

AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

**“TO WAGE PEACE VIGOROUSLY”
THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION’S IMPERATIVE TO
INTERVENE IN UKRAINE**

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The End of History?

In 1989, political scientist Francis Fukuyama celebrated the victory of liberal-democratic ideology over Soviet Communism by exclaiming an “end to history.” In his now infamous declaration, Fukuyama contended that the end of the Cold War symbolized not only the end of an era, but also “the end of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of the Western liberal democracy as the final form of government.”¹ Although he argued the world would still see war, Fukuyama claimed that the emergence of a liberal world order rendered conflict conducted by large states a phenomenon of the past.² Unfortunately, his predictions did not account for the remnant pangs of realpolitik that characterizes the current relationship between Russia and the West. In just the past few years, Russia has once again emerged as a geopolitical foe to the liberal world order, challenging the norms established after World War II, and then again reaffirmed at the end of the Cold War. The latest conquests in the Crimea and Eastern Ukraine reveal that Russia is no longer willing to play by the rules, requiring liberal institutions like the United Nations (UN) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to reestablish a semblance of order and stability for the sake of global peace.

Initially created after World War II to stabilize Europe, NATO evolved over the subsequent 66 years, transforming from an alliance solely dedicated to collective defense, to one willing to intervene outside of its member states in the name of collective security. However, despite NATO’s successes in operations outside of Western Europe, including those in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Libya, it has not effectively adapted to the emerging strategic landscape of the 21st century. The Russian adversary of the new millennium no longer wishes to contest the West directly, but leverages information, technology, economic coercion, and covert operations to accomplish its goals asymmetrically. Fought under the nom de guerre of hybrid

warfare, this multidimensional and cross-domain operational concept has already had an impact on the strategic landscape of Europe, and threatens to undermine the principles that made NATO so powerful during the Cold War.

Contrary to Fukuyama's hypothesis, Russia has not accepted the Western-led international order, and has recently challenged the international status quo through its aggressive activities. President Vladimir Putin has led Russian efforts over the past decade to reassert dominance in former Soviet states through the use of propaganda and economic blackmail. In addition, he has openly challenged NATO and European Union (EU) influence in countries like Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, even conducting military operations in violation of international law. In a well-calculated series of escalations over the past several years, Putin has worked to counter Western influence through covert and overt acts operations in former Soviet states. Hard-won stability has now faded into a slow-moving upset of the European status quo, culminating within the last year by the illegal and egregious annexation of Ukrainian sovereign territory. NATO must act firmly and quickly to reverse this trend before the situation escalates and the Alliance faces a challenge it cannot overcome.

NATO must simultaneously engage with Russia over shared interests and deter aggression through a credible, firm and united policy to serve its fundamental purpose of ensuring security, peace and stability on the European continent. The authors of the original NATO Charter expressed their desire to see a world without conflict, fashioning an alliance based on the principles of collective defense. As the organization evolved, it acknowledged the importance of promoting peace and security beyond its borders, and adopted the concept of collective security. Although member states do not often agree on when and how NATO should intervene in sovereign countries, the crisis in Ukraine requires that they once again evolve and

adopt a mutually agreed upon standard for foreign intervention. If NATO does not effectively deter Russian belligerence and reestablish international norms in Eastern Europe, Putin will continue to employ hybrid warfare, destabilizing former Soviet republics in hopes of driving a wedge between members of the Alliance. NATO must reassure its allies and partners by clearly articulating a threshold that would impel collective security action in Europe, similar to the terms outlined in Article 5 concerning collective defense. This action would reinvigorate NATO's deterrent strength and send a clear message to Putin that Russia cannot violate international law without suffering unacceptable consequences.

Putin's Quest to Regain Russian Glory

Through his actions, Putin has demonstrated a desire to reinvigorate Russian power through overt and covert shaping activities in the former Soviet states. According to Dr. Mary Hampton, "Putin has clearly signaled irredentist and revisionist intentions through renewed emphasis on national nuclear prowess, open challenges to the Western guided international order, and threats made to the Baltic States and Moldova, revealing aggressive intent while promising to return Russian populations to the protection of the motherland."³ Despite his repeated violations of international law, he has achieved his strategic aims and will continue to consolidate power under the guise of protecting the interests of Russian citizens abroad. In the wake of his quest to regain the glory of the former Soviet Union, Putin occupied Georgia in 2008, ravaging the military and occupying the territory of a NATO Partnership for Peace member. Six years later, Russia annexed the Ukrainian territory of Crimea, falsely justified through faux-elections and enabled by a Russian occupation force.⁴ Most recently, Putin has sent his forces into Eastern Ukraine to stir unrest among the predominantly Russian-speaking population, Russia's "Fifth Column," sparking a direct conflict with Ukrainian military forces.⁵

His actions are clear, and reflect a disdain for the post-Cold War liberal world order led by the US. If left undeterred, Russia's execution of the "Putin Doctrine" will continue to destabilize Eastern Europe and eventually result in a direct conflict with NATO.

Putin seeks to recapture the glory of the former Soviet Union and lift Russia to its former superpower status by reasserting its dominance in regional affairs, shaping the information domain, rebuilding its military, and wielding its economic prowess to shape European politics. According to Leon Aron, "although he has never spelled it out formally, Putin has pursued this objective with such determination, coherence, and consistency that it merits being called the Putin Doctrine."⁶ He has interfered in the affairs of the independent former Soviet Socialist Republics, intending for Russia to gain control and influence over territories, natural resources and political leadership. To achieve these revisionist national security objectives, he has employed all of the instruments of national power over the past decade, including information operations that enable him to dominate perceptions across the world. Putin commands a powerful propaganda machine that works to drive internal public opinion as well as those in Western Europe. Today, Russia views itself as the master of the territory of the former Soviet Socialist Republic, motivating Putin to establish a goal to restore the power of the former Soviet Union. As a result, his foreign policy has emphasized reshaping Russia's role in both the region and in world affairs. In addition, Putin's recent expenditures and force reorganization have reversed the sharp decline in military spending that occurred during the early 2000s. The Russian economy still depends on its energy resource production and has not embraced the Western open-market model. In addition, Putin has withheld resources from Russia's neighbors as a form of economic blackmail.⁷ Ultimately, Putin has effectively applied all of Russia's instruments of power to enact his doctrine aimed at challenging the liberal world order.

In an attempt to reverse Russia's decline in global prominence, Putin has pursued a revisionist world order, geared towards transforming Russia into a key player in the international arena. Simply put, Putin views Russia as a regional hegemon. Leon Aron explains, "Since coming to power in 2000, Vladimir Putin has added an overarching goal to Russian foreign policy: the recovery of economic, political, and geostrategic assets lost by the Soviet state in 1991."⁸ When Putin came to power in the early 2000s, he faced a significantly weakened Russia still seeking to find its place in world affairs. Lyudmila Igumnova writes:

Vladimir Putin at the beginning of his presidency recognized all Russia's troubles: weak state structures, economic and demographic decline, decline of armed forces, growth of organized crime, corruption, and division of Russian society. It was also honestly admitted that poor (economic, social, political) conditions restrict Russia's ability to impact the international agenda. This crisis was presented as temporary. Putin thought of how to prevent Russia's further international decline and how to re-establish the idea of Russia's greatness. After the chaos of the 1990s, Putin could consolidate and strengthen state structures. The country's decline has been stopped. Russia re-established its great power status and became more visible on the international stage.⁹

Since Putin came to power, Russia's rhetoric and foreign policy towards the West and its political and military allies has changed. Strategic documents, such as the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (2008), National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020 (2009), and the new Russian Military Doctrine (2014), illuminate Russia's strategic policy towards the West and NATO. These documents aid in understanding the mindset of Russian leaders, and the actions they have taken to accomplish those strategic goals.

In its strategic documents, Russia has revealed its intent to recapture its former stature in world affairs and cultivated a more contentious relationship with NATO. According to the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (2008), "Russia views itself as: a great power in the global war on terror; global energy supplier; great nuclear power; indispensable factor in the policy of non-proliferation; and as a leading power in the post-Soviet space and the driving

force of integration in the region.”¹⁰ This foreign policy perspective has influenced and facilitated Putin’s development of subordinate strategies to enable this ambitious vision. In 2009, he signed the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until the 2020 (NSS 2009), articulating his approach to regaining Russian dominance. The first chapter of the document emphasized that the “Russian Federation is transitioning to the higher level of technological development and quality of life, which is becoming one of the leading country, and influence to the world’s processes. Russian Federation proceeds to the new state policy in the sphere of the national security.”¹¹ In addition, the NSS 2009 emphasized several external military challenges to the national security of the country. First, the document claims that it is the policy of leading foreign countries to achieve overwhelming superiority in the military sphere. Other threats to security include the deployment of the ballistic missile defense system, militarization of the near Earth space, and development of high-precision weapons, information dominance, and other high-tech of the military warfare.¹² However, the NSS 2009 did not directly name any countries, political, or military organizations as a direct threat to the national security of the Russian Federation, instead deferring amplification of these threats to Russia’s military doctrine. This doctrine, adopted at the meeting of the National Security Council on 19 December 2014, directly indicated that the foremost military threat to the Russian Federation was NATO. Specifically, the document states that NATO has increased its military capabilities and infrastructure, encroached on the Russian Federation’s borders, and continued to expand the Alliance.¹³ Putin undoubtedly views NATO as a spoiler to his revisionist intent, and is therefore working to counter the Alliance’s credibility in world affairs. To accomplish this strategic vision, Putin has utilized the instruments of national power to influence opinions and policy both within and outside of the Russia Federation, including leveraging Russia’s vast natural gas resources.

Russian politicians have capitalized on the interdependence between the Russian and European economies in order to influence political decisions abroad. Since the end of the Cold War, Russia has emerged as one of the largest energy markets for many Western European countries. According to the CIA World Fact Book, Germany (12.2%), France (4.4%), and Italy (4.3%) are the biggest importers of Russian goods, illustrating the complexity many NATO countries face when working to counter Russian policies.¹⁴ In Russia, oil and natural gas production provide the greatest sources of budget revenues, accounting for 68 percent of Russia's total export revenues in 2013.¹⁵ Russia is one of the main energy suppliers for Western Europe, providing 30 percent of the EU's natural gas imports.¹⁶ In addition, 35 percent of the European Union's oil supplies are of Russian origin.¹⁷ Today, Germany "sources 36 percent of its natural gas imports and 39 percent of its oil imports from Russian energy suppliers."¹⁸ Additionally, the growing dependence on Russian energy has not solely impacted Western Europeans. The Ukrainian economy has been heavily dependent on Russian natural gas, working to renew natural gas supply contracts with Russia every year. Gazprom, a Russian natural gas extraction company, has compelled officials to sign disadvantageous contracts to the detriment of Ukraine, increasing the volatility of energy imports. According to those contracts, the price for natural gas was significantly higher than the price for the same Russian gas offered to other European countries. Even during the previous pro-Russian Ukrainian Government, officials struggled to secure favorable energy pricing during annual negotiations, often spending one to two months in negotiations just to achieve a suboptimal deal. However, during the last year, and with the help of the EU, the new Ukrainian government has taken significant steps to decrease those dependencies. The main aims of those steps were to diversify sources of the natural gas supply, as well as increase domestic natural gas extraction. As a result, in March 2015,

negotiations lasted only several days, resulting in a deal where Russia offered Ukraine a price of \$248 per one-thousand cubic meters, over \$100 less than the previous price. However, even that price was \$33 higher than Ukraine pays for the natural gas from Europe. Because of increasing oil prices from \$25 in 2000 to \$100 in 2007, Putin was able to pay huge state debt, and invested in the development of the armed forces.¹⁹ Russia has actively leveraged its export of natural resources to increase its regional influence and fund its reinvigoration of the Russian military.

In recent years, Putin has initiated several Russian military modernization programs, including restructuring the services in an effort to forge a Russian military identity distinct from that of the former Soviet Union. During his first years in power, Putin initiated a significant reduction of the armed forces while almost tripling the defense budget.²⁰ He ended the careers of more than 400,000 service members, 300,000 of whom were experienced officers who had served under the Soviet Union. Although counterintuitive to some, Putin's purges of the ranks served a greater purpose, coincident with his strategic vision. Since he was preparing Russian armed forces for combat, and the most probable place for the future war would be the territory of the former Soviet Republics, the service members represented a liability to Putin. Many Russian officers had studied as cadets at the military colleges before rising through the Soviet Army ranks, serving alongside military members from other Soviet states. Since many maintained relationships with their former classmates, Putin worried that their relationships would increase the likelihood they would object to combat operations against former Soviet states. Simply put, Putin figured it would be difficult to explain to them why they have to fight with yesterday's peers. More significantly, these efforts revealed his expectation and intention, that Russia would soon fight in the former Soviet Republics in an effort to regain lost glory.

During this period, Russia also increased its military spending, modernizing most of its

weaponry and increasing the salary of its military members. For example, the 2012 salary of a Russian officer became one of the biggest in Commonwealth of Independent States, and fifth in the world. In essence, Putin expected a fight, and understood he would need a modern military and motivated force to enact his aggressive intent. For more than ten years, Putin prepared his armed forces to conduct military operations on the territory of the former Soviet Republics, culminating in the most recent conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Despite decreasing oil prices and slowing economy, Russia's military budget grew by 33% this year.²¹ As the Deputy Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin notes, "[Putin's] idea is that by 2015 we should have upgraded 30 percent of military equipment, and by 2020 - 70 percent."²² However, Western sanctions and a slowing economy have hindered Putin's modernization efforts by "weakening the ruble and isolating the market from foreign funding," making it difficult for Russia to afford his modernization efforts.²³ Yet, these setbacks have not thwarted Russia's efforts to reassert itself militarily across Europe and in the Arctic.

Through his use of military power, Putin is challenging European countries from the Arctic to the Caucasus. At the end of the 2014, Russia established a unified strategic command in the Arctic, naming the region a sphere of Russian vital interests. According to the Russian news agency, TASS, "Russia's Defense Ministry is going to build 13 airdromes and 10 radars in the Arctic, and Russia will have full radar coverage of the Arctic region this year, while next year it will be ready "to meet unwanted guests."²⁴ Long considered beyond Russia's Economic Exclusion Zone, efforts to claim Arctic territory represent a challenge to the international status quo and coincide with Russia's revisionist aims. In addition, Russian aggression in the Baltic region has increased anxiety in former Soviet states in the region, including NATO members Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. Last year, NATO conducted more than 400 intercepts of Russian

strategic bombers, refueling aircraft, and jets over the Baltic Sea and Europe.²⁵ In response, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg recently remarked that although Russian aircraft had not violated NATO airspace, “the way the Russian planes operate threatens civilian aviation in the region.”²⁶ Aside from the threat to the commercial airline industry, Russia’s actions in the Baltics are a visible manifestation of the Putin Doctrine and the rejection of the current world order. Even Kazakhstan, a nation considered close to Russia, has experienced increased tensions with Russia. During a 2014 visit to a youth center in Russia, Putin claimed “there had never been a country called Kazakhstan, that the republic was purely the product of the current president, Nursultan Nazarbayev.”²⁷ Incredulous, Nazarbayev retorted, “Our independence is our dearest treasure, which our grandfathers fought for. First of all, we will never surrender it to someone, and secondly, we will do our best to protect it... Kazakhstan will not be part of organisations that pose a threat to our independence.”²⁸ Poland is also concerned about Russian aggression in Ukraine. General Stanisław Koziej, head of the Polish National Security Bureau, recently explained that “Poland is facing a security crisis in the wake of the war in neighboring Ukraine, and has the potential to become embroiled in a “hybrid war” with Russia - involving propaganda and “information aggression.”²⁹ As underscored by Koziej, Putin has engaged in hybrid warfare with several states, capitalizing on his control of Russian media to shape the information environment in Russia and abroad. This asymmetric campaign has been integral to his operations and has complicated the international community’s response to Russian aggression.

Russia uses hybrid warfare to asymmetrically defeat its adversaries, employing a sophisticated informational campaign to shape perceptions in Russia, Ukraine and other European countries. For example, the occupation of the Ukrainian Crimea demonstrated the successful use of a combination of special-forces, conventional military units, and information

operations. Anti-Russian-propaganda website, StopFake.org, explains that hybrid war in Ukraine “combines military, information, terrorist and other aggressive actions, coordinated from the center to achieve certain strategic objectives. The aim of this war is the complete subordination of Ukraine to Kremlin’s new-empire expansionist plans.”³⁰ The insidious and complicated nature of hybrid warfare has made it difficult for NATO to determine whether or not such an attack on a NATO member would trigger an Article 5 response. Since the member states cannot agree on an appropriate response to a hybrid attack, Putin has successfully fomented disunity in NATO, providing an impetus to continue this course-of-action. In addition to foreign countries, Putin has also conducted information operations in Russia to garner support for his agenda. As of yet, the West has not effectively countered his efforts.

In efforts to ensure support for his domestic and foreign policy strategies, Putin has worked to control the information domain in Russia through the use of propaganda and censorship. The Russian population’s willingness to bear the economic difficulties on behalf of the state interests has depended greatly on the success of Russian propaganda, which paints a dire picture of the international environment and cites a multitude of continuously growing threats from outside the country. Well-organized and financially supported by the Russian government, the aggressive informational campaign has worked to portray a strong image of the enemy, which is allegedly approaching the borders of Russia. Russian propaganda successfully uses core cultural beliefs and values of Russian citizens to strengthen the potency of the message and undermining foreign attempts to refute it. Igumnova claims, “Most Russians truly believe that state interests have a priority over their personal rights and freedoms. According to Russian historical tradition, throughout many centuries the state has been seen as more important than individuals. Most people in Russia can easily accept authoritarian rule and refuse to enjoy their

rights and freedoms for the sake of the global imperial role of their country in world politics. The global role and independent stance are the sources of patriotic feelings.”³¹ Moreover, Russian people have historically believed in the idea of a strong leader. This is why Russian-controlled media outlets have worked to spread images of Putin riding tigers, bears, and motorcycles. Russian television, in particular, played a key role during the annexation of Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula.

Russian television played an important role in helping Putin control the information domain during the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014. According to a recent article in the Economist, “in the seizure of Crimea, television played as much of a leading role as the army. Russian television, widely watched in Crimea, bolstered the loyalty of the local population while justifying the Kremlin’s actions at home.”³² In 2010, the Columbia Journalism Review declared the Russian news agency, Russia Today, “a fairly new and still mostly obscure English-language cable news channel funded by the Russian government.”³³ Authors noted that Russia Today worked as a “soft-power tool to improve Russia’s image abroad, to counter the anti-Russian bias the Kremlin saw in the Western media.” In the last decade, however, the news outlet has transitioned to a mouthpiece for the Putin regime, undermining its journalist-credibility in efforts to justify “Putin’s confrontational foreign policy.”³⁴ Marcin Zaboroski, Director of the Polish Institute of International Affairs, admitted that during annexation of Crimea, Putin was extremely successful in controlling information through his use of Russia Today.³⁵ Through frequent broadcasts and spurious data, Putin sent the strategic message that his actions in Crimea were justified in the name of protecting Russians abroad.³⁶ Although categorically false, the Russian population believed the propaganda and supported Putin’s actions, which violated international law and risked a large-scale war.

The Fight for Ukraine

The Putin Doctrine has guided Russian foreign policy for several years, and has caused the current conflict in Ukraine, which exemplifies the greater ideological tension between Putin's Russia and the West. During the Cold War, Ukraine and Russia were both members of the former USSR, which resulted in the movement of a substantial number of Russian speakers to Ukrainian territory. Putin has declared his intention to protect the interests of those ethnic Russians, even if it results in the violation of Ukrainian sovereignty. In addition, Putin has viewed Ukraine's openings to the West as direct threat to Russia's security, prompting him to interfere in Ukrainian politics. Russia's annexation of Crimea represents the first time since World War II territory in Europe has changed possession by force. The international community cannot allow this violation of international law and must address it quickly to avoid uncontrollable escalation towards war.

Throughout the history of Ukrainian and Russian relations, Russia has always tried to keep Ukrainian territory under its control and influence, even after Ukraine declared independence in 1991. Igumnova argues, "it is difficult for Moscow to accept the sovereignty of the former Soviet republics. They are a zone of Russia's vital interest, where Moscow wants to be the leader."³⁷ For example, Russia did not recognize Ukraine's independence for over 6 years after the declaration. On November 2013, former President of Ukraine Victor Yanukovich refused to sign an agreement with the EU that would have opened Ukraine up to the West. The Ukrainian public had anticipated the signing of this agreement for over four years, causing great political unrest in the days following Yanukovich's decision. In response, hundreds of thousands of citizens gathered in the capital to protest the failure of the deal. In response to the unrest, Yanukovich ordered his forces to disperse the protesters with using firearms, resulting in several

deaths. On January 22, 2014, two protesters were killed after being hit with live ammunition, with a third killed during a “confrontation between police and demonstrators at barricades.”³⁸ Confrontation increased after this incident, resulting in more than one hundred people killed in downtown Kyiv. On February 22, 2014, the Ukrainian Parliament voted to dismiss Yanukovich to quell the violence. That same day, he escaped from Ukraine to Russia along with the Prime Minister and other members of the former Government. Five days later, the Ukrainian Parliament appointed an interim government and scheduled new presidential elections for 25 May 2014. At that time, Putin clearly understood he was losing influence over Ukraine, and elected to intervene in order to control the outcome of the unrest. Based on his foreign policy, it was not too difficult to predict that Putin would try to protect Russia’s Black Sea Fleet based in Sevastopol, located on the Crimean Peninsula.³⁹ Less than one week after Parliament dismissed Yanukovich, Russia began its incursion into Crimea, sending in masked gunmen to seize several government buildings.⁴⁰ At this stage, Russia granted Yanukovych refuge, clearly communicating support for the deposed leader.⁴¹ On March 1st, the same day Russian troops took control over the peninsula’s key infrastructure, “Russia’s parliament approved President Vladimir Putin's request to use force in Ukraine to protect Russian interests.”⁴² On March 6th, “Crimea’s pro-Russian leadership voted to join Russia,” scheduling a Crimean referendum for just 10 days later, escalating the crisis.”⁴³ Once the votes were tallied, an incredible 97% of Ukrainians in Crimea elected to join Russia in what many now realize was a rigged voting process.

At the same time Putin claimed there were no Russian military forces in Ukraine, witnesses in Crimea provided firsthand accounts of Russian soldiers actively conducting operations. In March of 2015, a Russian film company released a documentary film named

“Crimea: Way Back Home.”⁴⁴ In this film, Putin provided an interview in which he admits he personally controlled and gave the orders to the special-forces to conduct extraction operation to help the former President Yanukovich escape from Ukraine. He also confessed that he used special-forces to take control of the Crimean Parliament, as well as other governmental institutions. In addition, he confirmed that at the beginning of March 2014, he deployed Russian regular army, navy, and air defense units to the peninsula. Today, Russia continues to convert much of Crimea’s territory and resources for the Russian military, revealing Putin’s true intent for operations in the area. Russia’s Defense Minister, Sergei Shoigu, has since claimed that following special instructions from Putin, the Russian Federation established a strong group of military forces in Crimea, which is now able to protect Russian national interests in the region. Not since World War II has a state taken such aggressive actions in Europe to acquire a neighbor’s territory. Putin’s actions signify a gross disregard for international law and Ukrainian sovereignty, requiring collective action by outside forces to counter Russia’s aggression.

NATO’s Enduring Purpose

NATO must act quickly in Ukraine to uphold its organizational purpose to ensure the peace, security and stability in Europe. The Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula marks the first time since the Second World War that European territory has changed ownership by force and sets a dangerous precedent.⁴⁵ While NATO does not have an explicit responsibility per its charter to defend Ukrainian territory against Russian attack, failure to uphold international laws and norms in this conflict will undermine the Alliance’s existential purpose. That purpose, codified in the original charter and explained in the language used to support its approval, has not changed significantly since 1949. Despite the dramatic transformation of Europe since the end of World War II, NATO still exists in order to ensure peace and stability by providing for

security and collective problem solving.

As an organization, NATO has vastly changed over the 66 years since the signing of the Washington Treaty, adopting its outlook to account for the ever-changing geopolitical environment. Formed in the context of the late 1940s, the original Atlantic Alliance reflected the complex realities of the post-war years, aiming to bolster Western European and US resolve in maintaining the peace. The original charter, which codified the principle of collective defense, mirrored many of the same concepts incorporated in the UN Charter, which predated NATO by only a few years. From 1949 until the end of the Cold War, the Atlantic Alliance focused on the promise of collective defense, successfully deterring Soviet aggression and ensuring security on the European continent. However, over the past 25 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, NATO adapted its approach to European stability and security by increasing cooperation with non-NATO members and conducting operations out-of-area in the name of collective security. It accomplished these new tasks while continuing to emphasize its Article 5 commitments, but diverted significant resources to them. While NATO's evolution may initially appear to reflect a new purpose to account for the post-Cold War era, the principles that underlie collective security adhere to the same existential purposes trumpeted by many of the initial signatories to the Washington Treaty.

The bleak state of European affairs following the Second World War paved the way for the Atlantic Alliance and the promise of collective defense. Both world wars had devastated the European continent, rendering states' economic and political infrastructures incapable of providing basic services to their surviving citizens. Stimulated by the Marshall Plan, Western Europeans began to emerge from economic ruin by the late 1940s, but were again threatened by an aggressive and expansionist Soviet Union in the East. The Soviets had learned they could

counter western policies in the UN through their Security Council veto, leaving little recourse for vulnerable European states. In this context, 12 nations signed the NATO Charter on April 4, 1949, guaranteeing the collective defense for the Allies, as well as a commitment to peace and security for Europe. During US Senate debates regarding ratification of the Washington Treaty, members of the Committee on Foreign Relations repeatedly called the principle of collective defense the “heart of the treaty.”⁴⁶ This mantra reflected a mutual understanding among Americans and Europeans that the treaty’s most immediate application in the world would be to counter the growing Soviet threat in Eastern Europe. In order to avoid another arms race in Europe, the treaty would instead exercise a “stabilizing influence on current and future members as their militaries learn to plan together rather than against one another, thereby avoiding the nationalism of defense across Europe.”⁴⁷ A strong collective defense would mitigate the need for each state to divert reconstruction funds towards building up their militaries thereby reducing the emphasis on hard power politics on the continent. While collective defense galvanized public attention in 1948 and 1949 as the heart of the NATO concept, collective security represented the true spirit of the organization.

The UN and NATO formed in the 1940s mainly to reinforce international laws and norms by guaranteeing the peace by offering an alternative to militarization and realpolitik. Though each organization approached international politics differently, both organizations prioritized stability operations and peacekeeping as their most important purpose. These tasks constituted the core principles of collective security and provided the philosophical purpose for both institutions. Following its first session on September 17, 1949, the NATO Council explained that it existed to “assist, in accordance with the Charter, in achieving the primary purpose of the United Nations—the maintenance of international peace and security.”⁴⁸ From its inception, the

Alliance tied its *raison d'être* to the United Nations and the standards outlined in its charter, including the prohibition of UN members invading one another. Leaders celebrated the potential of the treaty to curtail the emerging power rivalries with the Soviets, envisioning NATO as a counter to all threats to Europe. When he signed the Washington Treaty, US President Harry Truman claimed that if the Alliance “had existed in 1914 and in 1939...it would have prevented the acts of aggression which led to two world wars.”⁴⁹ While collective defense dominated discussions about the treaty during deliberations, member states in 1949 understood that NATO embodied more than a security pact between allies.⁵⁰ The Alliance represented a shared understanding among the member states that no rogue state would again threaten European stability without facing a unified front, even in non-Article 5 situations.

During the Cold War, NATO forged an identity steeped heavily in the principles of collective defense, heavily influenced by nuclear deterrence strategy and the subsequent policy of *détente*. In 1967, NATO sponsored the development of the “Report of the Council on the Future Tasks of the Alliance,” also referred to as the Harmel Report.⁵¹ This seminal document outlined the core principles of the Alliance and developed a concept for cooperation with the Soviet Union.⁵² Most important in this report, however, was NATO’s emphasis on its core tasks and purpose that reinforced its foundational principles of collective defense and collective security. According to the report, the first task was to “deter aggression and attempts at coercion, to defend the Allies in the event of aggression, and to assure the balance of forces, thereby creating a climate of stability, security and confidence.”⁵³ In other words, collective defense was a means to an end, but not the end in and of itself. NATO existed, and still does today, in order to foster a stable, secure and confident environment in Europe. Today, NATO historians contend that the Harmel Report “not only reiterated the Organization’s key principles, but it also set out a

realistic programme [*sic*] of work, therefore reasserting the existence of NATO in a practical as well as a political way.”⁵⁴ While easier to conceptualize during the Cold War, when the distinction between East and West was simple, the political environment of the post-Cold War era has complicated NATO’s calculus on when to apply collective security.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, NATO worked to redefine itself in the post-Soviet threat environment, ultimately increasing its emphasis on collective security and cooperation with non-NATO members. In 1999, NATO released a Strategic Concept explaining the emerging roles the Alliance would play in the new millennium. In it, they emphasized the principle that “security is indivisible” and that NATO’s goal was a “stable security environment in Europe.”⁵⁵ This climate of peace, according to the document, depended on “the growth of democratic institutions and commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes, in which *no* country would be able to intimidate or coerce *any* European nation or to impose hegemony through the threat or use of force.”⁵⁶ The 1999 Strategic Concept codified what NATO had learned during the first decade following the collapse of the Soviet Union, including lessons from its non-Article 5 operations in the Balkans in 1995, where member states believed their security interests were at stake.⁵⁷ NATO not only sought to ensure the security of nations on its periphery, but also to expanded their aperture to include any state able to meet the high standards of membership. In its latest Strategic Concept released in 2010, NATO contends that it is currently responsible for three core tasks including, collective defense, crisis management and cooperative security.⁵⁸ In the amplified verbiage regarding cooperative security, the authors explain that NATO will “engage actively to enhance international security, through partnership with relevant countries and other international organisations [*sic*].”⁵⁹ These updated intentions reflect NATO’s evolving perspective following participation in combat operations in

Afghanistan, and set the stage for its intervention in Libya in 2011. When NATO accepted the mission to enforce a no-fly zone over Libya in support of UN Resolution 1973, some member states expressed their concern that the Alliance had strayed too far from its original purpose. Although contentious, the short duration and success of Operation Unified Protector reduced the volume of criticism regarding the mission.⁶⁰ The ultimate lesson from operations in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Libya was that despite its original posture as a defensive-only Alliance, NATO would take military action outside of its member states if it felt a deteriorating situation threatened the peace, security, and stability of Europe. This is precisely the context NATO finds itself in today with Russia's annexation of Crimea and the tenuous ceasefire in Eastern Ukraine.

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

NATO must act quickly and decisively in Ukraine to uphold its organizational purpose to ensure the peace, security and stability in Europe. Failure to intervene on behalf of existing international laws and norms will establish the precedent that an aggressive state can violate another's sovereignty without effective opposition from the international community. Russia's current violation of international law threatens to upset the European status quo that has guaranteed stability since the end of the Second World War. Not only has Russia violated the UN Charter, but also the NATO-Russia Founding Act and the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, the latter of which reiterated, "respect for the independence and sovereignty and existing borders of Ukraine."⁶¹ If NATO, in addition to other international organizations, cannot reverse this troubling trend, individual states will have to look elsewhere to guarantee their own security. This would undermine the very reason the original 12 states signed the Washington Treaty 66 years ago, and is not in the best interest of any state. Finally, if left unchecked, Russia will continue to upset European stability, even if punished by sanctions and

threatened by symbolic security posturing. As expressed by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, “As Russia and the separatists that it backs descend on eastern Ukraine, they’re doing more even than violating the borders of one country. They are threatening the principles upon which the transatlantic partnership was founded and upon which the international order we seek to build depends.”⁶² NATO must send a firm and credible message to Putin that aggressive Russian actions are unacceptable and will not occur without significant ramifications.

As discussed in the previous section, the UN and NATO originated from a desire by the victors of World War II to establish a new world order dedicated to the peaceful resolution of conflict and the international laws and norms. The UN endeavored to maintain the peace by facilitating an all-inclusive diplomatic forum, enabling diffusion of conflict through dialogue and submission to UN decisions. This world order, modeled after Wilsonian liberalism, embodied the desire of the Allies to distribute responsibility for world peace to all UN member nations. In contrast to the UN, NATO established itself as a political and security alliance of like-minded nation-states, committed to maintaining the international status quo through actions, not words.⁶³ Through deterrence and assurances, NATO committed itself to reinforcing international law, especially with regard to European state sovereignty. Established as a threshold, or “red line” of sorts, the mandate for collective defense clearly communicated the one circumstance where NATO would act collectively to uphold the law. Putin has used Article 5 verbiage against NATO in this conflict, avoiding direct attacks on NATO members while continuing to violate international law. Because Russia possesses a Security Council veto, the UN has not been able to diffuse the situation by condemning Russian aggression and reaffirming Ukrainian sovereignty. The current situation cannot continue for the sake of the international order, in that it establishes the ineffectualness of the liberal institutions to maintain international laws and norms, signaling

to the world that power, and not dialogue, are the tools of choice in the 21st century. Without an effective response from action-oriented NATO, states will seek out alternate alliances that will ensure their security, but undermine the founding principles of the Atlantic Alliance. The danger of this new precedent most immediately impacts those nations that previously belonged to the USSR including, Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and the Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia), the latter of which are members of NATO.

Russian expansionist policies and violation of international law have caused great concern among several European states, including both NATO and non-NATO members, and establish a dangerous precedent in international affairs. Although the occupation of Eastern Ukraine dominates the media today, this particular Russian operation is only the latest in a series of escalatory actions taken by the Putin government in recent years. Based on this example, NATO members must recognize that failure to firmly and effectively deter Russian actions will most likely result in a continuation of this policy. For example, according to Christopher Musselman, a US Navy Fellow at the Atlantic Council Brent Scowcroft Center for International Security, the Russia-Georgia war in 2008 established a dangerous precedent in Europe.⁶⁴ He writes, “After the 2008 Russia-Georgia war, Putin likely concluded that Russia could use hard power in its neighborhood without the possibility of a decisive military response from the West.”⁶⁵ Musselman concludes that the current response from the West in Crimea and Ukraine has probably reinforced this notion.⁶⁶ To date, NATO has not raised the stakes in the standoff with Putin enough to deter him from continuing to conduct his hybrid warfare on former Soviet states, which has caused concern in several NATO states. In particular, the Baltic States all contain significant Russian speaking populations and are all members of NATO. If Putin elects to conduct destabilizing operations in one of these states, similar to the Russian cyber-attacks on

Estonia in 2007, it is not yet clear what defensive or retaliatory actions NATO will take. This ambiguity is a direct result of the failure to establish a clear and enforceable threshold for taking collective security actions, essentially paralyzing the Alliance. NATO's failure to demonstrate strong resolve in response to events in Ukraine will perpetuate Putin's belief that he can continue to undermine NATO's influence and prestige in Europe with insignificant consequences.

If NATO cannot ensure the peace, security and stability of Europe, states will have to seek these outcomes elsewhere, further diminishing the capability of the Alliance. Damon Wilson, the Executive Vice President of the Atlantic Council, argued in a March 4, 2015 US Senate hearing that Putin's best avenue to undermining NATO's influence in Europe revolved around its Article 5 commitment. He contended that NATO's failure to respond to an attack on an ally would "end both NATO and America's role as a great European power."⁶⁷ Although Ukraine is not a NATO member, the aforementioned precedent of inaction combined with trajectory of Russian foreign policy raises the possibility that NATO could soon face this scenario. If politically unable to generate support due to the ambiguity of hybrid warfare, alliance members could no longer reasonably assume NATO's ability to adhere to its collective defense commitments. Naturally, states would look elsewhere to guarantee their security, eventually undermining the Atlantic Alliance to a point of insignificance. Not only would this scenario hurt American participation in European security affairs, but also it would also substantially increase the volatility of Europe and the potential for armed conflict. It is in NATO's best interest to avoid this type of deterioration of the liberal world order, requiring immediate firm and effective actions by the Alliance to reverse these trends.

In addition to NATO taking decisive action to demonstrate resolve and reassure member states, it must do so quickly in order to avoid gradual escalation of the conflict, which will

increase the potential for direct conflict with Russia. Wilson explains that the current US strategy is essentially to “raise the costs on Russia by imposing sanctions, protect NATO, and count on the long term fundamentals, which are on our side and are working against Russia.”⁶⁸ However, this strategy will not affect the current fight in Eastern Ukraine, and provides Putin with a timeline within which he can complete his operation without incurring unacceptable costs. In addition, Putin will not change his course based on incremental escalation, since the costs are too low, allowing him to adjust while continuing his aggressive actions. Ultimately, a weak response to Russian aggression increases, rather than diminishes, the potential for war since Putin has no reason to cease his operations. At some point, Russia will cross an individual state’s security threshold, eliciting a response from that military and forcing NATO to decide whether to intervene. If that particular state belongs to NATO, this could bring the Alliance into a direct conflict with the Russians for the first time in its history. Therefore, a gradual escalation in the Ukrainian conflict does not reduce the potential for war, which is evident in Eastern Ukraine today. Despite the ceasefire agreed to in the Minsk II agreements in February 2015, Stoltenberg notes that “Russian forces, artillery and air defence [sic] units as well as command and control elements are still active in Ukraine.”⁶⁹ The limited economic sanctions imposed by the US and EU on a handful of Russia’s oligarchs have not effectively deterred its aggression or demonstrated that the West is serious about thwarting Putin’s efforts. NATO must not only act decisively, but must do so quickly to be effective, which means that economic sanctions are not the most effective method to achieve the desired end.

“To Wage Peace Vigorously”

To prevent war and ensure the peace, security and stability of Europe, NATO must take effective and timely action to deter Russian aggression and reestablish Ukraine’s international

borders. Since it is clear NATO must act to counter Russian violations of international law, the problem is now determining what specific policies will ensure the best possible outcome for NATO and Ukraine. US President Barack Obama and German Chancellor Angela Merkel have repeatedly claimed that no military solution in Ukraine exists, but have not identified a viable alternative that will effectively deter Putin. To successfully deescalate the current situation in Ukraine, and affirm the inviolability of international law and norms in Europe, NATO must work in concert with other international institutions to engage Russian officials regarding the main points of contention. NATO must speak with a united voice in opposition to Putin's revisionist claims and work to bolster Ukrainian defenses in the name of collective security. In addition, just as collective defense established a threshold for NATO action to support allies under attack, the Alliance should also delineate a clear redline for when NATO would respond to an event in the name of collective security. These actions will bolster the credibility of the Alliance and work to ease tensions with the Russians, fostering an environment reflective of the idealism of the late 1940s and again at the end of the Cold War.

The EU and US must continue to engage diplomatically with Russia to ease tensions, especially on issues of mutual concern. As expressed by Secretary Acheson in 1949, "we are determined, on the one hand, to make it unmistakably clear that immediate and effective counter measures will be taken against those who violate the peace, and on the other, to wage peace vigorously and relentlessly."⁷⁰ The latter task requires a different skillset and methodology than leveraging NATO's military might to counter Russian aggression, and requires a greater amount of time to accomplish. Despite the deterioration of Putin's relationship with many leaders in the West, Russia still shares many interests with NATO and the EU, including nuclear nonproliferation, economic integration, counterterrorism, global climate change, emerging issues

in the Arctic, and space exploration. Focused engagement on the non-controversial aspects of these issues will help rebuild trust between nations like the US and Russia, and will provide an additional mechanism to assuage Russian concerns. Although NATO functions mostly as a security and political organization, it possesses unique negotiating strength with Putin because member states possess the collective strength to stand behind their security commitments. Putin's actions reflect his respect for power, requiring an organization that leverages considerable influence to engage him from a position of strength. For this reason, NATO member states should encourage Secretary General Stoltenberg to speak on behalf of a unified NATO and outline NATO's concerns and suggest mutually acceptable solutions that restore Ukraine's international borders. Such diplomatic outreach is well within the acceptable range of activities for Stoltenberg and serves NATO's greater purpose of waging relentless peace.

NATO member states should immediately provide the Ukrainian the military aid it requires to effectively defend its borders, including lethal weapons. In a recent joint report from the Atlantic Council, Brookings Institution, The Center for a New American Security and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, the authors argue that Ukraine cannot contend with Russian forces alone.⁷¹ In addition, as mentioned in the previous section, the US and other EU states have imposed economic sanctions on a small number of Russia's ruling elite, but have not effectively raised the costs enough to discourage further action. For this reason, the authors of the joint report argue that the "West needs to bolster deterrence in Ukraine by raising the risks and costs to Russia of any renewed major offensive."⁷² They contend that in order to succeed, the West should provide military both lethal and non-lethal military assistance.⁷³ Non-lethal aid includes "counter-battery radars, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), electronic counter-measures for use against opposing UAVs, secure communication capabilities, armored Humvees and medical

support equipment.”⁷⁴ Although contentious among several alliance members, including the US, lethal aid is essential in enabling the Ukrainian military to raise the costs for Russia while working to reestablish their borders. To achieve relative parity with the deployed Russian forces, the Ukrainian military would require “light anti-armor missiles, given the large numbers of armored vehicles that the Russians have deployed in Donetsk and Luhansk.”⁷⁵ NATO members can significantly impact the current fight by taking decisive and unified action and providing military lethal and non-lethal capabilities, effectively raising the costs for Putin. If coupled with direct engagement with the Russians and the message that the weapons are for defensive purposes only, NATO will demonstrate resolve and strengthen its position in Europe.

In addition to diplomatic engagement and immediate military aid, the Alliance must clearly articulate the rules European states must follow and the threshold that would trigger a NATO response in the name of cooperative security. Although for over six decades the two organizations have approached the enforcement of international laws and norms, NATO and the UN exist to maintain peace and security through active conflict resolution and the enforcement of international law. The first sentence of the NATO preamble reads, “The Parties to this Treaty reaffirm their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and their desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments.”⁷⁶ One could infer, then, that NATO shares the same values as the UN, including its prohibition against the violation of state sovereignty. Article 2 of the UN Charter states: “All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.”⁷⁷ NATO should continue to clearly communicate that violation of any state’s sovereignty, even a non-NATO member state, is a violation of international law and cannot occur. Although the

attack against a non-NATO member would not mandate an Article 5 response from NATO, it should generate cooperative security response, tailored to restore stability and enforce international law. If NATO codified a criterion for action in its next strategic concept, it would function as a new deterrent threshold, more suited for the strategic environment of the 21st century. Although it would not mandate specific actions from member states, introducing such language in an official manner immediately provides a unified NATO response to acts of aggression and avoids the constant political fight that often paralyzes the Alliance. Most importantly, since NATO possesses enough raw power to credibly deter Putin, a unified voice and clear red line will force the Russian president to reconsider his militant policies in Eastern Europe. As always, NATO must also ensure it responds swiftly and firmly if Russia fails to heed this warning. While many in NATO do not believe a military solution in Ukraine exists, that does not mean NATO will not have to employ a military force to end the conflict if all other means of deterrence, sanctions, and diplomacy fail. Since the strength of deterrence lies with the credibility of the threat issued, the Alliance must prepare itself to actually follow through by conducting military operations to ensure a return to the status quo.

Conclusion

NATO has weathered many challenges over the past six decades and has managed to endure as the dominant force for security and stability on the European continent. Although the Soviet Union threatened to destabilize Europe in the years following World War II, the Alliance effectively countered Stalin's efforts to expand his empire into Western Europe. Today, however, a revisionist Putin has rejected the liberal world order that has characterized interstate relations for over 25 years. In his celebratory declaration, Fukuyama failed to account for Putin's rejection of a post-history era and his desire to lift the Soviet Empire from its grave. Not only has

he expressed a desire to rebuild Russia to its former glory, but also the willingness to violate international laws and treaties, to which Russia had previously agreed. NATO member-states must provide a unified front to Putin, and challenge him to rejoin the community of states. As an agent for European peace, NATO must challenge Putin's revisionist claims to maintain its credibility as an organization and assure its members. However, actions must follow these statements in the form of lethal aid, diplomacy and the declaration of a threshold for cooperative security operations. Commensurate with these new actions, NATO should continue to reassure Alliance members by conducting exercises in member states, continuing to patrol the Baltic Sea, offering membership to states who meet the Alliance's requirements, and developing a rapid reaction force. Failure to act quickly and decisively will increase the prospects of a direct conflict with Russia, representing the first time NATO has failed to deter war. To maintain its credibility, NATO must also ensure that it demonstrates the willingness to not only protect its member states on behalf of collective defense, but also any victim of territorial aggression in Europe. This includes addressing the complexities of hybrid warfare, which often obfuscate the criteria NATO desires to act. Although some leaders in NATO claim that there is no military solution in Ukraine, the choice to go to war is not reserved solely for the Alliance. Russia also gets a vote. If Putin elects to cast that vote, NATO must be willing and prepared to counter Russian aggression and reestablish the peace. If Putin senses it is unwilling to escalate in such a manner, he will capitalize on this paralysis to rapidly achieve his objectives, including potential destabilization of NATO member-states. NATO cannot allow this to occur.

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