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THE INFLUENCE OF REGIONAL CONFLICTS AND MILITARY REFORM ON THE 2010  
AND 2014 MILITARY DOCTRINES OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION: AN ANALYSIS OF  
THE DEVELOPMENT AND CURRENT FORCE POSTURE OF THE RUSSIAN  
CONVENTIONAL GROUND FORCES

BY

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THESIS

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## **Abstract**

The 2010 and 2014 Military Doctrines of the Russian Federation, as planning documents for the armed forces, have been influenced and guided, both directly and indirectly, by the recent regional conflicts in Georgia and Crimea, as well as by the ongoing ‘New Look’ military reforms. The perceived threat by Russia of the continued eastward expansion by NATO into their periphery and region of influence not only provided the impetus for military action, but the deliberate inclusion of NATO as a military threat and main external danger in both doctrines. From the Russian perspective, the expansion of NATO and infringement in their sphere of influence can only be dissuaded by show of force, and as a result, the desire to protect its national interests and regional hegemony is reflected prominently in the doctrines. The ‘New Look’ military reforms on the other hand, regardless of the radical and sweeping changes on the structure and posture of the armed forces, had very little impact on either doctrine. In complete contradiction both documents continued to stress the requirements of a Soviet-style mobilization reserve and other such aspects similar to the pre-reform Russian military force. As a result, the current military doctrine has left the present-day Russian armed forces, specifically the ground forces, contending with how to confront the continued threat of NATO expansion and prepare for future regional conflicts, while attempting to strike the appropriate balance between a smaller, permanent-readiness force, and a large mobilization army.

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## INTRODUCTION

Russia is only respected and has its interests considered when the country is strong and stands firmly on its own feet.

—Vladimir Putin, *Russia and the Changing World*

The Russian Federation, since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, has been involved militarily in several large-scale regional conflicts. The Second Chechen conflict, with the battle and insurgency phase lasting almost ten years, provided a renewed emphasis on the need for a more modern—both qualitatively and quantitatively—military, and a relevant military doctrine which fit within the larger requirements of the national security strategy. Amid worsening tensions between the Republic of Georgia and their breakaway neighbors of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Russian air and ground forces launched a full-scale invasion of the region, albeit in response to initial Georgian actions and with the announced intentions of peacekeeping and protecting the citizens of the region, to include native Russians and those granted Russian citizenship. Though the operation achieved the ultimately desired effect of preventing Georgian forces from entering either autonomous region, militarily the conflict highlighted the still present command and control—and technological—flaws of both the Russian ground and air forces. As a result, Russian Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov presented a series of drastic military reforms, followed shortly by a new military doctrine in 2010.

For the next several years changes were implemented, though often with stiff resistance from the military itself. New equipment and weapons systems were introduced, and the structure and size of the military—virtually unchanged since Soviet times—received an unprecedented overhaul in line with other contemporary mobile and deployable forces. The Russian military also profited from a steadily increasing budget, which has become one of the major portions of

national expenditure. All of this came to fruition in the early months of 2014 when the sustained political protests in Ukraine resulted in the removal of the Russian-friendly government. Under the guise of both being ‘invited’ and protecting native Russians, ground forces of the Russian Federation quickly, and with precision, seized control of Crimea. The ability of the Russian military to execute the operation, both in terms of forward-deploying multiple mobile forces and in command and control, was on par with any contemporary Western-military operation. Compared to operations a mere fourteen years earlier in Chechnya, it signified the emergence of a new, and more adaptable, Russian military.

As the situation in Crimea dissolved into a separatist conflict in eastern Ukraine, and amid the escalation of tensions between Russia and the Western powers (NATO), a new military doctrine emerged in December 2014. Though similar in spirit to the previous doctrine, the new doctrine conveys a more defensive posture with expressed interest in protecting Russian nationals in the immediate periphery of the border. The new doctrine also stresses the use of more advanced technology in both offensive and defensive systems and a stated objective of reestablishing dominance within the Arctic. Of most concern is the unstated threat—as perceived by Russia—of the expanding NATO presence along their borders. Though denied by the Kremlin, their escalating involvement and support both in weapons and troops, as well as financial aid, for the separatists in eastern Ukraine can only be ascertained as the execution of the new Russian military doctrine. The renewed flights of long-range bombers, the almost brazen interdictions by Russian interceptors of NATO aircraft and the increased patrols of the Black Sea Fleet into the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean can also be viewed as the new stance of the Russian military acting within the guidance of the doctrine. Though these military actions had previously been operational, with the new 2014 military doctrine it provides Russia with—at

least to them—a legitimate and warranted use of their military force operating against a perceived threat to their national security.

This thesis attempts to examine the 2010 and 2014 Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation and the resulting change and progression which has occurred by correlating the structural and equipment changes in the Russian military as a result of the 2008 military reforms, and the two recent ground campaigns in Georgia and Crimea/Eastern Ukraine. The 2008 conflict in Georgia—though a Russian victory—highlighted the long overdue need for military reform, and shortly afterwards the ‘New Look’ reforms were initiated, followed shortly in 2010 by the first new military doctrine in over a decade. With most of the military reforms in place, in the spring of 2014 Russian occupied and annexed Crimea with a very mobile and professional military force. Amid rising tension with the West and NATO, and an escalating proxy-war in Eastern Ukraine, on 26 December 2014 Russia released the current 2014 Military Doctrine. By comparing the changes of the 2014 Military Doctrine from the former 2010 document, development and current status of the military reforms and conflict performance in Georgia and Crimea/Eastern Ukraine with an emphasis on the ground forces, examining the evolution of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation and the influence of coinciding military reform and relevant regional conflicts is possible.

Russian military doctrine and Russian military reform since the 2008 Russian-Georgian war raises several questions to be researched and answered within the constraints of this analysis. First, how has the recent 2014 Russian military doctrine evolved from the major 2010 doctrine? What are the major similarities and differences? Are there any overarching themes? Second, how has the evolution of the doctrine been influenced by conflicts in Georgia and Crimea/Ukraine? Did the impetus for the uses of military force, the resulting military action and

the corresponding geopolitical climate provide a catalyst for the new doctrines? Third, have the doctrines coincided with the ongoing 2008 'new look' military reforms? Are stated goals such as increased combat readiness, organizational restructuring and modernization of weapons and equipment reflected in the military doctrines? Lastly, what is the status and direction of the Russian ground forces after the military reforms, and under the current military doctrine? Have they been able to incorporate these internal and external demands and translate them into a viable force? What is the future direction of this force?

The 2010 and 2014 Military Doctrines of the Russian Federation, as planning documents for the armed forces, have been influenced and guided, both directly and indirectly, by the recent regional conflicts in Georgia and Crimea, as well as the ongoing military reforms, though the extent of this influence varied from overt and deliberate in the Georgian case, to rather contradictory and incompatible in the Crimean case. The perceived threat by Russia of the continued eastward expansion by NATO and other western institutions into their periphery and region of influence not only provided the impetus for military action, but the deliberate inclusion of NATO as a military threat and main external danger in both doctrines. This increased tension towards NATO also resulted in an elevated posture on nuclear deterrence, and a stronger and more obvious assertion of a Russian sphere of privileged interest. The regional conflicts also contributed to a renewed interest in the doctrines for the protection of not only Russian citizens abroad, but Russian-speakers as well, and the authorization to use military forces for that purpose. From the Russian perspective, the expansion of NATO and infringement in their sphere of influence can only be dissuaded by show of force, and as a result, the desire to protect its national interests and regional hegemony is reflected prominently in the doctrines.

The 'New Look' military reforms on the other hand, regardless of the radical and sweeping changes on the structure and posture of the armed forces, had very little impact on either doctrine. Beginning in late 2008, the reforms were the most aggressive overhaul of the Russian military since its establishment in 1992, creating new rapidly deployable brigade-sized permanent-readiness forces composed of a much smaller force utilizing new and modernized equipment. Despite this, in complete contradiction, both documents continued to stress the requirements of a Soviet-style mobilization reserve and other such aspects similar to the pre-reform Russian military force, for both the operational forces, as well as in the economic and defense sectors, while at the same time containing nuanced mentions of military reform concepts. As a result of these influencing factors, the current military doctrine has left the present-day Russian armed forces, specifically the ground forces, contending with how to confront the continued threat of NATO expansion and prepare for future regional conflicts, while attempting to strike the appropriate balance between a smaller, permanent-readiness force, and a large mobilization army.

### **Existing Literature**

The defense analysis community has discussed and analyzed various dimensions of the Russian military doctrine, coinciding military reform and the relevant regional conflicts. There have been scholarly contributions to the developments of the individual military doctrines, military reform and their implications, as well as extensive writings concerning the conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine, though with a lesser amount of material on the recent actions in Crimea. Because military doctrine includes a wide range of issues, there is no coherent single theme in the existing literature, however in the following summary some of the major issues will be presented and addressed.

The development of the doctrine, both in the early stages after the creation of the Russian Federation, and the later drafts of 2000 and 2010 has been widely written about and analyzed. Marcel De Haas<sup>1</sup>, in his analysis of Soviet, CIS and Russian military doctrines from 1990 until 2000, argued that the development of the military doctrine demanded an important role in any study of Russian security policy, due to its reflection of current and future policy. He tracked the evolution of the doctrine and how it has adjusted to reflect current threats; the initial fear of a global war has evolved to include civil and religious war, as well as international crime and terrorism. The doctrine, he noted, has always included 'Russian citizens abroad,' though it has slowly changed from those located in former Soviet republics to Russian citizens abroad in general. Regardless, De Haas stressed that each military doctrine has reacted to the post-Cold War security policy of the West, which is seen as a security threat to Russia.

In a more dated piece, Mary E. Glantz<sup>2</sup>, daughter of renowned Soviet military historian David Glantz, also analyzed the military doctrine, though focusing primarily on the argument between parliament and the presidency over what constituted a threat to the new Russian Federation. The continued eastward expansion of NATO was the primary concern of Yury Baluyevsky when he analyzed the 2010 Russian military doctrine. Baluyevsky noted two major events, the first being the refusal of the United States to constrain the development of a missile defense system and second, their material and declaratory support of Georgia during the 2008 conflict, as chief reasons for this transition. Russia as well reacted in their doctrine to the continued option of the United States for using their nuclear weapons for a preventative strike, as

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<sup>1</sup> Marcel de Haas, "An Analysis of Soviet, CIS and Russian Military Doctrines 1990-2000," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 14, no. 4 (2001).

<sup>2</sup> Mary E. Glantz, "The Origins and Development of Soviet and Russian Military Doctrine," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 7, no. 3 (1994).

Russia stated that their nuclear weapons were for defensive purposes only. He noted as well that this defensive nuclear deterrence formed the basis of the 2010 doctrine.

The 2010 military doctrine within the National Security Strategy was a concern of Gregory P. Lannon when he examined the ‘New Look’ reforms of the army and the effect on foreign policy. He argued that the current reforms of the military had limited their influence globally, and as a result introduced a new ‘southern’ foreign policy, which focused more on the Caucasus region. He claimed—contrary to others—that the threat of NATO and China have been relegated below those posed by the Caucasus region, even going so far as to argue that this southern region has defined Russian foreign policy and military thinking since the mid 1990s. He supported this claim by discussing the ‘New Look’ reforms, which have tailored the military to fight insurgent groups and smaller forces, and how the opposition to these reforms was lessened after the showing of the military in the Georgian war. Though the Caucasus region is still important to Russia, the current political and military situation in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine have brought a renewed prevalence to NATO once again.

Several scholars have written on the continual issue of the role of military technology within developing Russian military theory. Rod Thornton, in analyzing the Russian military in 2008, argued that the military had been previously neglected due to the desires of the political leadership to reduce defense spending. To support this claim, he reviewed the current situation of the Russian military and their actions in the Georgian conflict. While acknowledging that compared to previous conflicts in Chechnya the military fared well, he claimed it was because the military utilized contract troops to do the actual fighting, while conscript troops continued to fill all other areas of the military not engaged in high profile actions. Despite this, due to the neglect of the military, the Russian forces fighting in Georgia were both technically and

technologically inferior to their counterparts.<sup>3</sup> He concluded by noting that though the Russian military could launch nuclear missiles or fight insurgent forces, they could not do much in between.

Though still looking at the transformation of technology in the Russian military, Tor Bukkvoll explored the three different schools of thought within the military on this sensitive subject. These three ideologies—traditionalists, modernists and revolutionaries—all have different conceptions of how the military should evolve in regards to the balance of manpower reductions for greater technology in equipment. While the traditionalists believe that new technologies will not revolutionize warfare, the revolutionaries—who want to make technology a priority—feel that warfare has changed forever and if Russia does not adapt they will be unable to defend their sovereignty in the future. Caught in the middle, the modernists want to break with the previous Soviet model, and adopt a more balanced approach between technology and manpower. Bukkvoll also discussed the contentious issue between the groups of either developing a military that responds to the West asymmetrically with a larger force, or responding in kind to the Western model by developing a technologically-heavy military.

Noted Russian and Soviet military expert Jacob W. Kipp, writing shortly after the formation of the 1993 Russian military doctrine, examined the changes in military doctrine and policy during this period. Though dated, his examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the military forces of Russia and how the doctrine could influence their utilization is still relevant today. Bettina Renz as well looked at the influence of the military doctrine on the deployment of

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<sup>3</sup> Rod Thornton, “A Bear with Teeth?” *The RUSI Journal* 153, no. 5 (October 2008): 52. He noted several examples of decay in the military and how it became apparent during the conflict. First, the overall maintenance of equipment was subpar, and as a result the movement of forces into South Ossetia was hampered by multiple vehicle breakdowns which blocked the already narrow roads. Second, the technological quality of their equipment versus their Georgian counterparts was inferior. Though both armies used similar models, the Georgian vehicles had been updated with night vision, advance fire control systems and all-weather capability.

the military, though she focused on the 2010 doctrine and the issues of manpower requirements. Using the Georgian conflict as a backdrop, she noted that the reforms instituted in 2008 sought to address previous issues the political will to develop a new and professional military is still insufficient. Throughout the article, she argued that the new, modern Russian army will only be possible when Russia fully embraced the need to end conscription. In addition, the Strategic Studies Institute has written several extensive studies about the modernization of the Russian military.

Though much scholarship exists on the aforementioned areas, it is the subject of military doctrine and military reform that has received the most attention. Keir Giles, writing about Russian military transformation after 2011, analyzed several different facets of this transformation, and how these changes will provide a more adaptable and flexible force capable of meeting Russia's foreign policy goals. Giles noted that this reform has been accelerated as new senior leadership who support the reform process is in place in key posts. To bolster his claim, he discussed the new structural changes in the military which consisted of the change to brigade formations from the previous division/regiment structure and the establishment of heavy, medium and light forces to meet evolving security threats. He also examined the omnipresent issue of personnel and staffing with contract and conscription forces, and in turn the resulting issues of developing an NCO corps, as well as the hurdles of restructuring the professional military educational system. Despite these obstacles, Giles noted that military leadership realized it would be the missile defense forces and information security which would be at the core of a more modern force, versus the previous reliance on mass mobilization to counter a land invasion by NATO. Like Lannon, Giles argued the area of the north Caucasus will continue to be the focus of Russian operations.

The International Institute of Strategic Studies annual *Military Balance* publication provided a section devoted to the ‘New Look’ reforms from 2008 until 2011. In the examination, the IISS contributors evaluated the changes established by the Defense Minister to include the Ministry of Defense (MoD) becoming the main civilian oversight body of the military, as well as the reduction of the number of officers of all grades. Also discussed was the reduction in the number of military districts and the introduction of the brigade system. In addition, the threat of NATO was mentioned, and how even though it was not considered a threat, the continued development of military infrastructure closer to Russia’s borders could constitute a threat.

Roger N. McDermott as well analyzed Russian military reform, with a focus on the change in organization from divisions to brigades and how, he argued, this has almost removed the mass mobilization concept. These reforms, as others have noted, is a result of the dismal showing of the military during the Georgian conflict and McDermott provided evidence of specific changes in terms of both more modern equipment and the mobilization and readiness of various military commands. Though the issue of conscription versus contract had been prevalent, he noted that the transformation to a brigade structure, and with it the June 2009 demonstration and testing of three tank brigades, was the final abandonment of the previous mass mobilization concept which relied completely on conscripts. This structural change also brought with it new equipment and hardware, with the key units receiving these items first and then progressing throughout the remainder of the military. He noted as well that the tank will continue to be the key feature of the ground forces. He concluded that the most fundamental and ambitious military reform program in Russian since 1945 was in progress.

Alexander Golts also examined military reform, but in the context of the Global War on Terrorism. He argued that reform is required due to lack of modern equipment and growing internal social problems. He also analyzed the current issue of mixed formations consisting of both conscript and contract soldiers, and he argued this needs to be a temporary fix, not a long-term staffing solution, which is contrary to the MoD who still calls for a mobilization reserve in case of a massive war. Unlike McDermott, Golts concluded that the Russian military cannot imagine anything but a military based in conscription and mass mobilization, with limited training by specialized officers, themselves only having limited technical training.

Several prominent Russian officials as well have produced analyses of their military doctrine. General of the Army Makhmut Gareev, who is President of the Russian Academy of Military Sciences, wrote shortly after the 1992 draft doctrine about the options for Russia and the various paths that will be presented to them. Though not arguing any particular point, he wrote of what future war might look like, and how a new doctrine needs to be developed which takes all these possibilities into account. Andrei Makarychev and Alexander Sergunin, writing about the institutional, political and security implications of Russian military reform, argued that despite numerous setbacks and barriers to the efforts of reform, there have been certain successes. They noted the clear shift from the traditional Soviet-style army to a more mobile, deployable and better equipped force. This shift, they found, was due to Moscow's radical change in threat perception and the abandonment of the previous Cold-war goals. Makarychev and Sergunin noted these threats have moved from external to internal, which in turn requires a more mobile military. Other reasons for reform they discussed were economic necessity and low combat readiness of the military, which along with lack of modern equipment, they blame for the degraded performance in Georgia and to a certain extent, Chechnya.

Probably the most current scholarship on the Russian military doctrine and military reform has been completed by Bettina Renz. Though she was previously mentioned for an article she wrote in 2008, she recently analyzed the Russian military capabilities after 20 years of multiple reforms, and included a discussion on military operations in Crimea. She argued that though reform had been discussed and implemented, it was never actually completed. The 2008 reforms of Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov were previously thought to be effectively dead after his resignation, but as she pointed out, the events in Crimea did not show an ineffective military force. She claimed that the previous failures in Chechnya and the questionable results in Georgia versus the success in Crimea were a result of strategy, not a question of technological superiority. She concluded that the previously flawed assumptions about Russian military reform have often led to exaggerated assessments of its inadequacy and downplaying the changes that have occurred, which the Russian operations in Crimea have shown to be otherwise. In addition, scholars such as military analyst Charles J. Dick, Russian and Eurasian military expert Stephen J. Blank and former Russian Security Council member Vladislav Chernov have written extensively about the various reforms in the Russian military since 1992.

The current literature engaged with a wide spectrum of topics within the larger context of the Russian military doctrines, regional conflicts, and military reform. In relation to the military doctrines, issues arise as to their function as security and planning documents for the military, while another reoccurring theme is the concept of a threat in the documents, and how the expansion of NATO is expressed within this context. However, the status and organization of the military, both before and after the reforms, occupied a large portion of the literature. Most prominent was the need for reform of the operational structure from a mobilization force, to a

more permanent-readiness force. In addition, the literature engaged with the debate over contract and conscript soldiers, as well as the required compromises during the reform process.

The chapters of this thesis explore the 2010 and 2014 Military Doctrines of the Russian Federation, the ongoing 'New Look' military reforms, the regional conflicts in Georgia and Crimea/Eastern Ukraine, and how these separate yet intertwined topics have influenced and altered one another, resulting in the Russian military we see today. While the military doctrines, as well as the military reforms and regional conflicts, apply to the Russian Armed Forces as a whole, the primary focus of this project is on the Russian conventional ground forces, due to not only their size and prominence, but also the magnitude of the impact of the aforementioned factors upon them. The first section will analyze these important subjects. Chapter one investigates the 2010 and 2014 Military Doctrines of the Russian Federation in terms of similarities, differences and common themes. Chapter two examines at the 2008 Russian-Georgian War as a catalyst for reform, while chapter three will analyze the 2008 'New Look' Military Reforms; the objectives of the reforms; and the status of reforms by 2012. Chapter four examines the first demonstration of the reformed Russian ground forces during the 2014-2015 Annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. For both regional conflicts, the prelude to military intervention will be presented, as well as a brief timeline of the conflict and a brief analysis of the eventual outcome.

The second section is concerned with the assessment of these subjects. Chapter five examines the influence of both the regional conflicts and military reform on the Military Doctrines; the subsequent increase in the perceived threat from NATO expansion and Western influence; and the contradicting position towards a permanent-readiness force. Chapter six will conclude with the consequences of the aforementioned factors on the Russian military; the

current Russian ground forces post-Crimea/Ukraine, and their long-term presence and viability as a 21<sup>st</sup> Century military force.

For this project, a wide range of scholarly journals and government publications were consulted. Among the more prominent sources, this includes the *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, *European Security*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, *RUSI Journal*, and *Defense and Security Analysis*. Multiple publications of the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College were examined as well. In addition, both Russian and Western online news sources were used to provide critical current perspectives. The thesis also makes use of Russian sources, to include the Moscow-based independent defense analysis publication *Moscow Defense Brief*, and several Russian-language sources, most prominently the 2014 Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation (not available in English as of this writing) and the Russian Ministry of Defense publication *Voennaia Mysl'*.

## CHAPTER 1

## THE MILITARY DOCTRINES OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Military Doctrine, as distinct from strategy, depicts how to employ military tools: what kinds of wars one plans to fight, and how one plans to fight them.

—Kristin Ven Bruusgaard, *Crimea and Russia's Strategic Overhaul*

The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation represents the views and objectives of the Russian Government as to how best prepare for, and protect, the Russian Federation from both external and internal threats. Military doctrine itself is “neither a theory in general nor the views of individuals, but rather a system of views on defense issues officially adopted in a country.”<sup>4</sup> The crucial role of this document is to “explain how armed forces of different kinds should fight.”<sup>5</sup> In order to complete this task, the military doctrine “encompasses an extremely wide range of issues, beginning with military policy and ending with the organization of military service.”<sup>6</sup> These issues are items such as “what types of wars to prepare for and under what conditions,” as well as “what kind of weapons the army will buy.”<sup>7</sup> This document, though, does not exist in a vacuum; the national security doctrine, foreign policy concept, defense treaties, economic policies and constitution all provide a framework for the Russian General Staff to

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<sup>4</sup> M.A. Gareev, “On Military Doctrine and Military Reform in Russia,” *The Journal of Soviet Military Studies* 5, no. 4 (1992), 539. General of the Army Makhmut Akhmetovich Gareev is the current President of the Russian Academy of Military Sciences. A decorated veteran of the Great Patriotic War and foremost expert on military theory and operations in Russia, he has been one of the core authors of all four military doctrines (1993, 1997, 2010 & 2014) as well as the original 1992 draft.

<sup>5</sup> Kristin Ven Bruusgaard, “Crimea and Russia’s Strategic Overhaul,” *Parameters* 44, no. 3 (Autumn 2014), 82.

<sup>6</sup> Gareev, *On Military Doctrine*, 540.

<sup>7</sup> Dale R. Herspring and Roger N. McDermott, “Serdyukov Promotes Systematic Russian Military Reform,” *Orbis* 54, no. 2 (2010), 291.

develop the military doctrine. Traditionally, the Russian General Staff will begin work on a new military doctrine once the national security doctrine is approved by the President of the Russian Federation. The National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020 was approved by decree № 537 of the President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev on 12 May 2009, thereby replacing “the country’s 1997 National Security Concept” and setting in motion preparations for the first new military doctrine in almost ten years.<sup>8</sup>

### **The 2010 Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation**

The 2010 Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation (hereinafter 2010 Doctrine) was approved by Presidential edict on 5 February 2010. The document itself is divided into four sections: general provisions, military dangers and threats, military policy and military-economic support for defense. The general provisions section—in addition to accounting for the other influencing documents and the legal basis for the doctrine—plainly stated the purpose of the 2010 Doctrine, which is “for the protection of the national interests of the Russian Federation and the interests of its allies.”<sup>9</sup> The section also provided definitions to the formal concepts utilized in the doctrine, ranging from military danger, military threat and armed conflict to the military organization of the state and military planning.

In the section on military dangers and military threats to the Russian Federation, the 2010 Doctrine noted that “despite the decline in the likelihood of a large-scale war involving the use of conventional means of attack and nuclear weapons being unleashed against the Russian Federation,” there was intensification in other areas which included main external and internal

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<sup>8</sup> Herspring and McDermott, *Serdyukov Promotes Systematic Russian Military Reform*, 291.

<sup>9</sup> Sovet Bezopacnosti Rossijskoj Federatsii. *Voennaia Doktrina Rossijskoj Federatsii*, (2010) [Hereinafter *VDRF* 2010].

military dangers, as well as the main military threats.<sup>10</sup> It is within the first category of main external military dangers that NATO was prominently mentioned, specifically its eastward expansion. The 2010 Doctrine noted that NATO was a danger because of its “desire to endow” their force potential through “global functions carried out in violation of the norms of international law,” and more specifically that NATO has moved “the military infrastructure of NATO member countries closer to the borders of the Russian Federation.”<sup>11</sup> The category also noted the continued attempts at destabilization of states and regions to undermine stability, the deployment of foreign troops in country’s adjacent to Russia, the “creation and deployment of strategic missile defense systems,” as well as international terrorism in the southern border regions of the country.<sup>12</sup> It is within this section as well that the 2010 Doctrine noted the use of nuclear weapons, specifically which “will remain an important factor for preventing the outbreak of nuclear military conflicts and military conflicts involving the use of conventional means of attack.”<sup>13</sup>

The third section, the military policy of the Russian Federation, provided the ‘when’ to use military force. The military policy within the 2010 Doctrine is “aimed at preventing an arms race,” as well as “detering and preventing military conflicts,” alluding to the more defensive

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<sup>10</sup> *VDRF* 2010, section II.7.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, section II.8.a. It should be kept in mind that in the 2010 Doctrine, in relation to prominence, a military danger is lesser than a military threat. As stated in section I.6.b & c. of the 2010 Doctrine: military danger—a state of interstate or intrastate relations characterized by an aggregation of factors capable in certain conditions of leading to the emergence of a military threat; military threat—a state of interstate or intrastate relations characterized by the real possibility of the outbreak of a military conflict between opposing sides and by a high degree of readiness on the part of a given state (group of states) or separatist (terrorist) organizations to utilize military force (armed violence).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, section II.8.d.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, section II.16. This in effect is implying Russia’s nuclear deterrence.

posture of the document.<sup>14</sup> However the main task of the Russian Federation accorded by the military policy is the “prevention of a nuclear military conflict,” and as a result particular prominence in this section is given to exactitude of a nuclear deployment and the commitments to collective security and bilateral agreements.<sup>15</sup> The 2010 Doctrine was very explicit on when the Russian Federation could resort to nuclear weapons, and unlike other nuclear powers, it did not specify a first strike option, but rather a response. According to the 2010 Doctrine the Russian Federation only reserved “the right to utilize nuclear weapons in response to the utilization of nuclear and other types of weapons of mass destruction against it and (or) its allies,” and against a conventional attack so severe that “the very existence of the state is under threat.”<sup>16</sup> The 2010 Doctrine also reaffirmed the Russian Federations commitment to collective security organization, to include the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), as well as to “develop relations in this sphere with other interstate organizations.”<sup>17</sup>

The agreements the Russian Federation has to the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) are mentioned in accordance with utilization of military forces, whereby it noted that “an armed attack on a CSTO member state” is regarded as “aggression against all CSTO member states,” and will therefore “implement measures” in accordance to the treaty

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<sup>14</sup> *VDRF* 2010, section III.17.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, section III.18.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, section III.22. See also Yury Baluyevsky, “Assessment of Threats in Russia’s Military Doctrine” *Security Index: A Russian Journal on International Security* 16, no.3 (2010), 62, where he noted the feature of preventive first strike in the U.S doctrine, and how they were authorized to use their nuclear weapons if the government “unilaterally decides that such a military threat can emanate from the territory of a certain country.”

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, section III.19.e. Interestingly enough, the 2010 Doctrine noted that the “other interstate organizations” included the European Union and NATO.

statutes.<sup>18</sup> The CSTO is further emphasized in regards to providing troops for peacekeeping operations and assigning individual units to joint rapid-response forces. Also prominently mentioned throughout the section is requirement of the Russian Federation to “ensure the protection of its citizens located beyond the borders” of the country, both in peacetime and during conflict.<sup>19</sup> The 2010 Doctrine also noted that in order to protect “the interests of the Russian Federation and its citizens” and to maintain peace and security, the Russian Armed Forces “may be used operationally outside the Russian Federation.”<sup>20</sup> The remainder of the section covered the development of the military, organizational aspects and the development of military planning documents.

The final section on military-economic support for defense contained all the tasks for the “steady development and maintenance of the state’s military-economic and military-technical potential,” in order to meet requirements of the 2010 Doctrine both in peacetime and during conflict.<sup>21</sup> Some of these tasks included, but were not limited to, providing modern equipment for the armed forces, specialized equipment for the nuclear forces and further development of the defense industry. Lastly, the section covered the requirements of military-political cooperation

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<sup>18</sup> *VDRF* 2010, section III.21. The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is a military alliance similar to NATO, founded in 1992 by states of the former Soviet Union. It currently contains six members: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. This wording is similar to the article 5 requirements of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, section III.20. and section III.27.j.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, section III.26. This particular passage is interesting as it vaguely gives the Russian military authorization to operate in other countries, almost indiscriminately. Of more interest is the fact that just a year and a half earlier Russia had gone to war with Georgia over the ‘protection’ of the Russian-speaking population in South Ossetia, though possible relevance will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 5.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, section IV.38.

with the Republic of Belarus, SCO member states, CSTO member states, CIS member states, as well as the United Nations and “other international, including regional, organizations.”<sup>22</sup>

### **The 2014 Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation**

The 2014 Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation (hereinafter 2014 Doctrine) was approved by the President of the Russian Federation on 25 December 2014. The document itself is divided into four sections: general provisions, military dangers and military threats to the Russian Federation, the military policy of the Russian Federation and military-economic support. In the interest of efficiency, and in order to reduce redundant verbiage which has previously been mentioned from the 2010 Doctrine, discussion on the 2014 Doctrine will focus primarily on new or altered sections, while still presenting the intent of the document.

The general provisions section begins by stating the purpose of the 2014 Doctrine is “preparation for armed defense and armed protection of the Russian Federation.”<sup>23</sup> The section continues by acknowledging the impact of various planning documents, to include the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020, the Foreign Policy Concept, as well as of state and international laws and norms. Specifically spelled out in the 2014 Doctrine is the commitment of the Russian Federation to utilize military action for “protection of national interests and the interests of its allies” only after “exhausting the possibilities of the use” of other non-violent tools.<sup>24</sup> Though the section concludes by defining the basic concepts of the 2014 Doctrine, including a military threat, military danger, local war, military policy and military organization.

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<sup>22</sup> *VDRF* 2010, section IV.51.e.

<sup>23</sup> Sovet Bezopacnosti Rossijskoj Federatsii. *Voennaja Doktrina Rossijskoj Federatsii*, № Пп-2976, (2014) [Hereinafter *VDRF* 2014].

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, section I.5. Non-violent tools include the use of political, diplomatic, economic and legal means.

The second section on military dangers and military threats to the Russian Federation notes that “despite a decline in the probability of unleashing against the Russian Federation a large-scale war” (though no differentiation of either conventional or nuclear), other military threats have “intensified.”<sup>25</sup> Within the numerous lists of external military dangers there are several categories which have been expanded, or are new: international terrorism has grown to include the threat of global extremism and “its new manifestations in terms of the lack of effective international cooperation against terrorism,” as well as the “real threat” of nuclear and chemical attacks; the inclusion of “foreign private military companies in the areas adjacent to the state border of the Russian Federation” within armed radical groups; the use of “information and communication technologies in the military-political purpose” to subvert the sovereignty and political independence of states; the establishment in adjoining states of regimes, including those “as a result of the overthrow of the legitimate government bodies,” whose interests threaten Russia; and the “subversive activities of special services and organizations of foreign states and their coalitions against the Russian Federation.”<sup>26</sup>

The main internal military threats also saw an expansion of categories to include the “activities of terrorist organizations and individuals” aimed at undermining sovereignty; the impact of social-media activities on the population and “especially young citizens of the country,” with the intention of “undermining the historical, spiritual and patriotic traditions in the field of defense of the Fatherland”; the provocation of “ethnic and social tensions” and “extremism.”<sup>27</sup> The characteristics and features of modern military conflicts have been

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<sup>25</sup> *VDRF* 2014, section II.11. Of interesting note, in the 2010 Doctrine it was written that the military threats ‘are intensifying.’

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, sections II.12.j,k,l,m,n.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, sections II.13.b,c,d.

combined, and feature the specific mention of precision guided munitions (PGM), which are “comparable in efficiency with nuclear weapons,” as well as the use of “unmanned aerial vehicles.”<sup>28</sup> Three new characteristics include the participation in hostilities of “irregular armed groups and private military companies,” the “use of indirect and asymmetric methods of action” and the use of “externally funded and managed” political parties and social movements.<sup>29</sup> In addition, nuclear weapons remain “an important factor in preventing the emergence of nuclear wars and military conflicts with the use of conventional weapons.”<sup>30</sup>

Section three, the military policy of the Russian Federation, still maintains a defensive posture by aiming to deter and prevent military conflicts; the principal task is still the prevention of a nuclear military conflict. The 2014 Doctrine as well maintains the “right to use nuclear weapons” only as a response to an attack by “nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction” and during a conventional attack when a “threat to the very existence of the state” exists.<sup>31</sup>

Cooperation with various collective security organizations as a task of the Russian Federation is repeated, but the 2014 Doctrine includes the Republic of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in order to “ensure the common defense and security.”<sup>32</sup> Additionally, the 2014 Doctrine now lists as a task the “expansion of cooperation with the states-members of the BRICS.”<sup>33</sup>

In order to “counter attempts by individual states (groups of states) to achieve military superiority through the deployment of strategic missile defense systems,” the 2014 Doctrine aims

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<sup>28</sup> *VDRF* 2014, section II.15.b.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, sections II.15.h,i,j.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, section II.16. This stance has not changed from the 2010 Doctrine, but it is important to mention that nuclear deterrence is still prominent.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, section III.27.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, section III.21.h.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, section III.21.g. The BRICS nations are Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

to form “bilateral and multilateral cooperation in countering likely missile threats,” up to and including the “creation of joint missile defense systems with equal participation of Russia.”<sup>34</sup>

The protection of Russian citizens abroad still maintains a prominent presence as a main task of the Armed Forces during peacetime, but what is completely new is the last task, that of “ensuring the national interests of the Russian Federation in the Arctic.”<sup>35</sup> Though the category of military planning has been renamed as mobilization and mobilization readiness of the Russian Federation, the remainder of the third section—for the most part—remains relatively similar to the previous doctrine. The final section on military and economic support for defense details all the tasks required to develop, produce and deploy equipment necessary to maintain a modern military force. Lastly, the sections on tasks and priorities of military-political cooperation now include the Republic of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, though strangely not the BRICS, despite their previous inclusion in the third section on military policy.

### **The Military Doctrines: A Brief Analysis**

Both the 2010 and 2014 Doctrine, as planning instruments for military leadership, provide direction on what type of conflict to expect, when use of the armed forces is justified, and how to utilize them. In the 2010 Doctrine, though, several major themes arose, which consisted of the increased danger of NATO expansion, the stance on nuclear deterrence, spheres of influence, commitment to collective security, and protecting the interests of Russian citizens abroad; as the more recent document, the 2014 Doctrine—despite a few nuanced additions—maintained the orientation and intent of its predecessor.

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<sup>34</sup> *VDRF* 2014, sections III.21.k,l. Though not specifically stated, this could be in relation of Russian offers to NATO for a joint missile defense system, which Russia proposed in 2013.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, section III.32.s.

One of the most overarching points in the 2010 Doctrine was the inclusion of NATO as a main external danger, which is “still regarded as an actively hostile bloc” by Russia.<sup>36</sup> For Russia, NATO was seen as “clearly an anti-Russian alliance” designed “to protect Europe from Russia,” and would continue to “be the main external political adversary and the main source of military threats to Russia.”<sup>37</sup> Though not elevated to the status of a ‘threat’, the document did note specific activities “that could under certain circumstances lead to an immediate threat.”<sup>38</sup> The Russian Federation has been leery of any western expansion into, or influence over, any of the states of the former Soviet Union, but it is especially concerned with expansion which “could affect Russia’s security interests in the regions adjacent to its territory.”<sup>39</sup> Even though for almost two decades the southern region of Russia—the North Caucasus—has been fraught with conflict and uncertainty, and terrorist attacks have occurred in major Russian cities, Russia’s “threat perception is chiefly focused on the United States and NATO.”<sup>40</sup>

The 2010 Doctrine, despite the mention of a decline in the possibility of a nuclear conflict, still maintained the option to utilize the nuclear arsenal. This option though was considered as a method of deterrence, rather than an offensive stance as “Moscow recognized

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<sup>36</sup> Mark Galeotti, “Reform of the Russian Military and Security Apparatus: An Investigator’s Perspective,” in *Can Russia Reform? Economic, Political, and Military Perspectives*, ed. Stephen J. Blank (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2012), 76.

<sup>37</sup> Mikhail Barabanov, “Towards a Military Doctrine for Russia,” *Moscow Defense Brief* 1, no. 11 (2009), 6. The author also noted that the “US and the West are the main external obstacles to the restoration and modernization of Russia and can be confidently identified as its chief potential adversaries.”

<sup>38</sup> “Chapter Five: Russia,” *The Military Balance* 111, no. 1 (2011), 178. Specific activities included the movement of “military infrastructure of NATO member countries closer to the borders of the Russian Federation” and “global functions carried out in violation of the norms of international law.” (VDRF 2010, section II.8.a.)

<sup>39</sup> Marek Menkiszak, “Russian Policy Towards NATO in a Broader European Security Context,” in *The Russian Armed Forces in Transition: Economic, Geopolitical and Institutional Uncertainties*, ed. Roger N. McDermott, Bertil Nygren and Carolina Vendil Pallin (New York: Routledge, 2012), 75.

<sup>40</sup> James A. Marshall, “Russia’s Struggle for Military Reform: A Breakdown in Conversion Capabilities,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 27, no. 2 (2014), 240.

less need for rapid recourse to nuclear measures.”<sup>41</sup> As noted previously in the discussion of the 2010 Doctrine, the prevention of a nuclear military conflict is designated the main task of the Russian Federation, and the only justification for a nuclear launch would be either in response to a nuclear attack, or if the ‘very existence’ of the state is in question resulting from an attack which utilized conventional weapons.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, it was evident that “the principle of defensive nuclear deterrence forms the basis” of the 2010 Doctrine.<sup>43</sup>

Within the 2010 Doctrine as well, was Russia’s claim towards a more active role in the regions bordering the country; as a Russian sphere of influence; as an area where Russia would act to protect Russian citizens; as an area where Russia would coordinate actions with other collective security organizations. Though not overtly stated, the 2010 Doctrine reaffirms Russia’s position as the dominant power along its borders where it “would operate in defense of its interests without submitting its actions to international institutions for discussion or approval.”<sup>44</sup> In the view of Russian officials, actions such as “attempts to destabilize the situation in individual states and regions” in the periphery of their border justified their more ominous position.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> James T. Quinlivan, “Yes, Russia’s Military is Getting More Aggressive,” *Foreign Policy*, December 30, 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/12/30/yes-russias-military-is-getting-more-aggressive/>

<sup>42</sup> Alexander Golts in “Military Reform in Russia and the Global War Against Terrorism,” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 17 (2004), 39, noted that the resources of the Russian armed forces are only sufficient enough to “prevent an enemy from penetrating Russia,” but in order to stop the aggression nuclear weapons would have to be utilized.

<sup>43</sup> Yury Baluyevsky, “Assessment of Threats in Russia’s Military Doctrine,” *Security Index: A Russian Journal on International Security* 16, no. 3 (2010), 63.

<sup>44</sup> Ariel Cohen and Robert E. Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgia War: Lessons and Implications* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2011), 64.

<sup>45</sup> *VDRF* 2010, section II.8.b. See also Mark Galeotti, *Reform of the Russian Military and Security Apparatus*, 76 where he noted that destabilization events such as the Ukrainian ‘Orange Revolution’ and Georgian ‘Rose Revolution’ were seen in Moscow not as moments of actual change, but rather that “nefarious Westerners were engineering pro-democracy movements in Eurasia.”

Newly added to the 2010 Doctrine was wording that Russia would act to protect their citizens abroad. In fact, this is reiterated three separate times within the document: as a principal task of the armed forces to ensure their protection beyond the borders; as a main task of the armed forces to protect those outside the country; as a principal task of the armed forces to operate outside of the Russian Federation to protect their interests. Lastly, the 2010 Doctrine clearly spelled out Russia's commitment to collective security agreements, most prominently the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Not only did Russia commit to increased collective security operations and to provide forces for CSTO peacekeeping and rapid-reaction forces, Russia also included the mutual defense provision of the CSTO. Regardless of the overall defensive stance of the 2010 Doctrine this inclusion, as well as the aforementioned protection of citizens, reinforced Russia's position to "act militarily in support of its allies or its citizens abroad."<sup>46</sup>

The 2014 Doctrine, as previously mentioned, has for the most part maintained the orientation and themes of the previous document. Still prominent is the expansion of NATO, and the immediate threat which Russia feels from it, clearly stated in the document:

The increasing power potential of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the allocation of its global functions implemented in violation of international law, the approach of the military infrastructure of the countries – members of NATO to the borders of the Russian Federation, including through further expansion of the block.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Chapter Five: Russia, *The Military Balance*, 178. See also James A. Marshall, Russia's Struggle for Military Reform, 197 where he noted that the NATO expansion is really only a threat to Russia because with the move into Eastern Europe comes the U.S. Strategic Missile Defense System, and in that sense "limits Russia's coercive abilities vis-à-vis Central and Eastern European states."

<sup>47</sup> *VDRF* 2014, section II.12.a.

However, despite this the 2014 Doctrine “will remain solely defensive.”<sup>48</sup> The language of nuclear deterrence remains almost verbatim from the previous document, as well as protection of Russian citizens abroad and commitment to the periphery. However, the inclusion of the Arctic as a region of interest is important to note as it affirms Russia’s stance towards the region, where they are once again pursuing an active policy “after decades of absence.”<sup>49</sup> While the main tasks of the Russian Federation to prevent military conflict and for military-political cooperation did not change, they were expanded to include the Republic of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, the BRICS and the Asia-Pacific region. Their inclusion confirms Russia’s stance towards not only collective defense within the region, but with the addition of the BRICS, and especially the Asia-Pacific region, it announces Russia’s intentions to play a much more influential role globally. Lastly, the addition and reference to foreign private military companies, irregular armed groups, subversive groups and externally funded social movements represent Russia’s real belief that these groups are being utilized in areas near their border, in order to undermine their influence and position in the region.

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<sup>48</sup> “Russia’s Military Doctrine Remains ‘Solely Defensive’—Putin,” *RT.com*, December 19, 2014, <http://rt.com/news/216055-putin-russia-security-doctrine/>

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* The article noted as well that Russia is currently refurbishing old Soviet bases to use for this venture.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE 2008 RUSSIAN-GEORGIAN WAR

The conflict might be thought of as the final war of the twentieth century, fought by a Soviet legacy force, desperately seeking to make do with dated equipment and a top-heavy command and control system more suited to conducting the kind of large-scale conventional warfare that had passed into the annals of military history.

—Roger N. McDermott, *Russia's Conventional Armed Forces and the Georgian War*

The 2008 Russian-Georgian war, which took place 7-12 of August 2008, began in the territory of the Republic of South Ossetia, but eventually expanded to include the Republic of Abkhazia, as well as the northern regions of Georgia. Though the armed conflict only lasted a mere five days, tensions between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Georgia had steadily deteriorated for many months prior. The conflict featured large movements of armored columns with tanks and armored personnel carriers, the limited-use of airpower by the Russian forces, amphibious landings by Russian forces into Abkhazia, and a minor naval engagement between Russian and Georgian ships in the Black Sea. While ending in a Russian victory, the war served to highlight not only the poor condition of their equipment, but also the need for more advanced weapons platforms and capabilities akin to the adversaries in the Georgian military. In this chapter, I will offer an account of the conflict that demonstrates Russian military deficiencies, and then turn to the lessons military planners drew from the experience.

#### **Prelude to War**

Tensions between Russia and Georgia over the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia had been, for the most part, relatively low since the dual conflicts in those regions in the early 1990s. However, a series of events in the spring and summer of 2008 “strongly suggested that

confrontation in the Georgian conflict zones was becoming increasingly likely.”<sup>50</sup> Earlier in the year the situation had been looking optimistic, when Russian President Vladimir Putin and Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili met in February to “discuss the re-establishment of trade and air traffic links that had been cut in 2006.”<sup>51</sup> This event notwithstanding, on 4 March 2008 Georgia withdrew from the Joint Control Commission (JCC) in South Ossetia, which in turned caused “a setback in the Tbilisi-Moscow dialogue.”<sup>52</sup> The response from Moscow to this was swift and deliberate.

On 6 March 2008 Russia declared that it would lift previous trade restrictions on the Republic of Abkhazia and urged “other CIS countries to follow suit,” followed shortly afterwards in April by a presidential decree signed by President Putin which instructed “Russian state agencies to establish official ties with the Abkhaz and South Ossetian de facto administrations.”<sup>53</sup> After the deployment of Russian Railway Troops to Abkhazia in May, Russia began a large military exercise in July, *Kavkaz 2008*, which took place in “eleven regions near the Georgian-Russian border” and involved about 8,000 troops.<sup>54</sup> By the beginning of August, incidents in South Ossetia elevated it to prominence as the center of tension. The month began with a Georgian military vehicle explosion, which Georgia blamed on South Ossetia. The next day, South Ossetia claimed that Georgian snipers had killed several of their soldiers, followed directly by a retaliatory mortar attack on several Georgian villages, killing a

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<sup>50</sup> Johanna Popjanevski, “From Sukhumi to Tskhinvali: The Path to War in Georgia,” in *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia*, ed. Svante E. Cornell and S. Frederick Starr (M.E. Sharpe: New York, 2009), 143.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 144. The Joint Control Commission (JCC) was established after the 1991-1992 war between Georgia and South Ossetia separatists. The JCC was designed to provide a peacekeeping force in South Ossetia, and Russia, Georgia and South Ossetia all equally provided troops to this force.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 144-145. This decree also required the various state agencies to establish trade relations with both regions, as well as providing consular services to their residents.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

Georgian police officer and several others.<sup>55</sup> Over the next several days, military confrontation between Georgian and South Ossetian forces increased. On 7 August, the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali was shelled, and Georgian forces were sent “into the disputed region to seize control of it.”<sup>56</sup> A last ditch effort to avert a larger conflict was made the same day by representatives of the Georgian government, who traveled to Tskhinvali in order to meet with South Ossetian officials. However, the meeting never occurred, and later that evening “the first media reports of troop movements through the Roki tunnel from [Russian] North Ossetia” began to appear.<sup>57</sup> With this, the Russian movement of forces into South Ossetia from North Ossetia, and the start of the war, had begun.

### **The Ground Campaign**

The movement of Georgian troops into South Ossetia on 7 August 2008 had two main objectives: the first was to quickly overwhelm and destroy the smaller South Ossetian forces and “occupy the capital of Tskhinvali”; the second objective was to block the Transcaucasian highway and the Roki tunnel, in order to “prevent the arrival of volunteers from Russia.”<sup>58</sup> However, the Achilles heel of the Georgian operation was that “it completely overlooked the

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<sup>55</sup> Popjanevski, *From Sukhumi to Tskhinvali*, 149. Following the mortar attacks, the commander of the Russian Airborne Troops announced Russia’s readiness to assist Russian members of the JCC in South Ossetia.

<sup>56</sup> Gregory P. Lannon, “Russia’s New Look Army Reforms and Russian Foreign Policy,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 24, no. 1 (2011), 34. See also Ilai Z. Saltzman, “Russian Grand Strategy and the United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” *Orbis* 56, no. 4 (2012), 558, where he noted that even though skirmishes had occurred between Georgia and South Ossetia for several months prior, it was the decision to move the Georgian military into South Ossetia “that turned a relatively low-intensity protracted skirmish into a large-scale conflict.”

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 151. The first media reports began around 7:10pm local time.

<sup>58</sup> Mikhail Barabanov, Anton Lavrov, and Viacheslav Tseluiko, *Tanki Avgusta: Sbornik Statei* (Moskva: Tsentralnaia analiza strategii i tekhnologii, 2009), 49.

possibility of the Russian army's intervention in the conflict."<sup>59</sup> Unknown to the Georgian military leadership at the time, a Russian infantry battalion and weaponry had already deployed south of the Roki tunnel and "reinforcements were camped north of the tunnel."<sup>60</sup> Continuing on with their original plan, the Georgian forces on 8 August 2008 initiated their attack against the capital city of Tskhinvali, as well as surrounding positions overlooking the city, with a large artillery bombardment, followed shortly thereafter by the movement of the ground forces. The attack into Tskhinvali by the larger Georgian force "made it significantly harder for the Russian ground troops to enter Georgian-controlled territory."<sup>61</sup>

On the morning of 8 August 2008 the first contingents of Russian aircraft began to appear in the skies over the city, and began attacks on the advancing Georgian forces. By this time, the main body of the Russian 58<sup>th</sup> Army had moved through the tunnel, and "launched a heavy counterattack in South Ossetia" towards the capital.<sup>62</sup> The Russian 58<sup>th</sup> Army, which had participated in the recent *Kavkaz* exercise, was part of the North Caucasus Military District and were considered some of "Russia's most competent troops" because of their extensive combat

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<sup>59</sup> Barabanov, Lavrov, and Tseluiko, *Tanki Avgusta*, 48. The authors noted that although the Georgian army had planned and prepared for such a scenario, it was assumed by many that this would be an unlikely event. In addition, many in the Georgian civilian and military leadership felt that recent promises of eventual NATO membership would also serve as a deterrent.

<sup>60</sup> Pavel Felgenhauer, "After August 7: The Escalation of the Russia-Georgia War," in *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia*, ed. Svante E. Cornell and S. Frederick Starr (M.E. Sharpe: New York, 2009), 169. The term 'armor' is open to debate though, as Barabanov, Lavrov, and Tseluiko, *Tanki Avgusta*, 57, noted that it was not until 0200 on 8 August 2008 that "the first Russian armor of the 693<sup>rd</sup> Motorized Rifle Regiment" crossed into South Ossetia. In this context 'armor' can be taken to mean a tank, whereas in the former 'armor' could be referring to an armored vehicle, such as a BMP armored personnel carrier. See also Popjanevski, *From Sukhumi to Tskhinvali*, 151, where the author noted that at 11:00pm on 7 August 2008 that President Saakashvili received notice that Russian military vehicles were already passing through the tunnel. See also Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgian War*, 20, who claimed that advance Russian forces had entered South Ossetia several days prior to the start of the conflict.

<sup>61</sup> Popjanevski, *From Sukhumi to Tskhinvali*, 152. Barabanov, Lavrov, and Tseluiko, *Tanki Avgusta*, 59, noted that the first Russian casualties occurred at the Russian JCC compound on the outskirts of Tskhinvali after an attack by three Georgian T-72 tanks. They also noted that the initial Georgian attack on the city consisted of 12,000 troops and 75 T-72 tanks.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

experience in Chechnya and the Caucasus, with a larger complement of professional soldiers.<sup>63</sup> The remainder of the Russian armored and mechanized forces consisted of the 19<sup>th</sup> Motor Rifle Division, the 42<sup>nd</sup> Motor Rifle Division and the 33<sup>rd</sup> Special Mountain Brigade as well as the airborne forces of the 76<sup>th</sup> Guards Airborne Division, the 98<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division and the 45<sup>th</sup> Airborne Special Forces Regiment, in addition to the pro-Russian Chechen GRU *Vostok* and *Zapad* battalions.<sup>64</sup>

The following day, 9 August 2008, Russian launched operations in Abkhazia, conducting both a large amphibious invasion and delivering ground forces into the region by rail, deploying around 9,000 troops.<sup>65</sup> The same day Georgian forces had advanced further into Tskhinvali, and amid fierce fighting by both sides, managed to capture the southern portions of the city. As a testament to how fierce the fighting was, the commander of the 58<sup>th</sup> Army General Anatoly Khrulev “was wounded during hand-to-hand fighting” which occurred after his column was ambushed outside of the city by Georgian forces.<sup>66</sup> Regardless of Georgian will, by 10 August 2008 Georgian forces had been pushed out of Tskhinvali as they were “increasingly

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<sup>63</sup> Barabanov, Lavrov, and Tseluiko, *Tanki Avgusta*, 46-47. This is important to note, as the forces sent to confront the Georgian military advance were not the same conscript heavy force that attempted to capture Grozny in 1994; however, the Russian forces still contained a large portion of conscripts, and although they were a much better force than in 1994, they still were not comparable to most Western military forces at the time.

<sup>64</sup> Felgenhauer, *After August 7*, 166-167. The author also noted on page 73, the troop strength of this force at 25-30,000 soldiers, who were supported by 1,200 pieces of armor and heavy artillery, and an additional 10-15,000 South Ossetian and Abkhazian separatist fighters, which served as an auxiliary force. Barabanov, Lavrov, and Tseluiko, *Tanki Avgusta*, 47, noted the antiquated composition of much of the equipment utilized by the Russian forces. For example, the 42<sup>nd</sup> Motorized Rifle Division was equipped with T-62 tanks, which at the time were more than 40 years old. The T-72 tank, which replaced the T-62, was deployed in small numbers and spread throughout several tank units, and no tank units had the T-80 or newer T-90. The motorized infantry suffered as well. Although there were a good percentage of the BMP-2 and BTR-80 personnel carriers in action, the majority were the much older BMP-1 and MTLB.

<sup>65</sup> Popjanevski, *From Sukhumi to Tskhinvali*, 152. See also Felgenhauer, *After August 7*, 171, who noted that earlier Georgia had received intelligence that Russia was massing forces for an invasion of Abkhazia. In addition, hours before the invasion Moscow had sent a diplomatic cable to Georgia declaring a ‘state of siege’ in the region of Abkhazia.

<sup>66</sup> Felgenhauer, *After August 7*, 170.

overpowered and outgunned” by the overwhelming number of Russian forces that had been deployed to South Ossetia.<sup>67</sup> After taking control of Tskhinvali, the Russian forces in South Ossetia crossed the border into Georgia, while the Georgian forces conducted a fighting withdrawal.

In the region of Abkhazia, Russian forces met little resistance. By 10 August 2008, Russian forces occupied the Georgian naval base at Poti, and then the large Georgian military base at Senaki the following day, where they “captured large stockpiles of Georgian military equipment” and proceeded to destroy the facilities.<sup>68</sup> On 11 August 2008, a general retreat began on all fronts, as the Georgian forces withdrew towards Tbilisi and began “concentrating forces for a last stand to defend the capital.”<sup>69</sup> However, that battle never happened, as on 12 August 2008, Russian forces in South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Georgia ceased all operations by order of the President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev.

### **End State: A Brief Analysis**

The rapid victory by Russian forces during the war with Georgia in 2008 came as a shock to most Western observers, since it “stood in stark contrast to the manner in which Russian forces had once become bogged down in a protracted conflict in Chechnya.”<sup>70</sup> The five-day war

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<sup>67</sup> Felgenhauer, *After August 7*, 170.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 173. Of interesting note along with the capture of Senaki is video footage that quickly went viral taken by a young Russian soldier who, using his cell phone camera, recorded the interior of a Georgian military barracks. In the video, he and his fellow soldiers can be seen rummaging through wall lockers and flipping beds, while very vocally expressing their anger and disbelief over how nice their adversaries living conditions are compared to their own. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ped0ddLrNU>

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 174. The author noted that during this period the best trained Georgian soldiers of the elite 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade had been deployed to Iraq as part of the coalition with U.S. forces. Beginning on 10 August 2008, U.S. military aircraft began to transport them back, however by the time the whole force had been assembled the war had already ended.

<sup>70</sup> Roger N. McDermott, “Russia’s Conventional Armed Forces and the Georgian War,” *Parameters* 39, no. 2 (2009), 65. See also Rod Thornton, *A Bear with Teeth*, 52, where he noted that “doctrinally, Georgia was not an enemy the Russian military was really designed to fight” as symmetrical wars with regional military forces was not

featured the Russian use of overwhelming mechanized forces, which utilized Soviet-style tactics, while the smaller Georgian forces, who fielded upgraded and modernized equipment, employed more mobile tactical units and support-by-fire techniques. The war can also be viewed as the first time Russia took an active stand against possible NATO expansion into a region on their periphery.

Strategically, Russian forces had the upper hand as the military command had successfully planned for the war by staging large contingents of the 58<sup>th</sup> Army throughout North Ossetia and Southern Russia at the conclusion of the *Kavkaz* 2008 exercises. Russia took advantage of this operationally by “committing a significantly greater number of forces to the fight” much more rapidly than Georgia could.<sup>71</sup> It was these strategic and operational advantages which meant that eventual victory “did not depend on any great degree on Russian tactical skills.”<sup>72</sup> The Russian armored and mechanized forces throughout the conflict typically utilized traditional Soviet-style tactics, which consisted of “moving in column formation, fighting from the lead elements and continuing to press forward after making contact,” which regardless provided advantages in the speed and simplicity of operation.<sup>73</sup>

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something that the General Staff had planned for. He equated the Russian victory to the overwhelming Russian force, the large number of *kontraktniki*, and the experience of the 58<sup>th</sup> Army, who had an abundance of experience from constant combat in Chechnya.

<sup>71</sup> Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgia War*, 27. The authors also noted the Russian use of irregular forces in Abkhazia and South Ossetia as a complement to their conventional forces.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29. The Soviet tactical doctrine was designed for use against a large conventional-style military force, such as German forces encountered during the Second World War, or the possible final conflict between the Warsaw Pact and NATO. However, the speed which this tactic generates enabled the Russian forces to bypass Georgian resistance and continue the advance, albeit with a trade-off in higher casualties. The simplicity of this tactic enabled a conscript soldier to execute with little training. In addition, due to the fact that most Russian vehicles during the conflict had no navigation equipment, night vision, or advanced fire-control systems, it proved the best method to both maintain formation and fight effectively.

The Georgian forces, though lacking strategic or operational advantages, did have an advantage in the tactical arena. In order to participate in NATO operations, the Georgian army was required to reorganize into a “small professional force, highly mobile, and relatively lightly armed,” in order to meet NATO standards.<sup>74</sup> This training, which was conducted by U.S. and Western military advisors to prepare Georgian forces for deployments to Kosovo and Iraq, taught their ground forces “skills relevant to conventional engagements at the tactical level” such as “reacting to contact and using firepower to support maneuver against the enemy.”<sup>75</sup> It was these newly acquired skills which enabled Georgian forces to initially gain a substantial foothold on Tskhinvali and continue to harass Russian forces even as they conducted a tactical withdraw. Despite a greater tactical advantage, the eventual collapse of the Georgian forces was the result of overall “Georgian military weakness, poor management, and limited combat capabilities” due to a smaller military, rather than “anything accurately reflecting the prowess of Russia’s armed forces.”<sup>76</sup>

During the conflict, the geography of the battlefield proved an obstacle to the Russian forces. The only way in or out of South Ossetia was the Transcaucasian highway via the Roki tunnel, and it was a critical route for Russia to bring forward reinforcements and supplies and to remove wounded personnel and damaged equipment. However, much of this was constricted due to the floods of civilian refugees, and “old Russian tanks and armored vehicles” which “often broke down,” thereby causing “constant traffic jams south of the Roki tunnel.”<sup>77</sup> The older—and in some cases obsolete—equipment that most of the Russian ground forces were

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<sup>74</sup> Barabanov, Lavrov, and Tseluiko, *Tanki Avgusta*, 16.

<sup>75</sup> Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgia War*, 28. As previously mentioned, during the conflict the Georgian 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade was deployed to Iraq when the war began.

<sup>76</sup> McDermott, *Russia’s Conventional Armed Forces and the Georgian War*, 67.

<sup>77</sup> Felgenhauer, *After August 7*, 167.

equipped with during the war was an concern that became painfully obvious over the course the five days.

The Russian ground forces during the war, for the most part, had a rather lackluster showing. Although there overwhelming force was conducive to a quick advance, they “were slow to react” to changes in battlefield tempo and “ponderous once they did react.”<sup>78</sup> Also, as a result of the “uneven quality of the motorized rifle units committed to the fight,” the brunt of the fighting was bore by the Airborne and Special Forces units.<sup>79</sup> Communication—or rather lack thereof—was a major issue that plagued Russian commanders of all levels. Antiquated communication gear resulted in an “almost total breakdown of military communication systems” during the conflict, and as a result Russian commanders were forced to utilize their own cell phones to communicate with each other and their troops.<sup>80</sup> Out-dated communications systems were not the only equipment issue the Russian ground forces had to contend with. In addition to the previously mentioned poorly-maintained and obsolete tanks and armored vehicles, Russian ground forces lacked essentials for modern combat: night-vision equipment (both vehicle mounted and smaller units for individual soldiers); identify friend or foe (IFF) systems, either in

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<sup>78</sup> Bettina Renz and Rod Thornton, “Russian Military Modernization: Cause, Course, and Consequences,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 59, no. 1 (January/February 2012), 45. See also Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgia War*, 26-27, who noted that Russian military analysts “generally concluded that Russian ground forces were the most effective and best-performing elements of the overall Russian effort.” Though the ground forces did have some issues, they performed much better than Russian Navy, who lacked the proper type of vessels to support the amphibious invasion with reinforcements, and the Russian Air Force, who not only had several planes shot down, but other than sporadic bombing of Gori and Tbilisi, were virtually non-existent.

<sup>79</sup> Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgia War*, 27.

<sup>80</sup> Felgenhauer, *After August 7*, 167. The author noted, in an ironic twist, that all the mobile phone traffic of the Russian commanders was carried by Georgian mobile phone operators.

the form of vehicle panels or flags; satellite navigation systems; and aerial reconnaissance means, either through UAV's or satellites.<sup>81</sup>

Georgian forces on the other hand—due in no small part to their joint activities with Western military forces—had more advanced and modernized weapons, even though the majority of their weapons systems consisted of Soviet-era equipment. As a result, the “Georgian forces seem to have inflicted more damage than they suffered.”<sup>82</sup> A majority of Georgian tanks and armored personnel carriers were equipped with “reactive armor, night vision equipment, advanced radios, and superior fire control systems” that had been installed by an Israeli contractor—all items sorely lacking on their Russian counterparts.<sup>83</sup> Georgian tanks in particular were much superior to their Russian adversaries. The Georgian armored forces were equipped with Russian-manufactured T-72s, but in addition to the aforementioned upgrades, they also had separate infrared cameras for both the driver and commander, GPS navigation, and the ability to fire Ukrainian-installed ‘Kombat’ guided tank-launched missiles, which as a result made them “superior to the tanks of Georgia’s former autonomies...as well as to any tanks Russia’s North Caucasus military district could deploy in 2008.”<sup>84</sup>

Lastly, the war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008 may also be viewed as Russia’s line in the sand against NATO expansion, and a reaffirmation of the Russian sphere of influence. Not only did it send a strong signal that “Russia intends to play a much more assertive role in international affairs in general and in the regional settings in particular,” the war also

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<sup>81</sup> Keir Giles, “Russian Operations in Georgia: Lessons Identified Versus Lessons Learned,” in *The Russian Armed Forces in Transition: Economic, Geopolitical and Institutional Uncertainties*, ed. Roger N. McDermott, Bertil Nygren and Carolina Vendil Pallin (New York: Routledge, 2012), 9-10.

<sup>82</sup> Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgia War*, 28.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>84</sup> Barabanov, Lavrov, and Tseluiko, *Tanki Avgusta*, 32.

made it known that “attempts to recruit former Soviet Republics” into Western organizations such as NATO “was not something that Moscow approved.”<sup>85</sup> In the end, regardless of modernized equipment or Western training, the conflict became a numbers game—and the Georgian forces just could not hold back the overwhelming mass of the Russian military machine.

### **The Impetus for Change**

The Russian army which went into action in Georgia in August 2008 appeared “highly reminiscent of the Red Army,” rather than a 21<sup>st</sup> century military force.<sup>86</sup> From their methods of tactical operation to the composition and equipment of their ground forces, elements of their Soviet past were readily apparent. Despite their overwhelming numbers and quick victory, the Russian conventional forces utilized during the war were deemed “technically and technologically inferior” to their Georgian counterparts.<sup>87</sup>

The war highlighted more than anything else, the old and outdated military equipment—particularly armored vehicles — of the Russian ground forces. During the offensive into South

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<sup>85</sup> Ilai Z. Saltzman, “Russian Grand Strategy and the United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” *Orbis* 56, no. 4 (2012), 559-560. See also Felgenhauer, *After August 7*, 177, who gave another perspective on this theory. He noted that “the main task of the Russian invasion was to bring about state failure and fully destroy the Georgian army and centralized police force,” as a failed Georgian state could never become a NATO member and “could be easier to control from Moscow.” See also Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgia War*, 71, who concurred as well and expanded the discussion by noting that the war was “intricately linked with Russia’s demands to revise European security architecture, do away with NATO, and weaken U.S. security presence in, and ties with, Europe.”

<sup>86</sup> Margarete Klein, “Towards a ‘New Look’ of the Russian Armed Forces?” in *The Russian Armed Forces in Transition: Economic, Geopolitical and Institutional Uncertainties*, ed. Roger N. McDermott, Bertil Nygren and Carolina Vendil Pallin (New York: Routledge, 2012), 29. See also Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgian War*, 31, where they noted that the Georgian Army had “jettisoned Soviet doctrine and purged the vast majority of the Soviet-era leadership.” The result of this was a double-edged sword though, as though it did allow the introduction of Western-style military theory and operational concepts, this rush to ‘modernize’ removed a majority of the senior leadership with not only actual operational command experience, but familiarity with the Russian (Soviet) methods of warfare.

<sup>87</sup> Thornton, *A Bear With Teeth*, 52. See also Galeotti, *Reform of the Russian Military*, 62, and Roger N. McDermott, “The Restructuring of the Modern Russian Army,” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 22 (2009), 493, who both noted shortcomings in both equipment and tactics.

Ossetia and Georgia more than 50 percent of the Russian tanks and armored vehicles suffered major breakdowns which removed them from operation.<sup>88</sup> In addition to maintenance problems, the armor of the T-62 and early model T-72 tanks which formed the core of the Russian ground forces proved highly susceptible to Georgian anti-tank systems.<sup>89</sup> Although some of the newer T-72 tanks were equipped with reactive armor canisters, most of them were empty, “effectively rendering them useless.”<sup>90</sup>

Not only were the tanks and armored vehicles outdated, but the personal-issue gear of the individual Russian soldier was lacking as well. The Russian soldiers went into battle with a helmet that had not changed in design since their grandfathers repelled the last great German offensive at Kursk in July 1943. Body armor—a major component of any modern infantry force—was sorely lacking as well. During the war, it was common occurrence for Russian soldiers to strip the “helmets and body armor from dead Georgians in order to improve their personal protection.”<sup>91</sup> Command and control systems proved insufficient for the requirements of modern conflict; many of the radio systems were woefully obsolete, and in one extreme case the commander of the 58<sup>th</sup> Army were forced to borrow a satellite phone from a reporter during

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<sup>88</sup> Andrei Makarychev and Alexander Sergunin, “Russian Military Reform: Institutional, Political and Security Implications,” *Defense & Security Analysis* 29, no. 4 (2013), 357. See also McDermott, *Russia’s Conventional Armed Forces and the Georgian War*, 72, where he noted that the two armored columns of the 58<sup>th</sup> Army which led the offensive on Tskhinvali, had 150-170 armored vehicles breakdown on the road leading to the city.

<sup>89</sup> McDermott, *Russia’s Conventional Armed Forces and the Georgian War*, 72. See also Herspring and McDermott, *Serdyukov Promotes Systematic Russian Military Reforms*, 296, where they also discussed the effectiveness of Georgian anti-armor capabilities on Russian armor.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-72. This also raises a question of training, as the largely conscript force which operated the vehicles more than likely did not know, or were not taught, either how to fill them, or even how to go about acquiring the materials for it.

<sup>91</sup> Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgian War*, 33. This practice has been witnessed on almost every battlefield since the beginning of armed conflict. In recent history, it was extremely prevalent on the Eastern Front during the Second World War, where German forces often stripped dead Red Army soldiers of their cold weather clothing, as it was superior to what they had.

the middle of a firefight for lack of any other form of communications between units.<sup>92</sup> The war also revealed the essentials of modern combat which the Russian ground forces lacked, most prominently thermal imaging, night vision goggles, satellite navigation, aerial reconnaissance and precision guided munitions.

The condition of equipment and weapons “had long been a source of discontent within the military,” and the war with Georgia proved to be the final straw.<sup>93</sup> Only a few months after the conclusion of the conflict, the Russian Ministry of Defense announced the beginning of a radical transformation of the Russian armed forces, the scope of which had not been attempted before, and that once completed would remove “all vestiges of its former Soviet structure.”<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> McDermott, *Russia's Conventional Armed Forces and the Georgian War*, 70. The author also noted another issue which hampered battlefield control was the various different maps utilized, which often provided conflicting data. The issue of communication is interesting, as it was also a huge factor during the First Chechen conflict, where the Russian forces often had to use mobile phones due to the fact that their unencrypted radios allowed Chechen forces to talk on their channels and spread false information.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>94</sup> Lannon, *Russia's New Look Army Reforms and Russian Foreign Policy*, 27.

## CHAPTER 3

## THE 2008 ‘NEW LOOK’ MILITARY REFORMS

The armed conflict between Russia and Georgia in August 2008 lit the fuse for the long overdue creation of a distinct form for the Russian military, as opposed to a continuous existence as a pale remnant of the Soviet armed forces.

—Keir Giles, *Russian Operations in Georgia*

Since the establishment of the current Russian Armed Forces in 1992, both military and civilian leaders had flirted with the idea of military reform, though prior to 2008, no one had made a firm commitment. During the midst of the First Chechen War, Defense Minister Pavel Grachev with the support of President Boris Yeltsin, announced intentions to create smaller, and more mobile forces, as well as to reduce the overall size of the military. In 1997, Defense Minister Igor Sergeev initiated some basic reforms, such as creating more fully-manned units and restructuring the military educational system.<sup>95</sup> The most ambitious plan to date was announced by President Vladimir Putin during his first term, who wanted to reduce the number of conscript soldiers, while at the same time increasing the number of *kontraktniki* (professional contract troops) with the ultimate goal of a 100 percent contract force. Though these previous attempts did reduce the overall size of the military, what remained though was basically a “scaled-down version of a Soviet-style mass conscription army.”<sup>96</sup>

With the conclusion of the 2008 Russian-Georgian War, the need for drastic change—both in terms of structure and equipment—was readily apparent. Though reform had been a

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<sup>95</sup> Alexander Golts, “Military Reform in Russia and the Global War Against Terrorism,” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 17 (2004), 29.

<sup>96</sup> Bettina Renz, “Russian Military Reform: Prospects and Problems,” *The RUSI Journal* 155, no. 1 (2010), 58.

recent topic of discussion, it was *this* conflict which enabled Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov to garner support “from a group of generals, now at the top of the armed forces, with combat experience and a determination to bring about change.”<sup>97</sup> The reforms, which consisted of five areas of focus—readiness, structure, equipment, military education, quality of life—were to be the impetus of a new, more modern and professional 21<sup>st</sup> century Russian military force. By 2012, most of the core reforms had occurred, and though the process had involved compromises from the original concept, the Russian military that emerged on the other side stood in stark contrast to its former shadow.

### **Objectives of the ‘New Look’ Reforms**

On 14 October 2008, Defense Minister Serdyukov officially announced the plans for the ‘New Look’ military reforms.<sup>98</sup> The goal of these reforms was to “create a professional, permanent combat-ready force,” with all formations of the Russian army to “be fully manned” and in a permanent-readiness status by 2012.<sup>99</sup> Shortly afterwards, President Dmitry Medvedev announced five main areas of focus for the reforms: increased combat readiness in the form of a permanent-readiness status for all units; restructuring and personnel reductions; modernization of weapons and equipment; improvements in military education; improvements in quality of life for service members.<sup>100</sup> In short order the reforms aimed to remove the old Soviet-style mass-mobilization army, and in their place a smaller, yet more efficient, and deployable fighting force.

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<sup>97</sup> Keir Giles, *Russian Operations in Georgia*, 10.

<sup>98</sup> Mikhail Barabanov, “Testing a ‘New Look’: Ukrainian Conflict and Military Reform in Russia,” *Globalaffairs.ru*, December 18, 2014, under “Towards a New Russian Army,” <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Testing-a-New-Look-17213>.

<sup>99</sup> McDermott, *Russia’s Conventional Armed Forces and the Georgian War*, 74.

<sup>100</sup> Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgian War*, 49. It is important to note, however, that these reforms focused only on the Russian Armed Forces. While state agencies such as the FSB and MVD, as well as the Border Guards, maintain large armed formations and have been used in military operations, since they are not subordinate to the Ministry of Defense, they were not subject to the reform process.

Beyond the recognized need to reform after the Russian-Georgian war, the reforms also reflected the realization of “the new nature of conflicts Russia may have to face,” which will primarily be “local conflicts, mostly on the territory of the former Soviet Union,” and as such these types of conflicts require a “strong rapid-reaction armed force that can be permanently maintained in a combat-ready state.”<sup>101</sup> Due to the nature of these threats emanating from the periphery, the ‘New Look’ reforms for the most part focused on the conventional forces, and specifically the ground forces.<sup>102</sup>

*Mass-Mobilization to Professional Force (Permanent-Readiness, part I)*

Under the mass-mobilization model, only a small percentage of units were manned at full capacity. The remainder was cadre units, which consisted of a skeleton force of officers at each unit who, in time of a national mobilization, were there to provide the initial training to the thousands of conscripts from all over the country. As the permanent-readiness concept required units to be fully staffed, the cadre units were no longer a logical part of this new force. Throughout Russia, the cadre units were dismembered, with the equipment that had been stored at central depots relocated to their respective units.

A ‘New Look’ military also required a better-trained force, which could not only competently operate the modern and technologically advanced equipment the permanent-readiness force required, but who were also trained in the tactical concepts of new low-intensity

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<sup>101</sup> Ruslan Pukhov, “Russia’s Army Reform Enters New Stage,” *Moscow Defense Brief* 2, no. 20 (2010), 1. The idea is to go from a massive standing army, to quickly deployable force.

<sup>102</sup> Klein, *Towards a ‘New Look’ of the Russian Armed Forces*, 30. Experiences in the north Caucasus, specifically Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia, as well as Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia had all been conducted primarily with conventional ground forces.

regional conflicts.<sup>103</sup> In the eyes of the Kremlin, these training and execution goals could only be realized “by expanding the percentage of contract (*kontraktniki*) soldiers in the armed forces.”<sup>104</sup> A long-standing policy of the Russian armed forces was to only use *kontraktniki* in combat operations outside Russia, mainly because of the horrible military and public relations nightmare that arose during the First Chechen War.<sup>105</sup> The *kontraktniki* also fit better into the permanent-readiness model since “adequate training demands far more time” than the standard conscript one year term of service.<sup>106</sup> The fact of the matter as well is that the use of *kontraktniki* troops in the permanent-readiness force makes the use of military force more palatable, as the “wider public tends to have a more permissive view of professional soldiers’ deaths than those of conscripts.”<sup>107</sup>

*From Divisions to Brigades (Permanent-Readiness, part II)*

The standard organizational structure of the Russian army followed the previous Soviet-model of military district, army, division and regiment. This structure though, especially the division, proved “inflexible in responding to the requirements of a short, mid-intensity war,” which had occurred in Russia’s southern periphery.<sup>108</sup> The division was designed to fight a

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<sup>103</sup> See also Herspring and McDermott, *Serdyukov Promotes Systematic Russian Military Reforms*, 291, where they noted that the Russian military introduced an annual physical fitness test requirement, which during the initial rollout 26 percent of all junior officers, failed.

<sup>104</sup> Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgian War*, 53.

<sup>105</sup> Jason P. Gresh, “The Realities of Russian Military Conscription,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 24 (2011), 186.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 197. As noted by the author, “every male between the ages of 18-27 is required to serve one year in the armed forces,” with the draft conducted twice a year and typically drafting around 250,000 recruits during each call up. See also Keir Giles, “A New Phase in Russian Military Transformation,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 27, no. 1 (2014): 50, who noted that the concept of an all *kontraktniki* force had been in operation in two separate units, the 76<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division and the 42<sup>nd</sup> Motor Rifle Division, in Chechnya for some time.

<sup>107</sup> Galeotti, *Reform of the Russian Military and Security Apparatus*, 82.

<sup>108</sup> Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgian War*, 53.

large-scale land war of earlier eras, operating across an extended frontline, which in turn made the division ill-suited for modern operational demands.<sup>109</sup> The divisions were also very top heavy. While each of the three regiments contained the traditional mix of armor and infantry, organic assets, such as artillery, were held at the division level and released to a regiment when required; while this composition does not have the “adroitness or flexibility to cope with the demands of fast-moving modern conflict,” it was perfectly suited to “all-out conventional warfare” of the type envisaged against NATO.<sup>110</sup>

In order to provide a structure more suited to a permanent-readiness force, the division was replaced by the brigade.<sup>111</sup> The brigade, which is a standard formation of most Western militaries, provided a more adaptable platform conducive to regional conflicts.<sup>112</sup> The brigade is composed of around 4,000 soldiers, with the previous assets held at division contained organically, thereby allowing “for a more rapid deployment to the theatre and more mobility within the theatre.”<sup>113</sup> These new brigades were to form part of a “three-tier command system,”

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<sup>109</sup> Klein, *Towards a ‘New Look’ of the Russian Armed Forces*, 31.

<sup>110</sup> Rod Thornton, *Military Modernization and the Russian Ground Forces* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2011), 21. Author noted that a regiment could either be armored, mechanized infantry, or basic infantry dependent of the type of parent division.

<sup>111</sup> Prior to the ‘New Look’ reforms, the Russian army contained 24 divisions, with 23 of them to be disbanded during the brigade changeover. The Russian Airborne Troops would maintain their division structure, as well as the 18<sup>th</sup> Machine-gun and Artillery Division, due to their position on the disputed South Kuril Islands. See McDermott, *The Restructuring of the Modern Russian Army*, 491, who noted that the six Airborne divisions will be spread between the six Military Districts, and transformed into a rapid reaction force, which will “provide to the capacity to meet any threat and deploy forces within one hour.”

<sup>112</sup> The brigade structure had been adopted by both the United States and Great Britain in the 1990s. See Lester Grau and Elena Stoyanov, “The Bear Facts: Russians Appraise the Stryker Brigade Concept,” *Infantry* (November-December 2004), 38, where they noted that the brigade structure had previously been looked at with great interest by the Russian military during the early phases of the U.S. operations in Iraq, particularly the Stryker Brigade units utilized by the U.S. Army, due to the fact that the Russian Army had “a long tradition of using wheeled personnel carriers in concert with tracked personnel carriers.”

<sup>113</sup> Klein, *Towards a ‘New Look’ of the Russian Armed Forces*, 32-33. See also Thornton, *Military Modernization and the Russian Ground Forces*, 21-22, for greater discussion of the brigade structure. See also Ivan Kononov, “The ‘New Look’ Russian Army,” *Moscow Defense Brief* 4, no. 18 (2014), 13-14, who noted as well that there

which comprised the military district/joint strategic command, operational command, and the actual brigade.<sup>114</sup> The operational command, which replaced the army group, provided for a more joint command structure as each will have operational control over “all the forces in its area of responsibility, including aviation, air defense, missile units, etc.”<sup>115</sup> Further flexibility was also gained by assigning battalions to the brigades, rather than their previous position underneath divisions, as this allowed for greater “tactical flexibility and responsiveness of these subunits.”<sup>116</sup> This structure also reduced the previous redundancy for the utilization of non-organic assets, thereby increasing tactical command and control.<sup>117</sup> With this new structure, the Russian ground forces had a smaller and more responsive force, with the required support assets to meet mission requirements, as well as the ability to modify based on operational and tactical conditions.

The ‘New Look’ force also meant a much slimmer force. The mass-mobilization model Russian army after the war in Georgia consisted of over a million soldiers and 355,000 officers, as well as 140,000 warrant officers, which equated to “one officer for every 2.5 soldiers,” a

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would be two types of brigades, the tank and motorized rifle, with the tank brigade maintaining a similar composition similar to the old regiment, while the motorized rifle brigade had at least five possible variations. For a counter-argument against the brigade structure, see Makarychev and Sergunin, *Russian Military Reform*, 362, where they noted that some experts believed “that this transition will dramatically weaken the armed forces and make it impossible to wage a large-scale war against a strong enemy.”

<sup>114</sup> Ivan Konovalov, “The ‘New Look’ Russian Army,” *Moscow Defense Brief* 4, no. 18 (2014), 12. The joint strategic command is only applicable during wartime.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 12

<sup>116</sup> Lannon, *Russia’s New Look Army Reforms and Russian Foreign Policy*, 39-40.

<sup>117</sup> Giles, *Russian Operations in Georgia*, 11. Examples of non-organic assets are reconnaissance forces, surveillance and target acquisition teams, forward air controllers (FAC), artillery forward observers (FO), and Special Forces units. Prior to the reforms, these assets reported directly to division, or even the army group in some cases, instead of the division or regiment they were attached to. In Chechnya, as well as in Georgia, this was a big problem. To illustrate, a rifle company may require artillery support to suppress an enemy assault, but in order to request this, the commander had to push his request up his chain of command to division, who would then prioritize the request, and then based on priority, send it down to regiment, and then eventually down to the artillery battery.

greater ratio than any other military force in the world.<sup>118</sup> With the disbanding of the cadre units, in addition to the creation of the smaller brigade structure, the ‘New Look’ reforms by design required personnel reductions; the officer corps was to be reduced by roughly 200,000 (including over 200 generals) and the warrant officer position to be eliminated. The most prolific cuts were to occur within the field grade officers: colonels from 25,665 to 9,114; lieutenant-colonel from 88,678 to 15,000; majors from 99,550 to 25,000; and company grade officers (captain) from 90,000 to 40,000.<sup>119</sup> The junior officer corps will be increased, however, as they are “essential to anchor new thinking within the military,” as well as vital to “improve the training of soldiers.”<sup>120</sup>

In addition to a decreased officer corps, the reforms also initiated a level of leadership never previously seen in the Russian military—that of a non-commissioned officer corps, better known in Western armies as an NCO. The creation of a NCO corps was in line with the desire to ‘professionalize’ the military, as an NCO holds the rank of sergeant or above, thereby requiring a contract soldier who will serve for several years. The NCO corps will hold mid-level leadership positions in the military, which is “crucial for the maintenance of discipline and for training.”<sup>121</sup> Previously, the Russian army relied solely on junior officers for all training, as well as any tasks

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<sup>118</sup> Klein, *Towards a ‘New Look’ of the Russian Armed Forces*, 35. Many of these officers formed the bulk of the cadre units which were previously mentioned.

<sup>119</sup> Lannon, *Russia’s New Look Army Reforms and Russian Foreign Policy*, 27-28. Author noted that lieutenants were to be increased by 10,000. For discussion on the proposed program designed to assist the dismissed servicemen, see Victor Goremykin, “Personnel Issues in the Formation of a New Profile for the Russian Armed Forces,” *Moscow Defense Brief* 2, no. 16 (2009), 5-6. The author noted that “program addresses the professional and social adaptation of servicemen,” who will receive “the full measure of social assistance, as well as retraining and assistance in finding work.” This assistance is focused on five key areas: information and consulting services relating to dismissal from the armed forces; logistical support for shipping of personal effects; retraining in civilian specialization; housing assistance; securing payment of social security benefits and pensions; and assistance in finding work.

<sup>120</sup> Klein, *Towards a ‘New Look’ of the Russian Armed Forces*, 36.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

“which required even the most basic degree of thought.”<sup>122</sup> This new NCO corps will not only execute “many of the functions previously afforded to officers,” but will also form the foundation of the permanent-readiness force.<sup>123</sup>

*Modern Weapons and Equipment (Permanent-Readiness, part III)*

A key element to the ‘New Look’ reforms were new, or at least modernized, weapons and equipment, as the permanent-readiness forces could no longer rely on Soviet ‘legacy’ weapons. New and cutting-edge weapons and technology were “central to the future success” and long-term viability of the Russian armed forces.<sup>124</sup> Within the larger category of modernized weapons and equipment, there were four main areas of focus: the creation of multirole weapon systems; advance precision-guided munitions (PGM); to greatly improve communication systems; upgrade command, control and communications systems at strategic, operational and tactical levels.<sup>125</sup> Besides new technology, the reforms addressed some of the more basic equipment vital to a permanent-readiness force, such as new uniforms and personal equipment,

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<sup>122</sup> Giles, *Russian Operations in Georgia*, 14. The author noted that the use of junior officers in this role had been recognized in Russia as a problem for some time. He noted as well after the announcement of reforms, many in the military argued that the NCO will just replace the warrant officer, and really be of no value. See also Klein, *Towards a ‘New Look’ of the Russian Armed Forces*, 38, who noted that the addition of an NCO corps will require “changes to the institutional culture of the Russian armed forces” as officers will have to learn “how to delegate authority.”

<sup>123</sup> Renz, *Russian Military Reform*, 59.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>125</sup> Makarychev and Sergunin, *Russian Military Reform*, 360. See also Renz and Thornton, *Russian Military Modernization*, 50-51, who noted that both tanks and aircraft (despite their poor showing in Georgia due to lack of technology) were not the major impediment for performance during the Georgian war, but it was the lack of “cutting-edge technologies” that are standard in Western militaries. See also Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgian War*, 61, who noted that these capabilities were so important to the military, that for certain technologies, they were willing to purchase from foreign manufacturers, which was a previously unheard of practice. For an interesting twist on this, see Felgenhauer, *After August 7*, 176. The author noted that in Georgia they had a modernization program for the T-72 tank in Senaki, which entailed installing “Israeli-made night-vision and other modern electronic equipment,” and after the base was overrun by Russian forces, they captured two of the tanks and the associated Israeli equipment and took all of it back to Russia.

and night-vision equipment in both vehicles and for individual wear.<sup>126</sup> Many of the previous Soviet ‘legacy’ systems in use were to be reduced, or even eliminated, which would not only allow for the acquisition of new equipment, but also streamline a much burdened logistical system.<sup>127</sup>

*Military Education and Quality of Life (Permanent-Readiness, part IV)*

The military education system in Russia, which provided both entry-level and advance education for officers, was also destined to be reformed. The military education system consisted of 65 institutions spread across Russia, and annually trained around 18,000 officers.<sup>128</sup> However, with the reforms, new officers would be “compelled to harness and refine their skills at one of 10 academic military training centers.”<sup>129</sup> While the initial objective was only 10 institutions, the reform guidelines were expanded to 16, which included three military training and science centers for “officer training for each branch of the armed forces,” as well as 11 military academies and 2 military universities.<sup>130</sup> The simple logic behind this change was the

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<sup>126</sup> See also Giles, *Russian Operations in Georgia*, 15, who noted that during the Georgian war that Russian soldiers and commanders looked “like Ossetian volunteer militiamen” as they dressed “as if everyone dresses however they feel like dressing.”

<sup>127</sup> The major reduction was to occur with armored vehicles, specifically tanks. See Giles, *Russian Operations in Georgia*, 61, who noted that the Russian armored force was to be reduced from 23,000 tanks to around 2,000. The majority of these were to be from the T-55 and T-62 fleet, which were considered useless on a modern battlefield. The end figure of 2,000 only refers to those tanks in the permanent-readiness units, as there will still be several thousand tanks located in strategic storage centers throughout the country, as well as an additional amount of older tanks used at training units. See also Konovalov, *The ‘New Look’ Russian Army*, 14, who also discussed the storage centers and noted that the “structure of the ‘dormant’ tank and motorized rifle brigades...is similar to that of the deployed brigades.” He also noted that under the reform system there would be around 60 strategic storage centers.

<sup>128</sup> Thornton, *Military Modernization and the Russian Ground Forces*, 42. Author noted that after the reforms only 1,500-2,000 officers would be trained annually.

<sup>129</sup> Roger N. McDermott, “The Restructuring of the Modern Russian Army,” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 22 (2009), 498.

<sup>130</sup> Jim Nichol, *Russian Military Reform and Defense Policy* (CRS Report No. 7-5700) (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 2011), 16, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42006.pdf>

personnel reductions in the officer corps, as a smaller officer corps no longer warranted such a vast training and education system.

The final major goal of the reforms was to increase the quality of life for servicemen. While during the Soviet period the army was a well-paying and viable career option, especially for officers, servicemen in the Russian army were faced with “low salaries, declining prestige and bullying,” which in turn made it an “unpopular employer.”<sup>131</sup> The major factor was pay, as a private made \$260-300 per month based on military posting, and a lieutenant made \$522-530 per month, also dependent on posting.<sup>132</sup> The financial aspect of service had become so bad, that after the reforms were announced President Medvedev stated “one should not have to be ashamed of serving for pay like this.”<sup>133</sup> The reforms initiated a pay increase for all service members, which in some cases doubled their pay, as well as better housing, benefits packages and social services.<sup>134</sup>

### **The Dilemma and Reality of Reform by 2012/2013**

The initial actions of the ‘New Look’ reforms began with personnel reductions in the officer corps, and as well as the associated structural changes involved with the brigade system of permanent-readiness. The modernization of equipment followed shortly afterwards, and with it came changes in the acquisition process for new equipment. In November 2012, Defense Minister Serdyukov and Chief of the General Staff Nikolai Makarov were replaced by Sergei

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<sup>131</sup> Klein, *Towards a ‘New Look’ of the Russian Armed Forces*, 38. The ‘bullying’ aspect was primarily in the enlisted ranks, especially among conscripts. Known as *Dedovshchina* (lit. grandfathering), it was the practice of hazing by senior conscripts towards new, first year conscripts.

<sup>132</sup> “Gosudarstvo Opredelilo Ėsenu Ratnogo Truda,” *vpk-news.ru*, April 13, 2011, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/7405>

<sup>133</sup> Klein, *Towards a ‘New Look’ of the Russian Armed Forces*, 40. See also Renz, *Russian Military Reform*, 61, who noted that low salaries “made it difficult to attract suitable personnel in sufficient numbers.”

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 40. The author noted that with the pay increase, service members had to start paying for services such as childcare and travel vouchers, which previously had been free.

Shoigu and Valery Gerasimov respectively. Despite this change in leadership the “basis of the overhauled Armed Forces never changed,” and the new Defense Minister “continued to lead the Armed Forces along the charted course.”<sup>135</sup> By 2013, analysts concluded that the reform process was “proving flexible and...developing with impressive speed.”<sup>136</sup> This marked progress though required variation and compromise from the force originally envisioned in 2008.

While the intent of the reforms was to create a permanent-readiness force manned by *kontraktniki* soldiers, by 2010 the Russian military realized that “due to the demographic decline and a generally low attractiveness of military service,” they were going to have to reverse course and start increasing conscription.<sup>137</sup> In addition Defense Minister Serdyukov noted:

We have no money to maintain contract servicemen in the quantities in which we would like to have them and that is why reduction of the quantity of contract servicemen and increase of the quantity of conscript servicemen is going on.<sup>138</sup>

This sudden change in direction produced immediate issues for the creation of permanent-readiness forces. The most glaring issue was the predicament of “mixed manning units” of both *kontraktniki* and conscripts, as these one-year term conscripts were constantly in various stages

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<sup>135</sup> Mikhail Barabanov, “Testing a ‘New Look’: Ukrainian Conflict and Military Reform in Russia,” *Globalaffairs.ru*, December 18, 2014, <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Testing-a-New-Look-17213>

<sup>136</sup> Chapter Five: Russia, *The Military Balance*, 173.

<sup>137</sup> Klein, *Towards a ‘New Look’ of the Russian Armed Forces*, 40. See also Chapter Five: Russia, *The Military Balance*, 178, where it was noted that in 2010 there were 150,000 contract personnel in the military, but this was expected to drop to 80,000 by 2015. The article noted that this reduction is also a realization of the true cost of maintaining a volunteer force. See Gresh, *The Realities of Russian Military Conscription*, 207, where he noted that another financial factor associated with the decision was the Kremlin’s “unwillingness to reduce social benefits for hundreds of thousands of veterans.” For initiatives to increase attractiveness of the military, see Chapter Five: Russia, *The Military Balance*, 179, where it is noted that the Russian military has entertained the idea of reducing the ‘work’ week to Monday through Friday, and give to conscripts the weekends off, as well as allowing them to wear civilian clothes and go off base, which is “a significant innovation in the Russian context.”

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 40. See also Thornton, *A Bear With Teeth*, 48, who noted that another factor was some members of the military leadership, who argued that Russia needed a conscript force for the sole reason that NATO was still in existence, and “was still a threat to Russia.” See Aleksey Nikolsky, “The Invisible Reform of the Border Guard Service,” *Moscow Defense Brief* 2, no. 34 (2013), 1, where the author noted that the only truly force manned 100 percent by *kontraktniki* is the Russian Border Service, and have completely stopped using conscripts.

of training and skill-level dependent on whether they had entered in the summer or winter induction cycle.<sup>139</sup> By 2012, as a result of the reduction of *kontraktniki*, and the increase of one-year term conscripts, the permanent-readiness brigades are “nowhere near fully manned or appropriately trained.”<sup>140</sup>

The structure of the military also evolved from the original announcement in 2008. The most glaring change was the reduction of the military district/joint strategic command from the old Soviet districts, to four regional districts: western, southern, central, and eastern.<sup>141</sup> The brigade restructuring continued to press forward throughout this process, and by early 2009 23 divisions were disbanded and regrouped into 40 new brigades, thereby creating the combined-arms permanent-readiness units of four tank brigades, 35 motorized rifle brigades and one combat, service and support brigade.<sup>142</sup> The remainder 45 brigades were formed by December 2009, and consisted of missile, artillery, MLRS, engineers, communications and other various combat support elements.<sup>143</sup> After the *Vostok* 2011 exercises, the decision was made to further

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<sup>139</sup> Keir Giles, “A New Phase in Russian Military Transformation,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 27, no. 1 (2014): 153. See Chapter Five: *Russia, The Military Balance*, 176, where it is noted that this training issue became an obvious issue during the *Vostok* 2010 exercise, as some of the units consisted of 80 percent conscripts with less than two months training. See also Thornton, *Military Modernization and the Russian Ground Forces*, 38-39, who discussed an alternate training method. Beginning in 2011, Russia instituted the Russian Defense Sports-Technical Organization (ROSTO). This program consists of 15,000 retired officers who train pre-draft age men at pre-prescription training centers in various military-technical skills in the hope of instilling basic military knowledge, thereby when they are conscripted, they are better prepared. In addition, high schools in Russia will begin teaching military subjects “as part of their overall curricula.”

<sup>140</sup> Renz and Thornton, *Russian Military Modernization*, 48. The authors even went so far as to say that these brigades “are not permanent-readiness formations.”

<sup>141</sup> Thornton, *Military Modernization and the Russian Ground Forces*, 25. The six Soviet districts were: Moscow, Leningrad, Siberia, Far East, Volga-Urals, and North Caucasus. See McDermott, *The Restructuring of the Modern Russian Army*, 490, who noted that “104 command-and-control entities had been formed” in order to support the three-tier structure.

<sup>142</sup> Pukhov, *Russia’s Army Reform Enters New Stage*, 1.

<sup>143</sup> McDermott, *The Restructuring of the Modern Russian Army*, 490. Important to note is the disparity of final numbers of brigades, as well as composition, among sources. McDermott, *The Restructuring of the Modern Russian Army*, 490, at the high end noted a total of 90; Pukhov, *Russia’s Army Reform Enters New Stage*, 1, and Giles, *A*

sub-divide the combined-arms brigades. The result was a threat-specific tailorable force consisting of heavy brigades with mainly tanks, medium brigades equipped with tracked armored personnel carriers, and light brigades with wheeled armored personnel carriers.<sup>144</sup> Each type of brigade will have a specific role: the heavy brigade will be the core ground unit and “maintain permanent combat readiness status”; the medium brigade is designed for rapid-response units; and the light brigade are the most highly mobile.<sup>145</sup> As a result of the expansion of the brigades, by January 2012 the number of brigades of all types had reached 96.<sup>146</sup>

Organizational command structure also changed, when in December 2012 President Putin subordinated “the General Staff directly to the President as Commander-in-Chief,” who had previously reported to the Minister of Defense.<sup>147</sup> A major initiative of the reforms, the NCO corps, began official training of 1 December 2009, when the NCO training academy for the Airborne forces accepted its first class of 254 trainees for the ten month program at the Ryazan Airborne Institute. The first class graduated in June 2012 from the over two-year program, and though it began with 254 trainees, the final total was 180 graduates; a second class of 175 graduated in November 2012; and 124 were expected to finish in early 2013.<sup>148</sup> These small

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*New Phase in Russian Military Transformation*, 152, and Chapter Five: Russia, *The Military Balance*, 175-176, all noted 85; Renz and Thornton, *Russian Military Modernization*, 47-48, noted 83.

<sup>144</sup> Keir Giles and Andrew Monaghan, *Russian Military Transformation—Goal in Sight?* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2014), 18. Authors noted that the light wheeled brigades would be more suited for use in Russia’s western neighbors due to the “well-developed road network.”

<sup>145</sup> Giles, *A New Phase in Russian Military Transformation*, 152.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 152-153. These consisted of : 4 tank brigades; 36 motorized rifle brigades; 1 force protection brigade; 4 airborne assault brigades; 7 *Spetsnaz* brigades; 2 reconnaissance brigades; 8 missile brigades; 8 artillery brigades; 4 rocket-artillery brigades; 10 SAM brigades; 2 engineer brigades; and 15 arms storage and repair depots, established as reserve units.

<sup>147</sup> Giles and Monaghan, *Russian Military Transformation*, 4.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 35. These small numbers present a real problem for Russia, as a million-man army requires several hundred thousand NCOs, and with less than 500 graduating each year the numbers will not catch up. However, that is not to say it will not work. An NCO is not just ‘made’ at a school, a soldier can also become an NCO after

classes underscored “the problem facing the Russian MoD in attracting, training and retaining a new generation of junior commanders.”<sup>149</sup> Though the importance of an NCO corps was stressed in the reforms, based off of graduation numbers, the emphasis to complete this task does not seem to be a priority.

Lastly, the modernization process of weapons and equipment, though getting off to a slow start, had begun in earnest by 2011. The process was spurred by the creation in 2011 of the State Armament Program 2011-2020 (*Gosudarstvennaia Programma Vooruzhenniia* 2011-2020), which increased military spending for the Ministry of Defense to 19 trillion rubles, with at least “10 percent of the GPV financing...channeled into R&D, 80 percent into new weapons, and the remaining 10 percent into repair and upgrades of existing equipment.”<sup>150</sup> This has resulted in the disposal of older model T-55 and T-64 tanks, as well as early model T-80 tanks, and their replacement by upgraded T-72B/BM/BA and T-90 tanks, as well as new armored personnel carriers in the form of the BMP-3 and MTLB 6MA.<sup>151</sup> The surge to re-equip the permanent-readiness forces with modernized, or preferably new equipment, also brought into question the ability of the Russian defense industry “to deliver on such massive contracts,” as much of the new designs will “be based on completely new designs” instead of newer evolutions of old

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spending several years in the military and rising up through the ranks to become a sergeant (NCO). So, if one also includes those soldiers that do stay in the military, at least for 3-4 years, by 2016 the graduates from the NCO training schools will begin to be supplemented by several thousand professional soldiers who have attained the rank of an NCO.

<sup>149</sup> Herspring and McDermott, *Serdyukov Promotes Systematic Russian Military Reform*, 290. The authors noted that the first class was designed to be 1,500. However, they only managed 400, and over 100 dropped out claiming disparity over what was promised and what was actually delivered.

<sup>150</sup> Andrey Frolov, “Russian Military Spending in 2011-2020,” *Moscow Defense Brief* 1, no. 23 (2011), 13.

<sup>151</sup> Barabanov, Lavrov and Seluiko, *Tanki Avgusta*, 95. See Giles, *A New Phase in Russian Military Transformation*, 153, who noted that priority for both reorganization and re-equipping is going to the Southern Military District, and by 2013 had almost completely issued new T-90A tanks and BTR-82A armored personnel carriers.

Soviet legacy platforms.<sup>152</sup> However this status may be, in 2013 the Ministry of Defense committed to increase the level of modern weapons and equipment to 30 percent by 2015, and to 70-80 percent by 2020.<sup>153</sup> Due to the ambitious nature of the 2008 ‘New Look’ military reforms, there will be some goals which will have to be adjusted and compromised, and some that will not be met at all. Regardless of that fact, the Russian military force that has evolved is one much different from just a few years earlier in Georgia; it is also a force that experts consider to be “more effective, flexible, adaptable and scalable for achieving Russia’s foreign policy aims.”<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Frolov, *Russian Military Spending in 2011-2020*, 14.

<sup>153</sup> V.G. Kovalev, L.N. Ilin, and A.V. Kandaurov, “Razvitie sistemy voozuzheniia obshchevoiskovykh formirovaniĭ sukhopotnykh voĭsk,” *Voennaia Mysl’*, no. 3 (March 2014), 77.

<sup>154</sup> Giles, *A New Phase in Russia Military Transformation*, 162.

## CHAPTER 4

THE 2014-2015 ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA AND THE CONFLICT IN EASTERN  
UKRAINE

A reformed military, after all, is meant to be a more usable one.

—Mark Galeotti, *Reform of the Russian Military and Security Apparatus*

A genuine rebirth of Russia as a great power is impossible without the restoration of Russian predominance in the former Soviet republics.

—Mikhail Barabanov, *Towards a Military Doctrine for Russia*

The 2014 invasion and subsequent annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, as well as their ongoing support of the breakaway regions of the Donetsk Peoples Republic and Lugansk Peoples Republic, have not only inflamed tensions between Russia and the West, but also reintroduced uncertainty to the region of Eastern Europe. Though the Crimean referendum for incorporation into the Russian Federation became official in March 2014, and for the moment the criterion of the Minsk Protocol has halted the fighting in eastern Ukraine, the eventual outcome is still up for debate. Regardless, the use of a modernized and professional force of airborne troops and *Spetsnaz*, supported by recently re-structured conventional forces at the Russian border, announced clearly the arrival of the new Russian military. The crisis has also served to aggrandize Russia's posture towards Western intrusion—specifically NATO—in their periphery.

**Prelude to the Occupation**

The peninsula of Crimea was an important region for the former Soviet Union, and has been critical for both Ukraine and Russia, mainly because of the strategic naval port of Sevastopol. Due to its deep-water ports, and access to the Mediterranean, Sevastopol's location

“enhances its strategic interest for regional and foreign actors.”<sup>155</sup> After the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the creation of an independent Ukraine, the loss of a major part of portion of coastline became an “additional source of geopolitical frustration for Russia,” who saw their access to the Black Sea “cut down from the whole northern shore” to a “short portion of the Caucasian coasts.”<sup>156</sup> Ownership of the naval base at Sevastopol was a contentious issue until 1997, when Russia and Ukraine agreed to joint-use of the base until 2017, and split the fleet between the two countries. The lease was renewed with the Kharkov Accords in 2010, extending Russia use until 2042.<sup>157</sup> However, this all came into question with events that unfolded in Kiev in the fall of 2013.

In 2012, Ukraine began work towards an association agreement with the European Union, in order to revitalize their struggling economy. In order to be eligible, Ukraine was required to make governance and economic changes. However, the Ukrainian government instead signed a partnership agreement with the Russian Federation in December 2013, which sparked a series of demonstrations and riots in the capital city of Kiev. These riots intensified, and by February 2014 climaxed with armed conflict in the streets and massive social unrest. These activities eventually forced the President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich, to flee the country and seek safety in Russia. For Russian President Vladimir Putin, who had previously

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<sup>155</sup> Igor Delanoë, “After the Crimean Crisis: Towards a Greater Russian Maritime Power in the Black Sea,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 14, no. 3 (2014), 367.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 370. As a result, Russia’s control went from most of the northern coastline to a shared base at Sevastopol, and a short coastline along the volatile Caucasus region. The author also noted that due to the constant fighting and unrest in the Caucasus region, Russia’s interests in the Black Sea are mainly security related.

<sup>157</sup> The importance of the naval port at Sevastopol for the Russian navy cannot be underscored enough; though there are a few other smaller Russian naval ports around the Black Sea, Sevastopol is the only port which can support any vessel in the Russian navy, and it is also the location of Russian naval aviation and support assets in the region. Of interesting note, the 2014 Doctrine (as well as the 2010 Doctrine) makes no specific annotation as to the functions of the Navy; the 2014 Doctrine (section III.32.m.) merely mention that one of the tasks of the Armed Forces is to “ensure the security of economic activities of the Russian Federation in the world ocean.” For explicit policy on maritime forces, see *The Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation to 2020*.

commented in 2008 about “dismembering Ukraine...and detaching the Crimea...” this was the perfect opportunity.<sup>158</sup>

### **The Military Occupation of Crimea**

The operation to occupy Crimea began under the guise of a surprise ‘operational readiness’ inspection of the Western and Central military districts. This action was ordered by Putin on 26 February 2014, and involved moving units of these districts to areas in other parts of Russia, far away from their home stations. These large-scale movements “helped to cover the redeployment of several thousand troops of *Spetsnaz* and Airborne Troops to Crimea,” as well as the movement of “military units to the Ukrainian border as a form of pressure on Kiev to prevent it from using military force in Crimea.”<sup>159</sup> The same day Russian troops, supported by armored personnel carriers, established a checkpoint about half way between from Sevastopol to Simferopol,” thereby separating the region from the remainder of Crimea.<sup>160</sup> In addition, armored personnel carriers and their associated troops operated in Sevastopol near the naval base.<sup>161</sup> The following day, 27 February 2014, the first Russian troops began to appear in Simferopol, the capital of the Crimea region, where they took over government offices and

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<sup>158</sup> Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgia War*, 6. This comment was made by Vladimir Putin while he was Prime Minister, concerning the possible expansion of NATO into both Georgia and Ukraine.

<sup>159</sup> Mikhail Barabanov, “Testing a ‘New Look’: Ukrainian Conflict and Military Reform in Russia,” *Globalaffairs.ru*, December 18, 2014, under “Ukraine: The Lessons of a War that Never Was,” <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Testing-a-New-Look-17213>.

<sup>160</sup> Mark Mackinnon, “Globe in Ukraine: Russian-backed Fighters Restrict Access to Crimean City,” *theglobeandmail.com*, February 26, 2014, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/tension-in-crimea-as-pro-russia-and-pro-ukraine-groups-stage-competing-rallies/article17110382/#dashboard/follows/?cmpid=tgc>. The author noted that these troops were wearing balaclavas, which was similar attire for all the other Russian troops in Crimea during that period.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

erected barricades.<sup>162</sup> By 28 February 2014, Russian troops were “guarding vital facilities in the region,” to include all government buildings and public venues, as well as Ukrainian Naval and Army installations.<sup>163</sup>

On 1 March 2014, the Russian Federation Council unanimously “granted its consent for the use of armed forces in Ukraine,” which enabled the movement of larger contingents of conventional forces into the peninsula.<sup>164</sup> As a result, “practically all combat-ready formations from the central part of the Western Military District,” as well as forces “from the Southern and Central Military Districts” were ordered to the Russian border with Ukraine.<sup>165</sup> By 3 March 2014, a little over five days after the first ‘little green men’ were seen in Crimea, over 16,000 Russian troops were in the peninsula, where they “controlled all Crimean border posts, as well as military facilities” and the ferry terminal on the Kerch peninsula.<sup>166</sup> It was this rapid-deployment of troops and equipment into Crimea and the Ukrainian border, as well “blocking Ukrainian forces on the peninsula,” which made it “practically impossible for Kiev to come up with any effective countermeasures.”<sup>167</sup> Though the rapid occupation up to that point had been

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<sup>162</sup> Andrew Higgins and Steve Erlanger, “Gunmen Seize Government Buildings in Crimea,” *nytimes.com*, February 27, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/28/world/europe/crimea-ukraine.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/28/world/europe/crimea-ukraine.html?_r=1). The authors referred to the troops as “masked men,” though it is now known they were Russian troops.

<sup>163</sup> Vladimir Radyuhin, “Russian Parliament Approves Use of Army in Ukraine,” *thehindu.com*, March 1, 2014, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/world/russian-parliament-approves-use-of-force-in-crimea/article5739708.ece>

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> Mikhail Barabanov, “Testing a ‘New Look’: Ukrainian Conflict and Military Reform in Russia,” *Globalaffairs.ru*, December 18, 2014, under “Ukraine: The Lessons of a War that Never Was,” <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Testing-a-New-Look-17213>. The author noted that it is estimated around 80,000 Russian troops were either on the border or in Crimea by the end of March 2014.

<sup>166</sup> “Russian Takeover of Crimea will not Descend into War, says Vladimir Putin,” *theguardian.com*, March 4, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/04/ukraine-crisis-russian-troops-crimea-john-kerry-kiev>

<sup>167</sup> Mikhail Barabanov, “Testing a ‘New Look’: Ukrainian Conflict and Military Reform in Russia,” *Globalaffairs.ru*, December 18, 2014, under “Ukraine: The Lessons of a War that Never Was,” <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Testing-a-New-Look-17213>

accomplished without any violence, tensions flared on 3 March 2014 when Russian troops fired over top of 300 Ukrainian airmen during a standoff outside of the airbase at Belbek.<sup>168</sup> On 12 March 2014, the 18<sup>th</sup> Separate Motorized Infantry Battalion from Chechnya arrived, after “having marched 900 kilometers to the Kerch Strait,” followed shortly afterwards by the 291<sup>st</sup> Artillery Brigade from Ingushetia.<sup>169</sup> Days later, on 17 March 2014, residents of Crimea voted to join the Russian Federation, and the following day Russia officially annexed the Crimean peninsula.<sup>170</sup>

During this period, eastern Ukraine had also become a hub of separatist activity, including protests and the occupation of government buildings throughout the region.<sup>171</sup> By April 2014 both the Donetsk and Lugansk regions of the Donbass began to call for a referendum to gain independence, akin to the previous actions in Crimea. In response the government in Kiev, now mobilized for war, began operations in the region and “started to bring in troops to suppress the separatists.”<sup>172</sup> Despite requests from both the separatist forces in Donetsk and Lugansk, on 24 April 2014, the Russian Security Council officially determined not to send troops to support Ukrainian separatists and the military began substantial troop withdrawals from the

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<sup>168</sup> “Russian Takeover of Crimea will not Descend into War, says Vladimir Putin,” *theguardian.com*, March 4, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/04/ukraine-crisis-russian-troops-crimea-john-kerry-kiev>

<sup>169</sup> Mikhail Barabanov, “Testing a ‘New Look’: Ukrainian Conflict and Military Reform in Russia,” *Globalaffairs.ru*, December 18, 2014, under “Ukraine: The Lessons of a War that Never Was,” <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Testing-a-New-Look-17213>

<sup>170</sup> Dmitry Boltenkov and Maksim Shepovalenko, “Russian Defense Arrangements in Crimea,” *Moscow Defense Brief* 43, no. 5 (2014), 1.

<sup>171</sup> Mikhail Barabanov, “Testing a ‘New Look’: Ukrainian Conflict and Military Reform in Russia,” *Globalaffairs.ru*, December 18, 2014, under “Ukraine: The Lessons of a War that Never Was,” <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Testing-a-New-Look-17213>

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

border with Ukraine by the beginning of May.<sup>173</sup> On 1 June 2014, the Federation Council “withdrew its formal permission to use the army in Ukraine,” in response to a request from the Kremlin, thereby ‘officially’ ending the active use of the Russian military in the region.

### **End State: Analysis of the Military Operation in Crimea**

The Russian military operation in Crimea became “the first significant test for the reformed Armed Forces,” and the operational deployment of Russian forces “showed a very high level of combat readiness and mobility.”<sup>174</sup> During the operation, Russia utilized various special operations forces and airborne units, who “seized key points on the peninsula, disarmed Ukrainian military forces, and took control of the territory.”<sup>175</sup> Another unique aspect of the Russian operation was the use of civilian self-defense forces, which enabled Russia to “create conditions needed to legitimize further military action.”<sup>176</sup>

During the initial occupation of Crimea, the Russian operation—unlike during the previous conflict in Georgia—utilized squad and platoon-sized units, supported by wheeled armored personnel carriers, who moved swiftly throughout the region, and quickly established a perimeter that not only cut off Crimea from the mainland, but also isolated the over 18,000

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<sup>173</sup> Mikhail Barabanov, “Testing a ‘New Look’: Ukrainian Conflict and Military Reform in Russia,” *Globalaffairs.ru*, December 18, 2014, under “Ukraine: The Lessons of a War that Never Was,” <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Testing-a-New-Look-17213>. The author also offered an alternative approach, and noted that if Russia had decided to use military force in the Donbass region in April, even May, that an invasion “would inevitably have led to a rapid disintegration of the Ukrainian state as we know it today and to the collapse of its armed forces,” and would have “made it possible to solve ‘the Ukrainian issue’ in a drastic way by separating the Russian-speaking regions and turning the rest of Ukraine into a second-grade state that could not jeopardize Russia’s interests.”

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.* The author noted as well that as a result of the invasion, Russia found themselves faced with a military confrontation with Ukraine, who was the second most powerful military in the CIS.

<sup>175</sup> Ven Bruusgaard, *Crimea and Russia’s Strategic Overhaul*, 83.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 83. The author noted that the use of both self-defense forces and covert forces allowed them to create plausible deniability, which in turn made it possible to “prevent a *fait accompli* to Kiev in terms of Russian military control over the peninsula.”

Ukrainian service members stationed at various bases throughout the peninsula.<sup>177</sup> Though large Russian armored brigades were available on the Ukrainian border, their presence was neither required, as Ukraine had no heavy armor in the region, nor would it have been conducive to the operation, as a Russian T-72 removes all options of plausible deniability. Though Russia had previously struggled with joint operations, activities in Crimea highlighted a new level of inter-service operations, as airborne units operated “effectively and in cooperation with other rapid-reaction forces from the special-forces reconnaissance brigades and the marine infantry.”<sup>178</sup> Though often not mentioned, Russia also displayed a much more developed system of logistical support. In the years since the Georgian campaign, Russia had worked to enhance “its strategic maneuver capabilities” and deployment of forces “over great distances,” which was demonstrated by the “swift and well organized” airlift of troops and equipment from across Russia, which “proved highly instrumental during the Ukrainian crisis.”<sup>179</sup>

However much better the showing by the Russian military in Crimea, the omnipresent issue of conscripts and *kontraktniki* resurfaced, and had an indirect affect on the readiness and utilization of certain military units. As a result of large number of conscript troops within the forces and fewer *kontraktniki*, as well as the one year conscription service term, many units were not at full strength “due to both shortage of personnel in the majority of units and the cyclic nature of conscripts’ training,” and as a result the majority of the new permanent readiness

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<sup>177</sup> Boltenkov and Shepovalenko, *Russian Defense Arrangements in Crimea*, 1.

<sup>178</sup> Bettina Renz, “Russian Military Capability after 20 Years of Reform,” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 56, no. 3 (June-July 2014), 75.

<sup>179</sup> Mikhail Barabanov, “Testing a ‘New Look’: Ukrainian Conflict and Military Reform in Russia,” *Globalaffairs.ru*, December 18, 2014, under “Ukraine: The Lessons of a War that Never Was,” <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Testing-a-New-Look-17213>

brigades “could not send no more than two-thirds of their personnel to the operational area.”<sup>180</sup>

Regardless though of this manpower issue, the overall intent of the ‘New Look’ military reforms had “proved correct;” Russian military analyst Mikhail Barabanov concluded that the Russian military fielded a “rather efficient permanent readiness force” that was capable of executing “large-scale operations in the post-Soviet space without mobilization or additional buildup.”<sup>181</sup>

Lastly, the Russian invasion and subsequent occupation of Crimea—as with Georgia previously—demonstrated more strongly than ever Russia’s stance against Western involvement and expansion into the neighboring regions of the Russian Federation. With Crimea firmly in his grasp, and the eastern region of Ukraine dependent on Russian support, Putin has accentuated “his intention to keep Ukraine in Moscow’s orbit.”<sup>182</sup> Russian officials also reaffirmed their commitment to ‘Russian citizens abroad’, and used this citizenship to “create a ‘protected’ population” in Crimea, which in turn enabled the Kremlin to redraw “the former Soviet borders in Russia’s favor.”<sup>183</sup> In the end, by occupying and annexing Crimea, Russia has enhanced its “ability to protect its southern flank,”<sup>184</sup> and more importantly, it has shifted the regional balance of power in its favor.

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<sup>180</sup> Mikhail Barabanov, “Testing a ‘New Look’: Ukrainian Conflict and Military Reform in Russia,” *Globalaffairs.ru*, December 18, 2014, under “Ukraine: The Lessons of a War that Never Was,” <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Testing-a-New-Look-17213>. The permanent readiness force, as previously mentioned in Chapter 3, were a critical feature of the 2008 ‘New Look’ military reforms, and were to form the basis for a more responsive and deployable force.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Andrew Higgins and Steve Erlanger, “Gunmen Seize Government Buildings in Crimea,” *nytimes.com*, February 27, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/28/world/europe/crimea-ukraine.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/28/world/europe/crimea-ukraine.html?_r=1)

<sup>183</sup> Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgian War*, 3.

<sup>184</sup> Delanoë, *After the Crimean Crisis*, 375.

## CHAPTER 5

THE INFLUENCE OF REGIONAL CONFLICTS AND MILITARY REFORM ON THE  
MILITARY DOCTRINES

We perceive some aspects of U.S. and NATO conduct that contradict the logic of modern developments, relying instead on the stereotypes of a bloc-based mentality. Everyone understands what I am referring to—an expansion of NATO that includes the deployment of new military infrastructure with U.S.-drafted plans to establish a missile defense system in Europe. I would not touch on this issue if these plans were not conducted in close proximity to Russian borders, if they did not undermine our security and global stability in general.

—Vladimir Putin, *Russia and the Changing World*

A reformed military is a foreign policy asset, a tool to support friendly regimes in Eurasia and, by implication, put pressure on those not fully aligned with Moscow.

—Mark Galeotti, *Reform of the Russian Military and Security Apparatus*

The purpose of a military doctrine, as a working document for the armed forces, is to provide guidance on how to best utilize the countries military assets to both deter and conduct an armed conflict. The military doctrine also “pursues the aim of sending a signal of some kind to foreign countries and the public.”<sup>185</sup> The regional conflicts in Georgia and Crimea, though conducted in drastically contrasting operational fashion, represented the Russian response to eastward expansion of Western institutions, and the perceived threat by Russia of NATO and Western involvement in their periphery and exclusive sphere of influence.<sup>186</sup> As a result, the 2010 and 2014 Doctrines, each of which were developed after cessation of operations in the aforementioned regional conflicts, were directly influenced by, and because of, this perceived threat that ultimately led to military intervention as the ultimate expression of the Russian

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<sup>185</sup> “RIA Novosti: Russian Pundits, Officials Agree with Need for New Military Doctrine,” *russialist.org*, September 3, 2014, <http://russialist.org/ria-novosti-russian-pundits-officials-agree-with-need-for-new-military-doctrine/>

<sup>186</sup> This perception of a threat from Western Institutions, specifically NATO, had been growing over time. This is most discernible in the Russian response to earlier NATO expansion in Georgia.

position. While both regional conflicts—and their impetus—had a direct influence on the Doctrines, the drastic military reforms which began in late 2008, for the most part, received little attention in either document. Despite the creation of permanent-readiness forces, in complete contradiction both documents continued to stress the requirements of a mobilization reserve and other such aspects similar to the force which they had so desperately wanted to part ways with. In this chapter, I will provide evidence to the impact of regional conflicts on the military doctrines, and then address the inattention towards, and conflicting treatment of, the military reforms.

### **Regional Conflicts and the Doctrines**

Though both the 2010 and 2014 Doctrines are mostly identical in format and intent, they each have resonating themes and specific language that can be attributed to the preceding regional conflict, which at the time of development of each document, were important influencing factors. For the 2010 Doctrine, it was the continued tension over “the issue of NATO’s eastward enlargement,” and more specifically, the consideration of Georgian for NATO membership.<sup>187</sup> For the 2014 Doctrine, while reiterating the threat of an expansive NATO, it was the perceived actions of the West in Ukraine, specifically subversive actions by Western agencies in activities that “result in the overthrow of the legitimate government bodies whose policies threaten the interest of the Russian Federation.”<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Marek Menkiszak, “Russian Policy Towards NATO in a Broader European Security Context,” in *The Russian Armed Forces in Transition: Economic, Geopolitical and Institutional Uncertainties*, ed. Roger N. McDermott, Bertil Nygren and Carolina Vendil Pallin (New York: Routledge, 2012), 73.

<sup>188</sup> *VDRF* 2014, section II.12.m. For discussion by Putin on the expansion of NATO, see “We Will React to NATO Build-up! Key Putin Quotes from Defense Policy Address,” *RT.com*, July 22, 2014, <http://rt.com/news/174768-putin-security-nato-ukraine/>. In the article, Putin noted that the build-up of NATO forces and infrastructure near Russia’s borders is “not just for defense, but an “offensive weapon” and an “element of the US offensive system deployed outside the mainland.” Putin continued that “no matter what our Western counterparts tell us, we can see what’s going on. As it stands, NATO is blatantly building up its forces in Eastern Europe, including the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea areas. Its operational and combat training activities are gaining in scale.” In return, Putin noted

This continued fear and anger over NATO expansion and Western engagement, however, is not altogether unwarranted, and it deserves to be mentioned briefly how NATO ultimately came to its highly visible place in the 2010 and 2014 Doctrines. In the original 1993 Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation the “word ‘NATO’ was not even mentioned,” but rather just the “expansion of military blocs and alliances” as a possible military danger.<sup>189</sup> By the time of the second military doctrine in 2000, Russia “had become more critical of the NATO expansion process,” but it still did not explicitly name NATO in the document, rather it stated that “increasing groups of foreign forces in the vicinity of Russian borders posed the main external threat.”<sup>190</sup> By the time of the 2010 Doctrine, NATO had expanded eastward two more times and publicly considered membership of both Georgia and Ukraine, which finally resulted in NATO and the eastward expansion being listed as a military danger.<sup>191</sup>

The 2008 Russian-Georgian War, as discussed in chapter 2, was Russia’s redline for NATO expansion. The 2010 Doctrine, accepted into law less than two years later, directly

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that “we shall provide an adequate and well-measured response to NATO’s expansion towards Russian borders, and we shall take note of [the West] setting up a global missile defense architecture and building up its arsenal of precision-guided weapons.”

<sup>189</sup> Yury Baluyevsky, “Assessment of Threats in Russia’s Military Doctrine,” *Security Index: A Russian Journal on International Security* 16, no. 3 (2010), 61. The author noted that another factor was the “material and ideological support given to Georgia” prior to the beginning of the conflict.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 61-62. The 2000 military doctrine was created shortly after the first major NATO eastward expansion, which included the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary. It must also be taken into account that in 1999 was the NATO air campaign, led by the US, in Kosovo. See James T. Quinlivan in “Yes, Russia’s Military is Getting More Aggressive,” *Foreign Policy*, December 30, 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/12/30/yes-russias-military-is-getting-more-aggressive/>, where he noted that “after President Boris Yeltsin warned the West not to push Russia, the United States and NATO never sought permission to begin bombing,” and the NATO campaign in Kosovo “humiliated Moscow and contributed to Yeltsin’s resignation at the end of 1999.” As a result, Russia went so far as to list foreign forces near the border of Russia, but still had not directly implicated NATO in the doctrine. In addition, he also noted that Russia, for the first time, felt infringed upon in their previous region of influence.

<sup>191</sup> See Jacob W. Kipp, “‘Smart’ Defense from New Threats: Future War from a Russian Perspective: Back to the Future after the War on Terror,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 27, no. 1 (2014), 47, where he noted that at the April 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest, the “North Atlantic Council agreed that both Georgia and Ukraine would become members of NATO.” Kipp also noted that it was the Bush administration which “continued to push Membership Action Plans for Georgia and Ukraine...in the face of Russian objections and warnings.”

reflected Russia's stance towards this expansion.<sup>192</sup> Though the document does list other NATO activities, such as missile defense, there are certain passages which can be inferred to be a direct result of the conflict in Georgia. While not overtly stating the possible NATO membership of Georgia, the 2010 Doctrine in turn noted the moving of "the military infrastructure of NATO member countries closer to the borders of the Russian Federation, *including by expanding the bloc* [emphasis added]."<sup>193</sup> Indeed, Georgian officials had been actively campaigning for membership.<sup>194</sup> Due to the fact that Russia viewed NATO expansion into Georgia as undermining their regional stability (and henceforth their influence) the 2010 Doctrine included as a military threat "attempts to destabilize the situation in individual states and regions and to undermine strategic stability."<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> For a Russian perspective and discussion on the inclusion of the NATO and Western threat, see Barabanov, *Towards a Military Doctrine for Russia*, 5-6, where the author noted in 2009 that a new military doctrine "should thus clearly state that NATO represents a military threat, that any attempt on the part of a post-Soviet republic to join it will be interpreted as an anti-Russian act, and that the expansion of NATO into the territory of the former USSR is categorically unacceptable."

<sup>193</sup> *VDRF* 2010, section II.8.a.

<sup>194</sup> For an example of Georgian interest, see "Georgians Back NATO Membership in Referendum," *sputniknews.com*, January 11, 2008, <http://sputniknews.com/world/20080111/96285713.html>, when in a referendum held simultaneously with Presidential elections "72.5% of voters backed the ex-Soviet state's aspirations to join NATO." In April 2008 at the NATO summit in Bucharest, Georgia applied for a membership action plan (MAP); however, though the United States and Poland supported this proposition, there was notable opposition from several members, most prominently Germany and France, over a fear of angering Russia. In the end, the MAP for Georgia was denied. For the very interesting Russian response, see "Text of Putin's Speech at NATO Summit (Bucharest, April 2, 2008)," *UNIAN.info*, April 18, 2008, <http://www.unian.info/world/111033-text-of-putins-speech-at-nato-summit-bucharest-april-2-2008.html>. In his speech the following day, Putin noted that "as for the policy of expanding the alliance, we have been attentively watching you discussion yesterday. On the whole, of course, we are satisfied with your decisions, which took place." Putin noted that the desire of Georgia to join NATO was "one of means to restore their territorial integrity" over the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but to "solve these problems they need not to enter NATO." Interestingly, in a forewarning of things to come, Putin also commented on Ukraine and Crimea. He noted that in Ukraine "one third are ethnic Russians," and "in Crimea 90% are Russians," and that introducing NATO into this region "may put the state on the verge of its existence." Confirming Russia's interest in the region, Putin cautioned NATO over expansion, and asked them to "realize that we have there our interests as well," and concerning Crimea, he noted that "we are not trying to provoke anything...but we ask our partners to act reasonably as well."

<sup>195</sup> *VDRF* 2010, section II.8.b.

Georgian military action, bolstered in part by the possibility of impending NATO membership, can further be recognized in the document in the references both to the “use of military force on the territories of states contiguous with the Russian Federation,” and to the “presence of seats of armed conflict and the escalation of such conflicts on the territories of states contiguous with the Russian Federation.”<sup>196</sup> In the category of a military threat, being even higher in scale than the previously mentioned, the document also included the “stepping up of the activity of the Armed Forces of individual states involving partial or complete mobilization,” very similar to the path to military action taken by Georgia prior to their movement of troops into South Ossetia.<sup>197</sup>

The 2010 Doctrine also represented “an attempt to integrate lessons from the war with Georgia,” and to utilize them in the document when they advanced “Russia’s conception of itself as a power once again on the rise.”<sup>198</sup> Specifically, the ability of the Russian Federation, listed within the military policy section, to utilize forces and troops abroad to enforce their sphere of influence in the form of collective security agreements, but more importantly, to “ensure the protection of its citizens located beyond the borders of the Russian Federation.”<sup>199</sup> This group of protected people, to include Russian-speakers, was the impetus for the military action by Russia in 2008, along with responding to the initial Georgian advances into South Ossetia.<sup>200</sup> As a

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<sup>196</sup> *VDRF* 2010, section II.8.h & i.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, section II.10.e.

<sup>198</sup> Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgia War*, 63.

<sup>199</sup> *VDRF* 2010, section III.20. See also Marcel de Haas, “Russia’s Military Doctrine Development (2000-10),” in *Russian Military Politics and Russia’s 2010 Defense Doctrine*, ed. Stephen J. Blank (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2011), 52, who also discussed the issue of protecting Russian citizens abroad.

<sup>200</sup> Prior to the outbreak of hostilities between Georgia and Russia, a large portion of the population in Abkhazia and South Ossetia had been given Russian citizenship. For figures concerning South Ossetia, see “South Ossetia Conflict FAQs,” *sputniknews.com*, September 17, 2008, <http://sputniknews.com/russia/20080917/116929528.html>.

result, this concept was specifically listed in the 2010 Doctrine as a legitimate stand-alone task within the military policy, and a task of the armed forces both during peacetime and in time of war. These sections within the 2010 Doctrine, along with the associated legal framework provided by the November 2009 *Federal Law on the Amendments to the Federal Law on Defence of the Russian Federation*, gave Russia the “right of unilateral military intrusion into any country in which Russian citizens reside on a permanent or temporary basis under a wide set of arbitrary constructed circumstances.”<sup>201</sup> The protection of Russian citizens abroad, and the perceived threat from NATO were the most influential components of the regional conflict in Georgia; as a result of the conflict, the 2010 Doctrine served as both a warning to continued NATO expansion and public announcement of the reestablishment of their sphere of influence.

The 2014 Doctrine, coming into effect nine months after the ‘official’ annexation of Crimea, continued to reflect the perceived threat of NATO. Russia once again denoted with a swift military response their objection to what they perceived was NATO/Western expansion into Ukraine, an area of traditional Russian influence.<sup>202</sup> While the regional conflict in Crimea and Ukraine did not prompt any new language in the 2014 Doctrine concerning NATO per se it did, however, demonstrate—in the eyes of Russia—that NATO finally attained the spot that

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The article noted that in 1989 only five percent of the population were ethnic Russians, but in 2008 “of the population of 80,000, around 70,000 have Russian citizenship.”

<sup>201</sup> Yury E. Fedorov, “Medvedev’s Amendments to the Law on Defence: The Consequences for Europe,” *UPI Briefing Paper* 47 (November 2009), 6, [http://www.fia.fi/en/publication/94/medvedev\\_s\\_amendments\\_to\\_the\\_law\\_on\\_defence/](http://www.fia.fi/en/publication/94/medvedev_s_amendments_to_the_law_on_defence/). Though the protection of Russian citizens abroad is listed in the 2010 Doctrine, it was the 2009 *Federal Law on the Amendments of the Federal Law on Defence of the Russian Federation* which provided the legal basis for the President of Russia to authorize troops abroad without waiting for legislative authorization. The author noted on page 5 that this law “definitely contradicts international law and the internationally accepted practice of humanitarian intervention,” as the accepted norm for protection of citizens abroad is through diplomatic or consular means, and physical protection is to be provided by the country they are residing within.

<sup>202</sup> This Western expansion included the potential European Union Association Agreement with Ukraine in 2013, which provoked the initial response from Russia.

“was allocated for it in the 2010 Doctrine.”<sup>203</sup> In effect, the influence of the Crimean conflict was to further confirm Russian perceptions of a NATO threat, which forced “Moscow to review its military doctrine,” because of both the “expansion of NATO in Eastern Europe” and the ongoing “crisis situation in neighboring Ukraine.”<sup>204</sup>

The regional conflict in Crimea and Ukraine, though, was influential in providing the impetus for new language in the 2014 Doctrine specific to perceived external Western influence in regards to undermining regional stability. In the section on main external military dangers, the 2014 Doctrine added “subversive activities of special services and organizations,” alluding to the strong belief in Russia of Western organizations providing both arms and monetary support to the Ukrainian government.<sup>205</sup> The ousting of Yanukovich and the instillation of a new, more Western-oriented government is also included in the document as the establishment of regimes resulting from the “overthrow of the legitimate government bodies,” within the Russian sphere of influence, and “whose policies threaten the interests of the Russian Federation.”<sup>206</sup> The continuing proxy war between Russia and Ukraine in the Donbass region, and the forces involved, was also annotated in the 2014 Doctrine whereby it noted the use of “foreign private

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<sup>203</sup> “RIA Novosti: Russian Pundits, Officials Agree with Need for New Military Doctrine,” *russialist.org*, September 3, 2014, <http://russialist.org/ria-novosti-russian-pundits-officials-agree-with-need-for-new-military-doctrine/>

<sup>204</sup> “Russia to Adjust Military Doctrine Due to NATO expansion, Ukraine Crisis,” *RT.com*, September 2, 2014, <http://rt.com/news/184376-russia-military-doctrine-nato/>. The article noted as well that Russia considers the defining factor as “the unacceptability for Russia of the expansion plans of the alliance’s military infrastructure” in the periphery of Russia. See also “RIA Novosti: Russian Pundits, Officials Agree with Need for New Military Doctrine,” *russialist.org*, September 3, 2014, <http://russialist.org/ria-novosti-russian-pundits-officials-agree-with-need-for-new-military-doctrine/>, where Aleksey Arbatov of the Russian Academy of Sciences noted “that introducing amendments to Russia’s military doctrine was a totally logical step because relations between Russia and the Western countries have undergone substantial changes over the past four years.”

<sup>205</sup> *VDRF* 2014, section II.12.n. See “Russian Military Analyst: Significant Covert Western Activity in Ukraine,” *Russia-insider.com*, September 28, 2014, [http://russia-insider.com/en/politics\\_ukraine/2014/11/05/04-27-09pm/russian\\_military\\_analyst\\_significant\\_covert\\_western\\_activity](http://russia-insider.com/en/politics_ukraine/2014/11/05/04-27-09pm/russian_military_analyst_significant_covert_western_activity), for an expanded discussion of Western involvement.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, section II.12.m

military companies in the areas adjacent to the state border of the Russian Federation.”<sup>207</sup> The propaganda war by both sides found its way into the document as well, which Russia noted was the social media “impact on the population, especially young citizens of the country.”<sup>208</sup>

The other major influence of the regional conflict in Ukraine was as an re-affirmation in the 2014 Doctrine of Russian commitment to the protection of their citizens abroad, and in the case of Crimea, Russian-speakers. With the catalyst for military action in Crimea being the protection of Russian citizens and Russian-speakers, the 2014 Doctrine maintained within the military policy section what is considered the “lawful use of the Armed Forces, other troops and bodies...to ensure the protection of its citizens outside the Russian Federation.”<sup>209</sup> The success of the security forces, who appeared almost from nowhere throughout Crimea in late February 2014, was recognized, and therefore reiterated in the 2014 Doctrine as a main task of the armed forces, that being the “protection of citizens of the Russian Federation outside the Russian Federation from armed attacks against them,” further reinforcing Russia’s option to use troops abroad.<sup>210</sup>

Both the 2010 and 2014 Doctrines were influenced, in one fashion or another, by the regional conflicts in Georgia and Crimea. The wording of the 2010 Doctrine was greatly

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<sup>207</sup> *VDRF* 2014, section II.12.k. For Russian accusations of private military companies operating in Ukraine, see “400 US Mercenaries ‘Deployed on Ground’ in Ukraine Military Op,” *RT.com*, May 11, 2014, <http://rt.com/news/158212-academi-blackwater-ukraine-military/>

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, section II.13.c.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, section III.22. See European Commission for Democracy through Law, *Opinion on the Federal Law on the Amendments to the Federal Law on Defence of the Russian Federation* (Adopted by the Venice Commission at its 85<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session, 17-18 December 2010), CDL-AD(2010)052, 8-10, where the legality of using military forces for protection of citizens abroad is discussed in detail. Of interesting note concerning this use of force, specifically relevant to the action in Crimea, the document notes that “it should be understood that this kind of intervention should not be used as a pretext for military intervention and should not have as a consequence the stationing of troops in order to ensure the continued protection of the citizens in question.”

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, section III.32.j.

influenced by the previous conflict in Georgia, from the strong language towards NATO, to the restoration of Russian influence in the periphery with the ability to deploy forces abroad. The influence of the conflict in Crimea, on the other hand, on the 2014 Doctrine can really only be seen in the addition of language towards outside (Western) subversive activities in countries bordering the Russian Federation. The biggest impact of the conflict in Crimea, however, is that it served as an *affirmation* of what Russia already perceived to be truths—the expansion of NATO into their sphere of influence, and the threat to Russian citizens and Russian-speakers in the region.<sup>211</sup> As a result, these perceptions were carried over into the 2014 Doctrine.

### **Military Reform and the Doctrines**

As I have shown, the military reforms which began in late 2008 involved a drastic reduction in the size of the Russian military, the restructuring of military formations, as well as the development of new weapon systems and upgrading of current models, all in an attempt to create a new ‘Russian’ permanent-readiness force, and finally remove all traces of the old ‘Soviet’ forces. Despite the fact that the ‘New Look’ reforms were the most ambitious overhaul of the Russian military ever attempted to date, the 2010 Doctrine “completely failed to mention these reform processes.”<sup>212</sup> The revised 2014 Doctrine, regardless of the “reforms that actually

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<sup>211</sup> It is important to understand exactly how dangerous the provisions concerning the use of troops abroad to protect Russian citizens in the 2014 Doctrine can be. These provisions were utilized without reservation in Crimea, but what makes them truly threatening is they could be applied to almost any of the countries along the border of Russia. A plausible scenario would be to utilize subversive agents to either intensify, or invent, an issue with the Russian-speaking minority, and in turn develop it into a major social endemic within the host country. Add in a few targeted assassinations of state leadership critical of the Russian minority, and a kneejerk reaction is almost guaranteed if not by the government, at least by the majority population, thereby giving Russia complete reason to utilize troops abroad in order to ‘protect’ their citizens. The one factor which Russia—despite all their saber rattling—is hesitant to confront in the process is NATO. Though NATO did not act in Georgia, and again in Ukraine, this can be attributed to the fact that they were not member states, all promises aside. However, the most plausible region for Russia to utilize the ‘protection’ clause is in the Baltic’s, but from the recent increase in NATO military activity in that region, however, it can be gathered that NATO will not sit idly by, and Russia, despite their recent large-scale military exercises in the region, understands this as well.

<sup>212</sup> Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgia War*, 67-68.

succeeded in recent years,” not to mention their operational use in Crimea, made no additional mention either.<sup>213</sup> Conversely, both the 2010 and 2014 Doctrine continued to stress the previous Soviet-model mobilization capacity of the armed forces, as well as in the economy and defense industry, almost as if the reforms had never occurred, and the next large-scale global conflict was a distinct possibility.<sup>214</sup>

In both Doctrines, mobilization and mobilization readiness are mentioned throughout: as a main task for the armed forces; as a main task of the military organization; and in the construction of the armed forces. Even more contradictory (and confusing), the 2014 Doctrine included a section within the military policy portion titled “mobilization preparation and mobilization readiness”; in the 2010 Doctrine these sections were titled just “military planning.”<sup>215</sup> Though this requirement for a mobilization-style force is listed throughout both Doctrines, the permanent-readiness concept did still appear in limited locations, often contradicting each other within the same section.<sup>216</sup>

The 2010 Doctrine section on the main priorities of the development of the military organization, called for “the necessary degree of manning, equipment, and support for permanent-readiness large formations,” yet at the same time the need “to develop the

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<sup>213</sup> Marshall, *Russia's Struggle for Military Reform*, 206.

<sup>214</sup> Despite the drastic reform of the Russian military, there was/is still an argument for the mobilization capacity within the Russian leadership. For an example of the current Russian argument, see V.V. Kirillov, “Voennaia aktivnost': cishchnost', sodержanie i vliianie na bezopasnost' Rossii,” *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia* 360, no. 4 (2014), 77, where the author noted that during the Second Chechen War the Russian army could only mobilize 55,000 troops, though they needed 65,000. He compared that to the example of the United States prior to the military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, where they were able to mobilize all the required forces within a few weeks.

<sup>215</sup> *VDRF* 2014, section III.40 (Mobilizatsionnaia podgotovka i mobilizatsionnaia gotovnost'); *VDRF* 2010, section III.35 (Voennoe planirovanie)

<sup>216</sup> For further discussion of this contradiction, see Alexander G. Savelyev, “Russian Defense Doctrine,” in *Russian Military Politics and Russia's 2010 Defense Doctrine*, ed. Stephen J. Blank (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2011), 177 and Renz, *Russian Military Capability after 20 Years of Reform*, 62.

mobilization base of the military organization and support the mobilization deployment of the Armed Forces.”<sup>217</sup> Even more contradicting to the ongoing military reforms, in the same section it required the military organization to “improve the quality of cadre training,” despite the fact that disbanding of the cadre system was among the first major actions of the reforms.<sup>218</sup> This inconsistency continued in the section concerning the structural development of the armed forces, as the 2010 Doctrine required “a rational correlation of permanent-readiness large formations and troop units to large formations and troop units intended for the mobilization deployment of the Armed Forces,” followed as well in the very next sentence by the need to “improve the quality of operational, combat, special, and mobilization training.”<sup>219</sup>

Mobilization requirements also reached into the sections covering economic and defense industry requirements. A required task of military-economic support for defense in the 2010 Doctrine was to “provide timely and full resource support” for the development of the armed forces “for combat, special, and mobilizational training.”<sup>220</sup> The defense industry was tasked with “ensuring the mobilizational readiness of the defense industry complex,” as well as to “create, develop, and maintain mobilizational capacities,” and lastly to “prepare equipment intended for delivery to the Armed Forces and other troops on mobilization.”<sup>221</sup> The result was a

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<sup>217</sup> *VDRF* 2010, section III.31.b & c.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, section III.31.d.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, section III.33.b & c.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, section IV.39.c.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, section IV.39.j; section IV.48.d & g.

document “distinctly out of step with the military itself,” due to the lack of “consideration for the fundamental transformation of the Russian Armed Forces.”<sup>222</sup>

The 2014 Doctrine, like its predecessor, continued the trend of conflicting tasks. Unlike the inclusion in the previous document, the 2014 Doctrine removed the requirement for improved cadre training as a priority of the development of the military organization, though it still maintained mention of a permanent-readiness force, as well as the contradiction of both a permanent-readiness force and a mobilization force in the section on the structural development of the armed forces. The striking difference is the mobilization preparation and mobilization readiness section of the 2014 Doctrine. This section concentrated heavily on mobilization readiness, with mobilization training designed “to perform mobilization plans in a timely duration.”<sup>223</sup> The main objective of this mobilization training is to prepare all organs of the economy and government for “protection of the state against an armed attack.”<sup>224</sup> In fact, this mobilization planning resulted in a series of eight completely new requirements concerning the tasks for the armed forces, the economic sector, defense sector, and civilian authorities during time of war, completely replacing the previous six military planning tasks of the 2010 Doctrine.<sup>225</sup> And just like the 2010 Doctrine, the 2014 Doctrine continued to list the mobilization requirements for both the economic and defense sectors.

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<sup>222</sup> Keir Giles, “The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation 2010,” *NDC Research Review* (February 2010), 12. See also Tor Bukkvoll, “Iron Cannot Fight: The Role of Technology in Current Russian Military Theory,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 34, no. 5 (October 2011), 702, who noted that the “doctrine can emphasize mobilization capacity all it wants,” as it did not “change the fact that the actual reform did away with much of it,” thereby indicating the “doctrine’s limited importance as a steering document” for the armed forces.

<sup>223</sup> *VDRF* 2014, section III.40.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, section III.41.

<sup>225</sup> All of these requirements are contained in section III.42.a – h. This brings into question a possible shift in focus away from regional and local conflicts, as it is noted in section I.8.g (large-scale war), that this type of conflict “between coalitions of states or major states of the world community,” will require the “mobilization of all available material resource and spiritual resources of the State Parties.”

This inclusion, and continued importance, of mobilization requirements in both the 2010 and 2014 Doctrines can be interpreted as a possible division between military and civilian leadership over both the direction and purpose of the current force structure. The civilian leadership, with the support of a few key military officials, desired a smaller and more professional force, which would be more adaptable to current and future foreign policy requirements. However, due to previously discussed manpower issues, conscription was increased. With the increased prevalence of NATO as a threat, the inclusion of mobilization requirements can be seen as a concession to the military leadership, who still believe that their “primary role is to prepare for the day when it must draft hundreds of thousands of conscripts in response to a World War II-like conventional invasion.”<sup>226</sup>

Despite the overwhelming direction in both Doctrines towards mobilization, there are a few sections within each that paralleled the ongoing military reforms. Both Doctrines required the construction of “modern armaments, military and specialized equipment.”<sup>227</sup> They both also required an optimization of “military educational institutions,” and an improved “level of social support for servicemen,” as well as “improving the system of military service using servicemen carrying out military service under contract and under conscription,” while “ensuring the combat readiness of large formations...being filled with military personnel undergoing military service under contract.”<sup>228</sup> However, regardless of these nuanced mentions of military reform concepts, and the profound impact that the actual military reforms had on the Russian ground forces, their

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<sup>226</sup> Marshall, *Russia's Struggle for Military Reform*, 199. The author noted that a central issue in contemporary Russia is the “weak civilian control over a byzantine military leadership that is opposed to reform.” See also pages 200-203 of the same article for interesting discussion on the continuing issue of civilian-military relations in Russia.

<sup>227</sup> *VDRF* 2010, section III.33.e; *VDRF* 2014, section III.38.e.

<sup>228</sup> *VDRF* 2010, section III.34.k,l & n; *VDRF* 2014, section III.39.m, n & p.

overall influence on the both the 2010 and 2014 Doctrines is negligible due to the mobilization requirements contained within each.

## CHAPTER 6

## THE PRESENT-DAY FORCE AND FUTURE DIRECTION

I am convinced that global security can only be achieved through cooperation with Russia rather than by attempts to push it into the background, weaken its geopolitical position or compromise its defenses.

—Vladimir Putin, *Russia and the Changing World*

The present-day Russian Armed Forces, specifically the ground forces, represent a much more competent and capable military force, demonstrated both operationally in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, as well during recent mass military exercises near the Baltic region. That is not to say, however, that the Russian ground forces are a fully developed and modernized military force. While they have been subjected to modernization reforms, they are still challenged by certain organizational and supply issues which have impeded them from realizing their full potential. Despite their operational and tactical success in Crimea, they are still grappling with how to best prepare for future regional conflicts and the continued threat of an expansive NATO, while determining the proper balance between a reform-driven smaller, contract, permanent-readiness force, and a larger, conscript, mobilization army of the current military doctrine.

**The Russian Military of Today**

The Russian military, which evolved through several years of military reforms, displayed itself for the world during the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Though the operation mainly utilized smaller special operations groups and airborne forces, and not the large brigade-heavy permanent-readiness forces, it nonetheless demonstrated a tactical proficiency and exactness of operation, and showed to expert observers “that it was capable of achieving a favorable strategic

outcome before other actors could intervene.”<sup>229</sup> The Russian military has also been conducting ‘snap’ readiness-drills across the country, but most frequently in the region near Ukraine, the enclave of Kaliningrad, and especially the territory bordering the Baltic States. The most recent exercise in March 2015, which coincided with ongoing NATO exercises, included over 45,000 troops and 3,000 vehicles, most of which were rapidly deployed over great distances.<sup>230</sup>

These recent actions by the Russian military suggest that Russia “is much closer to having the military it needs,” both in terms of operational readiness and operational use.<sup>231</sup> This operational force, though, notwithstanding the success in Crimea and the impressive display of military force with recent exercises, has personnel and procurement/development concerns which could prevent them from attaining an operational force as originally envisioned with the military reforms, and with the capacity to act as directed by the current military doctrine.

### *The Continual Thorn of Conscription*

One of the issues which the reforms aimed to reconcile was the reliance on a conscription force, though due to the declining number of *kontraktniki*, the Russian military had no choice but to increase conscription. The result was shorter, one-year contracts, with two annual call-ups in the spring and fall. This strategy resulted in the Russian military of today, with a smaller *kontraktniki* force which forms the core of the larger permanent-readiness units, the VDV and

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<sup>229</sup> Renz, *Russian Military Capability after 20 Years of Reform*, 78. See also Ven Bruusgaard, *Crimea and Russia's Strategic Overhaul*, 85, where she noted the Russian victory in Crimea was not through a “direct annihilation” of opposing forces, but rather an “internal decay...with the aim of destroying morale and willingness to fight.”

<sup>230</sup> “Russia Targets NATO with Military Exercises,” *Stratfor.com*, March 19, 2015, <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/russia-targets-nato-military-exercises>. See also “Hornet’s Nest: Massive Drills Across Russia, 20 Ships in Baltic Sea,” *RT.com*, March 18, 2015, <http://rt.com/news/241745-russia-offensive-defense-drills/>, where the article noted 76,000 servicemen and 10,000 pieces of military hardware. The article also noted that Russia will be conducting over 4,000 readiness-drills in 2015.

<sup>231</sup> Renz, *Russian Military Capability after 20 Years of Reform*, 62. For a counter-argument, see Marshall, *Russia's Struggle for Military Reform*, 200, where the author noted that actions in Crimea and Ukraine did not present a complete view of the Russian military, which make “claims that Russia has displayed newfound military might premature.”

special operations forces such as those used in Crimea, as well as “posts involving more challenging tasks,” and the larger conscript force, which fills the remainder of the positions, mainly in the ground forces.<sup>232</sup> This current force composition results in a Russian military that is “neither a conscript military nor a professional one.”<sup>233</sup>

The current force composition of combining conscripts and *kontraktniki*, though, for the time being is considered Russia’s “most realistic option.”<sup>234</sup> Regardless of whether the military and/or civilian leadership want a fully professional force, there are many other determinate factors which, in the end, have to be addressed and adjustments made from there. The biggest issue is the financial aspect. Professional militaries cost money—a lot of it—and between higher pay, better living allowances and greater social provisions, many countries military budgets cannot absorb this impact without affecting the economy in other places. The other issue facing the Russian military is the political factor. As in many other countries, conscription is seen as an institution to develop spiritual and patriotic traditions of the country. And for a country such as Russia, which is abound with reminders of sacrifice during the Great Patriotic War, this is indeed a moral obligation.

Russia has, for the most part, made this work over the past few years with the *kontraktniki* performing most of the technical and high-skill functions, and the conscript soldier’s in positions such as infantrymen or tank crewman. Recently, there has been discussion of once

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<sup>232</sup> Giles and Monaghan, *Russian Military Transformation*, 38. See also Marshall, Russia’s *Struggle for Military Reform*, 203, who noted that the current Russian military has fewer *kontraktniki* than “in the early to mid-2000s.” In addition, on page 192 they noted that many of the conscripts are unfit for service, with only about “40-50 percent of conscripts qualified to serve in the army.” For discussion on the VDV composition, see Giles, *A New Phase in Russian Military Transformation*, 157, who noted that while the VDV are the most professional of all the forces, they too had to accept a certain amount of conscripts.

<sup>233</sup> Renz and Thornton, *Russian Military Modernization*, 46.

<sup>234</sup> Renz, *Russian Military Capability After 20 Years of Reform*, 74. This is even despite the fact that the 2014 Doctrine, section III.39.p called for a force that was filled primarily with contract troops.

again extending the term of conscript service beyond a year which in turn would give the Russian military more use of the conscript soldier once he has achieved basic proficiency in his position.<sup>235</sup> If this will actually change remains unforeseen, but regardless of the current situation, the use of a mixed force will continue “for the foreseeable future.”<sup>236</sup>

### *Procurement and the Defense Industry*

The Russian military of today, as directed by both the reforms and the 2014 Doctrine, requires new and technologically advanced weapons and equipment. While the defense sector has shown that it can update existing legacy platforms with newer technology, the potential issue is their ability to develop and produce state of the art communication and information technology, which will be required for all new projects going forth.<sup>237</sup> The Russian defense industry of today, however, is affected by outmoded military production equipment, inadequate to produce new weapons platforms and associated components, with “more than two-thirds of the lathes, lathes, and other machine tools...having been in service for more than twice their allotted life spans.”<sup>238</sup> To remedy this, the Russian government is conducting “a major upgrade

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<sup>235</sup> S.V. Fomov, “O nekotorykh prichinakh krizisa otechestvennoĭ nauki voobshche i voennoĭ—v chactnosti,” *Voennaĭa Mysl'*, no. 2 (February 2014), 77. This would address the problem of a one-year conscript who, after completing all his training, only spends 2-4 months in an operational until before his term is up. As a result, there is a constant turnover of personnel, with operational readiness varying greatly as a result.

<sup>236</sup> Renz, *Russian Military Capability After 20 Years of Reform*, 69. See also Gresh, *The Realities of Russian Military Conscription*, 204, who noted that the Russian Deputy Minister of Defense stated “that conscription will most likely be in existence until the year 2030.”

<sup>237</sup> See also Renz, *Russian Military Capability After 20 Years*, 65, who noted that despite the shortcomings of Russian manufacturers to develop high-technology items, they “remained competitive in many other areas, including the production of jet fighters, tanks, helicopters and submarines.”

<sup>238</sup> Renz and Thornton, *Russian Military Modernization*, 51. Authors noted as well that even if the equipment was in perfect working order, it still could not manufacture “any of the modern military technologies that...Russian scientists might develop.”

and retooling effort for the Russian defense industry,” which is budgeted through 2020.<sup>239</sup> For the past several years, the defense industry has supported itself through contract orders of tanks, jets and helicopters to countries such as India, but has reinvested little in innovation research. However, Russia has committed 13 trillion rubles for procurement of new equipment by 2020 of both current models, as well as brand-new platforms.<sup>240</sup> With these combined actions, more practical decisions “on equipment purchasing and disposal are now being made,” that in turn “appear more closely related to Russia’s force optimization goals and purchasing capability.”<sup>241</sup> A major segment of these purchases are in new modern weapons systems, due to the fact that Russia was “lagging much behind the advance countries of the world.”<sup>242</sup>

One area of procurement specific to the ground forces is the development of the Armata Universal Combat Platform, designed to replace the T-90 as the main Russian battle tank. The final delivery to the Russian army of a three-year contract for the T-90A, produced by Uralvagonzavod, was completed in 2011, thereby ending delivery of new Soviet-legacy tanks

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<sup>239</sup> Frolov, *Russian Military Spending in 2011-2020*, 13. For comparison purposes, see Kipp, *Smart Defense from New Threats*, 44, who noted that in 2011 “the U.S. share of global defense spending was 41 percent” compared to “China at 8.2 percent and Russia at 4.1 percent.”

<sup>240</sup> Renz and Thornton, *Russian Military Modernization*, 50. See also Kirillov, “*Voennaia aktivnost’*,” 76, where he noted that the increased military spending by the U.S and other NATO countries has forced Russia to do the same, so as “not to be in the hand of the weakening position with the growth of military superiority to other countries.” For an expanded discussion on Russian military exports, specifically tanks, see Vasiliy Fofanov, “Short Term Rearmament Prospects of Russia’s Armored Forces,” *Moscow Defense Brief* 1, no. 11 (2008), 17, where the author noted that by 2004 “India had become the owner of a larger number of modern Russian tanks than the Russian army itself.” Additional discussion on tank production is had in Mikhail Barabanov, “Russian Tank Production Sets a New Record,” *Moscow Defense Brief* 2, no. 16 (2009), 8, where the author noted that in 2008 Uralvagonzavod produced 175 T-90 tanks, which was “the highest level of tank production at UVZ (and in Russia as a whole) since 1993.” For a very current and noteworthy change in status concerning expansion of military equipment, see “Russia ‘Completely Ending’ Activities under Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty,” *RT.com*, March 10, 2015, <http://rt.com/news/239409-russia-quits-conventional-europe/>.

<sup>241</sup> Giles, *A New Phase in Russian Military Transformation*, 151.

<sup>242</sup> Kirillov, “*Voennaia aktivnost’*,” 77. See also “Russian Defense Budget to Hit Record \$81 Billion in 2015,” *Moscow Times*, October 16, 2014, [http://www.themoscowtimes.com/top\\_stories/article/newsletter/509536.html](http://www.themoscowtimes.com/top_stories/article/newsletter/509536.html), where the article noted that to support this expanded acquisition, the Russian defense budget for 2016 “will reach a record 3.3 trillion rubles (\$81 billion),” which is 4.2 percent of the country’s GDP.

into the armored force.<sup>243</sup> Under development by Uralvagonzavod for five years, manufacture was finalized “for the first batch of Armata tanks and heavy personnel carriers” in February 2015, and “included in Russia’s 2015 defense order.”<sup>244</sup> Starting in 2016, the Russian army “plans large-scale purchases of tanks and armored vehicles,” with the desired goal of “replacing 70% of infantry and tanks brigades’ equipment by 2020.”<sup>245</sup>

The Armata platform is unique in that the vehicle chassis will serve as the basis for a “main battle tank, infantry combat vehicle, a heavy APC, a tank support combat vehicle, an armored repair-and-evacuation vehicle,” and various self-propelled artillery pieces.<sup>246</sup> All together, the contract for the Armata calls for the delivery of 2,300 units by 2020.<sup>247</sup> In addition to the Armata, the Russian defense industry is also developing the Boomerang 8x8 wheeled armored vehicle to phase-in in place of the current BTR-90 as well as the Kurganets-25 tracked infantry fighting vehicle, designed to replace the “BMP and BMD and MTLB and other types of

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<sup>243</sup> Mikhail Barabanov, “World Market for Main Battle Tanks in 2010,” *Moscow Defense Brief* 4, no. 26 (2011), 20.

<sup>244</sup> “Russia’s New Armata Tank on Army 2015 Shopping List,” *RT.com*, February 21, 2015, <http://rt.com/news/234363-armata-tracked-armored-platform/>

<sup>245</sup> Dmitry Gorenburg, “Capabilities of the Russian Ground Forces,” Russian Military Reform: Tracking Developments in the Russian Military, entry posted January 5, 2015, <https://russiamil.wordpress.com/2015/01/05/capabilities-of-the-russian-ground-forces>.

<sup>246</sup> “Armata-based New Combat Vehicles to be Displayed in 2015 Victory Parade,” *TASS.ru*, September 12, 2014, <http://tass.ru/en/russia/749238>. See also Pavel Aksënov, “Fotografii sekretnogo rossiiskogo tanka popali v set’,” *BBC.co.uk/russian*, March 26, 2015, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/russia/2015/03/150326\\_brand\\_new\\_russian\\_armata\\_tank\\_detected](http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/russia/2015/03/150326_brand_new_russian_armata_tank_detected), where author noted that there is discussion among military experts about whether Russia can actually produce the required “complicated electronic and optical systems” which will be required by the Armata.

<sup>247</sup> Dmitry Gorenburg, “Capabilities of the Russian Ground Forces,” Russian Military Reform: Tracking Developments in the Russian Military, entry posted January 5, 2015, <https://russiamil.wordpress.com/2015/01/05/capabilities-of-the-russian-ground-forces>. See also “Russia’s New Armata MBT to Make Its Debut in 2015,” *IHS Jane’s Defence Weekly*, October 6, 2014, <http://www.janes.com/article/44170/russia-s-new-armata-mbt-to-make-its-debut-in-2015>, where the article quoted the Commander of Russia’s Land Forces, Colonel-General Oleg Salyukov, who stated that “the Russian Land Forces are to receive a first batch of 32 Armata main battle tanks in 2015.”

tracked armored platforms.”<sup>248</sup> All of these weapon systems represent not only a quantum leap forward in technology, but also are more aligned with the desired permanent-readiness and rapid-response brigades of heavy, medium, and light composition.

### *Operational Support*

To provide support for regional operations such as the Crimean annexation and the ongoing separatist campaign in Eastern Ukraine, the Russian military has developed institutional structures which will increase their operational and tactical capabilities. The first major institution was the creation of a Russian Special Operations Command (Komandovanie Sil Spetsial’nykh Operatsiĭ), that will organize and deploy independent operating combat units in combat operations, which “have a high political significance and do not require the use of all the instruments at the disposal of the Armed Forces.”<sup>249</sup> Though it was established in March 2013, it is quite significant due to the appearance of various special operations forces in the Crimean operation, and is an indication of the importance of these types of forces for any future local or regional conflicts, where they could be used to “achieve a broad range of objectives, such as “organizing local residents into self-defense squads” or “eliminating rebel leaders.”<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> “Russia Plans to Field the T-99, a Radically New Main Battle Tank by 2015,” *Defense-update.com*, August 10, 2012, [http://defense-update.com/20120810\\_russia-plans-to-field-the-t-99-a-radically-new-main-battle-tank-by-2015.html#.VQSpKNLF-gx](http://defense-update.com/20120810_russia-plans-to-field-the-t-99-a-radically-new-main-battle-tank-by-2015.html#.VQSpKNLF-gx). The article noted that both the Armata and the Kurganets-25 platforms will have a “high degree of commonality.”

<sup>249</sup> Aleksey Nikolsky, “The Olympic Reserve: Why Russia has Created Special Operations Command,” *Moscow Defense Brief* 4, no. 36 (2013), 23. The author noted that these special operating units are not to be confused with *Spetsnaz* or the 45<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Airborne troops, as they are “not independently operating units,” but rather a “combat support force which conducts special reconnaissance behind enemy lines to support operations by the Army command.” He also noted earlier Western comparisons of the KCCO purpose to that of the United States Special Operations Command (SOCOM), which is the central command body for all special operations forces in the U.S. military, regardless of specific branch of service. For discussion on the role of various *Spetsnaz* forces, see Aleksey Nikolsky, “Russian ‘Spetsnaz’ Forces: From Saboteurs to Court Bailiffs,” *Moscow Defense Brief* 1, no. 39 (2014).

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, 24. Interestingly, the author noted that probable area of operations for these forces would be in Central Asia, where incidentally, the “U.S. and Chinese special task forces also conduct operations in the region.”

In order to better coordinate the activities of all forces involved in defense of the Russian Federation, in 2014 Russia established the National Defense Control Center. This command, located in the heart of Moscow, replaced the previous Central Command of the General Staff.<sup>251</sup> This institution is something very new for Russia, and it demonstrates the renewed effort by Russia to establish greater synthesis between military services, and across territorial defense agencies, with “a primus inter pares role for the Russian General Staff.”<sup>252</sup> This center is used to monitor all activities across Russia and can, during time of crisis, serve as a national command center. The importance of this cannot be overstated, as the creation of this command allows Russia to not only prepare a strategic defense, but also coordinate operational and tactical activities within their periphery utilizing all assets within their arsenal, thereby ensuring an overwhelmingly positive outcome for Russia.

### *Operational Focus*

The Russian military of today is a much smaller force than several years ago; however it has proven that the current force, built around rapidly deployable permanent-readiness brigades, is sufficient “without massive advantages in numbers” since it can be rapidly deployed for various operations and exercises, and this leaner force is “flexible enough for a variety of missions.”<sup>253</sup> The present force, as demonstrated in Crimea, has the potential to conduct operations in the Russian periphery, using the forces at their disposal, with a high probability of

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<sup>251</sup> “Russia Launches ‘Wartime Government’ HQ in Major Military Upgrade,” *RT.com*, December 1, 2014, <http://rt.com/news/210307-russia-national-defence-center/>. The article noted that the Central Command of the General Staff was tasked with “round-the-clock monitoring of military threats against Russia, particularly ballistic missile launches, and deployment of strategic nuclear weapons.”

<sup>252</sup> Ven Bruusgaard, *Crimea and Russia’s Strategic Overhaul*, 88-89. These services and agencies include the armed forces, the Interior Ministry, the Federal Security Services, and the Emergency Services.

<sup>253</sup> Galeotti, *Reform of the Russian Military and Security Apparatus*, 79.

similar results.<sup>254</sup> This being said the operations in Crimea and in Ukraine “do not suggest that the Russian military is capable of competing in conventional warfare” beyond their periphery, and even less against NATO.<sup>255</sup> Though the Russian military has a substantial ground force, their ability to project this power beyond their periphery is hindered by a lack of substantial heavy lift air and naval assets, which are required to not only move the combat forces and service and support assets to the theatre of operation, but maintain a continual supply of logistical support as well.<sup>256</sup> And while NATO is openly listed as a threat to Russia in the 2014 Doctrine, the reforms which took place were designed with a focus on Russia’s sphere of influence, and the smaller, rapidly-deployable permanent-readiness structure it required to maintain dominance in this region, rather than a large-scale engagement with NATO; the language in the 2014 Doctrine granting the right to utilize nuclear weapons in the event of an aggressive conventional confrontation cannot be overlooked either.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> For a counterargument to this, see Marshall, *Russia’s Struggle for Military Reform*, 199. The author noted that during operations in Crimea, the Russian forces were “not met by an opponent able and willing to fight.” In addition, the operations in Ukraine have “emphasized special operations and airborne forces,” which have “received the most attention in the recent round of reforms,” therefore not reflecting the true overall ability of the army.

<sup>255</sup> Renz, *Russian Military Capability after 20 Years of Reform*, 78-79. See also Herspring and McDermott, *Serdyukov Promotes Systematic Russian Military Reform*, 301.

<sup>256</sup> In all fairness though, the ability to project power as such has never been seriously developed due to the fact that both Russia’s geographic location and political interests have never required it. The historical use of the Russian military has mainly been located to the areas around the Russian borders, and largely in response to invasion by foreign powers located on the same continent. During the Cold War, Russia prepared for a large land campaign to be fought in Eastern Europe against NATO, and not outside of Europe; the only exception to this was the large submarine fleet designed to deploy nuclear weapons off of the coast of North America. The focus of the current Russian military is for operations within their near-abroad, though they have made some attempts to develop this ability to deploy forces beyond their periphery, most notably the contract with France for two Mistral amphibious assault ships. All this being said, it would be unfair to compare this aspect of the Russian military to say the United States armed forces, who can rapidly deploy several hundred thousand troops and their equipment almost anywhere on the globe in very short order; for the United States, with interests throughout the Pacific and Middle East, as well as Europe, this is a necessity, and henceforth this ability is a key operational focus of their military.

<sup>257</sup> For this possible scenario, see “Putin in Film on Crimea: US Masterminds behind Ukraine Coup, Helped Train Radicals,” *RT.com*, March 15, 2015, <http://rt.com/news/240921-us-masterminds-ukraine-putin/>. In the Russian documentary, “*Krym. Put’ na Rodinu*,” President Vladimir Putin discussed that if the operation in Crimea escalated beyond planned objectives, he “would have armed nuclear weapons if necessary.”

## A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Military: The Future of the Russian Armed Forces

The current Russian military is faced with the dilemma, not unlike military forces throughout the world, of how to plan for and develop their armed forces for unforeseen threats both in the near future, and beyond. For the future Russian military, the use of conventional military forces will “remain mandatory and characteristic of the armed struggle, regardless of size, and whether it is tactical or strategic.”<sup>258</sup> Therefore, Russia will need to maintain focus on these forces, as they will for the foreseeable future be the main contributor to ensuring success during conflict. These conventional forces, particularly the ground forces, need to further enhance operational activation ability of their permanent-readiness units, in par with the ability of similar NATO forces.<sup>259</sup> This will not only provide a greater deterrent to continued NATO expansion, but will also allow portions of these forces to be allocated to joint CSTO or UN peacekeeping operations, within the guidelines of the current military doctrine.<sup>260</sup> Also, contrary to the 2014 Doctrine, Russia does not need to focus on a large strategic reserve force. The training and maintenance of a large reserve force, argues Russian military historian Boris Sokolov, is “absolutely not necessary, because it is focused on the impossible scenario” of a

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<sup>258</sup> V.V. Babich, “K opredeleniiu form voennykh (boevykh) deistviĭ—cherez obnovennoe rackrytie ikh sushchnosti i sodержaniia,” *Voennaia Mysl’*, no. 5 (May 2014), 51. The author noted that the ideas and concepts of the art of war by previous Soviet military tacticians needed to be reevaluated, as war is different now, and will continue to evolve, therefore Russia needs to look to a new generation of military theorists. He also continued to emphasize that no matter how technologically advanced warfare became, at the core would always be the armed struggle between individual combatants on the field. See also S.V. Fomov, “O nekotorykh prichinakh krizisa otechestvennoi nauki voobshche i voennoi—v chactnosti,” *Voennaia Mysl’*, no. 2 (February 2014), who also discussed the need for military theorists in Russia to embrace the art of military science, and to utilize this to better prepare for what wars of the future will involve.

<sup>259</sup> Kovalev, Ilin, and Kandaurov, *Razvitie sistemy voozuzheniia obshchevoiskovykh formirovaniĭ Sukhoputnykh voĭsk*, 19. The authors noted that this is a current perspective of the armed forces, and in particular the army.

<sup>260</sup> These requirements are listed in *VDRF 2014*, section III.21.h, and section IV.56.f.

large-scale war.<sup>261</sup> The current, smaller, force structure is more than sufficient to achieve the geopolitical aims of Russia now, and for the foreseeable future. With the current commitment to the development and operational deployment of new weapons systems, this increased military capacity will more than offset the quantitatively smaller manpower component. In the unlikely event of a war of this magnitude, Russia will continue to maintain a sizeable nuclear weapons inventory.

Russia will need to continue to refine and expand on the reforms that were initiated in 2008 in order to field “genuinely world-class forces able to match those of the first-rank powers” well into the future.<sup>262</sup> However, despite recent developments and advancements towards new weapons, and the renewed efforts of the defense industry, for Russia to fully “catch up with the most advanced technologies will be a long, drawn out process.”<sup>263</sup> One area which requires immediate attention, and will have a long-term impact on conventional ground force operations, is the development of a GLONASS-integrated command and control systems for all ground force assets. This system, which could be vehicle-mounted, would provide Russian commanders with real-time positioning and status of not only their forces, but enemy forces as well. As a result, the “combat effectiveness of units with information management networks” would “increase substantially.”<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Boris Sokolov, “Mirazhi Rossiiskoi Voennoi Mysl’,” *VPK-news.ru*, August 8, 2012, under “S kem mozhet voevt’ RF,” <http://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/9127>. Of great interest, the author noted as well that the primary focus should not be on a confrontation with NATO, but rather “a potential alliance with NATO in the event of a conflict of Russia with China.” For further discussion on the issue of strategic reserves, see also Vladimir Ostankov, “Strategicheskikh Rezervov Net,” *VPK-news.ru*, March 19, 2014, <http://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/19528>

<sup>262</sup> Galeotti, *Reform of the Russian Military and Security Apparatus*, 63.

<sup>263</sup> Renz, *Russian Military Capability after 20 Years of Reform*, 65.

<sup>264</sup> Kovalev, Ilin, and Kandaurov, *Razvitie sistemy vooruzheniia obshchevoiskovykh formirovaniĭ Sukhoputnykh voĭsk*, 19. The authors noted that in order to have an army with the same combat effectiveness as NATO, the ground forces must have a tactical network between all elements of the ground forces. For more discussion by Russian military theorists, see V.G. Kazakov, V.F. Lazukin, and A.N. Kiriushin, “Sposob kompleksnogo upravleniia

Russia needs to continue to orientate their conventional ground forces along the eastern and southern periphery, for the time being, this is the region with the highest probability of confrontation. Though a conflict of any sort with NATO is highly unlikely, due to the increased tension with NATO Russia needs to maintain a credible ground force contingent in order to confirm their influence within the region, which will also serve as a powerful deterrent for any country in the region contemplating possible NATO membership. However, Russia cannot lose focus on the other unspoken threat of China.<sup>265</sup> Regardless of the perceived threat of NATO, China is the one military power that could directly overwhelm Russia with an extremely large conventional military force. The production capability and manpower reserves of China are enormous, and unlike Russia, their economy is currently in a much better position to support a large-scale conflict of this sort.

Lastly, Russia needs to determine what, for them, is a ‘modern’ force. For Russia, a modern military does not have to be a military that resembles, or is even similar to, contemporary Western forces, and therefore does not “equate to Russia explicitly remodeling its military along Western lines.”<sup>266</sup> The ‘modern’ force that Russia requires is one that will enable it to achieve its’ foreign policy objectives, that provides for a proper defense of their vast borders, that is equipped with the right combination of weapons and equipment, manned by a force that is properly trained and competent in its use, and which is able to be properly supported by the economy. Since Russia has never given any specific benchmark to serve as an indicator of their attainment of a ‘modern’ force, this gives the “Russian armed forces considerable leeway

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boevymi deĭstviĭami,” *Voennaĭa Mysl’*, no. 5 (May 2014), who also noted the need for a C4IR-type system to better control all assets during current and future conflict.

<sup>265</sup> For more discussion on this from a Russian perspective, see Boris Sokolov, “Mirazhi Rossiĭskoĭ Voennoĭ Mysl’,” *VPK-news.ru*, August 8, 2012, <http://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/9127>

<sup>266</sup> Renz, *Russian Military Capability after 20 Years of Reform*, 63.

in deciding when to declare that this criterion has been met.”<sup>267</sup> It is also wrong “to assume that there is an ideal type of modern military,” or what exactly a Russian military “for the twenty-first century should look like.”<sup>268</sup> The Russian military force of the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs to have a focused and common stance, which takes into consideration the structural composition of their current forces, including the introduction of new equipment, as well as the orientation of the 2014 Doctrine, thereby ensuring their ability to respond equally to any escalation of force or perceived threats, while still reinforcing a stronger, influential and resurgent Russia.

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<sup>267</sup> Giles and Monaghan, *Russian Military Transformation*, 2.

<sup>268</sup> Renz, *Russian Military Capability after 20 Years of Reform*, 63.

## CONCLUSION

If, instead of the dominance in the world of two superpowers, a so-called leadership of only one superpower or group of leading powers is established under some pretext, then nothing will change in the world, and new sources of confrontation will appear to replace the old ones.

—M.A. Gareev, *On Military Doctrine and the Military Reform in Russia*

The armed struggle—one of the fundamental pillars of war, it is a process organized by application of the warring states, its armed forces or part of them: to achieve through armed violence the aims of the war: economic, political and others, which are core to the struggle and our understanding of why we are fighting...without fighting the armed struggle simply ceases to be such.

V.V. Babich, *K opredeleniiu form voennykh (boevykh) deistvii*

From the summer of 2008 until the present-day, the Russian military has been subjected to several transformative events. These included the regional conflicts in Georgia and Crimea/Eastern Ukraine, the ongoing ‘New Look’ military reforms, as well as both the 2010 and 2014 Military Doctrines of the Russian Federation. These events, separate yet intertwined, have influenced and modified one another, resulting in the present-day Russian military force.

The first significant event, during the period of observation, was in Georgia in August of 2008, where the conventional ground forces, in conjunction with air and naval assets, advanced into South Ossetia in response to Georgian military activities in that region, eventually invading into the northern territories of Georgia itself. While the campaign lasted only seven days and was seen as an overwhelming victory for the Russian forces, the war also accentuated the overall poor condition of their equipment and the need for more modern and advanced weapons platforms and technologies, thereby providing the catalyst for the ‘New Look’ military reforms. The regional conflict was also the first prominent stand by Russia against the eastward expansion of NATO, and a reaffirmation of the Russian sphere of influence.

Following the war, the military reforms began in earnest. With the desire to remove all vestiges of the Soviet-legacy force, the reforms focused on several key areas, to include force readiness, structure and composition, hardware and equipment, and personnel composition. New permanent-readiness brigades were developed, designed not only to be quickly deployed throughout the Russian periphery, but due to the new brigade structure, contained the required assets to be more self-sufficient and adaptable to future regional conflicts. The size of the military was greatly reduced, with a renewed emphasis on professional soldiers and the development of a non-commissioned officer corps. In addition, current equipment was modernized, and new military technology and equipment was introduced to the force.

Less than a year and a half later, in February 2010, the first new military doctrine in over ten years was produced. As a result of the Georgian war and the perceived threat of NATO expansion, the new 2010 Doctrine prominently classified NATO as a military threat, and the main external military danger to the Russian Federation. This increased threat perception also resulted in the affirmation in the 2010 Doctrine of a more active role by Russia in their periphery, both to protect Russian citizens and Russian-speakers, as well as to assert their position to a Russian sphere of influence. However, regardless of the overwhelming impact of the recent conflict in Georgia on the 2010 Doctrine, the radical overhaul of the military forces which it was designed to guide and direct, hardly received mention. Rather, in complete contradiction, the 2010 Doctrine continued to stress the pre-reform Soviet-style mobilization concept.

By 2013, the Russian military had undergone most of the structural, personnel, institutional and equipment changes required by the 'New Look' reforms. Though the force that had evolved as a result stood in stark contrast to the force which invaded Georgia, the process

had also involved compromises and changes from the original concept, most notably the need to increase conscription due to manpower shortages. Despite this, the new force was much more capable and professional, and before long, would be tested in combat.

The perceived threat of NATO and Western expansion into the Russian sphere of influence once again resulted in military action in March 2014 in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. As a result of a failure of Ukrainian President Yanukovich to sign an association agreement with the European Union, and the resulting mass demonstrations and overthrow of the current government, Russia began a military operation to occupy and control the peninsula of Crimea, all under the pretense of protecting native Russian-speakers in the region. Unlike the previous operation in Georgia, the military campaign in Crimea involved various Special Forces and airborne units, as well as small squad-sized forces utilizing armored personnel carriers, to both quickly cut off the peninsula from the mainland, and isolate the Ukrainian military forces. And unlike the previous conflict, the execution of the operation was commensurate with any contemporary Western military operation.

After the official annexation of Crimea by Russia, the region of Eastern Ukraine collapsed into a separatist conflict between pro-Russian and Ukrainian military forces. Amidst the increased tension between NATO and the West on one side, and Russia on the other, a new military doctrine appeared. The new 2014 Doctrine, signed into law 26 December 2014, contained many of the same themes and direction of the previous doctrine, to include the prevalence of NATO as a military threat, as well as to the protection of Russian citizens abroad and the commitment to the Russian sphere of influence. Russia also included stronger wording on the commitment to collective security, which included not only the CSTO, but the BRICS and the Asia-Pacific region, confirming not only their commitment to regional defense, but

announcing their intentions for a more global role as well. While the conflict in Crimea not only reaffirmed Russian suspicions towards the West and NATO, the suspicions of Russia over Western involvement in both Crimea and Eastern Ukraine were specifically included in the 2014 Doctrine. These included the use of foreign private military companies, irregular armed groups, subversive groups and externally funded social movements, perceived by Russia as being used to undermine their influence and position in the region.

This culmination of events resulted in the present-day structure of the Russian Armed Forces. This current force, specifically the ground forces, is a capable, competent and modernized force, which has been demonstrated operationally in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, and during recent major military exercises. Despite these accomplishments, the Russian ground forces still face areas which challenged their ability to realize their full potential, most notably the debate over conscription, which will continue to be an area of contention for the foreseeable future. The conventional ground forces are also contending with how to best address the requirements and direction of the current military doctrine. Their new force composition of permanent-readiness brigades are optimized for the demands of local and regional conflicts, while the 2014 Doctrine maintains focus on the military threat of NATO, and the possible large-scale conflict that it would entail. The current force is also a smaller force, meant to rely more on better-trained professional soldiers with modern and technologically advanced weapons systems, while the 2014 Doctrine maintains the requirement for a large mobilization force.

While the military reforms had the most obvious impact on the structure and composition of the Russian Armed Forces and the least impact on the military doctrines, it was the two regional conflicts in Georgia and Crimea, and the perceived threat of NATO expansion, which in turn had the most direct influence on both the 2010 and 2014 Doctrines, consequently leaving the

Russian military in a state of ambiguity. This in itself can be considered the ultimate lesson of this project. The current Russian military force, as well as the force which it will develop in the future, will be guided and directed by this continued threat of expansion by NATO, the West, and the regional conflict(s) that will inevitably occur as a result. The modernization process which has been forced upon the Russian military, while of limited importance to the doctrine, had the explicit effect of developing a much more efficient, capable, and usable force to not only deter the expansion of NATO, but if required, halting by force. It is only by understanding how future regional conflicts and challenges to Russian hegemony in the territory of the former USSR will determine the orientation and posture of the Russian military, that the influence of regional conflicts and military reform on the Military Doctrines of the Russian Federation can truly be appreciated.

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