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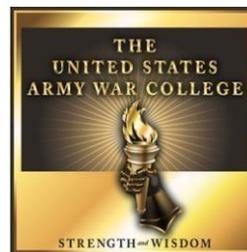
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Deterrence and Reassurance in the Baltics – A Balanced Approach

by

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Deterrence and Reassurance in the Baltics – A Balanced Approach

The RAND Corporation released a report in 2016 concluding that the Baltic States - Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania - could be overrun by a Russian Invasion in less than 60 hours.¹ The report was based on the results of extensive wargames and quantitative analysis. The Baltic States are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which affords protection under Article 5, NATO's collective defense provision. Failure to enforce Article 5 would have dramatic effects on the NATO alliance and U.S. interests in Europe. Russia possesses overwhelming advantages over the Baltic states as a function of geography and the build-up of forces in Russia's adjacent Western Military District.

The Baltic states are surrounded by the Russian mainland to the east, a Russian friendly Belarus to the south, and the Russian sovereign enclave of Kaliningrad to the west. Russia's geographical advantages are compounded by advanced Anti-Access Area Denial (A2/AD) capabilities in the region. Russia possesses a sophisticated Integrated Air Defense System and precision ballistic missiles and cruise missiles.² These capabilities and systems threaten to significantly slow NATO's response to potential Russian aggression in the Baltics, thus allowing Russia to consolidate its position. The relatively short distances from the Russian border to Baltic capitals further compounds this vulnerability.³

However, a relatively modest commitment of forces to the region could prove an effective strategy, according to various findings.⁴ One proposal involves stationing seven Brigade combat teams in the Baltics to include three Armored Brigades.⁵ NATO has recently begun to rotate forces into the Baltic Region to bolster a strategy of reassurance in the region, yet the Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) program, which

rotates four battalions consisting of roughly 4,000 troops, is argued by many to be insufficient.⁶ North Atlantic Treaty Organization's current rotational forces in the region essentially comprise a trip wire for follow-on NATO forces constrained by logistics and threatened by Russia's increasing A2AD capability. This leads several defense analysts to support permanently stationing forces in Eastern Europe.⁷ But the key question to ask is, how would Russia react to such a move? Would they be deterred, or would they escalate?

This paper uses Russia's Post-Cold War strategic documents and the chronology of Russia's post-Cold War turn away from the West to promote a more comprehensive understanding of the evolution of Russia's worldview and strategy. Such an understanding can then be helpful in shaping NATO's deterrence strategy against Russia in regard to the Baltics. It surveys the evolution of Russia's increasing antipathy toward the West. It finds that addressing the vulnerability of the Baltic States to Russian aggression presents risks of escalation. More important, without a clear picture of Russian views and intentions, the extent of escalation is compounded. Thus, deterrence in the Baltics must achieve a balance between presenting a credible commitment to the Article 5 requirements to defend the Baltic states while not escalating tensions in a manner that reinforces a security dilemma.

Russia and the Baltic States

Russian hardliners dispute the legitimacy of the independence of the Baltic States gained at the end of the Cold War.⁸ Yet some prominent analysts conclude that these are minority sentiments and that the Baltics are not at the forefront of Russia's strategy.⁹ Furthermore, the body of Russian strategic documents published since the end of the Cold War notably lack references to the Baltic states in Russia's interest

calculation.¹⁰ References to Georgia and Ukraine figure more prominently in strategic texts such as Russia's Foreign Policy Concept and National Security Strategy.¹¹ Russia's interests in the Black Sea and Caucasus regions are evident throughout the corpus of Russian strategic documents.¹² Particular focus is on Ukraine which was an integral part of the Soviet Union. Ukraine's capital, Kiev, was long considered the center of the Slavic world and Ukraine contained much of the most productive industrial regions in the former Soviet Union. Russia exhibits an attachment to Crimea where Catherine the Great staked imperial claim in the 18th century and where the Black Sea Fleet is stationed.¹³ Georgia, which was the home of Joseph Stalin, is similarly a former Soviet state in which Russia displays a historic attachment. The Black sea and Caucasus regions are important to Russia because of its requirement for warm water ports and for access to the oil rich Caspian Sea Basin.¹⁴ Georgia, and its neighbors in the Caucasus, contain vital overland routes to the land locked Caspian Sea.¹⁵

Conversely, the Baltics have historically been less tightly bound to Russia and have been a root of international controversy. As Peter Conradi writes, The Baltic states were "considered even during Soviet times as somewhat separate."¹⁶ The Baltic state's connection to the Soviet Union largely dates to World War II. The Baltics were occupied by the Soviet Union in 1940 following the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, known popularly as the "non-aggression pact" between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany.¹⁷ Germany occupied the Baltics during the war but were driven out in 1944. The United States and most western countries never recognized the legitimacy of Soviet annexation of the Baltic states.

However, since the end of the Cold War, the Baltics have been an increasingly become a target of Russian interference. Like other former Soviet states, Estonia and Latvia have sizable ethnic Russian populations.¹⁸ As these ethnic Russians found themselves divided from their homeland by a newly established international border, many retained Russian citizenship. Russia's strategic texts make significant references to the rights of Russian diaspora populations scattered across its periphery, and their willingness to defend them.¹⁹ Russian propaganda targets ethnic Russian sensitivities, sowing discord among these populations. For example, Russia exploits corruption in the Baltics states to discredit government legitimacy.²⁰ Russia is also establishing links between government officials and Russia's oligarchy further compromising government officials while increasing influence.²¹

Assessing Russia's Threat to the Baltics

Ongoing Russian interference in the Baltic states constitutes a threat to their democratically elected governments.²² Disinformation designed to stoke resentment among ethnic Russian minority populations promotes instability, particularly in Latvia where 27% of the population are ethnic Russians, and Russia maintains a significant foothold in the domestic economy.²³ Russia weaponizes corruption as a means of both discrediting and infiltrating the government.²⁴ Such interference represents a significant threat by Russian subversion below the threshold of armed conflict. Yet it remains unclear the extent to which Russia threatens the Baltics militarily, despite the overwhelming military and geographical advantages Russia possesses in the region.²⁵

An overt military intervention in the Baltics carries significant risks for Russia. The Baltic states are NATO members accorded Article 5 collective defense protection. The U.S. and its NATO allies are accordingly treaty bound to defend the Baltic states. This is

contrasted with Ukraine and Georgia whose bid to join NATO was essentially undermined by Russian incursions into their territory, according to Peter Conradi.²⁶ It remains unclear if Russia possesses such a strategic rationale for toppling the regimes in the Baltics. The assessment that Russia would be motivated to conduct a military intervention in the Baltics apparently assumes that permanently discrediting Article 5 and exploiting local military superiority might be sufficient cause. Yet while Russia possesses clear local advantages, NATO possesses far greater military capability in total.²⁷ There is increasing anxiety in NATO about Russia's A2/AD capability, which is significant, particularly when factoring the recent build-up in the Kaliningrad Oblast.²⁸ Yet Russia's strategic documents reflect a deep insecurity about NATO capabilities, particularly the U.S.'s precision global strike capability.²⁹ These documents reference the use of long range, strategic platforms for conventional purposes.³⁰ These concerns are coupled with concerns about the U.S.'s growing anti-ballistic missile capabilities.³¹ In sum, Russia views advanced U.S. capabilities as a significant threat and open conflict presents risks of escalation between nuclear powers.³²

Implications of NATO Posture Increases

North Atlantic Treaty Organization launched the EFP initiative in 2017 based on agreements made at the Warsaw Summit of 2016.³³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization has opted not to permanently station forces in the Baltics out of consideration for the NATO-Russia Founding Act based on concerns that Russia would view such a move as a violation of the spirit of the agreement. Yet the EFP force package is considerably more modest than the recommendations made by several research organizations based on force ratios seen as necessary to establish a credible deterrent.³⁴ The Russia-NATO Founding Act was negotiated in a manner that preserved latitude for stationing forces in

Eastern Europe given changes in the security environment.³⁵ The agreement was predicated on the relatively stable “current and foreseeable security environment” as it existed in 1997, which has eroded substantially since.³⁶ Russia’s aggressive incursions into Ukraine may arguably represent such a change thus opening the option of stationing forces in Eastern Europe while not violating the NATO-Russia founding act. Yet it is unlikely Russia will share this interpretation.

Nonetheless, many analysts conclude that NATO’s challenges in integrating disparate partners across a vast region coupled with Russia’s increasingly sophisticated A2/AD capabilities requires a substantial increase in NATO’s forward posture.³⁷ Overall, the analysis that concludes that NATO’s current posture is not credible focuses on operational level concerns, such as force ratios, force flow, command and control, and integration. All of these are important considerations but may not be the determining factor in the minds of the Russians – the target of the deterrence strategy.

Deterrence and Reassurance Concepts

Deterrence is the act of influencing an adversary to avoid its use of hostile action and thereby preventing conflict. This is normally accomplished by convincing an adversary that the costs of a hostile action outweigh the benefits.³⁸ When applied as a generic concept, deterrence can appear like an accounting transaction, where the costs of an action on one side of the ledger can cancel out the benefits on the other side of the ledger. Thus, a capability can be presented that neutralizes the offensive capability of the adversary. The assumption is that the adversary would then recognize the capabilities of the deterring force and choose another course. But this may lead to an assumption that decisions are made predominantly based on tactical, and operational military considerations. The decision-making apparatus of an adversary is far more

complex. The adversary is motivated by larger strategic considerations shaped by its overlying policy, national identity, and narrative.³⁹

The late Stanford political scientist Alexander George argued that a common pitfall in deterrence strategies is treating adversaries as “rational unitary actors” based on simplistic assumptions about how an adversary will behave.⁴⁰ Instead, George advocated employing “actor specific behavioral models” to better understand how to influence an adversary to produce a positive outcome.⁴¹ George’s approach seeks to understand how an adversary’s’ views and motivations impact behavior, and how effective deterrence operates within a broader framework of influence theory. George’s work emphasizes the role stakeholders play in the policy choices of adversary decision-making bodies. In sum, George advocates moving from a generic concept of deterrence based on generalized assumptions about the adversary to a more comprehensive strategy informed by a deeper understanding of adversary decision-making.⁴² Also, as George describes, an adversary is rarely a single actor with easily discernible logic, i.e., a “rational unitary actor.” When applying a generic concept of deterrence, a deterring party might form a pre-conceived logic of how the adversary should behave often derived through the process of mirror-imaging.⁴³ That is, a void in understanding in how the adversary makes decisions is filled by one’s self-derived image of rational decision making. Moving from these generic concepts of deterrence to a deterrence strategy thus requires a deep knowledge of the opponent’s views, and rationality informed by the context of the adversary’s culture and history.⁴⁴

Reassurance is also an important element of NATO’s strategy in the Baltics. Demonstrating a commitment to NATO Article 5 serves to both deter potential Russian

aggression and reassure U.S. allies that the commitment is credible. Reassurance is the act of affirming a commitment to an ally, often through the forward stationing of troops.⁴⁵ The EFP initiative is additive to the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) established in 2014, which includes a variety of security cooperation activities to reassure alliance partners in the region.⁴⁶ These initiatives underscore the centrality of reassurance in NATO's strategy. The ability to reassure the Baltic states of the credibility of NATO's security umbrella potentially has critical implications for the internal calculus of these States. The will of the Baltic states to resist Russian coercion may ultimately rest upon the credibility of NATO's commitment.

To balance deterrence and reassurance appropriately, it is thus necessary to comprehensively analyze Russia's worldview and intentions. Why such analysis is necessary is due to "path dependence," a phenomenon which drives decisions made in the present based on the history of institutional decisions.⁴⁷ In other words, the effects of past decisions shape our decision-making process in the present. Hence, the evolution of Russia's aggressive policies in their current form is best understood by addressing the key events and factors that have shaped Russia's perceptions.

The Evolution of Russian Views Since the Cold War

Since the end of the Cold War, Russia has grown increasingly cynical of U.S. and Western policies and institutions, and the overall strategic architecture it sees as favoring the West. Russia asserts that NATO has encroached onto its borders, while U.S. foreign policy violates the international norms that it purportedly supports.⁴⁸ Russia is increasingly insecure about its reduced stature and lost strategic depth, which refers to the buffer space Russia seeks to secure its heartland.⁴⁹ Accordingly, it has lashed out

in Georgia, and Ukraine, annexed Crimea, and played spoiler in the Middle East by intervening in Syria's Civil War.

The end of the Cold War was greeted with optimism in both East and West and ushered in an era in which cooperation replaced mutually assured destruction. Russia's Basic Provisions of the Military Doctrine, released in 1993, optimistically pronounced that "no state is an enemy" and that Russia's interests "in no way impinge on any other country."⁵⁰ Yet the 1990s brought Russia economic despair and humiliation in a period that coincided with unrivaled U.S. economic and military strength. The U.S. pledged economic support and a "new Marshall Plan," but the pain associated with economic "shock therapy" eclipsed goodwill for U.S. support, which ultimately fell short of expectations.⁵¹ President William J. Clinton maintained a strong personal relationship with Russian President Boris Yeltsin. When Yeltsin was challenged by hard lined communists in his 1996 reelection bid, the Clinton Administration felt compelled to support Yeltsin and Russia's fledgling democracy.⁵² That year Yeltsin became embroiled in the "loans for shares" scandal in which business elites allegedly provided loans to the government in exchange for shares of state owned assets transitioning to private ownership. The scheme is largely seen as the birth of the class of oligarchs that have since consolidated their dominance of the Russian economy.⁵³

The Yeltsin era marked a period of unprecedented cooperation on security matters between Russia and the West. In 1995 Russia contributed peacekeeping forces to "Operation Joint Endeavor" in Bosnia following the Dayton Peace Accords. Russia was admitted to NATO's Partnership for Peace program in 1993 and was increasingly integrated into NATO's decision-making process as codified in key provisions of the

NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997. Yet these cooperative efforts masked an evolving deep Russian cynicism by its elites and citizenry alike and a widening gulf between Russia and the West.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union left former Soviet states and Warsaw Pact members seeking integration into Western-led institutions. Many of these countries sought admittance into NATO. The Partnership for Peace program was viewed as a track for admittance into the alliance. But in Russia's case, the idea of joining NATO was greeted with skepticism by the West.⁵⁴ This left Russia's elites questioning the purpose of a military alliance that excluded them, but not its neighbors and former clients that had previously afforded the Soviet Union a strategic buffer zone. Yeltsin ultimately acquiesced on contentious disputes over NATO expansion given Western assurances that the alliance posed no threat to Russia. According to Robert English, this accommodation was greeted cynically by the Russian populace who increasingly viewed Yeltsin as a corrupt pawn of the U.S. and President Clinton.⁵⁵ Relations suffered as Russians began to view the relationship as means for the U.S. to advance its dominant position in global affairs. As Fritz Ermarth quipped, "think how [U.S. policy] must look to Russians: you support the regime's corruption on the inside, so it supports you in the humiliation of our country on the outside."⁵⁶ By 1995, both the rise of internal opposition Russian politics and the decline of Yeltsin's health, which led to heart surgery in 1996, combined to likely weaken his power over elites and increase cynicism in others. This pessimism made its way into official strategic documents that began to reflect Russia's dissatisfaction with the post-Cold War security architecture. According to Russia's National Security Concept of 1997, the first half of the decade represented a

period in which “Russia’s influence on the solution of cardinal problems of international life, which affect the interests of this country, was perceptibly reduced. In these conditions the desire of some countries to undermine Russia’s positions in the political, economic and military spheres was intensified.”⁵⁷

The Turning Point?

As time progressed, Russia’s relationship with the West took a tumultuous turn in 1999. Russia had emerged from an economic crisis in 1998 with a deepening sense of distrust for Western led economic and security institutions. When NATO intervened in the conflict in Kosovo with an offensive air campaign against Serbia, Russians sympathized with their former client, and bemoaned their government’s inability to aid their fellow Slavs.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, 1999 also marked the first wave of NATO accessions as Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic formally joined the alliance.

Vladimir Putin’s ascendancy in 2000 marked a brief thaw in the relationship. Despite aloof engagements with President Clinton, Putin formed a strong personal relationship with President George W. Bush after his inauguration in 2001.⁵⁹ Bush famously emerged from his first summit with Putin claiming to having gotten a “sense of his soul.”⁶⁰ Putin was the first leader to call President Bush after the September 11th attacks on the U.S. in 2001 and provided support to the U.S. coalition in Afghanistan. But Bush’s rapport with Putin would ultimately fail to contain simmering disputes between Russia and the U.S.⁶¹

In 2002, the U.S. abrogated the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty to counter growing ballistic missile threats from rogue regimes.⁶² Putin publicly brushed off the severity of the row, but Russia’s security establishment viewed U.S. efforts to employ missile defense as a significant threat.⁶³ The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 further stoked

Russia's increasing cynicism towards America. Russia opposed the invasion, like many other nations, but was particularly incensed by the use of regime change as a means of promoting democracy.⁶⁴ As the U.S. became increasingly distracted by the chaos in Iraq, and U.S. foreign policy increasingly focused on democracy promotion, three political revolutions burst to the scene in Russia's periphery.

The so called "color revolutions" of 2004-2005 were yet another source of contention in the relations between Russia and West. First, the "Rose Revolution" began in late 2003 with peaceful protests against the rule Georgia's President Eduard Shevardnadze. Shevardnadze had served previously as the Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union and played a vital role U.S.- Soviet collaboration during the Persian Gulf War in 1991. The U.S. flexed its diplomatic muscle by flying former U.S Secretary of State Howard Baker to Tbilisi to convince Shevardnadze to resign power in 2004.⁶⁵ Second, the "Orange Revolution" erupted later that year in Ukraine as protests emerged amid accusations of electoral fraud in favor of Viktor Yanukovich – Moscow's favored candidate. The protests ultimately yielded the annulment of the election and a subsequent run-off which elected Yushchenko, the pro-Western candidate. Third, the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan in early 2005 ended the rule of another Moscow favored leader, Askar Akayev, who fled to Moscow amid protests over corruption and authoritarianism. Moscow loathed the Color Revolutions because they removed three friendly regimes from former Soviet States in its immediate periphery. This antipathy was compounded by the second wave of NATO accessions in 2004 which included the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as well as Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

Heightened Insecurity

Russia has a history of insecurity stemming from its vulnerability as a country situated primarily on an open plain that has brought invaders to its heartland.⁶⁶ These invaders have included the Mongols, the Swedes, Napoleon, and Nazi Germany. As Russia recovered from the Mongol invasion in the 15th Century it began a period of expansion where it accumulated territory then rationalized further expansion based on the need to provide a buffer space for its newly acquired territory.⁶⁷ George Kennan famously reflected on this historical sense of insecurity and its impact on Russian behavior in the “Long Telegram.”⁶⁸ During the Cold War, satellite states and an expansive Soviet state provided a strategic depth seen as necessary for security.⁶⁹ In 2004 and 2005, Russia saw its historic buffer zone inundated with pro-Western revolutions and accessions to NATO. From a Russian perspective, the Color Revolutions represented subversion instigated by the West.⁷⁰ This sentiment further tainted the Russian perception of NATO expansion, which was viewed increasingly cynically. Western assurances that NATO posed no threat to Russia had lost credibility.

Russia’s turn away from the West thus became increasingly evident during the mid-2000s. The first aspect of this was the need for a national vision for stemming the tide of the West’s advance. From a Russian perspective, the post-Cold War architecture had failed to respect its interests. The fundamental problem was the loss of great power status, which had to be reversed. Accordingly, in 2004 Russia’s National Strategy Counsel called for a “Great Russia Plan” to serve as a road map to national revitalization.⁷¹ This established the vision for a return to great power status. Reflecting in this period, Dmitri Trenin wrote in 2006, “Until recently, Russia saw itself as Pluto in the Western solar system, very far from the center but still fundamentally part of it...Now

it has a new orbit entirely: Russia's leaders have given up on becoming part of the West and have started creating their own Moscow-centered system."⁷²

A Desire to Reframe the World Order

Putin famously lashed out at the Munich Security Conference in 2007.⁷³ Western leaders were shocked by Putin's hostility toward U.S. foreign policy and a world order he argued was distorted by U.S. hegemony. Putin stated that, "The United States has overstepped its borders in all sphere – economic, political, and humanitarian – and has imposed itself on other states."⁷⁴ Another round of NATO enlargement occurred in early 2008, as Croatia and Albania were invited to join NATO. Later that year Russia intervened militarily in Georgia in support of the pro-Russian break away provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, both of which were home to ethnic Russian majorities. By this time Russia's strategic documents fully reflected the break from the West. The economic crisis of 2008 had revealed structural flaws in the U.S. led international economic order, which emboldened Russia in its desire to reframe the international order in its favor.⁷⁵ According to Russia's 2008 Foreign Policy Concept:

The reaction to the prospect of loss by the historic West of its monopoly in global processes finds its expression, in particular, in the continued political and psychological policy of "containing" Russia...

The unilateral action strategy leads to destabilization of international situation, provokes tensions and arms race, exacerbates interstate differences, stirs up ethnic and religious strife, endangers security of other States and fuels tensions in inter-civilizational relations. Coercive measures with the use of military force in circumvention of the UN Charter and Security Council cannot overcome deep social, economic, ethnic and other differences underlying conflicts, undermines the basic principles of international law and leads to enlargement of conflict space, including in the geopolitical area around Russia.⁷⁶

Relations would further decline in the face of the 2011 protests of the so-called "Arab Spring." The protests led to regime change in several autocratic countries in the

Middle East to include: Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. The NATO-led military operation in support of the opposition in Libya particularly incensed Putin, who was purportedly obsessed with the video images of Muammar Gadhafi's violent death.⁷⁷ Once again, Russia viewed the events in the Arab Spring as the extension of Western interference. This aversion to political revolutions is deeply rooted in the images of the collapse of the Soviet Union, which had deeply affected Putin, who served as a KGB officer in East Germany in 1989 during the fall of the Berlin Wall.⁷⁸ The deep sense that such revolutions threatened the Russian regime itself would become evident when they emerged again in Russia's periphery.⁷⁹

Anti-Russian protests erupted in the Maidan square in Kiev in late 2013 against Ukraine's President Viktor Yanukovich's decision to reverse course from an impending trade deal with the European Union (EU) and instead sign a pact from Moscow. The protests centered on corruption and the perception that Putin had strong armed Yanukovich into turning away from the EU. The protests succeeded in toppling Yanukovich, who fled the country. Russia depicted the so called "Maidan Revolution" as a coup d'état instigated by the U.S. and the West. Russia's perspective was articulated by former FSB director, Nikolai Patrushev, who said in a 2014 interview with the Guardian, "the Ukraine crisis was a totally predictable outcome of the actions of the US and its closest allies." He went on to assert:

A whole generation of Ukrainians [have been] brought up to hate Russia and believe in the mythology of 'European values'. For the last quarter of a century, these actions were designed to wrest Ukraine and other former Soviet republics away from Russia and to redesign the post-Soviet space in America's interests. The US created the conditions and pretexts for the colored revolutions and financed them lavishly.⁸⁰

The belief that the West orchestrates political subversion in Russia's periphery is deeply imbedded in the world view of Russia's leadership. The Russian 2015 National Security Strategy later reflected on events in Ukraine:

The support of the United States and the European Union for the anti-constitutional coup d'état in Ukraine led to a deep split in Ukrainian society and the emergence of an armed conflict. The strengthening of far-right nationalist ideology, the deliberate shaping in the Ukrainian population of an image of Russia as an enemy, the undisguised gamble on the forcible resolution of intrastate contradictions, and the deep socioeconomic crisis are turning Ukraine into a chronic set of instability in Europe and in the immediate vicinity of Russia's borders.⁸¹

In 2014 Russia annexed Crimea after stoking ethnic Russian resistance to Kiev and infiltrating Crimea with undercover military forces, or so called "little green men."⁸² Crimea was home to the Black Sea fleet which had previously been split between Russia and Ukraine. These tactics would be repeated in Eastern Ukraine in the Donbass region. Again, Russian propaganda fed disinformation that targeted ethnic Russian populations in eastern Ukraine.⁸³ Russia provided direct military support to separatist forces and deployed its own forces to the conflict, according to Peter Conradi.⁸⁴ Both these incursions served to remove Ukraine from consideration for NATO membership.⁸⁵ In 2015, Russia would intervene in Syria to defend the Assad regime and challenge the U.S.'s role in shaping Middle Eastern security. In 2016, accusations were made by the U.S. of Russian political interference in the U.S election and accusations of collusion between the Putin regime and the campaign of Donald Trump.⁸⁶

Present Day Tensions

This history led to a resurgent Russia that has played spoiler to the U.S. led international order. Russia sees this role as the alternative to weakness in a U.S.

dominated system defined by Western policies that will fan the flames of democratic revolution, which may ultimately threaten the Russian regime itself. The 2014 Russian Military Doctrine tellingly highlighted Russia's deep insecurity and sense of regime vulnerability, and protesting the:

Establishment of regimes, which policies threaten the interests of the Russian Federation in the states contiguous with the Russian Federation, including by overthrowing legitimate state administration bodies;

...activities aimed at changing by force the constitutional system of the Russian Federation; destabilizing domestic political and social situation in the country; disrupting the functioning of state administration bodies, important state and military facilities, and information infrastructure of the Russian Federation;

...subversive information activities against the population, especially young citizens of the State, aimed at undermining historical, spiritual and patriotic traditions related to the defense of the Motherland.⁸⁷

It is against this backdrop that NATO must assess its deterrence options in the Baltics. A cynical Russian regime, preoccupied by a sense of encirclement, and haunted by the images of popular protests toppling friendly regimes, will likely behave in a manner that defies Western expectations. Revanchist Russia has made gains primarily below the threshold of conventional conflict contesting what it sees as a U.S. dominated world order.

Informed Choices

The tendency to ignore Russia's path-dependency, its larger worldview, and sense of encirclement represents a key pitfall in Western deterrence thinking. A generalized concept for deterrence – in George's vernacular - assumes that Russia will respond to the increased force posture as intended, which is often based on a mirror image of one's decision-making rationale.⁸⁸ For example, according to this view, more forces in Eastern Europe increases the costs of an attempt to topple the Baltic regimes

thereby buying down the risk of such aggressive behavior.⁸⁹ This view assumes that Russia's focus is offensive, similar to how U.S. planners might think about a foreign contingency without necessarily considering threats to a homeland that enjoys the protection of two oceans and friendly neighbors. Russian decision-makers have an entirely different mindset based on a historic sense of vulnerability reinforced by recurring invasions of its heartland. It was this insecurity that drove interventions in Georgia, Crimea, and Ukraine – all designed to halt the expansion of NATO and the E.U. to its borders.⁹⁰ Thus, an effective strategy for deterrence should consider the lens through which Russian decision makers will likely interpret actions: a cynical, primarily defensive oriented mind-set that prioritizes strategic depth.

Russia may also interpret an increased NATO footprint on its border as not just a military threat, but a political threat as well. Russian leaders are conditioned to think that Western forces are conspiring to undermine their regime – that democracy promotion presents a persistent threat to the Russian state.⁹¹ This further reinforces Russia's tendency to apply a mirror image of its adversary. Russian leaders see their focus on influence campaigns as a standard practice, particularly by the United States who they see as fomenting popular revolutions around the world (e.g., the Arab Spring, and the Maidan protests in Ukraine).

Countering Russia's activities below the threshold of conflict - which is sometimes referred as "hybrid warfare" or "gray zone operations" and often attributed to the so called "Gerasimov doctrine" – would likely include a host of non-military activities.⁹² This may include technical assistance to root out corruption, economic assistance, increased cyber capacity, and judicial reform. All such efforts may be

necessary in the Baltics to reform institutions in order to resist Russian subversion. But when coupled with an increased military posture, these efforts in their totality may reinforce a Russian sense of encirclement, and paranoia about Western efforts to undermine the Russian regime.⁹³

Stationing large numbers of NATO and Russian forces near one another also presents risks of miscalculation. Able Archer 83, the codename for a NATO command post exercise in 1983 based on a hypothetical Soviet nuclear strike, is perhaps the best example of how miscalculation can occur when adversaries misunderstand each other's intentions. Soviet intelligence intercepted the exercise role play and perceived an imminent nuclear attack by NATO, despite clear disclaimers that it was only an exercise.⁹⁴ Soviet forces began preparing to launch nuclear missiles at U.S. and NATO targets. Analysis of the root cause of this near nuclear calamity focused on Soviet paranoia about the West's intentions predicated on a history of invasion. NATO leader's failed to understand this mindset and underestimated the extent to which the Soviets believed that the West would attack them in a preemptive nuclear strike.⁹⁵

Striking a Balance

These memories are highly relevant in today's context where a balanced approach is needed. The most prominent risk in the present day may be that Russia will be drawn into prioritizing the Baltics as the object of their strategy. The Baltics have not been the centerpiece of Russia's current strategic focus, but NATO's sense of inferiority on its Eastern flank runs the risk of a self-fulfilling prophecy.⁹⁶ Russia may feel threatened from the West and reprioritize their interests to focus on the Baltics. This is a region where Russia possesses local advantages and a climate of mutual escalation will likely reinforce these advantages.

The current rotational forces under the EFP program, a program consistent with a strategy of reassurance, represent a prudent balance between the need to credibly demonstrate resolve and the need to avoid provoking Russia in a region where it naturally enjoys advantages as a function of geography. To ensure a comprehensive, and effective deterrence strategy, diplomacy is needed to make concerns transparent and negotiate mutually acceptable actions. As such, NATO leadership must focus on Russia's world view rooted in insecurity, and sense of encirclement.⁹⁷ Thus, employing a strategy that emphasizes reassurance will make the best use of the military use of force. Russia will likely continue to play spoiler in world affairs, but it is most likely to cross the threshold of open conflict when it feels threatened and encircled.

Conclusion

Russia and the West are increasingly becoming locked in a security dilemma. Mutual distrust and misunderstanding of each other's motivations has led to mutual insecurity about each other. The Baltic states may become the primary object of competition based on a mutually flawed projection of each sides world view onto the other party. Russia is portrayed as an offensive threat to the security of NATO when its approach to NATO appears to be primarily defensive, as Russia's aggression in Crimea and Ukraine were primarily motivated to halt NATO and the E.U.'s march east. It remains possible that the Baltics could be targeted absent a clear demonstration of resolve and commitment to Article 5; but a conventional incursion is fraught with risks to Russia that includes a highly destructive military conflict that may devastate its already weak economy and risk a nuclear confrontation with the U.S. In sum, the calls for a large military footprint in Eastern Europe are based on tactical and operational level considerations at the expense of a strategic level assessment of Russian motivations.

Endnotes

¹ David A. Shlapak, and Michael Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1253.html (accessed March 1, 2018).

² Curtis M. Scaparrotti, Commander, U.S. European Command, *Statement of Commander, United States European Command before the Senate Armed Services Committee*. 115th Cong., 1st sess., March 23, 2017.

³ Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, is 200 kilometers from the Russian Border. Riga, the capital Latvia is approximately 210-275 kilometers from the Russian border, depending on the route. See Shlapak and Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank*, 3.

⁴ Most notably RAND's proposals following the wargame series it hosted, but other similar proposals are addressed in this paper. See Shlapak and Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank*.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Judy Dempsey, "NATO's Eastern Flank and Its Future Relationship with Russia," October 23, 2017, linked from the *Carnegie Europe Home Page*, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/2017/10/23/nato-s-eastern-flank-and-its-future-relationship-with-russia-pub-73499> (accessed March 1, 2018).

⁷ Bryan Frederick et al., assess five proposals that exceed the EFP force levels: a 2016 RAND study, a 2015 RAND study, a CSIS report, Atlantic Council recommendations, and an Army War College paper. See Bryan Frederick et al., *Assessing Russian Reactions to U.S. and NATO Posture Enhancements* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), 74, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1879.html (accessed March 1, 2018). These proposals generally reflect what is referred to as the "deterrence by denial approach," in which the costs of responding after a Russian invasion, and likely annexation of the Baltic states, are deemed too high. See Dempsey, "NATO's Eastern Flank and Its Future Relationship with Russia."

⁸ The Russian Prosecutor General's Office began investigating the legitimacy of Baltic independence in 2015. See Per Olaf Salming, "Kremlin Investigating Legitimacy of Baltic Independence," June 30, 2015, linked from the *Up North – the Northern European Home Page*, <https://upnorth.eu/kremlin-investigating-legitimacy-of-baltic-independence/> (accessed March 1, 2018).

⁹ A RAND report published in 2017 assessing likely Russian reaction to proposed force posture adjustments in the Baltics found little emphasis on the Baltics as an object of Russian strategy. See Frederick et al., *Assessing Russian Reactions to U.S.*, 74. Another RAND report, *Russia's View of the International Order*, similarly found that Russia no longer views the Baltics as part of the "near abroad," which is defined as the areas on Russia's periphery where it seeks "the most direct influence and control." The report referenced consultation between Russian and

U.S. security analysts in 2016 as supporting evidence for this assessment. Consultation between U.S. and Russian security experts that formed these conclusions is listed described in a footnote of the RAND report. See Andrew Radin and Clinton Bruce Reach, *Russian Views of the International Order* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), 10, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1577.html (accessed March 1, 2018).

¹⁰ This includes the author's research of Russian strategy documents in the post-Cold War era. See Russian Federation, *The National Security Strategy* (Moscow: Kremlin, December 31, 2015).

¹¹ The conclusions by RAND addressed here cite an analysis of Russia's strategic text. The research for this paper includes the assessment of these primary sources which do not indicate a focus on the Baltics at a level of intensity comparable to other issues, such as Ukraine or Georgia. See Radin and Reach, *Russian Views of the International Order*, 10.

¹² Frederick et al. *Assessing Russian Reactions to U.S.*, 74.

¹³ Arkady Ostrovsky, *The Invention of Russia: The Rise of Putin and the Age of Fake News* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 143.

¹⁴ R. Craig Nation, *Russia, The United States, and the Caucasus* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, February 2007), 9-14.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13-15.

¹⁶ Peter Conradi, *Who Lost Russia?: How the world entered a New Cold War* (London: One World Publications, 2017), location 5774. Kindle e-book.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Location 645.

¹⁸ Pranas Ciziunas, "Russia and the Baltic States: Is Russian Imperialism Dead?" *Comparative Strategy Online* 27, no. 3 (July 25, 2008): 291, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01495930802185692> (accessed April 30, 2018).

¹⁹ The 2014 Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation explicitly cites the defense of Russian citizens living outside the confines of the Russian Federation as a legitimate cause for the employment of military forces. See Vladimir Putin, *The 2014 Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation* (Moscow: Kremlin, December 26, 2014), 6, <https://www.offiziere.ch/wp-content/uploads-001/2015/08/Russia-s-2014-Military-Doctrine.pdf> (accessed April 30, 2018).

²⁰ Heather A. Conley et al., *The Kremlin Playbook: Understanding Russian Influence in Central and Eastern Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 2016), 17-22, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/1601017_Conley_KremlinPlaybook_Web.pdf (accessed April 30, 2018).

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Andre Radin, *Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics: Threats and Potential Responses* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), 1-3, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1577.html (accessed March 1, 2018).

²³ Ibid., 14.

²⁴ Conley et al., *The Kremlin Playbook*, XIII.

²⁵ Catherine Harris and Frederick Kagan similarly conclude that Russia's threat to the Baltics would take the form of a "hybrid-war approach [rather] than to launch a conventional mechanized invasion." See Catherine Harris and Frederick W. Kagan, *Russia's Military Posture: Ground Forces Order of Battle* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, March 2018), 17.

²⁶ Conradi, *Who Lost Russia?:* Location 5,248.

²⁷ Frederick et al., *Assessing Russian Reactions*, 2.

²⁸ Scaparrotti, *Statement of Commander, United States European Command*.

²⁹ The Embassy of the Russian Federation to the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, "The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation - Press Release No. PR.-2976," June 29, 2015, linked from *The Embassy of the Russian Federation to the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland Home Page*, <https://rusemb.org.uk/press/2029> (accessed April 30, 2018).

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ The analysis of Russia's strategic texts conducted for this research project has revealed a consistent anxiety among Russian policy-makers about ballistic missile defense. See The Embassy of the Russian Federation to the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, "The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation." Russia is particularly concerned about the Aegis system. For context see Kris Osborn, "Why Russia and China Should Fear America's New SM-3 Missile," *The National Interest Online*, February 21, 2017, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/why-russia-china-should-fear-americas-new-sm-3-missile-think-19517> (accessed March 1, 2018).

³² President of Russia, *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation* (Moscow: Kremlin, November 30, 2016).

³³ This involves the rotation of NATO forces through Baltic states consisting of ~4,000 troops from four battalions. See Mathieu Boulegue, "The Russia-NATO Relationship Between a Rock and a Hard Place: How the Defensive Inferiority Syndrome' is Increasing the Potential for Error," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies Online* 30, no. 3 (July 25, 2017): 2017, 368.

³⁴ Frederick et al., assess five proposals that exceed the EFP force levels: a 2016 RAND study, a 2015 RAND study, a CSIS report, Atlantic Council recommendations, and an Army War College paper. The recommendations contained within these reports focus on operational level challenges and focus little on strategic level assessments of likely Russian responses. See Frederick et al., *Assessing Russian Reactions*, 7. These proposals generally reflect what is referred to as the "deterrence by denial approach," in which the costs of responding after a Russian invasion, and likely annexation of the Baltic states, are deemed too high. See Dempsey, "NATO's Eastern Flank and Its Future Relationship with Russia."

³⁵ Luke Coffey and Daniel Kochis, *The 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act Does Not Prohibit Permanent NATO Bases in Eastern Europe* (Washington, DC: The Heritage Foundation, April

29, 2016), <http://www.heritage.org/europe/report/the-1997-nato-russia-founding-act-does-not-prohibit-permanent-nato-bases-eastern> (accessed March 1, 2018).

³⁶ Conradi, *Who Lost Russia?* Location 5,761.

³⁷ Martin Zapfe and Michael Carl Haas, "Access for Allies: NATO, Russia, and the Baltics," *RUSI Journal Online* 161, no. 3 (June 22, 2016): 34-41, <https://rusi.org/publication/rusi-journal/access-allies-nato-russia-and-baltics> (accessed April 30, 2018).

³⁸ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, Joint Publication 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, March 25, 2013 (Incorporating Change 1, July 12, 2017)), I-11.

³⁹ Alexander L. George, *The Need for Influence Theory and Actor-Specific Behavioral Models of Adversaries* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, July 15, 2010), 464.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, 482.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 479.

⁴⁴ Robert Jervis's work, *War and Misperception*, provides a detailed account of the complications and consequences that can arise from a misperception of an adversary. See Robert Jervis, "War and Misperception," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History Online* 18, no. 4 (Spring, 1988): 195-210, in [JSTOR](#) (accessed April 30, 2018).

⁴⁵ John F. Troxel, "Military Power and the Use of Force," in *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Policy and Strategy*, 2nd ed., ed. J. Boone Bartholomees, Jr. (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, June 2006), 8.

⁴⁶ Boulegue, "The Russia-NATO Relationship Between a Rock and a Hard Place."

⁴⁷ Douglass C. North, "Institutions," *Journal of Economic Perspectives Online* 5, no. 1 (Winter, 1992): 97-112, in [JSTOR](#) (accessed April 30, 2018).

⁴⁸ Russian Federation, *The National Security Strategy*.

⁴⁹ Conradi, *Who Lost Russia?* Location 3486-3495.

⁵⁰ Vladimir Putin, *The Basic Provisions of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation* (Moscow: Kremlin, November 2, 1993), <https://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/russia-mil-doc.html> (accessed April 30, 2018).

⁵¹ Robert D. English, "Russia, Trump, and New Détente – Fixing U.S.-Russian Relations," *Foreign Affairs Online*, March 10, 2017, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/2017-03-10/russia-trump-and-new-d-tente> (accessed March 1, 2018).

⁵² Arkady Ostrovsky, *The Invention of Russia: The Rise of Putin and the Age of Fake News* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 201-202.

⁵³ English, “Russia, Trump, and a New Détente – Fixing U.S.-Russian Relations.”

⁵⁴ Conradi, *Who Lost Russia?*: Location 2,474-2,483.

⁵⁵ English, “Russia, Trump, and New Détente – Fixing U.S.-Russian Relations.”

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ President of Russia, *The National Security Concept*, Moscow.

⁵⁸ Conradi, *Who Lost Russia?*: Location 1,905-2,109.

⁵⁹ Ibid., Location 2,578.

⁶⁰ Ibid., Location 3,218-3,459.

⁶¹ Ibid., Location 2,733-3,031.

⁶² Ibid., Location 2,694-2,703.

⁶³ Russia’s strategic documents would highlight the abrogation of the treaty as evidence of U.S. malfeasance. See Russian Federation, *National Military Doctrine* (Moscow: Kremlin, December 26, 2014). Putin’s reaction at the time was measured as both Bush and Putin were apparently attempting to establish a positive relationship with one another. See Terrence Neilan, “Bush Pulls Out of ABM Treaty; Putin Calls Move a Mistake,” *New York Times Online*, December 13, 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/12/13/international/bush-pulls-out-of-abm-treaty-putin-calls-move-a-mistake.html> (accessed March 1, 2018).

⁶⁴ Conradi, *Who Lost Russia?* Location 3,441.

⁶⁵ Ibid., Location 3,284.

⁶⁶ Ibid., Location 486-495.

⁶⁷ Anders Aslund and Andrew Kuchins, *The Russia Balance Sheet* (Washington, D.C.: The Peterson Institute of International Economics and Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2008), 12.

⁶⁸ George F. Kennan, “Long Telegram,” telegram to Secretary of State, Washington, DC, February 22, 1946, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/index.php?documentid=6-6&pagenumber=1 (accessed April 30, 2018); X (George F. Kennan), “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs Online* 25, no. 4 (July 1947): 566-582, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/1947-07-01/sources-soviet-conduct> (accessed April 30, 2018).

⁶⁹ Conradi, *Who Lost Russia?* Location 486-495.

⁷⁰ See Julia Ioffe, “What Putin Really Wants” *The Atlantic Online*, January 2018. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/01/putins-game/546548/> (accessed March 1, 2018). Also see comments by Nikolai Patrushev “Ukraine Crisis – The View From Russia,”

The Guardian Online, October 25, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/24/sp-ukraine-russia-cold-war> (accessed March 1, 2018).

⁷¹ Russian National Strategy Council, *A National Strategy and Agenda for Vladimir Putin's Second Term* (Moscow: Kremlin, January 12, 2004).

⁷² Conradi, *Who Lost Russia?* Location 3,595.

⁷³ Ioffe, "What Putin Really Wants."

⁷⁴ Conradi, *Who Lost Russia?* Location 3,467.

⁷⁵ According to the 2013 Russian Federation Foreign Policy Concept, "The abilities of the historical West to dominate the world's economy and politics continue to shrink. The global potential for strength and development is becoming decentralized and shifting toward the East, primarily toward the Asia-Pacific region." See Russian Foreign Ministry, *Russian Federation Foreign Policy Concept* (Moscow: Kremlin, February 12, 2013).

⁷⁶ President of Russia, *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*.

⁷⁷ Ioffe, "What Putin Really Wants."

⁷⁸ Ibid

⁷⁹ The "near abroad" applies to Russia's historic sphere of influence as described in their strategic documents. Ukraine is central to such a sphere of influence as Kiev is a historic home to the Slavs.

⁸⁰ See comments by Patrushev "Ukraine Crisis – The View From Russia."

⁸¹ Russian Federation, *The National Security Strategy*.

⁸² Conradi, *Who Lost Russia?* Location 5,055.

⁸³ Ibid., Location 5,135.

⁸⁴ Ibid., Location 4,998 – 5,195.

⁸⁵ Peter Conradi's assesses that Russia's incursions into Georgia, and Ukraine (to include Crimea, and the Donbass region) served to remove these countries from prospective NATO membership. See Conradi, *Who Lost Russia?*: Locations 3,937, 5,248.

⁸⁶ Ibid., Location 5,949-6,196.

⁸⁷ Russian Federation, *National Military Doctrine*.

⁸⁸ See Colin Powell, "A Strategy of Partnership." *Hampton Roads International Security Quarterly* (Jan 15, 2004): 5-10. Also see Alexander L. George, *The Need for Influence Theory and Actor-Specific Behavioral Models of Adversaries* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, July 15, 2010), 479.

⁸⁹ This is also referred to as the “deterrence by denial approach,” in which the costs of responding after a Russian invasion, and likely annexation of the Baltic states, are deemed to high. See Dempsey, “NATO’s Eastern Flank and Its Future Relationship with Russia.”

⁹⁰ This was a key conclusion in Peter Conradi’s work. See Conradi, *Who Lost Russia?*

⁹¹ The evidence of this mindset exists in the body of Russian strategic documents published since Putin’s ascendance to power. For example, see Dmitry Gorenburg, “Moscow Conference on International Security 2015, Part 2: Gerasimov on Military Threats Facing Russia,” May 4, 2015, linked from the *Word Press Home Page* at “Russian Military Reform,” <https://russiamil.wordpress.com/2015/05/04/moscow-conference-on-international-security-2015-part-2-gerasimov-on-military-threats-facing-russia/> (accessed April 30, 2018).

⁹² See Andre Radin, *Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics: Threats and Potential Responses* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), 5-7, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1577.html (accessed March 1, 2018). Also see Michael J. Mazarr, “Struggle in the Gray Zone and World Order,” December 22, 2015, linked from the *War on the Rocks Home Page*, <https://warontherocks.com/2015/12/struggle-in-the-gray-zone-and-world-order/> (accessed April 30, 2018).

⁹³ This may also represent another aspect of mirror imaging when considering the role the Western Military District plays in influencing Russia’s near abroad, to include the Baltic states. See Catherine Harris and Frederick W/ Kagan, *Russia’s Military Posture: Ground Forces Order of Battle* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, March 2018), 12.

⁹⁴ Jamie Doward, “How a NATO Wargame Took the World to the Brink of Nuclear Disaster,” *The Guardian Online*, November 2, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/nov/02/nato-war-game-nuclear-disaster> (accessed March 1, 2018).

⁹⁵ In addition, a false alarm occurred in the months prior to the exercise. It was only by surreptitious luck that Soviet officers, on duty in Moscow at the time of exercise, cast doubt on the veracity of a supposed massive U.S. nuclear missile launch against the Soviet Union, thereby averting a catastrophic miscalculation. See President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, *The Soviet ‘War Scare* (Washington, DC: President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, February 15, 1990). NOTE: Declassified and redacted, 2012.

⁹⁶ Mathieu Bouleque argues that NATO’s eastern flank strategy is plagued by an inferiority complex. See Bouleque, “The Russia-NATO Relationship Between a Rock and a Hard Place.”

⁹⁷ Net assessment provides a methodology for integrating the likely choices of the adversary within strategic decision-making. See Paul Bracken, “Net Assessment: a Practical Guide,” *Parameters* (Spring 1990): 90-100, <http://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/parameters/Articles/06spring/bracken.pdf> (accessed March 21, 2018).