

# STRATEGY

A S P I

Why Russia is a threat to the international order



Paul Dibb

June 2016

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**Cover image:** Russian servicemen stand atop military vehicles during the Victory Day parade, marking the 71st anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany in World War Two, at Red Square in Moscow, Russia, 9 May 2016. © Sergei Karpukhin / Reuters / Picture Media



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Russian President Vladimir Putin attends a live broadcast nationwide call-in in Moscow, Russia, 14 April 2016. © Michael Klimentyev / Reuters / Picture Media

# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

Almost a quarter of a century after the demise of the USSR, Russia is back on the world stage and in a familiar, threatening manner. Some are describing the resurgence of Russia as a return to a new Cold War (Kalb 2015); others are predicting a coming war with Russia (Allison & Simes 2015); the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph Dunford, has described Russia as presenting ‘the greatest threat to our national security’ (Neuman 2015); US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter has accused Russia of endangering world order and making threatening statements about its potential use of nuclear weapons<sup>1</sup>; Zbigniew Brzezinski proclaims that we’re already in a Cold War, but that an accommodation should be negotiated to assure Russia that Ukraine won’t become a member of NATO (Fischer & Stark 2015).

What are we to make of all these serious and disturbing allegations? There can be no doubt that Putin’s Russia is now seeking to reassert itself as a major power. The outward symbols of this occurred as long ago as 2008, when Russia used military force against Georgia, although not very impressively. While Russian forces succeeded in their strategic aim of humiliating Georgia and reinforcing Russian control of Georgia’s separatist regions, there were many tactical and operational problems. According to Gustav Gressel, the poor performance of the Russian armed forces in Georgia demonstrated the need for real defence reform (2015:2–3). It isn’t generally understood in the West just how far-reaching Russian defence reforms have been, even though we have witnessed the results since March 2014 in Crimea, Ukraine and Syria. The military improvements are examined below, but it’s worth noting here Gressel’s conclusion that the Russian armed forces now have the ability to react quickly and strike without warning. Russia is now a military power that could overwhelm any of its neighbours if they were isolated from Western support (Gressel 2015:2).

However, it isn’t merely a matter of Russia’s improved military capabilities and training, as significant as they arguably are. The most important political factor is the role of President Vladimir Putin, who’s determined to reassert Russia’s major-power status and recover its standing in the Eurasian geopolitical space. As former British Ambassador to Russia Roderic Lyne explains, President Putin’s ‘new model Russia’ is that of an independent great power resuming its geopolitical position on its own terms (Lyne 2015:10). Lyne states that this reflects a deep sense of insecurity and a fear that Russia’s interests would be threatened if it were to lose control of its neighbourhood (2015:11). Putin speaks of Russia’s civilising mission on the Eurasian continent but he also paints a picture of Russia as a victim of the West: ‘They are constantly trying to sweep us into a corner’ and, when the USSR broke up, Russia ‘was not simply robbed, it was plundered’ (quoted in Lyne 2015:11). Putin claims the right to a sphere of strategic interest in Russia’s neighbourhood, in which Western influence and involvement would be limited. That sphere probably includes not only Crimea and Ukraine, but also Belarus, the Baltic countries, Moldova and Kazakhstan.

Putin’s Russia seems set on a path to confrontation with the West and is now challenging the established post-World War II security order in Europe. Some Russian commentators argue that the current turn away from Europe may be



more profound than in Soviet times (Karaganov 2015c). And conservative American think tanks assert that the West will need to deal with ‘an unprecedented geostrategic challenge’ for as long as Putin is in power (Aron 2015:6).

This paper analyses Russia’s geopolitical ambitions, its military modernisation, the threat it poses to the international order and how the West should respond. It estimates the prospects for the Russian economy to assess how economic weakness might affect Russian behaviour. It concludes by addressing Moscow’s strategic priorities in the Asia–Pacific region and the implications of Russia’s rise for Australia.



# CHAPTER 2

## Putin's Russia and the post-Soviet space

Putin has described the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 as the greatest catastrophe of the 20th century. Arguments still rage about whether the collapse was brought about through the arms race with the US, the ossification of communist ideology, ethnic demographic pressures, or the internal economic contradictions brought about by the dead hand of communist central planning (Laqueur 1994). Putin has recently acknowledged that the 'inefficiency of the former Soviet Union's political and economic systems was the main cause of the state's collapse' (Putin 2015:9). What's remarkable is that the disintegration of a military superpower occurred without a major war with its NATO adversaries, which is what might have been expected of a mortally wounded Soviet superpower. It isn't only Putin who regrets the demise of the USSR: many educated Russians today mourn the loss of Russia's international status. The Soviet Union was a country to be respected and feared, if not liked. President Putin plays on this by appealing to their sense of nationalism and by beating up ultranationalist sentiment over issues such as the recovery of Crimea and historical memories of 'the gathering of the Russian lands'.

In a speech given on 22 October 2015 in Sochi to the 12th annual meeting of the Valdai Discussion Club, Putin argued at length about why resisting Western dominance of the international system—particularly by America—is justified. He accused the US of promoting a model of unilateral domination, interfering in regional conflicts (especially in 'border areas' where the interests of major nations or blocs meet) and developing anti-missile defence systems in Europe aimed at changing the balance of forces in order to 'to have the opportunity to dictate their will to all' (Putin 2015:3–4). Putin also alleges that the US is developing a disarming first-strike capability, including the use of high-precision long-range conventional weapons comparable in their effects to nuclear weapons. He observes that the US has unilaterally seceded from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and accuses America of lying about the real purpose of the first test of the anti-missile defence system conducted in Europe: 'They were simply trying again to mislead us and the whole world. To put it plainly, they were lying' (Putin 2015:4).

Putin claims that America is also seeking to change the political system and government in Russia. He cites the example of the change of regime and 'coup d'état that took place in Ukraine not so long ago'. On the collapse of the former Soviet Union, Putin says rhetorically, 'Who gave this process a helping hand is another matter' (Putin 2015:10). What the Russian president is driving at here is his deep suspicion that Washington will seek his overthrow through the covert insertion into Russia of foreign ideas about democracy. He believes that the US is seeking to change the political system in Russia (Putin 2015:12). The Maidan demonstrations in Kiev in late 2013 and the overthrow of Ukrainian President Yanukovich were a personal humiliation for Putin and led to a clear and lasting change in his geopolitical outlook (Lyne 2015:7).

He claims that Russia's worried not about democracy on its borders but about NATO's military infrastructure coming ever closer (Lyne 2015). Putin suggests that when the Soviet Union collapsed there were oral assurances by NATO's then Secretary General that NATO would not expand beyond the eastern borders of the former German Democratic Republic (East Germany) (Lyne 2015:13). Now, he observes, 'we have missile defence systems right on our borders'

(Lyne 2015). Putin has proposed that the US, Russia and Europe should agree on the direction missile threats are coming from and have equal shares in the command of military countermeasures—a proposal he acknowledges has been rejected (Lyne 2015).

Putin paints a picture of Russia as a victim and target of Western attack over the centuries, with the West constantly trying to destroy it. That assertion's repeated by Nikolai Patrushev, the head of Russia's Security Council and a KGB veteran, who accuses the US of wanting Russia to cease to exist as a nation. And Sergei Naryshkin, a close Putin ally and speaker of Russia's lower house of parliament, suggests that the US is trying to goad Russia into war.<sup>2</sup> These are obsessive assertions with little basis in fact and are more a reflection of centuries of Russia's paranoia about the vulnerability of its borders and its insecurity as a nation state. Unfortunately, geopolitical perceptions historically have had a habit of leading to military conflict.

Since the Russian annexation of Crimea, the intensity and gravity of incidents involving Russian military forces have visibly increased in Europe and the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea and its attempt through military means to detach the Donbass region in the eastern part of Ukraine have to be seen as a fundamental challenge to the post-Cold War sanctity of European borders. Since the Russian annexation of Crimea, the intensity and gravity of incidents involving Russian military forces have visibly increased in Europe and the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. There have been many highly disturbing incidents involving violations of national airspace, narrowly avoided mid-air collisions, close encounters at sea, simulated attack runs with nuclear-capable aircraft and other dangerous actions on a regular basis over a very wide geographical area, including the Baltic, Black and North seas, the Arctic, and along US and Canadian borders (Frear et. al 2014).

In Syria, we saw Russia's first use of military power outside of the former Soviet security space. This was not only a successful attempt to undermine America's desultory military performance in the Middle East; it also marked Putin's reassertion of Russia's military power and his revenge for the expansion of NATO to Russia's borders. In Syria, Russia has shown that it has the military capability to employ its conventional forces beyond its borders to achieve political objectives (Campbell 2015). Syria also became a testing ground for Russia's new weaponry, tactics and strategy, including naval cruise missiles not used in combat before and fired from the Caspian Sea over 1,400 kilometres from their targets in Syria (Myers & Schmitt 2015). On 14 March 2016, President Putin announced that he was withdrawing 'the main part' of the Russian military forces that he had deployed to Syria six months previously. It's too early to know what the long-term effect of his drawdown in Syria will be, but Russia's military intervention has undoubtedly had a decisive effect and gained it a place at the negotiating table, ensuring that the US can't ignore its interests (Marten & Menon 2016). And it has reinforced Moscow's longstanding strategic stake in Syria dating back to the mid-1950s. Moreover, Moscow has the wherewithal to redeploy its forces to Syria should it choose to do so (Marten & Menon 2016).

## Russia and Syria

- Putin's use of military force from September 2015 to February 2016 to defend President Assad from anti-regime forces was the first use of Russian military force beyond the borders of the former Soviet Union since the end of the Cold War.
- The Russians demonstrated that they could mount intensive (if indiscriminate) military operations at a higher tempo than the US. By late February 2016, Russia was conducting around 60 airstrikes daily, while the American-led coalition averaged seven.
- By the time of the ordered withdrawal of its main forces in mid-March, Russia had conducted more than 9,000 airstrikes over five and a half months.
- In addition, the Russians mounted long-range cruise missile attacks on Syrian targets from their Caspian Sea flotilla some 1,400 kilometres away, as well as strikes by a submerged Kilo-class submarine.
- On 14 March 2016, Putin announced that the mission that he had set for the Russian military in Syria was 'on the whole accomplished' and ordered the withdrawal of the 'main part' of the Russian forces in Syria.
- Thus, Putin has been able to demonstrate Russia's renewed military capabilities for operations beyond its borders and secure Russia a substantial say in any international resolution of the conflict in Syria.
- Russia's use of military force in Syria is a clear demonstration of Putin's aggressive conduct of foreign policy.

## Russia's new military modernisation

The Soviet Union had the largest military forces the world has ever seen. Military strength was the basis of the USSR's existence as a superpower, and the Soviet leadership promoted the USSR as the dominant world force on that premise. As William Odom, the former head of the US National Security Agency, observes in his book about the collapse of the Soviet military, although the Soviet Union was doomed to an eventual breakdown, its fall could have been delayed for several years, perhaps decades (Odom 1998:393). Writing in 1998, he predicted that the future of Russian political development would depend critically on whether or not Moscow finally left the imperial path. He predicted that, if it returned to that path, liberal political and economic development would be imperilled by new military requirements and the repressive political measures necessary to meet them (Odom 1998:403). And that's precisely where Russia now stands: the Russian military and the security services dominate in Putin's Russian world (*ruskiy mir*).

Russia's military might disintegrated and fell into disrepair in the 20 or so years after the collapse of the Soviet state. The performance of the Russian military in Afghanistan in the late 1980s, the Chechen wars in the 1990s and the 2008 campaign in Georgia left much to be desired. As a result, the West got used to the idea that Russia was finished as a major military power. That was never true, given that Russia remained the only country capable of eliminating America with nuclear weapons. But the morale of post-Soviet Russian troops and the condition of their equipment were woeful.

However, as I observed in 2006, Russia wasn't finished as a major power and it wasn't used to having a weak military or weak leaders (Dibb 2006:78). I said that if, as appeared likely, 'a further slide towards authoritarianism and Kremlin central control is more in prospect than democracy, then assertive tendencies in Russian foreign policy will grow stronger' (Dibb 2006:83). An increasingly undemocratic domestic policy would result in increasing Russian ambivalence in its relations with the West. Russia would view the US-backed 'colour' revolutions in former

Soviet states such as Ukraine not as spreading democracy but as coups designed to advance Western influence in Moscow's backyard (Dibb 2006). I suggested that Ukraine was as likely a setting as any for the eruption of tensions between Russia and the West and predicted that beyond 2010 the West would probably face a much stronger Russia—including militarily (Dibb 2006:84–85). I thought that Russia would pursue a foreign policy that re-established Russian dominance in its neighbourhood and, if that meant clashing with NATO, it would be prepared to threaten the use of force and re-establish old understandings about spheres of influence in Europe (Dibb 2006:85). My conclusions were that, in many ways, the post-World War II Soviet Union was a status quo power, but a resurgent Russia might be more willing to contemplate disruption in order to create strategic space to re-establish itself (Dibb 2006).

Many Western observers have consistently misread Russia and the way it's driven by its geography, history and ambition.<sup>3</sup> Successive Russian/Soviet regimes have been seen as simultaneously dangerous and essentially fragile, and yet we're surprised when, once again, the Russian phoenix re-emerges from the ashes.

One of the problems here is that insufficient attention has been paid in the West to the evolution of Russian military and security thinking in the post-Cold War period, and to understanding Russia's emergent strengths and ongoing weaknesses.

One of the problems here is that insufficient attention has been paid in the West to the evolution of Russian military and security thinking in the post-Cold War period, and to understanding Russia's emergent strengths and ongoing weaknesses. A Chatham House research paper states that Western policymakers' grasp of the Russian leadership's motivations and decision-making processes, and especially in respect of military matters, has been degraded (Monaghan 2015:12). Russia's thinking about war and its military capabilities have both evolved. For instance, Russian operations in Crimea and the conflict in Ukraine feature elements of counterinsurgency, war among the people, opacity of identity and affiliation of participants, and unclear chain of command (Monaghan 2015). All these elements cause problems for the West, given its bad experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq and the challenges of building popular support for intervention in such complex scenarios. NATO's Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, Philip Breedlove, has described the Russian operations as a '21st-century offensive that builds on Soviet and Russian traditions but that incorporates new thinking and 21st-century tools' (Breedlove 2014).

The fact is that the West has been caught napping, and we need to think afresh about planning for Russia and its new security policy. Moscow will continue to challenge the Euro-Atlantic security architecture and it will aim to re-equip and restructure its armed forces, 'with the result that it is likely to be a near-peer or peer competitor in European security within five years', according to one expert (Monaghan 2015:13). Moscow has published plans to renew and reform its armed forces, including modernising 70% of its military equipment and recruiting half a million contract soldiers by 2020 (Monaghan 2015:13). Those may well be optimistic targets, given the current poor state of the Russian economy. But reaching even half of them would pose serious challenges to NATO defence planners in Europe, particularly as Putin perceives Europe as lacking the will to pay the necessary price to defend its principles.

Russia's military capabilities continue to improve rapidly despite its economic challenges. The results of these reforms are clearly visible, according to Gressel (2015:4). For example, in the Ukraine crisis the Russian army kept between 40,000 and 150,000 men in full combat-ready formations across the Russian-Ukrainian border and at the same time conducted manoeuvres in other parts of the country involving up to 80,000 service personnel (Sutyagin 2015).



Current Russian ambitions, if followed to their conclusion, will inevitably lead to a more direct confrontation with the West. Here we must recognise Russia's political will to resort to force when necessary, which seems to be entirely absent in Europe. Keir Giles argues that Moscow has successfully integrated a new concept of limited intervention and information warfare so as to bring recalcitrant neighbours to heel (Giles 2015:49). He also believes that, if Russia continues to invest heavily while Western militaries contract, it will eventually achieve its goal of once more over-matching European military power (Giles 2015:48). Others go much further than this: they talk about a coming war between Russia and the US and are more concerned about the drift of events than at any point since the end of the Cold War (Allison & Simes 2015:11). Some argue that Russia is clearly preparing itself for offensive operations and could exploit the weaknesses of its Western neighbours to achieve strategic surprise (Gressel 2015:13).

This brings us to the crucial question of the prospective use by Russia of nuclear weapons in any war in Europe. There's a new emphasis on the potential use of nuclear weapons in statements by President Putin and other officials (Russian Government 2014). Russia's thinking on nuclear warfare has become increasingly permissive. The most worrying trend is the discussion of the 'de-escalatory' use of nuclear weapons, which is a concept revolving around the use of an early limited nuclear strike to deter NATO intervention (Gressel 2015:12). The idea behind such a limited nuclear war is that Russia would seize control of the war escalation process by detonating a first strike in a preventive or pre-emptive mode, and this would force NATO to negotiate a political solution that allows Russia to hold on to its territorial gains in the event of an invasion, for example, of one of the Baltic states (Gressel 2015).

This is exactly the scenario that the Russian army rehearsed in exercises in 2009, 2013 and 2015 against Europe, requiring a rapid deployment of Russia's limited (but now high-readiness) conventional forces in offensive operations. When NATO reacts to the move, Russia would play the nuclear card to dissuade the West from engaging in a roll-back operation and force it to accept the Russian territorial gains as a *fait accompli* (Gressel 2015). Putin's statement that he was ready to put Russia's nuclear weapons on standby during the occupation of Crimea suggests that the concept of the use of nuclear weapons must be taken seriously.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the distinctive role strategic nuclear weapons play in Russian military doctrine, the use of tactical nuclear weapons is now presented within Russia as a realistic possibility and even something to be embraced (Giles 2015:43). At the least, such nuclear threats and intimidatory rhetoric are meant to have a coercive effect.

This disturbing development is addressed by Matthew Kroenig in the journal *Survival* (Kroenig 2015). He sees Russia as now having a proven military strategy of pursuing a combination of hybrid warfare and threats of early escalation to nuclear warfare. Kroenig claims this approach was employed against Georgia and Ukraine and could conceivably be repeated against a NATO alliance member (Kroenig 2015:54). Russia retains a massive conventional superiority over its smaller neighbours but not over NATO. If Russia were to attack a neighbouring NATO country in order to make territorial revisions and such a move caused NATO to invoke Article 5, Russia would then use a pre-emptive tactical nuclear strike to compel Western capitulation. That Moscow, as the conventionally inferior power, would look to the use of nuclear weapons early in a crisis isn't surprising, given that this is similar to NATO's doctrine during the Cold War, when it was outmatched by the conventional forces of the Soviet Union (Kroenig 2015:54; Sokov 2010, 2014).

Kroenig's solution to this new tactical nuclear threat from Russia is for NATO to consider the deployment in Europe of a range of tactical nuclear warheads with adjustable yields, nuclear-armed sea- and air-launched cruise missiles, and possible redeployment of nuclear gravity bombs with dual-key arrangements to Eastern European states such as Poland. To say the least, such moves would pose serious political difficulties in West European capitals and would be divisive within the alliance. Kroenig also acknowledges that forward-stationing nuclear forces in this manner would annul NATO's promise to Russia that it has no intention to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new members (2015:65).

# CHAPTER 3

## The Russian threat to international order

We live in an era when geopolitics is reasserting its place in the global order. Contrary to the optimistic prognostications after the collapse of the USSR, the world hasn't moved in any substantial way towards a broader embrace of democracy.<sup>5</sup> Great-power revisionism has now returned, and two great authoritarian powers, China and Russia, are fundamentally challenging the established international order. Both coercion and the use, or threatened use, of military power are back in vogue. Russia is seeking to carve out a sphere of influence in what it terms its 'near abroad' in Europe, and China is using coercion in the South and East China seas to assert its rising great power status. While Russia and China are very different actors, they are leagued together in their rejection of what they see as US hegemony and their view that the West has imposed on them the current international order, which must now be rewritten. We run the risk in the second decade of the 21st century of a confrontation between two new power blocs: the authoritarian continental powers of China and Russia and the Western democratic maritime states led by America.

The Russian challenge imperils security in Europe. Managing the increasing threats Russia poses to international order is now arguably the most serious issue facing the West. This is not to underestimate the challenge emanating from an economically powerful China, which also is a rising military power, but China, unlike Russia, doesn't pose an existential threat to world peace in the same way. The prospect of a strategic partnership with a liberal democratic Russia, yearned for by many in the West, 'has become remote in the face of incompatible interests and irreconcilable values' (Giles et al. 2015:vi). The Chatham House paper, *The Russian Challenge*, argues that Russian ambitions and intentions 'have been telegraphed for well over a decade, but the West found it easier at the time to disregard them and indulge in the fantasy that Russia was progressing towards a liberal democratic model with which the West felt comfortable' (Giles et al. 2015:vii). As John Besemeres states, the West has been reluctant to view Russia as an adversary (Besemeres 2015a).

The crux of Russia's challenge to Europe is Putin's determination to re-establish Russian primacy in its near abroad and to use the Russian-speaking populations in Crimea and Ukraine as an excuse for intervention and the use of force. There are significant numbers of Russian speakers also in the Baltic states, Belarus and Moldova, as well as in the Central Asian former Soviet republics—particularly Kazakhstan—so there's plenty of scope for further Russian mischief. Putin is driven by the urge to restore Russia as a great power and reverse the humiliation of the years of weakness since the collapse of the USSR. As Roderic Lyne observes, Moscow's attitude over the status of the 14 newly independent states formed out of the collapse of the Soviet Union is that those countries acquired independence accidentally rather than through a formal settlement of the post-Cold War order, are intimately linked to Russia, are to a greater or lesser extent historically part of Russia, and form Russia's security perimeter (Lyne 2015:7). From Moscow's perspective, they must therefore be recognised as within Russia's 'sphere of strategic interests' and must not be permitted to act in ways that are deemed to be contrary to Russia's vital interests. Yeltsin's Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev, warned as early as in April 1995 with regard to the Baltic countries that 'there may be cases when the use of direct military force may be needed to protect our compatriots abroad' (Lyne 2015:7). There is, therefore, significant continuity in this post-Soviet paranoia in Moscow.

Figure 1: Russia in relation to NATO



It needs to be recognised that the West has brought some—but by no means all—of this Russian overreaction onto itself. In the early 1990s, as the former Soviet Union was dramatically disintegrating, people lost their life savings, workers were often not paid for months on end, and the West did little to proffer a helping hand. As then Russian Ambassador Moiseyev in Canberra said to me: Russia needs a Marshall Plan; otherwise, you in the West will have a Weimar Republic on your hands. Then there’s the issue of the expansion of NATO to Russia’s borders. Countries like Australia that are surrounded by sea and share no common land borders find it hard to comprehend why Russia should feel threatened. The smart solution at the time would have been to find some way to try to include Russia in NATO membership while President Yeltsin was still inclined to quasi-democratic solutions internally. Now, an authoritarian Putin contemplates NATO starkly as a military threat. He speaks of it in hostile language that’s redolent of the Cold War in its drumming up of ultranationalist sentiment on the home front.

The Kremlin isn’t seeking incremental changes to the current order in Europe but aspires to create a totally new one; it sees post-Soviet borders as something to be revised—with military force, if necessary (Gressel 2015:2). Some influential Russian commentators regard the system of states and boundaries that took shape as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 as ‘illegitimate, random, unstable and therefore fraught with conflict’ (Barabanov et al. 2012:9). Sergei Karaganov (2015a) even compares NATO’s attitudes at this time with the imposition

of the Treaty of Versailles on a defeated Germany after World War I, which ‘led mankind to the Second World War in a generation’. Now, he claims, Russia is challenging this second version of the Versailles policy—‘hopefully, without a big war’. Yet, it would be irresponsible, he states, to ignore such a possibility completely. He says Russia would have been finished off in the years of its weakness but for its nuclear potential.

Some argue that one solution would be for Russia to turn to Asia while teaching the West to respect Russia’s vital interests in Ukraine.<sup>6</sup> In this worldview, Russia’s economic and political orientation has changed drastically from predominantly European to Eurasian, and this may lead to the emergence of what’s termed a ‘Community of Greater Eurasia’ in the future. Former Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov proclaims that Russia is no longer the eastern flank of the failed Greater Europe but is becoming the western flank of the emerging Greater Eurasia (Ivanov 2016a). Expectations here are based on a weakening Euro-Atlantic community and an emerging Eurasian Community centred on Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Iran and possibly India, formed around a renewed and expanded Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (Karaganov 2015b).

Many of these musings about Eurasia reflect the sort of imperial revival mentality that can be found in the writings of Igor Panarin, a former KGB analyst and now dean of the Diplomatic Academy of the Foreign Ministry, and Aleksandr Dugin, the founder of an international Eurasian movement in Russia that borders on geopolitical megalomania (Van Herpen 2014:75–87; see also Laruelle 2008). Putin himself launched a new project in October 2011 supporting the idea of Eurasia and the creation of a Eurasian Union with a core membership of Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan—in effect, aspiring to incorporate much of the former Soviet Union (Laruelle 2008:75). Most of this is a geopolitical fantasy, particularly given that such a Eurasia would be dominated by a China, which would see Russia as a junior partner in terms of its economic and political weight.

It’s in Europe where Russia can still make a difference strategically and use the advantage of its geographical proximity.

It’s in Europe where Russia can still make a difference strategically and use the advantage of its geographical proximity. Putin has spoken of Russia’s ‘civilising mission on the Eurasian continent’ and Russia’s traditional values as standing in opposition to subversive Western liberalism.<sup>7</sup> The Russian leadership’s perception is of the European Union as weak, ineffective and leaderless, with a failed economy and overwhelmed by a huge refugee problem. Vladimir Putin sees his country as facing a weakening Western adversary, and his strategy towards the West will continue to reflect a drive for greater Russian political and military assertiveness (Nixey 2015:38). Putin views European decision-making with contempt (Besemeres 2015b).

The outlook, then, is for further inevitable friction and even confrontation between Russia and the West: the natural state of international affairs for Moscow is that Russia, as a great power, should dominate its neighbourhood and dictate its governing structures (Wood 2015:54). The Kremlin’s assertion that Europe is in decline and Russia on the rise implies its belief that the conditions for a military revision of the current European international order will improve over time (Putin 2012). In the final analysis, a major military escalation on the European continent by Russia isn’t imminent, but it can’t be ruled out.



# CHAPTER 4

## How should the West respond?

The answer to this question is far from clear. Europe is preoccupied with its domestic political challenges, economic problems and the huge inflows of refugees from the Middle East. Indeed, there's increasing questioning of whether the EU project will survive. Moreover, EU and NATO members have different perceptions about how to handle a belligerent Russia: those in the east, such as the Baltic countries and Poland, are much more inclined to urge a build-up of NATO forces along Russia's borders, whereas countries such as Germany and France have a more cautious attitude, preferring to find compromises through diplomatic negotiations. America, too, has more than its fair share of foreign challenges elsewhere—from terrorism in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria to how to respond to a more assertive China in places such as the South and East China seas.

As a result, a vast number of recommended policy solutions are being proffered. At one extreme, some hold that it's time to face the threat of a new Cold War with Russia and to get NATO ready, if called upon, to fight it (Kroenig 2015:66). In this view, NATO must be prepared to repel an invasion by regular Russian forces and stand willing to use nuclear weapons in response to Russian aggression. This means planning for the deployment of a new generation of forward-stationed sub-strategic nuclear weapons and battlefield nuclear capabilities in Europe. At a less ambitious level, NATO members are discussing increasing the number of troops stationed in countries bordering Russia and putting them under formal alliance command.<sup>8</sup> Under one plan, NATO would have a battalion in Poland and each of the three Baltic States—roughly 800 to 1,000 soldiers in each unit. A more modest version would have a single NATO battalion in the area. None of these forces would be enough to stop an invasion, but the idea is that they'd be enough of a multinational tripwire to show that NATO remains committed to its mutual defence pledge in the event of conflict with Russia. Alexander Grushko, the Russian Ambassador to NATO, has said that NATO has already violated the 1994 agreement not to permanently station troops on Russia's borders.<sup>9</sup>

At the other extreme, some warn against applying Cold War models to current differences with Russia and accusing Putin of resurrecting the USSR. In this analysis, the war in Ukraine has revealed fundamental differences in how Euro-Atlantic security is understood in the West and in Russia, particularly in relation to the post-Cold War Euro-Atlantic security architecture (Monaghan 2015:5). This line of reasoning argues that deep division in how European security is understood by both sides lies at the heart of most likely future problems in the relationship (Monaghan 2015). That the West and Russia see the post-Cold War history of European security in very different terms is seen, in this view, as likely to render their positions essentially unacceptable to each other, even to the point of armed conflict.

All this precludes a more sophisticated understanding of how Russia is evolving in the 21st century. For example, military lessons of the Cold War can't be applied arbitrarily to different circumstances to develop effective policies of deterrence, since it remains unclear what deters the Russian leadership today. Russian military expansion is set to pose serious questions of Western policymakers that can't satisfactorily be answered using simplistic templates from the Cold War (Monaghan 2015:13). Instead, while we certainly need to understand the continuities in Russia

that derive from the country's Soviet inheritance, there's perhaps too much continuity of the 20th century in Western thinking about Russia (Monaghan 2015:3). All this raises the question, of course, of how to devise a policy response to a 21st century Russia that has so far avoided war but uses blatant coercion.

Sir John Sawers, the former head of MI6, has put an intriguing and different point of view. While he states that managing relations with Russia will be the defining problem in European security for years to come, he observes that we may end up with a debilitating frozen conflict in Ukraine well into the future, and that although this is a wretched outcome for Ukrainians 'it may be the least bad attainable outcome' (Norton-Taylor 2015). Sawers observes that the Ukraine crisis is no longer just about Ukraine but is now about a much bigger, more dangerous crisis between Russia and Western countries about values and order in Europe. He also warns against stepping up pressure on Putin over Ukraine and says that any change in power in the Kremlin 'may well be for the worse' (Norton-Taylor 2015).

Figure 2: Russia in relation to Ukraine and the Middle East



The latter statement is a contentious point, but Sawers isn't alone in his pragmatic attitude towards Ukraine. Both Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski have indicated that Russia should be reassured that Ukraine won't become a member of NATO. They are both, of course, geopolitical realists. Kissinger believes Ukraine should remain a buffer between US interests in Europe and the traditional Russian sphere of influence. He argues that Ukraine will always have a special characteristic in the Russian mind and that the relationship between the two can never be limited to a relationship of two sovereign states. He recommends exploring the possibility of a creating a non-military grouping on the territory between Russia and the existing frontiers of NATO (Hilbrunn 2015). Another alternative outcome, however, is Russia's continuing destabilisation of Ukraine and the effective replacement of the current pro-Western regime in Kiev with a pro-Russian one (Aron 2015:7).

One potentially crucial difference between the Cold War era and now is that the rules and understandings operating between the West and the Soviet Union no longer exist. Mechanisms for dialogue and channels of communication for managing what used to be called the central balance have fallen into disuse. They are in urgent need of repair to reduce the risks of an uncontrolled confrontation or misinterpreted actions. In this sense, the current stand-off between Russia and NATO in Europe is more dangerous and less predictable than in the Cold War. According to one Russian commentator, the risk of direct military confrontation between Russia and the US continues to grow (Ivanov 2016b).

The bottom line in all of this for the West is that the shape of the international order isn't encouraging.

The bottom line in all of this for the West is that the shape of the international order isn't encouraging. The problems that bedevil present-day relations between the West and Russia aren't simply the product of Cold War mindsets. Today's Russian state has inherited a culture derived from both Soviet and tsarist times that bears the imprint of doctrines, disciplines and habits acquired over a considerable period of time in its relations with neighbouring states (Sherr 2013:17-18). The re-emergence of Russia as an expansionist, revisionist actor on Europe's eastern borders has profound strategic consequences for Europe (Gressel 2015:13). Some Russians consider that the paths of Europe and Russia are seriously diverging and will remain so for a long time, 'probably for decades to come' (Ivanov 2016b). Russia has neither the will nor the capacity to compete with the West on a global scale these days; however, even if it can't shape the international order, it may be able to spoil it.

# CHAPTER 5

## Russia's priorities in Asia

From Australia's perspective, Russia's aims and priorities in Asia are of considerable interest. Even in the Soviet period, the USSR didn't have a major forward presence in the Asia-Pacific region. Its big handicap was its hostile relationship with China, which has now changed. The USSR had significant relations with India, to which it was a major arms supplier, and with Vietnam, which it supported in the Vietnam War and where in the 1980s it had its largest naval base outside of the Warsaw Pact area. Even so, its naval deployments in Cam Ranh Bay would have been easy targets for American (and Australian) attack submarines in the event of war. The Soviet Union was basically an autarkic power, so its trade, aid and investment in the region didn't amount to much. Although the Soviet Pacific Fleet was substantial, its primary purpose was to defend the homeland from US aircraft carrier attacks and protect its ballistic missile submarines in the Sea of Okhotsk and its approaches from hostile Western antisubmarine warfare. The demise of the USSR left the Pacific Fleet very much in disrepair and with a significant number of obsolete submarines and surface warships. Its civilian and military infrastructure in the Russian Far East suffered from a lack of investment and a rapid decline in population numbers.

As Gennady Chufirin remarked, in the 1990s Moscow paid very little attention to Asian affairs and almost everywhere in Asia receded into the background. Relations with India, Vietnam and North Korea went into decline as Russian foreign policy embarked on a strong pro-Western tilt under then Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev (Chufirin 1999:475). His replacement in 1996 by Foreign Minister, later Prime Minister, Yevgeny Primakov brought about a new foreign policy doctrine aiming to restore and develop relations with Asian countries, not as a counterbalance to the West, but as a means to promote and defend Russia's larger national interests as a Pacific power (Chufirin 1999:476). Even in greatly weakened political and strategic circumstances, Russia arguably retained a significant interest in Asian security by dint of geography, history, resource potential and strategic interests (Pollack 1999:471).

Under President Putin, we've seen a focus on the importance of a rising China on Siberia's distant eastern flank and, as mentioned above, an effort to devise a Russian Eurasian policy. Although that hasn't been very successful, the fact remains that a credible, longer term security order in Northeast Asia in particular can't be realised without Russia being included. Russia's strategic collaboration with China is based on their antipathy to the US and, increasingly, on Russia's role as a substantial future supplier of Siberian energy to China. Moscow's leaning towards Beijing has become more pronounced as Russia's tensions with Europe have risen. But, given the realities of distance, demography and outdated national infrastructure development in the Russian Far East, this places Russia at a pronounced disadvantage. It's also reflected in Moscow's peripheral involvement in key multilateral regional security institutions, such as the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Regional Forum. As Jonathan Pollack observed in the late 1990s, the forecast for Russia in Asia will remain tentative and potentially very troubled (Pollack 1999:473).

However, opinions on this subject differ quite widely. There are those who are more optimistic about Russia's Asian future. Matthew Sussex considers that what he terms 'Russia's ambitious decision to rebalance its strategic orientation towards Asia' is going relatively unnoticed but has the potential to generate significant regional effects



(Sussex 2015:1). Thus, he suggests that Russia is engaging in a large-scale military modernisation project with the intention of projecting power into Asia; its relationship with China has allegedly deepened considerably and it's looking to consolidate new and existing partnerships in the region; and it's seeking to tap its energy and resource reserves in the Far East to become a major Asian energy supplier. Sussex sees Putin's great-power vision of Russia as a Euro-Pacific actor as a means of seeking geopolitical balance and a degree of independence.

But he also recognises that there are significant obstacles to Russia's Asian pivot, including the unbalanced nature of its relationship with China and the fact that the Far East is historically underdeveloped and relatively unpopulated and has poor infrastructure (Sussex 2015:12-14). Russia's ambitions to make its Pacific Fleet into the largest of the Russian fleets remain ambitions, despite the promise by Minister of Defence General Sergei Shoigu in June 2014 that the conventional capabilities of both the Pacific Fleet and the ground and air forces in the Eastern Military District will be extensively modernised over the next five years. The fact is that Russia's forces west of the Urals are likely to continue to have the pre-eminent strategic role in relation to European contingencies. As Alexey Muraviev notes, Russia hasn't yet articulated a clear regional strategy in the Indo-Pacific, and the current posture of its armed forces east of the Urals is defensive and lacks any substantial offensive capabilities (Muraviev 2016:22-23). He concludes that Russia's return as a Pacific player is unlikely to destabilise the regional balance and acknowledges that many in Russia consider China as a future security challenge (2016:23-24).

Figure 3: Russia in relation to North Asia



### Russia and Japan

- The central impediment in Russia's relations with Japan is the two countries' disagreement over the ownership of the southern Kuril Islands, which Japan calls its 'Northern Territories'.
- Moscow and Tokyo remain far apart on this question of sovereignty, which has prevented their agreement on a post-World War II peace treaty.
- Russian favouritism towards China is reinforced by the strength of the US–Japan alliance, which has been provoked by growing Chinese military assertiveness towards Japan.
- Russia's military capability facing Japan in the Russian Far East has dwindled dramatically since the end of the Soviet Union.
- Putin has grandiose plans to make the Pacific Fleet the largest of the Russian fleets, but the weakness of the Russian economy will make that difficult.
- Japan potentially could become Russia's most natural partner in Asia. It poses no threat to Russian security and economic interests and is more technologically advanced than China (Lo 2015:150).
- However, Russia's preoccupation with Europe, its strategic convergence with China and Putin's view of the US as Russia's greatest geopolitical enemy make such a development highly unlikely.
- Japan's dependence on the US security umbrella and its fear of China also make a breakthrough in its relations with Russia highly unlikely.

### Russia's relationship with China

- Russia's engagement with Asia is dominated by its relationship with China.
- Moscow and Beijing share a common distrust of US unilateralism and a distaste for the Western dominated international order.
- China is by far Russia's largest neighbour, and the two countries share a border of more than 4,000 kilometres.
- Russia is developing important energy exports to China to reduce its reliance on the European market, but ranks only ninth among China's trading partners.
- The geopolitical dominance of China in Asia risks reducing Russia to the status of junior partner.
- For Beijing, the US is of much greater importance than Russia.
- In the long term, Russia is wary about China's intentions with regard to its latent claims on Russia's Far East territories and China's rapidly improving military capabilities.
- China also poses a long-term threat to Russian primacy in Central Asia.
- There's ambivalence and a lack of trust in Russia's relationship with China. It's been described as a fairly cynical partnership of convenience (Lo 2015:150).

A much more sceptical view, which I share, is held by former Australian diplomat Bobo Lo, who argues convincingly that geography is the foundation of a Russian foreign policy that, for all the talk about a reorientation to the East, is still fixated on the West (Lo 2015:18). Successive regimes—tsarist, communist and post-Soviet—have found it difficult to engage with Asia and overcome the prejudices and ignorance that have historically constrained Russia's approach towards Asia (Lo 2015:132). He argues that the challenges and potential threats to Russian interests posed by the rise of China are formidable—not least the issue of the relative weakness of Russia vis-a-vis China. Lo criticises the disconnect between Moscow's grandiose rhetoric about a 'turn to the East' (*povorot na vostok*) and the fact that for much of the post-Soviet era Asia has been relegated to the periphery of Russian policy. Moreover, he considers that Asian elites have a generally dismissive view of Russia's contribution to regional affairs (Lo 2015:140).

In particular, Lo characterises Russia's relationship with China as being hampered by ambivalence and a lack of trust, which results in a fairly cynical partnership of convenience (2015:150). Finally, there's the Russian Far East, which has long promised to be a gateway to Asia, including in Soviet times, but which has consistently failed because of its distance from Moscow (6,000 kilometres away) and its debilitating backwardness. Many Asians doubt Moscow's capacity and commitment to contribute meaningfully to Asia, except as an exporter of natural resources and weapons. Even in the best-case scenario, Russia will struggle to make its presence felt and gain acceptance as a legitimate and useful player in Asia (Lo 2015:162).

# CHAPTER 6

## The weakness of the Russian economy

There are, of course, legitimate points of view about the rise of Russian power different from the one taken in this paper. There's a strong argument that the weaknesses of Russia's economy and the demographic problems of its contracting population will prevent it from asserting power in the way that I've argued. There's no doubt that the recent drastic fall in oil prices and the imposition of harsh Western economic sanctions are having a serious effect on Russia. Russia's GDP contracted by 3.7% in 2015 and is expected to decline by another 1% in 2016. The rouble has fallen by 50% against the US dollar since 2014. The defence budget, which accounts for 4% of GDP, has been cut by 5% in 2016 in the biggest reduction in defence spending since Putin took office in 2000.<sup>10</sup> Even so, more than half of Russia's defence spending will fund the country's armament program, according to Deputy Defence Minister Tatiana Shevtsova, and expenditure on defence industry won't be cut, according to the deputy chairman of the Military Industrial Commission board, Oleg Bochkarev (Global Security, n.d.). It's significant that even in these economically difficult times Russia continues to substantially increase expenditure on its nuclear weapons complex and applied research in the field of defence (Global Security, n.d.).

Russia is the world's largest exporter of natural gas and oil, which account for 70% of all its exports and about half of the federal budget. The crash in world oil prices has punched a US\$19 billion hole in the government's budget, creating 'an atmosphere of extreme nervousness', Economy Minister Alexei Ulyukayev told Putin in a meeting on 26 January 2016, according to a transcript released by the Kremlin (Matlack 2016). Economists and business leaders, including some allegedly with strong Kremlin ties, are warning that Russia faces long-term stagnation and declining competitiveness (Matlack 2016). However, Russia has weathered serious crises before, including the 2008 oil price plunge and the 1998 sovereign debt default crisis, and Putin has claimed that Russia has grounds now 'for cautious optimism' in 2016 (Matlack 2016). *The Economist* takes a strongly different line and says that Russia's economic problems have moved from the acute to the chronic.<sup>11</sup>

This economic malaise has led some to predict the collapse of Russia. In a gloomy article in *Foreign Affairs*, Alexander Motyl proclaims that the Russian economy is in freefall, that the political system is disintegrating and that Putin himself is clearly past his prime (Motyl 2016). He says that Russia appears poised to enter a prolonged 'time of troubles' (as in the early 1600s) that could range from social unrest to regime change to state collapse. He acknowledges that some analysts dismiss the possibility of massive instability in Russia on the grounds that the opposition is weak, its leaders lack charisma, and Putin's popularity is high. But his conclusion is that Russia is on the edge of a perfect storm as destabilising forces converge, and that the result could be the collapse of the regime or the break-up of the state—resulting in a smaller and weaker Russia that 'might make for a more stable world'.

My view is that we can't take comfort from the fact that Russia's economy is in deepening crisis: Russians are famously resilient and hold traditional Russian beliefs in the country's exceptionalism. Moreover, as some argue, Moscow is at its most dangerous when weak (Keck 2015, Fisher 2015). In any case, Russia's current economic distress gives the Russian leadership a handy scapegoat: it can blame the West for the impact of sanctions and for the way America's drive for energy self-sufficiency through the coal seam gas and shale oil technological revolutions has undermined world oil prices. The unintended consequences of both those developments are that nationalism and statism are gaining ground in Russian policymaking (Hanson 2015:22). Russia is becoming more, not less, aggressive due to its economic weaknesses.

# CHAPTER 7

## Implications for Australia

Finally, what are the implications of all this for Australia? We need to consider carefully what our reaction would be in the event of major conflict in eastern Europe, provoked by Russia, which could involve our US ally defending one of the Baltic countries. Australia is ever-ready these days to involve itself in each and every conflict in the Middle East, so where do we stand on defending European democracies? Australia isn't a member of NATO and isn't bound by the common defence provisions of that pact. But the 2016 Defence White Paper states clearly that Australia supports a rules-based global order that's essential for our security and prosperity but that's under increasing pressure and showing signs of fragility (Australian Government 2016:44–46). Russia's refusal to act in ways consistent with international law and standards of behaviour, such as its 'coercive and aggressive actions in Ukraine', are specifically criticised (Australian Government 2016:46). I'm not arguing here that we should earmark elements of the ADF for possible combat in Europe in the event that Russia attacks—for example—one of the Baltic countries. But we do need to think through what our response would be, if any. We've been willing in the recent past to contribute to NATO operations to address shared challenges, including in Afghanistan. The question here is: would the interests of NATO members and Australia align sufficiently in the event of a Russian attack against a NATO country? The 2016 Defence White Paper proclaims that 'Australia has the responsibility *and the capability* to respond to threats to the rules-based global order' (Australian Government 2016:77; emphasis added).

In addition to the above, our policy needs to consider the following defence challenges closer to home arising from a militarily assertive Russia.

First, Moscow is testing US extended deterrence and its ability to counter military coercion. How things work out in Europe will affect Washington's ability to reassure allies and partners everywhere, including those in our region who must contend with increasing coercion by China.

Second, a Russia that's willing to use military force around its periphery, especially in Europe, will occupy more US time and attention. This, combined with Middle Eastern security, will further distract the US from its rebalance to the Asia-Pacific area. China will take advantage of this, and allies and partners of the US in the region—including Australia—would be subject to further uncertainty about American military commitments to Asia.

Third, Russia's aggressive military behaviour makes China's creeping and insidious incrementalism in places such as the South China Sea harder to counter because both Moscow and Beijing will be seen as getting away with it.

Fourth, as a result of Western sanctions Moscow will be more determined to sell advanced military equipment and technology to China, including submarines, fighter aircraft and air defence systems. This will add to China's efforts to challenge US military superiority in the region and will further undermine any ADF technological advantage. This is a matter of direct defence policy concern to Australia.



Fifth, the West will no longer be able to count on Russian support for nuclear nonproliferation policies or policies to prevent the transfer of sensitive conventional weapons and technologies, or in regional conflicts involving Russia's friends, such as North Korea.

Sixth, Moscow won't be interested in any nuclear arms control agreements that limit its nuclear war fighting capabilities, given their increasing prominence in Russia's new military doctrine.

Finally, it would be futile to believe that a more cooperative Russian approach towards the West over Syria will change Putin's geopolitical ambitions in Europe.

For Australia, all this points to taking the Russian threat more seriously and being better informed about developments in Russia.

For Australia, all this points to taking the Russian threat more seriously and being better informed about developments in Russia. Our current security priorities focus on terrorism in the Middle East and the rise of China, as if nothing else is of national security concern. For us in the West, a new era of confrontation with a heavily armed and belligerent Russia will introduce tensions into the international system that at the least will be extremely destabilising and, at worst, might well return us to the geopolitical brinkmanship and dangers of the Cold War.

# APPENDIX 1

## Russia's cyber capabilities

Cyberspace has developed into a critical component in modern conflict. Russia conceptualises cyber conflict through the lens of information warfare, which it perceives as a powerful tool by itself or in combination with other tools of national power to coerce adversaries and project power. It provides a mechanism to attack an opponent politically and militarily at a low cost, without needing to control terrain.

### Russia's doctrine and policy

Russia sees cyberspace as 'information space'—a domain for the production, dissemination and storage of information. Russia's first explicit statement on its military approach to cyberspace was the 'Conceptual View of the Activity of the Russian Federation Armed Forces in Information Space'. In this 'proto-doctrine' and elsewhere, Russia has identified cyber conflict as information war, in which information systems, activity and capabilities are negatively affected for the purpose of destabilising the adversary's political, economic and social system.

Russia observed the significance of information warfare in the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, published in Spring 2010, and by extension indicated how it sees the role of cyber capability in warfare as a way of diminishing an opponent's command and control capabilities. At the political level, Russia sees information warfare as method for creating a positive image of Russia and its activities in its domestic and transnational population, or for creating significant doubt about the veracity of adversary messaging by producing counter-narratives sympathetic to Russian perspectives. The doctrine acknowledged the 'intensification of the role of information warfare' and prioritised the development of forces and the allocation of resources for information warfare. To that end, the Russian armed forces appear to have integrated offensive cyber capabilities into military operations.

The flow of information, particularly about political and social features, is a central national security and stability concern for Russia. This perspective has influenced its perception of cyberspace and cyber conflict in a manner that differentiates it from its Western contemporaries. Russia sees information as a valuable resource that demands security at all times. The strategic value of information protection was highlighted in the information security doctrine released by Russia in 2000, which stressed that it was not only vital for the homeostasis of the state but also for the regime and the autocracy.

### Organisation structure and personnel

Russia has been developing one of the world's most competent cyber forces, with little public aggrandising. There's minimal information detailing the chain of command for its cyber personnel. While the primary authority for coordinating cyber operations is thought to be the Federal Security Service, the Russian Ministry of Defence is believed to be creating a cyber command. The Federal Protective Service, the Main Intelligence Directorate, the Foreign Intelligence Service and the Computer Security Incident Response Team of the Russian Federation are

also known to contribute to developing Russian offensive and defensive cyber capabilities. Special units within the Russian armed forces, like the signals troops and radio-electronic combat units, also work to control electronic warfare capabilities in the tactical and operational echelons.

The Russian Government is also known to be associated with criminal gangs, though not officially connected to them. It exploits such groups and is able to deny its connection to attacks, given the difficulty of linking such events back to the Russian administration.

## Targets

Russia has undertaken cyber operations mainly against former Soviet states. Cyber assaults against Estonia were predominantly distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, which flooded the resources/bandwidth of government, financial and media services in 2007. This attack demonstrated a broader view of cyber capabilities as a coercive tool—rather than being solely focused on information effects, it also disrupted civil society by preventing access to funds, news and government services.

In the 2008 Russo-Georgian war, Russia launched cyber operations before its conventional offensive. DDoS and kinetic cyberattacks (cyberattacks that indirectly or directly cause physical harm via the manipulation of susceptible information systems and procedures) effectively disrupted the Georgian information infrastructure. While there's no definitive information linking the Russian Government to cyber operations in either Estonia and Georgia, the former were the first officially and openly acknowledged cyberattacks against a nation using DDoS and large-scale botnets by nationalistic members of the public.

More recently, Russia is believed to have used cyberattacks in 2015 to exert pressure on Ukraine by shutting down the electrical grid in the west of the country for several hours. In July 2015, cyberattacks thought to originate in Russia harassed the US Government. This included hackers successfully obtaining sensitive information from the White House and interrupting the Defense Department's email system.

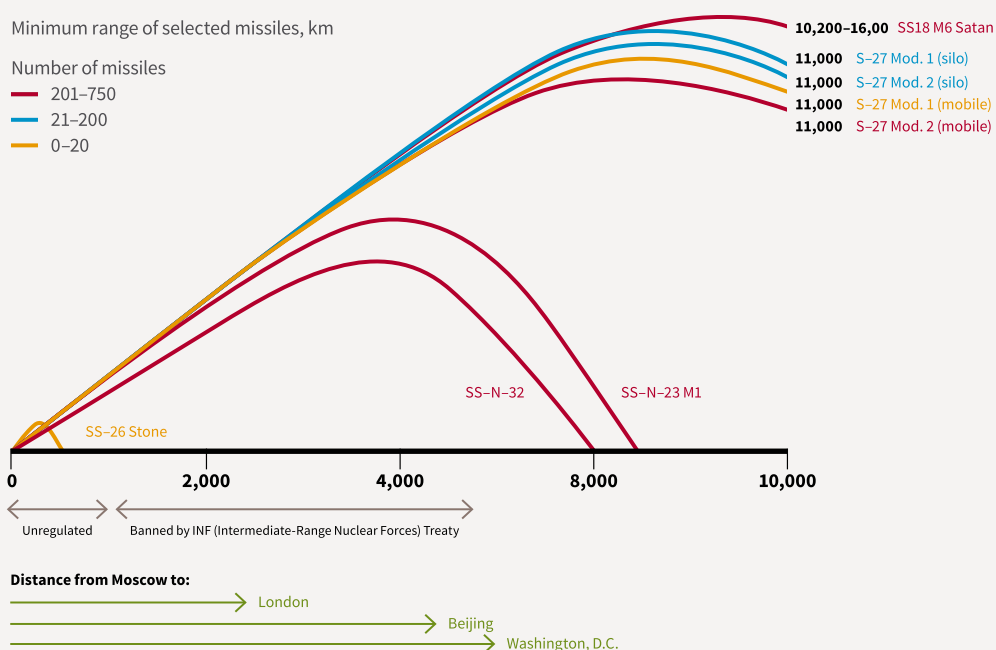
# APPENDIX 2

## Russia and emerging weapons

### Missile technology

- In 2014, Russia reiterated its plan to test new **hypersonic** weapons by 2020. Open press accounts reveal China and Russia are attempting to advance the hypersonic systems—more designing, prototyping, testing and investing in new facilities, as well as establishing an educated cadre of young aerospace engineering professionals who will form the future human capital infrastructure.
- In December 2015, documents were made public by the House Armed Services Committee that outlined how French defence company MBDA Missile Systems and ONERA, the French national aerospace research centre, are working with Raduga, a Russian missile manufacturer, and Rosoboronoexport, the Russian state arms company, to develop a **hypersonic missile** capable of reaching speeds of Mach 4 to Mach 8 (3,069–6,138 miles/hour).
- The current **hypersonic** project is reportedly known as Project 4202—six hypersonic glider tests since 2001; the latest (dubbed **Yu-71**) was tested in June 2015 and April 2016.

Figure 4: Ranges of selected Russian missile systems



- There have been reports that Russia is developing weapons that can carry both conventional **hypersonic** and **nuclear warheads** (this has not been confirmed).
- A *Jane's Intelligence Review* report said Russia could deploy up to 24 **nuclear-capable Yu-71** payloads between 2020 and 2025 and are expected to develop the **Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missile** in that time, which could be used to carry the new hypersonic device.
- **Novator 3M-54 Klub supersonic terminal-stage ASCMs** and **Zvezda Kh-31 supersonic anti-radar/anti-ship missiles** are in use—the Russians have used the cruise missile variant of this missile to attack Syria from the Caspian Sea a few months ago. A number of varieties of this missile have been in service since the 1980s.

## Aerial

- There are rumours that the PAK-DA fifth-generation long-range bomber (equipped with stealth capabilities) could be equipped with hypersonic weapons (questionable, they may have designed one, but it is unlikely that it will be built). Reports indicate Russia is updating their older Soviet-era TU-160M bombers in the meantime.
- PAK-FA next-generation fighter—Russia hopes to start regular production of the 5G with the first places coming in 2017. Russia's Air Force Commander-in-Chief said the PAK-FA's operational engine will be ready for testing next year and is likely to go into production in 2018. Currently, it is powered by two AL-41F1 engines which enable it to fly at a supersonic cruise speed, have a 2,600km/hour top speed, and a range of 5,500km. The next-stage engine, currently dubbed 'Type 30' is expected to have better speed and fuel economy.

## Maritime

- Reports of new unmanned underwater drone submarine capable of delivering a nuclear warhead over long distances (sceptical). Pentagon has called the drone submarine Kanyon; Russia calls it the Status-6 system. According to Russian sources the nuclear UUV could dive as deep as 3,280 feet and travel up to 56 knots with a range of 6,200 miles. This was allegedly revealed when President Putin met with military chiefs in Sochi in November 2015.

## Land

- According to a top Russian defence industry executive, the Armata T-14 main battle tank is already in serial production—Western allies had presumed it was still in its development stage.

## Electronic warfare

- Sources have confirmed the existence of Khibiny—electronic warfare capability—an aircraft-mounted Russian EW system with the capability to jam radar-based weapons. There is debate over whether it could actually disable Aegis radar.
- Use of radio frequency directed-energy weapons—the development of HPRF generators such as various types of gyrotrons and klystron amplifiers.
- Laser directed-energy weapons—Russia has significant capabilities in most areas of laser technology and special capabilities in free electron laser (FEL) and other high-energy lasers (HELs).
- Russian military claims they have created a 'microwave gun' capable of disabling drones and warheads in airborne projectiles—a new system which is equipped with a high-power relativistic generator and reflector antenna, management and control system, and a transmission system, which is fixed on the chassis of BUK surface-to-air missile systems. Can also disrupt radio frequencies and 'deactivate equipment' of low-flying planes. Has a range of 10km and can be fired in any direction.



# APPENDIX 3

## Recent incidents between Russia and the West

Date	Location	Incident description
29 April 2016	Baltic Sea	Russian fighter plane performs barrel roll near a USAF reconnaissance plane in international airspace over the Baltic Sea. Moscow claimed the American plane did not have its transponder turned on. USAF denied this claim.
21 April 2016	Bering Sea	USN P-8 Maritime Patrol reconnaissance aircraft flying a routine mission in international airspace intercepted by a MiG-31 Russian jet near the Kamchatka Peninsula.
14 April 2016	Baltic Sea	Russian warplane (SU-27) intercepted an American reconnaissance plane (RC-135) over the Baltic Sea at what US officials claimed was an unsafe distance—Pentagon protests.
11 April 2016	Baltic Sea	Russian jet buzzed an American guided missile destroyer, the USS <i>Donald Cook</i> . Russia accused the US of sailing too close to Russia's border in the Baltic. The following day, a Russian jet came within just 30 feet of the destroyer.
24 November 2015	Turkey	A Turkish F-16 jet downed Russian Su-24 aircraft that violated Turkish airspace (up to a depth of 2.19km for 17 seconds). One pilot killed.
3–4 October 2015	Turkey	Turkish F-16 jets intercepted Russian Su-30 and Su-25 fighters in Turkish airspace (in the Hatay region).
Early March 2015	Black Sea	Russian fighter bombers accused of using NATO warships in the Black Sea to practice attack scenarios.
12 December 2014	Sweden	Russian military aircraft, flying without transponders, flies within close proximity of a commercial carrier south of Malmo, Sweden, narrowly avoiding a collision.
14–20 November 2014	Coral Sea	Russian Pacific flagship missile cruiser <i>Varyag</i> , <i>Marshal Shaposhnikov</i> (destroyer), <i>Yaruslow Mudry</i> (frigate) and <i>Boris Botuma</i> (supply ship) tracked in international waters off Brisbane ahead of the G20 meeting.
28–30 October 2014	North Sea, Black Sea & Baltic Sea	Russia conducted a major air exercise in the North Sea, Black Sea and Baltic Sea, including a large formation of Russian fighters and bombers conducting missions over the Baltic Sea (in international airspace).
17–27 October 2014	Sweden	Major submarine hunt by Swedish authorities prompted by credible intelligence reports of 'underwater activity' in the Stockholm archipelago. Russia issued denial, but Swedes believe at least one unidentified vessel involved.
3 October 2014	Baltic Sea	Russian fighter flew 'within metres' of Swedish surveillance aircraft.
19 September 2014	Barents Sea	Russian officers detained a Lithuanian shipping vessel in international waters.
17 September 2014	Sweden	Two Russian Su-24 bombers intentionally violated Swedish airspace south of Oland.
7 September 2014	Black Sea	HMCS <i>Toronto</i> buzzed by a Russian aircraft which came within 300m of the warship.
Early September 2014	Labrador Sea	Russian strategic bomber practiced cruise missile strikes (stayed outside Canada's ADIZ).

5 September 2014	Estonia	Estonian security service operative abducted by Russian agents at Estonian border post—later taken to Moscow and accused of espionage.
18 July 2014	Kaliningrad	American surveillance plane conducting operations near Kaliningrad chased into Swedish airspace after being approach by Russian fighters.
17 July 2014	Ukraine	MH17 commercial plane scheduled from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur crashed after being shot down, crashing near Torez in Donetsk Oblast—283 passengers and 15 crew killed.
16 July 2014	Gotland and Latvia	Armed Russian aircraft intercepted a Swedish surveillance plane conducting operations between Gotland and Latvia in international airspace, flew within 10m of plane.
June 2014	Denmark	Armed Russian aircraft approached heavily populated island of Bornholm before breaking off what appeared to be a simulated attack.
23 April 2014	Sea of Okhotsk	Armed Russian fighter undertook threatening manoeuvres in the vicinity of American reconnaissance aircraft.
12 April 2014	Black Sea	Unarmed Russian fighter made 12 passes at American warship USS <i>Donald Cook</i> .
3 March 2014	Sweden	Close encounter between an SAS passenger plane (with 132 passengers) taking off from Copenhagen to Rome and a Russian reconnaissance aircraft that did not transmit its position—50 miles SE of Malmö.
28–29 April 2013	Alaska	Two Bear H nuclear-capable bombers detected flying into US military's Alaska ADIZ near the Aleutians and Alaska's North Slope region by the Arctic and Chukchi Seas—did not enter US airspace.
11 February 2013	Guam	Two Tu-95 Bear-H bombers circled Guam.
7 February 2013	Sea of Japan	Two Su-27 Russian planes violated Japanese airspace, above territorial waters off Rishiri island in Hokkaido—Japanese F-2 fighter jets scrambled.
4 July 2012	USA	Two Bear-H bombers flew close to the North Californian Coast (closest Russian aircraft had flown to US since the Cold War).
June 2012	Alaska	Russian strategic bombers intercepted off Alaska during large-scale nuclear exercise that Russian military officials say involved practice strikes against US missile defence sites in Alaska.
6 December 2010	Sea of Japan & Noto Peninsula	Two 'submarine hunter' Ilyushin-38 jets from Russia's Pacific Fleet circled the biggest joint US–Japanese military exercise in history for several hours in an apparent attempt to gather intelligence.
28 July 2010	Canada	Two CF-18s intercepted two Russian Tu-95 long-range bombers about 463km east of Goose Bay, NL. Planes did not enter Canadian airspace but did come inside the 300 nautical mile zone Canada claims.

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# NOTES

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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADF	Australian Defence Force
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
EU	European Union
GDP	gross domestic product
KGB	Committee for State Security (USSR)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

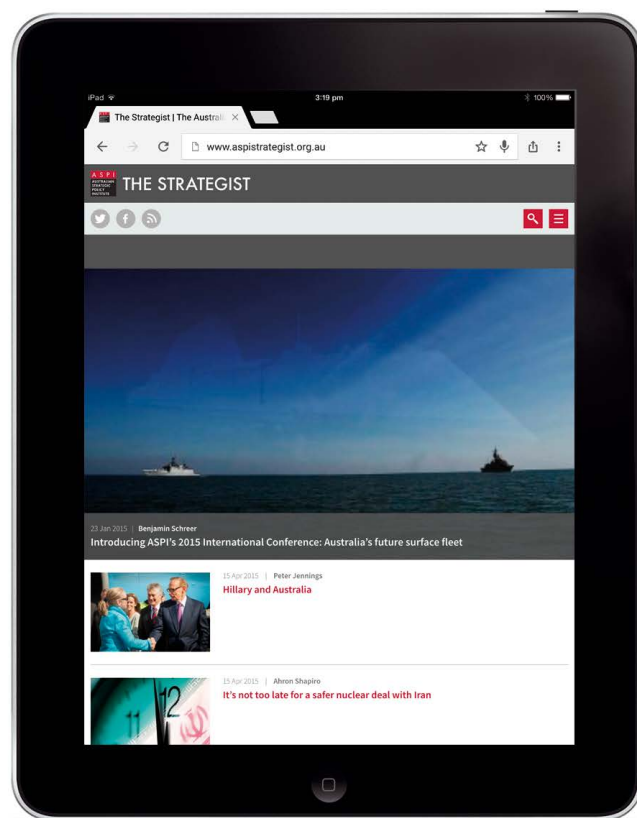
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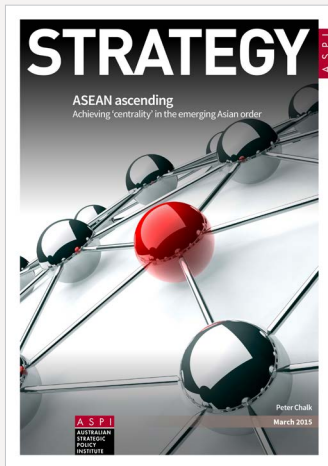
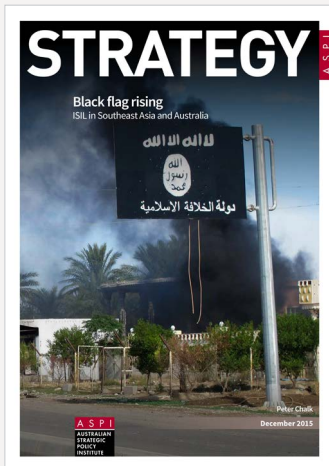
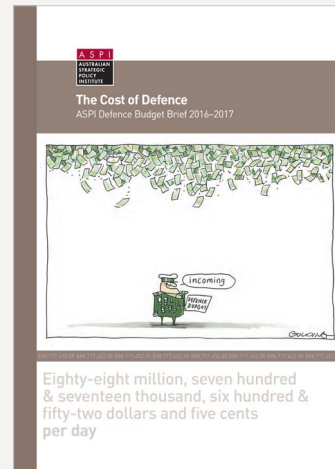
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## Why Russia is a threat to the international order

Almost a quarter of a century after the demise of the USSR, Russia is back on the world stage and in a familiar, threatening manner. Some are describing the resurgence of Russia as a return to a new Cold War; others are predicting a coming war with Russia, others that we're already in a Cold War. What are we to make of all these serious and disturbing allegations? There can be no doubt that Putin's Russia is now seeking to reassert itself as a major power. It seems set on a path to confrontation with the West and is now challenging the established post-World War II security order in Europe.

This paper analyses Russia's geopolitical ambitions, its military modernisation, the threat it poses to the international order and how the West should respond. It estimates the prospects for the Russian economy to assess how economic weakness might affect Russian behaviour. It concludes by addressing Moscow's strategic priorities in the Asia-Pacific region and the implications of Russia's rise for Australia.