BEN CONNABLE, STEPHANIE YOUNG, STEPHANIE PEZARD, ANDREW RADIN, RAPHAEL S. COHEN, KATYA MIGACHEVA, JAMES SLADDEN

Russia's Hostile Measures

Combating Russian Gray Zone Aggression Against NATO in the Contact, Blunt, and Surge Layers of Competition

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Preface

Russia challenges the security and stability of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and many of its member states. Russia's conventional capabilities pose a serious threat, and it has historically succeeded to one extent or another in sowing disorder, weakening democratic institutions, and undermining NATO cohesion. However, it also has a long track record of strategic shortfalls and even some ineptitude. NATO will benefit from exploring opportunities to deter, prevent, and counter Russian hostile behavior in the so-called gray zone short of war, where daily adversarial competition occurs, as the behavior that Russia exhibits in the gray zone will no doubt extend to high-order war.

Effectively deterring, preventing, and countering Russian hostile behavior demands clear analysis: Why and precisely how have Russian leaders applied *hostile measures*—for example, economic embargoes, limited military incursions, cyberattacks, information campaigns, and assassinations—in an apparent effort to undermine alliance security and stability?

This report documents research and analysis conducted as part of the project "Russia, European Security, and 'Measures Short of War,'" sponsored by the U.S. Army Deputy Chief of Staff, G-3/5/7. The purpose of the project was to provide recommendations to inform the options that the Army presents to the National Command Authorities to leverage, improve upon, and develop new capabilities and address the threat of Russian aggression in the form of measures short of war.

This report is accompanied by two online appendixes, available for download at www.rand.org/t/RR2539. Appendix A, "An Evolutionary History of Russia's Hostile Measures," presents a detailed history of hostile measures and operations from the creation of the Soviet Union in 1917 through the end of the Cold War. Appendix B, "Detailed Case Studies of Russia's Use of Hostile Measures," presents complete case studies of the measures that Russia employed in Moldova, Georgia, Estonia, Ukraine, and Turkey during specific crises in those countries in the post–Cold War era.

Research for this study began in 2015 and was completed in 2016. Additional research and analysis were conducted between late 2017 and early 2019 to bring the findings and recommendations up to date with contemporaneous events. The report was under U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) security review from January to August 2019. Russian behavior and the evolution of the European security environment between early January 2019 and the publication of this report served to reinforce the validity of the findings and recommendations presented here.

This research was conducted within RAND Arroyo Center's Strategy, Doctrine, and Resources Program. RAND Arroyo Center, part of the RAND Corporation, is a federally funded research and development center (FFRDC) sponsored by the United States Army.

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Summary

> Russia seeks veto authority over nations on its periphery in terms of their governmental, economic, and diplomatic decisions [and] to shatter the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. . . .
>
> —Summary of the U.S. National Defense Strategy, 2018[1]

Russia threatens the security and stability of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and, bilaterally, many of its individual member states. However, as of early 2019, the nature and extent of the Russian threat was still being debated. We argue that the current consensus on the complex Russian threat is simultaneously understated and overblown. Russia is dangerous. It sows disorder, weakens democratic institutions, and undermines NATO cohesion. In some ways, its full conventional threat is perhaps even more dangerous than currently portrayed. However, Russia has a long track record of strategic shortfalls and even some ineptitude in its long game; it is neither infallible nor omnipotent. NATO can effectively deter, prevent, and counter Russian hostile behavior in the gray zone—along what the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) calls the *contact layer*, where daily adversarial competition occurs—and during direct, state-on-state, high-order conventional or nuclear war: in the *blunt* and *surge* layers.

Effectively deterring, preventing, and countering Russian hostile behavior against the NATO alliance demands clear analysis: Why and precisely how have Russian leaders applied what we refer to broadly as *hostile measures*—for example, economic embargoes, limited military incursions, cyberattacks, information campaigns, and assassinations—in an apparent effort to undermine alliance security and stability? This report builds on existing expert analyses to help NATO find the best ways to use both its special and conventional military forces to push back against this behavior.

All of the many thousands of hostile and often costly interactions between Western and Soviet states or Russia since the 1917 revolution have taken place in the so-called gray zone short of war. This long-standing reality makes the gray zone a continuous challenge and an enduring threat to alliance cohesion and stability. And the behavior Russia exhibits in the gray zone will extend into high-order war. This threat, too, must be evaluated and considered.

[1] U.S. Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, Washington, D.C., 2018, p. 1.

Approach and Purpose

This report draws on primary and secondary sources of historical analysis, recent case studies, and the existing work of many top experts at the RAND Corporation and in the broader analytic community. Based on analyses of these sources, it proposes a more holistic and, arguably, more precisely representative conceptualization of the Russian threat. It recommends a complementary NATO military posture that is better able to address the broadest scope and scale of Russian hostility. (As of early 2019, the alliance was already enacting many useful policies.) At the same time, it is our intent to put the existing threat in less daunting context: Russian behavior is fairly consistent and manageable when considered historically.

Our report has three purposes: (1) describe the evolution, institutionalization, and limits of Russian hostile measures; (2) recharacterize Russian hostile measures, including their use in high-order war; and (3) recommend ways for NATO to deter, prevent, and counter Russian hostile measures in the gray zone and during high-order war (in the contact, blunt, and surge layers).

Reconceptualizing "Measures Short of War" as Hostile Measures

American Kremlinologist George F. Kennan called actions like sabotage, disinformation, and political destabilization *measures short of war* (MSW). Kennan's term was groundbreaking at the time. But 70 years of intervening experience and analyses suggest that revision is needed. Kennan did argue for considering MSW *during* war, but the very term of art he employs includes the fixed phrase *short of war*. Whether or not he intended the concept to apply during high-order war, his selected term is self-defining and ultimately unhelpful and impractical. We argue that it reinforces the mistaken idea that these measures are employed only in the gray zone and that they are a thing apart from high-order conventional or nuclear war.

Hostile measures—a term that folds in the more specific category of clandestine or covert *active measures*—applies more accurately to the behavior Kennan sought to circumscribe.[2] We use Kennan's term *measure* and the broad, generic term *hostile* to avoid introducing yet another acronym or catchphrase to the debate over the character of war. Our intent is to be accurate without claiming new theoretical ground: As many astute observers of the gray zone have argued, this is nothing new. Building from the stable baseline set by Kennan, we define *hostile measures* as follows:

> State activities other than high-order conventional or nuclear attack applied against other states at any time, and in any context, with the hostile intent of gaining advantage and reducing that state's capabilities, stability, or advantages.

Figure S.1 depicts the applied range of hostile measures, presenting a contrast to the artificially bounded understanding of the gray zone. It shows conceptual phasing from left to right: The gray zone precedes conventional war, which, in turn, precedes nuclear war. Hostile measures typically associated with the gray zone are available to states across the full spectrum of conflict.

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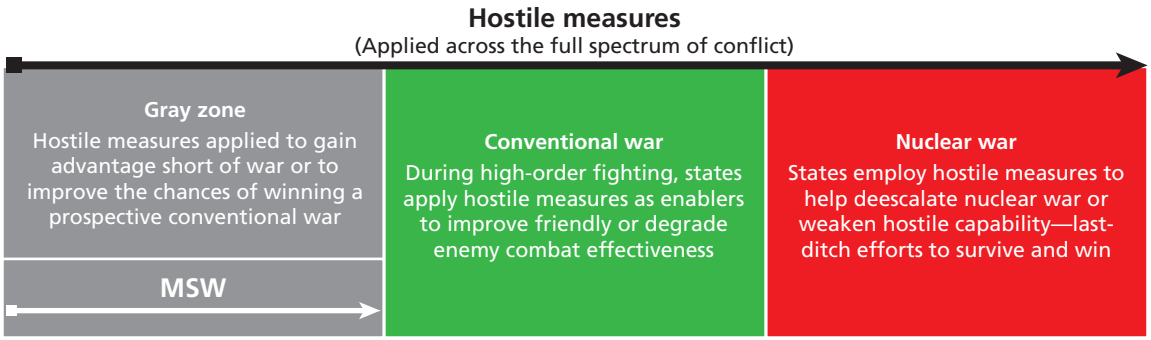
[2] Some might argue that *active measures*—or the Russian counterpart, transliterated as *aktivnye meropriyatiya*—is sufficient. Our research shows that active measures are more narrowly applied to clandestine or covert intelligence operations and would not include limited military operations or other relevant actions.

Figure S.1
Hostile Measures Across the Spectrum of Conflict



Russia's Gray Zone Threat

> The gray zone is not a specific defense and military challenge with well-defined parameters and boundaries. Instead, it is clear recognition of a universe of challenges lying in what amounts to a conceptual dead space in strategy development and strategic planning. This dead space exists from the highest levels of the U.S. national security community to deep into the Pentagon's strategy and planning process.
>
> — Nathan P. Freier et al., *Outplayed: Regaining Strategic Initiative in the Gray Zone*, 2016[3]

Hostile exchanges in the gray zone between NATO member states and Russia have been dangerous, intensely damaging, and, in some cases, extremely costly. They include overt acts of diplomatic aggression; global intelligence operations, such as Soviet penetrations of NATO intelligence agencies; destabilizing Cold War proxy conflicts across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East; assassinations; economic sabotage; political subversion; disinformation; and limited use of direct military intervention, including Soviet support for both the North Korean and North Vietnamese forces fighting against the U.S. military in the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s.[4]

Table S.1 presents a sample of hostile measures that the Soviets employed during the Cold War, including as part of high-order conflict. While these are singular examples, the Soviets combined multiple measures in sequence or parallel in almost every case.

All these activities received attention during the Cold War when Russian power was at its zenith. But Western policy interest in Russia declined steadily after the end of the Soviet Union in 1991 and through the late 2000s. Experts on Russia filtered out of Western intelligence agencies and diplomatic services and became scarce in both academia and nongovern-

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[3] Nathan P. Freier, Charles R. Burnett, William J. Cain, Jr., Christopher D. Compton, Sean M. Hankard, Robert S. Hume, Gary R. Kramlich II, J. Matthew Lissner, Tobin A. Magsig, Daniel E. Mouton, Michael S. Muztafago, James M. Schultze, John F. Troxell, and Dennis G. Wille, *Outplayed: Regaining Strategic Initiative in the Gray Zone*, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: U.S. Army War College Press, 2016, p. 74.

[4] More recently, the U.S. intelligence community found that Russia applied hostile measures to influence the U.S. federal elections in 2016. See Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections*, Washington, D.C., January 6, 2017.

Table S.1
Examples of Soviet Hostile Measures During the Cold War

Measure	Example
Assassination	1959: A Soviet intelligence officer assassinates Ukrainian dissident Stepan Bandera
Destabilization	~1981–1983: Cuba trains Central and South American insurgents at the Soviet Union's behest
Disinformation	1959–1986: National Voice of Iran broadcasts Soviet propaganda into Iran
	1983–1988: Operation Infektion, in which the Soviets use East Germans to blame the United States for AIDS
	1986: The Soviets spread rumors about Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) efforts to sabotage the summit of leaders of Non-Aligned Movement member countries in Harare, Zimbabwe
Proxy war	~1954–1975: Soviet Union provides direct military and intelligence support to North Vietnam
	1975–1991: Soviet Union directs and supports Cuban intervention in Angola, seizes control by proxy
Sabotage	1949: The Soviets create panic in Yugoslavia by launching sabotage operations from Bulgaria

SOURCES: Various CIA documents and scholarly literature on Cold War–era Soviet activities. See Chapter Three for a complete accounting of sources.

mental policy circles. As U.S. interest in Russia waned, Russian international activity increased steadily under Vladimir Putin in his roles, variously, as prime minister and president. NATO concerns about Russia did not peak again until the annexation of Crimea.

In early 2014, Russia used disguised special operations units, disinformation tactics, and local proxy forces to seize the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine. This action shocked the Western policy community and galvanized experts to analyze and define the gray zone. A quick surge of literature on gray zone activity and on the still loosely defined concept of *hybrid warfare* followed. Just a few years after this short-of-war calamity, the threat of high-order war recaptured the strategic discourse in the U.S. national security community. Since 2014, policy interest in Russian hostile measures in Eastern Europe has been overtaken by a renewed focus on conventional war in Europe and Asia. As a consequence, the gap in knowledge and threat appreciation that existed between 1991 and 2014 may be gradually reemerging.

Addressing the Reemerging Gap

Few opportunities remain to sharpen the detailed descriptions of Russian actions in Crimea and eastern Ukraine. With some notable exceptions, there has been little effort to put into useful context the rationale, patterns, and limits of recent Russian hostile measures. Policymakers struggling to deter, prevent, or counter Russian actions in Europe (and elsewhere) would benefit from a deeper understanding of the historical-cultural context for Russian actions. When viewed on a longer timeline, the motives and decisions of Russian leaders and government institutions appear more logical, less grandiose, and, perhaps, even more vulnerable to deterrence and countermeasures than they do in the narrow spotlight of recent events.

Accordingly, this report summarizes the history of ideas, institutions, and practices that have shaped Russia's use of hostile measures, with an emphasis on Europe—specifically, Eastern Europe. It describes the evolved institutionalization of Russia's approach to hostile mea-

sures and how capabilities to apply those measures have solidified over time. It also presents findings from a process-tracing analysis of Russian operations in Moldova, Georgia, Estonia, Ukraine, and Turkey.

The Nature of Russian Hostile Measures

Russian Leaders' Use of Hostile Measures Is Spurred in Large Part by Existential Worry

Our historical analysis and interpretation of the literature suggest that Russia's evolving use of hostile measures is rooted in existential worries of the pre-Soviet and Soviet state. Russia has always perceived itself as a nation under threat from its neighbors and from global interlopers; in many cases, this belief was justified. Internal state deception, distrust, and infighting throughout the Soviet period exacerbated individual and collective perceptions of looming instability and destruction.

Consequently, Russian leaders are motivated by at least three general, overarching worries: (1) Western encroachment, (2) disruption to the stability of allied governments, and (3) internal revolt. Whether or not it is true, Russian leaders believe that Western leaders promised to halt NATO's eastern expansion during negotiations in 1990.[5] Therefore, the alliance's eastward expansion toward Russia's border represents both a broken promise and an inherent threat.

The map of NATO members, aspiring members, and partners in Figure S.2 paints a clear picture of a Russian state that regional foreign and security policy expert Sherman Garnett described as "a wedged bear in a great tightness."[6] Member states are fully integrated into the alliance. Membership Action Plan countries are formally on track for membership, while aspiring member countries are working toward that status but less formally. Other countries support the alliance through the Partnership for Peace program, contribute troops to alliance operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere, or engage directly with NATO through the Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme.

Thirteen countries in Eastern Europe have joined NATO, and four more have sought accession since Putin assumed the presidency of Russia in 2000. Three current members, two aspiring members, and five countries that formally partner with NATO abut Russia's border from Norway to Mongolia. Every country in Europe, with the exceptions of Kosovo and Cyprus, are alliance members, are pursuing membership, or have (or recently had) a formal partnership agreement with NATO. Alliance influence in Central Asia extends its reach almost from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans. From Russia's perspective, the alliance has it effectively surrounded and is closing in.

We note that worry is not the only factor that drives Russian behavior. Russia is a large, complex state with many security, economic, and diplomatic interests. But worry appears to be the primary motivator behind its use of hostile measures in Eastern Europe. Russian leaders see a need to counter what they perceive as existential external and internal threats, so their use of such measures is logical in the context of NATO expansion and partnership activity. This suggests a major consideration for the alliance's efforts to deter, prevent, and counter Rus-

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[5] Uwe Klußman, Mathias Schepp, and Klaus Wiegerefe, "NATO's Eastward Expansion: Did the West Break Its Promise to Moscow?" *Spiegel Online*, November 26, 2009.

[6] See Sherman Garnett, "Russia's Illusory Ambitions," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 2, March–April 1997.

Figure S.2
NATO Expansion and Influence Near Russia's Borders

SOURCE: NATO, "NATO on the Map," webpage, undated.
NOTE: Russia is shaded red, including the Russian territory of Kaliningrad, located on the Baltic Sea along the northern Polish and southwestern Lithuanian borders. Russia forcibly annexed Crimea in 2014, but the Ukrainian government deemed this annexation illegal. Thus, we include Crimea as part of Ukraine. Kosovo is not affiliated with NATO but could be described as a NATO protectorate.

sian aggression: Firm commitment should be tempered by clear defensive intent. NATO has already taken the lead in extending some genuine confidence-building measures designed to assuage Russian worries, with decidedly mixed success.

Russia's Hostile-Measures Operations Can Be Forecast Successfully

Our case analysis and limited process tracing showed that we cannot yet predict which tactical measures Russia will employ in any prospective hostile-measures operation. But we *can* forecast Russia's broad approach and some patterns of operation. Logical, reactive patterns of behavior motivated by well-known triggers lend themselves to forecasting. Russia applies hostile measures in two ways:

- *opportunistically:* constant pursuit of advantage through the use of hostile measures
- *reactively:* using hostile measures as a short- and long-term reaction to a perceived threat.

Given Russia's clearly identified national security concerns—Western encroachment, disruption to the stability of allied governments, and internal revolt—coupled with its predilection to warn before acting, NATO should be able to successfully forecast Russia's broad operational approach to applying hostile measures.[7] Russia takes opportunistic advantage where

[7] There are cases that do not fit the general approach. For example, Russia's motives for disrupting the 2016 U.S. presidential election are difficult to place within the typical reactive pattern of post-Soviet Russian behavior. Setting aside the exceptions, Russia generally applies hostile measures as part of a predictable strategic defensive approach.

deterrence and prevention are weak. Thus, forecasting can assume that if a nation poses a security threat in one or more of those three ways, and if it fails to deter or prevent Russian hostile measures, then Russia is likely to use hostile measures aggressively against that state.

Reactive application is sometimes a long-term, generally tactical behavior designed to spoil a threat and punish a perceived offender. Russia has applied hostile measures reactively, and in some cases it still does, in the cases we examined. Its goal in doing so is to destabilize countries or to signal displeasure over behavior it views as inimical to Russian interests. Russian leaders will emphasize economic and political measures over military measures whenever possible, however. Longer campaigns that give the appearance of over-the-horizon strategy fall into similar patterns. For example, the decades-long effort to disrupt Moldova appears to be an extended version of the shorter-term campaign in Georgia: Both operations were designed to prevent Western encroachment, support allied governments or pseudo-states (in this case Transnistria, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia), punish the offending governments, and instill fear in their leaders to prevent future offenses.

Patterns in Russian Hostile-Measures Behavior and Case Study Example

While Russia is adept at masking its tactical actions as they unfold, historical analysis reveals some consistencies in its contemporary approach. We drew these findings from our limited sample of five cases, our historical analysis, and our broader analysis of Russian behavior, cited throughout this report:

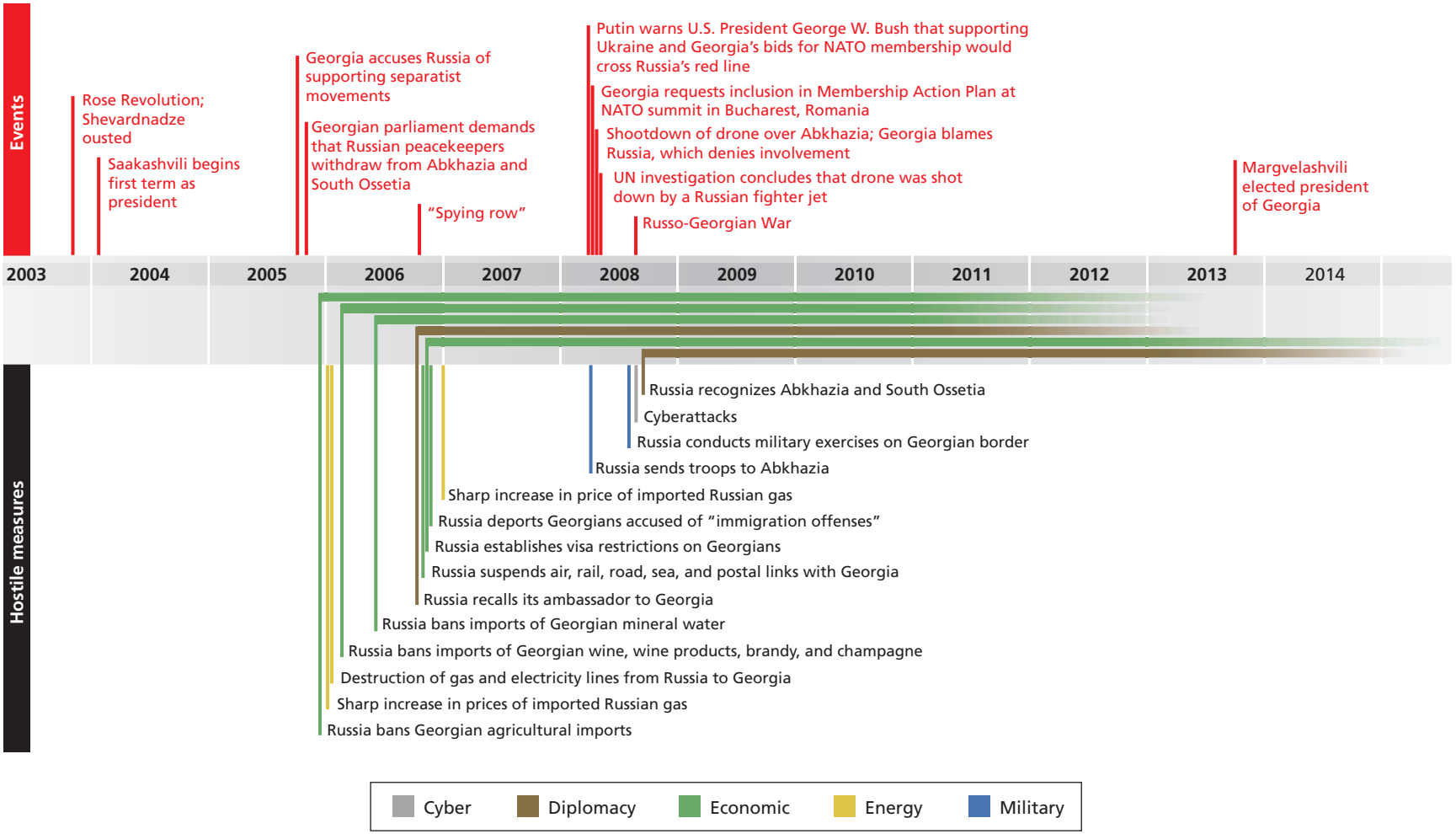
1. Russia consistently reacts with hostile measures when it perceives threats.
2. Both opportunism and reactionism drive Russian behavior.
3. Russian leaders issue a public warning before employing reactive hostile measures.
4. Short- and long-term measures are applied in mutually supporting combination.
5. Diplomatic, information, military, and economic means are used collectively.
6. Russia emphasizes information, economic, and diplomatic measures, in that order.
7. All arms of the government are used to apply hostile measures, often in concert.

Figure S.3 offers one example from our research. It shows the timeline of events in the Georgia case, beginning with the Rose Revolution at the end of 2003 and ending with the election of a new Georgian president in October 2013. Key events are presented above the timeline, while Russian hostile measures are presented below the timeline. Enduring measures, such as Russia's ban on Georgian agricultural imports, are presented with an inverted "L" shaped timeline marker from left to right and color-coded by category.

Cyber as a Caveat and Cautionary Note

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian conventional threat—while still dangerous—waned considerably. However, internet dependence has opened NATO vulnerabilities to cyber-attack. Whereas Russian hostile measures have only a limited effect on individual European countries, cyber operations extend Russia's reach into Western Europe and the United States. Russia's ability to affect elections and shut down or manipulate power grids, financial networks, and other critical infrastructure presents a critical threat to NATO security. This threat is consistent from the gray zone through high-order war. Russia's cyber capabilities are danger-

Figure S.3
Timeline of Russian Hostile Measures in Georgia



ous and not well understood, something that should be taken into account when interpreting the general findings presented here. Their inherent danger highlights the need for sustained, full-spectrum threat analysis.

Russian Performance and NATO Action

Russia has long-standing expertise in the use of hostile measures. However, its success in applying these measures has been uneven, and its capabilities have been somewhat overstated. Russia applies hostile measures expertly but generally not in a way that helps it sustain a favorable status quo in Europe. Our historical analysis and case studies suggest that Russia is tactically competent but strategically shortsighted (or at least insufficient to thwart NATO). The Soviet Union's many local, short-term successes in the gray zone did not generate dominant global communism or prevent the collapse of the Soviet state. NATO has more than doubled in size since 1949, progressing ever eastward toward Russia's border. Expansion may have triggered the most recent spate of Russian aggression, but these specific cases of aggression were mostly reactive, tactical, local, and, in some cases, counterproductive.

Table S.2 summarizes our assessment of Russia's success rate in each of five selected cases at both the tactical and strategic levels of effort: Moldova, Georgia, Estonia, Ukraine, and Turkey. Tactics are actions designed to achieve strategic goals. Tactical success can be impressive and intimidating in the short term, but, in the absence of strategic progress, it can be wasted or even counterproductive. Threshold design is drawn from the collective RAND literature on assessment, examples of which are cited in Chapter Three of this report.

In the five cases, we assessed Russian tactical and strategic success as follows:

- *Tactical:* Did Russian hostile measures achieve a desired *effect*? Did they slow, stop, or punish a perceived hostile action or gain Russia an immediate tactical advantage in the target area?
- *Strategic:* Did the entirety of Russia's hostile measures—its collective tactics—clearly generate a favorable, long-term strategic change? In these cases, was long-term Western influence stopped or rolled back, and did long-term Russian influence increase?

We determined that Russia achieved tactical success in three out of the five cases but that it had no definitive strategic success: In every case, it failed to prevent former Soviet states or clients from moving ever closer to the West. It sometimes delayed but did not stop progress toward NATO accession. In three cases, Russia's strategic success backfired: The victims of its hostile measures accelerated their westward shifts in response to Russia's behavior, NATO increased its direct support for each state, and NATO and (in some cases) the European Union reactively made firmer mutual commitments to support the defense and development of the affected states.

Russia's genuine tactical acumen should not be confused for either tactical omnipotence or strategic brilliance. Russia is not invincible, and its leaders are not irrational or impervious to deterrence. Western states can *deter*, *prevent*, and *counter* Russian hostile measures by taking on strong, thoughtful political positions and force dispositions. Steps to deter, prevent, and counter Russian actions should be taken simultaneously and in concert to achieve both a combinatory and sequential effect. NATO should first seek to deter Russian hostile measures. If deterrence

Table S.2
Summary of Russian Performance Across Five Cases

Tactical Results	Strategic Results
	
60% success	No success

NOTE: Green indicates success, red indicates failure, and gray indicates an unclear outcome.

fails, it should seek to prevent Russia from applying hostile measures. If Russia succeeds in applying hostile measures, NATO should find ways to counter their efficacy. For the military component of the NATO alliance, the tools for deterrence, prevention, and countering are generally the same: Forward military presence reinforced with an array of enabling capabilities.

Russia's influence can be largely limited to its near abroad, or the areas directly along its borders in former Soviet and Warsaw Pact states. Even there, in countries like Estonia and Poland, Russia's capacity to infringe on NATO interests can be diminished with thoughtful, measured, firm, and consistent action. Success against Russian hostile measures depends on continuing and, if possible, enhancing the alliance's newfound commitment to its eastern flank.

Using a Forward Military Posture to Address Russia's Hostile Measures

> U.S. ground forces are the linchpins in the DoD's gray zone response. All U.S. ground forces can tangibly contribute to contesting gray zone competition with forward-deployed forces and surge expeditionary capability. . . . Army forces are essential future gray zone contenders.
>
> — Nathan P. Freier et al., *Outplayed: Regaining Strategic Initiative in the Gray Zone*, 2016[8]

> The Global Operating Model describes how the Joint Force will be postured and employed. . . . It comprises four layers: contact, blunt, surge, and homeland. These are, respectively, designed to help us compete more effectively below the level of armed conflict; delay, degrade, or deny adversary aggression; surge war-winning forces and manage conflict escalation; and defend the U.S. homeland.
>
> — Summary of the U.S. National Defense Strategy, 2018[9]

This 2016 recommendation from the U.S. Army's Strategic Studies Institute and DoD's call for the establishment of a *contact layer* of forward forces designed to compete and win in the gray zone with countries like China and Russia also apply to NATO's competition with Russia in Europe. Forward posture is the key to deterring, preventing, or countering Russian hostile measures. Our research recommends focusing on a conventional military deterrence posture as a baseline for a NATO counter–hostile measures strategy. This conclusion was strongly reinforced by recommendations from experts on Russian strategy at a February 2016 symposium that we organized in Cambridge, UK, and it is echoed in other research, including

[8] Freier et al., 2016, pp. 84–85.

[9] U.S. Department of Defense, 2018, p. 7.

previous RAND studies of Russian hostile measures. Forward-positioned conventional forces should serve as a "baseplate" to which technical and advanced special operations capabilities can be added.

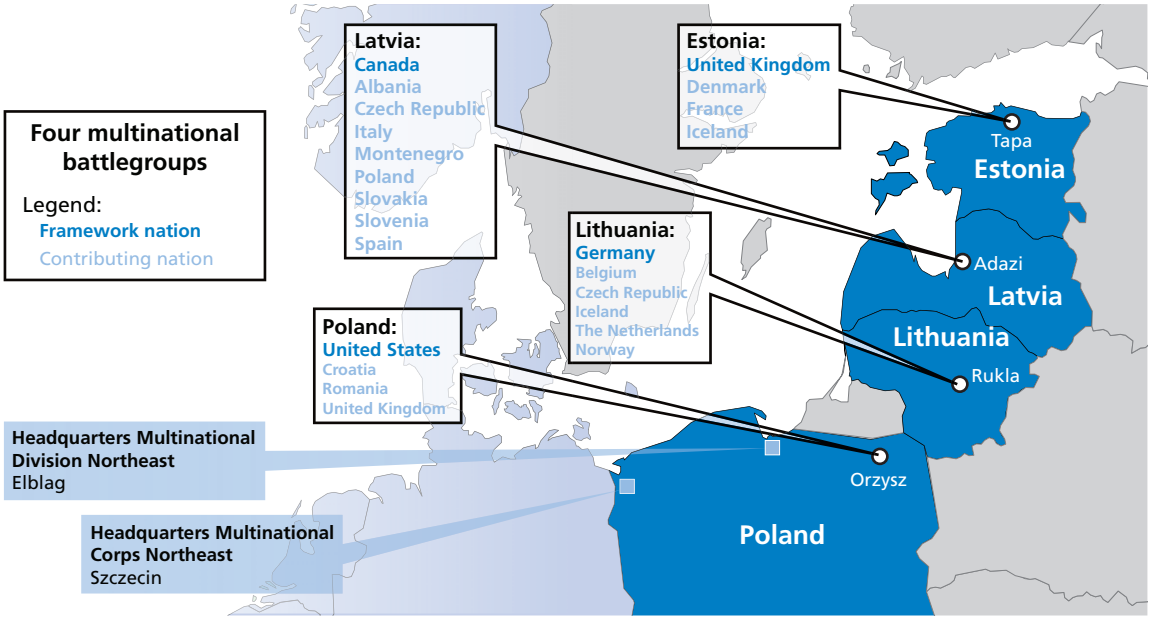
Regional events since the 2016 symposium suggest that conventional forces are optimal for supporting efforts to prevent, deter, and counter Russian hostile measures. Such efforts include providing direct support to special operations forces that are directly engaged in gray-zone competition or in thwarting Russian hostile measures during high-order war. NATO, through its Readiness Action Plan, has begun forward posturing in a measured way to deter a perceived threat of Russian conventional attack. The U.S. government's European Deterrence Initiative and NATO's enhanced forward presence of approximately 4,500 troops dispersed across several multinational battlegroups have sent a strong signal of defensive commitment to Eastern European allies and Russia. Figure S.4 depicts this enhanced presence as of mid-2019.

Building on existing research by the Army's Strategic Studies Institute and others, we found that this strategy is likely to have a positive knock-on effect: A forward conventional presence *can*, we argue, help deter Russian hostile measures. It is also likely to present opportunities for targeted actions to prevent and counter Russian such behavior, generating dual benefits.

Dual Benefits of Forward Defense

A forward conventional baseplate—preferably involving forward-stationed multinational units on secure military bases—also serves a dual purpose: It signals strength that can deter all hostile measures, from deception operations to conventional and nuclear attacks. Forward presence enables the authorized and permitted application of military technical capabilities—such

Figure S.4
NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence



SOURCE: NATO, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, "Enhanced Forward Presence: Map," webpage, last updated June 14, 2019.

as intelligence collection, information operations, and counterintelligence—that can be highly effective in preventing and countering Russian hostile measures. In many cases, military forces possess the best and most numerous of these capabilities. However, their use in Europe requires careful diplomatic engagement, improved authorities, consistent relationships between contributing and hosting states, and well-established boundaries.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The history, analysis, and case examples captured in this report highlight four key conclusions about how Russia's success in employing hostile measures and the odds that the alliance can effectively forecast and deter, prevent, or encounter their use:

- Russia's application of hostile measures is tactically adroit but strategically shortsighted. Russia typically fails to achieve strategic success by applying hostile measures.
- General patterns in Russian gray zone behavior lend themselves to forecasting, and Russia often issues formal indications and warnings before making use of hostile measures.
- Appreciation and preparation for Russian hostile measures should be broadened beyond the gray zone to include high-order conventional and nuclear scenarios.
- A forward conventional presence can help deter, prevent, and counter Russian hostile measures of influence in Europe.

These and the more in-depth findings presented here support our recommendation that NATO should sustain a measured forward presence in Europe indefinitely and leverage conventional force enablers to deter, prevent, and counter Russian hostile measures.

This report is accompanied by two online appendixes, available for download at www.rand.org/t/RR2539. Appendix A, "An Evolutionary History of Russia's Hostile Measures," presents a detailed history of hostile measures and operations from the creation of the Soviet Union in 1917 through the end of the Cold War. Appendix B, "Detailed Case Studies of Russia's Use of Hostile Measures," presents our complete case studies of Moldova, Georgia, Estonia, Ukraine, and Turkey.

Acknowledgments

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RAND Arroyo Center's Strategy, Doctrine, and Resources staff were instrumental in creating this research opportunity and in supporting our efforts over the course of this yearlong effort. Terrence Kelly generated the concept for this research, while Sally Sleeper and Michael Mazarr shepherded the project to completion. We also thank the staff of our Army sponsor, including Tony Vanderbeek and Mark Calvo, for their continuing interest in our research and for supporting our work with enthusiasm.

Abbreviations

CBRN	chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear
Cheka	VCheka, or Vserossiyskaya Chrezvychaynaya Komissiya [All-Russian Extraordinary Commission]
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
FSB	Federal'naya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii [Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation]
GPS	Global Positioning System
GRU	Glavnoye Razvedyvatel'noye Upravleniye [Main Intelligence Agency]
IBCT	infantry brigade combat team
KGB	Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti [Committee for State Security]
MISO	military information support operations
MSW	measures short of war
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NKVD	Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del [People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs]
Okhrana	Okhrannoye Otdelenie [Department for Protecting the Public Security and Order]
SOF	special operations forces
SVR	Sluzhba Vneshney Razvedki Rossiyskoy Federatsii [Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation]
UAS	unmanned aerial system

CHAPTER ONE

Russian Hostile Measures in Every Context

This report builds on existing RAND Corporation research and consolidates more than 500 pages of research on Russian hostile behavior below the threshold of high-order conventional war.[1] It describes tactics and measures that Russia uses below this threshold and that it is likely to use *during* war. It also briefly describes the evolution of Russia's approach to state-on-state competition to help political and military leaders and analysts understand how and why Russia came to view success in the gray zone as existential and therefore a crucial part of its national security strategy. The research presented here highlights specific recommendations for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) centering on the use of military assets to deter, prevent, and counter Russian hostile measures.

Hostile Measures in the Gray Zone and During High-Order War

It is increasingly important to consider the holistic nature of competition with Russia. For many years, the U.S. National Defense Strategy was released with little fanfare: The pro forma document has had limited influence on practice. The 2018 strategy was different. In the unclassified summary of the strategy, then Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis and his writing team stated plainly that the combined threats of state-on-state gray zone behavior and high-order war were of greater strategic significance than the activities of such terrorist groups as the Islamic State: "Inter-state strategic competition, not terrorism, is now the primary concern in U.S. national security."[2] On the following page, the strategy identified Russian

[1] See, for example, Ben Connable, Jason H. Campbell, and Dan Madden, *Stretching and Exploiting Thresholds for High-Order War: How Russia, China, and Iran Are Eroding American Influence Using Time-Tested Measures Short of War*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1003-A, 2016; Christopher Paul and Miriam Matthews, *The Russian "Firehose of Falsehood" Propaganda Model: Why It Might Work and Options to Oppose It*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, PE-198-OSD, 2016; F. Stephen Larrabee, Stephanie Pezard, Andrew Radin, Nathan Chandler, Keith Crane, and Thomas S. Szyana, *Russia and the West After the Ukrainian Crisis*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1305-A, 2017; Andrew Radin and Clinton Bruce Reach, *Russian Views of the International Order*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1826-OSD, 2017; Michael Kofman, Katya Migacheva, Brian Nichiporuk, Andrew Radin, Olesya Tkacheva, and Jenny Oberholtzer, *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1498-A, 2017; Andrew Radin, *Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics: Threats and Potential Responses*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1577-AF, 2017; David A. Shlapak and Michael Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1253-A, 2016; and Bryan Frederick, Matthew Povlock, Stephen Watts, Miranda Priebe, and Edward Geist, *Assessing Russian Reactions to U.S. and NATO Posture Enhancements*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1879-AF, 2017.

[2] U.S. Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States*, Washington, D.C., 2018, p. 1.

diplomatic behavior and hostile measures as central threats in a long-term, state-versus-state competition for global influence, listing Russia's technology-enabled subversion of democracy before the Russian nuclear threat.

Mattis's conceptualization of the threat is directly relevant to NATO. In fact, the alliance's collective approach to addressing long-term competition with Russia is central to both U.S. and European security. Understanding the context in which Russia honed what American Kremlinologist George F. Kennan called *measures short of war* (MSW)—what we call *hostile measures*—will help NATO policymakers conceptualize and implement strategies to deter, prevent, and counter the threat identified in the National Defense Strategy.[3]

Using the Gray Zone as a Conceptual Device

Measures short of war are generally understood to be state-on-state actions, typically conducted in the gray zone. The term *gray zone* was popularized after the 2014 Russian invasion of Crimea.[4] The gray zone is the conceptual space between complete nonengagement and the outbreak of high-order war, with the latter described as intense, declared conventional or nuclear war between the armed forces of two or more nation-states. High-order war is rare. Gray zone activity is commonplace. Nation-states are in constant multilateral engagement in the gray zone, seeking alliance with and advantage over other states.

A 2016 preliminary research effort by RAND Arroyo Center disputed the notion that war is changing or that intense gray zone competition amounted to anything new.[5] While the emergence of the cyber domain, hybrid terrorist-insurgent groups (such as the Islamic State), and instant global communication via the internet is adding new dimensions to the character of war and gray zone competition, the nature of conflict itself is unchanging. War in any form remains a Clausewitzian clash of independent, opposing wills. But high-order conventional and nuclear war remain as rare today as they were throughout the 20th century, a period during which the vast majority of conflicts were classified as irregular or civil wars.[6]

Instead of creating a new paradigm of conflict, the recent literature on the gray zone has helped national security experts step back from the staid perspectives on warfare that have hindered Western understanding of the nature of gray zone threats. Like high-order war, gray zone conflict is a constant struggle of independent, opposing wills that plays out relentlessly in subtle and not so subtle diplomatic, informational, military, and economic actions and reactions. Russia is helping the United States relearn this faded Cold War lesson with a bracing series of gray zone setbacks for European allies and the United States itself.

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[3] See George F. Kennan, "Measures Short of War (Diplomatic)," in Giles D. Harlow and George C. Maerz, eds., *Measures Short of War: The George F. Kennan Lectures at the National War College, 1946–1947*, Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1991.

[4] In this lightning operation, Russia's military and security agencies employed a potent mix of special operations forces, information operations, and clandestine political destabilization to seize Ukrainian territory. The term existed before 2014 but was not exhaustively explored until after the Crimea invasion. For additional background, see our case study in Appendix B, available online, as well as Kofman et al., 2017. For Kennan's original analysis as outlined in his September 1946 lecture, see Kennan, 1991.

[5] Connable, Campbell, and Madden, 2016.

[6] Connable, Campbell, and Madden, 2016, pp. 3–5.

Defining Russian Hostile Measures

In his original formulation of the term *MSW*, Kennan sought to describe all interstate behavior short of war. He divides MSW into two categories: amicable and nonamicable. Of his 12 overarching examples, half are amicable measures, such as arbitration.[7] All six nonamicable measures are overt acts, such as embargoes or the severing of diplomatic relations. He also presents a range of hostile actions that totalitarian states might take, including the less overt, less amicable acts of "intimidation, deceit, corruption, penetration, subversion . . . psychological pressure, economic pressure, seduction, blackmail, theft, fraud, rape, battle, murder, and sudden death."[8] Kennan does not reconcile these two lists, leaving the dozen above-board, overt policy options oddly dissociated from the basket of dirty tricks that are now most closely associated with the term *MSW*. Kennan's analysis focuses almost solely on overt diplomatic actions; he devotes little space to aggressively hostile measures. But in the more than 70 years since, MSW has come to embody covert action and below-the-threshold-for-war hostilities. It is rarely used in reference to Kennan's central focus on overt diplomatic activities.

In some ways, it is useful to think about state policy options as a long, unbounded menu that includes cultural exchanges, routine economic aid to allies, basic trade negotiations, embargo, psychological operations, and covert destabilization. However, *MSW* cannot capture *every* action that a government takes short of war if the term is to have any utility. A boundless approach would also mean that the gray zone—a potentially helpful bounding tool to circumscribe measures used—would be limitless in scope and therefore devoid of practical meaning to policymakers. We concur with Hal Brands's observation that "'gray zone' cannot mean everything if it is to mean anything" and extend his observation to the measures applied.[9] During this and previous research on MSW, we determined that total diffusion makes terms irrelevant but that trying to apply a specific and narrow taxonomy generates more disagreement than concurrence.

There is another significant practical concern in using the term *MSW*. Terminology should be both precise and accurate. It would be difficult and perhaps illogical to interpret the measures in question as anything *other* than measures used in circumstances short of war. This means that, by definition, these measures are not used during war. But at one brief point in his argument, Kennan does suggest recharacterizing policy options:

> [We] must cease to have separate patterns of measures—one pattern for peace and one pattern for war. Rather, we must select them according to the purpose we are pursuing and classify them that way.[10]

This is logical and practical advice. It reflects Kennan's realistic understanding of the problem: Almost all measures are applicable below and above the threshold for high-order war. Policy options cannot and should not be neatly delineated by conflict phase. Some are more or less appropriate to given conditions. But this argument does not align with Kennan's terminology. In fact, his use of the term *MSW*—which he drew from textbooks on international

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[7] Kennan, 1991, p. 4.

[8] Kennan, 1991, p. 8.

[9] Hal Brands, "Paradoxes of the Gray Zone," Foreign Policy Research Institute, February 5, 2016.

[10] Kennan, 1991, pp. 16–17.

law—does exactly what Kennan argues against: It separates patterns of measures below and above the threshold for high-order war.[11]

Kennan is regarded as the dean of Sovietology and one of the greatest American policy analysts of the 20th century. A Pulitzer Prize winner for his writings on international affairs and the history of relations between Russia and the West, Kennan was also one of the first U.S. policymakers to help apply the measures he described against the Soviet Union in the early Cold War era.[12] His ideas are rightly venerated, but they are not unassailable. As a policymaker, Kennan chose to eschew *MSW* in favor of the term *political warfare*, or "the employment of all the means at a nation's command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives," including "'black' psychological warfare and . . . underground resistance in hostile states."[13] *Political warfare* might be used to describe the policy approach that applies MSW, but Kennan did not clearly make that distinction nor seek to resolve the two terms.[14] Even to Kennan, the term *MSW* was not sacrosanct.

MSW has been in common use for more than half a century, but it is insufficiently accurate and, in the modern context, dated and misleading. In place of *MSW*, we offer the term *hostile measures*. This term can be used in conjunction with *political warfare* or other terms that describe the policy approach to applying such measures; we refer specifically to the actions taken. In other words, a state could apply hostile measures to achieve political warfare objectives. This proposed formulation might be helpful:

- States apply hostile measures in the gray zone to achieve political warfare objectives.
- States also apply hostile measures during high-order war to achieve wartime objectives.

To arrive at the term *hostile measures*, we started with Kennan's *measures short of war*. We removed *short of war* because it creates an artificial and unhelpful boundary. To capture the behaviors that are most relevant to policymakers and to eliminate routine functions that are less relevant to competition, we added the term *hostile*. To avoid artificial bounding beyond the term *hostile*, we retained the general term *measures*. Ultimately, we defined *hostile measures* as follows:

> State activities other than high-order conventional or nuclear attack applied against other states at any time, and in any context, with the hostile intent of gaining advantage and reducing that state's capabilities, stability, or advantages.

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[11] Kennan, 1991, p. 3.

[12] For insights into Kennan and his service, see George F. Kennan, Charles Gati, and Richard H. Ullman, "Interview with George F. Kennan," *Foreign Policy*, No. 7, Summer 1972; Richard Russell, "American Diplomatic Realism: A Tradition Practised and Preached by George F. Kennan," *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 11, No. 3, November 2000; George F. Kennan, "Foreign Policy and the Christian Conscience," *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1959; David Mayers, "Containment and the Primacy of Diplomacy: George Kennan's Views, 1947–1948," *International Security*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Summer 1986; and David F. Rudgers, "The Origins of Covert Action," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 35, No. 2, April 2000.

Several historians have questioned Kennan's efficacy as a policymaker. See, for example, Sarah-Jane Corke, "George Kennan and the Inauguration of Political Warfare," *Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 6, Summer 2006, and Scott Lucas and Kaeten Mistry, "Illusions of Coherence: George F. Kennan, U.S. Strategy and Political Warfare in the Early Cold War, 1946–1950," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33, No. 1, January 2009.

[13] As quoted in Lucas and Mistry, 2009, p. 39.

[14] Kennan used the term *political warfare* once in his talks at the National War College but does not reconcile the term with *MSW*. See Giles D. Harlow and George C. Maerz, eds., *Measures Short of War: The George F. Kennan Lectures at the National War College, 1946–1947*, Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1991.

These measures certainly include the nonamicable overt diplomatic actions that Kennan focused on in his 1946–1947 lectures at the National War College. Figure 1.1 depicts the applied range of hostile measures, presenting a contrast to the artificially bounded understanding of the gray zone. It shows conceptual phasing from left to right: The gray zone precedes conventional war, which, in turn, precedes nuclear war. Hostile measures typically associated with the gray zone are available to states across the full spectrum of conflict.

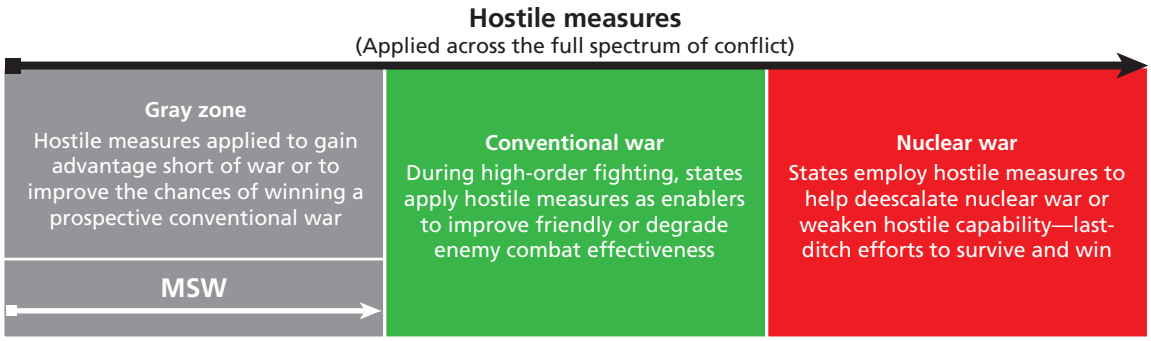
Active Measures as a Subset of Hostile Measures

Within the broad category of hostile measures are overt actions, such as limited military incursions, economic embargoes, and public information campaigns, as well as tailored clandestine and covert hostile measures, including targeted disinformation campaigns. Historically, Russian policymakers and intelligence officers have referred to these as *active measures*, transliterated as *aktivnye meropriyatiya*.[15] They should be considered a subset of hostile measures.[16]

Ongoing Debate: Defining and Bounding the Hybrid Un-War

Debate over the meaning of *gray zone*, *MSW*, *political warfare*, and other terms is even more expansive than we have suggested thus far. In prior research, aptly titled *Stretching and Exploiting Thresholds for High Order War*, we identified a range of catchphrases adopted by analysts seeking to describe hostile interstate activities other than high-order war.[17] Examples

Figure 1.1
Hostile Measures Across the Spectrum of Conflict



[15] Dennis Kux, "Soviet Active Measures and Disinformation: Overview and Assessment," *Parameters*, Vol. 15, No. 4, November 15, 2005. Also see Thomas Rid, professor of security studies, King's College London, testimony before the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence at the hearing "Disinformation: A Primer in Russian Active Measures and Influence Campaigns," March 30, 2017; U.S. Department of State, *Active Measures: A Report on the Substance and Process of Anti-U.S. Disinformation and Propaganda Campaigns*, Washington, D.C., August 1986; Cathy Darlene Walters, *Perceptions Management: Soviet Deception and Its Implications for National Security*, thesis, Monterey, Calif.: Naval Postgraduate School, March 1988; Kenneth C. Keating, *Maskirovka: The Soviet System of Camouflage*, thesis, Garmisch, Germany: U.S. Army Russian Institute, June 1981; Morgan Maier, *A Little Masquerade: Russia's Evolving Employment of Maskirovka*, Fort Leavenworth, Kan.: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2016.

[16] Dennis Kux, 2005, provides an overview of the history of Soviet and Russian active measures, tracing their lineage back to the 1920s. Also see Rid, 2017, and Walters, 1988.

[17] Connable, Campbell, and Madden, 2016.

include *parawar*, *asymmetric war*, *pressure pointing*, *lawfare*, *salami slicing*, *unrestricted warfare*, and *hybrid warfare*. This slew of terminology highlights the disagreement and, often, outright confusion over the nature of gray zone interstate competition. In June 2016, a team from the Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute produced a significant analysis of the gray zone and hybrid war. That report concluded, "There is no common perception of the nature, character, or hazard associated with the gray zone or its individual threats and challenges."[18] We concur with this finding but do not seek a definitive solution. Instead, we briefly describe the ongoing analytic debate over terminology as a way to frame our findings on the gray zone and hostile measures. *Hybrid warfare*, a term generally attributed to Frank G. Hoffman at the U.S. National Defense University, is particularly salient to this debate.[19] It was NATO's term of choice in the immediate period after Russia's seizure of Crimea.

Genesis of the Gray Zone–Hybrid Warfare Debate

Two events in 2014 led to an intense but short-lived analytic trend. Russia's annexation of Crimea generated a frantic examination of Russian covert-action capabilities and tactics.[20] The Islamic State's seizure of large parts of Iraq in 2014 accelerated a parallel, overlapping interest in the on-again, off-again term *hybrid warfare*, which has been interpreted to mean anything from the behavior of a hybrid paramilitary-terrorist organization to state-level hybrid application of tactics in the gray zone.[21] Meanwhile, there was growing awareness among nonexperts that China was operating aggressively in the gray zone in places like the East China Sea, Africa, and elsewhere. First, the shock and awe generated by the blitzkrieg-like success of Russia in Crimea and the Islamic State in Iraq generated considerable analytic excitement. A few early accounts suggested that Russia had invented a new way of war.[22] Many of these

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[18] Nathan P. Freier, Charles R. Burnett, William J. Cain, Jr., Christopher D. Compton, Sean M. Hankard, Robert S. Hume, Gary R. Kramlich II, J. Matthew Lissner, Tobin A. Magsig, Daniel E. Mouton, Michael S. Muztafago, James M. Schultze, John F. Troxell, and Dennis G. Wille, *Outplayed: Regaining Strategic Initiative in the Gray Zone*, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: U.S. Army War College Press, 2016, p. 73.

[19] Frank G. Hoffman, "Hybrid Warfare and Challenges," *Joint Force Quarterly*, No. 52, First Quarter 2009. For Hoffman's latest perspective on this issue, see Frank Hoffman, "Sharpening Our Military Edge: The NDS and the Full Continuum of Conflict," *Small Wars Journal*, June 27, 2018.

[20] U.S. Army Special Operations Command, *"Little Green Men": A Primer on Modern Russian Unconventional Warfare, Ukraine 2013–2014*, Fort Bragg, N.C., 2015; Sam Jones, "Estonia Ready to Deal with Russia's 'Little Green Men,'" Financial Times, May 13, 2015; Anton Shekhovtsov, "Who Is Afraid of the 'Little Green Men'?" *Intersection*, September 21, 2015.

[21] Our previous analysis examined these terms and the various merits of the initial literature; see Connable, Campbell, and Madden, 2016, pp. 1–8. Many terms, both new and revived from the Soviet period, poured forth in this brief period, including *new-generation warfare*, *unrestricted warfare*, *nonlinear warfare*, *political warfare*, *lawfare*, *reflexive control*, *full-spectrum warfare*, *fourth-generation warfare*, *hybrid warfare*, and *active measures*. See, for example, Kux, 2005; Oscar Jonsson and Robert Seely, "Russian Full-Spectrum Conflict: An Appraisal After Ukraine," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2015; Timothy Thomas, "Russia's Information Warfare Strategy: Can the Nation Cope in Future Conflicts?" *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2014; and Maria Snegovaya, *Putin's Information Warfare in Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia's Hybrid Warfare*, Washington, D.C.: Institute for the Study of War, September 2015.

[22] For example, Molly K. McKew and Gregory A. Maniatis, "Playing by Putin's Tactics," *Washington Post*, March 9, 2014, and Peter Pomerantsev, "Brave New War," *The Atlantic*, December 29, 2015. McKew continued to cling to this argument in 2017; see Molly K. McKew, "The Gerasimov Doctrine," *Politico*, September–October 2017.

For counterarguments, see Charles K. Bartles, "Getting Gerasimov Right," *Military Review*, January–February 2016; Freier et al., 2016; Bettina Renz and Hanna Smith, *Russia and Hybrid Warfare—Going Beyond the Label*, Helsinki, Finland: Kikimora Publications, 2016; and Keir Giles, *Russia's 'New' Tools for Confronting the West: Continuity and Innovation in Moscow's Exercise of Power*, London: Chatham House, March 2016.

reports lent credence to Russia's contemporaneous, chest-thumping propaganda. Some observers suggested that Vladimir Putin was applying his new type of warfare to establish hegemony over (at least) Eastern Europe.[23] There was a brief period of intense focus on the gray zone and hybrid warfare from 2014 to 2015, characterized by descriptions of Russia's new-generation warfare.[24]

Refinement of the Gray Zone–Hybrid Warfare Debate

By early 2016, the debate over the Russian threat had stabilized, and some deeper analyses emerged. For example, in an early 2016 article, Russia watcher Andrew Monaghan suggested letting some of the steam out of the gray zone–hybrid warfare pressure cooker. In addition to driving home the point that this kind of nebulous hostile behavior was long-standing—an argument we made in our 2016 report—he also pointed out that Russian commentators explicitly rejected the term *hybrid warfare*.[25] Bettina Renz and Hanna Smith gave warning to policymakers who might have been captured by the initial onslaught of literature:

> [T]aking the success of Russia's operational approach [in Crimea] as a basis for defence planning is counterproductive as it is likely to preclude the flexibility of responses needed in any potential future Russian hostility.[26]

In addition to Monaghan, Renz, and Smith, other experts, such as Keir Giles at Chatham House and Michael Mazarr and Christopher Chivvis at RAND, helped bring the discussion back to its origins.[27] The terms *gray zone* and *hybrid* have now been so thoroughly picked over and demystified that even retracing this brief analytic history risks redundancy. By our reading of the collective literature, the analytic community eventually reached some general conclusions:

- Gray zone hostilities are nothing new, particularly for Russia.
- Russia will continue to apply these tactics, but its goals and means are limited.
- Deterring, preventing, or countering so-called gray zone behavior is difficult.

By 2017, analyses of the gray zone and hybrid warfare had shifted toward a balanced, objective view of Russian power.[28] As the nature of the writing changed, the pace of publication slowed considerably. Perhaps the effect of the hyperbolic tone of some initial 2014–2015

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[23] For example, Phillip A. Karber, "Russia's 'New Generation Warfare," *Pathfinder Magazine*, June 4, 2015.

[24] See Phillip Karber and Joshua Thibeault, "Russia's New-Generation Warfare," Association of the United States Army, May 20, 2016.

[25] Andrew Monaghan, "The 'War' in Russia's 'Hybrid Warfare,'" *Parameters*, Vol. 45, No. 4, Winter 2015–2016, pp. 67–68; Connable, Campbell, and Madden, 2016, pp. 1–8.

[26] Renz and Smith, 2016, p. 8.

[27] Giles, 2016; Michael J. Mazarr, *Mastering the Gray Zone: Understanding a Changing Era of Conflict*, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: U.S. Army War College Press, 2015; Christopher S. Chivvis, *Understanding Russian "Hybrid Warfare" and What Can Be Done About It*, testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Armed Services Committee, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, CT-468, 2017. Also see Sam Charap, "The Ghost of Hybrid Warfare," *Survival*, Vol. 57, No. 6, 2016.

[28] The term *hybrid warfare* stuck in the European analytic community but lost some favor in the United States; it remains ill defined, and we do not use the term in this report.

articles had boomeranged. Practical matters also intervened. In U.S. policy circles, interest in North Korea, Iran, and China displaced some of the attention on Russia, and the specific focus on Russian hostile measures shifted to the 2016 election and ongoing social media manipulation. By early 2018, U.S. policy interest in the threat that Russian hostile measures posed to Eastern Europe had waned, while broader NATO interest steered more toward the conventional aspects of high-order war. Emphasis on long-term competition in the 2018 National Defense Strategy may offer two opportunities to refocus analysis on the holistic nature of the Russian threat: (1) to solidify advances in gray zone–hybrid war analysis with more-detailed historical research and (2) to expand and improve NATO perceptions of the Russian threat in a high-order war scenario.

One last general point appears to have been reached in policy circles, although perhaps more by passive and unintended consensus than through concerted effort. Read collectively, the most thoughtful reports on the gray zone and hybrid warfare suggest that gray zone tactics are generally distinct from high-order war. We should also explicitly state a point about the breadth of Russian behavior and associated analysis: The cited literature avoids addressing but does not actively deny the likelihood that Russia would use hostile measures during high-order war. But this mostly unwritten assumption has not made the hostile-measures threat sufficiently real in policy debates over the conventional and nuclear threats.[29] While the term *hybrid* would suggest a blending of conventional and unconventional measures along the entire continuum of conflict, work by top experts, including those at RAND, instead suggest or describe a continuum separated into phases that are distinct in terms of measures applied.[30] This report seeks to broaden the perspective on the applicability of hostile measures across phases of competition.

Approach and Methodology

This report has three purposes: (1) describe the evolution, institutionalization, and limits of Russian hostile measures; (2) recharacterize Russian hostile measures, including their use in high-order war; and (3) recommend ways for NATO to deter, prevent, and counter Russian hostile measures in the gray zone and during high-order war. Appendix A of this report traces the evolutionary history of Russian hostile measures; Appendix B contains detailed case studies of Russia's use of hostile measures in particular crises in the post–Cold War era. (Both accompany this report online at www.rand.org/t/RR2539.) Here, we briefly summarize the methodology behind the historical analysis and case studies, topics addressed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

[29] For one of several descriptions, see Guillaume Lasconjarias and Jeffrey A. Larsen, eds., *NATO's Response to Hybrid Threats*, Rome: NATO Defense College, 2015, p. xxii. Lasconjarias and Larsen accurately describe Russia's approach in Europe as a blending of a range of unconventional and conventional measures. However, like other writers on the topic, they do not explicitly and fully discuss the use of hostile measures during conventional war. We engaged directly with the lead author of that report and learned that NATO Defense College analysts clearly understand that the Russian hostile measures threat extends into the realm of high-order war. Therefore, it is by omission rather than by commission that the reader is left with the impression that Russia will apply its hostile measures only in scenarios short of high-order war.

[30] Connable, Campbell, and Madden, 2016, is one RAND report that used Kennan's MSW paradigm.

Historical Analysis

The purpose of our historical analysis was to detail the evolution of Russia's approach to hostile measures over time. Our general approach was to write a traditional historical narrative using both primary and secondary sources. We added a historical-cultural perspective drawn from secondary sources to the analysis in Chapter Two. The history in Appendix A draws on the vast scholarly and policy literature on Soviet and Russian foreign policy in both Russian and English. We also turned to the substantial available collections of U.S. and Soviet or Russian primary source documents, translated by the research team when necessary. Among the most important were Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) intelligence reports and assessments, declassified through Freedom of Information Act requests; the Wilson Center's rich collection of declassified and, in many cases, translated Cold War–era documents; and the online National Security Archive of declassified documents related to U.S. foreign policy housed at George Washington University.[31] In addition to government documents, these collections include personal correspondence and popular literature.

Case Studies

We conducted a small-*n* case study effort designed around *process tracing*. This is a methodology purposed to match its description: We identified, plotted, and then analyzed Russian hostile measures in five selected cases. The goals of this effort were to (1) describe Russian hostile measures in detail in a case context; (2) compare from case to case; and (3) set a baseline for what should be a more detailed and wider-ranging case-study effort to show empirically derived, generalizable patterns in Russia's use of hostile measures. We selected cases that were most appropriate for the subject of our research—recent and Europe-centered—and applied the following additional criteria:

- confined the cases to post-Soviet Russia to help characterize contemporary behavior
- eliminated cases in which the risk of war was exceptionally limited
- focused on cases in geographic proximity to Russia and in which the targeted state was a NATO member or allied with NATO
- prioritized cases in which Russian minorities resided in the targeted state
- limited cases to those characterized by a frozen conflict
- included cases of strategic interest to the United States beyond its NATO membership.

Some cases met all these criteria, while one or more criteria did not apply in others. It is impossible to precisely quantify U.S. strategic interest, so we applied this criterion subjectively. Process tracing could be applied to many or perhaps all of the examples referenced in the historical analysis and case-study narratives in the online appendixes to this report.

Differences Between the Accompanying Online Appendixes and This Report

The accompanying online appendixes stand alone as distinct research (each has its own, separate set of references). However, this report brings together those findings with additional context and aggregates the conclusions presented there—for example, by applying a rating system

[31] CIA, "Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room," webpage, last updated April 22, 2019; Wilson Center, "Digital Archive: International History Declassified," webpage, undated; George Washington University, "The National Security Archive," homepage, undated.

to assess the outcomes of the five cases of Russian use of hostile measures. Overall, we conclude that it is possible to forecast general Russian behavior as it relates to the use of hostile measures, but the appendixes make a case against forecasting tactical actions. The distinction is in the level of analysis: general, strategic approaches to the use of hostile measures versus the prediction of tactical patterns in a given case. This report provides a holistic analysis of the problem, while the accompanying appendixes offer a more nuanced and detailed focus on the history of Russian hostile measures and their use.

Organization of This Report

The remainder of this report is organized as follows. Chapter Two summarizes and expounds on the detailed historical research presented in Appendix A, which accompanies this report online. It describes the historical-cultural evolution of Russian hostile measures–related tactics, highlighting key events and institutions to better familiarize policymakers with the institutionalized and, ultimately, limited nature of Russia's approach. Chapter Three summarizes and provides additional context for the detailed case studies of Russian hostile measures in Appendix B. Chapter Four examines ways to deter, prevent, and counter Russian hostile measures, focusing on NATO's options in Eastern Europe.

The two appendix volumes are available online at www.rand.org/t/RR2539. Appendix A, "An Evolutionary History of Russia's Hostile Measures," presents a detailed history of hostile measures and operations from the creation of the Soviet Union in 1917 through the end of the Cold War. Appendix B, "Detailed Case Studies of Russia's Use of Hostile Measures," presents the five post–Cold War case studies: Moldova, Georgia, Estonia, Ukraine, and Turkey.

CHAPTER TWO

The Evolution and Limits of Russian Hostile Measures

> Applying a Western conceptual framework to explain a foreign operational art, divorcing it from its foreign ideational context and from what the foreigners say to themselves may lead to misperceptions.
>
> — Dima Adamsky, 2018[1]

Deterring, preventing, or countering Russian hostile measures necessitates understanding Russian motivations, tactics, and strategies and—more importantly—their limits. By characterizing the historical and cultural evolution of Russia's use of hostile measures, we sought to reveal insights about the nature of Russian behavior in the gray zone. It is not possible to predict with certainty the tactics that Russia will employ in any given case. However, with a fuller appreciation of Russian behavior, it is possible to forecast, and then preemptively address, Russian hostile-measures operations in prospective high-order war scenarios. Understanding the broad motivations behind these operations and the patterns of approach—the general ways in which Russia tends to group tactics—will allow for improved analysis and forecasting. This chapter briefly describes Russia's motivations for institutionalizing hostile measures.

The Institutionalization and Nature of Russian Hostile Measures

> Neither Soviet nor American strategists are culture-free, preconception-free game theorists. . . . It is useful to look at the Soviet approach to strategic thinking as a unique "strategic culture."
>
> — Jack L. Snyder, RAND Corporation, 1977[2]

All major theories of state formation acknowledge, albeit to varying degrees, the influences of geography, history, and culture on the nature of the state, its institutions, and its behavior.[3] It

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[1] Dima Adamsky, "From Moscow with Coercion, Russian Deterrence Theory and Strategic Culture," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 41, Nos. 1–2, 2018.

[2] Jack L. Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, R-2154-AF, September 1977, p. v.

[3] We do not attempt to describe or debate all theories here. For a quick review of some of the major theories, see Peter A. Hall and Rosemary C. R. Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," *Political Studies*, No. 44, 1996; Jürgen Habermas, "The European Nation State, Its Achievements and Its Limitations: On the Past and Future of Sovereignty and Citizenship," *Ratio Juris*, Vol. 9, No. 2, June 1996; Patrick Carroll, "Articulating Theories of States and State Formation," *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol. 22, No. 4, December 2009; Andreas Wimmer and Yuval Feinstein, "The Rise of the Nation-State Across the World, 1816–2001," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 75, No. 5, 2010; George Steinmetz, ed.,

is therefore reasonable to consider Russian state formation in geographic, historical, and cultural context without necessarily selecting one scientific theory over another.[4] There are genuine, warranted limits to the conceptualization of strategic culture: Culture is never static or consistent, and no nation-state can exist as an isolated and therefore inviolable cultural island. The concept of strategic culture must be considered with caution. This section describes the broader dynamics associated with the institutionalization of Russian hostile measures within the Russian state; see Appendix A for greater detail and additional references to the literature on this topic through the end of the Cold War.

A Strategy Evolved from Existential Worry

> Russia's strategic culture is profoundly paranoid and likely to remain so. As a result, Russia behaves in ways that threaten or subvert other countries and obstruct Western diplomacy.
>
> — Edward Lucas, Center for European Policy Analysis, 2013[5]

Russia experts debate the degree to which constant strategic worry impels Russian leaders toward outwardly hostile behavior. Worry may not drive all aspects of policy, but Russia's evolving use of hostile measures clearly originated in the existential worries of the pre-Soviet and Soviet states. Russia has always perceived itself as a nation under threat from its neighbors and from global interlopers; in many cases, this belief was justified. Its size, geographic position, and relative lack of physical border barriers, such as mountain ranges, make it inherently vulnerable to incursions. Its heterogeneous population and historically fractious politics make it inherently vulnerable to internal revolt. These vulnerabilities affect Russian culture and motivate state behaviors—principally, state-on-state hostile measures—to counter them.[6]

Worry About External Invasion

> Bourgeois strategy is reactionary in its social and political aims since it serves the interests of imperialist aggressors, who conduct unjust and predatory wars in order to seize foreign

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State/Culture: State Formation After the Cultural Turn, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999; and Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta, eds., *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader, Malden*, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.

[4] Colin Gray summarizes three waves of strategic culture theory in a 1999 article (Colin S. Gray, "Strategic Culture as Context: The First Generation of Theory Strikes Back," *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1, January 1999). There are many other resources on strategic culture, including work by Theo Farrell, Dima Adamsky, James Wirtz, and Michael C. Desch. See Theo Farrell, "Strategic Culture and American Empire," *SAIS Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 2, January 2005.

[5] Edward Lucas, *Rethinking Russia: The Paradox of Paranoia*, Washington, D.C.: Center for European Policy Analysis, January 28, 2013. Also see Andrew Soldatov, "All-Encompassing Paranoia: How the Attitude Toward Security Has Changed in Russia," *Russian Social Science Review*, Vol. 58, No. 1, 2017; Thomas Graham, "The Sources of Russian Insecurity," *Survival*, Vol. 52, No. 1, 2010; Olga Oliker, Christopher S. Chivvis, Keith Crane, Olesya Tkacheva, and Scott Boston, *Russian Foreign Policy in Historical and Current Context A Reassessment*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, PE-144-A, 2015.

[6] Andrei A. Kokoshin of Moscow State University describes the evolution of Soviet doctrine, strategy, and policy in a way that reinforces these assumptions (Andrei A. Kokoshin, *Soviet Strategic Thought, 1917–1991*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999).

> territories, to suppress national liberation movements, and to enslave the people of other countries.
>
> — Marshal Vasily Sokolovsky, 1962[7]

> Russian elites appear to have increasingly concluded that the United States and NATO represent long-term political and potentially military threats to the current regime in Moscow.
>
> — Bryan Frederick et al., RAND Corporation, 2017[8]

Russia's vast borders were and arguably still are practicably indefensible. Former senior director for Russia on the U.S. National Security Council Thomas Graham has argued that "Moscow's fear is a product of Russia's geopolitical setting, political structure, and historical experience, all of which have shaped its strategic culture."[9] Table 2.1 lists some of the historic encroachments on what is now the Russian state.

Trauma and fear associated with these invasions imprinted on Russian culture and contributed directly to the development of a powerful central state and national military. Worry

Table 2.1
Examples of Foreign Encroachments into Russian Territory

Century	Summary of Events
13th	Mongol invasion of what is now the Russian state; destruction of Moscow
14th–16th	Lithuania-Russia wars; many Lithuanian attacks on Moscow
16th	Livonian War leads to loss of major Eastern European holdings; attack on Moscow
16th	Crimean and Turkish invasion of Russia from Crimea; attack on Moscow
17th	Polish-Russian War between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia in alliance with Sweden; attack on Moscow
17th	Ingrian War; Swedes invade Russian territory and seize Novgorod
17th	Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth defeats Russian Army; Smolensk captured
19th	Napoleon's Grande Armée invades Russia; Moscow attacked and burned
19th	Crimean War; French and British coalition; Russian Caucasus penetrated
20th	North Russia Intervention; U.S. and allied troops land on Russian territory
20th	German invasion of the Soviet Union; ~20 million Russians killed and Moscow besieged

SOURCES: Glenn E. Curtis, ed., *Russia: A Country Study*, Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, U.S. Department of the Army, July 1996; David R. Stone, *A Military History of Russia: From Ivan the Terrible to the War in Chechnya*, Westport, Conn.: Praeger Security International, 2006; Robin Higham and Frederick W. Kagan, eds., *The Military History of the Soviet Union*, New York: Palgrave, 2002; Nicholas Rzhevsky, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Russian Culture*, 2nd ed., Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

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[7] The quote is taken from a RAND translation of a 1962 Soviet military document titled *Military Strategy*; the document's original author, who held the highest rank in the Soviet military, is typically transliterated as Vasily Sokolovsky (Vasilii Danilovich Sokolovskii, Herbert S. Dinerstein, Leon Gouré, and Thomas W. Wolfe, *Soviet Military Strategy*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, R-416-PR, April 1963, p. 137).

[8] Frederick et al., 2017, p. xiii.

[9] Graham, 2010, p. 56.

about external intervention, specifically, contributed to the formation of the state security apparatus that became primarily responsible for applying hostile measures. Although the NATO alliance has never invaded Russian territory, the continuity of the perceived threat is understandable: Current alliance members, including Germany, Poland, Lithuania, the United Kingdom, France, and the United States, have all crossed Russia's borders with hostile intent. Continued NATO expansion toward Russia's borders since the fall of the Soviet Union has exacerbated existing worries.[10] According to Putin's 2015 National Security Strategy,

> The buildup of the military potential of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the endowment of it with global functions pursued in violation of the norms of international law, the galvanization of the bloc countries' military activity, the further expansion of the alliance, and the location of its military infrastructure closer to Russian borders are creating a threat to national security.[11]

This perceived threat of physical advance is further exacerbated by the all-too-real progression of Western—primarily U.S.—soft-power influence in Eastern Europe, including support for the "color revolutions" that have undermined Russian client governments.[12]

Worry Over Internal Revolt

> In the modern world extremism is being used as a geopolitical instrument and for remaking spheres of influence. We see what tragic consequences the wave of so-called color revolutions led to. For us this is a lesson and a warning. We should do everything necessary so that nothing similar ever happens in Russia.
>
> — President Vladimir Putin, 2014[13]

Russian leaders have faced continual threats from internal revolts and revolts against vassal regimes for several hundred years; Russia has been beset by instability since at least the middle of the 16th century. Table 2.2 lists a selection of some of the hundreds of revolts and smaller, more local uprisings against Russia and its vassal states. Note that many of these events directly threatened Moscow and the ruling elite. Most recently, so-called color revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan exacerbated long-standing worries of internal dissent. Former U.S. policy adviser on Russia Angela Stent has argued that modern Russian leaders see revolt in Eastern Europe as a potential reflection of their own domestic vulnerability.[14]

All this chaos has contributed to a common Russian, and specifically Muscovite, cultural appreciation for a safe, reliable status quo. President Putin, chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces Valery Gerasimov, minister of defense Sergey Shoygu, and director of the Federal Security Service (FSB) Alexander Bortnikov are all products of the Soviet state that

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[10] Radin and Reach, 2017, chapter 1; Frederick et al., 2017, chapter 3.

[11] Vladimir Putin, *The Russian Federation's National Security Strategy*, presidential edict 683, December 31, 2015.

[12] Andrew Monaghan presents a sound interpretation of Russia's perception of the NATO threat and Western failure to appreciate this perception (Andrew Monaghan, *The New Politics of Russia: Interpreting Change*, Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2016, pp. 8–7, 67–74). Keir Giles essentially makes the same argument (Giles, 2016).

[13] Quoted in Darya Korsunskaya, "Putin Says Russia Must Prevent 'Color Revolution,'" Reuters, November 20, 2014.

[14] Angela Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2014, p. 101. Chapter 5 offers an overview of the color revolutions.

Table 2.2
Examples of Internal Revolts Against the Russian State and Its Vassals

Century	Summary of Events
16th	Tatar Rebellion; Tatars attempt to expel Russian influence after Ivan IV; Tatars raid Moscow
17th	Bolotnikov Rebellion; Ivan Bolotnikov organizes a Cossack army and leads attacks near Moscow but is defeated
17th	Copper Riot; thousands riot to protest economic conditions; the movement is centered in Moscow and is put down
17th–18th	Bashkir uprisings; Turkic ethnic group rebels against Russian expansion and the settlement of ethnic Russians; mixed outcome
17th	Razin's Rebellion; Stenka Razin leads a Cossack army up the Volga River, threatening Moscow
17th	First Streltsy Rebellion; more than 2,000 rebelling soldiers march on Moscow but are defeated
18th	Bulavin Rebellion; Kondraty Bulavin leads a Cossack army to march on Moscow, defeated
18th	Pugachev Revolt; Emelyan Pugachev raises and leads a rebel force along the Volga and is defeated
19th	Decembrist Revolt; thousands of soldiers mutiny in Moscow and other areas; the uprisings are defeated
20th	"First" Russian Revolution; large-scale popular revolt centered in St. Petersburg and Moscow
20th	Central Asian Revolt; two-decade revolt by mostly Muslim Central Asians against Russia
20th	Russian Civil War; large-scale internal conflict following the Russian Revolution of 1917
20th	Eastern European uprisings; vassal states fight for independence after Russian Revolution, with mixed success
20th	Baltic state uprisings; decade-long revolt against Soviet occupation of the Baltics that is ultimately defeated
20th	Hungarian Revolution; Hungarians revolt against Soviet control and occupation and are defeated
21st	Color revolutions; Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine revolt against Russian control or influence
20th–21st	North Caucasus uprisings; Chechens and Dagestanis revolt against Russian control and are defeated
21st	Ukrainian Revolution (Euromaidan Revolution); strategically critical client state on Russia's border collapses
21st	Syrian War; near collapse of a long-standing Russian client state in the Middle East; secured as of 2018

SOURCES: Henry A. Landsberger, ed., *Rural Protest: Peasant Movements and Social Change*, London: Macmillan, 1974; Immanuel Ness, ed., *International Encyclopedia of Revolution and Protest*, Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2009; Lincoln A. Mitchell, "The Color Revolutions," *Foreign Affairs*, January–February 2013; Curtis, 1996; Stone, 2006; Higham and Kagan, 2002; Rzhevsky, 2012.

rationalized, institutionalized, popularized, and weaponized existential worry. Their application of hostile measures to address what they perceive to be existential external threats is logical in context. Political scientist Mette Skak argued that Russia's annexation of Crimea was more a response to concern about internal revolt than NATO encroachment—an inside-out rather than an outside-in strategic reflex resulting in a consummate hostile-measures operation.[15]

[15] Mette Skak, "Russian Strategic Culture: The Role of Today's Chekisty," *Contemporary Politics*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 2016.

Dmitri Trenin, director of the Carnegie Moscow Center, has described how these worries have endured in U.S. policy:

> The Kremlin genuinely fears US-designed, US-sponsored and US-directed "color revolutions." The Russian security community fears Western spying and its penetration of Russian officialdom and elites. The General Staff is concerned about the movement of NATO infrastructure toward Russia's borders, the US ballistic missile defenses, and strategic nonnuclear systems.[16]

Trenin goes on to argue that "many of these fears are groundless or overblown."[17] Nevertheless, they are evident in current Russian strategic thought and day-to-day behavior. The perception of a threat influences behavior, even if the perceived threat is overblown or nonexistent. Whether or not one believes that worry, or even paranoia, is the primary driver behind current Russian actions in the gray zone and its preparations for high-order war, this essential element of Russian culture demands an objective and thoughtful accounting. One need not sympathize with the motives for Russian behavior, but some logical analytic empathy is warranted. Our research suggests that an appreciation of the worry inherent in Russian state culture is essential to understanding and, in turn, deterring, preventing, and countering Russian hostile measures.

Evolution of the State Hostile Measures Apparatus

Russian state security organizations evolved in response to the types of threats listed in Tables 2.1 and 2.2. Hostile measures are primarily the domain of the intelligence services and army, currently called the Russian Ground Forces. Russia's modern-day FSB and its Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) evolved from the pre-Soviet, tsarist Okhrana secret police force and, later, the Soviet KGB.

Security Services

> Our aim is to fight against the enemies of the Soviet Government and of the new order of life.
>
> — Felix Dzerzhinsky, director of the Cheka, 1917[18]

Early nonmilitary Soviet security forces were almost entirely directed against internal dissent. Both Dzerzinsky's Cheka (the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission) and the NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) were created as mechanisms to enforce Bolshevik order.[19] Internal security missions gradually expanded in the post-tsarist period to include a full range of international activities, and, before it was disbanded, the NKVD undertook a range

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16 Dmitri Trenin, *Should We Fear Russia?* Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2016, pp. 117–118.

17 Trenin, 2016, p. 118.

18 The quote is attributed to Dzerzhinsky in an interview with the contemporary Bolshevik daily newspaper *Novaia Zhizn*. See R. Gerald Hughes and Arne Kislenko, "'Fear Has Large Eyes': The History of Intelligence in the Soviet Union," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 4, 2017, p. 639.

19 There were several other organizations both during and in the immediate postrevolution period. See Richard F. Staar and Corliss A. Tacosa, "Russia's Security Services," *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 1, Winter 2004.

of external intelligence operations.[20] Security agencies expanded in both scale and scope after World War II. The KGB simultaneously targeted internal dissent and external threats.[21] Worry that drove the internal security mission shaped the agencies' approach to external manipulation. Existential worry about global threats, in turn, sharpened the internecine application of hostile measures within the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union.

Mirroring other aspects of Russian culture and officialdom, the security services operate within the bizarre strictures of a central, unresolved dichotomy. The massive scope and scale of the Russian state and its interests have always required distributed operations and some level of operational trust in the personnel who conduct tactical intelligence activities. However, institutional worry and centralized state authority have always dictated top-down control. In the security services, this led to an inherently unstable structured-distributed approach.[22] Officers were trained to take initiative in the field and to constantly pursue the advantage through hostile measures, but they could only do so within the fairly tight constraints of highly politicized and often unpredictable centralized management. Field officers tried to intuit the vague and shifting threshold between commendable aggression and politically forbidden overreach. Mercurial and dichotomous control inevitably generated mixed results. Some officers were censured or demoted, and some were jailed or killed.[23] Despite these seemingly counterintuitive and often unpredictable control measures, intelligence field offices were organized to constantly pursue opportunities to apply hostile measures with the goals of undermining adversaries, propping up vassals, and preserving a favorable status quo. This dynamic may have extended to the operations of the post-Soviet FSB and SVR.

Military Forces

> Armed forces, throughout the entire history of their existence, have been a most effective instrument of state policy, not only in war but also in peacetime. Today . . . this assertion is all the more true and the proof of it is obvious at every turn.
>
> — Admiral Sergei Georgievich Gorshkov, Soviet Navy, 1979[24]

All arms of the Russian military have been used to apply hostile measures. For example, during and after the Cold War, Russian combat aircraft flew near or across recognized international

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[20] Barry McLoughlin and Kevin McDermott, eds., *Stalin's Terror: High Politics and Mass Repression in the Soviet Union*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, chapters 2, 6, and 7.

[21] The KGB was one of many Soviet government security organizations, and it evolved from other post-Okhrana organizations, including the Cheka. See Appendix A of this report, as well as Staar and Tacosa, 2004; Jeremy R. Azrael and Alexander G. Rahr, *The Formation and Development of the Russian KGB, 1991–1994*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 1993; Leonid Shebarshin, "Reflections of the KGB in Russia," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 28, No. 51, December 18, 1993; Raymond W. Leonard, *Secret Soldiers of the Revolution: Soviet Military Intelligence, 1918–1933*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999.

[22] Hughes and Kislenko, 2017. Appendix A includes additional sources.

[23] See Christopher M. Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB*, New York: Basic Books, 1999.

[24] Sergei G. Gorshkov, *Sea Power of the State*, London: Pergamon Press, 1979, quoted in Bradford Dismukes and James M. McConnell, eds., *Soviet Naval Diplomacy*, New York: Pergamon Press, 1979, p. 302. Also see Isabelle Facon, *Russia's National Security Strategy and Military Doctrine and Their Implications for the EU*, Brussels, Belgium: European Parliament, Sub-Committee on Security and Defence, 2017.

state boundaries, buzzed NATO ships and planes, and massed for public displays of force intended to signal deterrent or offensive threats. Soviet air forces were used in both covert and overt roles as short-of-war hostile measures against the United States during the Korean War.[25] Russia's air and naval forces continue to support limited military actions that fall below the threshold for high-order war.[26] In early 2018, Putin used video of a simulated nuclear attack to intimidate prospective Western adversaries.[27] Arguably, the Russian Ground Forces and the branch's organizational predecessors have traditionally been the primary military enabler and enactor of hostile measures.

Russia's army has always served multiple purposes. Its primary roles have been to secure the state's borders and to suppress revolt within Russia and its vassal states, but it has also been a key instrument and an enabler of hostile measures. Throughout the Cold War—a war fought entirely in the gray zone—the Soviets deployed contingents of conventional ground forces around the world with, variously, the intent of buffering allies, offsetting Western influence, or destabilizing states not aligned with the Soviet Union. Soviet Army advisers also deployed to Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, and, in the case of the Vietnam War, they provided direct support to North Vietnamese military units defending against U.S. air strikes.[28] Intelligence officers from the main Soviet intelligence directorate (GRU) and special forces (Spetsnaz) conducted aggressive global clandestine and covert operations against NATO.[29] More recently, in Ukraine and Syria, the armed forces have effectively employed mercenary troops in direct and indirect combat roles.[30] Deniable and expendable mercenary forces are particularly effective for enabling Russian use of hostile measures.

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[25] Here, short of war implies short of direct high-order war between the United States and the Soviet Union. See Michael J. McCarthy, "Uncertain Enemies," *Airpower History*, Spring 1997; Austin Carson, "Facing Off and Saving Face: Covert Intervention and Escalation Management in the Korean War," *International Organization*, Vol. 70, No. 1, Winter 2016; Mark O'Neill, "Soviet Involvement in the Korean War: A New View from the Soviet-Era Archives," *OAH Magazine of History*, Vol. 14, No. 3, Spring 2000; Xiaoming Zhang, *Red Wings Over the Yalu: China, the Soviet Union, and the Air War in Korea*, College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 2002.

[26] See, for example, Elizabeth Young and Viktor Sebek, "Red Seas and Blue Seas: Soviet Uses of Ocean Law," *Survival*, Vol. 20, No. 6, 1978; Catalin Costea, "Russian Federation's Provocative Behavior in the Air Space of the Black Sea Region Between 2014–2017," in Florian Cîrciumaru and Christian Băhnăreanu, eds., *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference: Strategies XXI, The Complex and Dynamic Nature of the Security Environment*, Bucharest, Romania: "Carol I" National Defence University, December 2017; and William M. Arkin, "Provocations at Sea," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 41, No. 10, 1985.

[27] Neil MacFarquhar and David E. Sanger, "Putin's 'Invincible' Missile Is Aimed at U.S. Vulnerabilities," *New York Times*, March 1, 2018.

[28] CIA, *Communist Aid to North Vietnam*, intelligence memorandum, Langley, Va.: March 7, 1968.

[29] See, for example, Gordon H. McCormick, *Stranger Than Fiction: Soviet Submarine Operations in Swedish Waters*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, R-3776-AF, 1990; Defense Intelligence Agency, *Soviet Army-Level Special Purpose Companies*, declassified intelligence analysis, May 1987; and Burton A. Casteel, *Spetsnaz: A Soviet Sabotage Threat*, thesis, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: Air Command and Staff College, April 1986.

Note that Ola Tunander and others suggest that the submarine penetrations might have been clandestine false-flag operations intended to influence Swedish public opinion against the Soviets (Ola Tunander, "Some Remarks on the US/UK Submarine Deception in Swedish Waters in the 1980s," Oslo, Norway: International Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2004).

[30] See, for example, "More Russian Fighters from Private 'Wagner Group' Die in Syria," *Moscow Times*, March 22, 2017; Leonid Bershidsky, "Putin Wants to Win, But Not at All Costs," *Bloomberg Opinion*, December 6, 2017; and Sarah Fainberg, *Russian Spetsnaz, Contractors and Volunteers in the Syrian Conflict*, Russie.Nei.Visions Policy Paper No. 105, Paris: Institut Français des Relations Internationales, December 2017.

Conventional ground forces are Russia's most ubiquitous and perhaps most effective hostile-measures tool. Framed within Kennan's original MSW conceptualization, the physical presence of thousands of ground troops on NATO's eastern flank is a hostile measure. Russian Ground Forces battalion tactical groups backed by an array of missiles, aircraft, and artillery convey a powerful if only prospective threat. Conventional force training exercises, such as Kavkaz 2008 and Zapad 2017, serve multiple purposes beyond training: They signal a threat; they provide cover for hostile measures, including information and electronic warfare operations, with a real impact on nearby NATO capabilities; and they provide cover for special operations and other intelligence collection activities.[31] It is not lost on Western analysts and leaders that Soviet and, later, Russian interventions in Eastern Europe (e.g., Czechoslovakia in 1968, Chechnya in 1999, Georgia in 2008) were typically preceded by large-scale ground force exercises involving tens or hundreds of thousands of troops.[32] Whether they are sitting in barracks or actively engaged, Russia's armed forces give political leaders a constant regional and limited global hostile-measures capability.

Russia's Strategic Application of Hostile Measures Is Consistent and Foreseeable

> Russian diplomacy has always succeeded when guided by realistic, pragmatic considerations and failed when dominated by imperial ideology and messianic ambitions.
>
> — Igor Ivanov, Russian foreign minister, 2001[33]

Russian strategic aggression has ebbed and flowed over time, changing with the rise, death, or retirement of aggressive leaders like Empress Catherine II and more passive, internally focused leaders in the late and immediate post-Soviet periods. Availability of resources, battlefield successes and failures, and international competition have all affected Russia's strategic outlook over time. Acknowledging the complex changes to Russian state strategy through history, it is still possible to make some useful generalizations. Russian strategic application of hostile measures can effectively be broken down into three major periods: (1) the pre-Soviet period to the Brezhnev Doctrine in 1968, (2) 1968 through the end of the Soviet Union, and (3) the post-Soviet era.

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[31] Dave Johnson, "ZAPAD 2017 and Euro-Atlantic Security," *NATO Review*, December 14, 2017. Also see the Zapad-related articles in the November 2017 issue of *OEWATCH* (U.S. Army, Foreign Military Studies Office, "Zapad: Views from the Neighborhood," *OEWATCH*, Vol. 7, No. 10, November 2017). For a short historical analysis, see Johan Norberg, *Training to Fight: Russia's Major Military Exercises 2011–2014*, Stockholm, Sweden: Swedish Defence Research Agency, December 2015, and Michael Kofman, "What to Expect When You're Expecting Zapad 2017," *War on the Rocks*, August 23, 2017.

[32] Alex P. Schmid, *Soviet Military Interventions Since 1945*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1985, p. 31; Olga Oliker, *Russia's Chechen Wars 1994–2000: Lessons from Urban Combat*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2001; Michael Orr, "Second Time Lucky? Evaluating Russian Performance in the Second Chechen War," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, March 8, 2000; Vicken Cheterian, "The August 2008 War in Georgia: From Ethnic Conflict to Border Wars," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 2009; George T. Donovan, Jr., *Russian Operational Art in the Russo-Georgian War of 2008*, thesis, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, 2009.

[33] Igor Ivanov, "The New Russian Identity: Innovation and Continuity in Russian Foreign Policy," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 2001, p. 8.

The first period was marked by Russian imperial expansionism and then communist revolutionary expansionism.[34] While the Soviet Union certainly continued its global activities after the late 1960s—most notably in Vietnam, Angola, Sudan, Syria, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan—the last two decades of the Soviet Union generated leaders who were increasingly concerned about maintaining existing gains, protecting interests in the near abroad, and preventing counterrevolutionary revanchism.[35] Even aggressive post-Soviet Russian leaders, like the long-serving Vladimir Putin, are not burdened by the internationalist demands of Russia's communist legacy. Russia's post-Soviet international strategy for applying hostile measures is unabashedly nonideological, transactional, and mostly focused on two basic and overarching objectives: Reduce threats to the state, and carefully build state influence and power wherever possible.[36] It pursues these objectives within practical resource constraints and with the overarching purpose of preserving a status quo that is deemed favorable to Russia.

These logical but rather generic strategic objectives may appear *astrategic* to Western observers: They are nonspecific and generally not circumscribed. In fact, this approach does constitute a strategy, albeit one that does not fit within a traditional Western paradigm. It is arguably clearer and more consistent—but not objectively more effective—than Western national strategies in the post-Soviet era. It is also a strategy tailor-made for hostile measures: It is primarily a gray zone approach to foreign policy; it requires a means of destabilization; and it both recommends and benefits from opacity, deception, and deniability. Finally, it is a strategy conceived and constituted of tactics, with a near-term and therefore limited vision. While Russia seeks great-power status, there is nothing great or grand about its strategy.

Continuity of the Brezhnev Doctrine and Limited Sovereignty

> The socialist states stand for strict respect for the sovereignty of all countries. We emphatically oppose interference in the affairs of any states, violations of its sovereignty. At the same time the establishment and defense of the sovereignty of [socialist states] is of particular significance for us communists.
>
> —Leonid Brezhnev, general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1968[37]

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[34] Whether or not this ideological expansionism was truly ideological in nature is up for debate. For example, Alex P. Schmid argues that Stalin was more concerned with controlling other countries than with propagating communist ideology: "Control was the key" (Schmid, 1985, p. 16). There is also more than sufficient evidence of the motivating and channeling value of communist ideology in Soviet military and political strategy. The intensity of the Sino-Soviet struggle to dominate communist discourse is certainly a manifestation of the import of communist ideology, whether or not it was applied cynically to achieve geopolitical control.

[35] See Schmid, 1985, for a description of Soviet interventions between 1945 and the early 1980s. Also see Stephen T. Hosmer and Thomas W. Wolfe, *Soviet Policy and Practice Toward Third World Conflicts*, Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1983.

[36] See, for example, RAND's analysis of contemporary Russian strategy in the Middle East: James Sladden, Becca Wasser, Ben Connable, and Sarah Grand-Clement, *Russian Strategy in the Middle East*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, PE-236-RC, 2017. Also see Dmitri Trenin, *What Is Russia Up to in the Middle East?* Medford, Mass.: Polity Press, 2018.

[37] Quoted in Stephen G. Glazer, "The Brezhnev Doctrine," *International Lawyer*, Vol. 5, No. 1, January 1971, p. 169. Also see Glenn R. Chafetz, *Gorbachev, Reform, and the Brezhnev Doctrine: Soviet Policy Toward Eastern Europe, 1985–1990*, Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1983, and Robert A. Jones, *The Soviet Concept of 'Limited Sovereignty' from Lenin to Gorbachev: The Brezhnev Doctrine*, New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1990.

While Russia's current approach to hostile-measures use is generally nonideological and Russian leaders no longer bear the self-imposed responsibility for the global defense of socialism, justifications that underwrite the use of hostile measures are effectively unchanged from at least the late 1960s.[38] The quoted 1968 speech by Leonid Brezhnev, an article in *Pravda*, and two speeches by then–Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko were interpreted by some Western observers as a new doctrine, dubbed the Brezhnev Doctrine.[39] Soviet Russia would ostensibly seek to preserve the international status quo and respect the boundaries of nonhostile, nonsocialist states, but it reserved the right to intervene in existing socialist states to ensure their adherence to communist doctrine. This signaled a shift from the Khrushchev-era policy that generally allowed Warsaw Pact states to pursue semi-independent paths to socialism. No longer would the Soviet Union feel compelled to request a pro forma invitation to execute a military intervention. Soviet military hostile measures in Czechoslovakia in 1968 marked a clear departure from the relatively more officious start to the intervention in Hungary in 1956. Under the Brezhnev Doctrine, Russia claimed both responsibility and authority to prevent counterrevolutionary behavior and Western encroachment into the Soviet sphere.[40]

U.S. Department of State foreign policy analyst Matthew J. Ouimet describes how Soviet responsibility for socialist stability surged and then retreated between 1968 and the late 1980s as strategic failures mounted, resources dwindled, and leadership evolved.[41] Under General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet Union had all but abandoned its counterrevolutionary interventionism. But the doctrinal justification for action—the idea that Russia had the *authority* to intervene to maintain a pro-Russia status quo and prevent Western encroachment—was never effectively retracted. Remove the ideological justification of global socialism, and shrink the geographic space accordingly, and the precepts of the Brezhnev Doctrine look remarkably like Russia's more recent post-Soviet strategy.[42] Russia is a great power that seeks to preserve the international status quo. It generally respects the physical boundaries of states that do not affect Russian security, even as it pursues various political interests in hostile and nonhostile ways around the world.[43] But Russian leaders reserve the right to intervene as needed in

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[38] RAND's Benjamin Lambeth makes a strong argument for practical continuity in Soviet military doctrine and strategic thought (Benjamin S. Lambeth, *How to Think About Soviet Military Doctrine*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, P-5939, February 1978).

[39] Helmut Schmidt, "The Brezhnev Doctrine," *Survival*, Vol. 11, No. 10, 1969; Glazer, 1971; Chafetz, 1983; Jones, 1990. Sections of text from the Pravda article can be found in Jaromir Navratil, ed., *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Document Reader*, Budapest, Hungary: Central European University Press, 1998, p. 504.

[40] For a detailed analysis of the Brezhnev Doctrine, see Matthew J. Ouimet, *The Rise and Fall of the Brezhnev Doctrine in Soviet Foreign Policy*, Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2003. Ouimet details both the history of the doctrine and its relative collapse during the Gorbachev era, but he does not examine the post-Soviet era in detail.

[41] Ouimet, 2003.

[42] This does not discount the often-expansive language used to describe Russian imperialist aims. Our argument for a more consistent focus on the status quo centers on the longitudinal application of Russian strategic thought rather than on sometimes-grandiose policy statements from the tsarist through mid-Soviet periods. For an analysis of the evolution of strategic thought, see Elena Morenkova Perrier, *The Key Principles of Russian Strategic Thinking*, Paris: Institute for Strategic Research of the Ecole Militaire, 2014; CIA, *Soviet Military Theory: Structure and Significance*, Langley, Va.: National Foreign Assessment Center, October 1979.

[43] See Radin and Reach, 2017, pp. 90–91, for a brief comparative analysis of Russian and U.S. perspectives on intervention in the post-Soviet era.

states that most affect Russian international interests, and particularly in former Soviet states adjacent to its border.[44]

Resource Constraints and Restraints

> There is . . . a spectrum of 'greatness' along which Russia can place itself. Although Russia will attempt to situate itself as far along the spectrum as it can afford, at present it is placed quite modestly. Its economic autonomy is tenuous. . . . Its control over its claimed sphere of influence is limited, certainly when compared to Soviet and even Tsarist times.
>
> — Stephen Fortescue, Lowy Institute, 2017[45]

> Russia is a wedged bear in a great tightness.
>
> — Sherman Garnett, expert on Russian foreign and security policy, 1997[46]

The availability of resources certainly affected the viability of the Brezhnev Doctrine, and resource constraints remain relevant today. While some analyses suggest otherwise, Russian strategic aggression has always been resource-constrained.[47] Mid–Soviet period policy under General Secretary Joseph Stalin was more expansionist than normal, and Russian strategic behavior was more restrictive than normal as the Soviet Union faded under Gorbachev, as well as in the immediate post-Soviet period under President Boris Yeltsin.[48] This speaks directly to the current situation: Although the Russian economy is challenged by sanctions, stagnation, and unpredictable oil prices, it is relatively strong compared with the immediate post-Soviet period.[49] This strength has allowed Putin to be more aggressive in developing hostile-measures capabilities and applying them abroad. Prospective future resource constraints would therefore be likely to slow Russian aggression in the gray zone and reduce Russia's capacity to employ hostile measures during high-order war. Whether or not a Gorbachev-like figure follows Putin, resources will continue to have substantial impact on Russia's behavior.

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[44] Jiri Valenta makes this argument in the context of the Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan interventions (Jiri Valenta, "From Prague to Kabul: The Soviet Style of Invasion," *International Security*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Fall 1980). Also see Skak, 2016. It is always worth referring back to some of the canonical theoretical material on intervention to put these broader issues into perspective. One accessible example is Hans J. Morgenthau, "To Intervene or Not to Intervene," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 45, No. 3, April 1967.

[45] Stephen Fortescue, *Can Russia Afford to Be a Great Power?* Sydney, Australia: Lowy Institute for International Policy, June 2017, p. 2.

[46] Sherman Garnett, "Russia's Illusory Ambitions," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 2, March–April 1997, p. 76.

[47] See the literature review in Chapter One for references to some of these less-judicious analyses.

[48] See, for example, David M. Glantz, "Stalin's Strategic Intentions, 1941–1945: Soviet Military Operations as Indicators of Stalin's Postwar Territorial Ambitions," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 2014; Chafetz, 1983; and R. Hyland Phillips and Jeffrey I. Sands, "Reasonable Sufficiency and Soviet Conventional Defense: A Research Note," *International Security*, Vol. 13, No. 2, Fall 1988.

[49] See, for example, World Bank, *Russia's Recovery: How Strong Are Its Shoots?* Washington, D.C., November 2017, and Andrew E. Kramer, "Rising Oil Prices Buoy Russia's Economy, Despite Sanctions," *New York Times*, January 18, 2018.

The Freeing and Limiting Absence of Supernational Ideology

> Even though Russia does have an emergent ideology that lays heavy rhetoric on national distinctiveness, cultural-historical differences from the West play second fiddle to pure pragmatism. Moreover, this ideology is vague in the extreme.
>
> — Luke March, University of Edinburgh, 2012[50]

Russian neo-nationalism might be viewed as an ideological tool for international influence. Neo-nationalism is a powerful organizing principle, and it has striking parallels in places like Hungary. But we find that Russian neo-nationalism, specifically, is more useful as an internally focused tool than an international motivator. Its influence on policy pales in comparison to the motivating and constraining power of international communism.[51] Excepting the role and value of Russian neo-nationalism, Putin's foreign policy is practicably nonideological.[52] A nonideological strategy arguably gives Russia considerable advantage in the gray zone and is a better fit for the Russian state and for strategic culture than communist internationalism. Igor Ivanov's commentary on the relative success and failure of Russian grand strategy over time—that it is most successful when it is realistic and pragmatic and least successful when it is driven by ideology—appears to hold true. The preferred "center rest" position for Russian strategic thought lies in pragmatic defense of the status quo; this was evident in Ivanov's own 2003 military doctrine and reform plan.[53] It follows that, if there is indeed a fairly consistent Russian grand strategy, it confers consistency to Russian strategic application of hostile measures. Russia's ability to engage successfully with competing ethnosectarian groups and political entities in the Middle East—for example, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Lebanese Hezbollah, and Iran simultaneously—is emblematic of this essential pragmatism.[54]

However, a nonideological international strategy is also unlikely to generate favorable and consistent long-term change or to provide Russia with a significant global advantage. Even if an internationalist political ideology were ultimately ill fitting for Russia, Soviet leaders from 1917 to 1991 made tremendous strategic progress toward advancing global communism. In less than a century of existence, the Soviet Union led an international movement that spread through parts of Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and, if one counts the communist political movements in the United States, Mexico, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, every populated continent on Earth. Communism gave voice to revolutionaries as colonialism disintegrated, in turn providing significant political, social, economic, and military leverage to the Soviet state. Communist ideology was a powerful geopolitical tool for Soviet leaders. Arguably,

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[50] Luke March, "Nationalism for Export? The Domestic and Foreign Policy Implications of the New 'Russian Idea,'" *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 64, No. 3, 2012, p. 421. Also see Natalia Morozova, "Geopolitics, Eurasianism and Russian Foreign Policy Under Putin," *Geopolitics*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2009, and Bobo Lo, *Russian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era: Reality, Illusion, and Mythmaking*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

[51] See March, 2012, and Lo, 2002, for citations reflecting a range of alternative arguments and interpretations.

[52] For insight into the ways this nonideological approach applies internally, see Maxim Trudolyubov, "A Guide to Getting Along in Putin's Russia," *New York Times*, April 16, 2018.

[53] This 2003 Ministry of Defense plan was nicknamed for Minister Ivanov. For analysis of the Ivanov Doctrine, see Matthew Bouldin, "The Ivanov Doctrine and Military Reform: Reasserting Stability in Russia," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 2004.

[54] See Trenin, 2018.

it constituted the core of Soviet power, even as it overheated the state and contributed to its eventual collapse.

Today's Russian state cannot hope to recapture the great power status of the Soviet Union without a corresponding supernational organizing principle. But ideology presents a Catch-22: It creates opportunities for greatness while demanding the kind of impractical policies that fed Soviet ruin. Ivanov's preferred nonideological course limits what can be achieved. Few reasonable alternatives exist. It is unlikely that Russia will be able to translate pro-Russia nationalism into a comparable global movement, and Russian leaders do not presently seek to revive communism.[55] Therefore, the success of Russia's nonideological strategy amounts to little more than ephemeral, transactional, and mostly tactical incrementalism.

A Brief Note on the So-Called Gerasimov Doctrine

> The open use of forces—often under the guise of peacekeeping and crisis regulation—is resorted to only at a certain stage, primarily for the achievement of final success in the conflict.
>
> — Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov, 2013[56]

> Gerasimov's article is not proposing a new Russian way of warfare or a hybrid war, as has been stated in the West.
>
> — Charles K. Bartles, Russia analyst, U.S. Army Foreign Military Studies Office, 2016[57]

Some analysts have interpreted Gerasimov's 2013 article as describing a new way of Russian warfare.[58] However, Charles Bartles and many others have argued that it merely presented Gerasimov's perceptions of the changing character of warfare—that it reflected Russia's interpretation of evolving Western approaches to warfare, not new Russian practice. This kind of explanatory, interpretive analysis is common in official Soviet and Russian military publications. Russian military writers have long sought to describe patterns in Western military practice to frame an argument for internal institutional change or to defend a status quo position. This approach is part and parcel of the Soviet and now Russian military scientific method. Gerasimov's style suggests the latent effects of a Soviet-era writing style shaped by the interwoven and sometimes metronomic dynamism of the Marxist-Leninist dialectic, or the Russian military's interpretation of it.[59] A translation of the 1962 Soviet military doctrine provides

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[55] See, for example, Masha Lipman, "Why Putin Won't Be Marking the Hundredth Anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution," *New Yorker*, November 3, 2017.

[56] Valery Gerasimov, "ценность науки в предвидении" ["The Value of Science in Prediction"], Военно-промышленный курьер [*Military-Industrial Kurier*], February 27, 2013.

[57] Bartles, 2016, p. 37.

[58] McKew and Maniatis, 2014; Peter Pomerantsev, 2015; McKew, 2017. For alternative positions, see Freier, 2016; Renz and Smith, 2016; Giles, 2016; and, according to our interpretation of his work, Dmitry (Dima) Adamsky, *Cross-Domain Coercion: The Current Russian Art of Strategy*, Proliferation Papers No. 54, Paris: Institut Français des Relations Internationales, November 2015.

[59] In very basic terms, Marxist-Leninist dialectical materialism holds that theories of practice must be periodically challenged, evolution and change are constant, all things are inherently connected and balanced, and phenomena are often best examined by comparison of polar dichotomous positions. Russian military writers used the scientific aspects of dialectic

an excellent comparative example. Over more than 400 pages of text, then-Marshal Vasily Sokolovsky switches between descriptions of Western military theory and practice and the recommended Soviet response.[60] In many places, it is difficult to distinguish between the two, just as it was in Gerasimov's article.

As we argued in 2016, and as Bartles and many others have argued since 2013, there is no new Russian way of warfare, and there is no new Russian concept for applying hostile measures.[61] Instead, Western analysts are merely more aware of long-standing Russian practice. That practice has accelerated under Putin's leadership, backed by a sufficiently strong Russian economy. The only consistency in the present equation is long-standing Russian practice.

Application of Hostile Measures Is Often Masked, Clandestine, or Covert

> [There is a] distinctly Soviet outlook on life and methodology of dealing with the world which has, over time, exhibited tendencies towards hypervigilance, multiple-tier awareness, risk aversion, ambiguity and deviousness in relationships and behavior, and a deep-felt need for control, often of a reflexive nature.
>
> — Diane Chotikul, researcher, Naval Postgraduate School, 1986[62]

Chotikul's 1986 observations are still useful as they apply to the Soviet state and modern Russia. Tactics to further Russian strategy were and are often purposefully masked, intentionally misleading, and clandestine or covert and therefore sometimes difficult to identify as they unfold.[63] Active measures are almost always clandestine or covert and rarely executed without a mask of misattribution. Russia typically applies hostile measures and, routinely, its active measures with the intent of deniability. Planning typically includes long-standardized considerations for *maskirovka* (camouflage and deception), *dezinformatsiya* (disinformation), and *refleksivnoe upravlenie* (reflexive control).

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materialism as a foundation for understanding and improving military science. See James J. Schneider, "The Origins of Soviet Military Science," *Journal of Soviet Military Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 4, 1989; Alexander Spirkin, *Dialectical Materialism*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1983; Frederick Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, 1925; Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, "On the Question of Dialectics," *Collected Works*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972; T. I. Oizerman, *The Main Trends in Philosophy: A Theoretical Analysis of the History of Philosophy*, H. Campbell Creighton, trans., Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1988; Dale R. Herspring, "Nikolay Ogarkov and the Scientific-Technical Revolution in Soviet Military Affairs," *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1987; and Artemy Magun, "The Intellectual Heritage of the 1917 Revolution: Reflection and Negativity," *Constellations*, Vol. 24, No. 4, December 2017.

[60] In all likelihood, Sokolovsky's staff wrote the majority of the document.

[61] Connable et al., 2016.

[62] Diane Chotikul, *The Soviet Theory of Reflexive Control in Historical and Psychological Perspective: A Preliminary Study*, Monterey, Calif.: Naval Postgraduate School, July 1986, p. 93.

[63] In general terms, clandestine operations are intended to be hidden while covert operations are both hidden and deniable. Covert operations are generally riskier and rarer than clandestine operations.

Maskirovka: *An Institutionalized Practice of Deception, Within Limits*

> The concept of *maskirovka* as defined by the Soviets encompasses a diverse spectrum of stratagems employed to warp the enemy's view of Soviet positions, designs and missions, and to alter the perceptions of their own side and their clients as well.
>
> — Roger Beaumont, defense analyst, 1982[64]

Maskirovka is both a general tactical approach and a practical measure: Russian political, intelligence, and military leaders who guide the use of hostile measures consider camouflage and deception central to operational planning and apply specific techniques, such as misattribution, intensive secrecy, and proxies, to this end.[65] All these approaches fit within a state paradigm for applying hostile measures that is more than a century old. Roger Beaumont recounted the history and the Soviet military scientific approach behind *maskirovka*, explaining its applications at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war.[66] But *maskirovka* existed in Soviet practice beyond the armed forces, and that continues to be the case in Russian practice today. It is a general, deeply institutionalized approach to government activity that emerged from the tight confines of the Soviet autocracy. In other words, it is an inherently opaque approach to government behavior and international activity that matches what some believe to be a long-standing and even broader institutional preference for opacity in all things.[67] This generalized secrecy feeds into what theorist and historian Isaiah Berlin described as the limited ability of Western observers to understand Russian thinking and behavior:

> Western liberals are apt to find the attitudes and behavior of former Communists opaque in a way that can distort their responses in potentially dangerous ways.[68]

Practices of concealment and deception are institutionalized in state practice, but it is possible to read too much into official texts. No military or intelligence organization ever fully realizes its doctrinal aspirations. Russian officials could not possibly apply *maskirovka* everywhere, all the time, without exception or failure. For the purposes of understanding, deterring, preventing, and countering Russian hostile measures, it is sufficient to accept that hostile measures are routinely camouflaged while remaining skeptical of the more dramatic claims of Russian competence. It is also worth keeping in mind Beaumont's observation about the value of Russian deception activities:

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[64] Roger Beaumont, *Maskirovka: Soviet Camouflage, Concealment and Deception*, College Station, Tex.: Center for Strategic Technology, Texas A&M University, November 1982, p. 3.

[65] Beaumont, 1982.

[66] Beaumont, 1982; Kux, 2005; Rid, 2017; Walters, 1988; James Q. Roberts, *Maskirovka 2.0: Hybrid Threat, Hybrid Response*, Tampa, Fla.: Joint Special Operations University Press, 2015; Timothy C. Shea, "Post-Soviet Maskirovka, Cold War Nostalgia, and Peacetime Engagement," *Military Review*, Vol. 82, No. 3, May–June 2002.

[67] The degree to which this preference for opacity extends into Russian society is debatable. As Gary M. Hamburg argues, this debate is best articulated between the writings of Andrzej Walicki and Isaiah Berlin (Gary M. Hamburg, "Andrzej Walicki, Isaiah Berlin and the Writing of Russian History During the Cold War," *Dialogue and Universalism*, Vol. 16, Nos. 1–2, 2006; also see Andrzej Walicki, "Russian Social Thought: An Introduction to the Intellectual History of Nineteenth-Century Russia," *Russian Review*, Vol. 36, No. 1, January 1977; Isaiah Berlin, *The Soviet Mind: Russian Culture Under Communism*, Henry Hardy, ed., reissued edition, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2016; and Isaiah Berlin, "The Silence in Russian Culture," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 36, No. 1, October 1957).

[68] Berlin, 2016, p. 175. Note that, in the same sentence, Berlin goes on to suggest that this is a bidirectional problem.

> There is much to be gained by appearing to be crafty and deceptive. Even if one is aware of such a predisposition, a posture of craftiness enhances the anxiety of an opponent.[69]

In some readings, *maskirovka* is an overarching approach that includes what are termed *lesser tactics*, including disinformation and reflexive control. It might be more useful to simply think of these deception and influence measures as complementary.

Dezinformatsiya *and* Refleksivnoe Upravlenie

> We prefer to ignore the lessons of history, which have shown repeatedly the vital strategic and tactical function of propaganda at decisive periods in the progress of civilization. This was realized by the Communist movement from Lenin's earliest days.
>
> — John Clews, expert on communist propaganda, 1964[70]

Dezinformatsiya, or disinformation, is the practice of misinforming or misleading adversaries (and others) with false information, typically to slow, degrade, or stop effective responses to an associated Russian activity, such as sabotage, cyberattack, or limited military incursion. Disinformation is primarily an accompanying measure rather than a stand-alone tactic.[71] For example, in its efforts to manipulate the 2016 U.S. elections, Russia used a combination of disinformation, computer hacking, and technical cyberattacks on U.S. voting networks and machines.[72] In our case studies, disinformation is one of Russia's go-to hostile measures, but not necessarily its most potent.[73]

Refleksivnoe upravlenie, reflexive control, is a Soviet-era tactical theory that seeks to alter how adversaries perceive events and shape their subsequent responses and behaviors.[74] Reflexive control is typically accomplished through *dezinformatsiya* and guarded by *maskirovka*, but it can also be achieved with overt high-tempo military actions designed to shock the enemy military command system.[75] Although reflexive control draws on long-standing Russian theory and has been woven into Russian military and policy practice, its potency and effects should not be overstated. As political scientist Maria Snegovaya and others have argued, by simply increasing awareness of the Russian deception threat, NATO can reduce the vulnerabilities that John Clews lamented in *Communist Propaganda Techniques*.[76] Awareness of the Russian threat and Russian intentions will help NATO remove one of the central preconditions necessary for successful reflexive-control operations: preexisting vulnerabilities to manipulation.

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[69] Beaumont, 1982, p. 21.

[70] John C. Clews, *Communist Propaganda Techniques*, New York: Praeger, 1964, p. 12.

[71] Kux, 2005.

[72] Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections*, Washington, D.C., January 6, 2017.

[73] For greater detail, we recommend our colleagues' work on Russian disinformation: Christopher Paul and Miriam Matthews, *The Russian "Firehose of Falsehood" Propaganda Model: Why It Might Work and Options to Counter It*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, PE-198-OSD, 2016.

[74] Timothy Thomas, "Russia's Reflexive Control Theory and the Military," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2004; Chotikul, 1986; Snegovaya, 2015.

[75] Thomas, 2004, pp. 244–245.

[76] Snegovaya, 2015, p. 21; Clews, 1964, p. 12.

But NATO leaders must also keep in mind Russia expert Timothy Thomas's observation that the "chief task of reflexive control is to locate the weak link of the filter, and exploit it."[77] Russian leaders are adept at identifying weak links. Again, a moderated appreciation for Russian expertise is warranted.

Weaknesses Will Be Ruthlessly Exploited and Strength Will Generally Be Avoided

> Push with the bayonet. . . . If you meet steel, stop; if you meet flesh, proceed.
>
> — Attributed to Lenin[78]

This oft-cited but perhaps misattributed statement by Vladimir Lenin best describes Russia's approach to hostile measures: Russian leaders have used and continue to use hostile measures most aggressively and effectively against weak states, where NATO is least unified and present, and where the alliance's capabilities to counter hostile measures are lowest. They are particularly active in southeastern Europe, where NATO presence has historically been thin.[79] Russia is less effective against stronger, more unified, and more resilient targets in Western Europe. This speaks directly to one of the conclusions of this research: Russia can be deterred from using hostile measures and its efforts can be prevented or countered with appropriate action.

Opportunism in Practice: Aktivnost, Sluchainost, *and* Tvorchestvo

> Deceive the enemy. Attack from an unexpected direction at an unexpected time. . . . Use initiative to accomplish the mission. Be prepared to react effectively to deal with numerous contingencies. Think quickly and be decisive and resourceful in accomplishing the mission.
>
> —U.S. Army Field Manual 100-2-1, 1984,
> excerpt from a list of Soviet operational and tactical principles[80]

Russian leaders seek to apply three concepts to hostile-measures operations: *aktivnost* (continuity of effort), *sluchainost* (fortuitous or unexpected opportunity), and *tvorchestvo* (creativity).[81] All three of these terms had specific meaning in Soviet military doctrine and generally remain applicable today.[82] Collectively, they suggest an operational art akin to the one developed by interwar German military staff officers and later adopted as maneuver warfare by the U.S. military. While acknowledging an array of cultural and practical differences between the interwar

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[77] Thomas, 2017, p. 241.

[78] This paraphrase, generalized from multiple sources, is often attributed as a quote but without sufficiently defensible citation. It may be apocryphal, but it is important as an enduring cultural artifact.

[79] See, for example, Todd South, "Top General Says Balkans, Not Baltics the Most Vulnerable to Russian Influence," *Army Times*, March 8, 2018.

[80] Army Field Manual 100-2-1, *The Soviet Army Operations and Tactics*, Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, U.S. Department of the Army, July 26, 1984, p. 2-4.

[81] These are general descriptions and loose transliterations that might have alternative spellings. See Beaumont, 1982, for more complete definitions and descriptions of these Russian terms.

[82] These are conventional military terms that may or may not have been directly applied in writing to Russia's approach to hostile measures. The point of this section is to present an analytic parallel: The way Russia approaches conventional warfare theory is the same as the way it approaches hostile measures.

German, post-Vietnam U.S., and mid-century Soviet militaries, the most advanced operational concepts generated by these countries are similar: Military forces should pursue loosely directed, high-tempo operations, seeking out the enemy's *Schwerpunkt*, or center of gravity, using *Fingerspitzengefuehl*, or "fingertip feel," while operating under the distributed command approach of *Auftragstaktik*.[83] The intended approach is to create a military attack that flows like water, constantly and semi-independently exploiting gaps in the enemy's strategy, planning, and capabilities. This approach requires continuity of effort, fortuitous opportunity, unexpected action, and creativity. It can generally be summed up as aggressive opportunism.

Aktivnost, *sluchainost*, and *tvorchestvo* are impressive-sounding terms. Their loosely aligned German equivalents were equally impressive to the U.S. maneuver warfare set in the 1980s. Our case studies and the existing literature do show that Russian leaders apply hostile measures opportunistically, actively, sometimes unexpectedly, and with some creativity. *These three terms embody the overarching Russian government approach to hostile measures.* However, as we noted earlier, doctrinal concepts are not often fully realized in practice. The U.S. military never fully developed or executed the most ambitious aspects of its maneuver warfare operating concept.[84] There were few contemporaneous observers who would have described the Soviet Army as a loosely controlled, *tvorchestvo*-embracing, mission-command organization. Indeed, the U.S. Army suspected that Soviet officers viewed initiative as a closely watched process of normative behavioral template selection rather than free thinking. They were allowed to pick from a set menu of officially structured options to fit changing conditions.[85] The same unresolved dichotomy that applies to initiative-driven Russian intelligence operations applies to military and government initiative-driven opportunism: Adaptability is simultaneously encouraged and discouraged, often without logical deconfliction.[86] There also are limits on current Russian military, intelligence, and political tactical acumen. As with all other aspects of Russian hostile-measures capabilities, NATO observers should take a measured approach to assessing the degree to which Russia has realized, or might realize, its ambitious doctrinal concepts for operational fluidity.

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[83] Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr., "On the Verge of a New Era: The Marine Corps and Maneuver Warfare," *Marine Corps Gazette*, Vol. 77, No. 7, July 1993; William S. Lind, "Why the German Example?" *Marine Corps Gazette*, Vol. 66, No. 6, June 1982; G.S. Lauer, *Maneuver Warfare Theory: Creating a Tactically Unbalanced Fleet Marine Force?* Fort Leavenworth, Kan.: School of Advanced Military Studies, U.S. Army Command and Staff College, December 24, 1990; Jeffrey J. Lloyd, "Our Warfighting Philosophy," *Marine Corps Gazette*, Vol. 73, No. 11, November 1989.

[84] Andrew D. Walker, "An Alternative to Maneuver Warfare," *Marine Corps Gazette*, Vol. 75, No. 11, November 1991; Gary W. Anderson, "When Maneuver Fails," *Marine Corps Gazette*, Vol. 73, No. 4, April 1989; Michael S. Chmielewski, "Maybe It's Time to Reconsider Maneuver Warfare," *Marine Corps Gazette*, Vol. 86, No. 8, December 2002; Terry Terriff, "'Innovate or Die': Organizational Culture and the Origins of Maneuver Warfare in the United States Marine Corps," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 2006.

[85] See the quote from FM 100-2-1 at the beginning of the previous section.

[86] For example, in the U.S. Army's list of Soviet operational and tactical principles, initiative and quick thinking are encouraged alongside the admonition to maintain constant top-down command and control (Army Field Manual 100-2-1, 1984, p. 2-4).

Summary

Russia has not invented a new way of war. Recent Russian actions are instead a rather intensive, but—due to inevitable changes in available resources—probably impermanent, amplification of long-standing practice. The entirety of the Russian state, from the office of the president to the most remotely stationed consular officers, is culturally inclined and institutionally predisposed to applying hostile measures opportunistically, wherever and whenever doing so might gain an advantage for Russia or help preserve a favorable status quo. Russia applies these measures reactively when faced with a perceived threat or loss of influence. Although its actions are dangerous and must be addressed, there is nothing magical about Russian capabilities. Part of their success has been in convincing Western observers that it is far more capable and competent than the historical record suggests. However, as we note in Chapter Three, the cyber threat may offer one dangerous exception. The next chapter summarizes our historical case studies to help substantiate this point. It focuses on the gray zone and also looks forward to the prospects for Russian use of hostile measures in high-order war.

CHAPTER THREE

Gray Zone Cases and Actions During High-Order War

This chapter presents summaries of our five gray zone case studies and findings as they pertain to Russian hostile-measures options during high-order war. Detailed analyses of the cases can be found in Appendix B, which accompanies this report online.

A Note on How We Rated the Five Cases

In this chapter, we provide subject-matter expert ratings of the relative success or failure of Russian hostile measures in each case. These attributions—success, failure, or an unknown middle ground—represent analytic opinion rather than empirical fact. They are also assessed from a Western perspective rather than from the Russian perspective. We rated several Russian operations as failures. It is possible that Russian leaders or other Western analysts would view these same operations as successful.

The threshold design of our analysis is drawn from the collective literature on conflict assessment.[1] We set the following descriptive thresholds for success or failure in these cases:

- *Tactical:* Did Russian hostile measures achieve a desired *effect*? Did they slow, stop, or punish a perceived hostile action or gain Russia an immediate, tactical advantage in the target area?
- *Strategic:* Did the entirety of Russia's hostile measures—its collective tactics—clearly generate a favorable, long-term, strategic change? In these cases, was long-term Western influence stopped or rolled back, and did long-term Russian influence increase?

[1] See, for example, Ben Connable, *Embracing the Fog of War: Assessment and Metrics in Counterinsurgency*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-1086-DOD, 2011; Fred Charles Iklé, *Every War Must End*, rev. ed., New York: Columbia University Press, 2005; Scott Sigmund Gartner, *Strategic Assessment in War*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997; Gregory A. Daddis, *No Sure Victory: Measuring U.S. Army Effectiveness and Progress in the Vietnam War*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011; Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Uncertain "Metrics" of Afghanistan (and Iraq)*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 18, 2007; Ben Connable and Martin C. Libicki, *How Insurgencies End*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-965-MCIA, 2010; James Clancy and Chuck Corssett, "Measuring Effectiveness in Irregular Warfare," *Parameters*, Summer 2007; Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004; Sara Jane Meharg, *Measuring Effectiveness in Complex Operations: What Is Good Enough?* Calgary, Alberta: Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, October 2009; William S. Murray, "A Will to Measure," *Parameters*, Vol. 31, No. 3, Fall 2001; Jonathan J. Schroden, "Measures for Security in a Counterinsurgency," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 5, October 2009; Emily Mushen and Jonathan J. Schroden, *Are We Winning? A Brief History of Military Operations Assessment*, Arlington, Va.: CNA, September 2014.

While we can trace Russian behavior on a timeline, the literature on conflict assessment clearly shows that we cannot—and *should not*—seek to quantify the intrinsic value of any single measure or set of measures toward a fixed, quantitative threshold for tactical or strategic progress. This caution is particularly relevant to gray zone cases that lack the clearer outcomes generated by most traditional military operations and even some irregular wars. Ultimately, our assessments are a product of subject-matter expert analysis driven by the empirical research presented in Appendix B and summarized here.

Russia's Hostile Measures in the Gray Zone

Russia has not engaged in a full-scale high-order war with a near-peer competitor since the Soviet operation against the Japanese Imperial Army and its supporting forces in Manchuria in 1945. All of Russia's state-on-state hostile actions since World War II—including some rather intense military operations that fell just short of high-order war—have taken place in the gray zone. And they have been many. Table 3.1 lists a small sample of hostile measures that the Soviets applied during the Cold War. Note that these are singular examples from the respective cases; the Soviets applied multiple measures in sequence or in parallel in almost every case.

Existing literature thoroughly documents Soviet gray zone behavior. CIA archival material is particularly useful, and many of the other sources cited here provide ample background on this topic. Our intent is not to replicate existing work or present an exhaustive list of Russian operations. Instead, we sought to tease new and useful information out of existing cases to identify patterns in Russian behavior. If patterns can be identified, NATO analysts and leaders can more effectively forecast—and subsequently deter, prevent, or counter—Russian measures.

Table 3.1
Examples of Soviet Hostile Measures During the Cold War

Measure	Example
Assassination	1959: A Soviet intelligence officer assassinates Ukrainian dissident Stepan Bandera
Destabilization	~1981–1983: Cuba trains Central and South American insurgents at the Soviet Union's behest
Disinformation	1959–1986: National Voice of Iran broadcasts Soviet propaganda into Iran
	1983–1988: Operation Infektion, in which the Soviets use East Germans to blame the United States for AIDS
	1986: The Soviets spread rumors about CIA efforts to sabotage the summit of leaders of Non-Aligned Movement member countries in Harare, Zimbabwe
Proxy war	~1954–1975: The Soviet Union provides direct military and intelligence support to North Vietnam
	1975–1991: The Soviet Union directs and supports Cuban intervention in Angola, seizes control by proxy
Sabotage	1949: The Soviets create panic in Yugoslavia by launching sabotage operations from Bulgaria

SOURCES: CIA, *Tension Inside Yugoslavia; Countermeasures to Confirm Sabotage*, Washington, D.C., June 21, 1949; CIA, *Soviet Disinformation Campaign Aimed at Harare Nonaligned Summit*, Washington, D.C., August 19, 1986; CIA, *Cuban Capabilities to Destabilize Grenada*, Washington, D.C., November 9, 1983; CIA, *Soviet-Supported Destabilizing Activities in the Third World*, Washington, D.C., February 17, 1982; Thomas Boghardt, "Operation INFEKTION: Soviet Bloc Intelligence and Its AIDS Disinformation Campaign," *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 53, No. 4, December 2009; U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, *Soviet "Active Measures": Forgery, Disinformation, Political Operations*, Washington, D.C., October 1981; Hughes and Kislenko, 2017.

We used a modified version of the qualitative research method called *process tracing*. In its purest form, process tracing seeks to make causal inferences.[2] Because many of the Russian actions in question were clandestine or covert, we could not always clearly attribute responsibility for hostile measures. Short of seeking to establish causal inference, we pursued the common lesser-included objectives of detailed description and process sequencing: We described the cases in detail and in sequence, walking through the observed set of Russian behaviors in each case and then representing them graphically on a timeline.[3] We sought to create detailed descriptions of these cases to inform analysis of current events and to help set a baseline for prospective future studies. We applied this approach to five gray zone cases: Moldova, Georgia, Estonia, Ukraine, and Turkey. In each, Russia applied or continues to apply hostile measures to destabilize countries or to signal displeasure over behavior viewed as inimical to its interests.

Precedent: A Soviet Process for Using Hostile Measures to Control Eastern European States

There is ample historical precedent for the value of using a process-tracing approach to help understand current Russian hostile-measures operations. Although Russia *seeks* to apply free-flowing opportunism, its practices have often been structured, linear, and perhaps even path-dependent. Sovietologist Malcolm Mackintosh described a fairly consistent five-step sequential process for controlling Eastern European countries in the immediate post–World War II era.[4] First, the Soviets would back the establishment of a communist front movement. Next, they would force the merger of any fractured communist or socialist parties into a single bloc. Following consolidation, they would begin to isolate and undermine centrist and right-wing parties. With the opposition rendered ineffective, the Soviets would stage preordained elections and then sign treaties with the new regime. Finally, with power fully consolidated, the Soviets would purge the new party bloc of any perceived opposition or dissent.

Overview of Five Case Studies of Russian Use of Gray Zone Hostile Measures

In this section, we summarize each of our five cases, each of which is accompanied by a graphic representation of our process-tracing analysis. Each graphic depicts a timeline progressing from left to right. Historical events relevant to the case are presented along the top of the timeline to help anchor each Russian action in time. Observed Russian hostile measures are recorded along the bottom. Some measures were employed at a single point in time, while others were used over time. Continuing measures extend along the timeline from left to right. Each measure is color-coded to facilitate interpretation.

This chapter is purposefully brief, summarizing the case studies presented in Appendix B and highlighting the visual impact of the process-tracing approach. We cite sources only where we have contributed additional analysis beyond what is included in Appendix B. The map in Figure 3.1 shows our five case-study countries, which are all located in Eastern Europe and either adjacent to or one country removed from Russia's western border.

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[2] David Collier, "Understanding Process Tracing," *Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 44, No. 4, October 2011.

[3] See Appendix B, which accompanies this report online, for a detailed description of this approach.

[4] Malcolm Mackintosh, "Stalin's Policies Towards Eastern Europe, 1939–1948: The General Picture," in Thomas T. Hammond, ed., *The Anatomy of Communist Takeovers*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1975. This analysis is summarized in Schmid, 1985, p. 5.

Figure 3.1
Map of Case Countries

Moldova (1992–2016)

Moldova's eastern region of Transnistria declared its independence in September 1990. Moldova's central government ignored the claim and declared its own independence from the Soviet Union a year later. A brief war ensued in 1992 between Moldovan and Transnistrian forces, the latter supported by the Russian 14th Army. Russian military forces remained stationed in Transnistria after Moldovan independence, and a security zone was established along the line of conflict, policed by a tripartite peacekeeping force of Russian, Transnistrian, and Moldovan forces.

Russia's objectives in Moldova have been to maintain Russian influence and prevent the former Soviet republic from building strong alliances with the European Union and NATO. Russia's military presence in the frozen conflict over Transnistria allows it to threaten Moldova with internal destabilization and, possibly, territorial fragmentation. Moldova is highly dependent on Russia as an export market for its agricultural products, as a major source of foreign investment, as a job market for Moldovan workers, and as a provider of energy—particularly gas, which is needed to operate Moldovan electricity plants.

Russia has operated a continuous, long-running hostile-measures campaign against Moldova. We traced a mix of nine short- and long-term hostile measures applied against Moldova from 1992 through 2016:

1. forward stationing military forces in Transnistria that threaten Moldovan security
2. support for Moldovan communists and coercion of other political parties
3. saturation of Moldovan cable television with pro-Russia programming
4. cultural influence (e.g., engagements, religious affiliations) to influence opinion

5. periodic economic sanctions targeted at Moldovan light-industry products
6. restricting the mobility of the Moldovan labor force, thereby hindering employment
7. leveraging Transnistrian labor and industry to undermine the Moldovan economy
8. manipulating energy supplies, including cuts to vital natural gas in winter
9. applying compatriot policies, including issuing Russian passports to Transnistrians.

Operational intensity and focus have wavered over time, but some measures—including the military presence in neighboring Transnistria—have been in place without change for decades. Figure 3.2 presents a timeline of the Moldova case through 2016, the cutoff date of our research.

Learning from the Moldova Case Process

Russia's hostile-measures campaign in Moldova offers considerable opportunity for pattern tracing. As in other cases, as we will discuss, Russia employed both immediate and long-term hostile measures in Moldova. Immediate measures are targeted and appear intended to achieve specific, near-term tactical effects. Long-term measures appear intended to apply constant pressure against the target and to set a permanent change in the status quo. The two categories of hostile measures overlap to a large extent: Long-standing hostile measures give Russia the ability to "surge" at specific times or provide the terrain for more-aggressive discrete actions. The combinatory pattern of immediate and long-term measures appears to be typical of the Russian approach.

Russia has succeeded in executing hostile-measures tactics against Moldova for nearly three decades. However, this campaign of tactical successes has not generated strategic success. As of early 2019, Moldova was not on an official track toward NATO membership, but cooperation with NATO was improving.[5] Moldova also increased trade with the EU to offset its trade losses with Russia, increased energy imports from the West to offset lost imports from Russia, and increased military cooperation with the West in at least partial reaction to a fear of Russian intervention. In 2014, Moldova and the EU signed a formal agreement aimed at improving both political and economic cooperation. If Russia's primary objective was to keep Moldova in its sphere of influence and to prevent a westward shift in Moldovan alliances, it has thus far failed. *In fact, the entire long-running Russian hostile-measures operation appears to have backfired.* Constant existential threats, economic punishment, vitriolic diplomacy, and insidious manipulation of the Moldovan population were never matched by sufficient incentives that could have enticed Moldova's leaders or population in the opposite direction. In many ways, these results should have been foreseen. Russia might find ways to reverse this westward lean, but its efforts can best be described as a slow-burning, low-grade, and a mostly self-induced strategic failure.

Table 3.2 summarizes our evaluation of Russia's relative success in employing hostile measures against Moldova at the tactical and strategic levels. We rated this operation a tactical success and a strategic failure.

[5] NATO, "Relations with the Republic of Moldova," webpage, last updated October 12, 2018.

Figure 3.2
Moldova Case Timeline

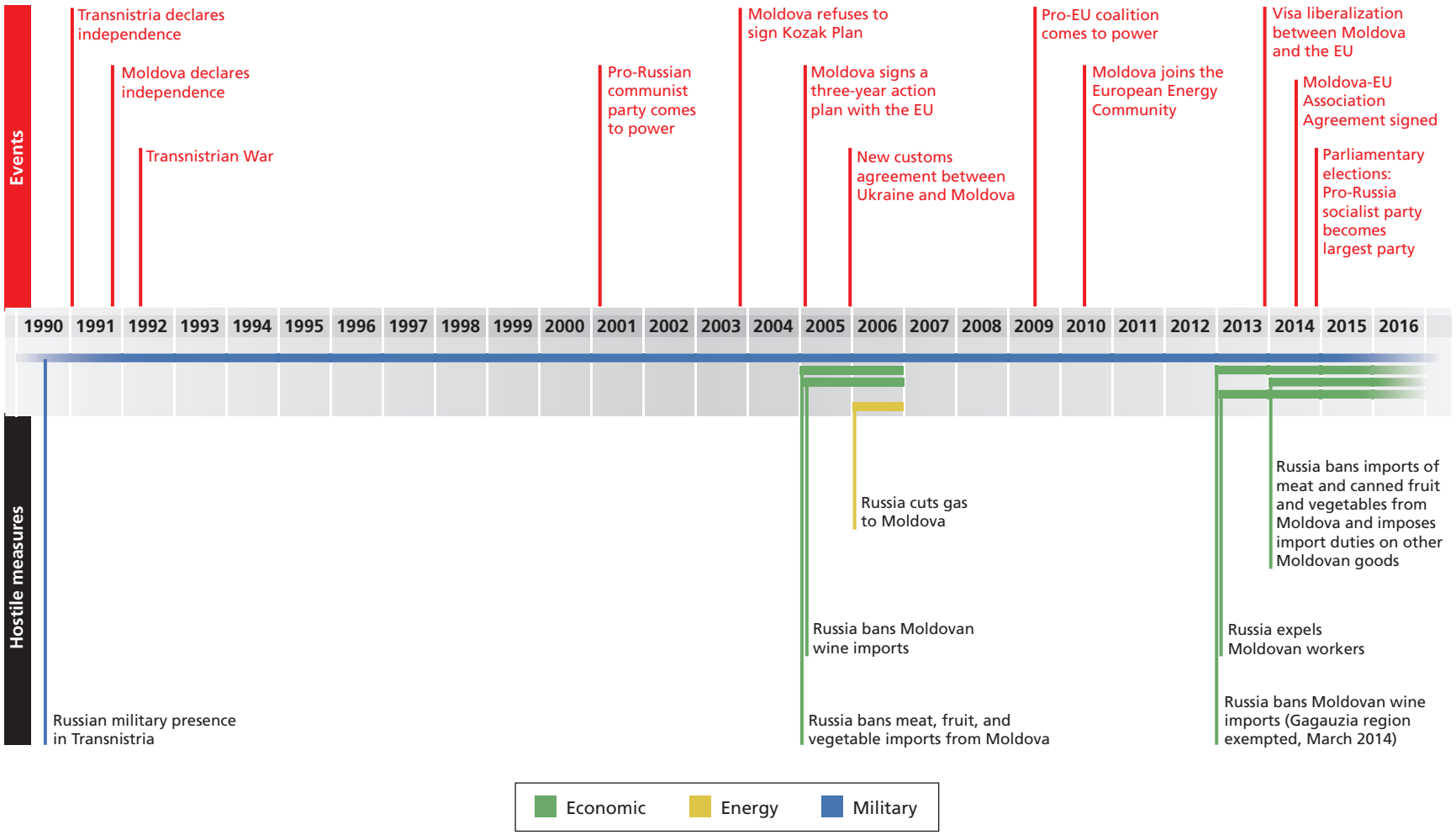

Table 3.2
Assessment of Russian Performance in the Moldova Case

Level of Action	Objectives	Results
Tactical	Threaten and destabilize Moldova	Success ◆
Strategic	Prevent Moldova from aligning with the West	Failure ◆

Georgia (2004–2012)

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Georgia has sought greater independence from Russia and Russia has worked to maintain its influence over Georgia and the South Caucasus. The relationship between the two countries has been overtly hostile since the 2003 Rose Revolution brought a pro-Western regime to power in Georgia. Some of the gravest points of disagreement have revolved around the status of the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and Georgia's aspirations to join the EU and NATO. Mikheil Saakashvili, president of Georgia from 2004 to 2013, is a Western-educated politician with an aggressively pro-Western agenda.

A five-day war for control of South Ossetia anchors this case study, but the process tracing addresses events and Russian hostile measures both before and after this event. The five-day war came only a few months after Georgia's application to the NATO membership action plan at the Bucharest summit in early April 2008. Russia's actions against Georgia continued well beyond the brief period of direct combat.

Russia had four objectives in this case: (1) keeping Georgia within its sphere of influence and preventing its accession to NATO, (2) maintaining control over South Ossetia and Abkhazia, (3) discouraging European leaders from pursuing energy policies that would have reduced dependence on Russia, and (4) signaling a clear threat to other former Soviet states to keep them within the Russian sphere of influence.[6]

We traced 12 Russian hostile measures in this case:

1. pressuring the Georgian energy sector with price gouging and alleged sabotage
2. applying trade sanctions and undermining Georgian international trade
3. suspending diplomatic relations
4. severing transportation and postal delivery services
5. expelling Georgian migrant workers from Russia
6. compatriot policies: issuing passports to South Ossetians and Abkhazians
7. directing Russian support to both South Ossetia and Abkhazia
8. shooting down a Georgian surveillance drone
9. deploying Russian military forces to the Georgian border
10. conducting cyberattacks, specifically distributed denial of service attacks
11. launching a concentrated media campaign supporting Russian military actions
12. officially recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

[6] Specifically, Russia sought to deter the West from building the Nabucco pipeline, which would have reduced Western dependence on Russian energy. See, for example, Jeffrey White, "Georgia-Russia Conflict Shows EU's Energy Vulnerability," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 15, 2008.

Note that measures 10 and 11 were applied during open military conflict between Russia and Georgia in early August 2008. Russia's hostile-measures campaign flowed across the period of open combat and increased temporarily to support combat operations.

Figure 3.4 presents the timeline for the Georgia case. Note that several Russian measures were ongoing at the end of the case-study period, and some continued (with varying degrees of intensity) as this report was being prepared in early 2019.

Learning from the Georgia Case Process

Russia succeeded in executing its tactical campaign and achieving what might be termed an operational objective of stopping immediate Georgian accession to NATO. By 2013, Saakashvili had been removed from office and replaced (temporarily) by a pro-Russia leader. Russia also established a frozen ethno-territorial conflict in Abkhazia and South Ossetia that has made Georgia less attractive for NATO accession; NATO membership might carry with it a quick spiral to defensive actions in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. Russia delivered a crushing military defeat to Georgia, eliminating its ambitions to control the breakaway republics, dampening public confidence, and instilling existential fear of Russian military intervention.

While Russia's tactical measures may have made NATO accession more difficult, its long-term strategy in Georgia appears to be failing. Relatively aggressive and consistent Western support likely helped Saakashvili stay in power for two presidential terms despite constant Russian pressure. Georgia had not joined NATO as of early 2019, but the United States has increased its support to the Georgian government. In 2009, the United States signed a strategic partnership agreement with Georgia, and since the end of the 2008 conflict, it has delivered hundreds of millions of dollars in direct support to develop Georgia's military and democratic governance.[7] U.S. objectives for Georgia are specifically to "increase its resilience against Russian pressure."[8] In 2014, NATO approved the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package and reconfirmed Georgia's eventual accession, stating that the package of initiatives was designed to "help Georgia advance in its preparations towards membership."[9] In August 2017, Vice President Mike Pence again reaffirmed U.S. support for Georgia:

> We are proud of our friendship and strategic partnership with the nation and the people of Georgia. . . . The United States supports Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. . . . Georgia's future is in the West.[10]

Then–Secretary of Defense James Mattis made similar remarks in late 2017.[11] In March 2018, Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili was invited to the NATO summit and met

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[7] U.S. Department of State, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, "U.S.-Georgia Strategic Partnership Commission," webpage, undated.

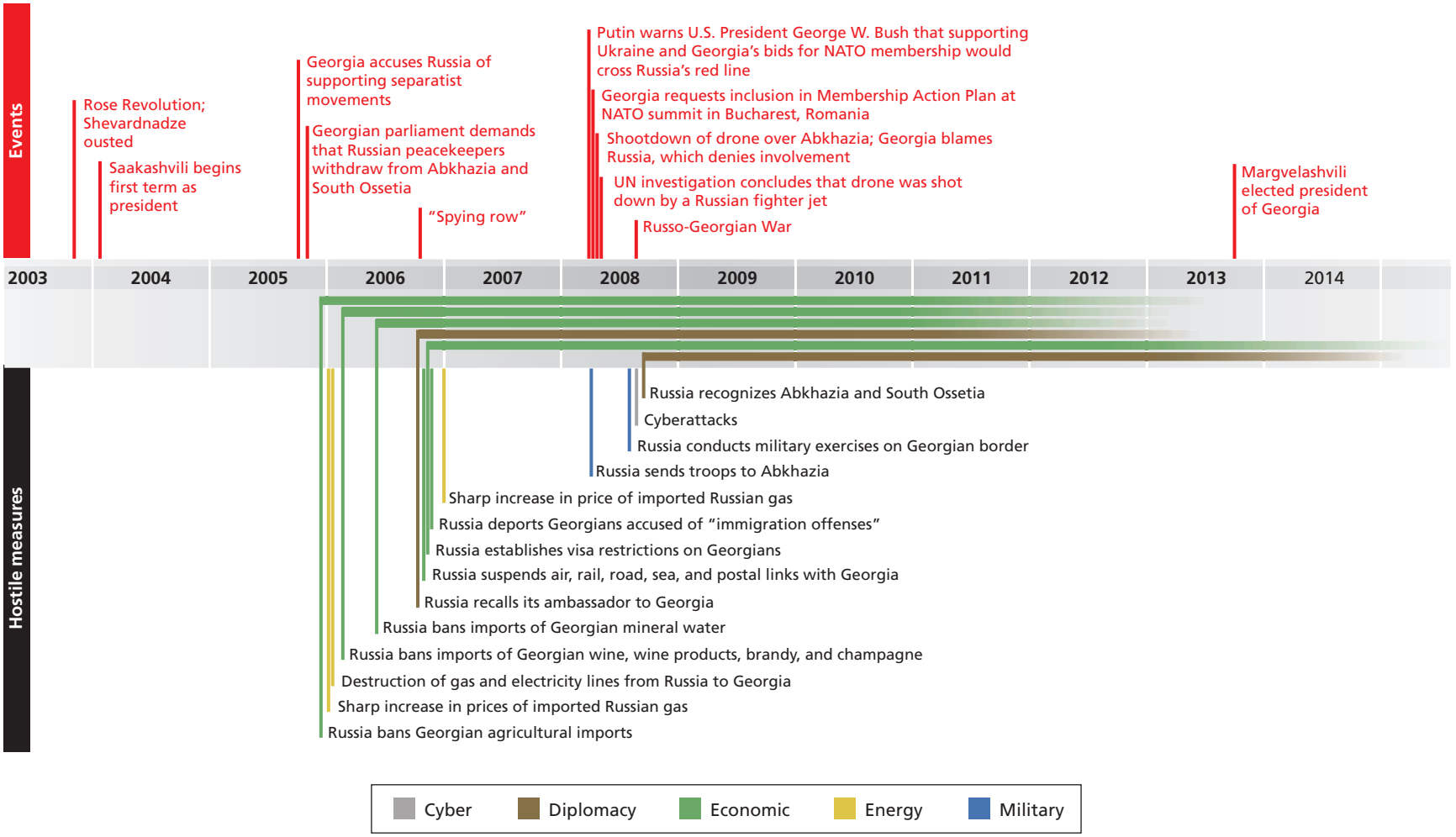
[8] U.S. Department of State, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, "Foreign Operations Assistance: Georgia," fact sheet, August 31, 2016.

[9] NATO, "NATO Enlargement and Open Door," fact sheet, July 2016b. Also see The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "Fact Sheet: U.S. and NATO Efforts in Support of NATO Partners, including Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova," Washington, D.C., July 9, 2016, and NATO, "Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP)," media backgrounder, February 2016.

[10] White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "Remarks by the Vice President and Georgian Prime Minister in a Joint Press Conference," Tblisi, Georgia, August 1, 2017.

[11] James N. Mattis, Secretary of Defense, "Remarks at Bilateral Meeting with Georgian Minister of Defense Izoria," transcript, Washington, D.C., November 13, 2017.

Figure 3.3
Georgia Case Timeline



with officials.[12] Continuing Western support for Georgia since 2008 may have deterred Russia from pursuing even more aggressive hostile measures.

Table 3.3 summarizes our analysis of Russia's relative success in Georgia at the tactical and strategic levels. With our noted reservations, we rated the operation a tactical success. Russia temporarily halted Georgia's accession into NATO, but it did not stop its westward shift or the increasing economic and military support provided by NATO. The Nabucco pipeline project was canceled, but it is not clear that Russian hostile measures led to that outcome.[13] At best, Russia delayed Georgia's westward shift, and at worst it may have solidified Georgian pro-Western sentiment. We rate this case a strategic wash.

Table 3.3
Assessment of Russian Performance in the Georgia Case

Level of Action	Objectives	Results
Tactical	Secure provinces, deter Nabucco pipeline	Success ◆
Strategic	Prevent Georgia from aligning with the West	Unclear ◆

Estonia (2006–2007)

This crisis evolved when the Estonian government chose to relocate a statue commemorating Soviet liberation of Estonia in World War II. Russia sought to prevent the relocation but also took the opportunity to pursue other objectives: (1) sustaining and increasing Russian influence in Estonia, particularly among its Russian and Russian-speaking populations; (2) deterring Estonian civilians from supporting westernization and, more directly, NATO; and (3) partially destabilizing Estonia to ensure its continuing vulnerability to Russian influence. We traced six hostile-measures tactics over the period of our case study:

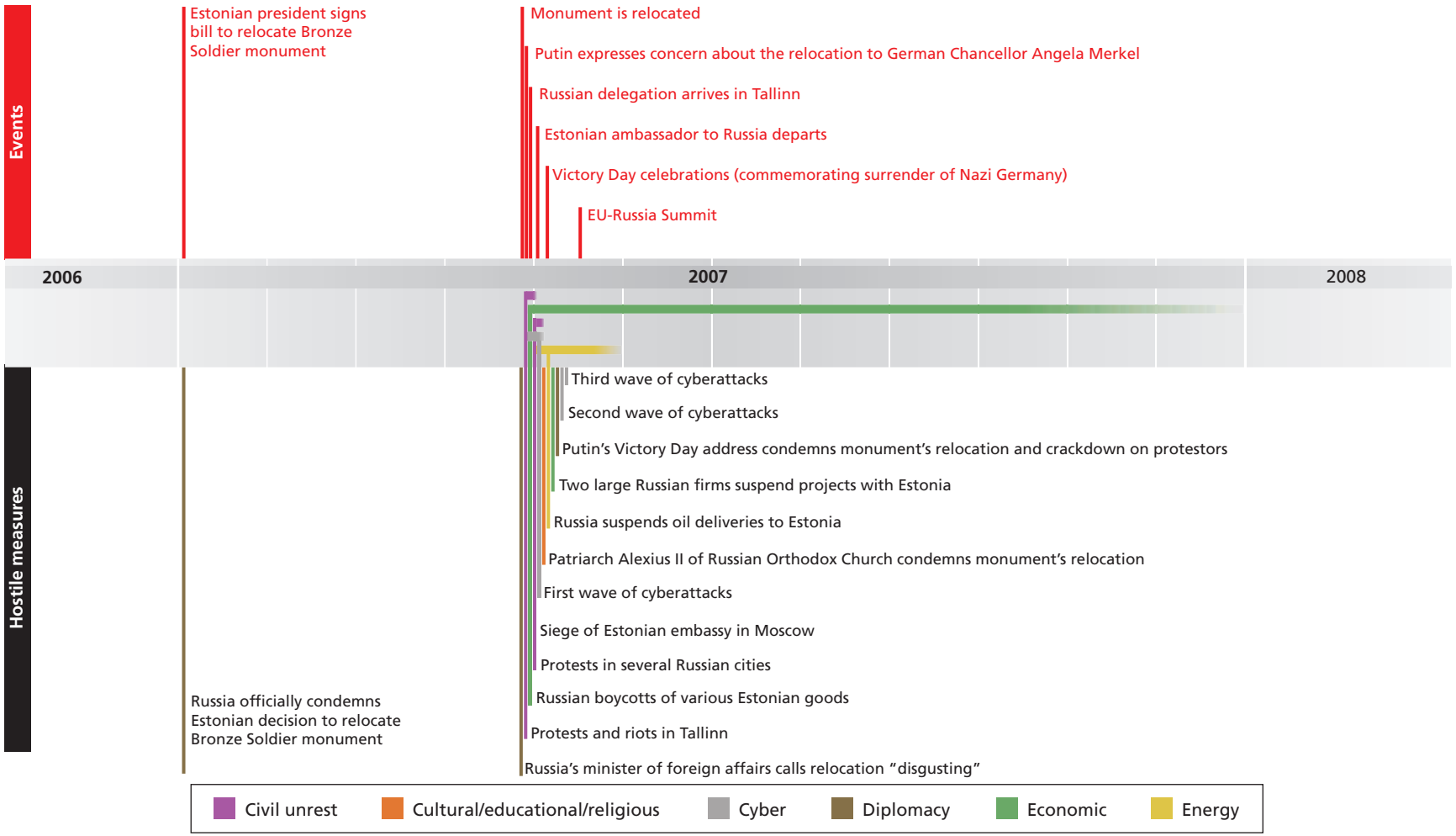
1. fomenting protests against the Estonian government using proxies
2. pressuring Estonian political leaders through public diplomacy actions condemning Estonian actions
3. applying indirect economic sanctions through Russian companies
4. facilitating a civil siege of the Estonian embassy in Moscow
5. conducting an aggressive anti-Estonia, pro-Russia media campaign
6. reportedly conducting cyberattacks against government and civil infrastructure.

Figure 3.4 presents the timeline for our Estonia case. In this case, the majority of events were clustered in early 2007, although boycotts continued through mid-2008.

[12] "Jens Stoltenberg Invites President Margvelashvili to NATO 2018 Brussels Summit," First Channel (Georgia), March 9, 2018. Also see Emily Tamkin, "An Interview with the President of NATO's Most Persistent Applicant," *Foreign Policy*, March 14, 2018.

[13] The pipeline project, which was to run from Turkey to Austria, linking with existing pipelines in Western Europe and to the east in Georgia, among other countries, was specifically designed to reduce European dependence on Russian natural gas. The question of Russian involvement is a highly complex issue and appears to be unresolved. See, for example, Morena Skalamera, "Revisiting the Nabucco Debacle: Myths and Realities," *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 65, No. 1, 2018, and Pavel K. Baev and Indra Øverland, "The South Stream Versus Nabucco Pipeline Race: Geopolitical and Economic (Ir)rationales and Political Stakes in Mega-Projects," *International Affairs*, Vol. 86, No. 5, 2010.

Figure 3.4
Estonia Case Timeline



Learning from the Estonia Case Process

This was a narrow, targeted, and apparently well-coordinated effort that was, for the most part, contained by both time and geography. As in the Moldova case, Russia successfully executed most of its tactical operations. For the process tracing, *maskirovka* made it difficult to attribute several of the measures. For example, the diplomatic offensive was overt, but the source of the cyberattacks was carefully hidden. We could draw reasonable conclusions about Russian influence in protests and the siege of the embassy. Process tracing in this case is clearly revealed in Figure 3.4: This was a targeted operation concentrating a series of immediate effects to achieve an immediate objective. Some actions continued after the period of our case study, although not with the same levels of intensity or coordination.

Russia successfully executed its hostile-measures tactics, but the operation failed. Russia did not succeed in its immediate objective of preventing the relocation of the statue. At best, this intense application of hostile measures instilled fear in the Estonian population and leadership: Russian actions served as a firm reminder to Estonia that Russia could interfere in its internal affairs at a moment's notice and with minimal risk. To some extent, Russia succeeded in undermining perceptions of Estonia's stability. However, even this successful intimidation undermined Russian strategic objectives in Europe. Since the Bronze Soldier incident, Estonian leaders have sought increasingly closer cooperation with the EU and NATO. As with Moldova, Russian hostility has pushed Estonia away rather than drawn it closer. Arguably, Russian gray zone aggression in Estonia activated a gradual awakening in NATO, helping to set the stage for current overt opposition to Russian aggression.

Table 3.3 summarizes our analysis of Russia's relative success at the tactical and strategic levels in Estonia. We rated this operation as both a tactical failure and a strategic failure.

Table 3.4
Assessment of Russian Performance in the Estonia Case

Level of Action	Objectives	Results
Tactical	Prevent relocation of the Bronze Soldier	Failure ◆
Strategic	Prevent Estonia from aligning with the West	Failure ◆

Ukraine (2014–2016)

Russian leaders have perceived their influence in Ukraine as pivotal to maintaining control over security policy in former Soviet states. Crimea and its strategically important port city, Sevastopol, provide a buffer against Western encroachment, and the peninsula has long been a domestic security concern for Russian leaders. As the pro-Russia Ukrainian government collapsed in early 2014 and the new government's interests shifted to the West, Russia saw gray zone operations as an appropriate and effective way to achieve its objectives while avoiding direct confrontation with NATO.

Russia has several likely objectives in Ukraine: (1) to preserve a pro-Russia status quo along its borders and prevent revolutionary behavior; (2) to restore Russia's position as a global power; (3) to prevent NATO and the EU from inching closer to Russia's borders; (4) to create a viable Eurasian Union that includes Ukraine; and (5) to weaken NATO. Hostile measures enabled Moscow to achieve a few of its objectives, primarily by increasing Russia's

global stature.[14] However, as of early 2019, it appeared that Russian hostile behavior may have unintentionally accelerated Ukraine's shift to the West. We traced nine Russian hostile measures applied against Ukraine beginning with the 2014 crisis; some of these continued at least into early 2019:

1. politically annexing the Crimean Peninsula
2. providing direct and indirect military support to separatists in eastern Ukraine
3. using irregular proxy forces in Crimea and eastern Ukraine
4. conducting snap military exercises and building up forces along the Ukrainian border
5. exploiting compatriots (ethnic Russians or Russian speakers in Ukraine)
6. engaging in media manipulation, pro-Russia public diplomacy, and cyberattacks
7. claiming legal justification for hostile measures
8. increasing energy prices to squeeze the Ukrainian government
9. enacting economic embargoes and suspending free trade.

The elongated and variegated timeline of the Ukraine case in Figure 3.5 stands in contrast to the Estonia case. Russia executed its hostile measures in indistinct phases, mixing clandestine, covert, and overt military and intelligence actions with an array of information, diplomatic, and economic activities.

Learning from the Ukraine Case Process

This was Russian reactive opportunism at its finest. Russian leaders responded aggressively to three major triggers: loss of a historically important ally that served as a status quo–bearing state on Russia's immediate border, hostile Western encroachment into Russia's perceived sphere of influence, and the prospect of another successful color revolution that could indirectly destabilize the Russian state. The emerging situation in Ukraine in early 2014 triggered all the major Russian sources of worry. In retrospect, some kind of aggressive, hostile response should have been foreseen.[15] How Russia and the West perceive the relative success of the operation is another matter. On its face, the Ukraine operation, executed in various fits and starts, could be interpreted as modern strategic *maskirovka*: Although the onset of the operation could have been predicted, its different steps might have been brilliantly orchestrated with off-tempo unpredictability. We instead take a different view, sharing the broader consensus of Russia analysts: The initial operation in Crimea was opportunistic but tightly controlled; the follow-on operation in eastern Ukraine was less well controlled, and the continuing conflict has perhaps moved beyond Russian control.[16] Indeed, it may have resulted in a strategic setback.

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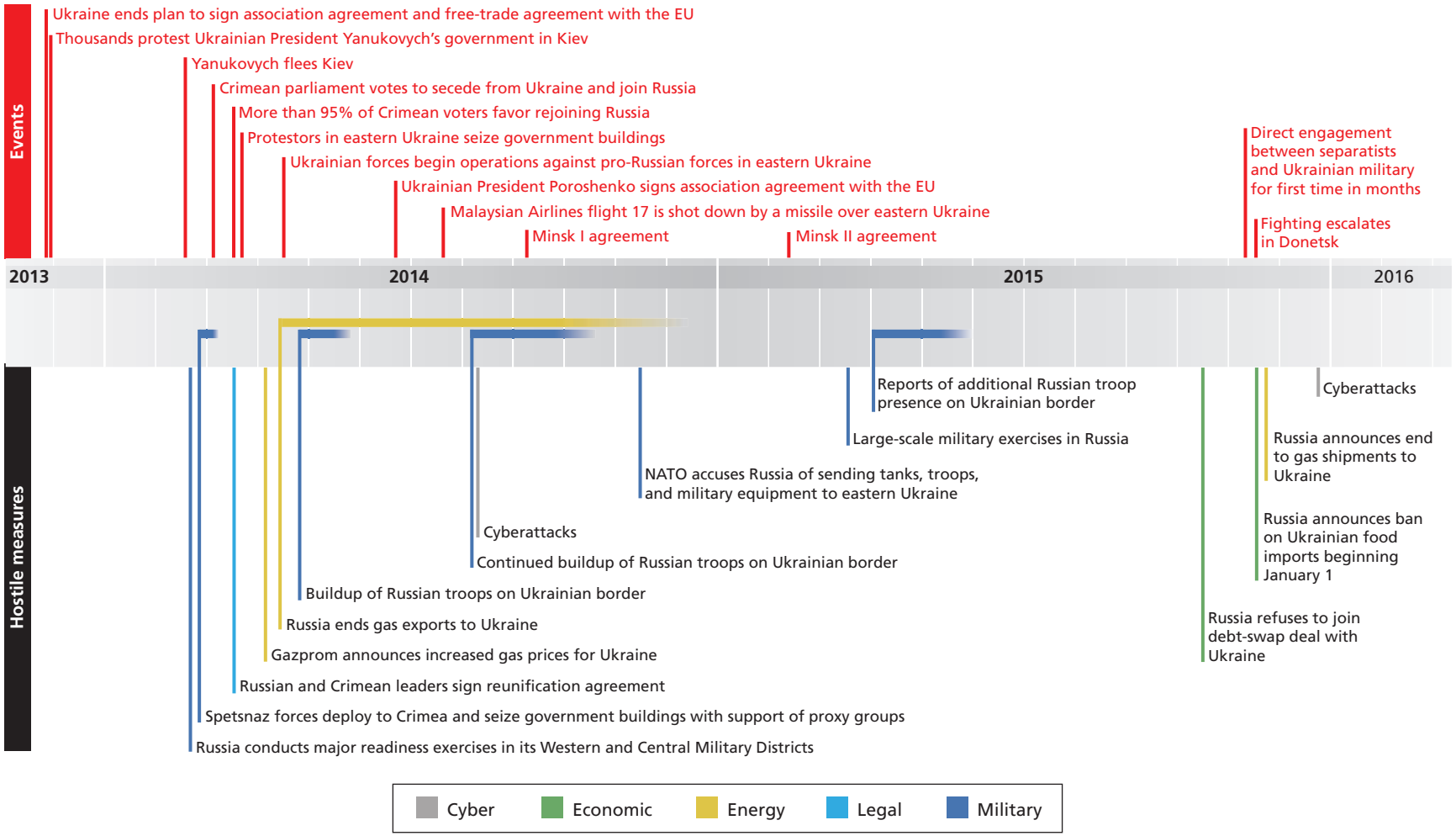
[14] Timothy Thomas asserts that this operation may have also been viewed as an opportunity to seize Ukraine's natural resources and ensure the free flow of Russian oil and gas (Timothy Thomas, "Russia's Military Strategy and Ukraine: Indirect, Asymmetric—and Putin-Led," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 2015).

[15] NATO has examined the foreseeability of the Russian intervention in Ukraine. See, for example, "Russia, Ukraine, and Crimea: A Predictable Crisis?" video, *NATO Review*, July 3, 2014. Also see Paul D. Miller, "I Predicted Russia's Invasion of Ukraine," *Foreign Policy*, March 7, 2014; Jeremy Kotkin, "Russian Aggression Is a Predictable Result of Bad Western Policy," *War on the Rocks*, March 26, 2014.

[16] For an array of opinions, see Kofman, et al. 2017; Larrabee et al., 2017; Roy Allison, "Russian 'Deniable' Intervention in Ukraine: How and Why Russia Broke the Rules," *International Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 6, November 2014; Jonsson and Seely, 2015; and Thomas, 2015.

Figure 3.5
Ukraine Case Timeline



Did Russia succeed? Tactically, Russia succeeded in annexing Crimea but has thus far failed to help its proxy forces secure eastern Ukraine. Prior to 2014, there was effectively no NATO military presence in Ukraine.[17] After the onset of Russia's hostile-measures operation, NATO and, separately and directly, the United States invested billions of dollars to support the Ukrainian military, government, and economy.[18] The United States has also established the Joint Multinational Training Group–Ukraine to help build up to five battalions of Ukrainian soldiers per year.[19] Russia may have sought to push NATO away from its borders, but, in early 2018, Ukraine was formally listed on the alliance's website as an aspiring member.[20] On August 24, 2017, Secretary of Defense Mattis stated,

> Have no doubt the United States also stands with Ukraine in all things. We support you in the face of threats to sovereignty and territorial integrity, and to international law and the international order writ large. We do not, and we will not, accept Russia's seizure of the Crimea.[21]

Although Ukraine is not yet a NATO member and has not signed a mutual defense treaty with the United States, this declaration by Secretary Mattis bears remarkable similarity to the cooperative defense language in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, which states that an attack on one NATO member constitutes an attack on the alliance.[22] Russia may have annexed Crimea and created an interminable frozen conflict in eastern Ukraine, but it has, if anything, accelerated Ukrainian westward political movement. Russia's actions in Ukraine have drawn considerable unwanted attention to its influence activities in Eastern Europe and its economic behavior internationally. The United States, the European Union, and Canada have enacted tough sanctions against Russia in response to its operations in Ukraine. Some analysts argue that the sanctions have had a negligible impact on the Russian economy, while others believe that they have achieved their desired effect.[23] According to NATO, they have "been a success in terms of the proximate goal of inflicting damage on the Russian economy."[24]

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[17] After the fall of the Soviet Union, there was a series of on-again, off-again engagements between Ukraine and NATO, including combined counterpiracy missions, various declarations, and some training of Ukrainian military forces. South Ukraine's 2008 effort to join NATO, which generated an alliance declaration stating that Ukraine would eventually become a NATO member, ended with Putin issuing a missile threat. See North Atlantic Council, "Bucharest Summit Declaration," April 3, 2018, and Peter Finn, "Putin Threatens Ukraine on NATO," *Washington Post*, February 13, 2008.

[18] See, for example, NATO, "NATO's Support to Ukraine," fact sheet, July 2016c, and White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "Fact Sheet: U.S. Support for Ukraine," Washington, D.C., September 18, 2014.

[19] 7th Army Training Command, "Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine," webpage, undated.

[20] NATO, "Enlargement," NATO, webpage, last updated October 12, 2018.

[21] U.S. Department of Defense, "Secretary Mattis Joint Press Conference with Ukrainian President Poroshenko," transcript, August 24, 2017.

[22] NATO, *The North Atlantic Treaty*, April 4, 1949.

[23] Shellie Karabell, "Why Russian Sanctions Haven't Worked," *Forbes*, August 14, 2017; Jack Stubbs and Polina Nikolskaya, "'Russia in the Doldrums?': New U.S. Sanctions to Weigh on Recovery," Reuters, April 9, 2018; Tom Keatinge, "This Time, Sanctions on Russia Are Having the Desired Effect," *Financial Times*, April 13, 2018; Darko Janjevic, "Western Sanctions on Russia: Lots of Noise and Little Impact," *Deutsche Welle*, April 4, 2018; Oliver Fritz, Elisabeth Christen, Franz Sinabell, and Julian Hinz, *Russia's and the EU's Sanctions: Economic and Trade Effects, Compliance, and the Way Forward*, Brussels, Belgium: European Parliament, Directorate-General for External Policies, 2017.

[24] Edward Christie, "Sanctions After Crimea: Have They Worked?" *NATO Review*, July 13, 2015.

A strategic assessment must take into account the fact that Russia's economy has been at least partly undermined and that Ukraine has moved closer to the West and to NATO. As shown in Table 3.5, we assessed this hostile-measures operation as a tactical wash and a strategic failure.

Table 3.5
Assessment of Russian Performance in the Ukraine Case

Level of Action	Objectives	Results
Tactical	Seize Crimea, control eastern Ukraine	Mixed
Strategic	Prevent Ukraine from aligning with the West	Failure

Turkey (2015–2016)

On November 24, 2015, the Turkish Air Force shot down a Russian Su-24 bomber flying in the Turkey-Syria border region. In response, Russia employed a series of hostile measures against Turkey. Russia had four objectives in its hostile-measures operation: (1) punish Turkey and illustrate to other NATO countries the costs of attacking Russian assets; (2) deter Turkey from engaging in any further action against Russia's military assets or intervening in northern Syria; (3) drive a wedge between Turkey and its NATO allies, particularly by appearing to side with the United States in its support for Kurds in northern Syria; and (4) posture for a domestic audience in Russia.

Russia employed six types of hostile measures from November 2015 to April 2016. This case study focuses exclusively on the hostile measures that we could clearly link to the downing of the Su-24. It does not cover measures taken by Russia and seemingly hostile to Turkey that originated before the November 2015 crisis:[25]

1. launching public diplomacy attacks against Turkey, including accusations of legal violations
2. forward deploying advanced air, ground, and naval military forces
3. supporting anti-Turkey Kurdish militias in northern Syria
4. enacting economic sanctions on food and natural resources
5. exerting pressure on the energy sector, including terminating collaborative projects
6. canceling cultural exchanges and high-level diplomatic meetings.

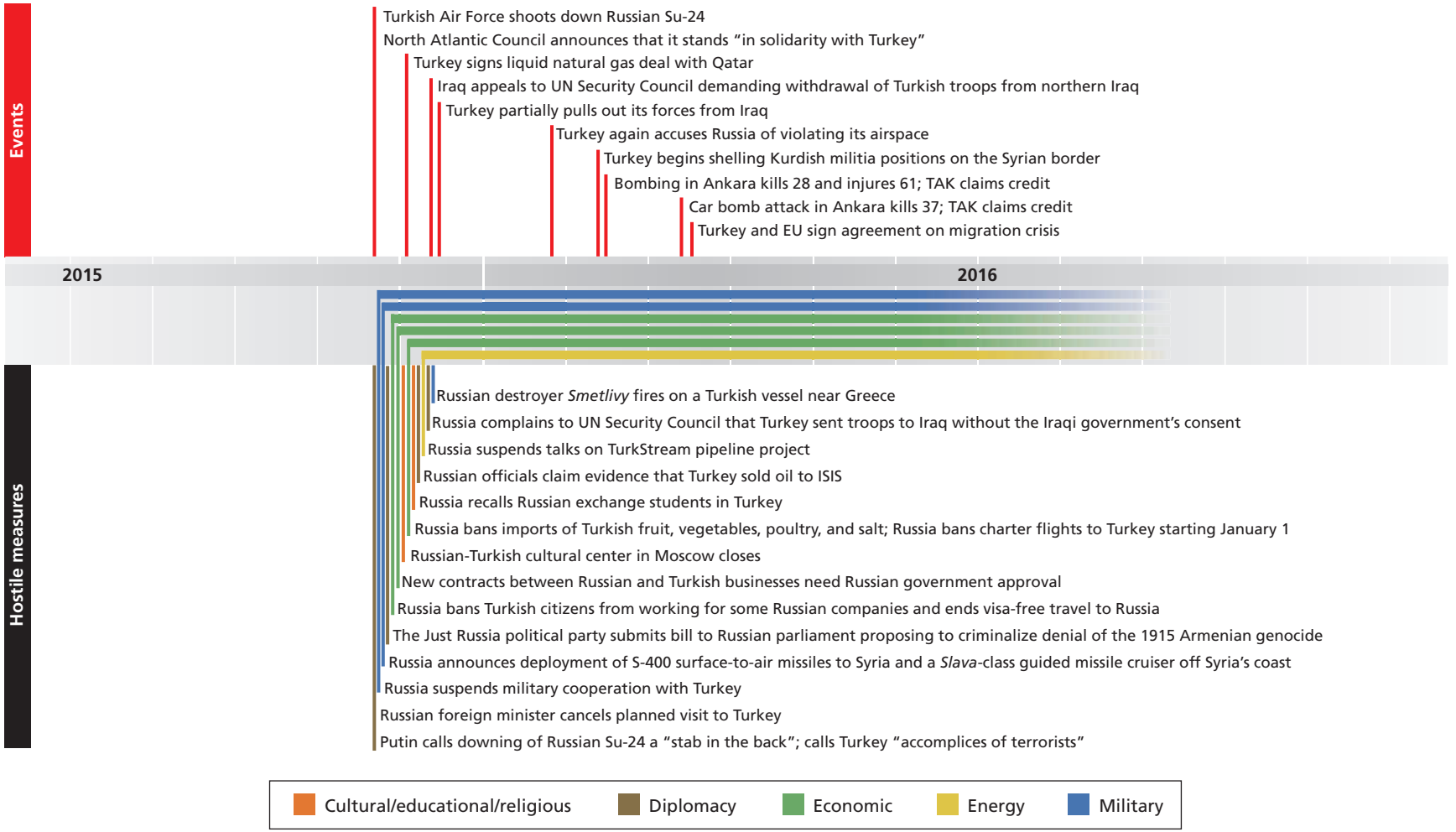
As shown in the timeline in Figure 3.6, Russia began applying hostile measures in the Turkey case with a public diplomacy campaign, which was followed by military measures in Syria and economic sanctions. Russia's active support to Kurdish militias in Syria represents its most consequential measure against Turkey. Allowing the militias to consolidate along the Turkish border was a sensitive matter for Turkey, which has a long history of conflict with the Kurds and views them as a destabilizing presence and an almost existential threat.

Learning from the Turkey Case Process

Russia responded to the Su-24 incident rapidly, aggressively, and with what appeared to be a tightly knit set of coordinated hostile measures. This was a genuine whole-of-government hostile-measures campaign involving several ministries, diplomats, economists, and military

[25] Examples include Russia's expansion of its military base in Armenia and a military deal with Armenia prior to the SU-24 event.

Figure 3.6
Turkey Case Timeline



NOTE: ISIS = Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. TAK = Teyrêbazên Azadiya Kurdistan [Kurdistan Freedom Falcons].

units. Tactically, the effort was both well run and successful, and it demonstrated an interagency approach to international action that is not often employed by other states. However, the operation also had some adverse effects for Russia. First, it demonstrated Russia's relative international isolation. No other country committed to supporting Russia's various accusations or seconded the sanctions against Turkey. Only Armenia publicly supported Russia's stance. Second, Russia's hostile measures had the temporary effect of pushing Turkey closer toward the West. Third, the economic embargoes negatively affected the Russian economy and were clearly not intended as an indefinite measure.

Turkish response was muted, and the international community, including Turkey's NATO allies, did little to help deflate tensions. While Turkey temporarily shifted its attention westward, by mid-2017, it had achieved rapprochement with Russia. Russian diplomats may have helped ease the situation, or perhaps the accumulated hostile measures had their desired effect. A more likely explanation for this reversal was a change in Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's perceptions in the aftermath of a 2016 coup attempt in Turkey.[26] By late 2017, Turkey was purchasing Russian military equipment, and economic engagement had resumed.[27]

Did Russia succeed? As in the other cases, it successfully executed its tactics. Turkey was duly punished for its actions. This could be chalked up as a tactical success. Assessing Russia's strategic success is more difficult. Although Russia has long sought to distance Turkey from NATO and has taken other hostile measures against the country, it is not clear whether or how this specific set of tactical hostile measures in response to this single incident contributed to Turkey's ultimate rapprochement with Russia. It is also not clear that this intensive set of actions was anything more than opportunistic and reactive. Therefore, as shown in Table 3.6, we rated this case as a successful tactical operation with unclear strategic objectives and results.

In this case, it was ultimately not the hostile measures that Russia imposed on Turkey but the turnaround in Turkish-Russian relations in the years that followed—particularly Turkey's purchase of Russian air-defense systems over the objections of the United States and other NATO allies—that succeeded in isolating Turkey from the alliance, at least temporarily.

Table 3.6
Assessment of Russian Performance in the Turkey Case

Level of Action	Objectives	Results
Tactical	Punish, deter, divide Turkey, posture internally	Success ◆
Strategic	Unclear whether tactics had a strategic purpose	Unclear ◆

Rating Russia in the Gray Zone: Tactical Success but Strategic Failure

Five cases can deliver only anecdotal results. However, it is possible to draw a generalizable conclusion about Russian hostile measures by incorporating findings from our historical analysis and the other works cited herein. Note that the caveats introduced at the beginning of

[26] For an analysis of the Turkey-Russia relationship, see Torrey Taussig, "The Serpentine Trajectory of Turkish-Russia Relations," blog post, Brookings Institution, October 4, 2017.

[27] See, for example, David Dolan, "Turkish Missile Deal with Russia Reflects Stormy Relationship with NATO," Reuters, September 22, 2017.

this chapter apply: Russian leaders may perceive their own relative success or failure differently, and other analysts may have different opinions regarding Russia's performance. The collective literature suggests that Russia is tactically adept at applying hostile measures. It has repeatedly demonstrated the ability to quickly assemble and execute a complex and aggressive interagency operation to punish or even destabilize other states. Soviet operations against NATO, Warsaw Pact states, and other countries were often well designed, well executed, and tactically successful; the mostly overt operations in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 are standout examples. But despite these tactical successes, the Soviet Union gradually lost control of Eastern Europe and then, for a wide variety of complex political, social, economic, and military reasons, ceased to exist.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia has also had a number of tactical successes in the gray zone. Russian tactics often mimic long-term strategy: Across Europe, Russia employs hostile-measures tactics for extended periods, sometimes decades. However, extended tactics do not necessarily constitute a thoughtful and effective effort to achieve the general objectives of a Russian grand strategy (maintenance of a favorable status quo, weakening of NATO, enhancement of Russia's great-power status). Tactical successes have not prevented what appears to be inexorable NATO expansion toward Russia's western border. The alliance started with 12 members in 1949 and had more than doubled in size to 29 members by 2018. With the notable exception of Spain in 1982, accession progressed generally eastward.[28] Even in Georgia, where Russia was able to temporarily forestall accession, a clear and apparently enduring partnership with NATO has emerged; according to NATO, Georgia is on a clear path to accession.

Russia has had partial success in achieving one part of its grand strategy: It has made some progress toward destabilizing potential adversaries, such as the United States, Estonia, Georgia, and Ukraine. For the time being, Russia is internally stable, although it is unclear how its internal stability relates to its international hostile-measures activities.[29] Russia has generally failed to preserve a pro-Russia status quo in Eastern Europe. In the long run, its limited success at destabilization may be far less important to Russia than its more compelling strategic failures in places like Estonia and Ukraine.

Our five cases may not stand alone as empirical evidence, but they are broadly exemplary of historical trends. This analysis reflects a combination of the case studies, an examination of historical trends, and the other findings presented in this report. It is ultimately a product of subject-matter expert interpretation of the cases. In general—in the historical cases and in these five specific cases—Russia applies hostile measures successfully but typically fails to leverage tactical success for long-term strategic gain.

Table 3.7 aggregates the tactical and strategic results from our cases, showing a 60-percent tactical success rate and a consistent failure to achieve strategic success. We acknowledge that failure to achieve strategic success does not necessarily connote outright failure. Russia accomplished lesser objectives in each case.

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[28] NATO, 2016b.

[29] Russian leaders have applied draconian internal security measures that are not directly related to external operations. See, for example, Jason M. Breslow, "What Is the State of Dissent in Vladimir Putin's Russia?" *Frontline*, January 13, 2015, and Lilia Shevstova, "Forward to the Past in Russia," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 26, No. 2, April 15, 2015.

Table 3.7
Summary of Russian Performance Across the Five Cases

Tactical Results	Strategic Results
 60% success	 No success

NOTE: Green indicates success, red indicates failure, and gray indicates an unclear outcome.

Patterns in Russian Hostile-Measures Tactics

We did not seek causality in our pattern tracing, nor can we claim empirical generalizability from our findings. However, we highlight the following patterns across the cases, the historical analysis, and existing literature:

1. Russia consistently reacts with hostile measures when it perceives threats.
2. Both opportunism and reactionism drive Russian behavior.
3. Russian leaders often issue a public warning before employing hostile measures.
4. Short- and long-term measures are applied in mutually supporting combination.
5. Diplomatic, information, military, and economic means are used collectively.
6. Russia emphasizes information, economic, and diplomatic measures, in that order.
7. All arms of the government are used to apply hostile measures, often in concert.

Of these patterns, the third and sixth may be most notable. In each of the five cases we studied, and in our historical analysis, Russian leaders tended to offer ample public warning before executing a hostile-measures operation.[30] Sometimes, the warning emerged gradually over time (e.g., in Moldova); other times, the message was tailored to an emerging crisis (e.g., in Georgia). These warnings consistently signaled Russian grand strategic desires to maintain a favorable status quo and preserve order. Although it expertly masks its tactics, the Russian state often intentionally and publicly telegraphs its behavior. Threats are typically acted upon if they are not heeded.

Military activity is often the most visible and aggressive of the measures discussed here, but it does not appear to be the most common option for Russia. While it is not possible to quantify all of Russia's hostile measures or the relative impact of one measure over another, our process tracing and historical analysis suggests a stronger emphasis on information, economic, and diplomatic measures over military measures. The Georgia case is generally representative. Russia applied aggressive military action over a short period. Its continuing military presence represents a significant threat. However, enumerating the variety of measures applied over the course of the case reveals that military force accounts for only two of 12 measures employed. This suggests the need to reconsider the traditional analytic emphasis on Russian military measures.

Literal prediction of the future is a logical impossibility. We do not claim that we can predict Russian behavior. Because *prediction* is a pejorative term in the analytic world, we

[30] For examples, see Riina Kaljurand, *Russian Influence on Moldovan Politics During the Putin Era, 2000–2008*, Tallinn, Estonia: International Centre for Defence Studies, 2008; Christian Lowe, "Russia Warns Georgia Over Peacekeepers," Reuters, June 19, 2008; Sophia Kishkovsky, "Georgia Is Warned by Russia Against Plans to Join NATO," *New York Times*, June 7, 2008; Denis Dyomkin, "Russia Warns Moldova Against 'Georgian Mistake,'" Reuters, August 25, 2018; and Vladimir V. Putin, "A Plea for Caution from Russia," *New York Times*, September 11, 2013.

describe Russian hostile-measures behavior as *practicably foreseeable*: NATO leaders and analysts should be able to foresee Russian behavior because it has been consistently and overtly templated for such a long time. Foreseeable actions can be deterred, prevented, or countered.

Assault by All Means Available: Hostile Measures During High-Order War

We argued in Chapter One that, with few exceptions, Western analysts have unintentionally facilitated the inherently flawed belief in a neat bifurcation of Russian behavior below and above the threshold for high-order war.[31] Despite some prima facie acknowledgments to the contrary, deeper analyses of both the gray zone and high-order war delineate the two. In this construct, Russian actions in the gray zone and during high-order war would be fairly distinct. This is plainly wrong. As Kennan argued in the 1940s, if Russia did execute a high-order conventional or nuclear attack, it would almost certainly do so in concert with a full complement of measures typically associated with the gray zone. It is useful to think about measures as additive rather than sequential. Table 3.8 shows the cumulative accrual of a sample of Russian measures ranging from hostile measures short of high-order war to the full complement of conventional and unconventional weapons. Conceptual phasing moves from left to right: the gray zone; conventional war; and chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN) war.

An alternative view emerged during discussions with RAND colleagues.[32] Russian leadership might be too occupied with the challenges of fighting a major war to give traditionally gray zone hostile measures much attention. Our examination of the institutionalization of Russian hostile measures suggests otherwise: Clear, top-down direction is not necessary to keep the Russian hostile-measures machine in play. Russian intelligence organizations, diplomats, and military personnel not engaged in the conventional fight will continue to apply these measures as a matter of course during high-order war. In all likelihood, Russian war plans for Eastern Europe include the use of hostile measures.[33]

Russia's historical behavior supports the assumption that its leaders will apply the full range of hostile measures available in the gray zone during high-order war. Although Russia has been continuously prepared for high-order war, there is limited contemporary evidence of actual Russian conventional warfare behavior.[34] The Soviets fought several limited wars in the

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[31] Including the lead author of this report; see Connable, Campbell, and Madden, 2016. Exceptions have appeared mostly in the margins of the many reports we have cited rather than in stand-alone products focused on the conventional aspects of Russian hostile measures. The best exceptions are Soviet-era intelligence analyses that examined hostile measures (or "active measures") in a warfighting context (for example, Beaumont, 1982).

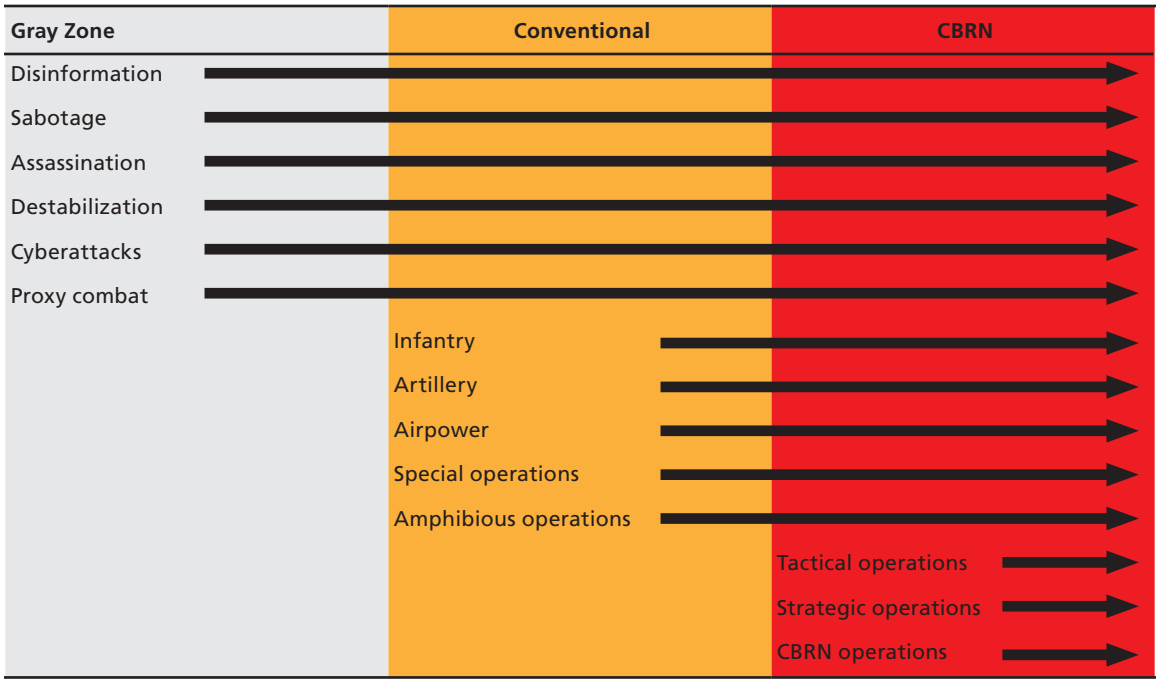
The phrase *assault by all means available* is drawn from an article by Dan Gouré ("NATO vs. Russia: How to Counter the Hybrid Warfare Challenge," *National Interest*, July 7, 2016).

[32] These were informal discussions regarding the nature of the gray zone, hostile measures, Russia, and conventional and nuclear war conducted with more than ten RAND colleagues between 2015 and 2018. These colleagues were experts on Russia and European security. Not all agreed with this point of view, but we found it to be an interesting input to the analysis.

[33] These war plans are classified by the Russian government. This statement reflects our informed analytic opinion, supported by the analysis and citations presented in this section and the previous chapter.

[34] We do not categorize counterinsurgencies, civil-war interventions, or advisory missions as high-order war. For example, although the Chechnya conflicts of the 1990s–2000 involved heavy combat, the Chechens did not field advanced aircraft, armor formations, or a naval force against the Russians. We also discount limited Soviet involvement in the Korean War and the Vietnam War as instances of Russian high-order war; Russia did not field a major force or overtly employ com-

Table 3.8
Cumulative Selected Measures Across the Spectrum of Warfare



early 20th century, including some heavy conventional conflicts shortly after the 1917 Revolution. The 1939–1940 Winter War with Finland and World War II are the only substantive, relatively modern, well-recorded cases of Russian high-order war since 1917.[35] Of these, World War II offers the best test of Russia's use of hostile measures in such a context.

We discussion that follows includes a section on the KGB and GRU in Afghanistan. Although the Soviets fought the Afghanistan campaign as a counter-guerrilla operation against a nonstate actor, the well-recorded KGB activities during those operations are emblematic of what Russia might seek to accomplish in a near-peer conventional war.

Historical Precedent: Soviet Hostile Measures Against the Wehrmacht in World War II

Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941.[36] Invasion planning called for the military defeat of the Red Army and then for the piecemeal stabilization and division of Soviet territory

bined arms or nuclear weapons in either conflict. See Meredith Reid Sarkees and Frank Wayman, *Correlates of War Datas, 1816–2007*, version 4.0, Correlates of War Project, December 8, 2011, and Meredith Reid Sarkees and Frank Wayman, *Resort to War: 1816–2007*, Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2010.

[35] Examples of earlier wars include the 1919 Polish-Soviet war and the Soviet-China conflicts of the late 1920s and 1930s. In one rather substantive intervention in 1934, Soviet soldiers made an incursion into Xinxiang (then transliterated as Sinkiang) wearing either Chinese or unmarked Soviet uniforms. See Li Chang, "The Soviet Grip on Sinkiang," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 42, No. 3, 1954, p. 494, and Leonard, 1999. While the Soviet Union and China were at loggerheads during the Sino-Soviet split and some gunfire was exchanged (e.g., on Zhenbao Island in 1969), none of this amounted to high-order, peer-on-peer war. For a summary of the Sino-Soviet conflict, see Michael S. Gerson, *The Sino-Soviet Border Conflict: Deterrence, Escalation, and the Threat of Nuclear War in 1969*, Arlington, Va.: CNA, 2010.

[36] Andrew A. Kokoshin, The German Blitzkrieg Against the USSR, 1941, Cambridge, Mass.: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University, June 2016; Alex J. Kay, "Germany's Staatssekretäre, Mass Starvation and the Meeting of 2 May 1941," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 41, No. 4, October 2006.

into socialist cantonments to be run by the Nazi regime. As the German Wehrmacht pushed forward, it left behind the brutal Einsatzgruppen death squads to pacify captured territory. Occupying governors attempted to implement complex economic programs designed to simultaneously control the population and extract resources for the war. Germany's plan failed for a wide array of reasons, including the Russian military counteroffensive, geography, weather, supply issues, and questionable political leadership, but certainly also, in part, because Soviet partisan and intelligence activities eroded the German rear area throughout the war.[37]

The Soviet hostile-measures response to the invasion generally unfolded in three phases. As the Red Army reeled backward in the first two months of the invasion, it responded with aggressive but mostly unplanned, haphazard attacks on the Wehrmacht's rear. Units bypassed by the German blitzkrieg formed ad hoc partisan teams. Small cells of parachutists were quickly trained and dropped behind German lines to execute sabotage operations, targeting infrastructure and conducting reconnaissance in the rear area. By August 1941, the Soviets had organized the beginnings of what would become a complex and dangerous hostile-measures campaign targeting Germany's occupying forces and increasingly untenable lines of communication.

Even as the Soviet Union faced potential collapse, it generated a hostile-measures campaign collaboratively and with surprising composure. Organization was swift and comprehensive, directed from the top even though the Soviet state apparatus was organized at each level of control up from the small-unit level. NKVD leaders created units specifically prepared to lay low and then sow destruction as front-line units passed forward. Older Soviet Communist Party members joined clandestine units purposed to disrupt German economic programs, instigate popular uprisings, and assassinate collaborators. Central planners took control of partisan units that were able to connect through German lines while encouraging distributed, ad hoc disruption operations throughout the occupied Soviet Union. Propaganda units formed rapidly and began barraging the occupied territories with leaflets and radio broadcasts.

Over time, the partisan units linked up with the Red Army to conduct collaborative raids, tearing up German supply lines and forcing the Wehrmacht to pull some badly needed combat units back for security duty. In one case, parts of two combat divisions had to be withdrawn to protect against a joint rear-area attack conducted by partisans and Soviet soldiers.[38] Partisan units grew to form brigades more than 1,000 forces strong, including distinct subunits for agitation and propaganda. Figure 3.7 shows the organization of a standard Soviet partisan brigade in late 1943 or early 1944.[39]

Soviet agents aggressively undermined the German economic program by destroying livestock and crops deep in the western occupied zone. Economic sabotage, coupled with aggressive counterintelligence and propaganda, fed the already unbearable conditions in occupied areas while generating anti-German sentiment: Russia was able to exacerbate popular discontent by worsening living conditions and then blaming it on the Germans.

By the time the Soviets shifted to the counteroffensive, they had generated a massive, multilayered hostile-measures apparatus tailored to complement conventional military opera-

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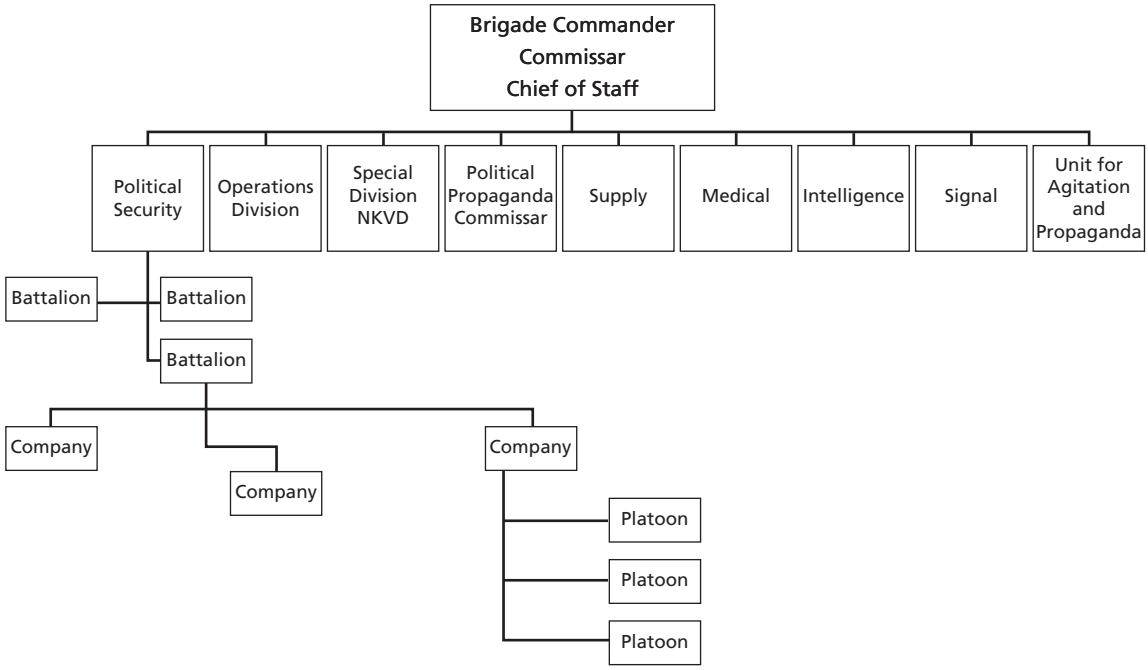
[37] This summary is drawn from Edgar M. Howell, *The Soviet Partisan Movement, 1941–1944*, U.S. Department of the Army Pamphlet 20-244, Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, U.S. Department of the Army, August 1956.

[38] Howell, 1956, p. 77.

[39] Howell, 1956, p. 139.

Figure 3.7
Typical Soviet Partisan Brigade



tions. Red Army and NKVD planners used the partisan units like modern special operations forces (SOF) in a direct support role for offensive ground combat units. Full-scale sabotage, propaganda, and intelligence operations continued apace throughout the war. Out of existential necessity emerged the institutions, doctrine, and experience for the full integration of hostile measures into conventional defensive and offensive military operations.[40]

The KGB and GRU in Afghanistan: Active Measures in Counter-Guerrilla Warfare

The Soviet Union used active-measures operations, directed and led by its intelligence apparatus, throughout the war in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989. Intelligence officers effectively initiated the war with a covert, KGB-led, joint force operation to seize control of the Afghan government.[41] Operation Agat centered on a surprise attack led by Soviet special operations and intelligence troops dressed in Afghan uniforms. Leveraging relationships built by intelligence officers and advisers already in place, the intelligence services helped develop and then leveraged the Afghan state security police to run an array of clandestine and covert operations

[40] Soviet and, later, Russian leaders mimicked this holistic approach to undermining enemy states and populations in every conflict after World War II, including during the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian revolts in 1956 and 1968, in Chechnya in the 1990s and early 2000s, and, as we show in our case studies, in the more recent offensives in Georgia and Ukraine.

[41] This section is derived from Vasiliy Mitrokhin, *The KGB in Afghanistan*, Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars, 2009; Andrew O. Doohovskoy, *Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Soviet Afghan War Revisited: Analyzing the Effective Aspects of the Counterinsurgency Effort*, thesis, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 2009; Olga Oliker, *Building Afghanistan's Security Forces in Wartime: The Soviet Experience*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-1078-A, 2011; Jiyai Zhou, "The Muslim Battalions: Soviet Central Asians in the Soviet-Afghan War," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 2012; Alexander Alexiev, *Inside the Soviet Army in Afghanistan*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, R-3627-A, May 1988.

against the mujahideen. Throughout the war, the KGB and GRU—primarily Spetsnaz—conducted disinformation campaigns, false flag operations, and other activities designed specifically to support conventional Soviet military operations against the mujahideen and keep the Soviet-friendly regime in power.

In addition to conducting an array of unilateral, partnered, and advisory missions on a daily basis throughout the war, the KGB and GRU formed joint task forces and command structures to make best use of the assets of both organizations. Most sources on the war suggest that the KGB used the Spetsnaz as elite reconnaissance-strike units and also contributed special tactics units to the effort, such as the Kaskad and Omega. Both groups worked with Soviet Army units while conducting clandestine and covert operations.

Forecasting Future Russian Application of Hostile Measures During War

The World War II–era Soviet partisan brigades no longer exist, and the KGB has morphed into the FSB, but Russia clearly has the historical knowledge to integrate hostile measures into high-order war. Other capabilities have supplanted the old partisan organization, and the NKVD has evolved through the KGB to its military counterpart, the GRU, leading to the present-day capabilities resident in the FSB, the SVR, and Spetsnaz. Russian cyber capabilities, satellites, and even some of its unmanned aerial systems can penetrate far into NATO territory to disrupt rear-area operations. Russia's capabilities are different, but it still has the tactical capacity to disrupt allied conventional operations.

Now consider the present debate over a notional Russian conventional invasion of Eastern Europe. Three of NATO's greatest concerns are the prospects of concentrated Russian gray zone attacks, a Russian conventional attack in Eastern Europe, and a Russian nuclear attack against alliance states. Hostile measures make the conventional and nuclear scenarios even more troubling. Present analyses of the Baltic invasion scenario often do not include the full array of hostile measures.[42] During high-order war NATO must assume the loss of mobile phone networks, disruption to data networks, manipulation of Global Positioning System (GPS) signals, sabotage of both ports and rail networks, assassination of key military figures, and aggressive disinformation campaigns to undermine popular support for alliance defense and counterattack. Full appreciation of the Russian conventional and nuclear threats demands a fuller accounting of hostile measures as full-spectrum options.

Cyber Capabilities: A Dangerous Exception to Russian Tactical Limitations

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian conventional threat—while still dangerous—has waned considerably. However, internet dependence has opened NATO vulnerabilities at the other end of the conflict spectrum: cyberattack. Russia's cyber capabilities easily extend its reach into Western Europe and the United States. Its ability to affect elections and shut down or manipulate power grids, financial networks, and other critical infrastructure presents a critical challenge to NATO security. This threat is consistent from the gray zone through high-order war. Russia's cyber capabilities are dangerous and not well understood, highlighting

[42] For example, Latvia's 2016 defense white paper conceptualizes a Russian attack against Latvia, but it separates scenarios into "hybrid" and "conventional" war (Government of Latvia, *The National Defence Concept*, Riga, Latvia, 2016, p. 7).

the need for sustained, full-spectrum threat analysis.[43] Nonetheless, this exceptional capability fails to give Russia a consistent strategic advantage: Even if they achieve what might be termed *strategic effects*, cyberattacks cannot make up for Russian strategic shortsightedness. Effective tactics and technological capabilities do not constitute effective strategy.

Summary

Russia presents a dangerous but manageable threat. This threat is primarily tactical, sometimes overstated, and underappreciated in prospective conventional and nuclear conflict. Russian behavior in the gray zone is motivated by worry, and its leaders often signal forthcoming reactions to perceived threats. Thus, its actions and reactions are amenable to forecasting. Pattern tracing reinforces this finding. While each case of Russia's use of hostile measures is in many ways unique, the patterns of behavior seem to be generalizable. If these uses can be patterned and forecasted, they can be deterred, prevented, and countered in the gray zone. As we argue in the following chapter, actions that NATO takes against Russian hostile behavior in the gray zone will also be effective in addressing that behavior during high-order war.

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[43] Russian cyber capabilities have been the focus of considerable analysis. See, for example, Michael Connell and Sarah Vogler, *Russia's Approach to Cyber Warfare*, Arlington, Va.: CNA, March 2017; Ben Buchanan and Michael Sulmeyer, *Russia and Cyber Operations: Challenges and Opportunities for the Next U.S. Administration*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and Chicago Council on Global Affairs, Task Force on U.S. Policy Toward Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia, 2016; and Frank J. Cilluffo, director, Homeland Security Policy Institute, George Washington University, "Cyber Threats from China, Russia, and Iran: Protecting American Critical Infrastructure," testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Security Technologies, March 20, 2013.

CHAPTER FOUR

Deterring, Preventing, and Countering Hostile Measures

> The very idea of Russian aggression against a NATO country is absurd and not worth discussing even hypothetically. All such scenarios belong to the category of propaganda or delusions. . . . The concept of "hybrid war" also belongs to the category of propaganda.
>
> — Aleksandr Khramchikhin, Institute for Political and Military Analysis, Moscow, 2018[1]

> [T]he longer the West waits to make it clear that it will resist Russia, the harder this resistance will be and the lower its chances of success.
>
> — Keir Giles, Chatham House, 2016[2]

> All U.S. ground forces can tangibly contribute to contesting gray zone competition with forward-deployed forces and surge expeditionary capability.
>
> — Nathan P. Freier et al., *Outplayed: Regaining Strategic Initiative in the Gray Zone*, 2016[3]

This brief chapter presents our recommendations, all of which are grounded in the preceding analysis and key findings. We recommend a measured approach that simultaneously presents a strong, cohesive front and mitigates Russian predilection to lash out in response to what are often inflated perceptions of an existential threat. This calls for a carefully postured forward stationing of NATO military forces in Eastern Europe. We argue that a forward military presence, augmented by specific technical and tactical capabilities, will help deter, prevent, and counter Russian hostile-measures behavior during both gray zone competition and high-order war. The alliance has already taken some steps toward improving its capacity and posture vis-à-vis the Russian hostile-measures threat, but it can and should improve its posture.

First, we briefly examine the ongoing debate over deterrence and defense in Eastern Europe, highlighting two sets of countervailing arguments that address the potential effects of forward deployment: (1) the possibility of achieving conventional deterrence and (2) the likelihood that a forward defensive military posture will trigger Russian aggression. Next, we present a rationale for a measured forward presence with a focus on gray zone deterrence, preven-

[1] Aleksandr Khramchikhin, *Rethinking the Danger of Escalation: The Russia-NATO Military Balance*, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 25, 2018.

[2] Giles, 2016, p. 69.

[3] Freier et al., 2016, p. 84.

tion, and countering. Finally, we address the half-century-long debate over NATO expansion and its impact on Russian hostile-measures activity.

Ongoing Debate Over Deterrence and Forward-Positioned Forces

There is a rich, ongoing debate over forward deployment, or forward stationing, of military forces to deter and defend against a conventional Russian ground attack in Eastern Europe.[4] It is not our goal here to resolve the debate over whether such a move would effectively deter a conventional Russian attack. Instead, the conventional debate frames our argument for deterrence as it pertains to hostile measures.[5] Some analysts argue for purposeful ambiguity: If the prospective foe does not know about and cannot reasonably calculate a violent response to its behavior—conventional attack or, ostensibly, hostile measures—then it is faced with dangerous uncertainty that may deter that behavior.[6] RAND's George C. Reinhardt made a similar argument in 1958, writing about the "true mission" of deterrence in the Cold War context: "The potential foe must be kept militarily uncertain of the outcome of any aggressive move he may want to start."[7] NATO's physical deployment of military forces seems to be certain and unambiguous, particularly in the age of instant and near-total information transparency. This implies a trade-off: It reduces the risk of miscalculation while increasing Russian confidence in its own cost-benefit calculations in the seam between the gray zone and high-order war.

We argue for a third option. It is possible to both demonstrate strength and retain a measure of useful ambiguity regarding the threshold for violent response. Even with a determined forward ground force and the strength of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, the threshold for high-order war in Europe remains tacit rather than explicit. In 2016, we argued that U.S. strategic ambiguity was so prolific that it allowed Russia to exploit

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[4] *Forward deployment* refers to the temporary positioning of military units that are permanently stationed elsewhere. *Forward stationing* implies that the units take up permanent residence at advance bases, perhaps along with troops' families. Other options include forward positioning supplies or command teams that could be expanded. For insight and debate on this topic, see Shlapak and Johnson, 2016; Timothy M. Bonds, Michael Johnson, and Paul S. Steinberg, *Limiting Regret: Building the Army We Will Need*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1320-RC, 2015; David A. Shlapak, RAND Corporation, *Deterring Russian Aggression in the Baltic States: What It Takes to Win*, testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, CT-467, 2017; Michael Kofman, "Fixing Deterrence in the East or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love NATO's Crushing Defeat by Russia," *War on the Rocks*, May 12, 2016; and Michael Rühle, "Deterrence: What It Can (and Cannot) Do," NATO Review, 2015. We cite additional work in the following sections.

[5] For a survey of deterrence literature and concepts, see Ben Connable, "Moving to a Practical Deterrence Strategy: How to Make Deterrence Work in 2015 and Beyond," in Becca Wasser, Ben Connable, Anthony Atler, and James Sladden, eds., *Comprehensive Deterrence Forum: Proceedings and Commissioned Papers*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, CF-345-A, 2018.

[6] See, for example, Kofman, 2016; Elbridge Colby and Jonathan Solomon, "Facing Russia: Conventional Defence and Deterrence in Europe," *Survival*, Vol. 57, No. 6, 2015, p. 32. Of course, ambiguity might also cause panic that could trigger an attack. We examine this literature in some detail in Connable, Campbell, and Madden, 2016. Also see Austin Long, *Deterrence from Cold War to Long War: Lessons from Six Decades of RAND Research*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-636-OSD/AF, 2008.

[7] George C. Reinhardt, *Deterrence Is Not Enough*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, P-983, June 1958, p. 15.

thresholds for high-order war.[8] Some middle ground is preferable and can be reasonably acquired. The NATO alliance can present a stronger front while retaining the kind of useful ambiguity that some experts recommend.[9]

This approach is ideally suited to addressing hostile measures. Reinhardt concluded his case for ambiguity by arguing that uncertainties in deterrence "must extend equally to peripheral (limited) war, nuclear blackmail, internal subversion and sabotage, or economic psychological cold war."[10] Forward positioning is necessary, it should seek to deter all types of hostilities, and it can be both reasonable in scale and helpfully ambiguous.

The Risks of Forward Presence

An interwoven debate addresses the degree to which forward deployment might trigger a Russian conventional ground attack that might escalate to nuclear conflict. Some analysts, including those representing the Russian government, have dismissed the idea out of hand. For example, Aleksandr Khramchikhin of the Institute for Political and Military Analysis in Moscow argued in early 2018 that NATO is so physically and morally weak that it could not hope to present a realistic threat to Russia. Khramchikhin asserted that the alliance has "lost its will to fight," adding, "All of the talk in Russia about the threat of a NATO attack is nothing more than a propaganda ploy."[11] But Russia's deputy foreign minister, Alexey Meshkov, stated publicly that forward deployment of alliance forces was a threat to Russia and that deployments "greatly increase the danger of possible incidents."[12] Others have provided middle-ground analyses on this topic.[13]

Our analysis shows that Russian worries should not be blithely ignored, but Western concerns about Russian overreaction appear to be inflated. It is a logical fallacy to assume that historical cases predict future behavior, but there is no clear, empirical evidence that forward deploying or forward stationing troops always, generally, or even in a significant number of past cases precipitates high-order war. The current deployment of a few thousand NATO troops in Eastern Europe should not evoke *The Guns of August*.[14] NATO's forward military presence along the western edge of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact throughout the Cold

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[8] Connable, Campbell, and Madden, 2016.

[9] There are arguments for and against pursuing ambiguity in deterrence. See, for example, Lawrence Freedman, "Framing Strategic Deterrence: Old Certainties, New Ambiguities," *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 154, No. 4, 2009; Pan Zhongqi, "U.S. Taiwan Policy of Strategic Ambiguity: A Dilemma of Deterrence," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 12, No. 35, 2003; John J. Schulz, "Bluff and Uncertainty: Deterrence and the 'Maybe States,'" *SAIS Review*, Vol. 7, No. 2, Summer–Fall 1987; and Gerald M. Steinberg, "Parameters of Stable Deterrence in a Proliferated Middle East: Lessons from the 1991 Gulf War," *Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2000.

[10] Reinhardt, 1958, p. 15.

[11] Khramchikhin, 2018.

[12] Quoted in Andrew V. Pestano, "U.S. Army Tanks Reach Latvia; Russia Calls NATO Moves a Threat," UPI, February 8, 2017.

[13] Ulrich Kühn, *Preventing Escalation in the Baltics: A NATO Playbook*, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 28, 2018.

[14] This refers to Barbara W. Tuchman's description of the mobilization path that significantly contributed to the onset of World War I. See Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Guns of August*, New York: Macmillan, 1962.

War did not cause the Soviets to invade, nor did this presence trigger a nuclear war.[15] Recent empirical analysis by RAND shows that, on average, U.S. troop presence is associated with a lower likelihood of interstate war.[16] Another RAND report specifically addresses the possibility that Russia might overreact to a forward NATO presence in Europe. This research found that, under present conditions, a thoughtful, carefully managed, and moderate forward presence in Eastern Europe is unlikely to provoke a Russian invasion and could help enhance already-strong NATO deterrence.[17] We favor the middle-ground approach to deterrence, building from our argument that Russian hostile-measures behavior is motivated primarily by worry while simultaneously being encouraged by perceived weakness. Flipping this paradigm requires presenting genuine strength without triggering overreaction.

Using Military Forces to Deter, Prevent, and Counter Hostile Measures

The 2018 U.S. National Defense Strategy clearly spelled out the requirement to forward position U.S. military forces as part of the newly developed U.S. Global Operating Model. The primary purpose of this forward positioning would be to engage in great-power competition with China and Russia. The model includes a *contact layer* of forward-positioned military forces designed specifically to "help us compete more effectively below the level of armed conflict":

> The Global Operating Model describes how the Joint Force will be postured and employed. . . . It comprises four layers: contact, blunt, surge, and homeland. These are, respectively, designed to help us compete more effectively below the level of armed conflict; delay, degrade, or deny adversary aggression; surge war-winning forces and manage conflict escalation; and defend the U.S. homeland.[18]

As of early 2019, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) had not issued any public statements elaborating on the concepts behind the various layers of deterrence and defense—contact, blunt, surge, and homeland. But a range of existing DoD documentation suggests the value of using military forces to deter, prevent, and counter hostile measures. For example, the 2006 *Deterrence Operations Joint Operating Concept* calls for a constant forward presence of joint, multipurpose military forces to deter adversary aggression by denying benefits, imposing costs, and encouraging restraint. It argues that forward-deployed and -stationed forces enhance situational awareness of adversary behavior, particularly through the deployment of organic intelligence-collection assets to augment national-level capabilities.[19] The joint operat-

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[15] Some analysts cited herein argue that Russia's actions in places like Georgia and Ukraine signal a response to NATO's forward presence and eastward expansion.

[16] Angela O'Mahoney, Miranda Priebe, Bryan Frederick, Jennifer Kavanagh, Matthew Lane, Trevor Johnston, Thomas S. Szayna, Jakub P. Hlávka, Stephen Watts, and Matthew Povlock, *U.S. Presence and the Incidence of Conflict*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1906-A, 2018, p. x.

[17] Frederick et al., 2017, pp. ix–xiv.

[18] U.S. Department of Defense, 2018, p. 7.

[19] U.S. Department of Defense, *Deterrence Operations Joint Operating Concept*, version 2.0, Washington, D.C., December 2006, p. 34. A joint operating concept is a combatant command document that describes how a joint commander intends

ing concept specifically argues that maintaining a forward presence in "instances short of war" is essential for encouraging adversary restraint and for shoring up allies.[20]

U.S. military, NATO, and other analyses have already explored how conventional forces and SOF can and should be used to establish and actualize the joint force contact layer to gain advantage in the gray zone. A 2015 NATO research paper suggests using an array of military force enablers, such as military police, intelligence, psychological operations units, cyber defense teams, and civil-military units, to address short-of-war threats.[21] This kind of forward enabling activity would support NATO's intended response to hybrid threats: to prepare, deter, and defend.[22] In 2016, the U.S. Army's Strategic Studies Institute recommended the use of conventional joint forces—specifically, Army forces—for proactive interstate competition in the gray zone.[23] In 2016, a professor at the United States Military Academy argued that forward-positioned military forces present a deterrent to hybrid or gray zone threats, such as Russian hostile measures:

> [I]t is prudent for the US Army to position forces in countries susceptible to gray-zone incursions by adversaries. The presence of even a small US force in an at-risk country amplifies the risk for a potential aggressor that gray zone actions might result in an engagement of the US forces.[24]

A 2018 RAND report presented an argument for improving U.S. and allied performance in the gray zone, recommending "proactive use of detection and preventive measures to deter would-be aggressors, even if this protective umbrella carries some risk of overstretch."[25] It goes on to encourage improved interagency support, diplomacy, international partnerships, and information capabilities to counter hostile measures in the gray zone.

That report also emphasizes near-term dependence on a mix of conventional forces and SOF to deter and counter hostile measures. The authors argue for the virtues of SOF in this environment because they provide a wide range of capabilities, including integrated intelligence, advising,

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to operate. It also informs joint doctrine development and planning. It does not constitute official direction to the entire joint force or sanctioned joint doctrine.

Here, it is important to distinguish between forward-deployed and forward-stationed forces. The former generally refers to rotational deployment of units and individual personnel to the forward area. The latter is typically a longer-term arrangement in which personnel (perhaps accompanied by their families) work and reside at a location in or near the forward area. For more on this topic, see John R. Deni, *Rotational Deployments vs. Forward Stationing: How Can the Army Achieve Assurance and Deterrence Efficiently and Effectively?* Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, August 2017.

[20] U.S. Department of Defense, 2006, p. 35.

[21] Andreas Jacobs and Guillaume Lasconjarias, *NATO's Hybrid Flanks: Handling Unconventional Warfare in the South and the East*, Rome: NATO Defense College, Research Paper No. 112, April 2015, p. 11.

[22] Lasconjarias and Larsen, eds., "NATO's Response to Hybrid Threats," Rome: NATO Defense College, July 17, 2018.

[23] Freier et al., 2016.

[24] John Chambers, "Five Steps the US Army Should Take to Counter Hybrid Threats in the Gray Zone," Modern War Institute at West Point, October 20, 2016. Also see John Chambers, "Owning the 'Gray Zone,'" *Army Times*, November 6, 2016.

[25] Linda Robinson, Todd C. Helmus, Raphael S. Cohen, Alireza Nader, Andrew Radin, Madeline Magnuson, and Katya Migacheva, *Modern Political Warfare: Current Practices and Possible Responses*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1772-A, 2018, p. 279. There are other prescriptions for the use of SOF in the gray zone. See, for example, Joseph L. Votel, Charles T. Cleveland, Charles T. Connett, and Will Irwin, "Unconventional Warfare in the Gray Zone," *Joint Force Quarterly*, No. 80, First Quarter 2016.

civil affairs, information support operations, and unconventional warfare. We concur with this assessment and agree that SOF can and should be forward positioned and proactive. Our central recommendation, however, centers on the benefits of a forward *conventional* presence.

Note that we are arguing for improved use of conventional forces during gray zone competition, *not* the alteration of conventional forces into gray zone assets. Conventional actions designed to support SOF or directly address Russian hostile measures should be additional actions or secondary benefits of existing actions, such as combined-arms combat training, not actions that replace combat training or other preparations for conventional deterrence and defense. This is part and parcel of the great-power adversarial competition described in the 2018 U.S. National Defense Strategy.

Building a Conventional Force Baseplate Against Russian Hostile Measures

Our recommendation for continuing and enhancing NATO conventional force presence in Eastern Europe is informed by current U.S. policy and NATO concepts.[26] It is derived from our research, existing research on deterrence and gray zone activity, and conclusions from our 2016 symposium on Russian hostile measures. All 18 European and Russian experts who participated in the symposium recommended some form of conventional forward presence to deter and prevent Russian hostile measures in the gray zone.[27] Participants who were asked to focus on deterrence and prevention also argued that NATO relied too heavily on soft power to counter Russian hostile measures and that firmer commitment was required.[28]

Our recommendations are also informed by past practice. Conventional military forces and military enablers, such as human intelligence experts, special operations units, and counterintelligence experts, were central to deterring, preventing, and countering Soviet hostile measures during the Cold War.[29] Forward conventional military bases served as baseplates for a range of capabilities that NATO used effectively against Russian information operations and covert intelligence activities. For example, the U.S. Army Counterintelligence Corps operated directly against Soviet active-measures operations during the Cold War.[30] Military counterintelligence specialists, signals intelligence specialists, and others embedded with conventional

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[26] This includes all U.S. and NATO documents cited herein, as well as U.S. joint and Army doctrine describing the intended uses of various military forces and specialist capabilities, including ground combat forces, aviation, intelligence, military police, information operations, psychological operations, civil affairs, special operations, and human intelligence. Manuals for these types of forces and capabilities, along with their associated tasks, can be found on the NATO and DoD websites.

[27] We held the symposium on February 2, 2016, in Cambridge, UK, with the support of RAND Europe colleagues and our sponsor at the U.S. Army G-3/5/7 and with extensive participation from NATO military officers and civilians. It is worth noting that the symposium opened with the keynote speaker stating, "We are currently at war with Russia."

[28] There are alternative perspectives on commitment. For example, according to our reading of their work, Freier et al. (2016, p. 79) argue for tailored response measures and the enhancement of partner and allied capabilities, rather than a general forward posture of U.S. military forces.

[29] For example, DoD was active at all levels in countering Russian propaganda. See Fletcher Schoen and Christopher J. Lamb, *Deception, Disinformation, and Strategic Communications: How One Interagency Group Made a Difference*, Strategic Perspectives 11, Washington, D.C.: Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, June 2012.

[30] This activity probably continued after the publicly released, recorded histories published by the U.S. Army. See, for example, Ralph W. Brown III, "Making *the Third Man* Look Pale: American-Soviet Conflict in Vienna During the Early Cold War in Austria, 1945–1950," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2001, and James L. Gilbert, John P. Finnegan, and Ann Bray, *In the Shadow of the Sphinx: A History of Army Counterintelligence*, Fort Belvoir, Va.: U.S. Department of the Army, 2005.

forces across Europe for decades provide a range of force protection capabilities against Soviet hostile measures and serve as a deterrent to Soviet short-of-war activity. Military presence shores up the political will of allies, making them at least somewhat less vulnerable to Soviet manipulation.[31]

We argue that successfully deterring, preventing, and (we add) countering all types of Russian hostility—from the gray zone to high-order war—begins with a forward conventional military presence. Forward presence

1. signals NATO commitment and changes Russian cost-benefit calculations
2. improves alliance cohesion and resolve
3. contributes enabling intelligence, information, and civil-military capabilities
4. provides a stable and consistent forward platform to support SOF activities.

Military deployment or forward stationing of forces is a physical manifestation of political commitment and alliance strength. In chastising NATO in the wake of the alliance's post-2014 deployments, Russia de facto acknowledged that it perceived a significant shift in the balance of forces. While no research can precisely or accurately measure the impact of additional forces on Russian cost-benefit calculations for enacting hostile measures, it is safe to make the general assumption that those calculations have changed to some degree since the alliance committed units eastward. Forward military presence is also a firm, visible commitment to the supported member nation. In alliance parlance, forward presence represents an assurance measure: It assures the supported member of its benefits under the Washington Treaty.[32] Multinational military activity of the kind witnessed in the Baltics and northern Poland is also an effective method to improve alliance cohesion short of collaborating in war.

As of early 2019, the United States had committed to supporting a forward military presence in Europe and shoring up all aspects of U.S. and alliance military capabilities. The European Deterrence Initiative and Operation Atlantic Resolve provide the resources and serve as a vehicle to put U.S. military capabilities forward.[33] U.S. European Command

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[31] There is no way to prove the deterrent value of military force against hostile measures, either in a prospective future or in historical cases. Proving a causal link between one human behavior that *did* occur and another human behavior that did not occur—particularly when those behaviors might occur in the murky and complex worlds of espionage, counterespionage, propaganda, covert military actions, and political influence—is all but impossible. However, the same is true of conventional force deterrence: No research can prove absolutely that the presence of conventional forces was the sole or even the primary deterrent against an overt action that did not occur.

Even though it is not possible to prove the deterrent value of conventional forces, nations still employ them in a deterrent role because it is prudent and because reasonable qualitative assessments of historical behavior suggest that these actions have deterrent value. We argue that the same logic extends to the use of military forces to deter hostile measures. Although we cannot prove the degree to which military presence might deter a specific hostile measure, we argue that the overt presence of alliance military forces changes the cost-benefit calculation for all types of Russian behavior. There is a more linear and practical logic connecting the use of military force to preventing and countering Russian hostile measures. Conventional military forces, SOF, and their enabling capabilities (e.g., intelligence collection, counterintelligence, military police, information operations) are specifically tasked with preventing and countering many of the behaviors that constitute tactical hostile measures.

[32] NATO, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, "NATO Assurance Measures," webpage, undated; NATO, "NATO's Readiness Action Plan," fact sheet, October 2015.

[33] For a primer on the European Deterrence Initiative as of mid-2018, see Pat Towell and Aras D. Kazlauskas, *The European Deterrence Initiative: A Budgetary Overview*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, August 8, 2018. For information on Operation Atlantic Resolve, see U.S. Army Europe, "Atlantic Resolve," webpage, undated.

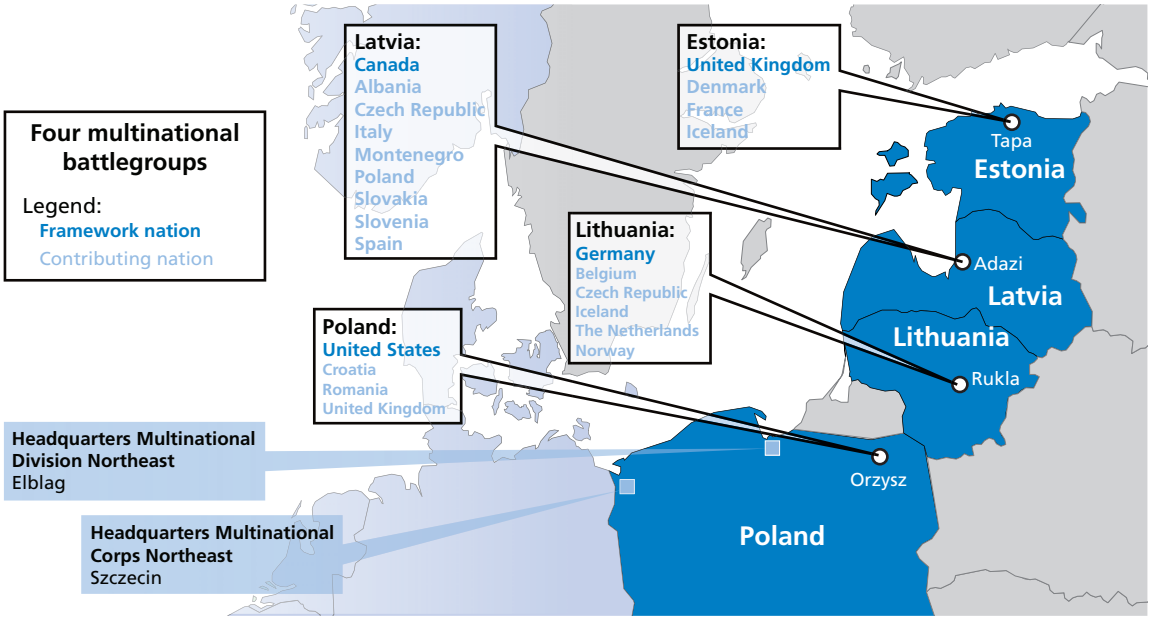
and its components have moved aggressively to increase this forward presence, as well as joint and combined training, planning, and enabling activities. The United States contributes directly to multinational force units in Europe. NATO emphasizes the critical need to sustain and improve alliance cohesion, so forward deployment within the multinational brigade structure is a direct, positive contribution to NATO cohesion. Commitment is manifested in the alliance's enhanced forward presence of approximately 4,500 troops divided across several multinational battlegroups. Figure 4.1 depicts this enhanced presence as of mid-2019.

Forward presence signals commitment and cohesion, potentially changing Russian perceptions of NATO resolve and raising the stakes for Russian hostile-measures activity. But our central argument for forward positioning conventional military forces rests on the idea of the "baseplate." A baseplate is a stable platform upon which capabilities can be added. In this case, the baseplate supports special operations capabilities, which could be supplemented by conventional military technical capabilities that are particularly useful against particular Russian hostile measures.

Conventional Enablers in the Baseplate

NATO can forward position any combination of conventional ground, air, and naval forces. Each type of force brings with it a unique set of enabling capabilities that can be leveraged to deter, prevent, and counter Russian hostile measures.[34] First, we consider examples of the Russian hostile-measures activities that NATO might address with military capabilities, drawn

Figure 4.1
NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence



SOURCE: NATO, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, "Enhanced Forward Presence: Map," webpage, last updated June 14, 2019.

[34] We focus on U.S. Army ground combat forces because this research was undertaken for the U.S. Army.

from our historical analysis, gray zone case studies, and analysis of recent Russian wargames, such as Zapad 2017:

- human intelligence reconnaissance of physical assets for sabotage planning
- human intelligence source recruitment
- measurement and signature intelligence collection
- local signals intelligence collection using small, mobile devices
- locally targeted information operations using regional media outlets
- counter-NATO propaganda, or propaganda targeting specific military forces
- cyberattacks against local networks or infrastructure (e.g., power grids)
- signal interference against GPS or other mixed military-civilian systems
- purposefully misattributed chemical, biological, or radiological attacks
- physical sabotage of key infrastructure, such as transportation systems or information networks
- covert assassination of key military or civilian personnel
- stockpiling of weapons or munitions for use in a prospective high-order war
- infiltration or corruption of partner military forces
- penetration or destruction of internet or cellular communications infrastructure
- limited conventional military attack, such as a ground or air raid.

Conventional military organizations have capabilities that can be applied against these prospective hostile measures. All military units with a functioning staff—for example, infantry battalions or air combat squadrons—have organic intelligence collection and analysis capabilities, including a wide array of aerial systems and multispectral imaging devices. All these units have organic transportation and communication equipment that can be used to move both military and nonmilitary assets. At the brigade, division, and corps levels and higher, technical enablers proliferate. A conventional baseplate includes organic capabilities housed within individual units, as well as conventional force attachments from higher-echelon organizations.

We use a U.S. Army infantry brigade combat team (IBCT) as an example of what can and should be a core element of the forward positioned, conventional force, multidomain baseplate. Each Army IBCT consists of three maneuver battalions, a fires battalion, a reconnaissance squadron, a brigade support battalion, and a brigade special troops battalion.[35] It also has extensive intelligence, military information support operations (MISO), military police, transportation, and communication capabilities, among other assets, that map well to prospective threats in the gray zone and during high-order war. In Table 4.1, a (+) indicates that a higher-echelon unit can provide more of a capability that the IBCT already has; capabilities in the right column are those not typically organic to an Army IBCT.

These technical enablers are impressive, but military units cannot address every possible Russian hostile measure. For example, there is not much that a U.S. Army brigade commander could do to deter, prevent, or counter a Russian economic embargo or a cyberattack against a host-nation intelligence agency. Local sensitivities impose additional restrictions: Applying

[35] Army Field Manual 3-96, *Brigade Combat Team*, Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, U.S. Department of the Army, October 2015, p. 1-2; Army Techniques Publication 3-90.61, *Brigade Special Troops Battalion*, Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, U.S. Department of the Army, August 2015.

Table 4.1
Example Conventional Force Enablers Against Hostile Measures

Organic IBCT Capabilities	Attachments from Higher Echelons
Human intelligence collection teams	(+) Human intelligence collection teams
Counterintelligence collection teams	(+) Counterintelligence collection teams
Small, short-range unmanned aerial systems (UASs) and limited processing, exploitation, and dissemination of intelligence information	Larger, longer-range UAS assets and advanced processing, exploitation, and dissemination of intelligence information
Remote ground sensors and monitoring teams	(+) Remote ground sensor teams
Short-range signals intelligence collection	Advanced, longer-range signals intelligence
Intelligence analysis platoon	Intelligence analysis reachback brigades
Military police platoon	Military police battalions
Ground surveillance radars	(+) Ground surveillance radar teams
Classified and unclassified radio and data networks	Advanced command-and-control capabilities
MISO teams	Strategic communication capabilities
Public affairs section with reachback capability	Fully integrated media teams
Information security specialists	Cyber-electromagnetic activity teams
Chemical, biological, and radiological defense units	(+) Chemical, biological, radiological defense
Infantry combat and fires units	Armor, aviation, long-range fires, and joint enablers

SOURCES: Ralph O. Baker, "HUMINT-Centric Operations: Developing Actionable Intelligence in the Urban Counterinsurgency Environment," *Military Review*, March–April 2007; Scott R. Masson, *Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Use in the Army Brigade Combat Teams: Increasing Effectiveness Across the Spectrum of Conflict*, thesis, Monterey, Calif.: Naval Postgraduate School, December 2006; Army Field Manual 2-22.3, *Human Intelligence Collector Operations*, Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, U.S. Department of the Army, September 6, 2006; Army Field Manual 3-13, *Inform and Influence Activities*, Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, U.S. Department of the Army, January 2013; Army Field Manual 3-96, 2015; Isaac R. Porche III, Christopher Paul, Chad C. Serena, Colin P. Clarke, Erin-Elizabeth Johnson, and Drew Herrick, *Tactical Cyber: Building a Strategy for Cyber Support to Corps and Below*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1600-A, 2017; Steven P. Stover, "Army Developing Expeditionary Cyber-Electromagnetic Teams to Support Tactical Commanders," U.S. Army, February 7, 2018.

NOTE: (+) indicates that a higher-echelon unit can provide more of a capability that the IBCT already has. Reachback capability means that a forward-deployed unit can obtain networked support from units in the United States or elsewhere; as of early 2019, cyber-electromagnetic activity teams were an experimental U.S. Army capability (see Stover, 2018).

all these capabilities in Eastern Europe is not a cut-and-dried proposal. Intelligence collection is a sensitive subject in Europe, particularly in the wake of Edward Snowden's unauthorized disclosure of the details of numerous global surveillance programs.[36] Country-level sensitivities dictate a case-by-case approach to increased intelligence and information operations. We touch on this point in the next section.

However, even a partial accounting of military assets signals a potential game-changing role against Russian hostile measures. During gray zone competition, even limited employ-

[36] Alison Smale, "Anger Growing Among Allies on U.S. Spying," *New York Times*, October 23, 2013; U.S. House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, *Executive Summary of Review of the Unauthorized Disclosure of Former National Security Agency Contractor Edward Snowden*, congressional report, Washington, D.C., September 15, 2016.

ment of some of these assets would give a country like Latvia—which has only one effective ground combat brigade with limited enablers—the ability to deter, prevent, or counter the kinds of prospective Russian hostile-measures behavior listed earlier in this section.[37] Russia will be less likely to execute a limited military raid or send "little green men" into an area populated by armed NATO military personnel.[38] And Russian *maskirovka* and *dezinformatsiya* will be less effective in an environment covered by advanced military intelligence capabilities.

Military assets will be unleashed during high-order war, sharply enhancing host-nation capabilities.[39] For example, the presence of advanced military ground reconnaissance units, heavily armed area defense patrols, UAS observation, long-range thermal and electro-optical sensors, counterintelligence officers, military police checkpoints, and active signals intelligence interception will make Russian military leaders think twice before committing valuable Spetsnaz assets to reconnaissance or sabotage missions.[40] They may be deterred from committing their teams, or the physical threat may actually prevent their deployment.

If Russian leaders did commit to employing hostile measures in our example IBCT's area of operations, during either gray zone or high-order conflict, the IBCT could help counter the effectiveness of these operations. Active reconnaissance, armed physical security, and the unseen tendrils of intelligence interception will necessarily limit the movement of Russian assets and reduce the number and quality of available targets for observation, sabotage, or assassination. Communication teams can help secure local data and voice networks, or even provide limited redundancy for the host nation in the case of an effective sabotage operation. MISO and public affairs teams can work with host-nation media to counter local Russian propaganda efforts.

A Stable and Supportive Platform for SOF

> International security competition and those elements seeking to undermine the Alliance will increasingly attempt to do so via Grey Zone tactics. . . . To parry competitors' Grey Zone tactics, SOF can provide essential special reconnaissance, intelligence, and precision operations. . . . A more efficient and regionalized SOF presence would build significant resilience and strength to the Alliance's new defence and deterrence posture.
>
> — *NATO Special Operations Forces in the Modern Security Environment*, 2018[41]

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[37] Latvian National Armed Forces, homepage, undated.

[38] A raid is a limited attack with one specific target. It is intended to be executed quickly and includes a purposeful withdrawal; it is not intended to hold ground. While an overt military raid could trigger a high-order war, the action, by itself, falls into the category of gray zone hostile measures.

[39] In all likelihood, prewar planning establishes restrictions for action. However, during high-order war, commanders tend to ignore some of the restrictions imposed during peacetime, particularly if these restrictions do not address law-of-war issues.

[40] The U.S. Army's field manual on operations describes the various activities Army units conduct in an area defense mission, which is the most likely mission to be assigned to a brigade helping to defend an Eastern European country against a Russian gray zone or conventional attack. See Army Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, U.S. Department of the Army, October 2017. Also see Army Field Manual 3-90-2, *Reconnaissance, Security, and Tactical Enabling Tasks*, Washington, D.C.: Headquarters. U.S. Department of the Army, March 2013, pp. 2-1–2-24.

[41] NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Defence and Security Committee, *NATO Special Operations Forces in the Modern Security Environment*, draft, April 4, 2018, pp. 11–13.

NATO SOF, such as U.S. Army Special Forces, the British Army's Special Air Service, and the Estonian Special Operations Force, bring additional, often more specialized, and (in some cases) more effective capabilities to bear against Russian hostile measures. Prior RAND research has detailed these capabilities and prospective applications, and we do not reiterate all the SOF capabilities at NATO's disposal here.[42] Rather, we focus on the relationship between conventional forces and SOF to show the prospective value of the conventional baseplate.

Forward-positioned multinational conventional forces provide two critical enabling functions for SOF. First, they provide a safe and consistently available forward base from which to operate. Conventional force military bases are typically large, secure, and well resourced. A well-built facility has sufficient supplies of food, water, fuel, and ammunition, along with some advanced maintenance, airfield, communication, and training facilities. SOF units can deploy to these bases, use their facilities, and retain some degree of security and anonymity within the envelope of the larger conventional presence.

Second, a consistent forward military presence helps multinational NATO forces build close and lasting relationships with host-nation military leaders at all levels of command. Forward presence also acclimatizes the local civilian population to the presence of multinational soldiers and equipment. Relationship building and host-nation acclimatization are essential to helping SOF overcome a consistent challenge in the gray zone: securing authorities and permissions to use special operations capabilities. In 2017, RAND published an examination of the organizational relationships between U.S. SOF teams and country teams around the world. It found that authorities were often a stumbling block for global special operations:

> In many cases, the country team imagined that SOF had the authorities it did not, and in some cases, the embassy thought that SOF did not have the authorities that it did. In other cases, clear authorities for an intended action or program appeared to be lacking.[43]

One official interviewed for the RAND study noted that authorities "are the single biggest limiting factor" to SOF effectiveness.[44] The report called for better integration of special operations liaison officers and considerable attention to relationship building.

Another examination of NATO special operations identified a cumbersome authorities-approval process as an impediment to successful operations.[45] Permissions follow authorities, and they are not guaranteed: Even if NATO forces are given the authority to act, host nations often do not permit the authorized actions due to various sensitivities. There is no simple solution to these questions about authorities and permissions. At least for the United States, authorities are tangled in legal complexity and subject to both the bureaucratic and cultural rules of various host-nation military and civilian organizations, as well as any gaps between

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[42] Robinson et al., 2018.

[43] Jason H. Campbell, Richard S. Girven, Ben Connable, Jonah Blank, Raphael S. Cohen, Larry Hanauer, William Young, Linda Robinson, and Sean Mann, *Implications of the Security Cooperation Office Transition in Afghanistan for Special Operations Forces: An Abbreviated Report of the Study's Primary Findings*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1201/1-SOJTF-A, 2017, p. 7.

[44] Campbell et al., 2017, p. 9.

[45] Steven C. Taylor, *The NATO Special Operations Forces Transformation Initiative: Opportunities and Challenges*, thesis, Monterey, Calif.: Naval Postgraduate School, 2009.

them.[46] NATO should seek to streamline its authorities and permissions processes, but, as prior RAND research has argued, bottom-up relationship building can go a long way toward improving efficiency and effectiveness. A conventional baseplate provides exactly the kind of presence, consistency, and level of engagement necessary to clear away some of the bureaucratic barriers to obtaining special operations authorities and permissions and should improve the capacity of SOF to address Russian hostile measures.[47]

The Nature of the Baseplate, Treaty Limitations, Reactions, and Mitigating Options

What should the conventional baseplate look like for NATO operations? It can take two general, but not mutually exclusive, forms: (1) a constant, rotational forward deployment of units that are not permanently stationed in the forward area, or (2) permanently forward-stationed units.

In the case of U.S. forces, units that forward deploy could operate from the host nation's bases or from a permanent shell base specifically designed to host visiting multinational forces. Forward-stationed U.S. personnel might or might not be accompanied by their families, depending on the perceived level of threat in the forward area. Those who bring their families tend to stay in place far longer—in many cases, three times as long—as those on what the U.S. military refers to as unaccompanied orders.[48] Host-nation forces could conceivably provide a unilateral baseplate, but that approach would negate many of the benefits we anticipate from a multinational approach and the forward positioning of Western European military units.

Both forward deployment and forward stationing have benefits and drawbacks. In his 2017 comparative analysis of U.S. Army forward deployment versus forward stationing, John R. Deni concluded that forward stationing was preferred by host nations because it provided "a sign of a stronger, more enduring commitment from the United States."[49] Deni found that the anticipated cost savings of forward deployments were overestimated and that both soldiers and their families saw forward stationing as a relief from constant separation. He recommended forward stationing U.S. Army forces in Eastern Europe and concurrently reducing forward deployments.[50]

Our analysis of the Russian hostile-measures threat, the previous RAND research, and our conceptualization of an ideal conventional baseplate reinforces Deni's findings: NATO should seek a forward-stationed multinational commitment in Eastern Europe. A 2015 RAND

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[46] RAND conducted another study on persistent global SOF operations, and several interviewees commented on the complex nature of the required authority approvals for these activities. See Derek Eaton, Angela O'Mahoney, Thomas S. Szayna, and William Welser IV, *Supporting Persistent and Networked Special Operations Forces (SOF) Operations: Insights from Forward-Deployed SOF Personnel*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1333-USSOCOM, 2017.

[47] Also see James Q. Roberts, "Need Authorities for the Gray Zone? Stop Whining. Instead, Help Yourself to Title 100. Hell, Take Some Title 200 While You're at It," *PRISM*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 2016, and NATO, Special Operations Headquarters, *NATO Special Operations Forces Military Assistance Handbook*, first study draft, Mons, Belgium, July 2014.

[48] Defense Travel Management Office, "Tour Lengths and Tours of Duty Outside the Continental United States (OCONUS)," January 29, 2018.

[49] Deni, 2017, p. xvii. RAND has conducted other relevant research on this issue: Michael J. Lostumbo, Michael J. McNerney, Eric Peltz, Derek Eaton, David R. Frelinger, Victoria A. Greenfield, John Halliday, Patrick Mills, Bruce R. Nardulli, Stacie L. Pettyjohn, Jerry M. Sollinger, and Stephen M. Worman, *Overseas Basing of U.S. Military Forces: An Assessment of Relative Costs and Strategic Benefits*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-201-OSD, 2013.

[50] Deni, 2017, pp. xvii–xix.

report specifically recommends pursuing U.S. Army basing in Romania and Bulgaria, a recommendation reinforced by our separate assessment of the Russian hostile-measures threat to southeastern Europe.[51] A conventional baseplate for multinational NATO operations could consist of a series of interdependent but unitary member-state bases (e.g., a U.S. base with a U.S. brigade linked to a French base with a French brigade) or multinational conventional bases created to permanently host a combined force. This does not preclude the continued development of Eastern European NATO member forces: Continuous efforts should be made to build and reinforce the defensive capabilities of the Baltic States, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and other alliance members and partners close to Russia's western border.

Treaty Limitations and Mitigating Options

Several international agreements might limit NATO's options for both the deployment and stationing of forces. These include the Russia Founding Act, the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, and the Vienna Documents of 1994 and 2011.[52] All these agreements seek to reduce conventional and nuclear tensions in Europe by establishing standards and procedures for transparency, force reduction, and potential escalatory actions, such as the forward deployment of forces. All decisions by NATO and its member states to forward position military units in Eastern Europe are affected to some degree by these various commitments. However, there is wiggle room in every relevant document. Three approaches to enabling forward presence can help NATO avoid breaking commitment thresholds and triggering Russian overreaction.

First, force type selection should lean toward light infantry linked to advanced fires assets and technical capabilities, rather than maneuverable armored units. Armor is essential to any conventional fight, but it is also a signature offensive asset with the highest likelihood of triggering Russian worry. Second, the introduction of forces can be gradual. Flooding Eastern Europe with a large-scale conventional presence would also seem to suggest offensive intent. NATO has, thus far, emphasized its defensive nature—and it should continue to do so. Third, its ongoing commitment to confidence-building measures with Russia should be sharply increased to coincide with its improved force posture.[53]

Will a Conventional Military Presence Deter Russian Hostile Measures?

In this chapter, we argued for forward stationing conventional military forces to help deter, prevent, and counter Russian hostile measures in Eastern Europe. There was strong expert

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[51] Thomas S. Szyana, Paul Dreyer, Derek Eaton, and Lisa Saum-Manning, *Army Global Basing Posture: An Analytic Framework for Maximizing Responsiveness and Effectiveness*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-158-A, 2015, p. xiv; Raphael S. Cohen and Andrew Radin, *Russia's Hostile Measures in Europe: Understanding the Threat*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1793-A, 2019.

[52] The Russia Founding Act is more precisely called the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security Between NATO and the Russian Federation (NATO, Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security Between NATO and the Russian Federation, May 28, 1997). Also see Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Vienna Document 1994 of the Negotiations on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures*, Vienna, Austria, 1994, and U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Arms Control, Verification, and Compliance, *Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty*, Paris, November 19, 1990. For an opinion piece on treaty issues, see Ulrich Kühn, "With Zapad Over, Is It Time for Conventional Arms Control in Europe?" *War on the Rocks*, September 27, 2017.

[53] References to these measures can be found in the Russia Founding Act, the Vienna Document 1994, and the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty, and, specifically in the Vienna Document of 2011 (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Vienna Document 2011 on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures*, Vienna, Austria, November 30, 2011. Also see NATO-Russia Council, homepage, undated.

consensus at our 2016 symposium supporting this approach and the belief that a conventional force presence would improve deterrence against what are effectively nonconventional actions. Of course, expert opinion does not constitute empirical evidence. Furthermore, empirically proving the efficacy of any deterrent is all but impossible: Showing definitive causal proof in the absence of a particular state behavior is beyond scientific capability. As we have argued, historical narratives of the Cold War suggest that the use of military enabling assets was at least partly effective in identifying and countering Soviet hostile measures.

Our argument rests on the following points:

1. In general, Russia will constantly pursue advantage through hostile measures, particularly in areas close to its borders, and reduce risk by reducing aggressive opportunism when and where adversaries resist.
2. NATO has engaged in a limited effort to resist Russian hostile measures in Eastern Europe, but this effort would benefit from reinforcement.
3. The insufficiency of NATO's forward-positioned assets tailored to deter, prevent, or counter hostile measures has facilitated Russian aggressive opportunism in Eastern Europe.
4. Conventional military units, with their organic capabilities and access to enabling capabilities, represent resistance by their very presence and increase the risk of Russian hostile-measures activities.
5. NATO can improve the prospects of deterrence if it can increase Russia's perception of the risk of using hostile measures and reduce its aggressive behavior without triggering a war, something that may involve using forces that are also capable of deterring a Russian conventional attack.[54]

If a forward conventional presence fails to deter Russia from employing hostile measures, conventional enablers and supported SOF elements will have some role in physically preventing or countering Russian behavior. It is not necessary to empirically prove the value of multiple-source intelligence collection assets in detecting and locating Russian clandestine or covert operatives and activities; this is one of their long-standing, primary purposes. Public affairs, MISO, and other information enablers are purpose-built to identify and counter hostile information activities. If Russia does not perceive these capabilities as a deterrent, it will surely have to account for them in practice.

Conclusion: Sometimes a Bear Is Just a Bear

Over at least the past century, Russia has naturally and effectively evolved a deeply institutionalized and highly expert hostile-measures capability. Hostile measures are an

[54] Of these points, the fourth—the belief that conventional units represent resistance—is perhaps the most arguable. Russia may simply adapt its measures to avoid conventional units and their enablers. See Cohen and Radin (2018) for evidence that Russia is less active where NATO's military presence is stronger.

There is a voluminous literature on deterrence, particularly in the context of the Russia-NATO relationship. We have cited relevant examples throughout this report. Also see Becca Wasser, Ben Connable, Anthony Atler, and James Sladden, eds., *Comprehensive Deterrence Forum: Proceedings and Commissioned Papers*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, CF-345-A, 2018.

excellent match for Russia's currently limited, nonideological, transactional, purposefully deceptive, and mostly tactical approach to problem solving. Unlike leaders in many NATO member states, Russian leaders are rarely conflicted about their national objectives, and they are less likely to be restrained by humanitarian concerns. While they would prefer to be respected and even liked by the international community, they appear to be quite comfortable facing the consequences for their often disruptive and mostly unilateral actions. Even as Moscow's aggression modulates along with the state's resources, its approach to international relations remains generally consistent and foreseeable. Putin reflects rather than constitutes the Russian state idiom when it comes to the use of hostile measures. The characteristic worry-driven, transactional ruthlessness in pursuit of state survival will almost certainly outlive him.

But even in the miasma of reactive fear triggered by Russia's recent adventurism, we see growing expert consensus on the limitations of Russian strategic power. Viewed with cold objectivity, Russian aggression in the gray zone reflects no small amount of weakness. Although Russia uses hostile measures opportunistically and routinely, its best-known hostile-measures operations—including those against Moldova, Georgia, Estonia, Ukraine, and Turkey—were reactive, sometimes frantic, and, by our interpretation of Russian grand strategy, ineffective. At the apparent height of Russia's post-Soviet power, it finds itself increasingly surrounded by NATO members and allies. In Europe, Russia's tactical gray zone successes have caused localized disruption but, with the notable exception of Crimea, no state expansion. It would be difficult to argue that the lives of Russian-speaking people or Russian citizens living in Eastern Europe have been markedly improved by Russia's cyberattacks, assassinations, economic embargoes, and military incursions.

If the European democratic experiment is failing, Russian gray zone attacks are not the proximate cause.[55] If we are at the nadir of European and, specifically, NATO cohesion and power, then Russia's strategic failures are all the more noteworthy.[56]

In 2014, political cartoonist Robert J. Matson stated, "Sometimes a bear is just a bear." He was arguing that some contemporaneous assessments of Russian prowess and global reach were overstated. His statement suggests both threat and limit: Bears are scary and dangerous when cornered, but they are relatively predictable, and they can be managed.[57] Russia is strategically limited but tactically strong. Its institutional capabilities to disrupt and punish deserve a healthy dose of respect. A bear is just a bear, but a bear is still a bear.

While we cannot predict actual behavior or tactical hostile-measures actions that Russia would pursue in a given scenario, we argue that it is possible to forecast Russia's strategic behavior in Eastern Europe with some degree of confidence. Russia will continue to do what it has done for the past century: apply hostile measures to preserve a favorable status quo, avert internal disorder, and disrupt Western states that represent what Russian leaders perceive to be existential threats. NATO can and should take positive measures to present steel to the probing Russian bayonet. Its actions to date have been helpful but are insufficient. If the alliance is serious about living up to its Article 5 commitments, then it will have to match Russia's insti-

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[55] Vojko Volk, "The Failure—and Future—of Democracy in Europe," *Foreign Policy in Focus*, July 29, 2015; James Masters, "Has Democracy Reached a Breaking Point?" CNN, April 26, 2017; Christian Caryl, "Europe's Big Freedom Fail," *Foreign Policy*, March 25, 2016.

[56] Nikolas K. Gvosdev, "Exposed: NATO's Dangerous Vulnerability to Russia," *National Interest*, October 9, 2015; Carlo Davis, "NATO Is in No Position to Protect Eastern Europe from Russia," *New Republic*, March 11, 2014.

[57] Pavel Koshkin, "The Political Cartoon as a Tool in Modern Information Wars," *Russia Direct*, January 21, 2014.

tutionalization of hostile measures with an institutionalization of moderated but hard-nosed security in Eastern Europe.

The alliance faces another serious challenge: how to distinguish between a gray zone hostile measure and an Article 5 trigger. Precisely which of Russia's hostile measures, applied in which circumstances, constitute an act of war against a NATO member state? Russia's use of hostile measures is long-standing, but cyber, information operations, and other actions that leverage emerging technologies are new and novel, and it may be difficult for NATO to identify an appropriate response. We did not explore this seam in detail, but it should be a topic for future research.

Finally, NATO military planners and political leaders must do more to incorporate hostile measures into considerations for high-order war. Whether or not the community of analysts intended to create the unhelpful conceptual gap between MSW and war, it exists, and it undermines the clarity and effectiveness of the alliance's military planning and policy. Collectively, the West must assume that hostile measures are viable tools in any conflict and that Russia will apply them reflexively and with considerable tactical expertise. Here, too, we recommend further research, as well as improvements to how NATO exercises and simulates notional war with Russia.

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Russia's conventional capabilities pose a serious threat to NATO that remains mostly untested. Where it has historically succeeded is in using various types of hostile measures to sow disorder, weaken democratic institutions, and undermine NATO cohesion and what Russia perceives as the eastward expansion of Western institutions. However, Russia also has a long track record of strategic shortfalls, and even some ineptitude. Formulating strategies for addressing these actions demands a clear understanding of how and why Russian leaders employ hostile measures—for example, economic embargoes, limited military incursions, cyberattacks, and information campaigns.

A historical review of Soviet-era power dynamics and detailed case studies of Russian hostile measures in the post-Soviet era help clarify the conditions under which Russia employs hostile measures and the vulnerabilities it exploits in the countries it targets—as well as the messages these measures send to other key audiences, such as Russia's domestic public, the Russian diaspora, and Western powers that Russia perceives as encroaching on its sphere of influence.

NATO and other Western powers will benefit from exploring opportunities to deter, prevent, and counter Russian hostile behavior in the so-called gray zone short of war, where daily adversarial competition occurs. Many of the behaviors that Russia exhibits in the gray zone will no doubt extend to conventional war.

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