

# Russia's Hostile Measures

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

Appendix A: An Evolutionary History of Russia's Hostile Measures

STEPHANIE YOUNG, BRENNAL ALLEN

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## About This Appendix

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This appendix accompanies the RAND report *Russia's Hostile Measures: Combating Russian Gray Zone Aggression Against NATO in the Contact, Blunt, and Surge Layers of Competition* and a second appendix presenting detailed case studies of Russian uses of hostile measures in the post-Soviet era. Both are available online at [www.rand.org/t/RR2539](http://www.rand.org/t/RR2539). Here, we present a historical overview of Soviet hostile measures between 1917 and the end of the Cold War, with a brief discussion of relevant pre-Soviet history. The history and evolution of Russia's hostile measures provide context to help North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) leaders and those of its member states better understand current Russian behavior.

We establish a timeline, sketch out Soviet-era institutional actors and capability development, identify broad security challenges that have motivated action over time, and describe the evolution and institutionalization of hostile-measures tactics as employed in several regional engagements.

### Scope, Research Questions, and Approach

Capturing the context for Russia's current use of hostile measures necessitated prioritizing breadth (in terms of time and geography) as opposed to exploring individual milestones in depth. However, even this high-level approach allows the reader to draw connections between the development and historical uses of hostile measures and the post–Cold War cases presented in Appendix B, “Detailed Case Studies of Russia's Use of Hostile Measures,” available at [www.rand.org/t/RR2539](http://www.rand.org/t/RR2539).

This historical review makes clear that Russia's use of hostile measures is not new. Rather, Soviet and Russian leaders have employed hostile measures alongside other tools of statecraft to achieve foreign policy objectives for decades.

It is also helpful to discuss what this report is not. First, it is not a scholarly history, but it does draw on a broad-based scholarly historiography, as well as a substantial body of U.S. and Soviet or Russian primary documents.<sup>1</sup> Although selected Russian-language sources are cited, either in translation or as translated by the research team, we primarily used English-language U.S. government documents that provided unique insight into Soviet activities. Among the most important collections 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

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<sup>1</sup> For this effort, we did not conduct research in physical archives.

the online National Security Archive of declassified documents related to U.S. foreign policy housed at George Washington University.<sup>2</sup> In addition to government documents, these collections include personal correspondence and popular literature. Our objective in selecting our sources was to provide insights into Soviet activities and, to the extent possible, Soviet strategic intent. Exploring the relationship between Russian strategic intent and Russia's use of hostile measures in greater detail would require a deeper dive into Russian-language primary sources.

Second, this appendix does not present a complete history of Soviet and Russian foreign policy. Rather, we explore selected historical events for insights into the scope and nature of Soviet/Russian hostile-measures capabilities and patterns of employment, and we chose our examples accordingly. We specifically considered Soviet activities in Eastern Europe because they helped us trace the history of behavior in the region of greatest concern to NATO leaders. This region was the central battleground for the Cold War. However, much recent scholarship has emphasized the global nature of the Cold War, so we did not limit our focus to Europe. We considered cases in East Asia to explore how the Soviet Union's global role—especially its relationship with communist China—affected the nature of the hostile measures it employed. We also selected several examples from postcolonial Africa. Revolutionary movements on that continent were both an important target for Soviet foreign policy and far from the Soviet Union's traditional sphere of influence. Engagement in Africa therefore depended on Soviet conventional power-projection capabilities that developed over time.

Finally, we dedicate a section of this appendix entirely to the Soviet Union's involvement in the protracted war in Afghanistan. This major conflict helped us meet one of our primary research objectives: to explore the use of hostile measures above the threshold of war.

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<sup>2</sup> 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, National Security Archive, homepage, undated.

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## Abbreviations

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Cheka	VCheka, or Vserossiyskaya Chrezvychaynaya Komissiya [All-Russian Extraordinary Commission]
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
Cominform	Communist Information Bureau
Comintern	Communist International
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
KGB	Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti [Committee for State Security]
KMT	Kuomintang [Nationalist Party of China]
MPLA	Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola [Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola]
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NKVD	Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del [People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs]
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OGPU	Obyedinyonnoye Gosudarstvennoye Politicheskoye Upravleniye [Joint State Political Directorate]
Okhrana	Okhrannoye Otdelenie [Department for Protecting the Public Security and Order]
PCE	Partido Comunista de España [Communist Party of Spain]
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PRC	People's Republic of China
UN	United Nations
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics



## The Russian Revolution to 1944

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Historians do not necessarily recognize the years between the 1917 revolution and the effective defeat of Germany in Europe near the end of World War II as a distinct period in Russian history. We artificially aggregated this period to set the backdrop for our later discussion of the Cold War era. With respect to hostile measures, this was a period of important institutional development in the Soviet Union. It saw the emergence and growth of institutions for political, policy, and ideological control, such as the Politburo and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Central institutions designed to establish and maintain state security emerged during the same period. Foremost of these was the Cheka, which evolved to become the KGB and the Soviet armed forces. These institutions would come to drive the development and serve as tools to implement Soviet hostile measures, with particular focus on exerting political influence, conducting information operations, and engaging in both covert and overt (but typically limited) kinetic action.

These institutions built and exercised internal and external control simultaneously. For the most part, there was no delineation among Soviet state entities aimed at establishing and maintaining a favorable internal and global status quo. For example, the United States generally divides responsibility for internal and external security between the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the CIA, while the Soviet KGB was responsible for both internal and external security simultaneously. The most prominent exception to this dualistic structure was the Communist International (Comintern), a global organization that put the Soviet Union at the center of efforts to develop leadership and ideology for socialist movements around the world. The Soviet state also envisioned the Comintern as both cover and facilitation for hostile measures, including intelligence operations and political destabilization. By the start of World War II, the Soviet Union had burgeoning hostile-measures and conventional capabilities available for use beyond its borders—and it had flexed these capabilities repeatedly, most notably during the Spanish Civil War.

### Pre-Soviet Russia and the Revolution

From the 16th century to their peak power in the early 18th century under Peter the Great, the Russian tsars vastly expanded their reach across Asia and Europe. By the late 19th century, the sprawling Russian Empire controlled diverse peoples (estimated at more than 125 million) over a region of about 8.5 million square miles. Fewer than half of the subjects

were Russian, and only about two-thirds were Slavic.<sup>1</sup> The diverse populations that constituted the remaining third of the empire by population (but three-quarters of its territory) consisted of 70 major ethnic groups, including the predominantly Muslim peoples in Central Asia and the Caucasus.<sup>2</sup> Unlike other European powers during this period, however, Russia expanded across the continent, incorporating neighbors rather than claiming territories overseas. Also in contrast to other European imperial leaders, the tsars viewed the territory under their control as Russian. As previous RAND research concluded, “Russia did not so much *have* an empire as it simply *was* an empire.”<sup>3</sup>

Yet, administering and maintaining effective control over such a far-flung and heterogeneous area proved challenging for St. Petersburg.<sup>4</sup> The tsars engaged in violent wars in the mid-19th century to tamp down resistance, resulting in the deaths of many residents and their displacement by Slav migrants.<sup>5</sup> These wars proved extremely resource-intensive for the tsars; one estimate held that, by the 1850s, wars in the Caucasus alone consumed one-sixth of the empire’s resources.<sup>6</sup> The situation proved increasingly unsustainable for the Russian Empire, especially as it faced pressure from Germany and Japan in the years leading up to World War I.

As the tsars worked to maintain control over the empire, they developed tools and institutions that would provide important foundations for what would come to be known as “active measures” (*aktivnye meropriyatiya*). After the assassination of Alexander II by revolutionaries in 1881, his successor, Alexander III, created the Okhrana (Okhrannoye Otdelenie), or the Department for Protecting the Public Security and Order.<sup>7</sup> To counter revolutionary elements in the Russian Empire, this institution relied on both informants and “active agents” embedded in opposition groups. Okhrana agents worked to both collect information and generate disinformation that could be used to foment distrust and discord among revolutionary organizations.<sup>8</sup> Under Sergei Zubatov, the Okhrana’s Moscow bureau chief at the end of the 19th century, the organization took increasingly aggressive measures to counter internal opposition, including infiltrating political parties and sponsoring its own political parties, student organizations, and labor unions. Among the movements its agents infiltrated was the Bolshevik Party—at the time, on the verge of an unlikely rise to power.<sup>9</sup> As one scholar has argued,

<sup>1</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Westad, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> 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, pp. 3–4.

<sup>4</sup> Peter the Great moved the capital of the Russian Empire from Moscow to St. Petersburg in 1712. St. Petersburg remained the capital until 1918, with the exception of the years 1728–1732, when Moscow briefly regained its capital-city status under Peter II (John H. Appleby, “The Founding of St. Petersburg in the Context of the Royal Society’s Relationship with Russia,” *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, Vol. 57, No. 3, September 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 42.

<sup>6</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 45.

<sup>7</sup> Richard J. Johnson, “Zagranichnaia Agentura: The Tsarist Political Police in Europe,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 7, Nos. 1–2, January–April 1972.

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Wilson, *Virtual Politics: Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005, p. 2; Aaron Bateman, “The KGB and Its Enduring Legacy,” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Wilson, 2005, p. 3.

Zubatov was motivated by “the belief that autocracy was better able to satisfy legitimate social demands than revolutionary violence.”<sup>10</sup>

As early as 1885, the Russian Empire had deployed the Okhrana model abroad with the establishment of the Foreign Agency, through which Russian police operating in foreign countries monitored emigres who were potentially hostile to the regime.<sup>11</sup>

## The Russian Revolution and Civil War

The tsars' tenuous hold on power presented an opportunity for political opposition in the empire.<sup>12</sup> During the February 1917 revolution, Nicholas II was forced to abdicate the throne, which set the course for rule by a provisional government. This political upheaval occurred in the context of major conventional military setbacks for Russia in World War I. In October 1917, the Bolshevik Party, led by Vladimir Lenin, overthrew the provisional government. This, however, was prelude to a period of intense civil war, during which the Bolsheviks successfully battled factions that resisted their centralized rule and worked to put down external threats.

The new leaders faced the challenge of negotiating an end to Russian participation in World War I from a position of weakness after the Imperial Army was disestablished in early 1918. On March 3, 1918, Lenin signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Central Powers, which resulted in his government's loss of its Polish provinces, the Baltic states, Ukraine, and parts of the Caucasus. For the revolutionaries, the loss of territory was considered an acceptable trade-off for peace. Leon Trotsky, commissar for foreign affairs, explained that his country had little choice but to accept the terms of the agreement: “Yes, we are weak, and this is our greatest historical crime, because in history one must not be weak. Whoever is weak becomes a prey to the strong.”<sup>13</sup> The regime focused on developing security institutions to ensure that it could prevent such an outcome in the future. In February 1918, the government began standing up the new Red Army and worked to retake territory recently lost. In the postwar settlement, the Soviet Union would regain all the territory it had lost—and more.<sup>14</sup>

Throughout the 1920s, Soviet leaders also worked to neutralize the perceived threat posed by neighboring states. Hostilities had been simmering between the Bolsheviks and Poland since 1919. In 1920, Polish forces entered Bolshevik territory and advanced on Kyiv before being pushed back by the Red Army. Efforts by Red Army commanders to advance further into Poland were rebuffed, however, in what was considered a Polish victory. The Treaty of Riga, signed in March 1921, resulted in Polish territorial gains.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Wilson, 2005, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Johnson, 1972.

<sup>12</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 45.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in R. Craig Nation, *Black Earth, Red Star: A History of Soviet Security Policy, 1917–1991*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992, p. 15.

<sup>14</sup> Oliker et al., 2015. It would not directly annex all these areas; rather, it established a tightly controlled sphere of influence across Eastern Europe.

<sup>15</sup> Nation, 1992, pp. 30–31.

During the war, the Bolsheviks had recruited thousands of Poles from the ranks of local communists in a failed attempt to set up a friendly puppet government.<sup>16</sup> This would not be the last time a Soviet or Russian leader would use proxies to support foreign policy objectives. “We decided to use our armed forces,” Lenin explained, “in order to help Sovietize Poland. Out of that arose the policy for the future as a whole.”<sup>17</sup> The war turned out to be more challenging than Lenin anticipated and contributed to the development of more-robust foreign intelligence capabilities.<sup>18</sup>

To preserve their revolutionary gains, the Bolsheviks also fought an intense civil war. On December 30, 1922, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was officially established. The boundaries of this federation of ostensibly autonomous regions were roughly those of the Russian Empire.<sup>19</sup>

### Early Soviet Institutional Development

The period after the revolution and civil war saw the institutional development of the new Soviet state. This is not to say, however, that such development was entirely new, linear, or reflective of a consistent vision for the Soviet Union's revolutionary or global role. But the new state was developing tools for maintaining political control, stability, and security that played an important role throughout the Cold War and that, in some cases, it continued to use in the post-Cold War period. For example, the Red Army developed into a force capable of effectively projecting power beyond its borders. The Soviet Union emerged from the civil war with an army 5 million strong, organized into 55 rifle and 23 cavalry divisions.<sup>20</sup> Yet, it was also underresourced. Slow modernization, as described by one scholar, meant that “it was still a World War I army centered around infantry, artillery, and cavalry.”<sup>21</sup> Soviet industry and infrastructure were in disrepair after years of revolution and war, and factory equipment was obsolete or poorly maintained.<sup>22</sup> This situation would change dramatically in the decade that followed.<sup>23</sup> This burgeoning conventional capability fostered the evolution of Soviet and Russian hostile measures. For example, the development of defense industries capable of producing military equipment was a necessary precursor to Soviet foreign assistance activities in support of such allies as North Korea and North Vietnam, and the development of conventional capabilities for power projection allowed the Soviet Union to engage in such faraway countries as

<sup>16</sup> Mark Galeotti, *Spetsnaz: Russia's Special Forces*, Oxford, UK: Osprey Press, 2015, p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Jonathan Haslam and Karina Urbach, eds., *Secret Intelligence in the European States System, 1918–1989*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2014, p. 14.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Haslam and Urbach, 2014, p. 15.

<sup>19</sup> Nation, 1992, p. 32.

<sup>20</sup> Nation, 1992, p. 34.

<sup>21</sup> David R. Stone, *Hammer and Rifle: The Militarization of the Soviet Union, 1926–1933*, Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2000, p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> Stone, 2000.

<sup>23</sup> Stone, 2000, p. 2, noted that, by 1933, the Soviet Union's “military economy had been transformed beyond recognition.” He continued: “This military-industrial revolution went beyond the industrialization of the First Five-Year-Plan to change the Red Army itself and the political structures that governed the Soviet state.”

Angola and Ethiopia. Simultaneously, the new state was establishing domestic political institutions to exert control and set its policy agenda.

### **Politburo**

In 1917, Lenin established the Politburo as the supreme decisionmaking body, composed of leading political leaders. It served in a policymaking role for the party at the highest levels and across all policy areas, and it retained this authority until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.<sup>24</sup> Analyses of declassified archives of Politburo protocols have revealed that its functions included considering, amending, and approving government decrees; overseeing foreign policy, which included issuing orders to the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs and Comintern; directing the activities of the secret police; exercising influence over state spending; and controlling the activities of cultural and media organizations, which included the authority to approve or ban journals, works of literature, and performances.<sup>25</sup> There is much scholarly debate about the Politburo's power relative to the Soviet leader, however, and whether and how the balance shifted over time.

### **The Communist Party of the Soviet Union**

The Soviet Union was established as a one-party state, intolerant of factions within the CPSU, and empowered to enforce party discipline.<sup>26</sup> The CPSU provided the ideology underpinning Soviet culture and public life. It periodically convened Party Congresses (about every four years), which brought together delegates from communist parties around the world. The Party Congress provided a forum for the CPSU to communicate its policies and ideology, and Western observers looked to these events for indications of changes in the direction in Soviet policy. The gatherings also occasionally made real news, as was the case when Premier Nikita Khrushchev gave his “secret speech” denouncing Josef Stalin in 1956, as we discuss later.<sup>27</sup>

### **The State Security Apparatus**

The new Soviet government established several institutions for exercising hostile measures as a means to maintain control at home and abroad. For example, Lenin established the Cheka—the first Soviet security and intelligence agency—in December 1917, just weeks after the Bolshevik Revolution.<sup>28</sup> The Cheka was shaped by such tsarist-era institutions as the Okhrana, but its initial efforts were directed overwhelmingly inward in an attempt to support the revolutionaries and crush internal dissent.<sup>29</sup> The original Cheka charter did not

<sup>24</sup> Between 1952 and 1966, the Politburo was called the Presidium.

<sup>25</sup> Michael David-Fox and David Hoffmann, “The Politburo Protocols, 1919–40,” *Russian Review*, Vol. 55, No. 1, January 1996, p. 101.

<sup>26</sup> E. A. Rees, ed., *The Nature of Stalin's Dictatorship: The Politburo, 1924–1953*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, “Khrushchev and the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party, 1956,” undated(a).

<sup>28</sup> Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB*, New York: Basic Books, 1999, p. 23.

<sup>29</sup> Bateman, 2016, p. 27.

reference foreign intelligence, a fact that led one scholar to note, “The historical foundation of contemporary Russian intelligence is a domestic secret police agency.”<sup>30</sup> The Cheka’s tactics came to include executions and torture at home, along with operations abroad to eliminate Russian émigrés perceived to be hostile to the Soviet regime. The extent to which it gathered information about foreign governments was limited.<sup>31</sup>

Several foreign incursions in the years following the revolution led Lenin to institutionalize stronger foreign intelligence capabilities, however. The challenges of the war against Poland in 1920, attributed in part to unreliable intelligence on Polish views and capabilities, drove Lenin to improve the country’s access to information about foreign governments. The Politburo released a statement in September of that year:

We went to Warsaw blindly and suffered a catastrophe. Bearing in mind the complex international situation in which we find ourselves, the question of our intelligence service must be made the appropriate priority. Only a serious, properly constituted intelligence service will save us from blindly meeting the unexpected.<sup>32</sup>

As a result of such concerns, a foreign department was established within the Cheka in December 1920.

Over the years, the Soviet secret police saw a series of reorganizations. The Cheka was the institutional ancestor of what would come to be called the Obyedinyonnoye Gosudarstvennoye Politicheskoye Upravleniye (OGPU), or Joint State Political Directorate (1923–1934); Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del (NKVD), or People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (1934–1941); and, after 1954, the KGB. The foreign activities of these institutions included counterintelligence, cryptography, sabotage, and kidnapping.<sup>33</sup>

### **Comintern**

In 1919, the Bolsheviks began supporting revolutions beyond Soviet borders by establishing an organization, headquartered in Moscow, that brought together workers’ parties from around the world. The Soviet government sought to influence, or “Bolshevize,” the leadership of these communist organizations by hosting regular meetings of the Comintern Congress.<sup>34</sup> In October, the Comintern began secretly operating outside the Soviet Union, using Berlin and Amsterdam as outposts for spreading the revolution in Western Europe.<sup>35</sup> This presence facilitated financial and material support to communist parties, including providing revolutionaries with passports and falsified documents.<sup>36</sup> Bringing communist leaders from abroad gave Soviet leaders an opportunity to develop and assess them for advancement within

<sup>30</sup> Bateman, 2016, p. 28.

<sup>31</sup> Bateman, 2016, pp. 29–30.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Haslam and Urbach, 2014, p. 15.

<sup>33</sup> Haslam and Urbach, 2014, p. 15.

<sup>34</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 49.

<sup>35</sup> Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB: The Inside Story of Its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev*, New York: HarperCollins, 1990, p. 67. The Amsterdam outpost came under local police surveillance and closed in April 1920.

<sup>36</sup> Andrew and Gordievsky, 1990, p. 68.



the global party ranks.<sup>37</sup> The Comintern employed effective propaganda efforts to attract international leaders to the socialist, and particularly Bolshevik, worldview. By the early 1920s, communist parties had gained momentum in several key countries, including China, India, Indonesia, Turkey, and Iran.<sup>38</sup> Young Comintern members who came to Moscow during this period, including Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh, would go on to become important socialist leaders in their own countries in the decades to come.<sup>39</sup>

The Comintern would also become what one scholar has called a “kind of militant foreign service,” spreading Soviet ideology and winning converts around the world.<sup>40</sup> The foreign intelligence department of the state security apparatus became a critical tool for engaging Comintern members, who served as important sources of intelligence for Soviet leaders. For example, in 1924, the Comintern distributed a circular declaring,

Each member of the communist party is obliged to supply reports on a daily basis on the activity of those organs of state power in which he personally works or the activity of those of which he is aware through representative organs, whichever the Party requires of him.<sup>41</sup>

Stalin dissolved the Comintern in May 1943, which he explained as an effort to shut down criticism of its influence on foreign affairs. The move reflected his attempt to undermine perceptions of the Soviet Union's internationalist goals—that it “intends to intervene in the life of other nations and to ‘Bolshevize’ them.”<sup>42</sup> Instead, he wanted the Soviet Union to be seen as a wartime ally of the West and a country committed to all “progressive forces . . . regardless of party or religious faith.”<sup>43</sup> One scholarly account called Stalin's rebranding and the dissolution of the Comintern “a propaganda success.”<sup>44</sup>

### **Stalin's Terror**

Soviet leaders undertook aggressive measures to subdue internal dissent and to defeat perceived threats at its borders. The preoccupation with internal stability led Stalin to order harsh crackdowns on internal dissent. As the CIA reported in a 1950 analysis,

When Lenin died in 1924, the Russian Revolution was just beginning to be consolidated. The position of the Soviet Union, built upon the Marxist-Leninist doctrinal bases, was weak. At this point, Stalin began to reinterpret Leninism for the main purpose of strengthening the USSR internally as a base of revolution.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Jeffrey V. Dickey, Thomas B. Everett, Zane M. Galvach, Matthew J. Mesko, and Anton V. Soltis, *Russian Political Warfare: Origin, Evolution, and Application*, Monterey, Calif.: Naval Postgraduate School, June 2015, p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> Westad, 2007, pp. 51–52.

<sup>39</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 55.

<sup>40</sup> Dickey et al., 2015, p. 30.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Haslam and Urbach, 2014, p. 27.

<sup>42</sup> Stalin, quoted in Andrew and Gordievsky, 1990, p. 330.

<sup>43</sup> Stalin, quoted in Andrew and Gordievsky, 1990, p. 330.

<sup>44</sup> Andrew and Gordievsky, 1990, p. 331.

<sup>45</sup> CIA, *Theory and Practice of Communist Subversion*, February 28, 1950, p. 8.

To serve as a “base of revolution,” the CPSU required ideological discipline: Organized dissenters, or those loyal or committed to competing worldviews, were not tolerated. By the mid-1920s, perceived opposition to the revolution, including “anarchists, left-socialists, liberals, Tsarists—were driven into exile, imprisoned, or executed,” and by the 1930s, only the predominantly Muslim peoples of Central Asia maintained armed resistance.<sup>46</sup> Peasant resistance to Stalin’s policy of agricultural collectivization between 1929 and 1936 was also brutally crushed. As one historian described it, “Gradually, by using terror—confiscation of land and supplies, mass arrests, deportations to labor camps, executions—the Bolsheviks turned the tide of opposition.”<sup>47</sup> By 1937, Stalin saw a need to bring internal dissenters into line by any means necessary:

[W]hoever attempts to destroy the unity of the socialist state, whoever seeks the separation of any of its parts or nationalities—that man is an enemy, a sworn enemy of the state and of the peoples of the USSR. And we will destroy each and every such enemy, even if he was an old Bolshevik; we will destroy all his kin, his family. We will mercilessly destroy anyone who, by deeds or his thoughts—yes, his thoughts—threatens the unity of the socialist state.<sup>48</sup>

One prominent victim of Stalin’s terror was Trotsky, the Bolshevik revolutionary and former commissar for foreign affairs and head of the Red Army. Following a split with Stalin, he was exiled in 1929, convicted of treason in absentia, and assassinated by the NKVD in 1940. This period demonstrated the extent to which Stalin viewed internal dissent as a security challenge and affirmed that he was willing to go to great lengths to ensure that senior leaders were ideologically aligned with the party. This approach would have echoes in Stalin’s posture toward foreign leaders as well.

## Spanish Civil War

By the time civil war broke out in Spain in 1936, the Soviet Union had been supporting leftist leaders there for years. In 1919, Spain was one of the targets of Comintern agents seeking to spread revolutionary ideology. In 1920, Comintern agents arrived in Madrid to encourage the local pro-Bolshevik group to establish what became the official Communist Party of Spain, known as Partido Comunista de España (PCE). When forces led by nationalist leader General Francisco Franco revolted in July 1936, the Soviet Union initially pledged nonintervention, but the posture did not last long. Within months, Soviet intervention in the Spanish Civil War became the state’s first long-distance military operation.<sup>49</sup> Support for the republican cause within the Comintern led Stalin to increase support to counter Franco.

<sup>46</sup> Westad, 2007, pp. 48–49.

<sup>47</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 54.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Westad, 2007, p. 56.

<sup>49</sup> Stanley G. Payne, *The Spanish Civil War, the Soviet Union, and Communism*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004, pp. 1–21. When the war broke out, Britain and France adopted a policy of nonintervention, and the Soviet Union followed suit in August. However, by October, Soviet arms and other material support for the Spanish Communist Party was flowing into the country (Nation, 1992, pp. 94–95). Despite their own nonintervention agreements, Germany,

Specifically, the Soviet Union sought to bolster its chosen partisans and weaken competitors seeking to challenge Franco. For example, Stalin worked to destroy the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification, or Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista, the PCE's main rival on the left.<sup>50</sup> While both parties ostensibly shared the objective of battling fascism, Stalin demonstrated little tolerance for rivals to the communist mantle. The OGPU led an ambitious effort to paint the party as fascist and "Trotskyist," secretly aligned with Franco and German Chancellor Adolf Hitler. The disinformation campaign led the republican government to crack down on the party in 1937.<sup>51</sup>

In September 1936, two PCE members joined the republican government with Comintern support. By October, the Soviet Union was shipping arms to the republican armies by means of the PCE.<sup>52</sup> It was also using the state security apparatus to support the anti-Franco movement. Also that year, an agent working for the NKVD was reportedly sent to Spain under cover as a journalist, with an objective of assassinating Franco.<sup>53</sup> NKVD agents also questioned foreign fighters arriving as volunteers who purported to support the republican cause.<sup>54</sup> The efforts reflected Soviet concern about infiltration by perceived threats to Stalinism (Trotskyites) and an opportunity to collect information, and even passports, from foreign nationals.<sup>55</sup>

In time, the Soviet Union's engagement in Spain proceeded along four tracks. First, it exercised influence through both the Comintern and the PCE. Second, it provided direct military assistance and sent Soviet military advisers to Spain (an estimated 3,000 total).<sup>56</sup> Among the capabilities that the Soviets brought to the fight were units trained to conduct guerrilla insurgency operations under the control of the NKVD. Such units were also skilled in sabotage and assassinations.<sup>57</sup> Unpublished RAND research by Fritz Ermarth in 1968 found that, for a period of time, the Soviet Union maintained effective control over Spanish republicans' military and administrative affairs. Third, it developed and provided political and materiel assistance and disseminated propaganda on behalf of the republicans through the Comintern, its parties, and its front organizations; this was in addition to the provision of food and other nonmilitary supplies. Finally, it undertook diplomatic activities aimed at discouraging German and Italian assistance to Franco and encouraging Britain and France to adopt policies more favorable to the Spanish Republic.<sup>58</sup>

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Italy, and Portugal supported Franco's nationalist forces (David Malet, "Why Foreign Fighters? Historical Perspectives and Solutions," *Orbis*, Vol. 54, No. 1, Winter 2010, p. 102).

<sup>50</sup> Wilson, 2005, p. 11.

<sup>51</sup> Wilson, 2005, pp. 11–12.

<sup>52</sup> Nation, 1992, p. 95.

<sup>53</sup> Andrew and Gordievsky, 1990, p. 221. The mission was reportedly abandoned in summer 1937.

<sup>54</sup> Through the International Brigades, headquartered in Paris, the Comintern attempted to recruit, mobilize, and field foreign fighters. It supported the recruitment of an estimated 35,000–50,000 volunteers over the course of the war. It also helped these fighters secure false passports and passage over the border into Spain. Volunteers who were not Communist Party members were investigated by the NKVD (Malet, 2010, p. 102).

<sup>55</sup> Andrew and Gordievsky, 1990, p. 159.

<sup>56</sup> Nation, 1992, p. 95.

<sup>57</sup> Galeotti, 2015, p. 8.

<sup>58</sup> Payne, 2004, p. 146.

Ultimately, the intervention proved unable to turn the tide of the war, and Franco secured the final capitulation of Madrid in March 1939.<sup>59</sup> Franco's victory was a stinging defeat for the leftist popular front in Spain—and for the Soviet Union, which had leveraged many tools of statecraft in an effort to bring about a different outcome. While a deep dive into the efficacy of hostile measures in affecting the outcome in Spain is beyond the scope of this limited historical review, such activities demonstrate burgeoning Soviet capabilities for exerting influence in foreign affairs. Elements of this multipronged effort, above and below the threshold of war, to bolster a politically aligned foreign leader (under the mantle of global communist leadership) would come up again and again over the history of the Soviet Union.

## Lead-Up to the Second World War

In the years following intervention in the Spanish Civil War and leading up to World War II, the Soviet Union's foreign policy reflected diplomatic efforts to *avoid* intervention in wars erupting around the world and simultaneous efforts to shape those events. In East Asia, a Sino-Japanese conflict began to escalate into full-scale war in 1937. The Soviet Union signed a mutual nonaggression pact with Chinese leaders in August in which it agreed to provide military and economic assistance to China to support the war effort in exchange for raw materials. This support included combat planes, machine guns, artillery equipment, and trucks. One estimate held that the Soviet Union was responsible for equipping between ten and 20 Chinese divisions.<sup>60</sup>

The extent to which Stalin had described the Spanish Civil War as an international struggle against fascism presaged an awkward agreement months later, in August 1939: a nonaggression pact with Hitler's Germany, the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact (or "Nazi-Soviet" pact). Germany, at this point, was eyeing Poland as its next target, a move that Britain and France already identified as a red line. Stalin had suggested an effort to avoid war through diplomatic agreement several months earlier. In March, he addressed the 18th Party Congress in a speech titled, "The Aggravation of the International Political Situation, the Collapse of the Post-War System of Peace Treaties, the Beginning of a New Imperial War," in which he highlighted the goal of pursuing a policy of peace through contacts with other states.<sup>61</sup> He asserted that the Soviet Union should "maintain vigilance and not allow those who would provoke war to draw our country into a conflict, not to pull others' chestnuts out of the fire."<sup>62</sup> Years later, after the fall of the Soviet Union, a "secret protocol" associated with the Nazi-Soviet pact came to light: It made clear that Hitler had promised Stalin a sphere of influence in Eastern Europe that included most of eastern Poland, Latvia, Estonia, and Finland.<sup>63</sup> The

<sup>59</sup> Nation, 1992, p. 96.

<sup>60</sup> Bruce D. Porter, *The USSR in Third World Conflicts: Soviet Arms and Diplomacy in Local Wars, 1945–1980*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 12.

<sup>61</sup> Andrei A. Kokoshin, *Soviet Strategic Thought, 1917–91*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT University Press, 1998, p. 92.

<sup>62</sup> Quoted in Nation, 1992, p. 98.

<sup>63</sup> Nation, 1992, p. 100; "Secret Supplementary Protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Aggression Pact, 1939," translation, 1939.

nonaggression pact and secret protocol served as tools in support of Stalin's foreign policy while reducing the risk of war with Nazi Germany.

For Stalin, however, the Nazi-Soviet pact and its secret protocol also supported another foreign policy goal: territorial gains. While the secret protocols addressed "spheres of mutual interest" rather than annexation, Stalin had other plans, which he advanced through a mix of hostile measures and direct military action. When Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, the Soviet Union moved to claim its share by also invading Poland weeks later.<sup>64</sup> In the months that followed, the Soviet Union moved to advance its claims in Northern Europe and thus protect the Baltic fleet and the Leningrad region. Also in September, it negotiated "mutual assistance pacts" with Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania and stationed Soviet troops in the territories on new air and naval bases.<sup>65</sup> In June 1940, the Soviet Union had invaded the Baltic states under the pretext that local communist parties sought support. With the Red Army on the ground in the Baltics, the Soviet Union next employed several types of hostile measures in a move to consolidate its power. After the invasion, pro-communist forces set up "people's governments," and confederates in the "League of the Working People" in each state won impressive victories in rigged elections. Once seated, the pro-communist governments voted unanimously to join the Soviet Union.<sup>66</sup> This playbook would be repeated in Eastern Europe after World War II and in Ukraine in 2014.

A similar approach was attempted unsuccessfully in Finland. For several months in 1939, Soviet leaders worked through direct diplomatic channels to win Finland territorial concessions and permission to establish air and naval bases in Finnish territory.<sup>67</sup> Stalin also requested that Finland sign a mutual assistance treaty that would allow the Soviet Union to intervene to assist in Finland's defense.<sup>68</sup> As was the case in Poland and the Baltics, Stalin's intent in Finland may have reflected a desire to reclaim land once held by the Russian Empire, as well as a desire to acquire an additional buffer against an attack from Nazi Germany.<sup>69</sup> However, hostile measures below the threshold of war failed to win desired territorial concessions, and, in November, Soviet troops rolled into Finland, sparking the Winter War. They met stiff resistance. It was not until March 1941 that the Soviet Union was able to secure all its territorial ambitions in Finland; the Red Army's hard-won victory in Finland left the impression of conventional military weakness.<sup>70</sup> The vastly outnumbered Finnish forces inflicted substantial casualties, leaving 126,875 Soviet soldiers dead and 264,908 wounded.<sup>71</sup> The case of Finland suggests important lessons regarding the limitations of the efficacy of Soviet hostile measures below the

<sup>64</sup> David C. Gompert, Hans Binnendijk, and Bonny Lin, *Blinders, Blunders, and Wars: What America and China Can Learn*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-768-RC, 2014, p. 83.

<sup>65</sup> Nation, 1992, p. 106.

<sup>66</sup> Wilson, 2005, p. 12.

<sup>67</sup> Historian Roger Reese has argued that the Soviet Union's ultimate goal was not just to station military assets but to absorb Finland. He notes that Stalin set up a sympathetic government in exile, positioned to take power, and that Soviet military plans called for conquest and occupation of the country (Roger R. Reese, "Lessons of the Winter War: A Study in the Military Effectiveness of the Red Army, 1939–1940," *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 72, No. 3, July 2008, p. 827).

<sup>68</sup> Reese, 2008.

<sup>69</sup> Reese, 2008, p. 827.

<sup>70</sup> Gompert, Binnendijk, and Lin, 2014, p. 83.

<sup>71</sup> Mark Kramer, "Stalin, Soviet Policy, and the Consolidation of a Communist Bloc in Eastern Europe, 1944–1953," paper presented at The Europe Center, Stanford University, Stanford, Calif., April 30, 2010.

threshold of war. Despite following a similar playbook as it had in the Baltics, the Soviet Union needed to employ hostile measures both below and above the threshold of war to achieve its objectives.

Any hope Stalin may have held that diplomatic measures and territorial concessions would help avoid involvement in World War II was undercut by Hitler's decision on June 22, 1941, to invade the Soviet Union with a strength of more than 3 million troops. Hitler reportedly declared that Operation Barbarossa, which brought the Soviet Union into the war, meant "total war" in the east. Stalin retorted that "if the Germans want a total war, they will get it."<sup>72</sup>

## Negotiating for the Postwar World

The Soviet military suffered an estimated 8.6 million casualties during World War II. Soviet civilians were not spared the war's devastation; double that number, an estimated 16 million, were killed.<sup>73</sup> The experience informed a Soviet postwar approach to foreign policy that emphasized *security* at its borders by exerting substantial control over its neighbors. The idea that Russian and Soviet expansionism (through territorial acquisition or by exercising political control) was motivated by a sense of insecurity about existential threats is common in Western scholarship.<sup>74</sup> However, while the tsars did not generally view other European superpowers as an existential threat, after World War II, Soviet leaders came to view erstwhile Western wartime allies as enemy number 1.

With the end of the war in sight, the leaders of the Big Three allied countries (Prime Minister Winston Churchill of Great Britain, President Franklin D. Roosevelt of the United States, and Stalin) began a series of meetings to negotiate terms for the postwar settlement. In February 1945, the leaders met in the Russian resort town of Yalta to discuss the terms of Soviet intervention against Japan in the Pacific theater and the terms of postwar Europe. Churchill and Roosevelt agreed that postwar governments in areas liberated by the Soviet Union would be "friendly" to Moscow; in return, Stalin pledged that free elections would be held in these areas.<sup>75</sup> This agreement defined a sphere of influence for the Soviet Union in Eastern and Central Europe, which was critical in shaping the postwar world. Following Germany's surrender in May 1945, Stalin met with Churchill and Roosevelt's successor, Harry S. Truman, in Potsdam, Germany, in July to continue a contentious debate over postwar borders. At Potsdam, the powers took on the critical question of Germany. They agreed to administer the country under four zones, each occupied by a different Allied power (France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States). The eastern zone was occupied by the Soviet Union, within which the important capital city, Berlin, was again divided into four zones and jointly occupied.<sup>76</sup>

In his famous speech in Fulton, Missouri, in March 1946, Churchill described the postwar settlement for Europe as amounting to an "iron curtain" dividing East from West:

<sup>72</sup> Nation, 1992, p. 115.

<sup>73</sup> Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, New York: Penguin, 2005, pp. 18–19.

<sup>74</sup> Olikier et al., 2015, p. 4.

<sup>75</sup> U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, "The Yalta Conference, 1945," undated(c).

<sup>76</sup> U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, "The Potsdam Conference, 1945," undated(b).

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in many cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow.<sup>77</sup>

Churchill pointed to several worrisome examples of Moscow's measures of control, including the political influence that Moscow exerted through local communist parties, its iron-fisted control of the countries' populations, and the spread of communist ideology—hostile measures that the Soviet Union employed to shape the postwar trajectory of countries east of what Churchill designated the Iron Curtain.

## Conclusions: Soviet Hostile Measures Before and During World War II

In the period from its founding to about 1935, the Soviet Union focused on the evolution and development of institutions that would become the foundation for future uses of hostile measures. Several of these efforts related to the development of tools for maintaining political, ideological, and physical control:

- The establishment of the Soviet state security apparatus (through the Cheka, OGPU, and NKVD), an institutional progenitor to the KGB. This organization facilitated maintenance of domestic control and shaping of foreign affairs. In this period, it supported covert kinetic action and the regime's communication strategy.
- The establishment of institutions for centralized political control through the Politburo and the CPSU, to provide policy and ideological guidance and control. These organizations informed decisionmaking regarding where and how to execute foreign policy and the ideological content supporting the Soviet communication strategy.
- The establishment of the Comintern as the critical player in the development of communist leaders around the world, which reflected the notion of the Soviet Union as the facilitator of a global socialist revolution. As a practical matter, it also helped the Soviet Union cultivate a generation of leftist leaders who would be critical to its foreign policy through the Cold War. In this period, these activities supported the regime's communication strategy and efforts to exercise political influence.

During this period, the Soviet Union focused not only on maintaining control at home and in its immediate neighborhood, as evidenced by its intervention in the Spanish Civil War, but it was also increasingly inclined to take on global commitments abroad. For the Soviet Union, total war against these regimes broke out just a few years later, when Stalin failed through a variety of hostile measures to avoid large-scale conventional engagement in World War II:

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<sup>77</sup> Winston Churchill, "The Sinews of Peace ('Iron Curtain Speech')," speech delivered at Westminster College, Fulton, Mo., March 5, 1946.

- In the Spanish Civil War, the Soviet Union exercised several hostile measures to support the republican cause. It provided foreign *and* military assistance; as part of its communication strategy, it developed and distributed propaganda; it sought political influence by working through the PCE; NKVD agents reportedly engaged in covert kinetic action; it supported proxy international brigades in the fight; and it pursued diplomacy to strengthen international support to the Republic of Spain and to dissuade support for Franco.
- In the lead-up to World War II, the Soviet Union employed diplomatic measures to (ultimately unsuccessfully) reduce the risk of all-out war with Germany and to (successfully) achieve territorial gains in the Baltics and Northern Europe.
- To consolidate power in the Baltics and Northern Europe, the Soviet Union also sought “mutual assurance pacts” and facilitated rigged elections (exerting political influence), giving it plausible deniability regarding unilateral action in the region.
- Following the devastating war with Germany, Stalin was deeply concerned about security on the Soviet western flank. Diplomatic agreements with the Allied powers sought to ensure that postwar Europe would give the Soviet Union a buffer of friendly states unlikely to pose a threat in the future.

Between 1917 and 1946, the Soviet Union developed political and security institutions to support domestic stability and enable it to control developments beyond its borders. Many of these institutions would continue to shape approaches to internal control and the exercise of foreign affairs in the Cold War. Soviet intervention in Spain was an example of these institutions in action, as well as an indication of Soviet leaders' willingness to act in support of leftist movements around the world. While the Soviet Union emerged from World War I diminished in size, Soviet leaders remained focused on reclaiming lost territory. Soviet leaders invoked security interests and “mutual assistance” in their movement on Northern and Eastern Europe in actions that would be repeated often through the Cold War. In reclaiming land once controlled by the Russian Empire, Soviet leaders asserted a sphere of influence that would animate global events for decades to come.



## Soviet Activities in Europe During the Cold War

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Emerging from a devastating war, Moscow was determined that countries in Eastern and Central Europe remain politically and ideologically aligned with the Soviet Union. This period and region saw the most widespread, varied, and perhaps successful Soviet use of hostile measures. The Soviet Union's capabilities continued to evolve, including the state security apparatus and Information Bureau, which was first charged with conducting information operations during World War II. It also introduced the modern iteration of special operations forces (Spetsnaz) and other new institutions for coordinating the ideological positions and security policies of Soviet satellite states, such as the Communist Information Bureau and the Warsaw Pact.

The Soviet Union's success in employing hostile measures to bring neighboring countries into line ideologically and politically was remarkable. Yet, it is important to note that its ability to effect specific outcomes through hostile measures was not absolute. In this chapter, we discuss some notable breaks between Soviet leaders and neighboring communist countries. For example, although he found the ideological and policy positions of Yugoslavia's communist leader Josip Broz Tito unacceptable, Stalin was unable to bring about changes to policies rooted in "Titoism," despite applying a range of hostile measures. In Poland in 1956, Soviet leaders were able to effect political change by applying pressure below the threshold of war, but a crisis in Hungary in the same year was resolved only through direct military force. The "Prague Spring" in Czechoslovakia in 1968 also came to an end only when the Soviet Union resorted to war.

### Subjugating Eastern and Central Europe

Despite significant and ongoing mutual distrust, the Soviet Union was a critical ally for the West in the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II. Executing the war effort took a terrible toll on the Soviet Union: An estimated 27 million Soviet troops and civilians died, a loss of around one in 11 of the Soviet Union's prewar population.<sup>1</sup> The destruction of the country's engines of economic activity was also substantial and would have reverberations for years to come. In addition to a loss of manpower and resources, battles had been waged on some of the country's most productive arable land. After the war, Stalin wanted security on his country's western flank—and he also sought economic benefits. Between 1945 and 1948, the Soviet Union worked to impose communist regimes in the Eastern European countries under its military control. One historian described the implementation of this goal as "local Communists

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<sup>1</sup> Nation, 1992, p.155.

set[ting] about constructing new states in the only way they and their Soviet advisers knew: through terror and the destruction of all independent opposition.”<sup>2</sup> Soviet control over these states was maintained through a variety of hostile measures despite several periods of organized resistance.

The Soviet Union’s approach to fostering an environment conducive to preserving its security and access to economic resources was the subjugation of neighboring governments to Soviet influence and control. In the negotiations at Postdam and Yalta, Stalin made clear that the territory between the Soviet Union and Germany must remain friendly to the Soviet Union and “free of fascist and reactionary elements.”<sup>3</sup> The move had echoes from past Russian leaders. For example, at the Congress of Vienna in 1814–1815, Tsar Alexander I met with the major powers (Britain, Prussia, and Austria) to negotiate the postwar order emerging from the French Revolutionary Wars and the Napoleonic Wars. Tsar Alexander made clear that Russian security was to be maintained through tight control of people living in territory occupied by Russian forces. The autonomy of small states was considered subordinate to the desires of the Great Powers.<sup>4</sup>

Stalin’s approach to regional control was defined by exceptional intolerance of any diversion from the Soviet model. As historian Tony Judt wrote,

Where Stalin differed from other empire builders, even the czars, was in his insistence upon reproducing in the territories under his control forms of government and society *identical* to those of the Soviet Union. . . . Stalin set out to re-mould eastern Europe in the Soviet image; to reproduce Soviet history, institutions, and practices in each of the little states now controlled by Communist parties.<sup>5</sup>

For the Soviet Union, World War II was a war to, as Judt described it, “defeat Germany and restore Russian power and security on its western frontiers,” and that “whatever was to become of Germany itself, the region separating Germany and Russia could not be left in uncertainty.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, Stalin sought to create a band of territory from Finland in the north to Yugoslavia in the south of governments that would not pose a threat to the Soviet Union. Another scholar has pointed to other economic and political incentives, such as resource extraction and opportunities to spread communism, that may have also contributed to Stalin’s interest in preventing the rise of hostile regimes anywhere along the Soviet Union’s western flank.<sup>7</sup>

As a result, with Soviet intervention, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and East Germany developed political, economic, and social institutions identical to the Soviet model. They modeled national constitutions on the Soviet Union’s, they established tools for maintaining strong state control of their national economies and the behavior of their citizens, and they were ruled by national communist parties subservient to

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<sup>2</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Judt, 2005, p. 118.

<sup>4</sup> Judt, 2005, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Judt, 2005, p. 167.

<sup>6</sup> Judt, 2005, p. 129.

<sup>7</sup> Kramer, 2010.

the Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup> Maintaining such a degree of uniformity across countries with very different social, political, and economic traditions and histories proved very challenging. As a declassified 1953 U.S. report by the President's Committee on International Information Activities observed, "Soviet exploitation has created resentments among the captive peoples. Satellite rulers maintain themselves in power only by force and are dependent on the support of the Kremlin."<sup>9</sup> Such a situation was inherently unstable. Indeed, the Soviet approach was not uniformly successful, as we discuss later in this chapter.

One important tool for ensuring Soviet influence in hostile states was the use of "front" governments, as had been employed during the Spanish Civil War. Unlike during that inter-war conflict, however, the Soviet Union had strong enough conventional military capabilities by the end of World War II to support friendly communist movements.<sup>10</sup> Front governments in a given country were coalitions of communists, socialists, or other anti-fascist elements, and, by the end of World War II, there were front organizations in every country in Eastern Europe.<sup>11</sup> One scholarly account described the following formula for Soviet use of front organizations to achieve political change:

Political development in most East-European states followed the same basic pattern. More or less genuine coalitions, which gave significant representation to a number of non-fascist parties but left the security services and the other main levers of power in Communist hands, were established immediately after liberation. Following intervals of various lengths, these governments were replaced by Communist-run bogus coalitions, which paved the way in turn for one-party states taking the lead from Moscow.<sup>12</sup>

There was little evidence, however, that communist parties would be victorious at the ballot box without external encouragement. No Eastern European country had shown much popular support for indigenous communist parties before or after the war. One relative exception was Czechoslovakia (with, by far, the largest party), which increased its 10-percent support for communists in 1939 to 38 percent in 1948—a sizable proportion of the population but still short of a majority.<sup>13</sup> However, polls anticipated that support for communists was sharply declining in 1948, a trend that concerned Stalin.<sup>14</sup> As a result, the Czechoslovakian security service and its Soviet advisers politically engineered the conditions for a rigged election that firmly established communist control.<sup>15</sup>

In Poland, there had long been strong resistance to communism. It was the country of which Stalin reportedly said in 1944, communism "does not fit the Poles. They are too indi-

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<sup>8</sup> Judt, 2005, p. 167.

<sup>9</sup> President's Committee on International Information Activities, *Report to the President*, June 30, 1953, pp. 12–13.

<sup>10</sup> Kramer, 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Judt, 2005, p. 131.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew and Gordievsky, 1990, p. 248.

<sup>13</sup> Kramer, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Polls anticipated the communist support would fall to 28 percent by the spring elections (Andrew and Gordievsky, 1990, p. 359).

<sup>15</sup> Andrew and Gordievsky, 1990, pp. 360–361.

vidualistic, too nationalistic.”<sup>16</sup> Establishing a friendly indigenous communist party in Poland required substantial effort. Polish agents for the Soviet security apparatus had been working since 1941 to establish an effective communist party, known as the Polish Workers’ Party. In 1944, Stalin recognized a Soviet-backed government in Lublin to challenge the authority of the Polish government. As we discuss later, the NKVD played a critical role in undercutting resistance to the communist-led provisional government in Lublin, recognized by Stalin in January 1945. NKVD agents worked to break surviving remnants of the Polish Home Army by infiltrating meetings and intercepting radio communications. They also facilitated the establishment of a Polish state security apparatus called the *Urząd Bezpieczeństwa*, or Office of Security.<sup>17</sup> In January 1945, the Lublin Committee declared itself the provisional government, and the Home Army formally disbanded; the resistance had lost. The Soviet Union recognized the Lublin Committee as the provisional government in 1945, but Western allies refused, viewing it as illegitimate.<sup>18</sup>

The 1953 President’s Committee on International Information Activities report also indicated that foreign communist parties were the “major weapon in the Soviet drive for world domination.” It described such organizations as

the central mechanisms for controlling and coordinating other activities, such as the operations of “front” organizations, the infiltration and manipulation of noncommunist organizations, the penetration of governments, and the preparation of secret groups for violent action. Wherever possible, the communist parties also attempt to advance their purposes by participation in political activities as legal parties.<sup>19</sup>

## Tools for Conducting Hostile-Measures Operations

The Soviet Union developed institutions through which to pursue the unique requirements of its goals in Eastern and Central Europe. Here, we describe new and evolving institutions for information operations, state control, and the projection of power abroad. Although this section describes the use of these tools in Europe, they were also leveraged to shape outcomes in other regions, as we discuss later in this appendix.

### Tools for Information Operations

Shortly after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, Moscow established the Soviet Information Bureau (*Sovinformbiuro*) to generate information related to the war effort and to counter Nazi propaganda.<sup>20</sup> After the war, *Sovinformbiuro* broadened its role and began shaping the information battlefield abroad. In June 1945, the organization described its goals as “to inform foreign audiences about the political and economic life of the USSR, about the national, social, and cultural achievements of its peoples as well as propaganda to convey Soviet

<sup>16</sup> Stalin, quoted in Andrew and Gordievsky, 1990, p. 348.

<sup>17</sup> Andrew and Gordievsky, 1990, pp. 346–347.

<sup>18</sup> Andrew and Gordievsky, 1990, p. 346.

<sup>19</sup> President’s Committee on International Information Activities, 1953, p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> Patryk Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power in Poland: Culture and the Making of Stalin’s New Empire, 1943–1957*, Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2015.

views of the more important questions of international life.”<sup>21</sup> It worked with indigenous government organizations, political organizations, and media outlets to place its own content into foreign publications. In particular, it targeted Finland, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Germany.<sup>22</sup> Its influence was particularly strong in Poland; as historian Patryk Babiracki explained, “The Sovinformbiuro was the most important channel of Soviet intervention in Polish mass media in terms of size, scope, continuity, and political weight.”<sup>23</sup>

The Soviet Union used its diplomatic presence in foreign countries to support clandestine information operations, a critical tool for advancing its interests without employing military force. Much of the messaging developed for distribution abroad related to Soviet and Russian culture. Embassies supported the publication and distribution of Soviet texts and Russian classics in an attempt to foster popular interest. They also supported cultural exchanges to build rapport and mutual understanding. The Soviet Union considered such efforts an important foil to similar cultural exchanges then being organized by the West.<sup>24</sup>

In 1957, the CIA reported that the structure of authority in the Soviet Union and in neighboring communist governments facilitated the use of information operations:

The capability of Communist governments for undertaking operations of deception is greater than that of most other governments because (a) they exert a higher degree of control over the information respecting their countries which becomes available to the outside world; and (b) they need not refrain from deception because of concern that their own general public may be puzzled or misled by operations primarily intended to deceive foreigners.<sup>25</sup>

Notably, this was an argument that American Kremlinologist George F. Kennan made in his 1946 “measures short of war” speech.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Babiracki, 2015, p. 60.

<sup>22</sup> Babiracki, 2015, p. 60.

<sup>23</sup> Babiracki, 2015, p. 59.

<sup>24</sup> Babiracki, 2015, pp. 76–93. For more on U.S. efforts in this area, see Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*, New York: New Press, 1999. Saunders describes the Congress for Cultural Freedom, which worked to promote U.S. culture abroad by, for example, publishing magazines, holding art exhibitions and concerts, organizing international conferences, and bestowing prizes and otherwise publicizing the work of artists and musicians.

Other U.S. public diplomacy efforts were carried out by the United States Information Agency, which produced publications on U.S. policy, sent U.S. speakers abroad, and established academic, professional, and cultural exchange programs. U.S. government-funded radio broadcasts by Voice of America, Radio Free Europe (in communist countries in Europe, such as East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Poland), and Radio Liberty (in the Soviet Union) spread U.S. messages to populations under Soviet influence. Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty continue on a smaller scale under the purview of the U.S. Agency for Global Media. See Kennon H. Nakamura and Matthew C. Weed, U.S. Public Diplomacy: Background and Current Issues, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, December 18, 2009, pp. 1, 10–11.

<sup>25</sup> Director of Central Intelligence, *Soviet Capabilities for Deception*, Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, Special National Intelligence Estimate No. 100-2-57, May 28, 1957, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> 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.

### The Cold War–Era Soviet State Security Apparatus

In March 1946, the wartime iteration of the Soviet state security apparatus, Narodnyi komissariat gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti, or People's Commissariat for State Security, was elevated to ministry status and renamed the Ministry of State Security. The organization continued to employ tactics for domestic control and foreign engagement it had used since the days of the Cheka. It played a central role in subjugating Eastern and Central European countries under Soviet-backed communist governments.

Stalin used this apparatus from the mid-1940s to mid-1950s to crush nationalist resistance within the Soviet republics. Moscow committed significant resources to a partially successful but bloody campaign in which Soviet secret police units battled resistance fighters in western Ukraine, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, and western Belarus.<sup>27</sup> As Soviet-backed communist governments gathered strength, they also served an important role in combating nationalist movements in Soviet republics. For example, in 1947, the Polish government relocated 200,000 ethnic Ukrainians in southeastern Poland and moved them west—far from the Ukrainian border. The goal was to prevent eastern Poland from being a safe haven for nationalists in Soviet Ukraine.<sup>28</sup> A Ministry of State Security report described the Soviet role in this move:

Direct contacts were established among the [East-bloc] state security organs [in the late 1940s], and they began to convene periodic meetings of their senior officials. As a result of this cooperation, the state security organs of the USSR, Romania, and Poland arranged joint measures to liquidate the bands of the [Ukrainian] underground and to safeguard their borders.<sup>29</sup>

In 1954, the Ministry of State Security was renamed the KGB. One scholar described KGB operations as ranging “from basic intelligence collection and analysis to subversion, media manipulation, propaganda, forgeries, political repression, political assassinations, agents of influence, the establishment of opposition parties and criminal organizations, antiwar movements and front organizations, and proxy paramilitary operations.”<sup>30</sup> The First Main Directorate of the KGB was responsible for foreign intelligence collection and related operations.<sup>31</sup>

*Active measures* (transliterated as *aktivnye meropriyatiya*) became a popular term to describe the activities carried out by the KGB or other Soviet organizations. A 1981 U.S. Department of State report defined Soviet active measures as “operations intended to affect other nations’ policies, as distinct from espionage and counterintelligence,” including “written or spoken disinformation; efforts to control media in foreign countries; use of Communist parties and front organizations; clandestine radio broadcasting; blackmail, personal and economic; and political influence operations.”<sup>32</sup> In a 1985 speech, CIA Director William J. Casey warned that such Soviet active measures would likely continue: “They will shift focus, but we will continue to be confronted by a centrally coordinated, well-funded, and well-staffed overt

<sup>27</sup> Kramer, 2010.

<sup>28</sup> Kramer, 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Kramer, 2010, p. 21.

<sup>30</sup> Dickey et al., 2015, p. 47.

<sup>31</sup> Gordon Bennett, *The SVR: Russia's Intelligence Service*, Surrey, UK: Conflict Studies Research Centre, March, 2000.

<sup>32</sup> U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, “Soviet ‘Active Measures’: Forgery, Disinformation, Political Operations,” Washington, D.C., Special Report No. 88, October 1981, p. 1.

and covert attempt to manipulate our perceptions and decisions.”<sup>33</sup> The extent to which the description of these Soviet measures echoes the discourse on modern Russian tactics reflects notable continuities.

### Cominform

In September 1947, following the breakdown of negotiations over potential Soviet participation in the Marshall Plan, representatives from nine European communist parties stood up a new international organization called the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform).<sup>34</sup> The move followed communists' unexpected loss in various parliamentary elections in 1946. As a result, Stalin wanted a tool for increasing influence over the internal affairs of countries in Eastern and Central Europe.<sup>35</sup> This organization was a kind of successor to the pre–World War II Comintern.<sup>36</sup> Cominform included representation from communist parties in Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, France, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union. Many of the senior communist leaders in these countries were previous Comintern members and had spent time in the Soviet Union before the war.<sup>37</sup>

Stalin intended the organization to oversee propaganda and coordination for communist parties across Europe. Its key functions included publishing a weekly newsletter and hosting of several world congresses. However, one historian has argued that Stalin's intent for this body was more ambitious:

The creation of the Cominform was paralleled by the elimination of all traces of political pluralism in Soviet eastern Europe. . . . [I]ndividual Eastern European politics were coercively transformed into miniature models of the Stalinist order in the USSR.<sup>38</sup>

Cominform's was unclear; it reportedly met only three times before being disbanded by Khrushchev in 1956.<sup>39</sup> While it was short-lived, Cominform represented an effort to synchronize political activities across communist parties in Europe, amid internal political tensions and differing interpretations of the communist ideology and state policies.<sup>40</sup>

### The Spetsnaz

The modern Russian Federation Special Forces (Spetsialnogo Naznacheniya)—the Spetsnaz—dates to 1950, although the tradition of special operations tactics is much older. For example, the newly formed Red Army carried out active reconnaissance (*aktivki*) behind enemy lines

<sup>33</sup> Air Force Association, “CIA Director Discusses Soviet Active Measures,” *Crossfeed*, December 20, 1985.

<sup>34</sup> Geoffrey Roberts, “Moscow and the Marshall Plan: Politics, Ideology and the Onset of the Cold War, 1947,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 8, 1994, p. 1371.

<sup>35</sup> Babiracki, 2015, p. 77.

<sup>36</sup> Dickey et al., 2015, p. 53.

<sup>37</sup> Dickey et al., 2015, p. 53.

<sup>38</sup> Nation, 1992, p. 176.

<sup>39</sup> Judt, 2005, p. 143.

<sup>40</sup> Roberts, 1994, p. 1381; Geoffrey Swain, “The Cominform: Tito's International,” *Historical Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 3, September 1992. Roberts and Swain discussed Cominform's founding as an early context for Stalin's break with Yugoslavian leader Tito over policy and ideology for communism in Europe.

after 1918, and, in 1921, the revolutionaries established special purpose units to root out “counter-revolutionaries” and carry out sabotage and agitation operations in enemy territory.<sup>41</sup>

After World War II, Soviet deep reconnaissance and sabotage units continued to evolve. In the late 1940s, Soviet military intelligence established a battalion-sized naval Spetsnaz element in each fleet. In 1957, the Soviet Union established five regular Spetsnaz battalions, each assigned to a “front”—the Soviet concept for operational command. The primary missions of the Spetsnaz were sabotage and reconnaissance deep behind enemy lines. In accordance with the small footprint required to execute these missions, the Spetsnaz were one of the few Soviet military elements capable of deploying quickly and discreetly. Over time, they became a widely used tool by the Soviet Union (and to the present day) for generating a variety of effects on the battlefield.<sup>42</sup>

For example, the CIA translated a secret 1969 report from the Soviet General Staff of the Armed Forces that highlighted the role of these special forces in Soviet electronic warfare.<sup>43</sup> Author S. I. Stemasov argued that NATO activities and U.S. involvement in Vietnam led the Soviets to conclude that “in a future war, should it be unleashed by the imperialists, both belligerents will implement thoroughly planned and previously prepared radio electronic warfare measures on a broad scale.”<sup>44</sup> Stemasov explained that the Spetsnaz had the capability to neutralize its enemies’ operational—and some strategic—shortwave radio communications, as well as shortwave, ultra-shortwave, and radio-relay communications at the tactical level of control and radio-relay communication links at the operational-tactical level. It also had battalions to cover the troops and installations against reconnaissance and airborne radar and could interfere with radio links that guided enemy aircraft.<sup>45</sup>

Successful accomplishment of the tasks of radioelectronic warfare in precise coordination with the tasks of the troops in an operation will create favorable conditions for achieving the goals of the operation in a shorter period of time and with fewer losses.

In order to attain these results it is necessary to have advance training of staffs and troops for radioelectronic warfare, continuous improvement of its methods and means, systematic study of the radioelectronic system of the probable enemy in the theater of military operations, a high level of training of the personnel and constant high combat readiness of the SPETSNAZ radio and radio technical units. . . .<sup>46</sup>

The Spetsnaz also made important contributions to tamping down the protest movement in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and in the war in Afghanistan.

<sup>41</sup> Galeotti, 2015, p. 7.

<sup>42</sup> Mark Galeotti, “The Rising Influence of Russian Special Forces,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, 2014.

<sup>43</sup> S. I. Stemasov, *The Organization of Radioelectronic Warfare in an Offensive Operation of an Army and a Front: Lecture for Courses for Command Personnel of the Armies of Warsaw Pact Member Countries*, Central Intelligence Agency, trans., March 19, 1969.

<sup>44</sup> Stemasov, 1969.

<sup>45</sup> Stemasov, 1969, pp. 13–14.

<sup>46</sup> Stemasov, 1969, p. 28.



## The Birth of NATO and the Warsaw Pact

NATO is a military alliance born of the Cold War and has been foundational to U.S. strategy concerning European security for decades. NATO was established in 1949 in the context of one of the first crises of the Cold War: a Soviet blockade of allied access to West Berlin and the resultant “Berlin airlift” to deliver supplies to the West. By April 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty (or Washington Treaty) had been signed by the United States, Canada, and ten European countries: Belgium, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and the United Kingdom. Article 5 of the treaty was critical in binding members to come to each other’s assistance if attacked.<sup>47</sup>

Beginning in 1954, Khrushchev began to push for the establishment of a European collective security organization to counter NATO. By this time, tension between the Soviet Union and NATO member states had increased as a result of the Korean War and over proposals to bring West Germany into the NATO alliance. Despite Soviet efforts to prevent it, West Germany was granted full sovereignty from occupying powers, along with membership to NATO. In response, the Soviet Union convened a conference in Warsaw to sign a treaty with Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Romania. The Warsaw Pact treaty was explicitly modeled as a counterweight to NATO. Its stated purpose was to support collective defense for member nations, and it specified that the alliance would disband automatically when NATO did. While the organization took root primarily as a symbolic counter to NATO, it soon faced several military crises, including an uprising in Hungary in 1956.<sup>48</sup>

One important area for coordination among the Warsaw Pact nations was the dissemination of propaganda. A declassified CIA translation of a 1965 article appearing in the Soviet journal *Military Thought* (*Voennaya Mysl*) called for increased military attention to the “organization and conduct of ideological warfare against the enemy under the conditions of a modern war.”<sup>49</sup> The author particularly emphasized the importance of “coordination and cooperation in the field of special propaganda between the political organs of the Soviet Armed Forces and the armies of the Warsaw Pact member countries.”<sup>50</sup> The content of propaganda, he emphasized, “will be set forth in the decisions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Soviet government.”<sup>51</sup> The target would be NATO troops, “who have long been subjected to intensive anti-Soviet and anticommunist ideological conditioning.” He added that, because NATO field armies “will include formations of two or three nationalities . . . we must therefore provide for the publication of printed propaganda materials in two or three languages.”<sup>52</sup> At the time, radio was considered the most effective means of distribution, although the author described several other approaches for disseminating leaflets. He also characterized coordination across the Warsaw Pact as particularly critical to “avoid discrepan-

<sup>47</sup> Judt, 2005, pp. 149–150.

<sup>48</sup> Nation, 1992, pp. 218–220.

<sup>49</sup> A. Shevchenko, “Some Problems of Political Work Among Enemy Troops and Population in the Initial Period of War,” Central Intelligence Agency translation of article purportedly from the journal *Military Thought*, 1965, p. 5.

<sup>50</sup> Shevchenko, 1965, p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> Shevchenko, 1965, p. 5.

<sup>52</sup> Shevchenko, 1965, p. 6.

cies in the content of the leaflets and radio broadcasts. . . . Otherwise, damage could be done to special propaganda, and the enemy will take advantage of this to discredit it.”<sup>53</sup>

To audiences outside Europe, the Warsaw Pact gave Soviet foreign policy a veneer of international support. For example, Gamal Abdel Nasser's nationalist regime in Egypt announced an arms agreement with Czechoslovakia in 1955 that allowed it to acquire Soviet fighter aircraft, bombers, tanks, artillery equipment, submarines, naval vessels, and ammunition. Months later, Nasser revealed that the Czechoslovakian deal had actually been negotiated with the Soviet Union.<sup>54</sup>

## Yugoslavia, 1944–1955

Communist Yugoslavia under Tito's leadership had been one of the Soviet Union's staunchest supporters during World War II, but a deep rift began to grow shortly after the war ended. One of the earliest reported disagreements related to the role of the Soviet state security apparatus in Yugoslavia. Tito was reportedly outraged to find that Soviet efforts to recruit agents in Yugoslavia targeted two men serving in his own cabinet.<sup>55</sup> While there were several points of contention, the most serious substantive disagreement centered on Tito's pursuit of certain policies in the Balkans without coordinating and consulting with Stalin. But “Titoism” also reflected an important alternative to the spread of communism in Europe. “Alone of the Communist parties in Europe,” wrote Judt, “the Yugoslavs had come to power by their own efforts, depending neither on local allies nor foreign help.”<sup>56</sup> Tito's approach to communism was relatively independent from Stalin's, making Titoism a source of great distrust in the Soviet Union. In June 1948, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was expelled from Cominform and publicly denounced.<sup>57</sup>

To undermine Tito, the Soviet Union turned to hostile measures, especially information operations, to influence the country's affairs. In 1949, the Politburo decided to begin publishing a Serbian-language newspaper to counter the Tito government's reported criticism of the Soviet Union. The Politburo called for a meeting of Soviet-aligned Yugoslavian communists to publish the newspaper *In Support of Socialist Yugoslavia* and appoint an already agreed-upon editorial staff. Moscow would finance the publication and, in collaboration with Yugoslavian communists who were “against the nationalistic band of Tito's followers,” publish and distribute the paper in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Romania.<sup>58</sup> In a top-secret plan in 1952, the Soviet Information Bureau related that “to expand anti-Tito propaganda, the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party decided to create flyers to be distributed in the territory of Yugoslavia.” It elaborated: “Before, flyers were only made on the basis of articles

<sup>53</sup> Shevchenko, 1965, p. 14.

<sup>54</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 17.

<sup>55</sup> Andrew and Gordievsky, 1990, p. 362.

<sup>56</sup> Judt, 2005, p. 140.

<sup>57</sup> Bojan Dimitrijevic, “The Mutual Defense Aid Program in Tito's Yugoslavia, 1951–1958, and Its Technical Impact,” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1997, p. 19.

<sup>58</sup> Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, “Decision by the Politburo of the CPSU to publish the newspaper *In Support of Socialist Yugoslavia in the USSR*,” Moscow, April 3, 1949; RAND translation.

published in immigrant newspapers. Now, it has been decided to also prepare special text for the flyers: shorter, assertive, and accessible to wide audiences of workers.”<sup>59</sup> The following were among the messages to be developed for this purpose:

*To soldiers and officers of the Yugoslavian Army:* Fight against turning the country into the U.S. aggressors' military base. Let's not serve as cannon fodder to the imperialists. Throw American generals and English admirals out of Yugoslavia. Let's not allow them to inspect our units.

*To the working population of Yugoslavia:* Our country is nothing more than one big concentration camp. Tito's people hold onto power with the help of a bloody fascist dictatorship; they legalized the regime of a police baton and filled the homeland with the patriots' blood—blood of the best sons and daughters of our people.

*To miners and dock and railway workers of Yugoslavia:* Do everything possible to disrupt the extraction of strategic raw materials (non-ferrous metals) and their shipment to the imperialists for the production of weapons. Disrupt criminal plans of the imperialists and their hired servants—Tito's people, who help prepare for war against the countries of popular democracy and the Soviet Union.<sup>60</sup>

Soviet intelligence collection activities also included embedding agents in Yugoslavian ministries to gather information on the Tito government.<sup>61</sup>

After seven long years of tension, the Soviet Union normalized relations with Tito's government in 1955. A notable turning point in the relationship took place in May of that year, when Khrushchev visited Yugoslavia in an attempt to mend the split that emerged under his predecessor. The move was one of several initiatives by Khrushchev to advance a degree of reform in the post-Stalin era. Perhaps the culmination of these efforts was his “secret speech” to the CPSU's 20th Party Congress in February 1956 denouncing Stalin's rule in no uncertain terms.<sup>62</sup> Among Khrushchev's grievances regarding his predecessor was his intolerance for Tito's leadership in Yugoslavia:

It was a shameful role which Stalin played here. The “Yugoslav affair” contained no problems which could not have been solved through party discussions among comrades. There was no significant basis for the development of this “affair”; it was completely possible to have prevented the rupture of relations with that country.

I recall the first days when the conflict between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia began artificially to be blown up. Once, when I came from Kiev to Moscow, I was invited to visit

<sup>59</sup> Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, “Plan to Prepare Propaganda Materials to Drop on the Territory of Yugoslavia,” Bucharest, Romania, July 4, 1952; RAND translation.

<sup>60</sup> Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1952.

<sup>61</sup> See P. N. Eliseev, Second Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in Yugoslavia, diary excerpt about a conversation with a Soviet citizen about restrictions of communication with foreigners among Yugoslavian state employees, May 10, 1949; RAND translation. This top-secret report was written by a Soviet citizen working in the Yugoslavian Ministry of Defense who reported to the Soviet Embassy on activities within his directorate.

<sup>62</sup> “Khrushchev's Secret Speech, ‘On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences,’ Delivered at the Twentieth Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,” translation, February 25, 1956.

Stalin who, pointing to the copy of a letter lately sent to Tito, asked me, "Have you read this?"

Not waiting for my reply he answered, "I will shake my little finger and there will be no more Tito. He will fall." . . .

But this did not happen to Tito. No matter how much or how little Stalin shook, not only his little finger but everything else that he could shake, Tito did not fall. Why? The reason was that, in this case of disagreement with the Yugoslav comrades, Tito had behind him a state and a people who had gone through a severe school of fighting for liberty and independence, a people which gave support to its leaders.<sup>63</sup>

The remarkable split between Khrushchev and Stalin led observers in Eastern Europe and in the West who were privy to the content of the speech to anticipate real reforms on the horizon in the Soviet Union.

Soviet employment of hostile measures to effect change in Tito's leadership in the immediate postwar period were notable for several reasons. First, they reflect the extent to which Stalin was deeply troubled by countervailing sources of authority among communist leaders. Second, the use of several measures of influence were not effective in bringing about the kind of change Stalin sought. Tito's intransigence, in Stalin's estimation, also led the Soviet leader to view other independently minded communist leaders with suspicion, including those in China, as we discuss later.

## Poland and Hungary, 1956

The growing sense that reform could be on the horizon in 1956 led to protest movements against Soviet rule in Poland and Hungary, with very different outcomes. But what was clear was that even after Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin, reform would not mean that Soviet leaders would accept perceived challenges to their reach and influence in Eastern and Central Europe without taking action.<sup>64</sup>

In Poland in October 1956, Władysław Gomułka, a prominent Polish communist leader who had recently been imprisoned by Soviet leaders, was ascending to a leadership position in the Polish United Workers' Party.<sup>65</sup> Moscow interpreted the move as a rejection of its authority, leading Khrushchev and other high-ranking Soviet officials to travel in person to Warsaw to encourage the Polish communists to take another path. The Soviet leaders strengthened their bargaining position by leveraging conventional strength, simultaneously instructing a brigade of Soviet tanks to move on the city.<sup>66</sup> This threat of force provided an additional lever to help Khrushchev achieve his political objectives. Gomułka was able to persuade the Soviet leader that he did not intend to make substantial changes or to substantively challenge Soviet influ-

<sup>63</sup> "Khrushchev's Secret Speech," 1956.

<sup>64</sup> Judt, 2005, p. 313.

<sup>65</sup> Mark Kramer, "The Soviet Union and the 1956 Crises in Hungary and Poland: Reassessments and New Findings," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 33, No. 2, April 1998, p. 169.

<sup>66</sup> Kramer, 1998, p. 169.

ence in Poland. He assured Khrushchev that Poland would not attempt to leave the Warsaw Pact or challenge the presence of Soviet troops in its territory. Tension during the “Polish October” thus eased, without violent intervention.<sup>67</sup>

An uprising in Hungary in the same year had a much more devastating outcome. The Hungarian uprising of 1956 had its roots in civil unrest regarding the country's political leadership, which the Soviet Union had played a significant role in empowering. In 1953, Moscow orchestrated the replacement of Hungary's Stalinist leadership with a reform-minded national communist leader, Imre Nagy.<sup>68</sup> Moscow's selection of Nagy was an effort to calm protests over political and economic policies without resorting to the use of force. Nagy was an independent-minded communist who had been critical of Stalinist policies in the late 1940s, which had resulted in his expulsion from party leadership, public shaming, and imprisonment.<sup>69</sup> “Nagy was certainly not a conventional option, from Moscow's point of view,” one scholar noted.<sup>70</sup> While supporting Nagy reflected the Soviet Union's move away from Hungary's painful Stalinist past, Nagy also moved quickly to implement liberalizing reforms related to economic, social, and political affairs that made Moscow increasingly uncomfortable. Khrushchev soon came to doubt the wisdom of Nagy's leadership, and, in 1955, the CPSU's Central Committee “condemned Nagy's ‘rightist deviations,’” removed him from office, and expelled him from the party.<sup>71</sup>

Nagy was replaced by a series of staunchly Stalinist leaders, but each proved unable to quiet increasingly insistent calls for reform.<sup>72</sup> Ongoing unrest in Hungary caught the attention of the CPSU. Notes from a meeting in July 1956 detailed plans to prepare an article for the press on “the subversive activities of the imperialists” in Poland and Hungary and “internationalist solidarity to rebuff the enemy.”<sup>73</sup> In October, students in Budapest demanded reforms and greater political freedoms and called for Nagy to assume the role of prime minister.

On October 23–24, the Hungarian government requested Soviet assistance in Budapest.<sup>74</sup> Notes from an October 23 meeting of CPSU leadership indicted that Khrushchev—and almost all the other senior party leaders—favored sending Soviet troops to Budapest in response to a request from General Secretary of the Hungarian Workers' Party Ernő Gerő.<sup>75</sup> The lone dissenter was Anastas Mikoyan, first deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, who argued for continued employment of measures short of military intervention. “We should try political measures,” Mikoyan argued, “and only [if those fail] then

<sup>67</sup> Judt, 2005, p. 312.

<sup>68</sup> In 1930, Nagy signed a certificate enlisting as an agent in the Soviet secret police (at the time, OGPU; later, the NKVD). See “Imre Nagy's OGPU (Unified State Political Directorate) Enlistment,” translation, September 4, 1930.

<sup>69</sup> Judt, 2005, p. 313; Nation, 1992, p. 221.

<sup>70</sup> Judt, 2005, p. 313.

<sup>71</sup> Judt, 2005, p. 313.

<sup>72</sup> Nation, 1992, p. 220. In July 1956, Matyas Rakosi stepped down and was replaced by Ernő Gerő; both were dedicated Stalinists. Although Gerő's ideological credentials were impeccable, he proved unable to meet the challenges of the political moment. As one scholar noted, he “could neither lead change nor suppress it” (Judt, 2005, p. 314).

<sup>73</sup> “Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 9 and 12 July 1956,” translation, July 9, 1956.

<sup>74</sup> According to R. Craig Nation at the U.S. Army War College, “Responsibility for the decision [to deploy Soviet troops] has remained a point of controversy” (Nation, 1992, p. 221).

<sup>75</sup> “Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 23 October 1956,” translation, October 23, 1956.

send troops.”<sup>76</sup> Party leaders in favor argued strongly that the situation was dire, and only military action could restore order. On October 23, the students assembled in a city square to demonstrate; some pulled down a statue of Stalin. Soviet troops entered Budapest to put down the resistance. The next day, the party announced that Nagy had been installed as prime minister. One scholar argued that the move to empower Nagy may have reflected a hope of reaching a peaceful outcome: “A ‘Polish solution,’ with Nagy in the role of Gomulka.”<sup>77</sup>

Any hope that the move would satisfy demonstrators was quickly dispelled, however. Nagy struggled to calm the protests and restore order without inviting Soviet intervention. On October 28, 1956, the KGB reported on developments in Budapest using information gleaned from its network of agents, including those working undercover as police.<sup>78</sup> Yet, Soviet patience gave way as Nagy sought to placate protestors by calling for the removal of Soviet troops and, on October 31, for withdrawing from the Warsaw Pact. On November 1, Soviet Army divisions stationed in Romania and Ukraine moved toward the Hungarian border. In response, Nagy renounced Hungary’s membership in the Warsaw Pact and made a radio announcement that his country was now neutral. On November 4, Soviet tanks attacked Budapest, and a radio broadcast announced that the Nagy government had been replaced. Budapest was retaken within 72 hours, but sporadic attacks continued for months. An estimated 2,700 Hungarians were killed in the fighting, and 341 were tried and executed in the years that followed. Nagy was among the leaders found guilty of counterrevolutionary activities and was executed in June 1958.<sup>79</sup>

In August of that year, Khrushchev delivered a speech in Hungary asserting the Soviets’ right to intervene to resist counterrevolutionary activities, such as those of 1956. This was an early articulation of what would come to be known as the Brezhnev Doctrine after 1968’s Prague Spring. Khrushchev declared that

if a new provocation is directed against any socialist country whatsoever, then the provocateur will have to deal with all the countries of the socialist camp, and the Soviet Union is always ready to come to the assistance of its friends, to give the necessary rebuff to the enemies of socialism if they attempt to disturb the peaceful labor of the people of the socialist countries.<sup>80</sup>

The two crises of 1956—in Poland and Hungary—reflect the spectrum of measures that the Soviet Union could leverage to shape international affairs. Although Soviet leaders first addressed the crises using hostile measures short of war, the efficacy of these measures was bolstered by the fact that the use of force always remained an option. However, in applying these tools, the Soviet Union could not guarantee that a crisis would stay short of war, as the Hungarian uprising demonstrated.

<sup>76</sup> “Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 23 October 1956,” 1956.

<sup>77</sup> Nation, 1992, p. 221.

<sup>78</sup> “Telegram from the Budapest KGB Station Concerning the Latest Developments in the City Following the Popular Uprising,” translation, October 28, 1956.

<sup>79</sup> Judt, 2005, pp. 313–318.

<sup>80</sup> Quoted in Nation, 1992, p. 222.

## Czechoslovakia, 1968

In March 1968, the CIA issued the secret memorandum “The USSR and Eastern Europe,” declaring, “Eastern Europe is alive with political movement once again.”<sup>81</sup> The occasion for the assessment was an uprising in Czechoslovakia, which began late in 1967 with student demonstrations in the streets of Prague calling for government reform. Alarmed at the domestic unrest, Leonid Brezhnev (who had succeeded Khrushchev in 1964) visited Prague and forced the Czech leader to step down. In January 1968, he was replaced by the Soviet-educated Alexander Dubček, whom the Soviet premier presumed to be loyal to Moscow.<sup>82</sup> However, rather than demonstrating fealty to the party line, Dubček’s government advanced a sweeping reform agenda in March, which, if implemented, would have brought about substantial political and economic changes. This was the beginning of what some hopefully designated the “Prague Spring.” Following the release of the action plan, the CIA had an optimistic assessment of the developments:

The odds are against any explosion in Eastern Europe comparable to that which occurred in 1956. Political circumstances and public moods have changed greatly in the intervening years. There is now a real prospect that Czechoslovakia will be able to set itself on a path denied to it in the past, toward a meaningful degree of liberty at home and sovereignty abroad and eventually a place of its own, somewhere between East and West.<sup>83</sup>

The intelligence estimate noted, however, that such an outcome did not mean that the Soviet Union would not try to use hostile measures to effect outcomes in Czechoslovakia. Indeed, the CIA predicted that it would use a range of hostile measures:

As always, the Soviets are certain to use a variety of pressures and even inducements to try to influence the course of events in Eastern Europe. Should they become sufficiently alarmed or angered by developments in, say, Czechoslovakia, they would probably bring to bear very heavy pressures indeed: direct intervention in Czech political affairs, to the point perhaps of working for an internal party coup; interference with the normal flow of trade and economic negotiations, perhaps selective at first but increasingly disruptive over time; and, eventually, hints and warnings of military intervention, perhaps with related troop movements designed to lend substance to the threats.<sup>84</sup>

Despite the Soviet Union’s violent response to the uprising in Hungary in 1956, the CIA had reason to believe that it would react differently to the Prague Spring. There had been signs over the past decade of increasingly liberal trends in Czechoslovakian culture, as poets, playwrights, and novelists, including Milan Kundera, created works critical of the Soviet Union and communist leadership to a degree that would have been unacceptable in earlier years.<sup>85</sup>

It would soon be clear, however, that the Soviet Union had other plans. By May, Soviet leaders began to pursue several avenues short of direct military action to bring Dubček back

<sup>81</sup> CIA, “The USSR and Eastern Europe,” Special Memorandum 6-68, March 21, 1968, p. ii.

<sup>82</sup> Nation, 1992, p. 249.

<sup>83</sup> CIA, 1968, p. ii.

<sup>84</sup> CIA, 1968, pp. 13–14.

<sup>85</sup> Judt, 2005, p. 438.

into line. It advanced a communication strategy opposing the “betrayal of socialism” evidenced by the Czech leadership, undertaking unscheduled troop movements, demonstrating a show of force by Warsaw Pact members in a military exercise in Czech territory, and engaging in bilateral discussions and Warsaw Pact summits.<sup>86</sup> On August 3, leading Czech communists sent a letter to Brezhnev requesting Soviet assistance in putting down ongoing protests. They wrote,

In such trying circumstances we are appealing to you, Soviet Communists, the [leading] representatives of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, with a request for you to lend support and assistance with all the means at your disposal. Only with your assistance can the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic be extricated from the imminent danger of counterrevolution.<sup>87</sup>

Reportedly, it was a response to a Soviet request two weeks earlier for a “letter of invitation.”<sup>88</sup>

In August 1968, Soviet leaders chose to escalate their employment of hostile measures to the level of military intervention. Twenty-four divisions of troops from Warsaw Pact member states (the Soviet Union, Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria) advanced across the border and quickly crushed the nascent reform movement.<sup>89</sup> Soviet Spetsnaz soldiers were reportedly the first on the ground in Prague, where they seized the airport and facilitated landings by air assault forces.<sup>90</sup> Soviet communications on the day following the siege offered the official explanation for the violence as a response to a request by Czechoslovakia for assistance combating “counterrevolutionary forces that have entered into collusion with external forces hostile to socialism.”<sup>91</sup>

After the operation in Czechoslovakia, Brezhnev broadened this rationale into a general approach that asserted a Soviet right to intervene in the affairs of socialist states threatened by externally sponsored counterrevolutionary forces. He asserted,

Each Communist Party is free to apply the principles of Marxism-Leninism and socialism in its own country, but it is not free to deviate from these principles if it is to remain a Communist party. . . . The weakening of any of links in the world system of socialism directly affects all the socialist countries, and they cannot look indifferently upon this.<sup>92</sup>

In time, Western observers came to refer to this idea as the Brezhnev Doctrine.<sup>93</sup>

While the operation in Czechoslovakia proceeded, the Soviet Union sought to control information about developments there. It jammed foreign radio stations that transmitted in

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<sup>86</sup> Nation, 1992, p. 250.

<sup>87</sup> “Letter from Czech Communist Politicians to Brezhnev Requesting Soviet Intervention in Prague Spring,” translation, August 1968.

<sup>88</sup> Judt, 2005, p. 444.

<sup>89</sup> Nation, 1992, p. 251.

<sup>90</sup> Galeotti, 2014.

<sup>91</sup> Quoted in Nation, 1992, p. 251.

<sup>92</sup> Quoted in Judt, 2005, p. 443.

<sup>93</sup> Nation, 1992, p. 251.



Czechoslovakia.<sup>94</sup> KGB documents from the Baltic states indicate that the organization was active in gauging responses among Soviet populations throughout the intervention in Czechoslovakia. For example, a 1968 letter from a KGB official relayed how agents spied on Lithuanian residents during public gatherings to collect insights into their views of the situation.<sup>95</sup> The KGB also infiltrated organizations alleged to oppose the intervention and confronted citizens reported to be spreading negative gossip.<sup>96</sup>

## Conclusions: Cold War–Era Soviet Hostile Measures in Europe

Here, we highlight several instances of Soviet use of hostile measures in Europe during this period:

- Facilitating the rise of communist governments in Eastern and Central Europe required the Soviet Union to use political influence and overt and covert military action.
- Several organizations in Eastern and Central European countries, including Cominform and the Warsaw Pact, provided a means of coordinating communications and overt military action, simultaneously enforcing discipline and providing the guise of international action by autonomous states.
- The Soviet Union demonstrated a strong aversion to the perceived risk posed by any ideological difference or weakness of fealty to Soviet leadership among states in its sphere of influence in Eastern and Central Europe. It enforced discipline through covert action (NKVD in Yugoslavia), an overt military presence (Poland), diplomacy (Tito's expulsion from Cominform), political influence, and communication campaigns.
- The Soviet Union's overt military presence in Europe after World War II gave it substantial leverage in exercising hostile measures.
- The Soviet Union sought the appearance of legitimacy as it exercised hostile measures through rigged elections (exerting political influence) or requests by proxy governments as a pretext for intervention, as it did in Czechoslovakia.

A range of hostile measures kept neighboring political leaders appropriately aligned with Soviet interests and ideology. The post–World War II settlement by the victorious Allied powers gave the Soviet Union an opportunity to shape Eastern and Central Europe in accordance with its own perceived security needs and ideological orientation. The presence of Soviet troops after the war and Soviet influence via institutions for information dissemination, coordination, and political influence gave Soviet leaders significant leverage to employ hostile measures. This influence was not absolute, however, as demonstrated by the break with Tito in Yugoslavia and violent crackdowns in Hungary and Prague. These examples indicate that when a country's leaders strayed from Soviet preferences, they risked Soviet intervention via a range of hostile

<sup>94</sup> “Yu. Illytskyi Reports on Items from the Czechoslovak Media,” translation, May 12, 1968.

<sup>95</sup> Lt. Col. Gudavichus, head of KGB Shilal regional department, Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic, letter summarizing citizens' reactions to the events in Czechoslovakia, August 26, 1968; RAND translation.

<sup>96</sup> Captain Nechushkin, head of the 3rd Department of the 2nd Directorate of KGB of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic, report on undercover operations conducted in response to the first signals of events in Czechoslovakia, September 4, 1968; RAND translation.

measures to bring them back into line. Indeed, in 1968, the Brezhnev Doctrine asserted the Soviet Union's right to intervene in the affairs of communist countries for the purpose of enforcing the Soviet interpretation of the communist ideology. The unique emphasis on stability—boosted by the rationale of security or a shared history and culture—would become a recurring theme in Soviet and, later, Russian employment of hostile measures.

## Soviet Activities in East Asia During the Cold War

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In 1946, the British ambassador to Moscow reported to the British foreign minister that the Soviets were focused on shaping postwar Europe and that, in terms of the investment of resources, Asia was “outside the immediate scope of Russian expansionism.”<sup>1</sup> The Soviet Union was employing hostile measures and other tools of statecraft to acquire territory and empower friendly governments at its borders in Europe, to assert control over regions it considered historically connected, and to bolster its security from external threats. In East Asia, Soviet leaders had long worked to cultivate communist leaders, and the rise of communist China in 1949 marked a notable victory. Indeed, on the day Mao announced the formation of the People’s Republic of China, celebrants hung 30-foot portraits of Mao and Stalin in Shanghai.<sup>2</sup> However, the Soviet Union’s strained relationship with China is critical context for understanding the employment of specific hostile measures in the region. The Sino-Soviet “split” amounted to competition for global leadership of the communist movement. It meant that while the Soviet Union sought to advance the communist project and resist Western influence in the region, it had to do so without bolstering Chinese prestige. This made Moscow’s approach in East Asia relatively cautious, focused on the targeted use of military advisers, accompanied by foreign and military assistance. The caution also to potential escalation with the United States, as the Soviet Union worked through diplomatic channels to bring conflicts to a close without risking its own direct military intervention.

### Soviet Interventions in China Before the Chinese Revolution

In the first years after the founding of the Soviet Union, the country took steps to shape selected revolutionary movements outside of Europe. Throughout the 1920s, several Soviet interventions helped shape events in China. In 1923, Sun Yat-Sen, leader of the revolutionary Kuomintang (KMT), or Nationalist Party of China, established a political and military alliance with the Soviet Union.<sup>3</sup> That same year, General Chiang Kai-shek of China’s National Revolutionary Army visited Moscow to discuss Soviet support for the KMT. As a result, Soviet military advisers traveled to China to establish a military academy in Canton and worked directly to train KMT officers. At the peak of its involvement, Moscow had deployed an esti-

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Bradley R. Simpson, “Southeast Asia in the Cold War,” in Robert J. McMahon, ed., *The Cold War in the Third World*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Kevin Peraino, *A Force So Swift: Mao, Truman, and Birth of Modern China, 1949*, New York: Penguin, 2017, p. 212.

<sup>3</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 10.

mated 1,000 Soviet military advisers to China.<sup>4</sup> The Soviet Union also provided materiel to the KMT, including 23,000 small arms, ammunition, and radio equipment, valued at around \$2 million by 1925. The Soviets also committed Red Army troops in support of Chiang's military campaign and provided air support for bombing, reconnaissance, and supply missions.<sup>5</sup> However, the Soviets withdrew from this alliance with the nationalists after the 1927 "Shanghai massacre," in which Chinese communists were killed by the very nationalists the Soviet Union was supporting.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, intervening in nationalist movements around the world, particularly through the use of targeted military assistance, would become a model that the Soviets would employ several more times.

## The Chinese Revolution and Sino-Soviet Relations

After World War II, China was beset by civil war between Chiang Kai-shek's nationalists (a movement that had received Soviet support in the 1920s) and the Communist Party of China. Under the leadership of Mao Zedong, the communists battled the ruling Nationalist Party led by U.S.-backed Chiang Kai-shek, ultimately emerging victorious in 1949. Chiang's war effort struggled to turn back the popular and well-organized communist forces. By October 1949, Mao announced establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC), and Chiang and his government fled the mainland for the island of Taiwan. One scholar described Soviet intervention as relatively limited: "Soviet involvement in the Chinese civil war was cautious and clandestine and probably was not a deciding factor in the war."<sup>7</sup> Support for the Chinese communists included military aid for Mao's forces, turning over large stores of captured Japanese arms to Mao as the Soviet Union withdrew from Manchuria, and allowing Mao to establish a valuable strategic foothold in that territory.<sup>8</sup> Stalin cautiously welcomed the revolution but remained skeptical of the extent to which Mao represented the Soviet worldview. A declassified 1953 U.S. government report found that, unlike in Europe, Mao's PRC was no puppet: "Communist China appears to have more the position of ally than satellite."<sup>9</sup> One scholar has noted that Stalin viewed Mao skeptically, fearing the emergence of an "Asian Tito."<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, in 1950, the two nations signed the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance.<sup>11</sup>

By the end of the decade, however, fissures had formed between the two nations over leadership of the global "socialist camp," as well as specific policies. For example, the Soviet policy of *détente* with the United States irked China, and China's economic policies pushed

<sup>4</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 14.

<sup>8</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> President's Committee on International Information Activities, 1953, p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> Nation, 1992, p. 190.

<sup>11</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 65.

for far faster development than Soviet advisers recommended.<sup>12</sup> The U.S. report had predicted that such an outcome was likely:

There are deep and historic conflicts of interest, however, which might in time lead to open rivalry. The Soviet rulers will attempt to gain domination over Communist China because of concern over its present capabilities for independent action. The Chinese Communist regime is almost certain to resist Soviet efforts to reduce it politically and economically to satellite status; moreover, Mao Tse-tung may now regard himself as the independent leader of the communist movement in Asia and may be reluctant to take directions from the new Soviet rulers.<sup>13</sup>

The causes for the split during the late 1950s have been attributed to differences over economic and cultural policies, Chinese nationalism, domestic politics, and Mao's unique interpretation of Marxism.<sup>14</sup> By summer 1960, the Soviet Union had removed most of its advisers and KGB agents from China.<sup>15</sup> Efforts to reengage the parties in Moscow in summer 1963 fell apart; the Chinese representative at the talks, Deng Xiaoping, accused the Soviet Union of escalating its attacks on China and "trying, come what may, to crush others." Deng argued that "using such methods is a habitual affair" for the Soviets.<sup>16</sup> The split meant that the two communist powers competed aggressively for influence around the world. China expanded its global reach: Its leaders visited 23 developing countries in 1963 alone, and it expanded its use of advisers and aid to influence governments abroad.

By the mid-1960s, China was a major priority for Soviet intelligence services, which worked to expand its sinologist staffs. With the inception of Mao's bloody Cultural Revolution in 1966, however, the KGB found operating in China to be exceptionally challenging. Its most successful agents operating in China were ethnically Mongolian or Central Asian and could blend more easily with the local population.<sup>17</sup>

Understanding the Sino-Soviet split is critical in interpreting Soviet activities to shape dynamics in East Asia, and, in some cases, Soviet influence globally. Historian Odd Arne Westad argued that Soviet engagement with communist leaders in Vietnam and Cuba, discussed later in this appendix, must be understood as an outcome of the Sino-Soviet split, which demonstrated to communist movements around the world that they need not hew to "Soviet political dogma"—a message that the Soviets would work diligently to counter.<sup>18</sup>

### **Korean War, 1950–1953**

When World War II ended in August 1945, the United States and the Soviet Union—victorious wartime allies—assumed responsibility for occupying the Korean Peninsula. The

<sup>12</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 69.

<sup>13</sup> President's Committee on International Information Activities, 1953, p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 161.

<sup>15</sup> Andrew and Gordievsky, 1990, p. 491.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Westad, 2007, p. 162.

<sup>17</sup> Andrew and Gordievsky, 1990, pp. 491–494.

<sup>18</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 158.

Soviet Union took responsibility for the area north of the 38th parallel, while the United States occupied the south.<sup>19</sup> The intent was to reunite the peninsula at a later date. However, heightening Cold War tensions precluded such an outcome. The occupying powers ensured that the governments they supported reflected their perceived interests: Communist leader Kim Il-Sung took power in the north, and a U.S.-educated anticommunist politician, Syngman Rhee, took power in the south. At the start of the occupation, a Soviet intelligence assessment of the state of communism in Korea already called for increased efforts to shape the leadership, institutions, and ideology.<sup>20</sup> For example, it recommended the Soviet Union “send from Moscow political literature available in Korean and also published literature about the USSR and the work of the Communist Parties of foreign countries, especially those such as Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia, and others.”<sup>21</sup> Stalin’s sensitivity regarding political affairs on the peninsula reflected, at least in part, a concern about the security of important Soviet naval resources at Vladivostok, just 60 kilometers north of the North Korean border.<sup>22</sup> A tense stalemate between the two Korean states persisted until June 1950, when North Korean troops invaded the south. In his memoir, Khrushchev reported that Stalin approved Kim’s plan to invade during a visit to Moscow in 1949, but he also emphasized that the decision to invade was Kim’s.<sup>23</sup>

Although it withdrew its troops in 1949, the Soviet Union continued to use several tools to shape events on the Korean Peninsula, including material military support to the North Korean communists. This support was critical to Kim’s decision, with Stalin’s assent, to push across the southern border.<sup>24</sup> The Soviet Union had also made an important decision six months before the invasion to withdraw its representative to the United Nations (UN) in protest over a decision not to seat the PRC. This meant that, on June 25, 1950, the same day the North invaded the South, the UN Security Council voted unanimously to intervene, as the Soviet Union was not present to veto the decision.<sup>25</sup> Under UN mandate, the United States sent 210,000 troops and materiel support, including aircraft, naval vessels, and tanks, to support the war effort in the south.<sup>26</sup> The Soviet Union could have leveraged its permanent membership on the UN Security Council as a tool for shaping the course of the Korean War, but the decision not to engage the UN precluded that. Soviet media reports reacted strongly to U.S. intervention; a Radio Moscow statement in July called it a “threat of attack upon Russia by imperialist powers.”<sup>27</sup> A 1951 editorial in the Soviet journal *Military Thought (Voennaya Mysl)* similarly asserted,

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<sup>19</sup> James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945–1974*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1996.

<sup>20</sup> “Soviet Report on Communists in Korea, 1945,” translation, 1945.

<sup>21</sup> “Soviet Report on Communists in Korea,” 1945.

<sup>22</sup> *Nation*, 1992, p. 191.

<sup>23</sup> *Nation*, 1992, p. 191.

<sup>24</sup> Patterson, 1996, p. 210.

<sup>25</sup> *Nation*, 1992, p. 191.

<sup>26</sup> President’s Committee on International Information Activities, 1953, p. 15.

<sup>27</sup> *Nation*, 1992, p. 192.

Having embarked upon the path of overt aggression, the ruling circles of the USA have imposed a “state of emergency” to accelerate the arms race, to facilitate the conversion of the country to fascism, and to intensify the exploitation of the working people.<sup>28</sup>

The fact that the United States and China committed troops to South and North Korea, respectively, and that the Soviet Union provided military advisers and materiel support to both China and North Korea has long been clear. Only recently, however, has evidence come to light indicating that the Soviet Union also brought its own forces to the fight, including Soviet MiG-15 fighter pilots, radar operators, and antiaircraft gunners.<sup>29</sup> In August 1950, Soviet fighter aircraft provided cover for Chinese forces amassing at the border between Manchuria and North Korea, and, the next month, Stalin ordered combat units to defend Pyongyang. His minister of defense noted that such a move would make it “impossible to hide the fact that Soviet pilots were actively engaged in combat.”<sup>30</sup> Often interested in maintaining a degree of plausible deniability, Stalin walked back his order. By 1951, however, Soviet pilots were engaged in northwest Korea, where they sought to defend air space against U.S. forces attacking Chinese and North Korean ground forces and supply routes.<sup>31</sup>

By September, U.S. forces began to push north of the 38th parallel in an effort to unify the peninsula under South Korean leadership. Soviet military assistance to North Korea—including tanks, aircraft, and Soviet military advisers—continued at modest levels once the United States intervened. Stalin did enable North Korean activities by providing air support, but he kept Soviet ground forces in a defensive posture.<sup>32</sup> By October, China stepped in and decided to send troops across the Yalu River to support the struggling North Korean troops. After months of fighting, the Soviet representative to the UN called for an armistice and the restoration of the border at the 38th parallel. One scholar has argued that Moscow’s decision to provide only modest support during the Korean War marked a critical point in the Soviet Union’s relationship with its allies in Asia: “Preoccupied with the threat of war,” wrote historian R. Craig Nation, “Stalin sacrificed revolutionary solidarity with the peoples of Asia and betrayed the spirit of his newly crafted alliance with People’s China.”<sup>33</sup> The result was a sense that China, not the Soviet Union, was the key regional communist power.

The Korean War saw several emerging developments in the employment of Soviet hostile measures. While the geographic and political divide in Korea after the war ended where it began—at the 38th parallel—the experience marked an important turning point for the Cold War superpowers. Both the United States and the Soviet Union significantly increased their defense spending and military end strength during the war, and this preparation for a Cold War persisted for decades to come. Fear about communist military aggression bolstered the still relatively new NATO alliance in Europe. The war also set a precedent for the employment of hostile measures in small local conflicts, which came to serve as a battleground for super-

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Kokoshin, 1998, p. 112.

<sup>29</sup> 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.

<sup>30</sup> O’Neill, 2000, p. 21.

<sup>31</sup> O’Neill, 2000, p. 22.

<sup>32</sup> Nation, 1992, p. 192.

<sup>33</sup> Nation, 1992, p. 194.

power competition.<sup>34</sup> Finally, the Korean War brought to the forefront a question of which communist power—China or the Soviet Union—carried the mantle of global leadership.

### Vietnam War, 1954–1973

In the 1940s, nationalist elements in Vietnam under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, a communist who trained in the Soviet Union, fought a war of resistance against French colonists. Fearing the spread of communism in the region, the Truman administration began to provide military aid to the French in 1950.<sup>35</sup> The Soviet Union and China recognized Ho's leadership of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in North Vietnam, and, in January of that year, China began providing substantial military, technical, and financial assistance to Ho's forces.<sup>36</sup> The United States stepped up its military assistance in Vietnam after the North Korean invasion of the South in June sparked fears that communism was on the march in East Asia. U.S. support reportedly accounted for 40 percent of French war expenditures by January 1953 and 75 percent by early 1954.<sup>37</sup> The French were losing the war despite U.S. support, but Eisenhower resisted calls to intervene militarily to salvage French efforts. In May 1954, a peace agreement established a temporary division of Vietnam, with Ho in charge in the north, and a French-backed government in the south. In the years that followed, the United States provided substantial material support to the anticommunist but corrupt and dictatorial leader ascending to power in South Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem.<sup>38</sup> On November 1, 1963, the U.S.-backed Diem and his brother were killed in a military coup.

In the deteriorating political situation in Vietnam, both the United States and the Soviet Union saw national interests at stake.<sup>39</sup> To some degree, both powers saw Vietnam as a proxy for a battle between communist and anticommunist ideologies. Also shaping the Soviet calculus, however, was the Sino-Soviet rivalry, which incentivized Khrushchev to take a visible stance in support of the Vietnamese communists. Indeed, Moscow reportedly feared that Hanoi was leaning toward Beijing.<sup>40</sup> A 1965 CIA report described the “major dilemmas of Soviet policy”:

The USSR naturally desires the victory of communism in Vietnam, yet it does not want to see such a victory as would magnify the prestige and power of Communist China. At the

<sup>34</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 16.

<sup>35</sup> Patterson, 1996, pp. 292–293.

<sup>36</sup> Simpson, 2013.

<sup>37</sup> Patterson, 1996, p. 293.

<sup>38</sup> The United States also began to commit military advisers in support of Diem. When John F. Kennedy took office in 1961, the United States had deployed 1,000 troops to Vietnam; by October 1963, it had deployed 16,732 (Patterson, 1996, p. 510).

<sup>39</sup> Another factor informing Soviet intervention was the 1965 defeat of leftist revolutionaries in Indonesia, which one historian described as “perhaps the greatest setback for Communism in the Third World in the 1960s and—seemingly—a signal victory for US abilities to influence Asian affairs” (Westad, 2007, p. 185). For the Soviets, the overthrow of Sukarno in Indonesia increased the perceived importance of Vietnam in resisting the spread of communism in East Asia (Westad, 2007, p. 189). Estimates held that the Soviet Union spent more than \$1 billion on military assistance in support of Sukarno between 1958 and 1965, making it the largest military assistance program targeting a developing country in conflict during the Khrushchev period (Porter, 1987, p. 19).

<sup>40</sup> Westad, 2007, pp. 183–184.



same time, in the circumstances of the Sino-Soviet controversy Moscow cannot afford to appear laggard in supporting the DRV and the Viet Cong. Yet it is highly apprehensive of the consequences of expanded war in the Far East, a major military confrontation between the US and Communist China, and the extremely dangerous world crisis that would result therefrom. Finally, the situation is one over which Moscow has little control; it cannot manage the DRV, or the Chinese Communists, or the US.<sup>41</sup>

While the Soviet Union was reluctant to fully engage in Vietnam for these reasons, Soviet leaders feared that if they did not take the lead, China would. As one scholar argued, "Failure to arm North Vietnam unreservedly might have made the USSR vulnerable to Chinese charges of not supporting national liberation movements and might have damaged Soviet prestige with Communist parties around the world," an effect that "may have been a greater factor drawing the Soviet Union into the conflict as an arms supplier than was competition with Washington."<sup>42</sup> Despite Soviet materiel support, Chinese leaders saw much to criticize in the nature of Soviet provisions in support of North Vietnam. Responding to Soviet plans to move troops and materiel into China, ostensibly to support the war effort in Vietnam, a Chinese official retorted in 1965,

It is completely clear that the aim of these and similar actions of yours is not to render real aid to Vietnam in its struggle against American imperialism, but to put China and Vietnam under your control and acquire for yourself capital for bargaining with the US.<sup>43</sup>

Facing criticism from many fronts, the Soviet Union's ability to effect change in the region was limited, in the CIA's intelligence estimate.<sup>44</sup>

In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson authorized the bombing of North Vietnam and deployed large numbers of U.S. ground forces. The size of the U.S. commitment grew rapidly in the years that followed. By the end of 1965, more than 175,000 U.S. troops were in South Vietnam, and within two years, more than half a million Americans had joined the fight.<sup>45</sup> The Soviet Union responded to U.S. intervention with a substantial increase in military assistance to supplement the North Vietnamese forces. In May 1965, the Soviet ambassador to Hanoi called Soviet support to North Vietnam "extraordinarily comprehensive," including material support and training both by Soviet advisers in Vietnam and of Vietnamese cadres visiting the Soviet Union.<sup>46</sup> From 1965 to 1972, the Soviet Union committed an estimated \$3 billion in arms to North Vietnam. China also provided materiel support, but the Soviet Union's contributions were much larger.<sup>47</sup> It is likely that the North Vietnamese ability to effectively combat the U.S.-backed South Korean government hinged largely on Soviet aid.

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<sup>41</sup> CIA, "Soviet Tactics Concerning Vietnam," Special Memorandum 18-65, July 15, 1965, p. 6.

<sup>42</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 22.

<sup>43</sup> "Oral Statement by the Head of the Department for the USSR and for the Countries of Eastern Europe of MFA PRC, Yu Zhan," translation, June 8, 1965.

<sup>44</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 184.

<sup>45</sup> Simpson, 2013, p. 53.

<sup>46</sup> "Note by the East German Embassy in Hanoi on a Joint Conversation with the Ambassadors from Other Socialist Countries in the Hungarian Embassy," translation, May 4, 1965.

<sup>47</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 22.

While it was supporting the military effort, the Soviet Union was also taking an active interest in finding a diplomatic solution to end the war, much to the chagrin of its ostensible allies. In July 1965, the CIA concluded that economic and military aid to North Vietnam represented a decision by the Soviet Union to deepen its commitment in the region. But it also noted that Soviet leadership recognized the risks inherent in this commitment. To mitigate these risks, the CIA intelligence assessment stated, Moscow had “intensified private approaches to the United States, indicating continued interest in a negotiated settlement. At the same time, it has threatened in low key to make trouble in Berlin if the US remains unyielding in Vietnam.” The document concluded, “We believe that this combination of tactics is intended to deter further US escalation in Vietnam.”<sup>48</sup> Importantly, this suggests that the Soviet Union was using hostile measures not only to influence U.S. involvement in Vietnam but also to manipulate the levers of power in Eastern and Central Europe. In short, hostile measures do not have to be localized in the region where an adversary desires a given effect.

Soviet gestures toward a negotiated peace with the United States also created tension with China. One Chinese official described the Soviet-U.S. engagements with disdain:

[T]he absence of coordination of actions by the Soviet Union with the actions of China and Vietnam on the Vietnamese question is explained solely by [the fact] that the Soviet side stubbornly insists on its mistaken policy of Soviet-American cooperation for the solution of international problems, and tries to bargain with the US on the Vietnam question.<sup>49</sup>

U.S. and Soviet efforts to negotiate a way out of Vietnam, as Secretary of State Henry Kissinger explained in a memo to President Richard Nixon in 1969, were reportedly the result of the fact that “vital interests of the United States and the Soviet Union” were “not in conflict.” Both countries, Kissinger said, had “a responsibility to keep it that way. Which is another way of saying we both have an interest in getting the war ended.”<sup>50</sup> In addition to back-channel negotiations with the Soviet Union, the Nixon administration also sought direct contacts with North Vietnam. These efforts led to a central role for the United States in negotiating the Paris Peace Accords in January 1973, including provisions for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of U.S. forces. Two years later, the North Vietnamese, equipped with Soviet weapons, overtook the South and united the country under communist rule.

## Conclusions: Cold War–Era Soviet Hostile Measures in Asia

Here, we highlight several instances of Soviet use of hostile measures employed in Asia during this period:

- Before the “Sino-Soviet split,” Soviet leaders provided Chinese nationalists with diplomatic support and military assistance—deploying military advisers and providing mate-

<sup>48</sup> CIA, 1965, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> “Oral Statement by the Head of the Department for the USSR and for the Countries of Eastern Europe of MFA PRC, Yu Zhan,” 1965.

<sup>50</sup> Quoted in Jeremi Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007, p. 223.

riel and military support before the civil war. In support of Mao's revolution after World War II, the Soviet Union extended military assistance to communist forces, provided captured Japanese arms to Mao, and allowed Mao to establish a valuable strategic foothold in Manchuria.

- The Soviet Union used diplomatic support and military assistance to shape developments on the Korean Peninsula and in Vietnam more than any other hostile measures. Although there was a hesitancy to commit Soviet troops overtly or covertly, there were reports of Soviet pilots participating in military operations in Korea.
- Soviet diplomatic and military assistance in East Asia was intended not only to bolster the recipient country but also to boost the Soviet Union's own prestige relative to the PRC (information operations).
- The Soviet Union also made diplomatic overtures in Vietnam in an effort to mitigate the risk of escalation in a conflict not considered central to its national interests. Importantly, the diplomatic approach reportedly used levers in both Asia and East Germany.

Soviet efforts to shape developments in East Asia differed sharply from those employed in Europe. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Soviet Union, for geopolitical reasons, sought to bolster East Asian communist leaders who aspired to national leadership positions. In part, Soviet leaders were trying to counter Western influence in the region. As the Soviet Union worked to guide developments in the region, it was also looking to the regional hegemon, the PRC. The competition for global leadership of the communist movement meant that the Soviet Union had to reconcile these two goals: Resist Western influence in the region while preventing China from overtaking the Soviet Union's ideological dominance. For these reasons, Soviet use of hostile-measures activities in East Asia was relatively cautious, focused on the targeted use of military advisers, foreign assistance, and military assistance. The Soviet Union also worked through diplomatic channels to bring conflicts to a close while avoiding the risks inherent in direct military intervention.



## Soviet Activities in Africa During the Cold War

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By the 1970s, anticolonial movements were sweeping across Africa, and the major Cold War powers took note of the transformational change underway. The United States, the Soviet Union, and China provided support to preferred partisans, turning nationalist movements into a Cold War battleground. The Soviet Union had been engaged on the African continent for years, cultivating communist support for the nationalist movements (providing training and influencing domestic politics). The Cold War competition for influence in postcolonial Africa was an opportunity for Moscow to counter Western influence, and as one historian explained it, to “make the world safe for revolution.”<sup>1</sup> The 1970s also saw large-scale interventions in Africa by Cuban military forces, which the Soviet Union employed as proxies to advance its interests on the continent. In this section, we discuss the complex employment of hostile measures in Africa, with a particular focus on two of the most significant Soviet engagements on the continent: the Angolan Civil War and the Ogaden War in Ethiopia.

### The Soviet Union in Africa in the 1960s

In 1962, the CIA reported, “The Soviet Union sees Africa as an area of great potential opportunity for the Bloc and the international Communist movement.”<sup>2</sup> In anticolonial movements on the continent, the CIA asserted, the Soviet Union saw the decline of Western imperialism, and, in newly independent states, it saw natural allies against the West. In its national intelligence estimate, the CIA predicted that, in the coming years, the Soviet Union would work to expand its influence in Africa through diplomatic, cultural, and economic measures. Initial efforts along these lines, the CIA reported, included training activities, infiltrating trade union activities, and working with existing political factions to build communist influence.<sup>3</sup>

The Soviet Union had been engaged in Africa since at least the early 1960s but, in the years that followed, its strategy on the continent grew and changed. This was partly because of improved Soviet capabilities for power projection:

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<sup>1</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 72. This is not to suggest that Soviet interventions were always ideologically consistent: Soviet leaders also demonstrated a willingness to support non-Marxists (Arthur J. Klinghoffer, *The Soviet Union and Angola*, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, May 10, 1990, p. 3).

<sup>2</sup> Director of Central Intelligence, *Trends in Soviet Policy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa*, Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, National Intelligence Estimate No. 11-12-62, December 5, 1962, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Director of Central Intelligence, 1962, p. 1.

By the 1970s, however, nearly two decades of massive investment in mobile forces began to yield results, enabling the Soviet Union to begin acting as a truly global power in world affairs. The USSR's growing military reach made it technically feasible to undertake massive involvements in the October War [Yom Kippur War, 1973], the Angolan civil war [1975], the Ogaden war [1977], and the civil war in Afghanistan [1979].<sup>4</sup>

The Soviet was expanding its global reach throughout the 1970s and shaping affairs in Africa, developments made possible by the employment of hostile measures.

### The Cuban Revolution and Support for Anticolonial Movements in Africa

After the 1959 Cuban Revolution, Prime Minister Fidel Castro moved quickly to forge ties with friendly governments for economic and security support—most importantly, the Soviet Union. In February 1960, the Soviet Union signed a trade agreement with Cuba, and, about a year later, agreed to begin providing arms and military advisers to Castro's government.<sup>5</sup> After Castro's victory in Havana and the transfer of Soviet assistance, the United States moved quickly to isolate the revolutionary government. By October 1960, the United States had cut off most exports to the island nation, and, by the time Kennedy took office, diplomatic relations had been severed and plans were underway for covert action in support of the Bay of Pigs invasion.<sup>6</sup> In May 1962, the Soviet Union decided to place nuclear missiles in Cuba, in part to demonstrate its commitment to Cuba's security. After the October Cuban Missile Crisis, Khrushchev agreed to remove the weapons, a decision that reportedly infuriated Castro.<sup>7</sup> Convincing the Cuban leader to accept the terms of the negotiation required delicate and difficult negotiations by Soviet officials.<sup>8</sup>

By the mid-1960s, Cuba, with substantial support from the Soviet Union, took an increasingly active role in support of independence movements in Africa. One scholar noted that, during the Cold War, Cuba sent far more soldiers beyond its "immediate neighborhood" than did the Soviet Union.<sup>9</sup> Moscow had historically been reluctant to commit combat troops around the globe, preferring to provide advisers and foreign assistance. By one account, this limited the efficacy of Soviet military assistance because Soviet arms were of limited utility to poorly trained indigenous forces.<sup>10</sup> The availability of relatively well-trained Cuban forces, therefore, was a critical enabler for Soviet influence in Africa. The CIA also asserted in a 1979 assessment that "the foremost advantage in using Cuban or other friendly forces to further

<sup>4</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 36.

<sup>5</sup> Westad, 2007, pp. 172–174.

<sup>6</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 171.

<sup>7</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 175.

<sup>8</sup> Sergo Mikoyan, *The Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis: Castro, Mikoyan, Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Missiles of November*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Piero Gleijeses, "Moscow's Proxy? Cuba and Africa 1975–1988," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 4, Spring 2006, p. 98.

<sup>10</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 53.

Soviet objectives in third world conflicts is that they reduce the visibility of Soviet interest and involvement.”<sup>11</sup>

Cuba sent hundreds of thousands of soldiers to Africa (Angola, Ethiopia, Congo-Brazzaville, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and Benin) in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>12</sup> Africa was the primary front for Cuban military intervention, but Cuban soldiers also participated in conflicts in Syria and South Yemen. Augmented Soviet train-and-assist support for partner forces, they carried out missions that the Soviet Union was reluctant to undertake directly, such as manning artillery, flying combat planes, providing frontline logistical and technical assistance, and engaging in direct ground combat.<sup>13</sup> One estimate held that as many as 4,000 Cuban troops may have been casualties of the wars in Angola and Ethiopia.<sup>14</sup> The small Latin American island nation also provided diverse technical assistance to African countries, including expertise related to health care, education, and construction, and it sponsored more than 40,000 Africans to come to Cuba for their education.<sup>15</sup>

It must be emphasized, however, that Cuba's adventurism abroad reflected Cuban priorities. The country's leaders sought to carry the mantle of leadership for leftist revolutionaries around the world, and they professed a cultural affinity with Africa. During his country's intervention in Angola, Castro declared, “Our people is both a Latin-American and a Latin-African people. Millions of Africans were shipped to Cuba as slaves by the colonists, and a great part of Cuban blood is African blood.”<sup>16</sup> An August 1978 U.S. government report assessed,

Cuba is not involved in Africa solely or even primarily because of its relationship with the Soviet Union. Rather, Havana's African policy reflects its activist revolutionary ethos and its determination to expand its own political influence in the Third World at the expense of the West.<sup>17</sup>

Regardless of Cuba's own independent proclivities to intervene in Africa, it could not have acted without material support from the Soviet Union.

## The Angolan Civil War, 1975–1976

By the mid-1960s, the Soviet Union's focus on the continent shifted from North and Central Africa to the south.<sup>18</sup> The KGB's deputy chairman reported that leaders of indigenous anti-colonial efforts in strategically important countries in southern Africa sought international

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<sup>11</sup> Director of Central Intelligence, *Soviet Military Capabilities to Project Power and Influence in Distant Areas*, Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, National Intelligence Estimate No. 11-10-79, 1979, p. 20.

<sup>12</sup> In the 1960s, Cuban activities were led by Ernesto “Che” Guevara, a revolutionary whom Castro put in charge of national support to foreign revolutions from 1961 until Guevara's death in 1967 (see Westad, 2007, p. 177).

<sup>13</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 54.

<sup>14</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 54.

<sup>15</sup> Gleijeses, 2006, p. 98.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Porter, 1987, p. 54.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Gleijeses, 2006, p. 111.

<sup>18</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 207.

allies for political, social, and economic support. He also noted that the United States and China were both increasing their efforts to shape developments in the region.<sup>19</sup>

Later in the decade, Portugal was finding it increasingly difficult to maintain its colonies in southern Africa. Anticolonial movements in Angola, a strategically and economically important Portuguese colony on the southwestern coast, proved to be a particularly critical battleground.<sup>20</sup> In 1974, the Portuguese government in Angola collapsed, and three independence movements—the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), National Front for the Liberation of Angola, and National Union for the Total Independence of Angola—vied for influence as civil war broke out in spring 1975.<sup>21</sup>

The MPLA was a Marxist-led organization advocating for social revolution that won limited assistance from the Soviet Union in its early years.<sup>22</sup> The MPLA's leader, Antonio Agostinho Neto, was a relatively independent-minded Marxist, and the Soviet leadership distrusted him.<sup>23</sup> To Moscow, internal factions within the MPLA raised questions about Neto's effectiveness, as did his leadership style.<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, the Soviet Union began providing arms to the MPLA in April 1974 and substantially increased these shipments in March 1975.<sup>25</sup> By fall 1975, the MPLA was seeing successes on the battlefield, and external opponents worked to counteract its advances. Each for its own reasons, neighboring South Africa and the United States opposed the MPLA in Angola. In October, an armored column of 1,500–2,000 South African troops crossed the Namibian border to intervene in the civil war.<sup>26</sup> The United States intervened as well, providing an estimated \$32 million in CIA resources to support a rival faction.<sup>27</sup>

In November, Neto declared the establishment of the People's Republic of Angola, which was immediately recognized by the Soviet Union, Warsaw Pact allies, Yugoslavia, Cuba, and Vietnam. Up to the point of independence, the bloody war had taken a toll, leaving an estimated 10,000 Angolans dead.<sup>28</sup> On the country's first day in existence, the PRC, which had expressed support for all three factions in Angola, took an opportunity to criticize Soviet involvement. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that

<sup>19</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 215.

<sup>20</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 210.

<sup>21</sup> Each organization enjoyed support from international backers. By 1974, China, the United States, the Soviet Union, and Cuba were all directly involved (Kurt M. Campbell, *Southern Africa in Soviet Foreign Policy*, London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, Adelphi Papers, No. 227, 1987, p. 6).

<sup>22</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 210.

<sup>23</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 210; Gleijeses, 2006, p. 100.

<sup>24</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 156.

<sup>25</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 162.

<sup>26</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 149. South Africa reportedly acted with support from the United States, which the United States denied (Gleijeses, 2006, p. 102).

<sup>27</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 171.

<sup>28</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 149.



an unfortunate situation of division and civil war has appeared in Angola after independence. This is entirely the result of the rivalry between the two Superpowers and particularly the undisguised expansion and crude interference of the Soviet Union.<sup>29</sup>

China sought a propaganda victory for African audiences by withdrawing military advisers and encouraging a diplomatic solution to the conflict, rather than appearing to impose a solution by military force as the Soviets were doing. The Soviet Union sought to achieve the same victory by affirming its commitment to fighting “to defend the interests of the peoples of young states.”<sup>30</sup> The Sino-Soviet rivalry, therefore, played a role in Soviet intervention in Angola, but it was relatively small compared with, for example, motivations to intervene in East Asia.

The new government called on Cuba for support. By this time, Cuba had a history of established connections with the MPLA's military forces.<sup>31</sup> About a decade earlier, Cuban troops had begun training MPLA guerrillas, and, already in 1965, some Cubans had crossed into Angola with Angolan fighters. From 1966 onward, Cubans staffed MPLA training schools in Congo-Brazzaville and organized the reentry of these troops into Angola. One scholar noted that such “early Cuban support for the MPLA was crucial for the Angolan movement, even though it was a very limited investment for Havana in terms of men and money.”<sup>32</sup> In response to the Soviets' request, Cuban forces intervened to roll back South African advances. Cuba called the intervention Operation Carlota after a slave who led an uprising in Cuba in 1843.<sup>33</sup> Cuban forces eventually reached an estimated 20,000 boots on the ground, a commitment of troops several times larger than the country had ever sent abroad before.<sup>34</sup> The former Soviet ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Dobrynin, reported that, in this case, Cubans acted “on their own initiative and without consulting” Soviet leadership.<sup>35</sup>

However, to the extent that Cuba acted on its own initiative, it did so with critical support from the Soviet Union. As the MPLA struggled to resist opposition forces, the Soviet Union ramped up its material and logistical support. After extending recognition to Neto's government, it announced plans to open an embassy in Angola, a move intended partly to facilitate coordination of its increasing assistance to the new government.<sup>36</sup> Soviet lift capabilities transported thousands of Cuban troops and heavy weapons to Angola by air and sea. Between November 1975 and March 1976, the Soviet Union sent an estimated 20 ships and 70 planes to deposit personnel and materiel in Angola. Soviet cargo ships also reportedly delivered small arms to Tanzania, Congo, or Guinea, from where they were delivered to collection points in areas controlled by the MPLA.<sup>37</sup> According to one scholar,

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Porter, 1987, p. 177.

<sup>30</sup> Commentary in Soviet newspaper *Izvestia*, December 26, 1975, quoted in Porter, 1987, p. 178.

<sup>31</sup> John A. Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution, Volume II: Exile Politics and Guerilla Warfare (1962–1976)*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1978, p. 273.

<sup>32</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 212.

<sup>33</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 166.

<sup>34</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 165.

<sup>35</sup> Gleijeses, 2006, p. 103.

<sup>36</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 157.

<sup>37</sup> Campbell, 1987, p. 7.

By February 1976, 12,000 Cuban troops had reached Angola and, armed with Soviet-supplied T-34 and T-54 tanks, armoured personnel carriers, MiG-21 fighters, anti-tank missiles, BM-21 rocket launchers, SAM-7 missiles and AK-47 automatic rifles, they joined the battle against the rival factions.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to military assistance, Soviet leaders also pursued a largely unsuccessful diplomatic effort to win Organization of African Unity (OAU) support for the government in Angola and to stem criticism of Soviet intervention.<sup>39</sup> As one scholar noted, “Fortunately for the Kremlin, it was weapons, rather than diplomacy that counted in Angola.”<sup>40</sup>

The effectiveness of this aid to Angola can be attributed, in part, to the development of better Soviet capabilities for power projection. During the conflict, for example, Moscow deployed a small task force off the shore from Angola in a show of force intended to exert political and military influence; it was a capability unavailable to the Soviet Union prior to its development of a blue-water navy—an effort that began in the 1950s.<sup>41</sup> The Soviet Union also benefited from advances in mobility forces. Sealift was provided by merchant marine (rather than the navy) vessels, and this capability increased from 590 ships and a combined capacity of 3.3 million tons in 1959 to an inventory of 1,600 ships with a capacity of 16 million tons by 1975.<sup>42</sup> These merchant ships carried the bulk of Soviet supplies to Angola.<sup>43</sup> Soviet airlift capabilities also expanded rapidly in this period. The Soviet Air Forces’ aggregate airlift capacity increased from 11.4 ton-miles in 1965 to 19.4 ton-miles in 1970 and 26.4 ton-miles by 1977.<sup>44</sup> This improved lift capacity opened several critical supply routes for the MPLA. Long direct flights from the Soviet Union to Angola (with several refueling stops in Africa) meant that an estimated 18 million ton-miles of supplies reached the country over the course of the war.<sup>45</sup>

The war in Angola began to come to a close in fall 1975 as external actors started to withdraw their support. Chastened by the protracted involvement in Vietnam, U.S. lawmakers voted in December 1975 to cut off further covert aid to Angola.<sup>46</sup> South Africa soon followed suit. By February 1976, the Angolan government was recognized by its neighbors and admitted into the OAU.<sup>47</sup> Cuba also began withdrawing its troops; an estimated 12,000 returned home by March 1977.<sup>48</sup> U.S. President Jimmy Carter came to office with plans to begin normalizing relations with Cuba, but the speed with which the remaining Cuban troops in Africa redeployed proved to be a point of contention. After a January 1977 meeting, the U.S. Depart-

<sup>38</sup> Campbell, 1987, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> One scholar noted that, in Angola, the Soviet Union abided by the OAU’s position that the territorial integrity of African states must be preserved but diverged from its position against foreign intervention (Klinghoffer, 1990, pp. 1, 12).

<sup>40</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 159.

<sup>41</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 45.

<sup>42</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 48.

<sup>43</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 49.

<sup>44</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 46. A ton-mile is the movement of one ton of freight over a distance of one mile.

<sup>45</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 161.

<sup>46</sup> Klinghoffer, 1990, p. 17.

<sup>47</sup> Marcum, 1978, p. 278.

<sup>48</sup> Gleijeses, 2006, p. 106.

ment of State reported that the Cubans “showed no give at all on Africa. Their only response to our reference to their military presence in Angola was to say that this was not a subject for negotiation.”<sup>49</sup> In one scholar’s assessment, “The Soviet Union yielded a high return from its investment in the Angolan civil war.”<sup>50</sup> Close on the heels of the war in Vietnam, the Soviet Union again demonstrated that its allies could prevail in a proxy war with the United States. It also flexed improved capabilities to project power and increased its prestige among revolutionaries in the developing world, especially in Africa. The intervention of large numbers of Cuban military forces was a demonstration of a new and consequential approach for the projection of Soviet power.<sup>51</sup>

### The Ogaden War in Ethiopia, 1977–1978

By the mid-1970s, many postcolonial regimes in the Middle East were undergoing radical changes. Churning leftist movements were met either with increased repression from leaders (as in Egypt and Iran) or with increasing representation by leftist leaders (as in Syria and Iraq). Syria and Iraq became the main recipients of Soviet aid in this period, and Soviet leadership worked through local communists in the governments of these countries to influence their internal affairs.<sup>52</sup> Communist influence in South Yemen was even clearer in 1970, when local Marxists established the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen. In Ethiopia, a Marxist-influenced revolution in 1974 also brought local communists to power. The spread of Soviet influence in a strategically important area near the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf was particularly troubling to the United States.

By the time of the 1974 revolution, Ethiopia occupied a vital strategic location in the Horn of Africa and stood alone as the only major African country to avoid long-term colonial rule.<sup>53</sup> Ethiopia’s consequential location, its ideological significance, and the scope of Soviet investment led one historian to conclude, “For the Soviet Union, the alliance with Ethiopia became by far its most important intervention in Africa.”<sup>54</sup>

The Soviet Union’s engagement with Africa evolved over time. After the revolution, Ethiopia’s leaders struggled with internal and external challenges—internal opposition and a war with neighboring Somalia. For several years, the Soviet Union was cautious about providing overt support to the revolutionary government.<sup>55</sup> That was until, in 1977, Somalia invaded the Ogaden region in southeastern Ethiopia, an area inhabited by ethnic Somalis. In response, the Soviet Union sent substantial military assistance to Ethiopia to aid its war effort. Moscow had a history of supporting both Somalia and Ethiopia, and the decision to shift support to Ethiopia led to a break in relations between Somalia and the Soviet

<sup>49</sup> Gleijeses, 2006, p. 106.

<sup>50</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 179.

<sup>51</sup> Porter, 1987, pp. 179–181.

<sup>52</sup> Westad, 2007.

<sup>53</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 251. The country was occupied by fascist Italy from 1935 to 1941.

<sup>54</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 251.

<sup>55</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 192.

Union and Cuba.<sup>56</sup> The Soviets had constructed a military base in Berbera, Somalia, between 1962 and 1976. Due to the strained relationship over Soviet support to Ethiopia, Somalia closed it to Soviet use in 1976. The substantial base consisted of a deep-water port, barracks for 1,000 personnel, a communication center, a petroleum storage area, an airstrip, and a handling and storage area for conventional missiles.<sup>57</sup> The base at Berbera reflected an important approach to military assistance that also supported the Soviet Union's own power projection: construction of facilities for a partner nation in exchange for the right to access them.<sup>58</sup> After its expulsion from Somalia, the Soviet Union towed a floating dry dock from Berbera to Assab in Eritrea, which then became the main unloading point for deliveries to Ethiopia by sea.<sup>59</sup>

By spring 1977, the Soviet Union had sent arms and equipment to Ethiopia, including tanks, fighter aircraft, and helicopters.<sup>60</sup> The intervention was described as an effort to protect the territorial integrity of a sovereign nation, a goal that won the Soviets popular support on the continent.<sup>61</sup> The U.S. National Security Council staffer with responsibility for the Horn of Africa told the U.S. national security adviser in 1978 that “the Soviets and Cubans have legality and African sentiment on their side in Ethiopia—they are helping an African country defend its territorial integrity and countering aggression.”<sup>62</sup>

As the war with Somalia continued, the Soviet Union, Warsaw Pact countries, and Cuba moved from providing materiel to boots on the ground. Ethiopia's war effort was faltering and likely to fail without a substantial injection of support. In April 1977, Castro announced plans to send advisers to Ethiopia. The Cuban leader, in conversation with the East German leader, praised the “great revolutionary potential” in Ethiopia and the broader opportunity in Africa to “inflict a severe defeat on the entire reactionary imperialist policy. One can free Africa from the influence of the United States and the Chinese.”<sup>63</sup> However, Cuba was reportedly reluctant to commit combat troops to Ethiopia, given their continued presence in Angola. In August 1977, Castro rejected appeals for military intervention from Ethiopia's leadership, explaining, “Despite our sympathy for the Ethiopian revolution and our profound indignation at the cowardly and criminal aggression to which it has fallen victim, it is frankly impossible for Cuba to do more in the present circumstances.”<sup>64</sup> In November 1977, the Cuban leader relented and decided to send troops.

<sup>56</sup> “Moscow had devoted nearly 15 years to cultivating a loyal client regime in Somalia. Economic and military assistance totaling over \$285 million had been extended to Mogadishu, and the USSR had almost entirely supplied and trained the Somali armed forces” (Porter, 1987, p. 183). Also see Harry Brind, “Soviet Policy in the Horn of Africa,” *International Affairs*, Vol. 60, No. 1, Winter 1983–1984, p. 93.

<sup>57</sup> Porter, 1987, pp. 50–52.

<sup>58</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 50.

<sup>59</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 202.

<sup>60</sup> By May 1977, the Soviet Union committed \$350 million–\$450 million in military equipment to Ethiopia, one of the single largest arms agreements it negotiated with a developing country (Westad, 2007, p. 272; Porter, 1987, p. 196).

<sup>61</sup> Klinghoffer notes that in supporting Ethiopia against Eritrean separatists, as in Angola, the Soviet Union demonstrated a pattern of abiding by the OAU policy of resisting changes to the territorial status quo. Klinghoffer, 1990, p. 2.

<sup>62</sup> Quoted in Gleijeses, 2006, p. 108.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Westad, 2007, p. 275. China was not involved militarily in the Horn of Africa, but it supplied substantial economic assistance. In addition, an agreement with Somalia provided “\$23 million in loans and grants,” the China's second-largest aid agreement on the continent (Porter, 1987, p. 211).

<sup>64</sup> Quoted in Gleijeses, 2006, p. 109.

Over the course of eight months, beginning in September 1977, the Soviet Union provided an estimated \$1 billion in military assistance to Ethiopia.<sup>65</sup> In September, two South Yemen battalions joined the fight, and an unknown number of East German military advisers arrived, mostly tasked with supporting the training and development of security institutions modeled on those in the Soviet Union.<sup>66</sup> In addition to sending 6,000 advisers, Castro contributed 11,600 Cuban soldiers to Ethiopia. The Soviet Union sent almost 1,000 military personnel to aid planning and help turn the war around. By 1978, the deputy commander of Soviet ground forces was the lead for Ethiopian military planning. Soviet and Cuban forces never came under the Ethiopian chain of command, even when they operated Ethiopian tanks, fighter aircraft, and other equipment. It was the most significant Soviet-led military effort outside Eastern and Central Europe since Korea.<sup>67</sup>

Yet, the scale of the Soviet effort in Ethiopia went much further than military support and training. Beyond prevailing in the war against Somalia, the Soviet Union was committed to supporting political and social change in Ethiopia—in accordance with its own values. “Ethiopia seemed a very suitable grand challenge for the transformational powers of socialism,” said the historian Westad:<sup>68</sup>

[The Soviets] also set the ideological direction for the development of the Ethiopian state, joining the new leadership in a massive attempt at fundamental social and economic reforms that promised to turn the country toward modernity. . . . The Ethiopian regime was an experiment that on a gigantic scale attempted to prove the validity of the Soviet experience for Africa, in a manner similar to the US civilian efforts in Vietnam.<sup>69</sup>

Advisers from the Soviet Union and other socialist states were embedded in Ethiopian ministries to promote socialism from within government institutions. By 1979, the number of foreign advisers in Ethiopia reached more than 7,000. They also facilitated the development of a local communist party to effectively lead the government. This broad ambition led at least one scholar to argue that, for the Soviet Union, “the alliance with Ethiopia became by far its most important intervention in Africa.”<sup>70</sup>

By March 1978, Ethiopian, Soviet, and Cuban forces had achieved their military objectives. The speed and ease of the victory reportedly surprised Soviet leaders. At the same time, the intervention set off alarms in the United States; in a 1978 speech, then-presidential candidate Ronald Reagan stated,

If the Soviets are successful—and it looks more and more as if they will be—then the entire Horn of Africa will be under their influence, if not their control. . . . [I]n a few years, we may be faced with the prospect of a Soviet empire of protégés and dependencies stretching from Addis Abba to Capetown.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 252.

<sup>66</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 202.

<sup>67</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 277.

<sup>68</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 279.

<sup>69</sup> Westad, 2007, pp. 252–253.

<sup>70</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 251.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in Westad, 2007, p. 283.

## Conclusions: Cold War–Era Soviet Hostile Measures in Africa

These two cases of Soviet intervention in Africa during the 1970s reflect similarities and differences in Soviet use of hostile measures. Here, as in East Asia, the Soviet Union was more inclined to attempt to effect change through military and foreign assistance than through direct military involvement (unlike in Eastern and Central Europe). However, the pivotal role of Soviet-backed Cuban forces in Angola and Ethiopia set these conflicts apart relative to other regions. Here, we highlight several Cuba-related instances of Soviet use of hostile measures in Africa in this period:

- It would be inaccurate to suggest that Cuba lacked agency in the decision to intervene, but its reliance on Soviet resources and enablers made its forces proxies for the expression of Soviet foreign policy.
- Soviet decisions to deploy nuclear weapons to Cuba were a form of hostile measures, representing military assistance, covert military action, and, in bolstering Castro's regime, political influence.
- The presence of trained fighters on the ground increased the impact of the Soviet effort in the region. This assistance was the primary hostile measure that the Soviet Union used in these conflicts, and it was greatly facilitated by improved conventional capabilities for power projection and mobility.

The presence of Cuban forces was not the only distinguishing characteristic of Soviet activities in Africa. By the 1970s, the Soviet Union developed power-projection capabilities that facilitated a wider range of hostile measures than had previously been possible so far from home. Soviet leaders could continue to compete with China for global leadership on a distant continent. They could also provide conventional capabilities to support a range of hostile measures, as well as wide-ranging social, economic, and political initiatives in a country as far away as Ethiopia. Some examples include the following (again, specific hostile measures appear in italics):

- The Sino-Soviet rivalry continued to play a role in the Soviet Union's strategy in Africa. Both sides engaged in communication strategy to shape views of their activities on the continent.
- The overt Soviet naval presence off the coast of Angola, and through construction of the base at Berbera, was a show of force intended to influence political and military developments in the civil war.
- Overt Soviet military support for Ethiopia—specifically, leadership and coordination of friendly forces—during the Ogaden War contributed to Ethiopia's operational success.
- Substantial support for the Ethiopian Communist Party and the development of administrative capabilities served as part of a grand experiment in socialist state building (political influence).

## Soviet Engagement in Afghanistan

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By the time it invaded Afghanistan in 1979, the Soviet Union had been engaged in the country for years, working to disseminate its version of the communist ideology and develop communist leaders. In part, Soviet interest reflected an attempt to bolster security along its southern border. Dissatisfied with the Afghan government's inability to control a domestic insurgency, the Soviet Union used its special forces and intelligence services in 1979 to mount a coup intended to entrench Soviet control without requiring a large-scale military invasion. The resulting Afghan resistance, however, led the Soviets to deploy conventional forces in what proved to be a protracted and devastating war; it was the first time the Soviet Union committed large numbers of its own troops to a conflict in the developing world. The war in Afghanistan is an important example of hostile measures that failed to keep the Soviet Union out of an all-out war. However, it is also a critical component in the evolution of Soviet hostile measures of influence. The Soviet Union employed hostile measures to shape the conventional war in Afghanistan alongside diplomatic measures to bring the war to an official close—although covert military advisers, forces, and foreign and military assistance continued until the Soviet Union itself fell.

### The Afghan Revolution and Civil War

In 1973, Mohammed Daoud Khan took power in Afghanistan with a modernization agenda that included numerous reforms and new infrastructure in one of the world's poorest countries.<sup>1</sup> Daoud Khan sought support for these goals from both the United States and the Soviet Union. By the time Daoud Khan overthrew his cousin, Afghanistan's last king, the Soviet Union had provided support to the country for decades, and the KGB had secretly funded and cultivated potential communist leaders through Kabul University and the Afghan Army.<sup>2</sup> Afghanistan had also been a target for KGB literacy drives and propaganda efforts; one scholar described it as “red-splashed Soviet propaganda posters shipped by the trainload to Third World client states. Women on the march: muscled and unsmiling, progressive and determined, chins jutted, staring into the future.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Westad, 2007, pp. 299–306.

<sup>2</sup> Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*, New York: Penguin, 2005, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> Coll, 2005, p. 39. Literacy campaigns and propaganda targeting Afghan women would prove culturally problematic.

Daoud Khan faced a degree of domestic resistance to his agenda, and, among his critics, he was particularly concerned about the communist movement in the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). The Soviet Union was generally supportive of the Daoud Khan regime, but it also maintained a relationship with Afghan communists. In 1977, Daoud Khan mitigated the perceived risks posed by his critics and initiated a purge of left-leaning organizations. Moscow responded by increasing support to the PDPA, which included using KGB facilities in Afghanistan to shelter persecuted communists.<sup>4</sup> However, the Soviet Union also made clear that it wanted the PDPA and Daoud Khan to make peace. The Soviet Embassy in Afghanistan reported that PDPA resistance would be unwise, because, "In our view such extreme action in the present situation could lead to the defeat of the progressive forces in the country."<sup>5</sup> It was a surprise to all involved when PDPA forces successfully overthrew the government on April 27, 1978.

A critical challenge facing the new ruling party was the existence of deep and persistent internal divisions. The rival factions looked to the Soviet Union for financial and political support. By July, one faction managed to push the other out of positions in government influence and purge its supporters. The Soviet Union moved quickly to connect with the new government. In 1978, the Soviet ambassador told the new Afghan president, Nur Muhammad Taraki, that "when there is a difficult situation in the country of our close friends we have a time honored practice of sending one of our leaders, a member of our Politburo, on an official visit."<sup>6</sup> Despite significant concern about the Afghan leadership, the Soviet Union decided to significantly increase its military and economic assistance to the country, including armaments, food, and an indefinite delay in required loan payments. It also vowed to defend Afghanistan militarily in the event of war with neighboring Iran and Pakistan.<sup>7</sup>

It soon became clear that domestic resistance would remain a major challenge for the new government. In 1979, an uprising in the western city of Herat, in which armed Islamic groups and locals protested the communist political and social reforms, led to the deaths of around 5,000 people, including about 50 Soviet advisers and their families.<sup>8</sup> The violence erupted after a directive from Kabul for compulsory literacy education for girls.<sup>9</sup> This was just one of many policies communists in Kabul sought to implement in Herat that were vigorously opposed by the population. Others included secularizing reforms, literacy campaigns, military conscription, the seizure of land previously held by tribal elders and scholars, the abolition of Islamic lending systems, the banning of dowries for brides, increased protections within marriages, and mandated universal education.<sup>10</sup> The contemporaneous revolution in Iran provided an important impetus for Islamist opposition, but the grievances were predominately focused on Afghanistan's domestic political leadership.

After the uprising in Herat, the Soviet Union was concerned about the stability of the government in Kabul. It considered intervening militarily but decided to increase material and

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<sup>4</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 302.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Westad, 2007, p. 302.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Westad, 2007, p. 305.

<sup>7</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 310.

<sup>8</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 307.

<sup>9</sup> Coll, 2005, p. 39.

<sup>10</sup> Coll, 2005, p. 40



political support instead.<sup>11</sup> The day the uprising was put down, the Soviet ambassador met with Taraki to discuss the severity of the security challenge and urge him to change policies. The ambassador reported back to the CPSU that he advised the Afghan leader “with the same energy as in the conduct of the armed struggle, to develop education and propaganda in order to attract the population to their side.”<sup>12</sup> The violence in Herat precipitated emergency sessions of the Politburo and the Secretariat to discuss options for bolstering the PDPA, including the option of Soviet military intervention.<sup>13</sup> In the months that followed the domestic revolt, the violence in Herat spread into a full-blown civil war, which the PDPA government struggled to control. Decisionmakers argued that a “loss” in Afghanistan would be an unacceptable blow to Soviet prestige, especially considering the perpetual rivalry with the United States and China for influence.<sup>14</sup> The Soviet Union was also increasingly concerned that current PDPA leadership would look to the West for support.<sup>15</sup>

Having lost faith in Afghan leaders, especially after violent internal struggles for control of the PDPA, the Soviet Union decided to use measures below the threshold of all-out war to effect political change. Recent historical scholarship addressing the Soviet decision to intervene has found a complex story of personalities and institutions. Historian Artemy Kalinovsky emphasized that, in this period, the decision was driven by a small number of people within the Politburo, not the Politburo as a whole.<sup>16</sup> Elements of the Soviet intelligence apparatus were also reportedly split on the decision, with the chief of foreign intelligence and key military leaders opposed and the chief of the KGB joining Brezhnev and other key leaders in favor.<sup>17</sup>

### **Soviet Military Intervention, 1979–1989**

In December 1979, clandestine Soviet military forces and KGB agents were positioned in Afghanistan to overthrow the president who deposed Taraki, Hafizullah Amin, and facilitate the transfer of power to a Soviet-chosen successor. KGB units were in place at critical locations in and around Kabul—the presidential palace, PDPA headquarters, and the main radio station—and Spetsnaz units were positioned north of the city at Bagram airfield.<sup>18</sup> A Spetsnaz battalion had been assembled with ethnic Tajiks, Turkmen, or Uzbeks; its members were reportedly intended to pass as Afghan forces.<sup>19</sup> The unit was 550 strong and equipped with nonstandard Spetsnaz equipment. By the time of its December arrival, the battalion was

<sup>11</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 308.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Westad, 2007, p. 308.

<sup>13</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 308.

<sup>14</sup> Artemy Kalinovsky, “Decision-Making and the Soviet War in Afghanistan: From Intervention to Withdrawal,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 4, Fall 2009, pp. 50–51.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010, p. 234; Kalinovsky, 2009, p. 50.

<sup>16</sup> “With Brezhnev himself ailing, foreign policy was dominated by four people: Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, Defense Minister Dmitrii Ustinov, KGB Chairman Yurii Andropov, and long-time Politburo member Mikhail Suslov (who, however, did not usually play a salient role on Afghanistan)” (Kalinovsky, 2009, p. 48).

<sup>17</sup> Raymond L. Garthoff, *Soviet Leaders and Intelligence: Assessing the American Adversary During the Cold War*, Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2015, p. 59.

<sup>18</sup> Westad, 2007, p. 321.

<sup>19</sup> Galeotti, 2015, pp. 20–21.

tasked with penetrating the palace and facilitating entry by KGB special units.<sup>20</sup> The significant role of the Spetsnaz forces in Afghanistan led one observer to call it the “Spetsnaz war.”<sup>21</sup> On December 27, KGB special units descended on the palace and assassinated the president. During the assault, the KGB flew the Soviet-chosen successor into Kabul, and he proclaimed himself prime minister shortly thereafter. The KGB also worked in the aftermath of the coup to establish a new Afghan security service to replace the existing brutal secret police apparatus, but the new institution earned its own reputation for brutality.<sup>22</sup> International condemnation, particularly from the West, immediately followed. In January 1980, the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* responded,

When Washington throws tens of thousands of soldiers from one end of the world to another, it is portrayed as an act of defending peace, but when a limited Soviet contingent responds to the numerous requests of the Afghan Government for support against aggressive forces it is seen as an invasion.<sup>23</sup>

The Soviet-engineered coup in Kabul was intended to provide a means of ensuring political change while avoiding a large-scale Soviet intervention, but it would not work out that way. As Thomas Barfield, a leading scholar of Afghan politics and culture explained,

Using the analogy of their invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the Soviets assumed that they could begin withdrawing their troops after a few months when order was restored. Instead, the intervention marked the beginning of a decade-long occupation that would result in the death of one million Afghans, the flight of four million refugees to Pakistan and Iran, and the displacement of millions of others internally.<sup>24</sup>

The Soviet intervention had the result of mobilizing mass resistance against the Soviet Union as an occupying force and against the government it bolstered. One contributing factor to the length and destruction of the war in Afghanistan was the presence of foreign support for combatants on both sides. While the Soviet Union supported the PDPA, the United States covertly supported resistance groups to foil what was seen as the latest example of Soviet aggression. Saudi Arabia also supported groups opposing the Soviet invasion of a Muslim country.<sup>25</sup> The resistance was broad-based, but the Islamist groups were the most successful in cultivating foreign sponsors.

### **Counterinsurgency and Escalation**

Domestic resistance to Soviet activities arose quickly. In January 1980, a limited contingent of Soviet forces put down a mutiny of Afghan soldiers, and, in the weeks that followed, Soviet forces intervened in response to skirmishes of increasing frequency.<sup>26</sup> By the end of the month,

<sup>20</sup> Galeotti, 2015, p. 22.

<sup>21</sup> Galeotti, 2015, p. 22.

<sup>22</sup> Andrew and Gordievsky, 1990, p. 577.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in CIA, “Spot Commentary: Soviet Reaction on Afghanistan,” January 5, 1980.

<sup>24</sup> Barfield, 2010, p. 234.

<sup>25</sup> Barfield, 2010, p. 236.

<sup>26</sup> Kalinovsky, 2009, p. 51.

according to Kalinovsky, “the only pro-Soviet Afghans seemed to be those who worked for the PDPA.”<sup>27</sup> By January, Soviet military activities were relatively limited in scope and scale, yet records of the Politburo’s discussions on the matter suggest that some members raised the possibility of withdrawing troops or working toward a diplomatic solution.<sup>28</sup>

However, in the face of increasing attacks—including a major protest in Kabul and an attack on the Soviet embassy in Kabul in February—decisionmakers found that an escalation of Soviet military engagement would be required. By March, Soviet forces were authorized to conduct joint operations with Afghan forces, including a large-scale operation against insurgents in Kunar Province.<sup>29</sup> A March 10 memorandum approved by the Politburo made clear that the expanded scope of activities entailed increased time and resources: “The successful resolution of internal problems and the strengthening of the new order in Afghanistan will take significant effort and time, during the course of which Soviet troops will continue to be the key stabilizing factor.”<sup>30</sup> The expansion faced substantial resistance at home from CPSU leaders, military leaders, and Soviet intellectuals.

The Afghanistan conflict is not best described as a Soviet use of hostile measures. The Soviets went to war in Afghanistan to subdue a domestic, rural-based insurgency. It was the first time the Soviet Union had deployed regular tactical formations of ground troops in a local conflict outside its immediate neighborhood.<sup>31</sup> Initial efforts focused on a heavily military response to tamp down domestic resistance. The Soviets targeted urban centers and transportation infrastructure with air strikes, land mines, and search-and-destroy sweeps in an attempt to undermine the insurgency.<sup>32</sup> Moscow also worked to stand up a 90,000-strong Afghan army to share in the fight. Even with a peak of 111,000 Soviet troops in the country, the Soviet Union still could not pacify the resistance. In 1985, the CIA reported,

More than five years after the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, they are bogged down in guerrilla war of increasing intensity. The Soviets have had little success in reducing the insurgency or winning acceptance by the Afghan people, and the Afghan resistance continues to grow stronger and to command widespread popular support.<sup>33</sup>

Reflecting back after the end of the war, the CIA also noted that there were clear limits on the size of the commitment that the Soviet leadership was willing to make, pointing out that a risk of “personnel and equipment losses” hindered the war effort.<sup>34</sup>

The war was a watershed for Soviet military forces, however, and many different measures were employed to influence developments. The use of these measures helps explain the evolution of Soviet hostile measures as a tool that could also advance Soviet interests during a conventional armed conflict. The Spetsnaz, for example, became a critical component of the

<sup>27</sup> Kalinovsky, 2009, p. 51.

<sup>28</sup> Kalinovsky, 2009, p. 52.

<sup>29</sup> Kalinovsky, 2009, pp. 52–53.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Kalinovsky, 2009, p. 53.

<sup>31</sup> Porter, 1987, p. 53.

<sup>32</sup> Barfield, 2010, p. 238.

<sup>33</sup> CIA, *The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: Five Years After*, May 1985, p. iii.

<sup>34</sup> CIA, *Lessons from the War in Afghanistan*, May 1989, p. 3.

war effort. While such forces accounted for only around 5 percent of Soviet ground troops in 1979–1980, they constituted 20 percent by 1989.<sup>35</sup> Their primary roles were reconnaissance and ambush, and they were organized to serve as a rapid-reaction force.<sup>36</sup> The Spetsnaz also began to operate disguised as Islamic rebels. Similarly, the KGB paid “false bands” of insurgents to attack rebel groups and create divisions among the opposition.<sup>37</sup> During the war, the Soviet Union also attempted to employ information operations tactics. For example, the CIA reported in 1985 that the Soviet Union implemented “efforts at media indoctrination of Afghans.” However, it concluded that such efforts failed “because of Afghan illiteracy, distrust of government-controlled sources, religious beliefs, and adherence to traditional values.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, Soviet propaganda campaigns were ineffective in Afghanistan, despite proving successful in other regions.

The war in Afghanistan proved much more damaging for the Soviet Union than anticipated. Moscow acknowledged a loss of 15,000 service members in the protracted conflict—including an estimated 750 dead or missing Spetsnaz—and wartime economic costs amounted to around \$5 billion annually.<sup>39</sup>

### Looking for a Diplomatic Solution

As early as 1981, Soviet decisionmakers began to seriously consider options for achieving a negotiated settlement in Afghanistan.<sup>40</sup> In the fall, the Politburo approved a plan to open UN-mediated talks between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which Soviet leaders hoped would stem Pakistan’s support for the insurgency.<sup>41</sup> Negotiations were stymied, however, by Soviet concern over continued U.S. support to the mujahideen. At a Politburo meeting in March 1983, the KGB chairman stated, “The problem is not Pakistan’s position. It is American imperialism that is giving us a fight. . . . [W]e cannot retreat.”<sup>42</sup> During the Brezhnev years, ongoing tension between superpowers precluded the possibility of a diplomatic resolution.

After Brezhnev’s death in 1982, he was succeeded as CPSU general secretary by Yury Andropov, who died in 1984, and Konstantin Chernenko, who died about a year later, in March 1985.<sup>43</sup> In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev took the helm, and he proceeded to shift the effort in Afghanistan toward a negotiated settlement. While Gorbachev called the war a “bleeding wound” at a CPSU Congress in 1986, he was also loath to withdraw troops in a manner detrimental to his country’s reputation. As he explained at a February 1987 meeting of the Politburo,

<sup>35</sup> Galeotti, 2015, p. 22.

<sup>36</sup> Galeotti, 2015, p. 23.

<sup>37</sup> Coll, 2005, p. 134.

<sup>38</sup> CIA, 1985, p. 10.

<sup>39</sup> Galeotti, 2015, p. 28; Barfield, 2010, p. 238.

<sup>40</sup> Kalinovsky, 2009, p. 58.

<sup>41</sup> Kalinovsky, 2009, p. 59.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Kalinovsky, 2009, p. 59.

<sup>43</sup> Kalinovsky, 2009, p. 59, footnote 51.

They're worried in India; they're worried in Africa. They think that this will be a blow to the authority of the Soviet Union in the national-liberation movement. Imperialism, they say, if it wins in Afghanistan, will go on the offensive.<sup>44</sup>

To accomplish the goal of withdrawing Soviet troops while preserving the Soviet Union's reputation for global leadership, Soviet decisionmakers sought to effect domestic change in the Afghan leadership while pursuing a diplomatic solution through international institutions. In 1986, the KGB hand-selected and supported Mohammad Najibullah Ahmadzai, whom Soviet leaders felt would be more effective in uniting the PDPA and making peace across factions.<sup>45</sup> Soviets also continued to work within the UN to achieve a settlement.

In May 1988, Soviet troops began to withdraw from Afghanistan, a process that was complete by February 1989. Under the terms of the UN-sponsored agreement, the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to cease support for the combatants—but both continued to provide covert aid for years.<sup>46</sup> The Soviet government also provided significant financial aid to the Afghan government, despite facing its own economic crises at home. By spring 1989, Gorbachev authorized shipments of supplies worth as much as \$300 million per month (including flour, mortar shells, and Scud missiles) to help prop up the faltering Afghan administration.<sup>47</sup>

The end of the Soviet war in Afghanistan coincided with the end of the Soviet Union itself. Moscow continued to aid the PDPA regime at a level sufficient to keep it in power, but once the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, its economic and military assistance ended, too.<sup>48</sup> Afghanistan descended into yet another civil war, which culminated in the Taliban's rise to power in 1996.

## Conclusions: Cold War–Era Soviet Hostile Measures in Afghanistan

Relative to other Cold War cases in which the Soviet Union employed hostile measures, Afghanistan marked a notable divergence. While the case featured a variety of familiar hostile measures to empower selected political leaders, the situation quickly spun out of the gray zone and into a conflict to which the Soviet Union committed large numbers of conventional military forces. If Soviet leaders anticipated that the conflict would turn out like Hungary (1956) or Prague (1968), in which a show of force was one of a range of hostile measures that would successfully bring wayward foreign leaders into line, they were wrong. Here, we highlight several instances of Soviet use of hostile measures employed during the Afghanistan war:

- The KGB selected and supported Afghan political leaders whom it believed would align with Soviet priorities.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Kalinovsky, 2009, p. 62.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Kalinovsky, 2009, pp. 62–63.

<sup>46</sup> Barfield, 2010, pp. 238–242. Clandestine Soviet advisers in combat roles also remained in Afghanistan (Coll, 2005, p. 194).

<sup>47</sup> Coll, 2005, p. 194.

<sup>48</sup> Barfield, 2010, pp. 248–249.

- The KGB employed covert kinetic action to assassinate the Afghan leader in December 1979 and install the Soviet Union's chosen successor. The operation was also supported by overt military action by the Spetsnaz.
- Assumptions that overt military action by Soviet forces to subdue dissent would quickly stabilize the Afghan government, as it had in Prague in 1968, proved invalid.

In the large-scale military operation, Soviet forces employed both hostile measures and conventional military power in pursuit of their objectives to control the domestic insurgency. The hostile measures that the Soviet Union employed to turn the tide of (or extricate itself from) the conflict included the following:

- Soviet assistance helped establish an Afghan national army as a proxy force to continue the fight against insurgents after Soviet forces withdrew, but it proved unsuccessful.
- A Soviet communication strategy to influence Afghans faced challenges, mostly because of an illiterate, rural-based population.
- The Soviet Union worked for years to achieve a diplomatic solution that would allow it to withdraw its forces.

## The End of the Cold War

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The end of the Cold War ushered in dramatic geopolitical changes that set Europe on a new path. The broad overview of Soviet use of hostile measures presented in this appendix suggests the extent to which such concepts as socialist ideology, competition with the West, and spheres of influence shaped the Soviet Union's sense of security and its global role. When the Soviet Union fell, the transition to the post-Cold War era was marked by elements of both continuity and change. One element of continuity was the Russian Federation's sense that stability in its border region was vitally important to its security. At the same time, geopolitical changes left Russian leaders convinced that the threat at their borders was greater than ever. Former Warsaw Pact allies and Soviet republics, once firmly in the Soviet orbit, turned West and engaged or joined critical Western institutions, such as NATO and the European Union.<sup>1</sup> The end of the Cold War also marked the end of the Soviet Union as a global superpower, leaving the country in a perilous economic state and with a diminished global role. This change affected Russian leaders' ability to shape international events using all the tools of statecraft. However, it continued to employ many of these Soviet-era tools. A 2015 RAND study concluded, "Many of the patterns found in both Russian rhetoric and actions since the breakup of the Soviet Union echo those of both the Imperial and the Soviet past."<sup>2</sup> It was not just a continuity of rhetoric and actions. Rather, in many cases, individuals with specific links to hostile-measures activities in the Soviet-era security services ascended to positions of leadership in the Russian Federation.<sup>3</sup> Before becoming president, Vladimir Putin was one of three prime ministers who had worked for the KGB and its successors.<sup>4</sup> One scholar noted the enduring influence of Soviet-era security institutions,

The state security apparatus has been the primary means of protecting the rule of the tsar, later the head of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and now the President of the Russian Federation. Currently, the security services are one of the most powerful political groups in Russia, influencing not only vital aspects of the government but controlling key organizations in the Russian private sector.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Olikier et al., 2015, p. 5; the authors also note the extent to which Russian and Soviet actions have been attributed to a sense of *insecurity* by Western scholars.

<sup>2</sup> Olikier et al., 2015, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Amy Knight, "The Enduring Legacy of the KGB in Russian Politics," *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 47, No. 4, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Knight, 2000, p. 4. The other two were Yevgeny Primakov and Sergei Stepashin.

<sup>5</sup> Aaron Bateman, "The Political Influence of the Russian Security Services," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3, 2014.

In short, while emerging political leaders in Russia operated in a transformed environment, they were informed by professional experiences that made them deeply and personally familiar with the way hostile measures were institutionalized and employed under Soviet control.

Until now, we have focused on Russian and Soviet employment of hostile measures of influence to effect foreign policy goals. Here, we consider the foundational events of the early post–Cold War years, further examining these themes of continuity and change that have informed the development of 21st-century Russian hostile measures. For a more detailed examination of significant cases from this era, see Appendix B, which accompanies the main report and this appendix online.

### **The Breakup of Yugoslavia: From Croatian and Slovenian Independence to the War in Kosovo**

The international response to the wars that broke out in the Balkans in the 1990s greatly affected Russia's conception of security in its neighborhood. Although NATO forces were not involved in a single military engagement during the Cold War, they deployed to several theaters (including to Bosnia, Serbia, and Kosovo) in the 1990s.<sup>6</sup> Peacekeeping missions in the Balkans in 1995 and 1999 essentially brought NATO troops to Russia's backyard. In Moscow's view, NATO was creating a new security environment in Europe through its actions in the former Yugoslavia, and this environment was hostile to Russian interests.

A comprehensive exploration of the complex social, political, socioeconomic, and cultural dynamics that shaped the Balkan Peninsula and its relationship with the Soviet Union and Russia is beyond the scope of this discussion. Rather, our goal is to highlight the dissolution of Yugoslavia and Russian and NATO responses as milestone events shaping Russia's conception of regional security and NATO's role.

After World War II, Yugoslavia comprised six republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia (which included the regions of Kosovo and Vojvodina), Macedonia, and Montenegro. Although the countries shared certain historical and cultural ties, such as Slavic languages and sizable Orthodox populations, it was also a diverse and fiercely nationalistic region. It was also a region with a complex relationship with Russia and the Soviet Union. These dynamics played out in important ways, informed by cultural differences and varying levels of access to political and economic power. Regional tensions increased after the death of long-serving Yugoslavian leader Josip Broz Tito in 1980. The notion of a shared history and culture had long been an important justification for Moscow's influence in the region, but this narrative was also complicated. As Russian author Fyodor Dostoevsky wrote in the late 19th century, when many of his contemporaries were celebrating the liberation of Slavic peoples from Ottoman rule, "Russia must seriously prepare herself to watch all these liberated Slavs rushing rapturously off to Europe to be infected by European forms, both political and social, to the point their own personalities are lost."<sup>7</sup> According to one historian, "After the split between Tito and Stalin, Yugoslavia built its appeal on the insistence that it was *unlike*

<sup>6</sup> NATO, "Operations and Missions: Past and Present," webpage, last updated April 25, 2019a.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Dimitar Bechev, *Rival Power: Russia in Southeast Europe*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2017, p. 9.



the USSR.”<sup>8</sup> Despite historical bonds, the Russian and Soviet hold on the region had always been contested.

A violent implosion began in 1991, when Croatia and Slovenia declared their independence, prompting a series of conflicts that would continue for years. When the turmoil in Yugoslavia began, the Soviet Union was still standing, and Gorbachev was in power. Gorbachev was among the international actors who condemned the Croatian and Slovenian independence movements.<sup>9</sup> The Serb-dominated Yugoslav National Army took action against Slovenia in a conflict that lasted ten days before ending in a negotiated settlement.<sup>10</sup> After Croatia declared independence, all-out war erupted with Serbia, leading the United States and the Soviet Union to issue a joint statement condemning the violence.

As the brief conflict between Slovenia and Serbia ended in July 1991, Gorbachev declared the Soviet Union's continued support for the preservation of a unified Yugoslavia:

We are looking for ways to resolve the problem by peaceful means, respecting the peoples of Yugoslavia but proceeding from the premise that we favor Yugoslavia's integrity and are committed to the inviolability of borders.<sup>11</sup>

Gorbachev also issued a warning about the implications of Yugoslavia's dissolution, claiming that if Europe did not respect territorial borders, “developments in Europe will be out of control.”<sup>12</sup> Behind the scenes, decisionmakers in Moscow supported Serbia and were looking for ways to influence the conflict. In August 1991, the Soviet defense minister approved an arms deal meant to help Croatian Serbs fight the Croatian nationalists who sought independence from Yugoslavia, but the deal never materialized.<sup>13</sup> Gorbachev also worked to shape events by approving a UN-backed arms embargo meant to contain the fighting and by negotiating directly with belligerents in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to secure a ceasefire agreement. Such an agreement was finally reached in January 1992, and the UN decided to commit an international peacekeeping force to monitor enforcement.

In 1992, a crisis broke out in another former Yugoslav republic: Bosnia-Herzegovina. In March of that year, a referendum calling for independence was backed by Bosnia's Muslim and Croat populations but rejected by Bosnian Serbs, who instead set up their own government. The Serbian government intervened by launching attacks on non-Serb regions of Bosnia.<sup>14</sup> The brutal war took a terrible toll on the population as the Serbian forces occupied increasingly larger portions of the republic. Until late 1992, Russia supported economic sanctions against Serbia, UN humanitarian support to Bosnia, and a no-fly zone over Bosnia; it even conceded to a NATO role in enforcing the no-fly zone, provided such actions were approved by the

<sup>8</sup> Bechev, 2017, p. 25.

<sup>9</sup> Neither Gorbachev nor his successor, Boris Yeltsin, was necessarily sympathetic to Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević, but they did take a strong line against secessionist movements in this period and demonstrated a willingness to use force to prevent it in Tbilisi (1989) and Vilnius and Riga (1991). See Bechev, 2017, p. 26.

<sup>10</sup> Mike Bowker, “The Wars in Yugoslavia: Russia and the International Community,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 7, November 1998, p. 1247.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Parks, “Gorbachev Sees Major Peril in Yugoslav Crisis,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 10, 1991.

<sup>12</sup> Parks, 1991.

<sup>13</sup> Bowker, 1998, p. 1247.

<sup>14</sup> Bowker, 1998, p. 1249.

UN.<sup>15</sup> However, such policies proved extremely divisive domestically for Russian President Boris Yeltsin. When his political opponents made trips to Belgrade in a show of unity and defiance, Russian volunteers flocked to join the fight.<sup>16</sup>

By 1993, however, consensus regarding the appropriate path in Bosnia frayed, and Yeltsin faced increasing domestic pressure to support Serbia, a traditional ally of Moscow.<sup>17</sup> In 1994, tensions flared with the West when Russia rejected a UN Security Council resolution to authorize air strikes. In February, NATO took the first military action in its history and shot down Serbian jets that had violated the no-fly zone; in April, NATO attacked Serbian forces on the ground. These actions led Yeltsin to assert that NATO acted without appropriate authorization and without consulting with Russia. In May 1995, NATO forces stepped up their attacks and forced Serbian troops to withdraw from an exclusion zone around Sarajevo, with the alliance flying an estimated 3,315 sorties in what was known as Operation Deliberate Force.<sup>18</sup> Yeltsin condemned the attacks and called for their immediate cessation.<sup>19</sup> However, the operation was successful in bringing about peace talks, which took place in Dayton, Ohio.

In the run-up to the Dayton Peace Accords, Russia used diplomatic pressure in an effort to influence the peace process in Bosnia. Moscow feared the spread of NATO's influence in Eastern Europe and stipulated in October 1995 that it would not join a peacekeeping force unless Russia was given joint authority over all decisions.<sup>20</sup> On October 22, Yeltsin gave a speech to the UN General Assembly criticizing NATO expansion and rejecting the idea that Russia would participate in peace operations under NATO command in Bosnia.<sup>21</sup> Despite these objections, Yeltsin met privately with President Bill Clinton on October 23 and agreed to contribute two battalions, a total of 2,000 personnel, to the international coalition. Yeltsin also insisted on hosting the presidents of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia in Moscow.<sup>22</sup> The pre-Dayton meeting in Moscow was announced October 25, and, two days later, Russia agreed to place its forces directly under the commanding general of U.S. forces in Europe, which meant Russian forces were technically under U.S. command, rather than NATO command.<sup>23</sup>

Just a few short years after the Dayton Peace Accords ended hostilities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, violence broke out again in the former Yugoslavia. Kosovo was an autonomous and self-governing Serbian province with a largely ethnic Albanian population and a Serb minority. Amid the ethnic-based violence, Kosovar separatists began to fight for indepen-

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<sup>15</sup> Bowker, 1998, p. 1250.

<sup>16</sup> One such volunteer was Igor Girkin (Strelkov), who rose to prominence in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine in 2014 (Bechev, 2017, p. 29; Noah Sneider, "Shadowy Rebel Wields Iron Fist in Ukraine Fight," *New York Times*, July 10, 2014).

<sup>17</sup> Bowker, 1998, p. 1251.

<sup>18</sup> Bruce R. Nardulli, Walter L. Perry, Bruce R. Pirnie, John Gordon IV, and John G. McGinn, *Disjointed War: Military Operations in Kosovo, 1999*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MR-1406-A, 2002.

<sup>19</sup> Bowker, 1998, p. 1254.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, New York: Random House, 1998, p. 210.

<sup>21</sup> UN General Assembly, Record of the 50th Session, 35th Plenary Meeting, October 22, 1995, p. 18.

<sup>22</sup> Holbrooke, 1998, p. 214. Holbrooke argues that Yeltsin sought to demonstrate Russia's commitment to the peace process to improve his position in upcoming domestic elections.

<sup>23</sup> Holbrooke, 1998, pp. 212, 259.

dence.<sup>24</sup> Violence and reprisals took a tremendous toll on Kosovar civilians. In 1998, fighting between Serbian and Kosovar forces escalated, creating a humanitarian crisis and contributing to growing support for international military intervention. In September, a UN Security Council resolution warned of an “impending humanitarian catastrophe” and called for a cessation of hostilities.<sup>25</sup> Serbian President Slobodan Milošević resisted international pressure to stop the conflict. In response, NATO conducted Operation Allied Force, an offensive military operation against Serbia with an objective of compelling Milošević to accept a peace framework.<sup>26</sup>

Russia strongly opposed NATO military action in Kosovo. In October 1998, Russia announced that it would veto any UN resolution authorizing the use of force against Serbia.<sup>27</sup> On March 23, Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, on his way to Washington, D.C., headed back to Russia midflight after learning through a phone call from U.S. Vice President Al Gore that NATO military action was likely to begin soon.<sup>28</sup> Yeltsin publicly rejected the idea that NATO would become the world's police, and Russia's ambassador to the UN, Sergey Lavrov, called for an immediate end to the campaign in an emergency UN Security Council meeting. On March 26, 1999, a Russian-introduced UN resolution calling for the end of the NATO campaign and renewed negotiations failed, with 12 of 15 Security Council members voting against it.<sup>29</sup> Five days later, Russia sent naval vessels to the Mediterranean, where they could enter the Adriatic Sea, causing concern that Russia would convey intelligence on NATO air operations to Serbia.<sup>30</sup>

As the 1999 NATO summit neared, Yeltsin approached Clinton about Russia's role in reestablishing peace in Kosovo. Russia had several interests: to keep the UN involved in Kosovo, to balance the role NATO would play in the region after the conflict, to ensure that Serbia retained sovereignty over Kosovo, and to create a Serbian sector within Kosovo.<sup>31</sup> The result was a month of diplomatic back-and-forth among the United States, Russia, and the European Union. Yeltsin eventually appointed his former prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, as special envoy for the Balkans. Chernomyrdin was tasked with bringing Russia out of isolation and acting as an intermediary with Serbia to find an agreement that would end NATO's bombing. Russia feared that any escalation in Serbia—especially if it involved NATO ground forces—could lead to a confrontation.<sup>32</sup>

NATO and the United States demanded that Serbia withdraw troops from Kosovo, accept a NATO peacekeeping force in Kosovo, and allow refugees to return home.<sup>33</sup> Russia,

<sup>24</sup> Benjamin S. Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo: A Strategic and Operational Assessment*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MR-1365-AF, 2001, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Lambeth, 2001, p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> Ivo H. Daalder and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000, p. 101.

<sup>27</sup> Daalder and O'Hanlon, 2000, p. 44.

<sup>28</sup> “Russian Premier Cancels U.S. Visit over Kosovo Crisis,” CNN, March 23, 1999.

<sup>29</sup> UN Security Council, “Security Council Rejects Demand for Cessation of Use of Force Against Federal Republic of Yugoslavia,” press release, March 23, 1999.

<sup>30</sup> Charles Trueheart, “Russia Orders Ship to Mediterranean,” *Washington Post*, April 1, 1999.

<sup>31</sup> Daalder and O'Hanlon, 2000, p. 140.

<sup>32</sup> Strobe Talbott, *The Russia Hand*, New York: Random House, 2002, p. 312.

<sup>33</sup> Talbott, 2002, p. 309.

too, wanted to end the war, but any agreement that subordinated a Russian peacekeeping force to NATO would have been politically unpalatable and could have led to Yeltsin's impeachment. Chernomyrdin's diplomatic efforts led to a compromise to which Russia, Serbia, and NATO could all agree. The G-8 statement of principles, meant to serve as a basis for ending NATO operations, emphasized the role of the UN and required Serbia to withdraw all forces from Kosovo, sticking points for Russia and NATO, respectively.<sup>34</sup> Chernomyrdin also played a critical role in negotiating an end to the NATO air campaign, insisting that Russian peacekeepers be under UN, not NATO, authority.<sup>35</sup> This remained an obstacle in the negotiations. When it became clear that Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and the United States would control military sectors in Kosovo after the withdrawal of Serbian forces, Russia attempted to carve out a zone for itself.

On June 11, 1999, before NATO forces entered Kosovo, 200 Russian troops participating in peacekeeping operations in Bosnia passed through Serbia into Pristina, the Kosovar capital, and took control of the airport.<sup>36</sup> Attempting to preempt NATO's consolidation of power in Kosovo by establishing a Russian zone was an unexpected measure that led to tense discussions between the United States and Russia. In the end, Russia agreed to deploy 4,000 troops to Kosovo that would be under Russian tactical control and NATO operational control.

## The Evolution of Russia's Perception of NATO and the Expansion of the European Union

During the Cold War, Soviet leaders expressed concerns that the West and Western institutions posed a threat to Soviet security and economic activity. However, these proclamations were not always consistent. Despite NATO's origins as a military alliance formed to counter a perceived Soviet threat, as the Cold War era drew to a close, there were indications that Russia was prepared to develop a new kind of relationship with NATO. Indeed, in late December 1991, Yeltsin expressed hope that Russia would become a member of the alliance in the future.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, the Russian Federation's first military doctrine, published in 1992, disavowed the notion that the United States or NATO remained enemies.<sup>38</sup> Russian leaders and analysts asserted that the country sought closer relationships with the West, but such efforts were largely abandoned when Russian leaders concluded that their interests were not being considered. Over time, Russia moved instead to denounce the West and develop military and economic institutions to counter Western influence.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Group of Eight, "G8 Statement on Regional Issues," Cologne, Germany, June 20, 1999; Talbott, 2002, p. 328.

<sup>35</sup> Daalder and O'Hanlon, 2000, p. 168.

<sup>36</sup> Daalder and O'Hanlon, 2000, p. 175.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Friedman, "Soviet Disarray: Yeltsin Says Russia Seeks to Join NATO," *New York Times*, December 21, 1991.

<sup>38</sup> Oliker et al., 2015, p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> Andrew Radin and Clinton Reach, *Russian Views of the International Order*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1826-OSD, 2017.

Russian leaders strongly opposed NATO expansion as the alliance began admitting member states historically in Russia's orbit.<sup>40</sup> In 1993, Yeltsin sought alternative international agreements in lieu of expansion, such as joint security guarantees and neutrality for countries in Eastern and Central Europe. A 1995 report from Russia's Council on Foreign and Defense Policy warned that, if expansion occurred, "the Baltic states and Ukraine would become a zone of intense strategic rivalry."<sup>41</sup> About a year later, Primakov, Russia's new foreign minister, met with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher to make clear his country's opposition to NATO expansion and suggest alternatives. "We will have to find a solution to this issue that is acceptable to Russia, NATO, and the Central Europeans," Primakov stated, "or sleep with the porcupine."<sup>42</sup> In the years that followed, Russian leaders sharpened their critique of expansion and began to suggest that there were risks to NATO and aspiring member states if plans proceeded. Media reports in January 1997 quoted an anonymous Russian defense official saying, "If NATO moves eastward, Russia will move westward," and calling out expansion into the Baltics as particularly unacceptable.<sup>43</sup> When such efforts failed and the alliance continued with its expansion plan, Russian leaders made it clear that they opposed the deployment of military forces or materiel to new member states, along with military cooperation and joint exercises.

In addition to tension over the admittance of new states, the Russia perception was that the United States had broken its promise not to expand NATO's presence east of Germany after German reunification. Although there was no written guarantee precluding expansion, declassified documents suggest that the United States informally assured Russia during the German reunification process that NATO would not seek expansion into Eastern Europe.<sup>44</sup> In a 2014 speech justifying the annexation of Crimea, Putin stated that Western leaders "have lied to us many times, made decisions behind our backs, placed before us an accomplished fact. This happened with NATO's expansion to the east, as well as the deployment of military infrastructure at our borders."<sup>45</sup> While the historical point remains unsettled, Russian leaders' assertion that the West took advantage of Moscow's weakened position in the 1990s and reneged on promises provides insight into current regional dynamics.

The NATO-Russia Founding Act, signed in 1997, codified the relationship between Russia and NATO on terms Russia considered consistent with its interests, while also providing a pathway for engagement and cooperation.<sup>46</sup> The act affirmed Russian interests relative to the

<sup>40</sup> Russia did not view all countries previously in its orbit as equally strategically important. See Radin and Reach, 2017, p. 11, Figure 2.1.

<sup>41</sup> James Greene, *Russian Responses to NATO and EU: Enlargement and Outreach*, London: Chatham House, June 2012, pp. 5–6.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Ronald D. Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door: How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002, p. 142.

<sup>43</sup> Asmus, 2002, pp. 181–182.

<sup>44</sup> Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin, "Deal or No Deal? The End of the Cold War and the U.S. Offer to Limit NATO Expansion," *International Security*, Vol. 40, No. 4, Spring 2016.

<sup>45</sup> Steven Pifer, "Did NATO Promise Not to Enlarge? Gorbachev Says 'No,'" blog post, Brookings Institution, November 6, 2014.

<sup>46</sup> NATO, "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security Between NATO and the Russian Federation Signed in Paris, France," May 27, 1997. The Founding Act stated, "NATO and Russia do not consider each other as adversaries. They share the goal of overcoming the vestiges of earlier confrontation and competitions and of strengthening mutual trust and cooperation." Also see Radin and Reach, 2017, p. 42.

alliance, including a provision establishing the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council and limitations on NATO's ability to deploy nuclear weapons or to permanently station military forces in new member states.

In the years that followed, several countries previously in the Soviet orbit aligned themselves with Western institutions that were encroaching, according to some Russian leaders, into Russia's traditional spheres of influence. In 1999, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland became the first former Warsaw Pact countries to join NATO, followed by Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in 2004.<sup>47</sup> The accessions of the three former Soviet Baltic states were particularly unsettling for Russia, as Moscow feared that NATO military assets could now be brought right up to the Russian border.<sup>48</sup> In response, Russian legislators called for rethinking the country's defense posture, and the Russian foreign ministry suggested reconsidering the decision to unilaterally demilitarize the area around the Baltics. The eastward encroachment of Western institutions continued in 2004, when the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the Baltic states joined the European Union, followed by Bulgaria and Romania in 2007.<sup>49</sup> As Western influence expanded, many Russian leaders came to believe NATO was a direct threat.<sup>50</sup> Putin expressed this sentiment in his 2007 speech at the Munich Conference on Security Policy, in which he challenged the intent of NATO expansion:

It turns out that NATO has put its frontline forces on our borders. . . . I think it is obvious that NATO expansion does not have any relation with the modernization of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary, it represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust. And we have the right to ask: Against whom is this expansion intended?<sup>51</sup>

In addition to unhappiness over NATO's military expansion up to Russia's borders, the NATO intervention in Kosovo deeply affected Moscow's view of post-Cold War European security. Russian leaders saw the intervention as NATO acting unilaterally without UN approval in its use of force against a non-NATO country.<sup>52</sup> Russian leaders reportedly saw many parallels between the Kosovo intervention and unrest in Chechnya, a republic in the North Caucasus that sought independence and fought costly and devastating wars against Russia from 1994 to 1996 and again in 1999.<sup>53</sup> Russian leaders expressed fears that NATO would interfere in the internal matters of Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States under

<sup>47</sup> NATO, "Member Countries," webpage, last updated May 14, 2019b.

<sup>48</sup> R. G. Gidadhubli, "Expansion of NATO: Russia's Dilemma," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 39, No. 19, May 8–14, 2004, p. 1885.

<sup>49</sup> European Union, "EU Member Countries," webpage, last updated April 11, 2019.

<sup>50</sup> Lawrence Freedman, "Ukraine and the Art of Crisis Management," *Survival*, Vol. 56, No. 3, June–July 2014, p. 16.

<sup>51</sup> Vladimir Putin, "Putin's Prepared Remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy," transcript, *Washington Post*, February 12, 2007.

<sup>52</sup> Stephen J. Blank, *Threats to Russian Security: The View from Moscow*, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, July 2000, pp. 4–8.

<sup>53</sup> The conflict resulted in thousands of Russian and Chechen casualties and displaced hundreds of thousands of people. Organized crime and terrorism also increased in the region as a result of the instability and weak governance. See Jim Nichol, *Stability in Russia's Chechnya and Other Regions of the North Caucasus: Recent Developments*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, December 13, 2010, p. 1.

the guise of peacekeeping and threaten Russian political-military interests. Russia's influence as a member of the UN Security Council also was weakened by NATO's actions, as Moscow and the UN were bypassed so the intervention could move forward. The intervention and the precedents it set left Moscow concerned for its own security, fearful that NATO would violate its sovereignty, and convinced that the West would ignore global institutions and use force to undermine Russia's interests.

The color revolutions that swept through the former Soviet bloc in the early to mid-2000s also affected how Russia viewed the West, particularly the United States. From the perspective of Russian leaders, U.S. support for the replacement of pro-Russia regimes with Westward-leaning governments was evidence of plans to weaken Russia and undermine its interests.<sup>54</sup> These revolutions—particularly the electoral defeat of Ukraine's pro-Russia president, Viktor Yanukovich—were perceived as manufactured by Western-backed, democracy-promoting organizations, such as the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, and the Open Society Foundations.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, there was concern that Moscow, too, would succumb to popular protests. As one Russian analyst put it, “The day before yesterday: Belgrade. Yesterday: Tbilisi. Today: Kyiv. Tomorrow: Moscow.”<sup>56</sup>

Russian leaders employed a range of measures to keep potential NATO aspirants looking east, especially after the first round of expansion.<sup>57</sup> For example, President Vladimir Putin established the Collective Security Treaty Organization, a multilateral military organization with the goal of supporting Russian military integration with its neighbors and establishing a red line against future expansion. Putin sought to entice Ukraine to stay out of NATO's orbit, in part by strongly (but ultimately unsuccessfully) encouraging it to join eastern-facing economic and security institutions, including the Collective Security Treaty Organization.<sup>58</sup> He also sought to deepen Russian influence over Belarus and Ukraine's energy infrastructure and internal markets in an attempt to build economic dependencies. As part of the compatriot policy, discussed next, Putin promoted deeper cultural affinities with states previously under the Soviet sphere of influence.<sup>59</sup> In response to the color revolutions, Putin used several familiar tools of statecraft to exert influence in Russia's “near abroad.” For example, Russia backed a Ukrainian political party led by Yanukovich that opposed NATO membership.<sup>60</sup> In 2006, Russia also used hostile measures in an ultimately successful attempt to prevent a multinational military exercise in Crimea.<sup>61</sup> In 2008, Putin's saber-rattling was evidenced by the asser-

<sup>54</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins and Igor A. Zevelev, “Russian Foreign Policy: Continuity in Change,” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 2012.

<sup>55</sup> Graeme P. Herd, “Colorful Revolutions and the CIS: ‘Manufactured’ Versus ‘Managed’ Democracy?” *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 52, No. 2, March–April 2005, p. 4.

<sup>56</sup> Herd, 2005, p. 5.

<sup>57</sup> Greene, 2012, p. 8.

<sup>58</sup> Greene, 2012, p. 7.

<sup>59</sup> Greene, 2012, p. 9.

<sup>60</sup> Peter Finn, “Ukraine's Yanukovich Halts NATO Entry Talks,” *Washington Post*, September 15, 2006; “Ukraine's Parliament Votes to Abandon NATO Ambitions,” BBC News, June 3, 2010.

<sup>61</sup> Greene, 2012, p. 15.

tion that “it was frightening to think” that Russia would be forced to target Ukraine with nuclear weapons if it hosted NATO bases.<sup>62</sup>

## Development of Russia's Compatriot Policy

The collapse of the Soviet Union led to an extremely painful period of transition for many citizens in the former Soviet bloc. According to the last Soviet census, conducted in 1989, an estimated 25 million ethnic Russians living in former Soviet republics would be left outside the Russian Federation at the end of the Cold War.<sup>63</sup> While many migrated to Russia in the years that followed, as of 2015, sizable populations remained in several former Soviet states, as shown in Table A.1.<sup>64</sup> Russia claimed a strong national interest in protecting the rights of

**Table A.1**  
Estimated Ethnic Russian Population in  
Former Soviet States, 2015

Country	% of Population That Is “Ethnic Russian”
Latvia	26.2
Estonia	24.8
Kazakhstan	23.7
Ukraine	17.3
Turkmenistan	12.0
Belarus	8.3
Kyrgyzstan	7.7
Moldova	5.9
Lithuania	5.8
Uzbekistan	5.5
Tajikistan	<2.0
Georgia	1.3
Azerbaijan	1.3
Armenia	<1.0

SOURCE: Zakem, Saunders, and Antoun, 2015.

<sup>62</sup> Quoted in Greene, 2012, p. 16.

<sup>63</sup> Sven Gunnar Simonsen, “Compatriot Games: Explaining the ‘Diaspora Linkage’ in Russia’s Military Withdrawal from the Baltic States,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 5, July 2001, p. 773.

<sup>64</sup> In the 1990s, immigration into Russia from former Soviet states was at its highest: An estimated 5 million immigrants moved between 1993 and 1999, about 3 million of whom were ethnic Russian (Vera Zakem, Paul Saunders, and Daniel Antoun, *Mobilizing Compatriots: Russia’s Strategy, Tactics, and Influence in the Former Soviet Union*, Washington, D.C.: CNA, November, 2015, p. 17).



Russian “compatriots” living outside its borders, predicated on a real or imagined sense of national identity, shared linguistic and cultural heritage, and human rights.<sup>65</sup> Of course, given the complexity of mixed heritage, multiple languages, and nuanced self-identification, labeling individuals as compatriots is fraught and subject to interpretation.<sup>66</sup> In the early post–Cold War period, Russia developed and employed a wide range of hostile measures as it implemented a compatriot policy that purported to protect the interests of ethnic Russians outside Russia's borders, but the policy was also used to justify claims on people and territory abroad.

Estimating the size of the compatriot population is inherently problematic and depends heavily on definitions that have evolved over time. Other terms that have been used to describe this population include *Russian speakers (russkoyazychnye)*, *ethnic citizens of Russia (etnicheskie rossiyane)*, and the *Russian diaspora*.<sup>67</sup> As one researcher has noted, each label emphasizes a real or imagined connection to the Russian Federation based generally on a shared history and culture, and suggests “a troubled relationship with host societies.”<sup>68</sup> Each is also problematic in its own way, capturing different populations whose size and circumstances vary.

The development of the compatriot policy emerged from what one RAND analysis termed “supranationalist views of Russian identity,” which implicitly challenged the extent to which former Soviet countries were truly independent.<sup>69</sup> Compatriot policy emerged as a reaction to the approaches that newly independent states took to integrate Russian minorities within their borders. In the Baltics, the new Lithuanian constitution guaranteed full citizenship rights to ethnic Russians, while policies in Latvia and Estonia branded Russian minorities as “stateless persons,” an approach that the Center for Naval Analyses described as ranging from “unaccommodating to provocative.”<sup>70</sup> Concern regarding the treatment of Russian minorities in Latvia and Estonia led to debate over the withdrawal of military forces in 1992. At the end of the Cold War, Yeltsin placed the estimated 120,000 formerly Soviet military forces that were stationed in the Baltics under Russian jurisdiction and initiated their return to Russian soil.<sup>71</sup> However, he suspended the withdrawal in October in an effort to influence how ethnic Russians in the Baltics were treated, citing a “deep concern over the numerous violations of the rights of the Russian-language population.”<sup>72</sup> Yeltsin was responding, in part, to

<sup>65</sup> As early as 1992, Russia asserted a “prerogative to protect ethnic Russians wherever they may live” (Oliker et al., 2015, p. 5).

<sup>66</sup> The specific definition of a *compatriot* was reportedly left purposely ambiguous. Putin offered the following explanation: “The compatriot is not only a legal category. More importantly, it is not an issue of status or favoritism. It is primarily a matter of personal choice. Of self-identification. I would even say, of spiritual self-identification” (quoted in Radin and Reach, 2017, p. 13, footnote 14).

<sup>67</sup> Igor Zevelev, *Russia and Its New Diasporas*, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2001, p. 4; Simonsen, 2001, p. 774.

<sup>68</sup> Zevelev, 2001, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> Radin and Reach, 2017, p. 13.

<sup>70</sup> However, Estonia and Latvia reportedly rectified unaccommodating policies toward minority populations as part of their accession to the European Union (Zakem, Saunders, and Antoun, 2015, p. 10).

<sup>71</sup> Simonsen, 2001, p. 771.

<sup>72</sup> John-Thor Dahlburg, “Yeltsin Suspends Baltics Pullout,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 30 1992.

Estonian and Latvian draft citizenship laws that would require residency and language tests designed to disenfranchise many ethnic Russians.<sup>73</sup>

In spring 1993, Russia again attempted to punish and coerce the Baltic states for their treatment of ethnic Russians. That June, after a law was adopted requiring non-Estonians to pass an Estonian language test and apply for citizenship or potentially face deportation, Russia responded by leveraging the region's reliance on Russian energy imports. As Russian lawmakers deliberated imposing economic sanctions on Estonia, Russia stopped exporting gas to Tallinn.<sup>74</sup> Gas shipments to Latvia and Lithuania were also suspended just after Russia declared it had the right to intervene to protect the rights of ethnic Russians in former Soviet territory.<sup>75</sup> After lengthy negotiations, Russia came to an agreement with Latvia and Estonia on the terms for a troop withdrawal, which was to be completed by August 1994. Russian troops had left Lithuania a year earlier.<sup>76</sup>

Moscow's policy toward Russians abroad grew increasingly formalized throughout the 1990s. In October 1993, Yeltsin approved of a new military doctrine that identified "the suppression of the rights, freedoms, and legitimate interests of citizens of the Russian Federation in foreign states" as a source of "military danger" facing the Russian Federation.<sup>77</sup> In August 1994, he issued the first government-wide policy declaration on compatriots: "On the Fundamental Directions of State Policy of the Russian Federation in Relation to Compatriots Living Abroad." The policy established a government commission to support compatriots, and the government outlined concrete guidelines two years later for a "Program of Actions to Support the Compatriots."<sup>78</sup> The program called for strengthening cultural ties with compatriots through Russian-language media, cultural centers, and economic ties.<sup>79</sup> In 1999, the Russian legislature passed the law "On State Policy of the Russian Federation in Relation to Compatriots Living Abroad," which legally defined compatriots and affirmed Russia's commitment to protecting their rights.<sup>80</sup> The expansive definition included Russian

<sup>73</sup> Dahlburg, 1992; Zakem, Saunders, and Antoun, 2015. Simonsen argued that slowing its withdrawal from the Baltics was also an effort to appease the military leadership, an important domestic political constituency (Simonsen, 2001, pp. 778–779).

<sup>74</sup> Sonni Efron, "Angry Russia Cuts Off Gas to Estonia," *Los Angeles Times*, June 26, 1993. The Russian company involved claimed that the dispute was over unpaid energy bills.

<sup>75</sup> Laura Kauppila, *The Baltic Puzzle: Russia's Policy Towards Estonia and Latvia, 1992–1996*, thesis, Helsinki, Finland: University of Helsinki, January 1999.

<sup>76</sup> Simonsen, 2001, pp. 776, 779.

<sup>77</sup> Russian Federation Security Council, *The Basic Provisions of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation*, November 2, 1993. Simonsen notes that an earlier draft of the 1993 military doctrine referred to the "rights and interests of Russian citizens and of people in former Soviet republics who 'identify themselves, ethnically or culturally, with Russia.'" The reference to ethnic and cultural identification would have been much broader than the language "Russian citizens" adopted in the final version (Simonsen, 2001, pp. 778–779).

<sup>78</sup> Zakem, Saunders, and Antoun, 2015, p. 15; Zevelev, 2001, p. 143.

<sup>79</sup> Zevelev, 2001, p. 143.

<sup>80</sup> Rights of compatriots include the following, as articulated by Zakem, Saunders, and Antoun:

- to use the Russian language (or "other native languages of peoples of the Russian Federation"),
- to exercise cultural autonomy and to create social, religious, and media organizations,
- to participate in non-governmental organizations at the national and international levels,
- to contribute to "mutually advantageous relations" between Russia and their states of residence,
- to maintain connections among themselves and to Russia, and to obtain information from Russia, and
- to choose whether to remain where they live or return to Russia. (Zakem, Saunders, and Antoun, 2015, p. 15)

Federation citizens living abroad, former Soviet citizens, emigrants from the Soviet Union or the Russian Federation, and descendants of compatriots.<sup>81</sup> Since then, Russian issuances on “Russia’s Foreign Policy Concept” in 2000, 2008, and 2013 have consistently reaffirmed the government’s commitment to protecting the rights of Russians abroad.<sup>82</sup>

Russian policymakers established a variety of mechanisms to engage Russians abroad. While military action has long been a tool used to support Russia’s compatriot policy, as we discuss in Appendix B, the establishment of cultural and linguistic institutions has also played a critical role. In 2007, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs established the Russkiy Mir Foundation to promote Russian language and culture, with contributions from both the government and the private sector.<sup>83</sup> Ahead of the foundation’s launch, Putin spoke of a global diaspora: “The Russian language not only preserves an entire layer of truly global achievements but is also the living space for the many millions of people in the Russian-speaking world, a community that goes far beyond Russia itself.”<sup>84</sup> In 2011, the foundation’s annual budget was estimated to be about 500 million rubles, or about \$17.5 million (then-year dollars).<sup>85</sup>

To strengthen ties between ethnic Russians and the Russian homeland, Moscow also provided passports to members of the Russian compatriot community, even if doing so violated the laws of the host country. Russia began granting citizenship and passports to ethnic Russians living in Crimea in the 1990s and continued to do so despite violating Ukrainian law.<sup>86</sup> A nongovernmental organization in Transnistria, the Union of Russian Communities in the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic, is suspected of giving passports to ethnic Russians living in the region, as well as circulating a petition to Transnistrian residents requesting that Putin support Russia’s recognition and annexation of Transnistria.<sup>87</sup> This example of a suspected Russian-backed hostile-measures campaign demonstrates how claims on the interests of “compatriots” could motivate Russian activities abroad.

As we discuss in Appendix B, Russian compatriot policy has provided a basis for the use of hostile measures, through which Russia has exploited real and imagined connections to the territory and people once in the Soviet orbit. The tools that Russia has developed to implement this policy have enabled it to interfere in the internal affairs for former Soviet states and pursue political interests justified by the need to protect compatriot rights.

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<sup>81</sup> Heather A. Conley, Theodore P. Gerber, Lucy Moore, and Mihaela David, *Russian Soft Power in the 21st Century: An Examination of Russian Compatriot Policy in Estonia*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, August 2011, p. 12.

<sup>82</sup> Vladimir Putin, *The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, June 28, 2000, January 12, 2008, and February 12, 2013; Zakem, Saunders, and Antoun, 2015.

<sup>83</sup> Conley et al., 2011, p. 14.

<sup>84</sup> Russkiy Mir Foundation, “About the Russkiy Mir Foundation,” webpage, last updated November 4, 2014.

<sup>85</sup> Conley et al., 2011, p. 14.

<sup>86</sup> Agina Grigas, “How Soft Power Works: Russian Passportization and Compatriot Policies Paved Way for Crimean Annexation and War in Donbas,” excerpt from *Beyond Crimea: The New Russian Empire*, Atlantic Council, February 22, 2016.

<sup>87</sup> Dumitru Minzarari, “Moldova Sending Confusing Signals Amid Open Russian Threats,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 11, No. 97, May 23, 2014.

## Conclusions: Russia's Development of Modern Tools for Employing Hostile Measures

This discussion was less concerned with identifying hostile measures that Russia has employed than with exploring the development of hostile measures to come. Beginning with the fall of the Berlin wall in November 1989 and culminating in the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, Europe's political and security environment changed dramatically. The Russian Federation's power diminished, and its influence in Europe suddenly declined. Particularly notable were developments in the years after the end of the Cold War that shaped Russian thinking about Europe's new security environment. NATO's eastward encroachment, its intervention in the Balkans, and the color revolutions that toppled pro-Russia regimes made Moscow suspicious of the West's intentions and aspirations. Russia developed new tools through its compatriot policy to assert its influence in this newly united Europe, laying the foundation for how Russia would come to confront Western influence in the former Soviet bloc.

Reflecting on the fall of the Soviet Union, Russian thinkers have pointed to the effective use of hostile measures by the United States and its Western allies as a critical component of the collapse. Indeed, in 2004, retired general E. E. Kondakov wrote an article on the use of "nonmilitary measures," which, he argued,

have been at the core of attaining results previously attained only by military means. The West has destroyed the USSR, the Warsaw Pact, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia through the comprehensive and systematic use of political, diplomatic, economic, informational, psychological, and other nonmilitary measures, in combination with their security forces and well-coordinated political organization.<sup>88</sup>

From the perspective of Russian leaders, U.S. nonmilitary measures pushed Europe into a new era in which Europe's security and its political and economic status quo had been upended. This idea that the *West* rather than Russia was the most adept user of hostile measures had echoes of the Cold War.

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<sup>88</sup> E. E. Kondakov, "Non-Military Measures of the Russian Federation Military Security and the Basic Problems of Their Realization," in Yuri Baluevsky, ed., *National Security of Russian Federation*, General Staff of the Russian Federation, Center for Military and Strategic Studies, 2004; RAND translation.

## Drawing Lessons from the Historical Record

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This historical review provided a broad overview of the evolution of Soviet and Russian hostile-measures capabilities and their employment in Eastern and Central Europe, East Asia, Africa, and Afghanistan through the early post–Cold War era.

Some central themes include the institutionalization of hostile measures and how Soviet and Russian leaders varied their hostile-measures tactics according to the area of operation (e.g., near versus far from the Soviet Union). Our objective was to support the assessment of similarities and differences in current Russian approaches to hostile measures, as well as to provide context for understanding Russia’s decision calculus today.

The continuity and change over this period is the critical story. Post–Cold War developments in the Russian Federation, in particular, reflected changes to Russia’s geopolitical situation that provide essential context for understanding its employment of hostile measures in the 21st century.

### Key Findings

This historical analysis points to several key findings related to the development, evolution, and employment of hostile measures by the Soviet Union and the Russia Federation since the Bolshevik Revolution.

#### The Role of Institutions

In a sense, the story of Soviet and Russian hostile measures is one about institutions. The Soviet Union developed a variety of military, intelligence, political, and cultural institutions to resource, coordinate, and legitimate its employment of hostile measures. These institutions changed over time, and their impact varied depending on factors on the ground.

- Soviet institutions (e.g., Comintern, the Warsaw Pact) provided a consistent message on policy and ideology to influence domestic and international audiences.
- Soviet institutions also supported hostile measures in indirect ways. For example, the development of Soviet conventional capabilities, including capabilities for power projection, were vital to its employment of hostile measures.

#### Developing Formulas for Intervention

The Soviet Union demonstrated certain patterns in its employment of hostile measures. Additional research into internal Soviet politics and decisionmaking processes is warranted,

but the evidence suggests that Soviet institutions played a role in favoring certain approaches over others. These approaches were relatively consistent over time:

- The Soviet Union favored approaches that allowed plausible deniability of unilateral action (e.g., seeking invitations by friendly governments to intervene, operating through the Warsaw Pact and other multilateral alliances, using proxy forces).
- Empowering friendly governments (preferably those that demonstrated fealty to the Soviet Union) was an early step in many of the historical cases considered here. But escalation to other measures (as in Afghanistan), in the event that chosen leaders failed to deliver as anticipated, was also on the table.

### **Adapting to Different Operational Contexts**

This has also been a story about adaptability: The Soviet Union employed hostile measures differently depending on conditions on the ground. Such factors as political, social, cultural dynamics; Soviet capabilities (both conventional and gray zone); broader foreign policy objectives; and perceived risk of escalation contributed to decisionmaking about which measures to employ. The following are some examples of variation across contexts (and the factors driving these differences):

- Soviet leaders proved more risk-averse regarding perceived security threats in Eastern and Central Europe than anywhere else. To mitigate these risks, they used hostile measures to put in place governments that demonstrated absolute fealty to the Soviet Union. Soviet leaders were more inclined to tolerate independent-minded communists in areas outside Europe.
- Soviet support to proxy forces (such as Cubans in Africa) reflected both Soviet objectives and the varied objectives of the governments that received support (e.g., proxy forces were not just puppets that lacked independent foreign policy objectives).
- Competition with the PRC for the mantle of global leadership of communist revolutions animated Soviet decisionmaking, especially in East Asia and Africa.
- Until the war in Afghanistan, the Soviet Union was very reluctant to deploy its own military forces outside Europe; rather, it favored the use of hostile measures and provided advisers, foreign assistance, and support to proxy forces as tools for shaping events.

The theme of adaptability also carried through with respect to the effects that hostile measures produced on the ground. Among the factors that shaped outcomes in a given local context were the suitability of the hostile measures employed; local political, social, and cultural dynamics, including strength and legitimacy of local leaders; and proximity to the Soviet Union. A few points stand out:

- Soviet leaders' ability to shape events in Eastern and Central Europe through hostile measures was much greater than in other regions, but it was not absolute. Tito's leadership in Yugoslavia and the violent interventions in Hungary and Prague indicated that there were limits to the influence that the Soviet Union enjoyed as a result of hostile measures.
- Countervailing activities by the PRC also determined the efficacy of Soviet hostile measures.

## Using History as a Guide for Addressing Russian Hostile Measures Today

One clear observation from this historical review is that Russia's use of hostile measures is not new. Rather, for its entire existence, the Soviet Union employed a variety of hostile measures, both below and above the threshold of war, in pursuit of internal stability and foreign policy objectives. In the foreign interventions described here, the Soviet Union employed hostile measures in support of such goals as acquiring territory, expanding its political influence, strengthening its security posture, bolstering leftist movements abroad, countering Western influence, and asserting its role as a global superpower. The approaches that allowed the Soviets a degree of plausible deniability, along with the ability to apply multiple hostile measures at a time, are echoed in 21st-century Russian activities. In short, modern Russian hostile measures are well-developed tools for influence and coercion that have been honed over many decades, and, as discussed in the accompanying report, Western governments should expect and prepare for their future use.

The historical application of hostile measures also demonstrated a large degree of adaptability. Over time, their use was not uniform, nor were their observed effects always successful. Soviet leaders selected hostile measures in accordance with such factors as local dynamics, Soviet capabilities, broader foreign policy objectives (e.g., Cold War competition), and perceived risk of escalation. The regional dynamics east and southeast of the Soviet Union's historical sphere of influence made this a particularly important area for employing hostile measures. Historically, the Soviet Union made unique claims on this territory and on the interests of residents—for security reasons and in the interest of reinforcing real or imagined cultural bonds. This unique regional dynamic continues to animate Russian foreign policy. However, historically, the Soviets were not entirely successful in achieving their objectives, either in Eastern and Central Europe or in the other geographic regions considered here. It should go without saying these tools of statecraft operate in complex landscapes, and many factors contribute to outcomes. Parsing this complexity and drawing conclusions regarding the historical determinants of success would require a deeper dive into Soviet strategic intent, the details of engagement, and the outcomes of various interventions than was possible in this high-level historical review.

The transformative geopolitical changes ushered in by the end of the Cold War shifted the Russian Federation's sense of security and relationship to the West. At the same time, there has been significant continuity with the Cold War era in terms of the threats Russia perceives and the measures it leverages in response. With a diminished role in regional and global affairs, Russia has turned to familiar tools of statecraft, including hostile measures, to advance its interests. Like their Soviet predecessors, Russian leaders have argued that it is the *West*—not Russia—that has developed tools to influence, coerce, and otherwise meddle in foreign affairs.

However, it is also important to note that this continuity does not mean that the future will look exactly like the past. As geopolitical developments transform Russia's internal dynamics (socially, economically, and politically), the focus of its global commitments, and its perceptions of security and stability in its neighborhood, Russian leaders will look for tools of statecraft to effect desired end states. These changes will present challenges and opportunities for Russia and for those seeking to understand, deter, prevent, and counter them.





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