Margarete Klein

Russia's Military Policy in the Post-Soviet Space

Aims, Instruments and Perspectives

SWP

Since the Russo-Georgian war and the start of military reform in 2008, the importance of military means in Russia's foreign policy toolbox has increased. This is especially true of the post-Soviet space, where Moscow's vital security interests and regional ambitions converge. Russia is pursuing three goals here: it wants to ward off threats, secure its supremacy over the region and limit the room for manoeuvre of external actors, such as the US, NATO or China. In doing so, it is guided by a three-level approach which consists of strengthening unilateral power projection capabilities and expanding bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

The balance of Russian military policy in the post-Soviet space is mixed. It is true that, today, Russia's significantly modernised armed forces can cover a broad spectrum of operations and exert political pressure through a show of force. On the other hand, Moscow's attempt to establish one-sided dependencies through military cooperation has proven to be only partially achievable. As in the political and economic spheres, it is also evident in the military sphere that Russia's desire for a zone of influence clashes with the reality of an increasingly differentiated area. The intervention in Ukraine intensified this trend, as even hitherto close allies of Russia in the CSTO military alliance now show more scepticism in their cooperation with their large neighbour.

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Table of Contents

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The post-Soviet space is at the heart of the still unresolved conflict over the configuration of the European security order. At the same time, the increased importance of military means in Russia's foreign policy toolbox is most noticeable here. Although Moscow made use of its armed forces in Moldova (1992), Georgia (1992—1994) and Tajikistan (1992) as early as the 1990s, these were limited 'peacekeeping' operations. The intervention in Georgia in August 2008 signalled the beginning of a new phase. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, Russia led an interstate war to secure its regional hegemonic claim and draw red lines against Western actors. The covert intervention in Ukraine since 2014 has also served this goal.

The present study examines the aims, instruments and perspectives of Russian military policy in the post-Soviet space. The Baltic states are excluded because they have been members of the EU and NATO since 2004. Unlike the other former Soviet republics, this has changed the framework conditions for Russian action.

Russia's military policy in the post-Soviet space is to ward off threats, control the region as a hegemon and limit the scope for action of external actors. To achieve this, Moscow is pursuing a three-level approach which consists of strengthening its unilateral power projection capabilities as well as its bilateral and multilateral connectivity mechanisms.

Moscow achieves its best outcomes at the unilateral level. The military reform carried out since 2008 reinforced the pre-existing superiority of the Russian armed forces. The reform significantly modernised its arsenal and increased the operational readiness of its armed forces. In addition, Moscow extended its pool of irregular 'proxies' needed for unconventional missions. Furthermore, since 2008 Russia has expanded its forward presence in the region. As a result, Russia's armed forces are well placed to conduct a wide range of operations in the region — from crisis management to counter-terrorism and unconventional and conventional wars — and to exert political pressure through a credible 'show of force'.

On the other hand, Moscow's attempt to create one-sided dependencies on Russia through bilateral and multilateral cooperation was not completely viable. With the exception of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine (since 2014), all post-Soviet countries have cooperated with Russia on armaments, training or exercises. However, Moscow can only develop a hegemonic model of cooperation with those territories and states that depend on Russia's military protection and lack alternative partners. This applies to the separatist territories of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria and to Armenia, Tajikistan and, to a certain extent, Kyrgyzstan. Even the attempt to assert its own leadership claim through a military alliance, namely the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), had only limited success. As in the economic and political sphere, it is also evident in the military sphere that Russia's claim to its own sphere of influence has long since clashed with the reality of a now highly differentiated area.

In recent years, Russia has increased its power projection capabilities not only in this region but out of it, too. With a build-up of arms in the military district 'West' and in Crimea, its strengthened military presence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia as well as its joint air defence with Belarus and Armenia, Russia is expanding its position on the Western border, and particularly in the Black Sea region. This presents even more of a challenge for the Atlantic Alliance and its member states because conventional arms control is in a deep crisis. Firstly, Germany should, therefore, continue to participate in the necessary reassurance measures for the Eastern and Southeastern alliance members. Secondly, it should continue its efforts within NATO and vis-à-vis Moscow to modernise military transparency, trust and limitation measures.

The cases of Russian coercive diplomacy in the post-Soviet space are not only a military, but also a regulatory challenge for Germany and NATO. The wars in Georgia and Ukraine violated the basic principles agreed in the Paris Charter in 1990. This triggered a deep crisis of trust, which reduces the chances of NATO or its member states finding a common approach with Russia with regard to solving problems in the post-Soviet space, while, at the same time, the need for such cooperation increases. The dangers of unintended escalation in cases of 'unresolved conflicts' as well as transnational dangers show how necessary this is. As long as there is no return to 'business as usual', it would be possible to build on successful projects initiated by the NATO-Russia Council, which could be developed further with greater participation from other states in the region. One such example is the fight against drug smuggling from Afghanistan.

There is a growing opportunity for NATO and its members to develop relations with other post-Soviet countries. Since the crisis over Ukraine, scepticism towards Russia has grown. This opens up the possibility of entering into dialogue with or even intensifying cooperation with states that have, so far, largely been militarily aligned with Russia, such as Kazakhstan, Armenia or Belarus. Offers of cooperation could be aimed at reducing transnational security risks, restoring trust and transparency, and strengthening their resilience to 'hybrid threats'.

Framework Conditions

Since the war in Georgia and the start of Russian military reform in 2008, the importance of hard power instruments to Russia's foreign policy has increased significantly. Russian leaders perceive military might as an indispensable prerequisite for successfully asserting their national interests. Putin warned in an article in 2012 that, "we should not tempt anyone by allowing ourselves to be weak". Strong forces are, "an indispensable condition for Russia to feel secure and for our partners to heed our country's arguments".[1] As a result, Russia increasingly demonstrated its military capabilities to the outside world (show of force) or even utilised them, as in Georgia (2008), Ukraine (from 2014) and Syria (from 2015). The threat of military force and its deployment became an integral part of Russia's coercive diplomacy. Its aim is to get other states to refrain from unwanted behaviour or display a desired behaviour.

> **The importance of military instruments in Russia's foreign policy has risen sharply.**

The armed forces became a crucial instrument for exerting influence, but are also used as an amplifier for non-military means. They are used both openly and covertly. In addition, Moscow employs its military instruments to expand cooperation with other states. Military cooperation is playing an increasingly important role in consolidating existing or developing new partnerships, such as the armaments cooperation with Turkey or joint exercises with China and Egypt.

The growing importance of military means is particularly noticeable in Russia's policy towards the post-Soviet space. All previous missions by Russia's armed forces (except for peacekeeping operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo and the intervention in Syria) took place in the territory of the former USSR. Also, military cooperative approaches, i.e. a bilateral cooperation or multilateral alliance system, are most pronounced in this region.

"Zone of privileged interests"

The objectives of Russian military policy in the post-Soviet space are shaped by Russian leaders' ambitions and their perceptions of threats in the region. They define Russia as a great power and, as a result, aim to restore international recognition for Russia's self-proclaimed status through its foreign and security policy.[2] At a global level, Russia is seeking to position itself as an independent pole in a multipolar world order. While it claims a say on all important global issues, it pursues hegemonic ambitions in the post-Soviet space. This is because, in Moscow's traditional understanding, control of its own sphere of influence is considered an indispensable prerequisite for acting as a great power. At the same time, the Russian leadership does not specify expressis verbis the geographical limits of the claimed zone of influence. It uses terms

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1   Vladimir Putin, "Being Strong: National Security Guarantees for Russia", *Russia Today*, 19 February 2012, https://www.rt.com/politics/official-word/strong-putin-military-russia-711/. See also Putin's speech to the 2018 Federal Assembly in which he accused the US of ignoring Russian security concerns while Russia's armed forces were weak. The nuclear modernisation projects announced would mean that Washington would now have to listen. "Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly", *President of Russia* (official website), 1 March 2018, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56957.

2   In the National Security Strategy from 2015, Russia is referred to as "one of the world's leading powers". According to Russia's Foreign Policy Concept from 2016, the task of foreign policy is to consolidate the country's status as "a centre of influence in the world today". "Strategija nacional'noj bezopasnosti Rossijskoj Federacii" [The National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation], *Sovet Bezopasnosti Rossijskoj Federacii* [The Security Council of the Russian Federation] (official website), 31 Dececmber 2015, http://www.scrf.gov.ru/security/docs/document133/; "Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation", *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation* (official website), 1 December 2016, http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_ documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/ 2542248.

such as 'near abroad',[3] 'zone of interest'[4] or 'zone of privileged interests'[5] which are kept intentionally fluid in order to maintain strategic ambiguity. In essence, this is the post-Soviet area, although the extent to which the Baltic States are included is left open.

The Russian leadership does not use the unambiguous term 'zone of influence' itself and prefers to speak of the need for close cooperation and integration resulting from historically grown ties.[6] In fact, Russia and the post-Soviet states continue to be closely linked economically, culturally and also in terms of security policy, so a need for cooperation does exist. The relations and order model being pursued by Moscow is, however, not based on cooperation among peers, but ultimately on the acceptance of Russian hegemony, thus corresponding to the concept of a zone of influence. Moscow's claim to leadership in the post-Soviet space includes the right to define the rules of the game that apply there and to limit external actors' room for manoeuvre. Although the sovereignty of the countries concerned is formally recognised, it is perceived as limited.[7] In military policy

terms, this means that Moscow implicitly rejects the right of the post-Soviet states to freely choose alliances and demands a veto over any military cooperation with third countries that could be perceived as a threat to Russia.[8] Russia's leaders consider maintaining security in the post-Soviet space a prerogative of its country, including the right to intervene unilaterally.[9]

As early as the 1990s, Moscow deployed its armed forces in conflicts in Moldova (Transnistria) and Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia) without respecting the OSCE's mandates of neutrality or the consent of all parties to the conflict.[10] After the Russo-Georgian War in 2008, Russia expanded the deployment options

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3   William Safire, "On Language; The Near Abroad", *The New York Times Magazine*, 22 May 1994, http://www.nytimes.com/1994/05/22/magazine/on-language-the-near-abroad.html.

4   "Ukaz Prezidenta Rossijskoj Federacii ot 14.09.1995 g. No. 940 'Ob utverzhdenii strategicheskogo kursa Rossijskoj Federacii s gosudarstvami — uchastnikami Sodruzhestva Nesavisimych Gosudarstv'" [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation from 14 September 1995, No. 940, "Setting the strategic course of the Russian Federation with the participating countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States"], *Prezident Rossii* [President of Russia] (official website), 14 September 1995, http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/8307.

5   "Interview Given by Dmitry Medvedev to Television Channels Channel One, Russia, NTV", *President of Russia* (official website), 31 August 2008, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/48301.

6   Even though political leaders avoid the term "zone of influence", it is certainly used as self-ascription in the political and military debate. For instance, influential military thinkers Chekinov and Bogdanov call the post-Soviet space a "zone of traditional influence". S. G. Chekinov and S. A. Bogdanov, "Osobennosti obecpechenija voennoj bezopasnosti Rossii v XXI stoletii v usloviach globalizacii" [The Features of Ensuring Military Security in 21st Century Russia in Conditions of Globalisation], *Voennaya Mysl'*, no. 6 (2016): 37–51 (50).

7   Although Russia has recognised the territorial integrity and state sovereignty of Ukraine in international treaties, this is considered an artificial construct, as can be seen in Putin's statement that Russians and Ukrainians are "basically one people". "Bol'shaya press-konferenciya Vladimira Pu-

tina" [Major Press Conference by Vladimir Putin], *Prezident Rossii* [President of Russia] (official website), 14 December 2017, http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56378. This view is also shared by large parts of the population. In an opinion poll conducted by research institute Levada in 2017, 61 percent of respondents would not classify Belarus and Ukraine, and 44 percent Georgia, as "foreign countries". However, only 25 percent considered it right that Russia use all available means — including military ones — to keep the former Soviet republics under its control; 65 percent did not agree. "Mezhdunarodnye otnoshenia" [International Relations], *Levada-Zentr* (official website), 2 February 2017, http://www.levada.ru/2017/02/02/mezhdunarodnye-otnosheniya-5/.

8   In 1995, President Yeltsin had already called for the CIS states not to join an alliance directed against one member state. He also called for third countries or international organisations to cooperate with CIS member countries on the assumption that they were "first and foremost a Russian zone of interest". Similarly, the draft contract on Euro-Atlantic security regulations presented by then President Medvedev in 2008 stipulates that no actor should undertake actions that are perceived by the other side as endangering their own security. However, no objective criteria are specified as to what actions should be taken. Under this subjectively interpretable category, Russia could have denied the post-Soviet states close adherence to and accession to NATO. Ten years after the Russo-Georgian war, Prime Minister Medvedev warned Georgia and NATO of a "terrible conflict" should the country join the Alliance. "Ukaz Prezidenta Rossijskoj Federacii ot 14.09.1995" (see note 4); "The Draft of the European Security Treaty", *President of Russia* (official website), 29 November 2009, http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/275; "Medvedev Warns against Conflict", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 7 August 2018, 8.

9   In March 1993, President Yeltsin urged international organisations to grant Russia "special powers as a guarantor of peace and stability in the former Soviet territories". *Itar-Tass*, 1 March 1993.

10   See Roy Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention* (Oxford, 2013).

for its armed forces abroad. Until then, the "Law on Defence" had only allowed Moscow to deploy its army outside its own territory to ward off an armed attack on its own territory or that of its allies, to combat international terrorism, or to conduct peacekeeping operations. An amendment to the law in November 2009 now makes this possible when another country requests military assistance, to repulse an armed attack on Russian soldiers stationed abroad or to protect Russian citizens abroad from armed assault.[11]

Since the wording is deliberately vague, Russian leaders have a wide scope of interpretation to justify military intervention in the post-Soviet space, going beyond defending itself against attack on its own territory or peacekeeping and anti-terrorist operations. If the fall of a pro-Russian government threatens to result in a 'colour revolution', Moscow can intervene in response to a request for help from the head of state. Regardless of whether the respective state leaders agree, Moscow could intervene if Russian troops stationed in the country or Russian citizens residing there were attacked. Above all, the phrase "protection of Russian citizens abroad" gives Moscow effective leverage that it has used increasingly since the Russo-Georgian war in 2008. In Kazakhstan (21 percent), Ukraine (17 percent), Kyrgyzstan (9 percent) and Belarus (8 percent), the share of ethnic Russians in the total population is particularly large.[12] With its policy of *passportizacija*, i.e. liberally granting Russian passports, Moscow is continually expanding the number of Russian "protected objects", predominantly in conflict areas such as Abkhazian, South Ossetia, Transnistria and Crimea.[13] Twice already, in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine in 2014, Moscow justified its military intervention through, among other things, the alleged need to defend Russian citizens.[14]

Perceived threats

In the Russian security discourse, the post-Soviet space is given a key role in ensuring national security. This is not only because of its geographic proximity, but also due to the numerous overlapping conflict situations. The military doctrine of 2014 refers to both the dangers and threats to Russia posed by the post-Soviet countries themselves and by those that affect the region from outside.[15] The former includes

11 "O vnesenii izmenenij v Federal'nyj zakon 'ob oborone'" [On the introduction of amendments to the Federal Law "On Defence"], *Rossijskaya Gazeta*, 9 November 2009, https://rg.ru/2009/11/13/armia-dok.html.
12 In Moldova, including the breakaway region of Transnistria, ethnic Russians accounted for 9 percent, Turkmenistan 5 percent and Uzbekistan, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan less than 3 percent each of their respective national populations. Figures refer to the last census in the respective countries.
13 The *russkij mir* (Russian World) concept goes even further. In it, Moscow appears as a protective power not only of Russian citizens and ethnic Russians, but also of the Russian-speaking population and all those people who, as Putin put it, "see themselves as part of Russia and regard Russia as their homeland". Although the broad *russkij mir* protection claim does not give the Russian President any legal authority to use troops abroad, nevertheless, it can increase political pressure on a target country. During the Ukraine crisis in 2014, Putin repeatedly referred to the concept of *russkij mir*, but has not used it since. "Reception to Mark National Unity Day", *President of Russia* (official website), 4 November 2013, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19562; cf. Vera Zakem, Paul Saunders and Daniel Antoun, *Mobilizing Compatriots: Russia's Strategy, Tactics, and Influence in the Former Soviet Union* (Arlington, VA: CNA, 2015).
14 Russia's leaders justified the intervention in Georgia in 2008 as self-defence since Russian peacekeepers had been shot in South Ossetia. In addition, they referred — still with no corresponding legal basis — to the protection of Russian citizens, which had previously come from their own *passportizacija* policy in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. On 1 March 2014, Putin had the Federation Council grant approval for an intervention in Ukraine to protect the lives of "citizens of the Russian Federation, our compatriots and personnel of the military contingent of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation stationed in the territory of Ukraine". "Vladimir Putin vnes obrashchenie v Sovet Federacii" [Speech delivered by Vladimir Putin to the Federation Council], *Prezident Rossii* [President of Russia] (official website), 1 March 2014, http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20353. See Emmanuel Karagiannis, "The Russian Interventions in South Ossetia and Crimea Compared: Military Performance, Legitimacy and Goals", *Contemporary Security Policy* 35, no. 3 (2014): 400−20.
15 Military doctrine distinguishes between military dangers and threats, the former being the precursor to the latter. According to the doctrine, the following developments are classified as dangers in the "neighbourhood of Russia": "armed conflicts and their escalation", "interethnic and interdenominational tensions", "activities of radical international armed groups and private military companies" and the "establishment of regimes that compromise Russian interests". "Military threat" means "military demonstration of power in the course of exercises" and the "intensification of the activity of armed forces including their partial or full mobilization". "Voennaja Doktrina Rossijskoj Federacii" [Military Doctrine

a violent escalation of multiple conflicts in the post-Soviet space which Russia could not control. These include ethnoterritorial disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan near Nagorno-Karabakh, between the Georgian government and the breakaway areas of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, between Moldova and the separatists in Transnistria and between Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in the Fergana Valley. In addition, there are conflicts over resources and unsolved succession arrangements in the region's authoritarian power systems. Some conflicts are deliberately fuelled by Russia in order to expand its own influence. Behind this strategy is the idea of controlled instability. However, a policy of this kind cannot eliminate the risk that these conflicts escalate without or even against Russia's intentions and then might have a negative impact on Russia. The same applies to the risks associated with military intervention.[16] An example of how quickly supposedly frozen conflicts can heat up again occurred in April 2016 when fighting broke out between Azerbaijani soldiers and fighters from the breakaway enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh and 30 people died over four days. In order to prevent the fighting from ending in direct military conflict between Baku and Yerevan, Moscow intervened at diplomatic level. It was eager to avoid a direct attack by Azerbaijani troops on Armenian territory (not on Nagorno-Karabakh), because Yerevan could then have demanded alliance solidarity from Moscow.

While in Russian military doctrine the escalation of conflicts in and between the post-Soviet states is considered a "danger", certain military activities by Georgia and Ukraine that Moscow is in open conflict with are considered "threats". These include the various rounds of partial mobilisations in Ukraine since 2014, as well as larger exercises.[17] The risk of an unintended military confrontation with Tbilisi seems rather low at the moment, given that Georgia's current leaders have no ambitions to recapture the breakaway areas through military force and the paramilitary forces in Abkhazia and South Ossetia are controlled by Russia. In contrast, the situation in the Donbas is much more volatile because violent non-state actors are much more autonomous and the domestic dynamics of the Ukrainian election campaign in 2019 may provide incentives for leaders to take a more robust stance. Since Russia completed the bridge across the Strait of Kerch in May 2018, the Sea of Azov has also become a third conflict point between Russia and Ukraine after Crimea and Donbas. How serious the potential for military escalation between Russia and Ukraine is, was seen in November 2018 when Russian border guard's vessels shot at Ukrainian patrol boats in the strait of Kerch.

Beyond the security risks arising from the region, Moscow traditionally views the post-Soviet states as a buffer against military threats and external risks, both transnational and inter-state. Accordingly, the Central Asian states are seen as a protective shield against security risks from Afghanistan and, in the long term, against a further strengthening China, while the South Caucasus countries are seen as a buffer against possible dangers from the Middle East. The post-Soviet states bordering on NATO countries, in particular, have become more important as an upstream defence ring. The reassurance measures agreed by the Atlantic Alliance for its Eastern member states in the wake of the crisis over Ukraine are seen in Moscow as part of an ultimately offensive rearmament, for example the US and NATO strategic missile defence plans.[18]

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of the Russian Federation], *Sovet Bezopasnosti Rossijskoj Federacii* [Security Council of the Russian Federation] (official website), 25 December 2014, http://www.scrf.gov.ru/security/military/document129/.

16 See Sabine Fischer, "Russian Policy in the Unresolved Conflicts", in *Not Frozen! The Unresolved Conflicts over Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh in Light of the Crisis over Ukraine*, (ed.) Sabine Fischer, SWP Research Paper 9/2016 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, September 2016): 9−24; Rossijskij Sovet po Mezhdunarodnym Delam [Russian International Affairs Council] (ed.), *Konflikty na post-sovetskom prostranstve: perspektivy uregulirovanija i rol' Rossii* [Conflicts in the Post-Soviet Space: Perspectives on Regulation and the Role of Russia] (Moscow, 2016).

17 Georgia and Ukraine cooperate with Western partners on multilateral manoeuvres. In 2017, 2,800 soldiers from Georgia, the US, UK, Germany, Turkey, Ukraine and Slovenia took part in Noble Trident in Georgia. The Rapid Trident exercise took place in the same year in Ukraine with 1,650 soldiers from 15 countries.

18 NATO responded to the crisis over Ukraine with reassurance measures for eastern member states and amendments to the Atlantic Alliance's military posture as a whole. Reassurance measures include increased air policing in the Baltic States, more exercises in the eastern member states (e.g. Sabre Strike 2018 with 18,000 soldiers) or the formally rotation-based deployment of four multinational NATO battlegroups in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland (Enhanced Forward Presence). The adaptation measures are

Moscow has become increasingly concerned over the activities of external actors in the post-Soviet space that undermine its own claim to leadership. Though they have not expressed it directly, Russia's leaders are uneasy about China's increasing power. Russia regards having a strong military position in the post-Soviet space, and especially in Central Asia, as reassurance against the growing economic and political importance of China. Nevertheless, Moscow sees itself much more strongly challenged by Western countries and institutions, particularly the US and NATO. In its 2015 National Security Strategy, Russian leaders accused Western actors of undermining Russia's integration processes in the region and fuelling tensions there.[19] The Atlantic Alliance's promise to Georgia and Ukraine,[20] albeit without any specific date, and US-NATO military cooperation with post-Soviet states is seen by Moscow as an attempt to push Russia out of its traditional buffer and/or zone of influence.[21]

For some time now, the Russian leadership has felt threatened in its quest for supremacy in the post-Soviet space not only by the 'hard power' of NATO and the US, but increasingly by the 'soft power' of Western states and institutions. The social and political changes brought about by the EU's association and free trade agreements with countries such as Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and Armenia limit Russia's scope for influence. At the same time, Russian leaders do not consider 'colour revolutions' to be the result of social or political dissatisfaction among the populations of these countries, but as a 'soft' variant of Western interventionism or a "new form of Western warfare", as Russian Chief of General Staff,

Valery Gerasimov, put it in February 2013.[22] They are purportedly aimed at weakening Russia by replacing pro-Russian regimes with those that "threaten Russia", or by creating "a zone of chaos" around Russia, eventually leading to regime change in Russia itself.[23] The military intervention of Libya by Western states in 2011, which was justified as protecting humanitarian interests but at the same time led to regime change and the killing of Gaddafi, has hardened Russia's position on this issue considerably.

Objectives and levels of Russian military policy in the post-Soviet space

The special position of the post-Soviet space in Russian military policy results from the fact that only there do hegemonic claims and vital security interests converge. The objectives of Moscow's military policy in this region are correspondingly broad. It is not just a question of warding off threats and dangers, but also of controlling the region and limiting the range of actions available to external actors.

To this end, Moscow is pursuing a three-level approach. At the unilateral level, it seeks to strengthen the power projection capabilities of the Russian armed forces in the post-Soviet space. These should be able to cover a wide range of requirements from conducting crisis management operations aimed at averting transnational threats and peacekeeping operations, to unconventional and conventional warfare operations aimed at asserting its interests and deterring external actors. The second level includes Russia's bilateral military cooperation with post-Soviet countries. The aim here is to combat common threats more effectively, but at the same time create hegemonic dependencies in Moscow's favour, through cooperation on armaments, training and exercises. Moscow has similar objectives at the

reflected above all in the strengthening of Alliance defence capabilities.

19 "Strategija nacional'noj bezopasnosti" (see note 2); "O vnesenii izmenenij v Federal'nyj zakon 'ob oborone'" (see note 11).

20 In April 2008, NATO promised Georgia and Ukraine membership, but did not name a specific date. "Bucharest Summit Declaration", *NATO* (official website), 3 April 2008, https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/official_texts_8443.htm.

21 The expansion of NATO, the "deployment of foreign troops" in the neighbourhood of Russia and "bringing military infrastructure" to the borders of Russia are seen as a danger in military doctrine and "military demonstration of power in the course of exercises" as a threat. "Voennaya Doktrina Rossijskoj Federacii" (see note 15).

22 Valerij Gerasimov, "Cennost' nauki i predvidenija" [The Value of Science and Foresight], *Voenno-promyshlennyj kur'er*, 26 February 2013, https://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/14632; Valerij Gerasimov, "Mir na granjach vojny" [Peace on the Verge of War], *Voenno-promyshlennyj kur'er*, 13 March 2017, https://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/35591.

23 See A. Belskij and O. Klimenko, "Politicheskie technologii cvetnych revolucii" [The Political Technologies of Colour Revolutions], *Voennaya Mysl'*, no. 9 (2014): 3−11; V. I. Vorobjev and V. A. Kitselev, "Strategii sokrushenija i izmora v novom oblike" [The Encircling Strategy in a New Guise], *Voennaya Mysl'*, no. 3 (2014): 45−57.

third level, multilateral cooperation with the post-Soviet states. The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) serves not only to strengthen capabilities for combatting external and transnational dangers, but also to legitimise Russia's claim to be the leading regional power.[24]

24 See "Ukaz Prezidenta Rossijskoj Federacii ot 14.09.1995" (see note 4); "Ukaz Prezidenta 'O strategii nacional'noj bezo-pasnosti'" (see note 2]; "O vnesenii izmenenij v Federal'nyj zakon 'ob oborone'" (see note 11); "Voennaja Doktrina Ros-sijskoj Federacii" (see note 15).

Russia's Unilateral Power Projection Capabilities

The following section analyses Russia's unilateral military power projection capabilities. Power is not understood in the sense of outcome, but as a resource. Consequently, no statements can be made about the chances of success of potential Russian military actions, since their impact depends on other contextual factors such as topography, resistance from the local population and response from external actors. Rather, it is a question of the military power resources available to Russia.[25]

Military superiority

Russia's armed forces are superior, both quantitatively and qualitatively, to those of other post-Soviet countries to varying degrees. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia inherited the bulk of the Soviet army, including its arsenal and infrastructure. Furthermore, Russia began to comprehensively reform its armed forces in autumn 2018, after the Russo-Georgian war. The successes in modernisation achieved since then are particularly noticeable when compared to the armed forces of other post-Soviet states. To date, most of their armed forces have hardly been reformed at all, or only in individual areas.

The Russian defence budget grew from $24.6 billion in 2008 to $45.6 billion in 2017.[26] In the same period, only Azerbaijan increased its defence budget by a similar percentage. Budget growth in other countries is either more moderate (Kazakhstan) or has so far been short-lived (Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus). In 2017, the Russian military budget was 17 times higher than the second strongest in the region (Ukraine), 29 times higher than the third strongest (Azerbaijan) and 1,572 times higher than the weakest (Moldova).[27]

After the dissolution of the Soviet Red Army, most of its extensive arsenal was transferred to the newly created Russian armed forces, but was poorly maintained in the 1990s and early 2000s. It was not until the 2008 military reform that Russia set itself the goal

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25 Of the multitude of potential parameters, we look at those that are important to Russia for its objectives in the post-Soviet space. These include the state of the Russian armed forces in relation to those of other post-Soviet countries. An assessment was made based on budget resources, weapon systems, personnel and levels of professionalisation and training. It is important not only to consider regular soldiers, but also non-regular proxies which play a major role in hybrid operations. The present paper also considers rapid deployment and forward military presence (military bases) because these factors are necessary in order to project power in the region. See Ashley J. Tellis et al., *Measuring National Power in the Postindustrial Age* (Santa Monica, CA, 2000), 133–76; David Clowes and Dominika Choroś-Mrozowska, "Aspects of Global Security — the Measurement of Power & Its Projection: Results from Twenty Selected Countries (2000–2013)", *Journal of International Studies* 8, no. 1 (2015): 53–66.

26 The figures used here correspond to the narrow definition of the Russian budget item 'National Defence'. Where expenses included in other Russian budget items need to be added so they meet the NATO definition of defence spending, then these figures are significantly higher, i.e. $61.7 billion in 2017. The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) (ed.), *The Military Balance. The Annual Assessment of Global Military Capabilities and Defense Economics* (London, 2018), 192. In 2017, the defence budget fell for the first time since the introduction of military reform. However, this is not a fundamental change of policy; rather, budget allocations to the military had peaked before 2016. Modest cuts were made in 2017 due to general budgetary savings and financial adjustment measures. See Janis Kluge, *Russlands Staatshaushalt unter Druck. Finanzielle und politische Risiken der Stagnation*, SWP-Studie 14/2018 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, July 2018), 25.

27 IISS (ed.), *The Military Balance* (see note 26).

of substantially modernising its military hardware.[28] Moscow launched an ambitious arms programme[29] that should see the share of modern weapons rise to 70 percent by 2020. Despite financial difficulties, supply and production problems in the Russian defence industry, European sanctions on "dual-use" goods (since 2014) and the termination of the arms cooperation with Ukraine (since 2014), Russia has been able to significantly modernise its forces' armaments and equipment since 2008. While defence companies mainly based their designs on Soviet blueprints into the mid-2000s, they are now developing and constructing completely new systems. As a result, the proportion of 'modern' systems in 2017 rose to 42 percent in the Army, 47 percent in the Navy and 62 percent in the Aerospace Forces.[30] In addition, the Russian armed forces invested in capabilities that are either not or only to a limited extent available to other post-Soviet states, particularly in the cyber sector.[31]

These qualitative improvements further increase Russia's quantitative superiority in the region. In con-trast, economically weak states with no significant defence industries such as Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Moldova and Armenia were barely able to maintain existing or acquire new military hardware. Only Azerbaijan and, to a lesser extent, Kazakhstan and Georgia were able to modernise their arsenals, in part through imports from abroad. After the collapse of the USSR, Ukraine inherited a third of the Soviet defence industry, but until 2014 it produced primarily for export. Kiev also lost important armament sites from the annexation of Crimea and fighting in the Donbas. Efforts at modernisation since 2014 have focused primarily on repairing and upgrading existing models, coupled with isolated arms imports from Western countries. The US government decided to deliver arms to Ukraine in December 2017. This is not yet a large-scale rearmament programme, but Ukrainian forces are now being equipped with modern weapons in selected areas.[32]

Also in terms of levels of personnel, professionalisation and training, the Russian forces are considerably superior to other post-Soviet states. With 900,000 troops, Russia's military is more than four times the size of Ukraine's, 13 times the size of Azerbaijan's and 175 times the size of Moldova's. Russia's military reforms have also brought about a surge in professionalisation. While in 2008 Russia only had 76,000 soldiers under contract (*kontraktniki*), by February 2017 that figure had risen to 384,000.[33] Overall, two-thirds of Russia's armed forces consist of professional and contract soldiers (220,000 officers and 384,000 *kontraktniki*) and only one-third of conscripts (around

28   Jurij Gavrilov, "Krizis: Armiya ne otstupaet" [Crisis: The Army Is Not Retreating], *Rossijskaja Gazeta*, 19 March 2009, https://rg.ru/2009/03/19/krizis.html.
29   The "State Armaments Programme 2011–2020" was allocated 19 trillion roubles, at that time the equivalent of 580 billion euros. There has been a hefty debate between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Defence since 2016 over the subsequent "State Armaments Programme 2018–2027". At 19 trillion roubles, 274 billion euros at the current exchange rate, it represents a compromise. Richard Connolly and Mathieu Boulègue, *Russia's New State Armament Programme: Implications for the Russian Armed Forces and Military Capabilities to 2027* (London: Chatham House, 10 May 2018); Ivan Safronov and Alexandra Dzhordzhevich, "19 trillionov prinimajut na vooruzhenie" [Defence Gets 19 Trillion], *Kommersant*, 15 November 2017, https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3467573.
30   "Ministr oborony Rossijskoj Federacii Sergej Shojgu vystupil na zasedanii Gosdumy v ramkah 'pravitel'stvennogo chasa'" [Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation, Sergei Schoigu, at the meeting of the State Duma during the government session], *Ministerstvo Oborony Rossijskoj Federacii* [Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation] (official website), 22 February 2017, http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12112634@egNews&. The numbers are difficult to verify because there are no clear criteria for 'modernity' and it is not clear what the percentages refer to precisely.
31   In February 2017, Minister of Defence Shoigu confirmed that an Information Warfare Directorate had been created at the Ministry of Defence in 2013 and announced it was establishing Information Operations Troops. "Ministr oborony Rossijskoj Federacii Sergej Shojgu vystupil" (see note 30).

32   These include rifles for snipers and anti-tank missiles. See Andrzej Wilk, *The Best Army Ukraine Has Ever Had. Changes in Ukraine's Armed Forces since the Russian Aggression*, OSW Studies, no. 66 (Warsaw: Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich [OSW], July 2017).
33   In order to increase the number of soldiers that can be deployed rapidly on foreign missions, since November 2016 *kontraktniki* have also been able to sign up for a short period of twelve months. In addition, since 2003, foreign citizens have been allowed to serve in the Russian armed forces on a contractual basis, and since October 2017 they have also been allowed to participate in military operations abroad. "Ministr oborony Rossijskoj Federacii Sergej Shojgu vystupil" (see note 30); "Ukaz Prezidenta Rossijskoj Federacii 'O vnesenii izmenenij v Polozhenie o porjadke prochozhdenija voennoj sluzhby'" [Decree by the President of the Russian Federation: "On the Introduction of Amendments to Regulations Governing Military Service".], *Oficialnyj internet-portal pravovoj informacii* [Official Internet portal for legal information], 8 October 2017, http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201710090001?index=0&rangeSize=1.

Table 1

Comparison of post-Soviet forces basis on selected parameters

	Defence budget 2016 in billions US dollars (purchasing power parity)	*No. of personnel*	*Combat tanks*	*Combat planes*
Russia	45.6	900,000	2,780	1,176
Armenia	0.43	44,800	109	15
Azerbaijan	1.6	66,950	439	37
Belarus	0.5	45,350	532	64
Georgia	0.3	20,650	123	3
Kazakhstan	1.4	39,000	300	104
Kyrgyzstan	n/a	10,900	150	4
Moldova	0.03	5,150	0	0
Tajikistan	0.2	7,500	37	0
Turkmenistan	n/a	36,500	654	55
Ukraine	2.7	204,000	832	125
Uzbekistan	n/a	48,000	340	45

Source: Own table based on data from IISS (ed.), *The Military Balance. The Annual Assessment of Global Military Capabilities and Defence Economics* (London, 2018): 181−215.

300,000). Professionalisation mainly benefited the rapidly deployable forces, which have also been strengthened in terms of personnel and materials. The number of airborne troops is expected to double to 72,000 by 2019.[34] A peacekeeping unit completely made up of professional soldiers (5,000 men) was established in 2013.[35] In the same year, the General Staff also created its own Special Operations Forces, members of which are deployed in Crimea and combat operations in the Donbas and Syria.[36] Thus, Russia has around 100,000 soldiers that can be deployed quickly for covert operations behind enemy lines, for counter-terrorism and counterinsurgency, crisis management and as a spearhead in conventional combat operations.

The general training levels of Russian soldiers have also improved significantly since the start of the military reform. The number, scope and complexity of the exercises have increased considerably.[37] Between 2011 and 2014, the number of soldiers participating in major exercises has increased from 15,000 to 150,000; the number of items of military hardware deployed has increased eightfold from 1,000 to 8,000.[38] The "East 2018" training exercise that took place in the "Eastern" and "Central" military districts

34   Sergej Ptichkin, "Desant peresjadet na tanki" [Paratroopers are Coming with Tanks], *Rossijskaja Gazeta*, 24 May 2016, https://rg.ru/2016/05/24/vdv-poluchat-tiazheluiu-brone tehniku.html.
35   Andrej Bondarenko, "Mirotvorcy v golubych beretach" [Peacekeepers in Blue Berets], *Krasnaja Zvezda*, 18 June 2013.
36   See Aleksey Nikolsky, "Russian Special Operations Forces: Further Development or Stagnation?", *Moscow Defense Brief*, no. 4 (2014): 25f.

37   In addition to an annual large-scale exercise which alternates between the various strategic directions ("West", "Caucasus", "Centre" and "East"), unannounced large-scale exercises (snap exercises) have been taking place again since 2013. While the former tests various aspects of warfare, the latter tests the readiness of the armed forces.
38   Based on data from Johan Norberg, *Training to Fight. Russia's Major Military Exercises 2011−2014*, FOI-R--4128--SE (Stockholm: Totalförsvarets forskningsinstitut [Swedish Defence Research Agency; FOI], December 2015). At the same time, the complexity of the scenarios tested continued to increase. Between 2014 and 2015, for example, there were 30 percent more joint military exercises. IISS (ed.), *The Military Balance* (see note 26), 187.

in September 2018 was the largest training exercise in post-Soviet times with officially 300,000 soldiers participating.[39] The training scenarios cover the entire range of deployment options in the post-Soviet space. Additionally, an increasing proportion of the armed forces have gained combat experience from operations in Ukraine and Syria. According to the Russian Defence Minister, 86 percent of Russian pilots have now completed flights in Syria.[40]

Russian forces have the highest level of operational readiness in the post-Soviet space. In contrast, financially weak states such as Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Moldova and Turkmenistan have hardly been able to invest in education, training or developing special forces for more than two decades. The situation looks somewhat better in resource-rich states, such as Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan or in Georgia and Ukraine, where the wars with Russia have acted as a catalyst for modernisation.[41] Since 2008, Tbilisi has been able to improve the training and education of its soldiers with the help of NATO and individual Western states, especially the US. In Ukraine, only 6,000 out of 140,000 soldiers were ready for rapid deployment at the outbreak of fighting in 2014 due to a lack of training and poorly maintained materials. Since then, Kiev has not only almost doubled the size of its armed forces, but has also invested in modern command and control, training and a special forces unit. Today, Ukrainian soldiers also have the greatest operational experience in the post-Soviet space, after Russian forces.[42] Nevertheless, Russia remains the only country in the region able to rapidly initiate, implement and sustain larger and more complex military operations.[43]

Paramilitary forces and "proxies"

In addition to its regular armed forces, Russia's leaders can also rely on paramilitary forces from other ministries for operations in the post-Soviet space. For instance, FSB special forces and the National Guard, formed in April 2016, are also available for anti-terrorism operations. Units of the National Guard can also be placed under military command for territorial defence or used to maintain public order in an occupation scenario.[44] The Kadyrovtsy, some of whom fought in the Donbas and Syria, are formally attached to the National Guard but are de facto loyal to Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov.[45] In order to secure the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are recognised as independent by Russia, Moscow also deploys border patrol troops.[46] Coordinating missions involving not only regular armed forces but also paramilitary units from other ministries was made considerably easier in 2014. The then newly founded National Command Centre of the Ministry of Defence no longer only commands the various branches of the armed forces, but also the specific deployment of the armed units of more than 40 ministries and authorities.[47]

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39 The real number of participating soldiers was presumably lower since Russia's military leadership tends to count military units in full strength and not the exact number of those soldiers that took part in the exercises.

40 "Ministr oborony Rossijskoj Federacii Sergej Shojgu vystupil" (see note 30).

41 Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, in particular, have increased training activities for their armed forces. Kazakh pilots now have similar training loads to Russian pilots with 100 hours' training a year. Rashid Shirinov, "Azerbaijani Army Begins Large-scale Military Drills", *Azernews*, 18 September 2017, https://www.azernews.az/nation/119127.html; IISS (ed.), *The Military Balance* (see note 26), 186.

42 Since conscription was abolished in 2013, Ukraine had the highest level of formal professionalisation among post-Soviet armed forces before the outbreak of war in 2014. However, the operational readiness of contract and professional soldiers was low due to lack of training and outdated equipment. After the beginning of the war, compulsory military service was reintroduced and by the end of 2016, 90,000 soldiers had been recruited. See Isabelle Facon, *Reforming*

Ukrainian Defense: No Shortage of Challenges, Notes de l'Ifri, Russie.Nei.Visions 101 (Paris: Institut français des relations internationales [IFRI], 2017).

43 See Gudrun Persson (ed.), *Russian Military Capability in a Ten-Year Perspective – 2016*, FOI-R--4326--SE (Stockholm: FOI, December 2016).

44 See Margarete Klein, *Putin's New National Guard. Bulwark against Mass Protests and Illoyal Elites*, SWP Comment 41/2016 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, September 2016).

45 See Péter Marton and Annamária Kiss, "Review Article: Chechen Combatants' Involvement as Foreign Fighters in Ukraine, Syria, and Iraq", *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society*, no. 2 (2016): 189−220.

46 Until 2004, Russia's Border Service was also responsible for protecting the Tajik-Afghan border.

47 See Roger McDermott, "Russia Activates New Defense Management Center", *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 11, no. 196 (4 November 2014), https://jamestown.org/program/russia-activates-new-defense-management-center/.

'Non-linear warfare' is playing an increasingly important role.

Beyond conventional missions, "non-linear warfare" or "hybrid warfare" is now playing an increasingly important role in Russian military discourse on the post-Soviet space and in the Ukraine conflict. The unusual feature of "non-linear" wars is that they are not formally declared between states. Military and non-military instruments are closely coordinated and irregular 'proxies' are used alongside covert armed forces.[48] They are not formally part of the armed forces or any other state paramilitary units, but are taking on de facto military auxiliary or combat tasks and are unofficially supported by the army, for example with training or supplies.[49] This approach gives Russia's leaders a dual advantage: Externally, they can distance themselves from non-state forces through 'plausible deniability' and inwardly contain the politically sensitive topic of 'fallen soldiers'. At the end of 2015, President Putin claimed there were no regular Russian troops in the Donbas; at the same time, he "never said there weren't people who carried out certain tasks, including military ones".[50]

These proxies include volunteer fighters from Russia, local forces from post-Soviet countries and mercenaries. In Russia, paramilitary education is promoted by the state — both in and out of school, for example, by the Volunteer Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Navy (DOSAAF), veteran organisations and nationalist groups.[51] According to media reports, non-governmental Internet platforms played a role in recruiting volunteer fighters for Ukraine, as did military draft offices that tracked down former Afghan, Chechnya and Georgia military personnel. Quite a few of the Donbas fighters from Russia once served in the Russian armed forces or security forces.[52]

Russian Cossacks can be found at the interface of state and non-state actors. There are around 500,000 registered Cossacks officially serving as auxiliary policemen, border guards and special army units in Russia. There are also Cossack associations that are not registered with the state.[53] Numerous members of both groups live in the regions on the borders of Ukraine, the South Caucasus and Kazakhstan and are, therefore, perfectly placed to act as proxies there. Russian Cossacks fought in Transnistria, Chechnya, Georgia and Ukraine. In the Donbas, they were mainly involved in capturing border towns.[54] Moscow benefits from the fact that Russian Cossack associations have close ties with Cossack groups in other post-Soviet countries. Moscow not only fosters these links,

48   Before 2014, in Russian military circles, the debate was on 'nonlinear warfare or 'new generation warfare'. Only in the course of the Western debate on 'hybrid warfare' was this term (*gibridnaja voijna*) also discussed in Russia, but it was mostly rejected as a Western concept. In Western discourse, the term quickly spread from 2014. In the meantime, however, its analytical content and political impact are also viewed much more critically in the West. On the Russian debate, see Gerasimov, "Cennost' nauki" (see note 22); Belskij and Klimenko, "Politicheskie technologii cvetnych revolucij" (see note 23); Vorobjev and Kitselev, "Strategii sokrushenija i izmora v novom oblike" (see note 23); Aleksandr Bartosh, "Rossii ne izbezhat gibridnych vojn" [Russia cannot escape hybrid wars], *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, 9 March 2018, http://nvo.ng.ru/concepts/2018-03-09/1_987_hybridwar.html. On the Western debate, see Andrew Monaghan, "The 'War' in Russia's 'Hybrid Warfare'", *Parameters* 45, no. 4 (Winter 2015—16): 65—74; Bettina Renz and Hanna Smith, *Russia and Hybrid Warfare. Going beyond the Label*, Aleksanteri Papers no. 1/2016 (Helsinki, 2016).

49   See Aleksandr Gostev and Robert Coalson, "Russia's Paramilitary Mercenaries Emerge from the Shadows", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 16 December 2016, https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-paramilitary-mercenaries-emerge-from-the-shadows-syria-ukraine/28180321.html.

50   "Bolshaja Press-Konferencija Vladimira Putina" [Major Press Conference by Vladimir Putin], *Prezident Rossii* [President

of Russia] (official website), 17 December 2015, http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50971.

51   See Sam Robertshaw, "Voluntary Organizations and Society-Military Relations in Contemporary Russia", *European Security* 24, no. 2 (2015): 304—18; Orysia Lutsevych, *Agents of the Russian World. Proxy Groups in the Contested Neighbourhood* (London: Chatham House, April 2016), 31.

52   Nikolay Mitrochin, "Diktaturtransfer im Donbass. Gewalt und 'Staatsbildung' in Russlands 'Volksrepubliken'", *Osteuropa* 67, no. 3—4 (2017): 41—55 (49).

53   Cossacks played an important role in protecting and expanding the territory of the Russian Empire as soldier peasants. While some Cossacks strive to be recognised as an independent ethnic group, most see themselves as ethnic Russians with their own specifically military culture. See Jolanta Darczewska, *Putin's Cossacks. Folklore, Business or Politics?*, OSW Point of View no. 68 (Warsaw: OSW, December 2017), 23ff.

54   See Valery Dzutsati, "Terek Cossacks Reveal Their Extensive Participation in the Annexation of Crimea", *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 13, no. 191 (6 December 2016), https://jamestown.org/program/terek-cossacks-reveal-extensive-participation-annexation-crimea/.

but actively supports Cossack groups in post-Soviet countries. For example, before annexation, Crimean Cossacks received financial support from Russia and in March 2014 they helped occupy administrative buildings. In Belarus, which has hardly any Cossack tradition of its own, Moscow is promoting the development of such groups, for example by providing training in Russian military camps.[55]

Other local proxies include former Russian soldiers and intelligence agents who have moved to post-Soviet countries, as well as (former) local security and military personnel. So some of the militia leaders in the Donbas once served in the armed organs of Russia. Crimea's annexation was also made easier by the defection of high-ranking Ukrainian military to the Russian armed forces, including a naval commander and the deputy commander of the Ukrainian Black Sea Fleet.

The advantage to Moscow of using Russian and non-Russian 'volunteers' is that it makes military actions look like local uprisings. However, they sometimes proved to be difficult to control and not very effective militarily. As a result, since 2015, Russian leaders have undergone a learning process. They are now relying increasingly on mercenaries who give them greater professionalisation and control. Although private military companies are still prohibited under Russian law, Russia's leaders can commission private security companies that are equipped like private military firms, or use the services of mercenary groups led by former Russian military or intelligence agents and registered abroad, such as "Vagner", "RBS" or "Slavjanskij Korpus".[56] If

they act too independently or are militarily ineffective then Russia can quickly distance itself from them again.

Deployability and forward presence

Fast deployability and forward presence are key elements of power projection. In the course of the military reform, the ability to move personnel and material both within and beyond their own territory was significantly improved.[57] Different transport methods are needed, depending on the deployment location. Transportation by road and rail is still critical for those countries with which Russia has a joint land border (Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan). One advantage for Moscow is that rail traffic in post-Soviet countries continues to be based on the Russian gauge. This simplifies transport in the region for Russia.

By contrast, military operations in those countries surrounded by land and with no joint border with Russia, namely Moldova, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, depend on air lift. Also, sea lift would be needed for operations in Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan. Certainly Russia's armed forces have by far the largest fleet of transport aircraft and ships in the region and its military operation in Syria demonstrates that Russia has overcome its traditional dependence on ground transport and is now in a position to ensure limited deployment even over several thousand kilometres. At the same time, however, the Syria operation is tying up a significant portion of its air and sea-lift capabilities. For this reason, it is questionable as to what extent Moscow could simultaneously carry out a large-scale deployment in one of the countries that cannot be reached by land — even more so if there are no Russian military bases there. Operations in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan would also depend on Kazakhstan permitting the necessary air transport to fly over its territory.

55 Kamil Kłysiński and Piotr Żochowski, *The End of the Myth of a Brotherly Belarus? Russian Soft Power in Belarus after 2014: The Background and Its Manifestations*, OSW Studies, no. 58 (Warsaw: OSW, November 2016), 31f.

56 In April 2012, Putin announced that private military firms could be "a way to implement national interests without direct state involvement". As a result, a bill to legalise private military firms was put before the Duma, but has not yet been adopted. Aleksey Nikolsky, "Legalization of Private Military Companies in Russia: What Is Holding It Back?", *Moscow Defense Brief*, no. 2 (2015): 26; Niklas Eklund and Jörgen Elfving, "Russian Private Military Companies — Redwater?", *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 14, no. 39 (22 March 2017), https://jamestown.org/program/russian-private-military-companies-redwater/. "Chastnaja armija pod krylom Minoborony" [Private military companies under the umbrella of the Ministry of Defence], *Fontanka*, 21 August 2017, https://www.fontanka.ru/2017/08/18/106/.

57 Defence Minister Shoigu said these snap exercises were to train deploying 65,000 troops over 3,000 kilometres within 72 hours. Dave Johnson, *Russia's Approach to Conflict — Implications for NATO's Deterrence and Defence*, NATO Research Paper no. 111 (Rome: NATO Defense College, Research Division, April 2015), 3.

Moscow's ability to project power in the post-Soviet space is enhanced by having its own military bases there.

Moscow's ability to project power in the post-Soviet space is enhanced by the presence of its own military bases. Russia maintains military bases in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Armenia, who agree to host them as a means to enhance the security that these countries feel unable to provide without external support. In Armenia, the presence of Russian troops to protect against possible aggression from Azerbaijan and Turkey is welcomed and, therefore, not challenged by the new leadership under Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who formed a new government after the Velvet Revolution in May 2018. The leaders of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan also value the Russian military presence as important support in the fight against transnational dangers, potential civil unrest or negative spillover effects from Afghanistan. Furthermore, they see it as a way to balance China's growing economic and political influence in the military arena. Kyrgyzstan, for example, is asking Moscow to establish a second Russian base (under the CSTO banner) in the south of the country near the border with Afghanistan. In contrast, Russian troops in Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Crimea (since 2014) are stationed there against the will of the host country.[58]

Whether or not a host country approves the presence of Russian troops, it can be used to exert politico-military pressure on the respective country and conduct military operations in and from that country faster and more effectively. The vulnerabilities associated with a Russian military presence were evident in Georgia as well as in the annexation of Crimea. Certainly, the shelling of the Russian peacekeeping contingent in South Ossetia by Georgian troops gave Russia the excuse to mount a military intervention. However, Moscow had already massively strengthened the number of troops it had stationed in Abkhazia as peacekeepers under the banner of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and, in 2008, it was able to use its military presence there to penetrate deep into Georgian heartland. The threatening presence of the Russian Black Sea Fleet also played a crucial role in the annexation of Crimea.

Regional priorities

Over the last decade, Moscow has succeeded in expanding the unilateral power projection capabilities of its armed forces in the post-Soviet space. Latest since the Ukraine conflict, there has been a clear shift of emphasis towards the western post-Soviet space, while the extended activities it has undertaken in the Caucasus since 2008 continue. By contrast, its military presence in Central Asia, which initially gained in importance in the wake of the Afghanistan problem after 2001, is stagnating.

The most significant changes relate to Ukraine. With the annexation of Crimea, the existing base of the Russian Black Sea Fleet became an integrated part of its strategic-operational command "South". The number of Russian soldiers stationed on the peninsula increased from 13,000 in 2013 to 28,000 in 2016 and is expected to grow to 45,000 by 2025.[59] The bilateral deployment agreement of 1997 had placed severe limitations on Russia's ability to modernise its Black Sea Fleet. But now, with the help of new submarines and frigates equipped with modern cruise missiles (Kalibr), as well as modern coastal and air defence systems, it has been able to strengthen its anti-access/area denial capabilities[60] over the peninsula and the adjacent region.[61] This not only serves to deter Ukraine from attempting to recapture the area, but also consolidates Russia's military position in the Black Sea, also vis-à-vis its NATO neighbours. Al-

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58 A 1997 agreement allowed Russia to station its Black Sea fleet in Crimea until 2017. In 2010, the agreement was extended and, therefore, the Russian military presence until 2042. Russia announced the extension after Crimea's annexation. At the Istanbul OSCE Summit in 1999, Russia agreed to withdraw its troops from Transnistria and to reduce its troop presence in Georgia, as well as to come to an agreement with Tbilisi on the modalities of the Russian military presence in the country. After the Georgia war in 2008, Moscow recognised Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states and negotiated with them, bypassing Georgia's contracts on troop deployments.

59 See Ridvan Bari Urcosta and Lev Abalkin, "Crimea: Russia's Stronghold in the Black Sea", *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 1 September 2016, http://www.ecfr.eu/article/essay_crimea_ russias_stronghold_in_the_black_sea.
60 With A2/AD capabilities, states seek to deny other actors access to, or scope for, military action in a given area. To achieve this, they mainly use air defence systems and precision weapons.
61 See Sergey Sukhankin, "Russia Pours More Military Hardware into 'Fortress Crimea'", *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 14, no. 147 (14 November 2017), https://jamestown.org/program/russia-pours-military-hardware-fortress-crimea/.

though this is officially denied, research by investigative journalists from Russia and Ukraine shows that Russian soldiers — in different strengths at different times — are covertly deployed in the Donbas.[62] Since 2014, Moscow has also massively strengthened its military presence along the entire land border with Ukraine by permanently relocating existing army units there or re-establishing large units that were formerly disbanded.[63] This approach not only maintains a constant threat to Kiev, but also allows Russia to rapidly intervene in the event of renewed escalation. There is increasing potential for military confrontation over the Sea of Azov since the bridge over of the Strait of Kerch, which was inaugurated in May 2018, connects Crimea with the Russian mainland. Kiev is concerned that Russia will limit access to the Sea of Azov for Ukrainian ships in order to harm the Ukrainian harbours in the Sea of Azov economically and, as a result, undermine the political cohesion of Ukraine.[64] Not only has Russia further secured the annexation of Crimea and the supply of pro-Russian

forces in the Donbas, but it has also expanded its overall capabilities to militarily underpin political demands against Ukraine.

The conflict over Ukraine and Russian-Western tensions also affected Russia's military position in the rest of the Western post-Soviet space. In 2013, Moscow sought permission to build an air base on Belarusian territory. To date, Russia has no military bases there. Such a base would have improved both its forward presence vis-à-vis NATO and also given the Kremlin military leverage in case the Belarusian leadership moved too close to the EU. The Russian leadership justified its call by the inadequate capacity of the Belarusian Air Force to fulfil its obligations under the planned joint air defence system. However, Moscow itself had brought about this condition by refusing to supply Minsk with modern fighter jets for years. President Lukashenko, probably sensitised by the experience of the Ukraine crisis, rejected Russia's request in 2015. Minsk was aware of its more favourable negotiating position against the background of the significant deterioration in Russian-Western relations. In order not to strain relations with Belarus, Moscow decided not to touch upon this contentious issue for some time. Yet Russia renewed its demand for a military base in Belarus while drafting the new Military Doctrine of the Union State of Russia and Belarus in autumn 2018. Nevertheless, Moscow was unable to force Belarus to include provisions into the military doctrine for establishing a Russian military base in Belarus. This hints at the limits of Russian influence even over its close allies. At the same time, the Russian armed forces established a new division on the border with Belarus and reinforced their air defences and air force in the Kaliningrad exclave. Both steps are aimed primarily at Ukraine and NATO, but also strengthen Russia's position vis-à-vis Belarus because of the proximity of their forces to the border.[65]

62   Russian newspapers and TV stations critical of the government (e.g. *Novaja Gazeta* and *Dozhd*) and Ukrainian investigative journalists (e.g. the research collective *InformNapalm*) provide evidence of the covert use of Russian soldiers in the Donbas, including tracking the origin of Russian fighters from regular military units killed or captured there. From open sources, however, it is not possible to determine a reliable total number of Russian soldiers deployed in the Donbas. According to Igor Sutiagin, a Russian military researcher working in the UK, up to 10,000 Russian soldiers were there at the height of fighting during the Battles of Ilovajsk and Debaltseve. Igor Sutjagin, *Russian Forces in Ukraine*, RUSI Briefing Papers (London: Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies [RUSI], 9 March 2015), https://rusi.org/publication/briefing-papers/russian-forces-ukraine; Nikolay Mitrokhin, "Infiltration, Instruktion, Invasion. Russlands Krieg in der Ukraine", *Osteuropa* 64, no. 8 (2014): 3 − 16.

63   In 2015, the headquarters of the 20th Army belonging to the military district "West" was transferred from Nizhni Novgorod to Voronesh on the border with Ukraine. At the same time, this army received two new divisions, the 3rd and 144th divisions, which were stationed near the border with Ukraine (Rostov) and Belarus (Belgorod). The 8th Army was re-established in the military district "South". The 150th division, which is assigned to it, is stationed on the southern border with Ukraine near Rostov.

64   Maryna Vorotnyuk, "In Serious Escalation, Russia Openly Attacks Ukrainian Vessels in Azov Sea*Eurasia Daily Monitor* 15, no. 165 (26 November 2018), https://jamestown.org/program/in-serious-escalation-russia-openly-attacks-ukrainian-vessels-in-azov-sea/.

65   Russia has been modernising and strengthening its armed forces in Kaliningrad since 2008. After the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis, the focus was mainly on expanding the A2/AD systems. In contrast, the offensive capabilities of the army units stationed there are poor. Here, the new division set up near Belgorod plays a greater role. See Fredrik Westerlund, *Russia's Military Strategy and Force Structure in Kaliningrad*, RUFS Briefing no. 40 (Stockholm: FOI, May 2017); Aleksandr Alesein, "Udarnye samolety: oni uleteli, no mogut vernut'sja" [Combat aircraft: they fly off, but can also return], *Belrynok*, 17 January 2018, http://www.belrynok.by/2018/01/17/udarnye-samolety-oni-uleteli-no-mogut-vernutsya/; Arseny

While Moscow expanded its power projection capabilities vis-à-vis Ukraine and, to a lesser extent, Belarus, the Ukrainian conflict exposed the vulnerability of Russia's military presence in Transnistria. After all, the 1,500 Russian soldiers stationed there can only be supplied or reinforced via Ukrainian territory.[66] In May 2015, Kiev suspended the agreement on land transport, so Russian troops have since had to be supplied exclusively by air.[67] This reduces Moscow's ability to use the military base in Transnistria for potential offensive actions in Moldova or against Ukraine and open up a second front in western Ukraine — as was feared in the spring of 2014. The task of the soldiers stationed in Transnistria, therefore, remains limited to securing Moscow's position in the Transnistria conflict.

Russia's military build-up in the West has received a significant boost in the wake of the Ukraine crisis.

Russia's military build-up in the West has received a significant boost in the wake of the Ukraine crisis. A similar process, albeit to a lesser extent, had already begun in the Caucasus after the Russo-Georgian War in 2008. For a long time, Russian troops stationed in the strategic operational command "South" were given preference with regard to modern hardware and to professionalisation and training; their forward presence was also expanded. Whereas before August 2008 there were only 1,000 Russian soldiers in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, around 3,500 soldiers and 1,500 FSB border guards have been stationed in each of the entities since. Now, every seventh inhabitant

of South Ossetia and every twentieth inhabitant of Abkhazia is a member of one of Russia's armed forces or border guards. Georgia's leaders are confronted by Russian troops in Abkhazia and South Ossetia that are one third the size of the entire Georgian armed forces, and can be quickly reinforced with more units from across the northern border.

After the Russo-Georgian war, Moscow stepped up training activities for the 3,300 soldiers stationed in Armenia and upgraded their weapons.[68] Its arsenal at the military base there is qualitatively and, in part, quantitatively superior to that of the Armenian armed forces, and the presence of its troops there also serves to reaffirm the close Russian-Armenian military alliance and to ensure that Yerevan is not moving too close to the EU. However, given Yerevan's dependence on military protection from Moscow, there are very narrow limits to Armenia's multi-vectoral foreign policy anyway. Even the new Prime Minister, Nikol Paschinyan, who in April 2018 forced the then Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan to resign after mass protests, did not question the alliance with Moscow.

Russia's power projection capabilities vis-à-vis Azerbaijan are significantly weaker than those in relation to Armenia and Georgia. It is the only South Caucasian country where Moscow has no military base. In addition, unlike Georgia and Armenia, resource-rich Azerbaijan has invested large sums in modernising its arsenal in recent years.

While Russia was and is significantly expanding its forward presence to the West and the South Caucasus, it is now stagnating in Central Asia. On the one hand, Moscow also managed to extend its right to use the bases here: until 2032 for the air base in Kyrgyz Kant, formally under the CSTO banner, with 500 soldiers and up to 2042 for the base in Tajikistan with 5,000 soldiers. Moscow is modernising the weapons and equipment of its troops stationed there, too, and is aiming for permanent use of the air base in Ajni, Tajikistan.[69] At the same time, however, Russia is

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Sivistky, "New Union State Military Doctrine Will Not Change Status Quo in Belarusian-Russian Military Alliance", *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 15, no. 174 (11 December 2018), https://jamestown.org/program/new-union-state-military-doctrine-will-not-change-status-quo-in-belarusian-russian-military-alliance/.

66 Of the 1,500 Russian soldiers in Transnistria, around 500 belong to the trilateral peacekeeping forces, while, according to official figures, the remaining 1,000 soldiers guard an ammunitions dump. In 1999, Moscow agreed to withdraw its guards by 2003. They have been there since without Moldova's consent.

67 Russia now mainly supplies its soldiers via Tiraspol airport. See Vladimir Frolov, "Will the Transdnestr Crisis Force Russia into War?", *The Moscow Times*, 7 June 2015, https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/will-the-transdnestr-crisis-force-russia-into-war-47197.

68 See Armen Grigoryan, "Russia Increases Military Capacity in the South Caucasus", *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 12, no. 61 (2 April 2015), https://jamestown.org/program/russia-increases-military-capacity-in-the-south-caucasus/.

69 See John C. K. Daly, "Russia to Double Aircraft at Kant Airfield in Kyrgyzstan", *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 10, no. 204 (13 November 2013), https://jamestown.org/program/russia-to-double-air craft-at-kant-airfield-in-kyrgzstan/; "Operational Group of Russian Forces in Tajikistan", *GlobalSecurity.org*, https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/russia/ogrv-tajikistan.htm.

Military Presence in the Post-Soviet Space (2018)

BELARUS

UKRAINE

MOLDOVA

Transnistria

1.500

Crimea

28.000

Black Sea

RUSSIA

500 soldiers per point

Abkhasia

3.500

GEORGIA

South Ossetia

3.500

Military base

ARMENIA

3.300

AZERBAIJAN

Caspian Sea

KAZAKHSTAN

UZBEKISTAN

TURKMENISTAN

KYRGYZSTAN

500

TAJIKISTAN

5.000

500 km

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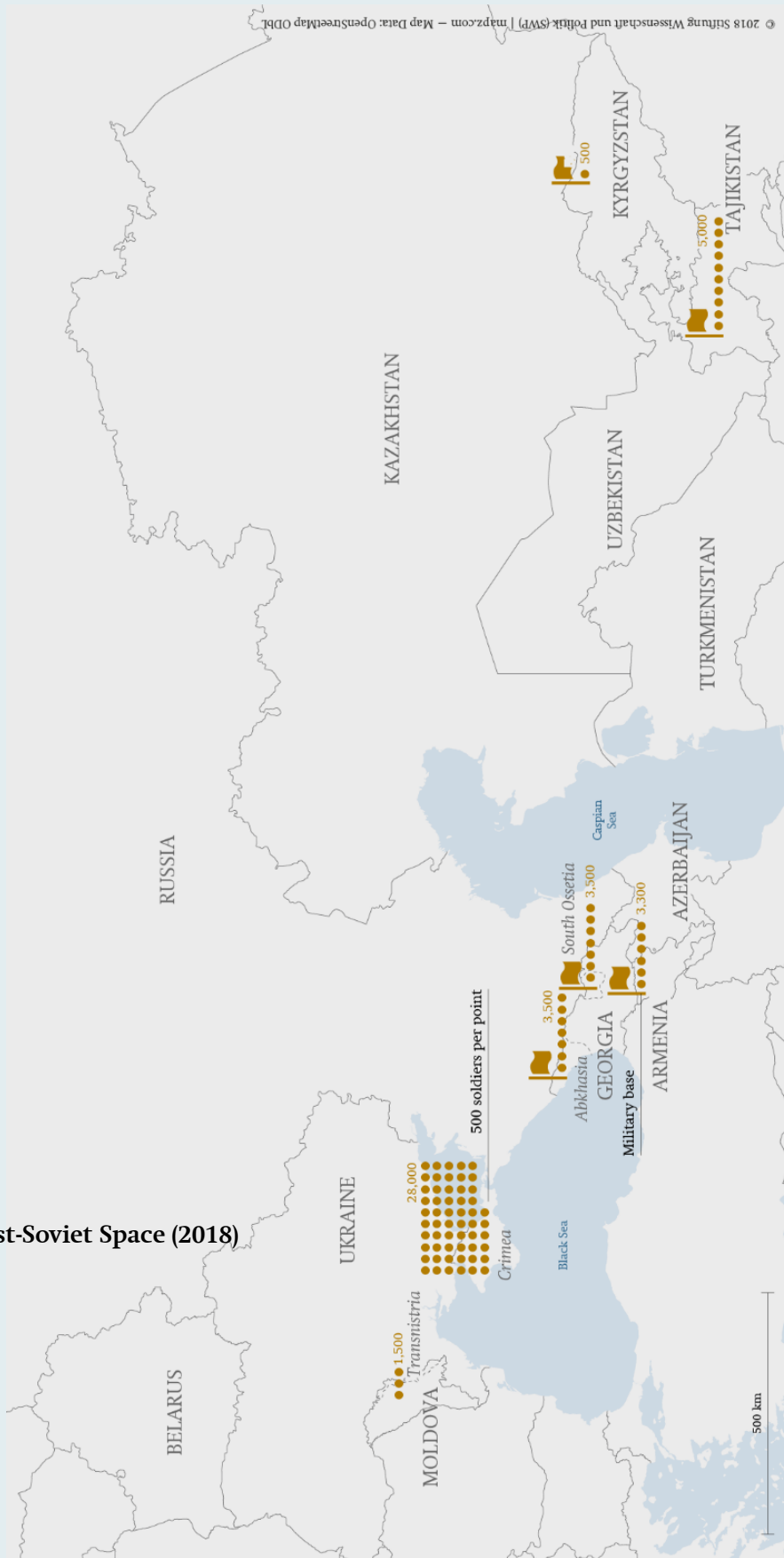
Table 2

Russia's military bases in the post-Soviet space (2018)

Country	Description	Number of stationed Russian soldiers	Approval of host country	Contractually guaranteed duration of use
Armenia	202nd military base	3,300	yes	2044
Georgia (South Ossetia)	4th military base	3,500 soldiers 1,500 border guards	no	2059
Georgia (Abkhazia)	7th Military base Air force and air defence naval base	3,500 soldiers 1,500 border guards	no	2059
Kyrgyzstan	Air force base under CSTO banner	500	yes	2032
Moldova (Transnistria)		1,500 soldiers (including around 500 peacekeepers)	no	2002
Tajikistan	201st military base	5,000	yes	2042
Ukraine	Black Sea Fleet (Crimea)	28,000	no	

Source: Own table based on data from IISS (ed.), *The Military Balance. The Annual Assessment of Global Military Capabilities and Defence Economics* (London, 2018), 224. Furthermore, Russia has military facilities in Belarus (a radar station and a naval communication facility) and in Kazakhstan (a radar facility). However, since these are not military bases, they are not listed in the table.

cautious about Kyrgyzstan's offer to build a second base there.[70] Furthermore, in February 2016, it not only reversed plans to increase troop numbers in Tajikistan and extend them to division strength (9,000 troops), but even announced a decrease to brigade strength (3,000 — 5,000 troops).[71] This reflects the general shift of military priorities towards the West as well as Russia's limited financial and material resources in the face of two parallel military operations.

Given the weakness of the Tajikistani and Kyrgyz armed forces, Moscow still has a strong military posi-

tion in both countries and could carry out limited operations there and from there, for example to counter terrorism or local uprisings. In the event of a broader destabilisation, however, Russian forces on the ground would need reinforcements and, therefore, permission from Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan for transports through or over their territory. Moscow does not have any of its own military bases in these three countries. Moreover, neither in Turkmenistan nor Uzbekistan can Russia rely on strong proxies, that is, Russian minorities or Cossack groups. As a result, Russia would not be able to build much military pressure on either country in case of a conflict. In the event of a crisis with Kazakhstan, Russia could exert pressure by concentrating troops on the land border and trying to mobilise Cossack associations and pro-Russian forces among the Russian minority in the north of the country. However, a conventional military operation would be a high-risk strategy given the size of the territory and its own military presence in the country.

70 "Atambaev. Rossija ne budet pretendovat' na territoriju Kirgizii" [Russia will not aspire to annex Kyrgyz territory], *Nezavisimaja Gazeta*, 24 July 2017, http://www.ng.ru/news/588371.html.

71 In April 2015, the commander of the 201st military base announced that 9,000 soldiers would be added to the units stationed there. In February 2016, however, the commander of the "Centre" military district announced that the base would be reduced to brigade size. "Operational Group of Russian Forces in Tajikistan" (see note 69).

Bilateral Military Cooperation

In addition to expanding its unilateral power projection capabilities, the second pillar of Russia's military policy in the post-Soviet space is bilateral cooperation. This ranges from cooperation on weapons, education and training to partial functional integration. The motivation of post-Soviet countries to cooperate militarily with Moscow ranges from the expectation of material benefits and the desire to balance the influence of other actors, to safeguarding vital security interests that only protection from Russia can ensure. Moscow itself sees the cooperation as a way of dealing more effectively with regional threats. At the same time, it targets close security links that create one-sided dependencies and the potential to exert its influence. Moscow is also willing to bear substantial costs to achieve this.

Armaments cooperation

Since the early 1990s, Russian leaders have promoted defence technology cooperation with the post-Soviet countries through the sale, purchase and joint production of weapons and equipment. Moscow benefits from the fact that, after the breakup of the USSR, three quarters of the Soviet defence industry remained in Russia. In addition, only Ukraine retained a share (14 percent) that allowed them to independently manufacture weapons.[72] All the remaining countries rely on arms imports.

Moscow's willingness to sacrifice economic benefits demonstrates how it uses arms exports as an instrument to maintain security ties. For example, Russia rewards its CSTO allies with price reductions.[73] It also promotes the sale of Russian weapons with bonds. If it is in its military interest, Moscow will also provide military equipment free of charge to alliance partners. For example, it provided air defence systems (S-300) to Armenia, Belarus and Kazakhstan to create a joint air defence network. As a result, Russia was able to secure a dominant role as an arms supplier to CSTO members. Between 2000 and 2016, it accounted for 95 percent of all arms imports from Tajikistan, 93 percent from Belarus, 81 percent from Armenia, 79 percent from Kazakhstan and 78 percent from Kyrgyzstan.[74]

Moscow uses these dependencies to consolidate its military position in the respective countries. It offered Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Armenia a generous package deal of arms shipments. In return, these countries agreed to extend Russia's right to use military bases in their territories by more than two decades. Subsidised arms imports are the only way to modernise their armed forces, especially for the financially weak countries. The more precarious the security situations of countries such as Armenia and Tajikistan become, the greater their dependence on Russia.

In contrast, Russia can barely exert any political pressure through arms exports on those post-Soviet countries that have diversified their imports or largely replaced Russia as a supplier. Between 2000 and 2016, the share of Russian military equipment in Azerbaijan's armed forces was 61 percent, 31 percent in Turkmenistan's and 10 percent in Uzbekistan's.[75] These countries import armaments from Ukraine, Israel, Turkey, Western countries and, for the first time in recent years, from China.[76] In order to remain a weapons supplier to the three countries concerned, Russia is prepared to make economic concessions. For

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72 Most of the defence companies remaining in Belarus and Kazakhstan only produce individual components and not entire weapons systems. Julian Cooper, *The Soviet Defense Industry: Conversion and Economic Reform* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991), 21.

73 Robert Śmigielski, *The Role of Arms Exports in the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*, Bulletin no. 54 (Warsaw: The Polish Institute of International Affairs, 9 April 2010), https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/116269/a130-2010.pdf.

74 Own calculation based on data from the SIPRI Arms Transfer Database, https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.

example, in November 2016, it wrote off historic debts of $800 million owed by Uzbekistan and promised to continue to supply the country with discounted military supplies, despite its withdrawal from CSTO, in the hope of "more active cooperation" on training and exercises.[77] The armaments cooperation with Georgia (since 2008) and Ukraine (since 2014) has been completely discontinued. As a result of Russian military interventions, these countries have amended their import policies and now source weapons and equipment mainly from Turkey and Western countries.[78]

The Ukraine crisis also revealed vulnerabilities in the Russian defence industry. Between 2009 and 2013, 87 percent of Russian arms imports came from Ukraine.[79] Moscow has been trying to reduce its dependence on Ukrainian and Belarusian suppliers in this sensitive area since the 1990s. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the conflict, Russia did not have any other source for around 30 percent of military equipment previously imported from Ukraine. This mainly affected turbines for ships, aircraft and helicopters as well as individual components for intercontinental missiles.[80] This resulted in delays to individual modernisation programmes for the Russian armed forces.[81]

Training cooperation

Russian leaders also use support for training activities to provide a further incentive for post-Soviet countries to commit to Russia. This allows it to focus on pro-Russian viewpoints, for example in terms of threat perception or the role of Russia in the region,

and to strengthen interoperability. Here, too, cooperation is promoted by Soviet-era connections. These include Russian language skills or the heritage of a joint military culture. Since the post-Soviet states, with the exception of Russia, did not have their own military academies at the beginning of their independence, they were dependent on Russian support during the transition period. In the 1990s, military teaching staff from Russia helped shape the development of new national military academies. Furthermore, subsidised training for their high-ranking military cadres in Russia remains attractive to this day, especially for financially weak countries.

Training cooperation with CSTO members is particularly close. As allies they receive fixed quotas of training places for officers.[82] Particularly the poorer member states of Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, often have as many officers being trained in Russia as they do in their own countries, or even more.[83] Russia maintained a particularly intensive training cooperation with Belarus. However, Minsk has been more reluctant since the Ukraine crisis. In 2012, 600 Belarusian soldiers were sent on officer training courses in Russia, but that number had fallen to 374 by 2015.[84]

Far fewer military personnel from Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan or Turkmenistan receive military training in Russia. For example, between 1992 and 2009, only 250 Uzbek officers took part in Russian military academy courses. After the country left the CSTO in 2012, training cooperation was interrupted and formally resumed in 2016 as part of the new bilateral

77 Fozil Mashrab, "Uzbekistan Turns to Russia in Search of Modern Weapons", *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 14, no. 19 (15 February 2017), https://jamestown.org/program/uzbekistan-turns-russia-search-modern-weapons/.

78 SIPRI has no information about Moldovan arms imports.

79 Tomas Malmlöf, "A Case Study of Russo-Ukrainian Defense Industrial Cooperation: Russian Dilemmas", *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 29, no. 1 (2016): 1–22.

80 Ibid., 15.

81 At the same time, Russia's defence industry gained capacity from the annexation of Crimea and the de facto occupation of Donbas. Andrey Frolov, "Russian in Place of Foreign. Import Substitution in Russia's Military-Industrial Complex: The Experience of 2014–2016", *Russia in Global Affairs*, 13 February 2017, http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Russian-in-Place-of-Foreign-18590.

82 There are no complete data series on how many officers from each CSTO member were actually sent to Russia each year for training.

83 According to CSTO data, 250 Armenian officers studied at Russian military colleges in 2014, compared with 203 in 2016. The number of graduates from Armenian military colleges is similar. In Tajikistan, the majority of officers are trained in Russia. Emil Danielyan, "Russia to Boost Military Training for Armenia", *Radio Azatutyun* (Armenian-language service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty), 9 September 2016, https://www.azatutyun.am/a/27977627.html; Dmitry Gorenburg, *External Support for Central Asian Military and Security Forces*, Working Paper (Solna: SIPRI, January 2014), 44f.

84 By comparison, 800 Belarusian soldiers were trained in their own country in 2012. Siarhei Bohdan, "Belarus-Russia Military Cooperation: Can the Kremlin Dictate the Terms?", *Belarus Digest*, 26 November 2015, https://belarusdigest.com/story/belarus-russia-military-cooperation-can-the-kremlin-dictate-the-terms/; Agata Wierzbowska-Miazga, *Support as a Means of Subordination. Russia's Policy on Belarus*, OSW Point of View no. 34 (Warsaw: OSW, May 2013), 30.

rapprochement between Russia and Uzbekistan.[85] There is no longer any training cooperation with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Ukrainian leaders have also been working to remove pro-Russian soldiers and officers from the armed forces since 2014.[86]

Joint exercises

Bilateral exercises not only promote interoperability, but also provide important insights into the state of the partner countries' armed forces.[87] The Ukraine crisis exposed the concomitant vulnerabilities. The Russian and Ukrainian Black Sea Fleets had regularly conducted joint manoeuvres (Farvater Mira) since 1997. These are also likely to have provided Russia with insights into specific vulnerabilities of Ukrainian armed forces deployed in Crimea.

Some CSTO members are now showing more autonomy.

As with armaments and training cooperation, the degree of cooperation between post-Soviet states and Russia is quite diverse on joint exercises. Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Moldova, Georgia and, since 2014, Ukraine are not engaged in any bilateral manoeuvres. The same was true of Uzbekistan for a long time, until in 2017, for the first time in twelve years, it held a joint manoeuvre with Russia again.[88]

Russia's cooperation with its allies in the CSTO on joint exercises is also the most advanced. The number, extent and complexity of bilateral exercises have increased significantly since 2008.[89] This is partly due

to Russia itself having massively expanded its training activities since the beginning of the military reform. Moscow's armed forces provide most of the personnel and hardware for the joint exercises and take the lead on planning and organisation. In addition, the need for exercises with Russia has increased among some Allies. This applies particularly to those countries that are exposed to military threats (Armenia, Tajikistan) or are hardly in a position to conduct more complex exercises on a larger scale alone, due to scarce finances. For example, the armed forces of Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan independently train almost exclusively at the tactical level; exercises at the operational or strategic level are held almost exclusively with Russia. Consequently, the armed forces of those three countries lack the capability to conduct major military operations on their own. These are only possible with Russian support, but not without or against Moscow.

The focus of the exercises is largely determined by Moscow. Consequently, the larger Russian-Armenian manoeuvres did not take place near the Azerbaijani border but the Turkish border. This reflects Moscow's view of Armenia as a 'forward buffer' against NATO's south-eastern flank and not so much Yerevan's concerns over an attack by Azerbaijan. Something similar can be seen in relation to Belarus, where Moscow uses bilateral exercises to expand its military deployment options into and out of Belarus. Here, Russia is rehearsing large conventional operations in which Belarusian territory acts as a defence buffer and as a starting point for offensive actions.

However, Russia's demonstration of its hegemonic ambitions in Ukraine also resulted in individual CSTO members, particularly Belarus and Kazakhstan, now displaying more autonomy. For example, President Lukashenko insisted on the presence of Western military observers at the Zapad 2017 exercise. Kazakhstan's armed forces, which had formerly trained intensively with Moscow's soldiers, failed to conduct a bilateral exercise for the first time in 2016. Instead, there was a trilateral manoeuvre involving non-CSTO member, Azerbaijan.

Integrated structures

In addition to cooperation on armaments, training and exercises, Russia is also creating integrated military structures. In some cases this is done in the framework of new projects, in other cases projects are being implemented that have existed on paper for

85 Vladimir Paramonov and Oleg Stolpovsski, *Russia and Central Asia: Bilateral Cooperation in the Defence Sector* (London, 2008), 13.

86 "Ukraine's Defense Minister: 40% of Ministry's Officials Fail Polygraph Tests", *Unian*, 25 April 2016, https://www.unian.info/politics/1328824-ukraines-defense-minister-40-of-minis trys-officials-fail-polygraph-tests.html.

87 In addition, Russian troops are training in the CSTO's multilateral framework with its post-Soviet allies. Dies wird im folgenden Kapitel behandelt.

88 "Uzbekistan, Russia to Expand Military and Technical Cooperation", *gazeta.uz*, 30 November 2016, https://www.gazeta.uz/en/2016/11/30/mil/.

89 See list of Russian exercises with external partners on the official website of the Russian Ministry of Defence, http://eng.mil.ru/en/mission/practice/all.htm?objInBlock=10&f=31&blk=10564892.

some time or existing forms of de facto integration have been formalised.

Integration with Abkhazia and South Ossetia is the most advanced. The Russian-Abkhazian Treaty on Alliance and Strategic Partnership of November 2014 provides for the creation of a Common Space for Security and Defence. Accordingly, the joint group of forces was formed in November 2016, consisting of personnel from the Russian military base in Abkhazia and Abkhazian units. In peacetime, command of the joint military forces rotates; in case of a threat or a state of war, it passes to Russia.[90] The "Alliance Relations and Integration Treaty" signed with South Ossetia in March 2015 also aims to create a "single defence space". As a result, Russia "shall ensure the defence and security of the Republic of South Ossetia, including the protection and defence of the state border of the Republic of South Ossetia".[91] Although Abkhazia and South Ossetia are not formally annexed, they represent a military outpost of Russia where the armed forces of both territories merely constitute an auxiliary force of the Russian army.

Moscow has also created integrated military structures with Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, but to a lesser extent. These structures include Joint Air Defence Systems with Minsk, Yerevan and Astana which have enabled Russia to move forward the protection of its airspace on the western, southern and south-eastern borders by several hundred kilometres. Similar contracts are being prepared with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.[92]

Russia also created integrated military structures with Belarus and Armenia. Under the umbrella of the CSTO, the "Regional Group of Russian and Belarusian

Armed Forces" was set up in 1999 to secure the territory of Belarus and the surrounding Russian regions, including Kaliningrad.[93] This group exists only on paper in peacetime and can only be activated by the immediate threat of war by the presidents of both countries who then establish a common leadership structure, formally securing Minsk a double veto in case Russia wants to activate the structure. Moscow is, therefore, pushing for deeper integration in order to strengthen its own position. At the end of 2015, Minister of Defence Sergey Shoygu said, without agreement from Minsk, that a "Joint Military Organisation" would be created in 2016 as part of the "Belarusian-Russian Union State", de facto uniting the armed forces of both countries.[94] Minsk has not yet formally commented, which would indicate they are still sceptical. In contrast to Belarus, Armenia is in favour of Russia's military integration plans, even after the Ukraine crisis, as it hopes to gain some security in the conflict with Azerbaijan. As a result, in 2016, Russia and Armenia created a Joint Association of Ground Forces, which goes further than the Russian-Belarusian format, as in peacetime it already has a joint command structure. In peacetime, the troops are under an Armenian general, but under the threat of war, command would automatically go to Russia's strategic command "South", which would give Moscow easier access to the Armenian army forces.[95]

Diverse (in)dependence

Even though decades of military integration between the Soviet republics continue to be felt today, bilateral relations are now highly diverse. How closely the post-Soviet states cooperate with Russia depends,

90 "Dogovor mezhdu Rossijskoj Federaciej i Respublikoj Abkhazija o sojuznichestve i strategichestkom partnerstve" [Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Abkhazia on alliance and strategic partnership], *Prezident Rossii* [President of Russia] (official website), 24 November 2014, http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/4783.

91 "Dogovor mezhdu Rossijskoj Federaciej i respublikoj Juzhnaja Osetija o sojuznichestve i integracii" [Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of South Ossetia on alliance and integration], *Prezident Rossii* [President of Russia] (official website), 18 March 2015, http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/4819.

92 Formally, Russia's joint air defence systems with Kazakhstan, Belarus and Armenia and, in future, with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan make up parts of the planned CSTO Joint Air Defence System. However, at the current implementation stage, they are just bilateral projects.

93 It belongs to the entire Belarusian army and Russia's 1st Guards Tank Army. As with the regional armed forces group with Armenia, it is formally a CSTO structure, but are actually bilateral projects.

94 Back in 1997, Minsk and Moscow agreed to create a Single Defence Area as a goal of the newly established Union State.

95 The Joint Association of Ground Forces of Russia and Armenia is based on the Regional Group of Armed Forces established in 2000 under the umbrella of the CSTO. Eduard Abrahamyan, "Russia and Armenia Establish Joint Ground Forces", *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, 16 December 2016, https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13416-russia-and-armenia-establish-joint-ground-forces.html.

firstly, on material benefit calculations, for example the desire for discounted arms supplies or subsidised training and military education. Secondly, Central Asian states in particular see cooperation with Moscow as an opportunity to set limits on China's growing economic and political influence in the area of security policy. Thirdly, actors in the post-Soviet space cooperate with Russia because they hope to gain greater protection against internal and external threats. However, Moscow can only establish unilateral dependencies in the sense of the desired hegemonic cooperation if the leadership of the respective partner country relies on Russian assistance to safeguard vital security interests.

This applies to Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and the two breakaway Georgian areas of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Due to a lack of financial and military resources, these states and regions are unable to independently ensure the protection of their territories or political regimes. In addition, they lack alternative military partners. The withdrawal of Russian military support could plunge all these states and territories into an existential crisis. Against this background, Moscow can largely determine the terms of cooperation and in doing so promote its own interests. This can be seen from the fact that Moscow was able to successfully link the supply of required military equipment to extending its right to use military bases in the countries concerned for decades and to create integrated military structures in some of them. In this way, Russia can expand its own forward defence.

Relations between Russia and the post-Soviet states are now highly diversified.

Although Belarus and Kazakhstan cooperate closely with Russia on armaments, training, exercises and integrated structures, it is still difficult for Moscow to create one-sided dependencies with them. Unlike the above-mentioned states and territories, Belarus and Kazakhstan do not see themselves exposed to any external threats that would require Russia's support to tackle. Rather, Russia's intervention in Ukraine has heightened concerns by Kazakh and Belarusian leaders about the vulnerabilities associated with bilateral cooperation. As a result, both countries reduced the scope of their military cooperation programmes with Russia. Minsk also successfully refused Moscow's request to build a military base in Belarus. Unlike Belarus, Kazakhstan also

has alternative military partners. As part of its multi-vectoral foreign policy, Astana regularly conducts exercises with the US, China and, since 2016, India; the same applies to armaments and training. Against this background, a significant expansion of military cooperation between Belarus and Kazakhstan with Russia is only likely if leaders there see their rule threatened by 'colour revolutions' and blame them on Western interference.

Although Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan also cooperate militarily with Russia, bilateral cooperation with their large neighbour is extremely selective and very limited, so no one-sided dependencies can be created to Russia's advantage. While Turkmenistan maintains its isolationist foreign policy, Azerbaijan continues to pursue its multi-vector approach in the military sphere. This means that in addition to limited cooperation with Russia, Baku cooperates closely with other partners such as Georgia and Turkey. The greatest dynamism comes from the activities of the new Uzbek leadership under President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. As a result, joint exercises between Uzbek and Russian soldiers have been revived, and the country is once again making use of Russian training assistance. At the same time, however, Tashkent is eager to cooperate more intensively with other Central Asian states, leaving Russia out of the equation. This is in line with earlier efforts to gain a stronger position in Central Asia.

Russia's military cooperation with Georgia and Ukraine has ended. Until 2014, Ukraine was the only post-Soviet country not to be a member of the CSTO, but which still cooperated closely with Moscow on military education, armaments and training. However, as a result of its intervention, Russia has now lost all the leverage that resulted from this collaboration.

Connections via Multilateral Institutions: The CSTO

In addition to bilateral cooperation, Moscow relies on multilateral institutions under whose umbrella the post-Soviet region can be more closely tied to Russia in military policy terms. These include the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which served as an important platform in military affairs in the first half of the 1990s.[96] For example, the Red Army was divided up and transferred to the new national armies under the aegis of the CIS. Russia also used the organisation to have its 'peacekeeping' operations in the post-Soviet space mandated multilaterally.[97] In the second half of the 1990s, however, the CIS gradually lost its military significance and, since 2002, has been replaced in this policy field by the organisation of the Collective Security Treaty.

The CSTO emerged from the Collective Security Treaty of the CIS. The Treaty was signed on 15 May 1992 by six post-Soviet countries, including Russia, who pledged to provide assistance in the event of an external attack. In October 2002, the Defence Alliance was upgraded to the Collective Security Treaty Organization.[98] Members of the CSTO now include Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.[99] Moscow sees the CSTO as a "key element of

security in the territory of the former Soviet Union"[100] and strives to "further develop it qualitatively".[101] On the one hand, the CSTO's aim is to combat common threats more effectively. On the other hand, Moscow sees it as an instrument for tying member states closer to each other, both through attractive offers and common security interests. In addition, Moscow hopes to expand its own power projection capabilities in the region and from it by creating joint military structures that it could use if needed. Furthermore, Russian leaders assign a political function to the CSTO. It is expected to multilaterally mandate possible Russian military operations in the post-Soviet space.[102]

Expanding military capabilities

Russia is the defining force in the CSTO. It not only promotes the expansion of responsibilities and structures, but it also provides the majority of resources. The CSTO began as a collective defence alliance against external aggression, but is increasingly developing into a multifunctional organisation based on a broader understanding of security. This can be seen

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96 CIS today includes Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Ukraine and Turkmenistan are associated members and only participate in the organisation's activities on certain occasions. Ukrainian President, Petro Poroshenko, withdrew all remaining Ukrainian representatives from the CIS in May 2018.

97 CIS peacekeepers deployed in Tajikistan (1993−2000), Abkhazia (1994−2008) and Transnistria (1992−present) consisted either entirely or mostly of Russian soldiers.

98 *Charter of the Collective Security Treaty Organization*, 7 October 2002, http://www.odkb-csto.org/documents/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=1896.

99 Signatories included Russia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In 1993, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Belarus joined the Charter. Georgia, Azerbaijan

and Uzbekistan left the alliance again in 1999. Uzbekistan rejoined in 2006 before leaving again in 2012.

100 "Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation" (see note 2).

101 "Strategija nacional'noj bezopasnosti Rossijskoj Federacii" (see note 2).

102 For more on the Russian debate about CSTO, see A. V. Tichomirov, "Podchody osnovnych aktorov k razvitiju ODKB posle 2014 g. (Rossija, Belarus', Kazakhstan)" [Approaches of major actors on the development of CSTO after 2014 (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan)], in E. F. Dovgan' and A. V. Rusakovich, *Organisazija dogovora o kollektivnoj besopasnosti i planirovanie sluchaj chresvychajniych obstojatel'stv posle 2014 goda* [Organization of the Collective Security Treaty and planning for exceptional circumstances after 2014] (Geneva, 2015), 39−72.

in the gradual expansion of its range of tasks, which now include the fight against terrorism, extremism, organised crime, illegal migration, the smuggling of weapons and drugs as well as cooperation on crisis response, border protection and information security.[103] The "CSTO Collective Security Strategy up to 2025" from October 2016 also focuses on threats arising from a supposed Western regime change policy, such as "colour revolutions", "information pressure" or "interference in the internal affairs of member states".[104] While this also reflects the concerns of many authoritarian leaders in the organisation's member states, they are certainly interested in receiving support from Russia to counter threats that could destabilise their regimes. However, Moscow benefits in particular from the extended responsibilities of the alliance. This will make it formally easier to define a change of power in a member state not supported by Russia as a security problem for the entire alliance and to call for joint measures to be taken, from consultations to appointing crisis response forces.

The CSTO has expanded its military structures. They are heavily dependent on Russia.

Since the end of the 2000s, the CSTO has expanded its military structures in line with its extended responsibilities. Initially, these consisted only of formations intended for the core function of collective defence. To this end, Russia created three groups of regional armed forces — with Belarus, with Armenia and with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan — to defend the respective subregions of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia against external attacks.[105] In the second half of the 2000s, the CSTO

then established new groups of mobile armed forces, in which all member countries participate. The Collective Peacekeeping Forces was founded in 2007 and consists of around 3,600 personnel, mostly soldiers but also police and civilians. They can be deployed not only within alliance territory, but also outside of it, with a United Nations mandate. In turn, the "Collective Rapid Reaction Force" created in 2009 has 17,000 personnel, mostly soldiers but also police, national guards and security forces. Its most important task is to facilitate rapid intervention in local conflict situations. The two structures are to be supported by the "United Air Force", which is still in the process of being set up.[106] The new formations extend the CSTO's range of operations beyond mere defence, for example, to ethnoterritorial conflicts in or between member states, the fight against terrorism and counterinsurgency, possibly in Afghanistan, as well as defending against colour revolutions. The new structures were established primarily at the instigation of Russia, while individual (then) member states, above all Uzbekistan and, to a degree, Belarus, were critical of the projects. Uzbekistan feared this would give Russia more leverage in Central Asia, while limiting its own freedom of action. The dispute over the Collective Rapid Response Troops led to Uzbekistan leaving the CSTO in 2012.[107]

Both groups of regional and mobile forces depend on Russia for personnel, equipment, training and leadership. For example, Moscow provides a brigade for the "Collective Peacekeepers" and a division and

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103 In 2010, Article 8 of the CSTO Charter was extended to include cooperation on crisis response, border management, information security and civil protection. *Charter of the Collective Security Treaty Organization* (see note 98).

104 "Strategija kollektivnoj bezopasnosti Organisacii Dogovora o kollektivnoj bezopasnosti na period do 2025 goda" [Strategy of collective security of the Collective Security Treaty Organization for the period up to 2025], 14 October 2016, *ODKB* [CSTO] (official website), http://www.odkb-csto.org/documents/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=8382.

105 The Russian and Belarus Regional Forces Group and the United Armed Forces Group of Russia and Armenia are, in fact, bilateral structures and, as such, were dealt with in the previous chapter. In contrast, the Collective Rapid De-

ployment Force in Central Asia is a multilateral structure made up of two Tajik, two Kazakh, one Kyrgyz and five Russian brigades.

106 In April 2013, the CSTO announced its intention to create Collective Air Forces. The scope and location of the new structures are still unknown. "Sily i sredstva sistemy kollektivnoj bezopasnosti ODKB" [The forces and means of the collective security system of the CSTO], *ODKB* [CSTO] (official website), http://www.odkb-csto.org/js_csto/voennaya-sostavlyauschaya-odkb/forces.php.

107 While Uzbekistan had fundamental doubts about joint response forces, Belarusian restraint was more based on tactical considerations. In the conflict over the price of Russian energy supplies, which was occurring at the same time, President Lukashenko made use of the consent requirement in the CSTO to exert pressure on the Russian leadership. Nevertheless, in October 2009, Belarus agreed while Uzbekistan initially reserved the right to participate in the new structures on an ad hoc basis only. "Uzbekskoe 'net' dja KSOR" [Uzbekistan's "No" to KSOR], *Inosmi*, 18 June 2009, https://inosmi.ru/world/20090618/249950.html.

a brigade for the "Collective Rapid Response Forces". In contrast, apart from Kazakhstan, the other allies only contribute smaller units.[108] For longer missions, their endurance also depends on Russian reinforcements. Even though it is unclear who is in command in a specific operation, there is much to suggest that it, too, would be based on rehearsed Russian leadership structures.[109] In addition, the most important leadership positions in the Moscow-based Joint Military Staff of the CSTO are occupied by Russian military personnel; both the chief and his first deputy are Russian generals.[110]

Russia also invests the most in CSTO's exercise activities.[111] As a result, the number and complexity of the manoeuvres increased. Where only one exercise per year took place before 2006, it has been four to six annually since 2012.[112] The now regular standard exercises cover a wide range of tasks. They range from conventional warfare (exercise *Vzaimodejstvie* [Cooperation]) and combatting terrorism to drug

smuggling (*Rubezh* [border], *Kobal't*) and peacekeeping (*Neruzhimoe Bratstvo* [Indestructible Brotherhood]). The rehearsed scenarios provide an insight into which operations the CSTO is preparing for. While, until the Ukraine crisis, these were mainly stabilisation operations in Central Asia, they have since been practicing the defensive and offensive elements of a conventional and unconventional conflict again. This clearly reflects the shift in Russia's focus in the wake of the Ukraine crisis and tense relations with the West. The first peacekeeping mission outside the CSTO area was simulated in 2016 and bears all the hallmarks of Russian influence[113] because it is in line with deliberations to prepare the Joint Peacekeeping Forces for possible missions in Ukraine or Syria.

To date, the CSTO has not completed a single mission.

Although Russia has been investing in the development of military structures and improved interoperability of the alliance since the end of the 2000s, it is uncertain how effective both would be on an actual mission. So far, the alliance has not had to pass any practical tests. Different standards of equipment and professionalisation and inadequately harmonised national laws suggest that multilateral cooperation beyond mere exercises would be fraught with practical pitfalls. There are a number of formal hurdles, for example with regard to Belarus. The country's constitution prohibits the use of armed forces abroad except for defence and peacekeeping. This makes it impossible for Belarus to participate in many potential CSTO operations.[114] For the militarily weak members Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, it is also likely to be difficult for them to actually deploy the promised forces with the required level of training and equipment. Moreover, the military effectiveness of the

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108 The CSTO Joint Peacekeeping Force consists of one Russian brigade, one Kazakh battalion and smaller units from other allies. Russia makes its 98th Airborne Division and 31st Airborne Brigade available for the Collective Rapid Response Forces. Kazakhstan participates with an airborne brigade and a marine battalion, Belarus with a brigade and Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan with a battalion each.

109 See Johan Norberg, *High Ambitions, Harsh Realities. Gradually Building the CSTO's Capacity for Military Intervention in Crises*, FOI-R--3668--SE (Stockholm: FOI, May 2013), 6, 19f. According to information from CSTO, it had previously only planned to create command structures for the different deployment scenarios, but now they are working on a permanent command structure. This would further strengthen Russia's influence. "Bezopasnost' — delo kollektivnoe" [Security is a collective matter], *Krasnaja Zvezda*, 15 February 2017, 2.

110 While Russian generals occupy the top posts (Chief and First Deputy Chief of the Joint Military Staff), representatives from other member states act as Deputy Chiefs of the CSTO's Joint Military Staff. "Nachal'nik Ob'edinjonnogo shtaba ODKB" [Head of the Joint Military Staff], *ODKB* [CSTO] (official website), http://www.odbk-csto.org/js_csto/komandovanie/head.php.

111 For example, Russian forces participate in most CSTO exercises and the majority of manoeuvres take place on Russian territory. Between 2003 and 2016, 14 CSTO exercises took place in Russia, eight each in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan and six in Kyrgyzstan. Marcel de Haas, "War Games of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization: Drills on the Move!", *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 29, no. 3 (2016): 378–406.

112 Ibid., 392.

113 "Kollektivnye mirotvorcheskie sily ODKB na uchenii 'nerushimoe bratstvo-2016' otrabotali provedenie operacii po podderzhaniju mira po 'mandatu Sovbeza OON' v uslovnoj strane, ne vchodjachshej v ODBK" [The collective peace forces of the CSTO practiced a peace mission on behalf of the United Nations in an imaginary non-member state of the CSTO during the "Indestructible Brotherhood 2016" manoeuvre], *ODKB* [CSTO] (official website), 27 August 2016, http://www.odkb-csto.org/training/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=8047&SECTION_ID=250.

114 The new military doctrine from 2016 reaffirmed this restriction. "Voennaja Doktrina Respubliki Belarus'", 20 July 2016, http://www.mil.by/ru/military_policy/doktrina/.

CSTO suffers from the fact that allies often use the organisation merely as an umbrella for de facto bilateral cooperation. This is particularly true for armaments and training cooperation where Moscow is trying to bind the other member states with subsidised prices and attractive programmes. While this promotes Moscow's position as the alliance's centre of gravity, there is a lack of robust military interoperability between the remaining members on joint exercises or on educational and training cooperation. Consequently, the value of the CSTO to Moscow is less the gains in military capability or burden sharing, and more the prospect of multilateral legitimacy which the alliance could give to Russian hegemony in general and specifically to any Russia-led operations.

Limited dominance

In order to use the CSTO as a legitimisation tool, Russia would have to dominate the political decision-making process within the organisation. Certainly, the Alliance Charter postulates equality between the member states and each participating country has one vote and a veto right in the committees.[115] However, in terms of personnel and structure, Russia is the most influential force in the CSTO and provides the majority of its leadership personnel. Nikolay Bordyusha was Secretary General of the organisation from 2003 to 2017. Prior to that, he had held senior posts in Russia's security sector and diplomatic service. After the decision was taken in 2015 to appoint someone to the position every three years in rotation, Moscow was able to ensure that the first successor would come from Armenia, the member state most dependent on Russia.[116] Russia continues to be dis-

proportionately represented in the alliance leadership, holding the position of Deputy Secretary-General and two of five management posts in the administrative departments.[117] In addition, the main institutions of the CSTO, the Secretariat and the Joint Military Staff, are based in Moscow.

Although the CSTO depends on Russia's political will and military capabilities, Moscow is only able to use the organisation as a tool for multilateral legitimacy and assert its interests to a limited degree. This is related to both a deep distrust of Russian dominance claims and a lack of internal coherence. One of Moscow's greatest successes to date is that, in December 2011, member states agreed to only approve new military bases of non-member states on their territory if all other alliance members agree.[118] Although the need for consensus has formally limited Moscow's room for manoeuvre, it benefits most from the new rule. According to its self-image as a great power, Russia has no intention of allowing foreign troops to set foot on its soil. In contrast, some member states have used the military bases of other countries as an important source of revenue or as a key element of their multi-vector foreign policy. For instance, the US has operated air bases in Kyrgyzstan (2001−2014) and Uzbekistan (2001−2005) and Germany had an air transport base in Uzbekistan (2001−2015). Since the withdrawal of Western troops in 2015, India has remained the only third country to maintain a military base on CSTO territory, namely in Tajikistan since 2002. The CSTO regulation from 2011 only refers to new military bases and excludes Uzbekistan since its withdrawal from the alliance in 2012, so it had no effect on the closure of US and German military bases. Nevertheless, in the future it will

115 Until 2010, there was a strict consensus principle in the CSTO which was later weakened at the behest of Russia. It is now possible to adopt resolutions in 'limited format'. If one member votes neither against nor explicitly for a resolution, it is deemed to have been adopted, but then it is not binding on the state that abstains. This change was implemented after several attempts by Uzbekistan to block Russian integration projects by refusing to give their consent. *Charter of the Collective Security Treaty Organization* (see note 98).

116 The new General Secretary of CSTO, Armenian Yuri Chachaturov, who was appointed in April 2017, can look back on a long career in the Soviet and Armenian armed forces. On 2 November 2018, the new Armenian leadership recalled Chachaturov from his post because he took part in a violent suppression of opposition demonstrations in 2008.

While Armenia's leaderships claims the right to appoint a new Armenian candidate for the post of secretary general, Belarus and Kazakhstan voiced their support to fill the post with a Belarussian candidate. Eduard Abrahamyan, "Internal Discord in CSTO May be Pushing Armenia to Leave Russia-led Alliance", *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 14, no. 168 (19 November 2018), https://jamestown.org/program/internal-discord-in-csto-may-be-pushing-armenia-to-leave-russia-led-alliance/.

117 "Ustavnye organy" [Statutory Bodies], *ODKB* [CSTO] (official website), http://www.odkb-csto.org/authorized_organs/list.php?SECTION_ID=102.

118 According to Article 7 of the CSTO Charter, not only military bases but also military infrastructure require approval. *Charter of the Collective Security Treaty Organization* (see note 98).

be more difficult for the allies to station troops from other states on their territory.[119]

Moscow wanted to deploy CSTO peacekeepers in Syria, but Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan refused.

Overall, the CSTO allies are keen to maintain their ability to act autonomously and are reluctant to respond when Moscow calls for allegiance. The CSTO Charter provides for member states to coordinate their positions on regional and international security issues.. However, member states demonstrated a certain reluctance to follow Russia's line of argumentation, in particular with regard to cases of Russian aggression in the post-Soviet space. For example, after the Russo-Georgian war in 2008, the CSTO condemned "Georgia's attempt to resolve the conflict with South Ossetia through military means" and supported "Russia's active role in creating peace and cooperation in the region".[120] However, none of the allies followed Moscow in recognising Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states. In the crisis over Ukraine, the CSTO recognised the legitimacy of the Crimean referendum; at the same time, the Special Summit convened by Russia in May 2014 only managed to provide lukewarm support for Moscow. As a result, "all sides" were encouraged to "ease tensions".[121] As a sign of his disapproval of Russia's policy, the Kazakh President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, did not even go to the summit.

In Russia's conflict with NATO, its allies also do not clearly position themselves on Moscow's side. The CSTO certainly supports Russia's core positions, such

as calling for a new Euro-Atlantic security order, criticises NATO's military activities on the territory of Eastern European Alliance members and demonstratively conducts training exercises on the borders of NATO countries.[122] Moscow also persuaded member states to adopt threat categories from Russian military doctrine, such as the US's strategic missile defence, in the "CSTO Collective Defence Strategy for the period until 2025".[123] However, the allies refuse to reduce their bilateral cooperation with NATO[124] and to transform the CSTO into an "Anti-NATO", as Russia has consistently called for since 2014.[125] This is true even for Armenia, whose security depends on Russia. In February 2017, the then Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan declared, "There is no doubt the CSTO and NATO pursue different goals, but our policy shows that it is possible for a country to find ways to cooperate in different formats".[126]

Russia also failed in its only attempt to date to activate the military structures of the CSTO. In order to share burdens and give a multilateral touch to a unilateral military operation, Moscow proposed deploying CSTO peacekeepers in Syria. But both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan refused.[127]

However, Moscow's instrumentalising of the CSTO is hampered not only by the other member states'

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119 One loophole is to give external actors access to ports or airports as transit hubs only, without establishing a military infrastructure or base there. As a result, despite criticism from Russia, Kazakhstan concluded an agreement with the US in 2018 which allows it to transport non-military goods through the Kazakh ports of Aktau and Kuryk. Ivan Minin, "Zachem Nazarbaevu voennaja baza SSHA na Kaspii" [Why Nazarbayev is giving the US a military base in the Caspian Sea], *News.ru*, 26 April 2018, https://news.ru/v-mire/poyavitsya-li-na-kaspii-voennaya-baza-ssha/.

120 "Press Conference Following the Collective Security Treaty Organization Summit", *President of Russia* (official website), 5 September 2008, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/1309.

121 Joanna Lillis, "Is Putin's Eurasian Vision Losing Steam?", *Eurasianet*, 9 May 2014, http://www.eurasianet.org/node/68360.

122 In August 2016, the CSTO conducted an exercise on the border of Latvia and Estonia which included elements of psychological warfare. Joshua Kucera, "Russia to Enlist Allies in Fight against NATO", *Eurasianet*, 13 December 2016, http://www.eurasianet.org/node/81646.

123 "Strategija kollektivnoj bezopasnosti" (see note 104).

124 Despite CSTO members undertaking in Article 1 of the Collective Security Treaty of 1992 not to join any military alliance directed against a CSTO ally, membership of the CSTO does not preclude close cooperation with other defence alliances. The CSTO countries cooperate to varying degrees with NATO, from taking part in Partnership for Peace, to participation in training programmes and joint exercises.

125 At the CSTO Summit in December 2016, Russia put forward a proposal to develop the CSTO into a stronger counterweight to NATO.

126 "Armenia's Accession to CSTO and Cooperation with NATO Fully Combinable — President Sargsyan", *Armenpress*, 27 February 2017, https://armenpress.am/eng/news/880516/armenia%E2%80%99s-accession-to-csto-and-cooperation-with-nato-fully-combinable-%E2%80%93-president-sargsyan.html.

127 Uran Botobekov, "Russia Wants CSTO to Deploy to Syria", *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 14, no. 89 (10 July 2017), https://jamestown.org/program/russia-wants-csto-allies-deploy-syria/.

concerns with regard to Russia's hegemonic intentions, but also by the alliance's lack of internal cohesion. Lack of trust, divergent priorities and individual interests make it difficult to take joint action. The relationship between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan suffers from unresolved border issues and relations between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are also tense. Given the mutual mistrust of Central Asian member states, it is therefore likely to be difficult to reach consensus on the need for a CSTO crisis management mission in Central Asia, if one were required. It can also be assumed that the level of alliance solidarity would be low in the case of an Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. After all, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have close cultural and religious ties as well as economic and political relations with Azerbaijan, which outweigh those with their ally Armenia. Even Belarus' ties with Azerbaijan are closer than with Armenia. The lack of inner cohesion reveals itself repeatedly when hostilities near Karabakh escalate, as they did in 2016. Although these hostilities were not a case for the alliance, as it was not an Azerbaijani attack on Armenian territory, nevertheless, it is precisely the Central Asian allies who do not even provide diplomatic support to Yerevan in these cases, but instead take sides with Azerbaijan. Responding bitterly, Armenian President Sargsyan complained at the CSTO summit in December 2015, "if we do not find it necessary to pick up the phone and find out what is happening in allied Armenia and if we vote against the interests of another member in international organisations, (...) then we bring the whole organisation [CSTO], its reputation and meaning into (...) question".[128]

Russia itself is only willing and able to regulate conflicts between its allies to a limited degree. Rather, it is keen not to let itself be drawn so far into these disputes that it would have to take a clear position. This limits the ability of the CSTO to contribute to solving regional security problems. When rioting broke out between the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in 2010 and the Kyrgyz President asked Moscow for support, Russian leaders rejected a CSTO mission.[129] Border

disputes between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, which has already left the Alliance, escalated in 2016. The Kyrgyz President called for an extraordinary meeting of the CSTO Council to send a strong signal of alliance solidarity. However, the alliance's response was muted and they only sent the Deputy Secretary General to monitor the situation. Moscow, in particular, showed little interest in straining the bilateral rapprochement with Uzbekistan that had only just begun.[130] Putin's statement to the National Security Council in July 2014 demonstrates clearly how little Moscow feels bound by the CSTO. He stated that Russia is, "fortunately not a member of an alliance. This also guarantees our sovereignty."[131]

Overall, the CSTO has so far lacked effectiveness, both as a security provider to member states and as a hegemonic tool of Russia. Both sides see the alliance primarily as a tool rather than an arena or even an actor. The crisis over Ukraine finally revealed the divergent expectations and the limited benefits of the alliance. For most member states, the organisation is merely an umbrella under which they can pursue their particular self-interests bilaterally with Moscow, in the form of subsidised armaments supplies, training activities and military education programmes.[132] Instead of dealing with regional problems through multilateral cooperation, they prefer to negotiate directly with Moscow. Like the other member states, Russia sees the CSTO primarily as an umbrella for its diverse bilateral relations. Since the allegiance Russia had expected from the alliance only occurred to a limited degree, development of the CSTO has stagnated since 2014.

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128 "S. Sargsyan's Speech at CSTO Collective Security Council Session Had Messages, Unpleasant Reminders: Expert", *panorama.am*, 22 December 2015, https://www.panorama.am/en/news/2015/12/22/president-armenia-csto-tigran-abrahamyan/1503058.

129 Deirdre Tynan, "CSTO Indecisive on Kyrgyzstan Intervention", *Eurasianet*, 14 June 2010, http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61294.

130 Joshua Kucera, "In Another Central Asian Security Crisis, Moscow Again Stands Aside", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 29 March 2016, http://www.eurasianet.org/node/78006.

131 "Security Council Meeting", *President of Russia* (official website), 22 July 2014, http://eng.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46305.

132 Anna Kreikemeyer, "Herrschaft statt Sicherheit: Die Organisation des Vertrags für Kollektive Sicherheit", *Osteuropa* 62, no. 5 (2012): 81—92 (84).

Review and Perspectives of Russian Military Policy in the Post-Soviet Space

The track record of Russian military policy in the post-Soviet space in terms of the three objectives pursued, namely to ward off threats, control the region and restrict the scope for action of external actors, is mixed. On the one hand, Moscow has been able to increase its ability to deter or ward off threats in and out of the region. After having modernised the Russian armed forces since 2008, they can now cover a wider range of objectives in the post-Soviet space. Although Russia's new operations would be subject to military limits beyond political considerations, for example due to difficult transport routes (Central Asia, Moldova) and the fact that some of its rapidly deployable forces are currently tied up in the Ukraine and Syria. Moscow's army is, nevertheless, far better able today than before the Russo-Georgian war to respond quickly to new dynamics and deter other actors with a show of military might. Through the expansion of its overseas bases, extended A2/AD capabilities and agreements on joint air defence, Russia has also been able to ensure that parts of the post-Soviet space act as a buffer against external threats.

Moscow only has limited ability to exercise hegemony over the post-Soviet space.

On the other hand, Moscow's military policy is limited in its ability to realise its desired hegemony over the post-Soviet space and limit the scope for action of external actors. While the interventions in Georgia and Ukraine led to Kiev and Tbilisi losing control of parts of their territory and the prospects of both countries acceding to NATO being severely hampered, this did not mean that Georgia and Ukraine merged into Moscow's claimed zone of in-

fluence, on the contrary: Both countries have turned decisively against Russia and other post-Soviet states' scepticism of its hegemonic ambitions has increased. This is true even for countries that previously co-operated closely with Russia, such as Belarus and Kazakhstan. If they perceived Russia primarily as a security provider until 2014, they increasingly regard their large neighbour as a potential danger — though have yet to say as much. This applies in particular to concerns about hybrid scenarios, which were included in the military doctrines of Belarus and Kazakhstan for the first time in 2016 and 2017 respectively. Accordingly, they are trying to eliminate as many entry points for Russian influence as possible, for example by training fewer Belarusian and Kazakh officers in Russia. In addition, the national identity of both countries is being promoted considerably more strongly by the state than before the Ukraine crisis. Kazakhstan's transition from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet in 2017 should also be seen in this context as an attempt to limit the 'soft' influence of Russia and its media channels.[133]

The post-Soviet space does not form a homogeneous sphere of influence.

At best, Russia has achieved ambivalent results, not only with its coercive diplomacy. Also, the expectation of creating unilateral dependence on Russia

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133 "Voennaja Doktrina Respubliki Belarus'" (see note 114); "Voennaja Doktrina Respubliki Kazachstan", 20 July 2016, http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=37940951#pos=14; -105; Elya Altynsarina, "Kazakhstan Adopts New Version of Latin-based Kazakh Alphabet", *The Astana Times* (online), 26 February 2018, https://astanatimes.com/2018/02/kazakhstan-adopts-new-version-of-latin-based-kazakh-alphabet/.

through cooperation proved to be misguided in many respects. Moscow has only achieved any notable success with this strategy in territories and states that depend on its military protection, such as Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria, Armenia and, to some extent, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. However, this approach has been less effective against Kazakhstan and Belarus, and completely ineffective against Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan who only cooperate selectively and to a limited degree with Russia. Contrary to Russian claims, the post-Soviet space is therefore not a homogeneous sphere of influence, but rather a patchwork of eleven states each with its own distinct military relationship with Russia.

This differentiated picture of the post-Soviet space is also reflected in the activities of external actors. Moscow's claim to be exclusively responsible for the security of the region and, therefore, to limit the scope for action of other states and institutions can only be implemented in part. Certainly Russia was able to secure a veto over the construction of future military bases in the CSTO area and the separatist areas of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria and Donbas also cooperate solely with Moscow. But even Belarus and Armenia, which are facing strong pressure from Russia to reduce their already limited forms of dialogue and cooperation with external actors, are trying to stick to these formats. For example, in 2017, the Armenian Defence Minister said that when it came to cooperation with CSTO and NATO, its country was "guided by the principle of 'both/and' rather than 'either/or'".[134] The remaining states are seeking to expand their military partnerships within a multi-vectoral approach, thereby reducing their dependence on Russia. As a result, it can be observed that China is playing an increasingly important role in security policy in Central Asia. This applies not only to multi-lateral formats that include Russia, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), but also to bilateral cooperation. China's People's Liberation Army is conducting bilateral exercises with the Central Asian states, assisting Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in training and equipping their armed forces. China's investment in the Belt and Road Initiative should further strength-

en its position in Central Asia, as well as in other parts of the post-Soviet space.[135] In the South Caucasus and Black Sea region, Turkey and, increasingly, Iran have also established themselves as important military partners for Azerbaijan and Georgia. The first formal four-party meeting, at which military issues were also discussed, took place in March 2018 between Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Iran. For Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova, the Atlantic Alliance and individual Western states have become their preferred partners. However, the US and NATO also played an important part in Kazakhstan's multi-vectoral approach, as evidence by Astana granting the US Armed Forces port rights to transit from Afghanistan in 2018. For some years now, cooperation with external partners has been increasingly accompanied by regionalisation tendencies without Russian participation. Since taking office in 2016, Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has sought to develop bilateral relations with the other Central Asian states. In 2017, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan also signed a joint military cooperation plan for the first time, which provides for cooperation on training, exercises and education. This reflects Mirziyoyev's ambition to give Uzbekistan more weight in Central Asia and not leave the initiatives solely to Russia or China.[136]

The limited benefits of Russian bilateral and multi-lateral ties may give Moscow even more incentive to focus on expanding its unilateral power projection capabilities. However, this could turn out to be counterproductive. Should Moscow, after the Russo-Georgian war, threaten or reassert military intervention in the post-Soviet space, for example, by flexing its muscles on the border or through non-linear operations, states such as Kazakhstan, Belarus or Uzbekistan may be increasingly less willing to cooperate with Moscow. This points to the fundamental weaknesses of Russian military policy in the post-Soviet space, namely a lack of trust and asymmetric expectations. Certainly, many post-Soviet states are using Russia's offer of military cooperation for their own interests. Many state leaders in the region also recognise the importance of Moscow as a key partner in

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134 Siranush Ghazanchyan, "No Controversy between Armenia's Membership in CSTO and Cooperation with NATO", *Public Radio of Armenia*, 29 March 2017, http://www.armradio.am/en/2017/03/29/no-controversy-between-armenias-membership-in-csto-and-cooperation-with-nato/.

135 See Martin Breitmaier, *China's Rise and Central Asia's Security*, Issue Alert no. 21/2016 (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies [EUISS], June 2016), https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Alert_21_Central_Asia_MB.pdf.
136 Malika Orazgaliyeva, "Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan Sign First Military Cooperation Plan", *The Astana Times* (online), 22 August 2017, https://astanatimes.com/2017/08/kazakhstan-uzbekistan-sign-first-military-cooperation-plan/.

countering threats and maintaining the stability of their authoritarian regimes. In the case of a 'colour revolution' in one of these countries, it could certainly send a military request for help to Russia. At the same time, however, only a few post-Soviet states accept Russia's hegemonic notions of political order.

Conclusions for Germany, the EU and NATO

Russia's military policy in the post-Soviet space is a military, and above all, a regulatory challenge for Germany, the EU and NATO. Since the end of the 2000s, Russian forces have strengthened their military position in the post-Soviet space. A clear shift of emphasis from Central Asia to the West and the Black Sea region can be observed, which is manifested, among other things, in the expansion of integrated air defence with Belarus and Armenia, as well as in an increased presence on the Crimean peninsula. As a result, Moscow is not only extending its buffer against the Atlantic Alliance, but also its power projection capabilities against eastern and south-eastern NATO members. Germany should, therefore, continue to support NATO's efforts to reassure those allies with contributions of its own. However, a policy based primarily on reassurance and deterrence will only aggravate the security dilemma between Russia and NATO. Germany should, therefore, also intensify its efforts to develop conventional arms controls and the accompanying military transparency and limitation measures (Vienna Document, Open Skies). It also needs to increase its commitment to building trust. This includes 'structured dialogue' within the OSCE, initiated by Germany, in which the participating states exchange views on threat perceptions, military arrangements and security-building measures.[137] In addition, trust-building formats should be revived with Russia's armed forces, albeit in an amended form so as not to give the impression of a return to business as usual. However, this approach will not achieve quick results. Rather, the value of dialogue lies in counteracting the trend for perceptions, which are now completely decoupled from the facts, to

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137 See Wolfgang Richter, *Die OSZE zwischen Konfrontation und "Strukturiertem Dialog". Unter Österreichs Vorsitz bekennt sich die Organisation zu ihrer friedensstiftenden Rolle*, SWP-Aktuell 5/2018 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, January 2018).

become even more entrenched. Germany, in particular, can draw on greater experience in dialogue and use it to shape future measures. But such steps can only mitigate the security dilemma. It can only be resolved when the underlying fundamental conflict over the European security order is overcome.

Russia's claim to its own zone of influence in the post-Soviet space conflicts with the principles of internal and external sovereignty of states agreed in the Charter of Paris, as well as with their right to choose their alliances freely. The open demonstration of Russia's intentions and capabilities in the Ukraine crisis, which included the use of military force to enforce its claim, not only aggravated the conflict over security order, but also further eroded confidence in Moscow's expected reliability. This limits the possibilities for Western actors and Russia to cooperate on security policy in the post-Soviet space. There is a need for cooperation, especially in dealing with transnational threats such as terrorism, drug and arms smuggling, and ethnoterritorial conflicts. Although Moscow benefits from the continuation of 'frozen conflicts', it has no interest in seeing them spiral out of control. In such cases, Russia can exert a moderating influence on the parties to the dispute, as it did in the spring of 2016 when fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan ended. The need for Moscow to play a constructive role is increasing, given the growing threat of escalation in the Armenian-Azerbaijani relationship since the change of leadership in Yerevan. As a result of Russia's military capabilities and its deployment in the post-Soviet space, there may be greater demand in the region itself for future Russian involvement, for example in the event of further destabilisation in Afghanistan. At the same time, many post-Soviet countries are critical of Russia's unilateral measures or bilateral cooperation because they fear the concomitant power asymmetry.

Before 2014, there were already practical cooperation projects within the NATO-Russia Council for

dealing with transnational threats, for example joint training for drug fighters in Central Asia or equipping the Afghan armed forces. With regard to Afghanistan and Central Asia, the CSTO had repeatedly encouraged formal cooperation with NATO prior to the Ukraine crisis.[138] Since 2014, the challenge for Western actors has been to continue to rely on cooperation with Moscow in dealing with certain security issues, but at the same time not to give the appearance of recognising Russia's hegemonic role by cooperating with it. Against this backdrop, proposals to completely 'normalise' NATO-Russia relations should be avoided, as they could all too easily be exploited as an ex-post legitimisation of Russian aggression in Ukraine. However, it makes sense to build on successful projects initiated by the NATO-Russia Council and develop new initiatives that involve the Central Asian states to a greater extent than in the past, for example in the fight against drug and arms smuggling. In contrast, formal cooperation between NATO and CSTO would not appear to make any sense. Firstly, the CSTO has so far not proved effective in managing internal conflicts or external crisis management. The disagreements and mistrust between member states are too deep for it to act as a stable basis for cooperation. Secondly, there is a danger that cooperation with the CSTO will be misunderstood as de facto legitimising Russia's hegemonic claim. This would strengthen an organisation whose members have been increasingly sceptical about this claim since 2014.

In addition to dealing with Russia, Germany and NATO are also interested in shaping relations with the other states in the post-Soviet space. The focus is on states aspiring to become members of the Atlantic Alliance (Georgia and, possibly, Ukraine), and on those who, to varying degrees, engage in dialogue or cooperate with NATO without wanting to join it. As far as Georgia and Ukraine are concerned, NATO should resist attempts to see rapid accession to the Alliance as part of a geopolitical containment policy

towards Russia, and instead ensure the entry criteria are met in full. Otherwise, it risks losing its credibility not only as a military but also as a normative actor, increasing the risk of a violent escalation of the conflict over security order.

At the same time, the loss of trust in Russia since the Ukraine crisis opens up the possibility for NATO to cooperate more intensively with those post-Soviet countries that have so far focused their security policy predominantly on Russia, in particular Armenia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Offers of cooperation should cover three areas: Firstly, that there is a pragmatic pursuit of common interests in countering transnational threats, for instance through military education, training and equipment. The second area is trust building and transparency. Here, individual NATO members, such as Germany and Poland, could lead the way and, for example, engage in dialogue with Belarusian and Kazakh forces. Thirdly, efforts should be made to strengthen transformation processes towards democracy and the rule of law, for example by promoting democratic control over the armed forces. Since most of the post-Soviet states have (semi-)authoritarian regimes in power, their interest in this area of cooperation will be low. However, NATO, in coordination with the EU, could provide incentives on the topic of resilience by helping the countries concerned reduce their social, political and economic vulnerabilities and thus reduce opportunities for Russia's non-linear operations.

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138 In 2003, the CSTO proposed formal cooperation with NATO, especially when dealing with security issues from Afghanistan. Out of concern for implicitly recognising Russia's claim to hegemony in the post-Soviet space and because of differing views among alliance members, NATO never responded to the proposal. In 2014, the CSTO withdrew it. "CSTO Suspends Dialogue with NATO", *New Europe*, 10 November 2014, https://www. neweurope.eu/article/csto-suspends-dialogue-nato/.

Abbreviations

A2/AD	Anti-Access/Area Denial
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
DOSAAF	Volunteer Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Navy
EU	European Union
EUISS	European Union Institute for Security Studies (Paris)
IISS	The International Institute for Strategic Studies (London)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSW	Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich (Centre for Eastern Studies) (Warsaw)
RUSI	Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies (London)
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Solna)
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics