

## Russia- Shifting the balance of power (first published in 2015)



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Edit

Editorial note 2019, since this was first published in 2015 Russia, China, Iran and to a certain extent NK continue to shift the balance of political power and influence to their advantage.

President Vladimir Putin is 'old school' KGB and his approach to international politics include the use of Soviet era tactics such as political warfare – propaganda, disinformation, subversion, espionage and clandestine warfare. His knowledge and willingness to use KGB-style subterfuge became apparent after using the 'little green men' approach as a prerequisite for Russia's proxy-war against Ukraine.

Putin's restructuring of Russia's Spetnaz Forces, Independent Airborne Brigades (VDV) and naval Infantry (marines) made them independent of the Ministry of Defense and become military assets of the FSB/GRU. This army within the army provides the deniable 'little green men' for Putin's foreign clandestine operations.

he frequently calls 'historical wrongs' and 'historical injustices', we must look at Russia within a global context to glean some idea of Putin's long-term objectives.

According to the US diplomat, Charles Hill, "... The established world order [is] collapsing and Russia will grab what they see as their own interests" (Moscow Times 27 April 2015)

Since the so-called Arab Spring of 2011, American influence in the Middle East greatly declined and left a power vacuum which Putin was quick to exploit. Apart from renewed Russian influence throughout the Middle East, Putin is also influential in Latin America and the Mediterranean. Russia's close military cooperation with China and Iran has also boosted Putin's reputation as a global leader.

Putin's initiatives appear to be a return to Cold War politics and the projection of Russian military power.

### The Middle East

Amidst the shifting uncertainties of the post-Arab spring, Russia has greatly increased its political influence throughout the region. We have also seen Russian delegations being awarded lucrative arms contracts throughout the Arab world and North Africa.

Syria: Russia, with the assistance of Iran, continue to arm the Syrian regime against the onslaught of various rebel factions.

After the Free Syrian Army seized a government position they allegedly found documents and photographs showing the presence of a small detachment of Russian Spetnaz and a GRU Sigt team.

Although these claims are difficult to confirm, rebel forces released the following statement:

"On the 5th of October 2014, the Free Syrian Army captured the *Illesmp C or 'Center C or Center S' SIGINT (Signals Intelligence) facility* (logo on top) jointly operated by the Russian *OsnaZ GRU radio electronic intelligence agency* (logo on the right) and one of the Syrian Intelligence Agencies (logo on the left). Situated near *Al Hara*, the facility was of vital importance for the Assad regime as it was responsible for recording and decryption of radio communications from every rebel group operating inside Syria, making it likely the Russian-gathered information at this facility was at least partially responsible for the series of killings of rebel leaders by airstrikes. A directive issued by the surveillance office on May 31 to eavesdrop and record all radio communications of the terrorist groups, directive signed by brigadier-general *Nazir Faddah*, commander of the first center." (The Interpreter 7 October 2014)

Although verification is still required, this facility may account for the accuracy of government air strikes against rebel leaders.

### Iran

In April Russia signed an energy deal worth an estimated \$8 to 10 billion (US). Russia will export 500 megawatts of electricity and construct new thermal and hydroelectric generating plants and transmission networks.

Russia has also provided Iran with the necessary designs and expertise to develop their own arms industry.

In 2011 Vyacheslav Danilenko, a Russian atomic scientist, was said to be a key adviser at Iran's Physics Research Center, which had ties to the country's nuclear program. It has further been claimed his work was backed by the Kremlin and Iran now has the explosive element for their warhead.

On 7 November 2011, after Israel expressed concerns over Iran's nuclear ambitions, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavov publicly declared, "If Israel were to launch a military strike on Iran this would be a very serious mistake...With unprecedented consequences..." (Telegraph 7 November 2011)

After Russia recently signed an \$800 million contract to supply Iran with S-300 long range air defense missiles, any Iranian agreement to stop the development of nuclear weapons will be difficult to enforce.

### Iraq

Russia is Iraq's second largest arms supplier. For instance, in 2012 Russian supplied £ 2.6 billion (3.2 billion euros, \$4.2 billion) of armaments.

### Egypt

Since the Egyptian military deposed the elected President Morsi, Russia is welcomes as their main arms supplier.

### Latin America

Russia's continued success in reshaping the balance of power and increasing its global influence is also visible in Latin America. During the Cold War, American politicians would regard this as being too close for comfort and take steps to maintain US interests in their own 'backyard'. As Putin continues to take every opportunity to condemn America, his interests and future initiatives in Latin America could be problematic for the United States.

According to Putin, "Cooperation with Latin America is key to Russia's foreign policy"(RT 10 July 2014)

Putin also said "...Latin America's fight to independence, for the right to decide its own fate is respected in our country. People know well the legendary Bolivar and Marti, Che Guevara and Salvador Allende..." (RT 10 July 2014)

Putin also announced that not only was cooperation with Latin America one of his 'key and very promising lines of Russian foreign policy', it reflected vital national interests in the development of relations with Russia. (RT 10 July 2014)



### Argentina

In July 2014, President Christina Fernandez da Kirchner visited Moscow. During a banquet President Putin made reference to the Falkland Islands which Argentina claims sovereignty over.

According to Putin, "Colonization is a dark cloud over the 20th and 19th century and something that should be wiped out". No mention was made of the Falkland Islands being under British rule since 1863, or a recent Falklands referendum where the Islanders voted in favour of remaining British.

After a strategic partnership agreement was signed which may include Argentina receiving 12 Sukhoi Su-24 aircraft, the British government was forced to deliver additional military assets to the Islands.

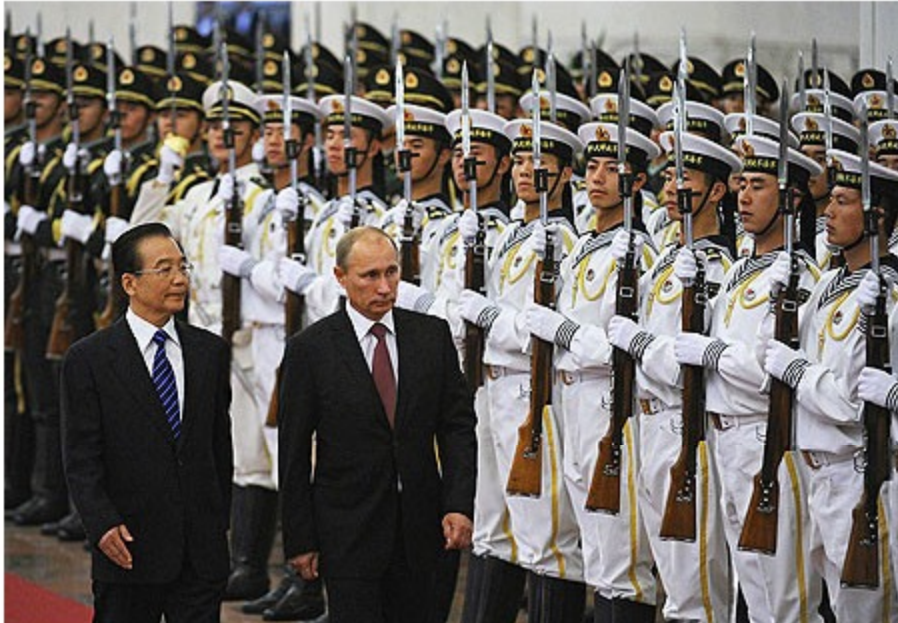
### Cyprus

According to Russian state controlled media, but denied by some Cypriot politicians, Russia is currently negotiating an agreement to allow their navy to use ports in Cyprus and to station aircraft on the Island. As Britain has two *covert* military bases on the island, *RAF Akrotiri* and the *Dhekelia Garrison*, additional resources will be required to provide adequate protection to these major military assets.

### North Korea

According to the South Korean newspaper, The Korean Herald, the North's official news agency, KNCA, recently announced it will be developing cultural and business contacts with Russia.

### China



Although several observers continue to say, historically Russia and China have never got on and described their new relationship as an axis of

'perceived' common enemies.

Vladimir Putin and China's president Xi Jinping are strong leaders with aspirations to recapture past glories, and both believe their countries were unfairly treated in the past. They also resent the current international order which they believe is led by the United States. Furthermore, both regard their nations as imperial powers which have the right to expand their territory.

Chinese foreign policy has a strong commitment to be masters over the East China Sea. Xi Jinping remains adamant that around 1.35 million square miles (3.5 million square km) of the South China Sea belong to China and this is hotly disputed by Japan, Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, Brunei, and Vietnam.

In 2014, China hosted a large military exercise with Russia and other SCO nations. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) consists of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

This military exercise, names 'Peace Mission 2014', included a Russian contingent of over 1000 troops, the 36th Motor Rifle Brigade from the Eastern Military District; an air wing of the Third Command of the air force and air defense troops. According to Kremlin controlled news organisations, Russia also contributed 13 main T-72 tanks, 20 artillery and

helicopters gunships, 4 Sukhoi Su-25 aircraft and 12 military transport aircraft. According to official Russian and Chinese sources, this exercise was designed to coordinate counter-terrorist operations.

China recently announced a joint naval exercise with Russia which is said "to deepen both countries friendly and practical cooperation and increase our navy's ability to jointly deal with maritime security threats". (Moscow Times 27 April 2015)

A key question is whether this alliance is against the United States and her allies?

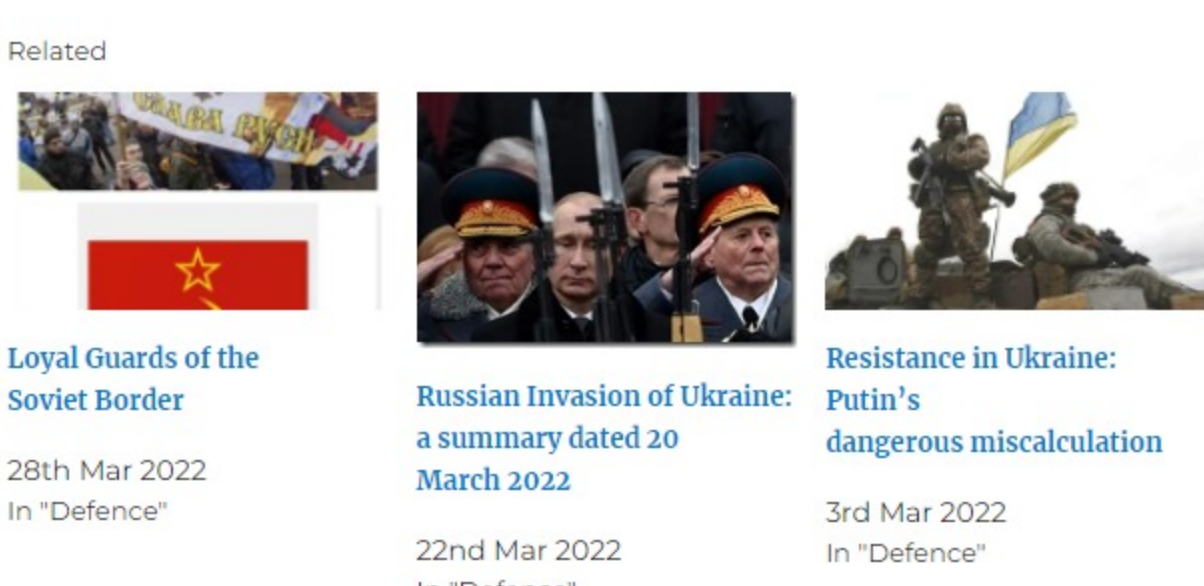
Vladimir Putin continues to outperform western political leaders, resulting in the gradual shift of power and prestige towards Russia. Apart from western nations needing to increase their defense budgets, the west urgently requires strong political leaders who have the determination and political skills which are essential for addressing Soviet 'old school' tactics based on threats, intimidation, subterfuge and military aggression.

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pluspensequidre

12th Mar 2022 at 10:25 am / Edit

Perhaps Volodymyr Zelensky is providing the leadership example ... the 'what good looks like' for western politicians? Certainly a profound change in the selective pressures which source them is required. A greater codification and communication of that to the populace's collective consciousness the solution?

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