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No Victory Without Movement: The Crimean Crisis In The Context of Russian Military Strategy

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NO VICTORY WITHOUT MOVEMENT: THE CRIMEAN CRISIS IN THE
CONTEXT OF RUSSIAN MILITARY STRATEGY

AN ALL-COLLEGE THESIS

College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University

In Partial Fulfillment
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By

Daniel T. Eggert

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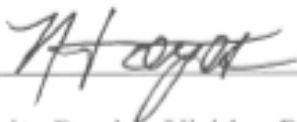
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Abstract

What factors influence the development of a state's military strategy? The study of military strategy has focused primarily on institutional constraints imposed by state apparatuses, material and ideational changes in military organization, and the sharing of knowledge and practices through formal alliances. To clarify the determinants of military strategy in a modern context, I examine two critical variables derived from the literature, namely civil-military relations and learning processes. Applying these theoretical explanations to the 2014 Crimean intervention yields insight into the relationship between Russian civil society and its military establishment, and the methodological systems employed by Russian military planners to reduce uncertainty about proper strategy selection. The results of the data analysis show that strong civilian control over the military does not necessarily lead to defensive strategies and that military planners evaluate both internal and vicarious experiences to formulate new and improved strategies.

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A project of this magnitude exacts a physical, mental, and emotional toll over the course of an academic year. I could not have succeeded without the love and constant support of my parents. They taught me the value of a strong work ethic and how to persevere in the face of adversity. The fulfillment of this thesis and my college career belongs to them. I am also indebted to Professor Christi Siver whose mentoring enabled me to improve my writing and research skills. Her willingness to copyedit my thesis on several occasions over the past year helped me craft a much better final product. I must also thank Professor Colin Hannigan and Professor Nick Hayes for reviewing numerous drafts of my thesis and providing integral feedback on the content and presentation of my ideas. Finally, I would like to congratulate and thank my friend Jordan Gemilere for having my back and suffering with me through the intensive writing process.

I. Introduction:

Military strategy occupies a central nexus in the study of international relations. For centuries, generals, leaders of state, and historians have all sought to understand the practice of warfare through a careful study of military strategy. Critical insights into strategy have been among the most prized possessions a nation could acquire, facilitating the continued survival of the state and perhaps permitting a bid for an empire. The study of military strategy traces back at least to Sun Tzu, a fifth-century Chinese military general and scholar whose treatise, *The Art of War*, canonized the aphorism “all warfare is based on deception.”¹ He stressed psychological and stealth warfare to subdue enemies without fighting them.² During a period when vast armies of men would meet on distant fields and engage in ferocious fighting, the use of deception and disinformation campaigns to degrade the offensive capabilities of opposing forces was a novel concept. The change in the meaning of strategy over time has been basically one of scope as the nature of war and the shape of society evolve along political, technical, and economic lines.

The advent of new technologies has enabled theoreticians to build on previous iterations of military strategy and adapt them to contemporary combat situations. The inclusion of mechanized forces, such as battle tanks and motorized infantry regiments, into strategic calculations allowed German General Heinz Guderian to pioneer a new method of warfare. An attacking force, spearheaded by a dense concentration of armored and motorized infantry formations, broke through the opponent’s line of defense and dislocated the defenders using speed and surprise.³ In the early stages of World War Two, Blitzkrieg (“lightning war”) brought about the swift defeat of the Polish and French armies in just under a year. Technical superiority

¹ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Translated by S. B. Griffith, (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 66.

² *Ibid.*, 105.

³ For information on the origins and development of Blitzkrieg warfare consider, Heinz Guderian, *Panzer Leader*, Translated by C. Fitzgibbon, (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1952).

facilitates unity of command and the pursuit of established objectives, but the ability to use all forces effectively requires broader strategic considerations relating to the quality and location of enemy forces.

An examination of military strategies over time demonstrates that the concept is constantly adapting to changing conditions. Advanced technologies in the realm of information security, the use of armed civilian proxies, and digitalized propaganda and deception mediums have provided new context and theory for understanding unconventional warfare. More specifically, in place of declared wars, strict delineation of military and nonmilitary efforts, and large conventional forces fighting climactic battles, modern conflict instead features undeclared wars, hybrid operations combining military and nonmilitary activities, and smaller precision-based forces. The operationalization of these strategic initiatives allows states to erode the capabilities of an adversary without risking direct confrontation. Through an analysis of the 2014 Crimean intervention, I contribute to the debate on the interrelation of military and nonmilitary activities, while addressing the continuing discussion on the feasibility of a hybrid warfare doctrine. If the methods by which states craft strategies exhibit a noticeable reliance on covert military means, then the scholarly community may need to revise traditional typologies of behavior to account for modern approaches. Ultimately, the research in this study will center on the following question: what factors influence the development of a state's military strategy?

Russian military operations in the Ukrainian territory of Crimea provide a contemporary perspective on the strategic imperatives that guide warfighting capability. Because countries subsist in an environment where internal and external threats to security are both common and ever-present, the effectiveness of their coercive arms becomes the ultimate measure of power. The theoretical puzzle thus lies in determining the strategic directives guiding the deployment of

military capabilities against all adversaries. Through a fusion of traditional forms of military interference and nonmilitary methods, such as information warfare, the Russian campaign brought about the first forced transfer of territory in Europe since 1945. Avoiding mass armed violence and a preemptive response from Western nations further solidifies Russia's bold move as an effective strategic calculation. I aim to explore the factors that influence the development of a state's military strategy through a systematic examination of the 2014 Crimean case.

I begin by evaluating the relevant literature on military strategy. Organizing scholars' findings into a single, comprehensible analytical structure is crucial for establishing a solid logical foundation from which to study continued innovation in military strategy. Possible explanations for innovation include civil-military relations and strategic threats. A third variable gathering significant attention in the literature is alliance structures. However, due to the absence of a binding partnership between Russia and Ukraine with provisions for coordinated military action, I treat alliance structures as an omitted variable. Scholarly content within the literature focuses primarily on domestic political attributes, such as regime type, distribution of power between civilian and military leaders, and internal stability. A separate group of studies examine state reactions to outside developments, such as wars fought between other states, past battlefield experiences, and geographical terrain. Scholars propose that successes and failures in previous conflicts engender an intricate learning process whereby states use past outcomes to formulate new military strategies. Following this section, I present my research design, including the operationalization of dependent and independent variables, proposed hypotheses, a discussion of my research methodology and the case selection, and measurements and sources for data collection. This research design acts as a gateway to the assessment of collected data and a

presentation of findings. Finally, I conclude by discussing any limitations to the findings and possible avenues for future research on military strategy development.

II. Literature Review:

Introduction

Decision-making theories at the individual, domestic, and systemic levels of analysis use military strategy as a dependent variable, recognizing the centrality of military strategy choice to policy and politics. A cluster of arguments posits that choices about military strategy are mediated by domestic institutions; the orientations of political entities⁴, the relationship between the citizenry and military organizations in a state⁵, and the fragility of governing structures⁶ are all examined by scholars framing their analyses through state-level factors. Conversely, a number of studies attempt to locate the causal factors that drive strategy selection through an investigation of exogenous pressures, such as rivalries and alliances.⁷ Since much of the literature arranges state behavior using these two perspectives, they provide the structural framework for this review.

Domestic Political Situations

A variety of perspectives suggest that the political alignment of governing bodies dictate decisions about military strategy and force structure. Regime type occupies a central role in the literature on military behavior with scholars debating whether democratic institutions are a help,

⁴Dan Reiter and Curtis Meek, "Determinants of Military Strategy, 1903-1994: A Quantitative Empirical Test." *International Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (1999), 370-372.

⁵ Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1984).

⁶ Alexander Wendt and Michael Barnett, "Dependent State Formation and Third World Militarization." *Review of International Studies* 19, no. 4 (1993): 321-347.

⁷ For information on adversarial influences see Todd Sechser and Elizabeth Saunders, "The Army You Have: The Determinants of Military Mechanization, 1979-2001." *International Studies Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (2010): 486-488. See also, Geoffrey Wallace, "Alliances, Institutional Design, and the Determinants of Military Strategy." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25, no. 2 (2010), 224-243.

a hindrance, or irrelevant when fighting wars.⁸ Scholars in this tradition have posited at least two mechanisms linking democratic governance with strategy selection. One strand of research focuses on democracies and casualty aversion: since voters' consent is required for democratic states to go to war, and because those same citizens will be called on to do most of the fighting, democratic leaders have incentives to create capital-intensive militaries that minimize the number of soldiers exposed to combat risks.⁹ If casualties tend to undermine public support for wars, then the substitution of personnel for heavy ordnance might serve as a firewall between wartime costs and public discontent.

Concerns over domestic political costs mitigate aggressive military tendencies among democratic leaders. A study conducted by Reiter and Meek, which represents one the only systematic quantitative analysis to date of the determinants of national military strategies, finds that democratic governments are not intrinsically more pacifist than nondemocratic governments, but rather that democratic leaders are more inclined to adopt maneuver strategies that keep wars short and relatively bloodless.¹⁰ This conclusion resurfaces throughout the literature with scholars proposing that a democratic leader's utility is derived in part by their domestic political fortunes. Factors noted here include those political institutions that hold democratic leaders accountable to the consent of the people, and the spirit of democracy with its emphasis on the development of individual rights, responsibility, and initiative.¹¹ When leaders must answer to

⁸ Dan Reiter and Allan Stam, *Democracies at War*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002), 56. See also, Gil Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 167. For more information on warfighting capacities consider, Jason Lyall, "Do Democracies Make Inferior Counterinsurgents? Reassessing Democracy's Impact on War Outcomes and Duration." *International Organization* 64, no. 1 (2010): 167-192.

⁹ Jonathan Caverley, "The Myth of Military Myopia: Democracy, Small Wars, and Vietnam." *International Security* 34, no. 3 (2010): 135-136.

¹⁰ Reiter and Meek, "Determinants of Military Strategy," 381.

¹¹ Reiter and Stam, *Democracies at War*, 193.

the will (and anger) of the people, they start only those wars that they are confident they can win through swift and decisive action.¹²

A second line of inquiry emphasizes public aversion to the types of missions undertaken by militaries. Democracies build firepower-intensive, low-manpower militaries to reduce the number of and exposure to risks of soldiers, but consequently they must rely on higher and less discriminating levels of violence, a policy that leads to criticism from the polity.¹³ Once disapproval levels reach a certain threshold, the government loses its capacity to portray the war as a necessary cause.¹⁴ Therefore, when fighting less mechanized forces, such as insurgencies, democracies may still prosecute wars using an ill-suited military strategy because the costs remain low for an individual citizen.¹⁵ Both mechanisms identified in the literature imply that democracies are disproportionately likely to favor heavy investments in advanced equipment, but while one suggests that democracies place a higher value on keeping wars short and bloodless, the other notes that risk-averse tendencies displayed by democracies contribute to ineffective strategy selection. An inability to craft strategies that emphasize insensitivity to friendly casualties and maximize violence against an opponent limits the effectiveness of democracies in war. The strong relationship between state and society acts as a constraining force when formulating strategies that balance political objectives with military conquests.

A third explanation related to domestic institutions concerns the influence of civil-military relations on the power and size of military organizations. When civilian control over the military is weak, the military's parochial interests—which tend to favor force structures that

¹² Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Randolph Siverson, "War and the Survival of Political Leaders: A Comparative Study of Regime Types and Political Accountability." *American Political Science Review* 89, no. 4 (1995): 851.

¹³ Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars*, 19.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

¹⁵ Lyall, "Do Democracies Make Inferior Counterinsurgents," 169.

emphasize tangible military power and symbolic weaponry—dominate defense policymaking.¹⁶

A number of scholars argue that military-dominated governments have incentives to prefer offensive strategies because they promote the autonomy of the military, enhance the prestige and self-image of military officers, permit seizure of initiative and reduction of uncertainty, and fit with essential beliefs about the inevitability of war.¹⁷ This literature suggests that states with strong civilian control are, on average, less prone to adopt provocative military strategies than states without it. A proclivity for speed and finality in decision-making privileges military solutions over diplomacy and negotiation.

A final institutional hypothesis deals with the stability of a state's governing arrangements. Migdal argues that in the developing world, state structures are fragile and governments frequently lack legitimacy. Since the population of an unstable state may itself represent a threat to the government, leaders rely more heavily on military solutions to maintain domestic order.¹⁸ In these cases, militarization does not stem from action-reaction dynamics in the states system, but from its superior ability to control restive publics relative to a strategy of mass mobilization. Maintaining firm control over standing armies while eliminating non-state controlled armies, militias, and gangs enables a state to hold a monopoly over the principal means of coercion.¹⁹ Scholars in this area have also asserted that decision-makers in the developing world condition military responses based on their cultural ideas about how a military should act, as well as the perceived political costs of alternatives, such as greater technological

¹⁶ Dana Eyre and Mark Suchman, "Status, Norms, and the Proliferation of Conventional Weapons: An Institutional Theory Approach," in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 84-85.

¹⁷ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 47-50. See also Todd Sechser, "Are Soldiers Less War-Prone Than Statesmen?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 5 (2004): 762-764.

¹⁸ Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), 15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

innovation.²⁰ These claims suggest that dysfunctional patterns of state formation, specifically where state-society compacts are more fragmented, may cause very different definitions of security and thus different levels of military activity.

Assessing Strategic Threats

Significant material and ideational changes in military organization can fundamentally change the relationship between states and soldiers. The general proposition among scholars is straightforward: decisions about how to use troops and weapons are based on anticipated threats and overall security needs.²¹ Describing states' threat environments, however, requires a broad consideration of possible security priorities that they may face. In contrast to alliances, scholars examine how states make independent judgements about military priorities. A number of studies, including Reiter and Meek, find no relationship between external security threats and military strategy choice, but the results of their analyses do show that military decision-makers reduce levels of uncertainty by relying on past battlefield experiences.²²

Placing a greater emphasis on internal learning processes stands in stark contrast to the notion that the preferences of military decision-makers drive strategy selection. No matter the strength of the military within a state, this strand of research holds that the parochial interests of the military do not dictate strategy choice alone. Rather, states are more likely to replicate strategies that have been used successfully in past military conflicts.²³ A tendency to look inward suggests that historical experience moderates decision-makers' inclinations about appropriate strategic conduct. The adoption of offensive force posturing, for example, reflects outcomes of

²⁰ Wendt and Barnett, "Dependent State Formation," 328-329.

²¹ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 41-44. See also Sechser and Saunders, "The Army You Have," 486.

²² Reiter and Meek, "Determinants of Military Strategy," 383. For a comparative case analysis of internal learning processes, consider Khong's *Analogies at War* (1992).

²³ *Ibid.*, 384.

similar engagements instead of predilection for organizational expansion and wealth attainment.²⁴ On balance, the literature holds that when a state fails in war, the lessons derived from the conflict episode spur innovation in future strategy selection. Similarly, then, victory must breed continuity and indifference.

Other scholars propose the inclusion of a distinction between internal and external strategy modeling. For instance, Sechser and Saunders find that decisions about military strategy reflect not merely the aggregate balance of power, but also rivals' military force structures. Their quantitative analysis assessing levels of mechanization (deployment of armored vehicles) shows that a state will react to an adversary's military developments by adjusting their own forces. States that had been militarily defeated by an insurgency presented lower levels of mechanization than those that had no counterinsurgency losses.²⁵ The vicarious learning variable reflects whether lessons from the past speak favorably or unfavorably of one particular strategy in comparison to the other strategies in a historical episode. In this sense, decision-makers critically evaluate their adversary's successes and shortcomings to determine the desirability of mirroring strategic adjustments.

A related argument put forward in the literature suggests that states are more likely to change their military strategy after an external shock. A comparative analysis of French and Prussian military strategies demonstrates that the Prussian military abandoned mercenary armies in favor of professional citizen armies after their defeat (shock) at the hands of the French.²⁶ The effect of battlefield experience is likely to depend on the nature of the conflict (counterinsurgency versus conventional), but the literature confirms that states learn from their

²⁴ Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine*, pgs. 48-50.

²⁵ Sechser and Saunders, "The Army You Have," 502-504.

²⁶ Deborah Avant, "From Mercenary to Citizen Armies: Explaining Change in the Practice of War." *International Organization* 60, no. 3 (2000): 48-49.

own experiences and those of other states. The salience of past battlefield experiences also may be mediated by the location of these wars. Specifically, outside interveners may react differently to battlefield failures than combatants who face conflicts on their own territory.²⁷

A corollary to adjustments in force structures (largely advanced by scholars using realism to frame their analyses) contends that terrain and relative location play a significant role in strategy selection. The geographical variables most often cited to influence strategy choice include contiguity and physical terrain. If a state perceives that it may be fighting a multi-front war, they are likely to prefer offensive strategies that promise quick defeats of individual foes, thereby minimizing the amount of time they will be at war on more than one front.²⁸ The type of terrain is shown to matter as well. Van Creveld finds that some physical environments are more permitting of certain strategies than others. Specifically, open, flat terrain is more likely to permit the rapid movement of large armies, whereas mountainous or heavily wooded terrain will be less permissive.²⁹

The literature also suggests that decisions about military strategy, made within complex political geographic settings, can be conceptualized as integrated forms of embeddedness. Three forms of embeddedness: societal, network, and territorial characterize the nature of relational power. Societal embeddedness refers to the social history of actors, or perhaps more simply their distinctive and shared attributes.³⁰ Network embeddedness refers to the ties an actor has within a social network, and territorial embeddedness concerns “the extent to which an actor is ‘anchored’

²⁷ Lyall, “Do Democracies Make Inferior Counterinsurgents,” 173.

²⁸ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 70.

²⁹ Martin Van Creveld, *Technology and War: From 2000 B.C. to the Present*, (New York: Free Press, 1991), 302-304.

³⁰ Colin Flint et al., “Conceptualizing ConflictSpace: Toward a Geography of Relational Power and Embeddedness in the Analysis of Interstate Conflict.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 99, no. 5 (2009): 830-831.

in particular territories or places.”³¹ Networks of rivalries between neighboring states coupled with favorable or unfavorable terrain types facilitate military action. Flint et al., for example, evaluate geographical features as an instigator for interstate conflict through an in-depth analysis of the diffusion of World War One. They find that territorial disputes were inseparable from Great Power competition and therefore the First World War spread as new entrants saw these issues as causes or opportunities for war.³² By first analyzing contiguity, the relationship of a state with one or two geographic neighbors is understood, but the subsequent interpretation of the whole network of states increases the number of nodes, or actors, and the multidimensionality of the context. Thus, a state’s decision to deploy its military forces in a specific manner is largely dependent on the actions undertaken by other actors in the system.

Research Gap

The literature surrounding the formation of military strategy points to an interplay between material and nonmaterial factors (aggregate capabilities and strategic imperatives), but the cases examined by scholars relate primarily to conventional applications. Sechser and Saunders evaluate mechanization rates in the context of counterinsurgency campaigns, but they view adjustments in force structures as reactionary developments.³³ States are not actively seeking out new and improved strategies rather they reformat approaches after being defeated by a non-state opponent. My research aims to determine whether the existing literature can effectively explain the selection of unconventional strategies by industrialized states. If Posen’s conception of military strategy as a means for a state to “‘cause’” security for itself” is correct, then a comprehensive assessment of the determinants of military strategy must include

³¹ Michael Hess, “Spatial Relationships? Towards a Reconceptualization of Embeddedness.” *Progress in Human Geography* 28, no. 2 (2004): 177.

³² Flint et al., “Conceptualizing ConflictSpace,” pgs. 831-834.

³³ Sechser and Saunders, “The Army You Have,” 502.

nonmilitary factors (use of cyberwarfare, propaganda and deception, paramilitaries, mobilization of ethnic contingents, etc.) as well.³⁴

III. Research Design:

Introduction

The aim of this study is to assess the following conceptual question: What factors influence the development of a state's military strategy? Causal explanations derived from the literature are principally concerned with the use of conventional military forces in interstate conflicts and counterinsurgency campaigns, but there is virtually no discussion on the adoption of unconventional strategies by state actors.³⁵ Scholars must pay greater attention to the primacy of nonmilitary activities, used in conjunction with traditional military interference, in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the means of conducting military operations.³⁶ If the military is indeed a tool used by states to achieve foreign policy goals, then it is prudent to examine whether modern iterations of conflict utilize strategies that deviate from pre-existing conceptions established in the literature. Divergences in state behavior may indicate that strategic developments are unconventional in the sense that they reside outside of traditional scholarly understandings of military action.

³⁴ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 13.

³⁵ Understandings of conventional warfare postulate the notion of two more or less equally matched belligerents displaying highly organized armed forces in face-to-face battle. The evaluation of strategy within Clausewitzian parameters demonstrates that conceptions of "unconventional" or "irregular" warfare require a high degree of appreciation for the socio-political environment in which conflicts occur. Since all military engagements have distinctive origins and directions, decision-makers will utilize a particular set of tactics that enable them to optimize their military position and fulfill desired policy goals. For a useful comparison of conventional and unconventional strategies see Smith's "Guerrillas in the Mist" (2003).

³⁶ Barry Posen reintroduces military historian B. H. Liddell Hart's idea that a state may integrate a broad array of measures outside of traditional military force into its operational strategy. The anarchic context of international relations conditions states to preserve their autonomy through any means necessary. For more information see Posen's *Sources of Military Doctrine* (1984).

Defining Military Strategy

Strategy occupies the highest echelon in military planning efforts. At its most basic level, strategy refers to the general way the military is employed rather than the total quantity of troops and materiel a state possesses, or the particular political objectives sought through war.³⁷ Carl von Clausewitz, a nineteenth-century Prussian military observer, usefully points to the importance of distinguishing between means and ends in thinking about military strategy specifically and warfare in general. I intend to focus on strategy as a military means rather than an end, implying that certain military strategies are not inevitably associated with certain political ends. Avoiding path dependent explanations will allow me to more effectively isolate strategy as a variable and assess it in light of the case selection. In this study, military strategy refers to the principles guiding the use of military forces for the overall planning and execution of armed conflict. Strategy can be distinguished from lower-level activities, such as the focus at the operational level on individual battles and campaigns, or the tactical level's attention to the use of individual soldiers and small troop units.³⁸

Classifying military strategy requires evaluating existing categorization models within the literature. This is conceptually slippery, as technological context is likely to determine strongly what is a sensible typology of military strategy. Nevertheless, I rely on the maneuver-attrition-punishment classification since past research has shown this distinction to be a consistent factor in explaining the initiation, duration, and outcome of interstate wars, with maneuver strategies generally being more successful than the alternatives.³⁹ Under this system, each category centers on a different overall tendency in the planning and execution of the use of

³⁷Clausewitz, C.V. *On War*. New York: E.P. Dalton and Co., LTD., 1940, 128.

³⁸ Reiter and Meek, "Determinants of Military Strategy," 364-365.

³⁹ This categorical framework is used by Reiter and Meek in "Determinants of Military Strategy" and by Wallace in "Alliances, Institutional Design."

military force. Maneuver strategies, such as the German blitzkrieg of World War Two, emphasize mobility over brute firepower with a desire to avoid set-piece battles in order to disrupt the command, control, and communication infrastructure necessary for an adversary to function effectively. Attrition strategies, often identified with the Western front during World War One, instead involve meeting opposing forces head-on in either one or a series of confrontations where the objective is to directly destroy the troops and materiel of an adversary.⁴⁰ Punishment strategies differ from the other two in that they include political components aimed to break the resolve of the opposing state. The intent is to coerce an adversary into making concessions by confronting them with the prospect of continuing destruction of population centers and industry.⁴¹ Leading examples are the Allied bombing campaigns against Germany and Japan in World War Two, and the American bombing of North Vietnam in the Vietnam War. In the latter case, President Lyndon Johnson offered to scale back U.S. bombing on the condition that North Vietnam, along with the National Liberation Front (NLF), cease and desist all military activity in South Vietnam.⁴²

As is expected, not all cases involve states with clear-cut strategies for engaging enemies. Studies using the maneuver-attrition-punishment typology tend to focus exclusively on maneuver strategies because they emphasize mobility, a key facet of modern engagements. I follow this trend because including the attrition and punishment strategies requires extensive knowledge of

⁴⁰ Wallace, "Alliances, Institutional Design," 225-226.

⁴¹ The modern study of strategy has not unanimously converged around the maneuver-attrition-punishment typology. Barry Posen proposes an alternative system that classifies strategies as being offensive, defensive or deterrent based. Several scholars have argued that the distinction between offensive and defensive strategies is theoretically flawed and that the whole notion of a balance favoring the offense or defense is nebulous and indeterminate. Nuclear weapons, for instance, can be used in an offensive and defensive manner thereby conflating the means and ends of strategy choice. For further criticism see Levy's "The Offensive/Defensive Balance of Military Technology" (1984).

⁴² George Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2002): 165-167.

the institutional demands of each category and the material capabilities necessary for their procurement. There is an inherent risk of oversimplifying the process of strategy selection when attempting to rationalize state behavior but having a strong point of reference assists with determining whether certain conflicts reside outside of traditional understandings of warfare. In terms of measurement, the most practical method is to make an inference based on a state's force structure (how much infantry and artillery relative to armor and air), officer attitudes, how much national defense appears to rely on prepared fortifications, and whether ground forces are air-mobile.⁴³ The presence of ground and air-mobile arms indicates an orientation towards maneuver, while reliance on infantry and artillery fighting from prepared fortifications is a fairly clear indicator of an attrition strategy. This approach also ensures that the proceeding analysis of the relationship between strategy and the variables that explain strategy choice accounts for the core attributes of maneuver (speed and mobility).

Identifying Independent Variables

The first independent variable is civil-military relations. Proponents of the militarism theory suggest that military officers are, on the whole, more prone to favor policies that are more aggressive than those preferred by civilians. The militarism hypothesis holds that parochial motives, socialized values, and sheer familiarity with the instruments of armed coercion create conditions that may predispose military leaders in favor of using force.⁴⁴ It implies that strong civilian control of the military can help avert unnecessary conflicts brought about by hawkish,

⁴³ To reiterate a previous point: wars are multifarious, and the strategies used by states display just as much variation in their design and execution. Categorizing strategies under generic labels may downplay their intellectual significance, but it only serves to reinforce the aim of this study to elaborate on the evolving norms of military decision-making.

⁴⁴ Eyre and Suchman, "Status, Norms, and the Proliferation of Conventional Weapons," 84-85. See Also, Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 46-50.

self-interested military establishments.⁴⁵ In the absence of sufficient civilian checks on military decision-making, states are more likely to be saddled with antagonistic strategies. Several scholars succeed in shedding light on the progressive stages of military influence by devising classificatory schemes. Stepan, for instance, lists prerogatives where the military assumes the right to exercise control over its own internal governance and to play a role in extra-military jurisdictions within the state bureaucracy.⁴⁶ These spheres, where the military has a formal or informal claim to dominate, include the army's constitutionally sanctioned role in the political system; its relationship to the chief executive, the government, and the legislature; and its role in intelligence, police, state enterprises, and the legal system.⁴⁷ The application of this system to the study will assist with determining how substantive behavioral differences between civilian and military leaders influence the power projections of a state's armed forces and the formulation of strategy.

The second variable is learning processes. Scholars proposing learning theories contend that military decision-makers may, in fact, be uncertain as to which strategies are appropriate. One means by which military decision-makers reduce uncertainty is to rely on past experiences. They examine instances from the past that present seemingly analogous decision problems, they assess the outcomes of certain choices, and they draw lessons as to which choices best meet their interests. Leng finds that there are two salient components to what policymakers are likely to learn from one dispute to the next. The first is what he calls "experiential learning"; that is, a straightforward application of the lessons learned from the outcome of one dispute to the strategies chosen in subsequent encounters with other adversaries. The second is the propensity

⁴⁵ Reiter and Meek, "Determinants of Military Strategy," 372.

⁴⁶ Alfred Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), 92-97.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 94-95. See also, Todd Sechser, "Are Soldiers Less War-Prone than Statesmen," 748-751.

to view the nature of international conflict and, consequently, appropriate strategies and tactics, from a realpolitik orientation that stresses the importance of demonstrating power and resolve.⁴⁸ Attempting to examine how military decision-makers draw lessons from past battlefield experiences is no simple task because each isolated incident presents its own unique outcomes. The most prudent method of analysis is to draw comparisons between my case selection and a previous conflict while controlling for the incorporation of lessons into military strategy. I intend to use the definitions proposed by Leng to specify how military decision-makers evaluate the meaning of learning experiences.

Hypotheses

The two hypotheses outlined in this section are intended to gauge the relationship between military strategy and the factors that influence its formulation. The first hypothesis is as follows:

H1: States are more likely to adopt maneuver strategies if they exhibit weak civilian control over the military.

A key theoretical perspective guiding scholars' analyses of civil-military relations is that militaries pursue strategies that serve their organizational concerns. On balance, the maneuver-attrition-punishment approach would predict that militaries ought to have an institutional interest in maneuver strategies. Predicated upon permitting fast decisions on the battlefield, maneuver strategies require more decision-making autonomy. They require investments in advanced equipment, such as tanks, aircraft, and communication networks, providing the military with a justifiable need for increased size and budgets. Maneuver strategies are also consistent with important elements of most military organizational cultures, as they promise to minimize the loss

⁴⁸ Russell Leng, "When Will They Ever Learn? Coercive Bargaining in Recurrent Crises." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 27, no. 3 (1983): 380-382.

of life for the maneuvering force, facilitate the seizure of initiative, and deliver a quick and decisive victory.⁴⁹ Therefore, the strategic preferences of the military are more likely to be reflected in policy when there is a military junta running the government, or when the military has a strong influence on foreign policy decision-making.

The second independent variable assesses internal and external learning processes, stemming from the general proposition that militaries are more likely to adopt strategies from prior conflicts. The resulting hypothesis holds that:

H2: States are more likely to adopt strategies that were used successfully in recent wars in which they participated, and less likely to adopt untried strategies.

The literature on learning and strategy selection describes an important distinction between vicarious and internal experiences. A group of scholars propose that states observe the experiences of other states in the system, emulating successful strategies and avoiding failed strategies.⁵⁰ Others have argued that states are likely to draw lessons only from their own experiences and not from those of others.⁵¹ Both perspectives offer an avenue for further exploration, but the latter argument promises to provide a more holistic understanding of how a state adapts their military strategy to changing conditions. The direct involvement of a state's armed forces in an interstate conflict or counterinsurgency campaign increases the salience of that particular engagement because the state will sustain gains and losses from the performance of its military. Successes in combat may breed continuity and failures may yield a completely new approach to warfare. Focusing on internal learning processes will also provide greater insight into the deployment of unique technologies and the sources of their conception. Shifts

⁴⁹ For further discussion see Reiter and Meek, "Determinants of Military Strategy," 365-368.

⁵⁰ See Reiter and Meek, "Determinants of Military Strategy."

⁵¹ See Sechser and Saunders, "The Army You Have." See also Avant, "From Mercenary to Citizen Armies."

towards mechanization or improved information networks, for example, will necessitate an equal change in strategic priorities. Having now described the hypotheses tested in this study, the subsequent section identifies the research approach and data collection methods.

Research Approach

The research presented in this study is framed using a single case study approach as it allows for an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context. It is an appropriate means for examining the development of military strategy because each isolated incident of interstate conflict or counterinsurgency force presents distinctive rationales for engaging in armed aggression.⁵² Quantitative analyses produce generalizable results, but they often use crude measures that are not representative of each state in the sample. Establishing relevant temporal parameters and coding datasets relating to military strategy remains an area of focus available to future researchers.⁵³ The application of the aforementioned hypotheses to a particular case will yield valuable information about the practicality of attempting to measure military decision-making within a state-societal and systemic framework. From an epistemological standpoint, this study uses a positivist approach because it focuses on testing and refining theory on the basis of case study findings.⁵⁴

⁵² Andrew Bennett and Alexander George, "Case Studies and Process Tracing in History and Political Science: Similar Strokes for Different Foci," in *Bridges and Boundaries: Historians, Political Scientists, and the Study of International Relations*, ed. Colin Elman and Miriam Elman, (Cambridge: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, 2001), 152-153.

⁵³ In one of the only systematic quantitative analyses to date of military strategy, Reiter and Meek created a dataset composed of a random sample of 190 country-year observations during the period from 1903 to 1994. They employed a random sample design in part because of the large time commitment and difficulties involved in the coding of military strategy. Nevertheless, their model remains a viable starting point for researchers considering a quantitative approach. For more information see, Reiter and Meek, "Determinants of Military Strategy."

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 117.

Case Selection

I evaluate military strategy selection through the lens of the 2014 Crimean Crisis. More specifically, I focus on the strategic initiatives employed by the Russian Federation, the aggressor in the conflict. This case is important for understanding modern approaches to warfare because Russia's forceful annexation of the Ukrainian province of Crimea marked the first forced transfer of territory to take place in Europe since 1945. The primacy of the information domain, use of cyberwarfare, propaganda, and deception, especially toward the Russian-speaking populace in Crimea, engendered widespread discussion about the possibility of Russia developing a hybrid strategy that it could use to restrain states in its periphery. These observations make this case hospitable for testing by implying that a state may use nonmilitary elements together with traditional forms of military action to create strategic initiatives. Analyzing this case promises to add a new dimension to the literature on military decision-making, which primarily centers on the application of military means to interstate conflict and counterinsurgency campaigns.

Data Sources and Collection Methods

Incorporating evidence that directly pertains to the Russian military establishment promises to enhance the reliability of my findings. The most valuable primary data sources are Russian military journals that include scholarship published by high-ranking military officials. *Military Thought (Voennaia Mysl')* and *Military Industrial Courier (Voyenno Promyshlennyy Kuryer)* are unique sources on the development of Russian military theory. They both offer articles on Russian military reform, tactics and strategy of modern combat, and counterterrorism and security operations. Other important sources for determining the scope of Russian strategic imperatives include national military doctrines approved by the Russian President (Vladimir

Putin) and public statements issued by military personnel and policymakers. Secondary materials published by credible sources, such as *The United States Army Special Operations Command*, will offer clarification on key concepts not properly defined in the primary documents.

Research Limitations

Acknowledging challenges and biases within this research narrows the focus of data collection efforts and confronts assumptions about Russian military cultures. Language and the availability of resources poses a significant barrier to the acquisition of complete information about Russian military affairs. Ideational strain exists as well, particularly when distinguishing between nationalist sentiment and actual substantiated claims. Since *Military Thought* and *Military Industrial Courier* are central organs of the Russian Defense Ministry, the journals' contributors are top military personnel and leading military scientists. These individuals occupy one of the highest echelons in the Russian military, but defamatory statements of the United States and Western European nations, although subdued, are present in their writing. Partiality toward advancing the goals of the Russian military adheres to the present international political climate, but sources published in these journals still offer a firsthand account into the organization and strategic thinking of Russia's military theorists.

The validity of this study comes from its willingness to explore whether presupposed typologies of behavior, such as the maneuver-attribution-punishment scheme, can sufficiently explain modern military strategies. A focus on technological innovation and participation outside of military structures may demonstrate a considerable shift in the way a state deploys its armed forces. Some scholars may call into question the objectivity of case study approaches, but this study, backed by a well-defined research objective, employs variables of theoretical interest for the purposes of explanation. Moreover, this study will not address all the interesting aspects of

the Crimean Crisis, but it will provide a foundation for scholars to advance understandings of military decision-making within this case.

IV. Data Collection and Assessment:

Introduction

The case that constitutes the analytical framework for this section is the annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014. The salience of this particular engagement stems from the covert nature of Russian operations on the Crimean Peninsula coupled with the confluence of strategic foresight and advanced technologies. Russia's assertive promotion of its national interests, punctuated by its military actions in Crimea, demonstrates a more confident and somewhat less risk-averse Kremlin, but it also has revived international concerns about the re-emergence of a more militaristic Russia. Scrutinizing the strategic initiatives of the Russian military through the lens of the 2014 Crimean Crisis will provide a more perspicuous explanation of how states develop comprehensive military doctrines.

To successfully gain insight into my conceptual question, I evaluate two independent variables, derived from the literature, that hypothetically influence a state's military strategy. These include civil-military relations and internal learning experiences. The first variable concerns the balance of power between civilian apparatuses of government and military leadership. If the military, as an institutional entity, shares or gains flexible control over its internal affairs from the legally established arrangement between legislative and executive branches of government, then its policy preferences will be more pronounced. Resulting strategic initiatives will promote the military's organizational interests and reflect hawkish stances on the inevitability of war.⁵⁵ The second variable considers the processes by which the military

⁵⁵ For more information see, Eyre and Suchman, "Status, Norms, and the Proliferation of Conventional Weapons," 80-85. See also, Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 41-50.

formulates and adapts strategies to suit modern iterations of armed conflict. To reduce uncertainty about appropriate doctrinal decisions, military planners evaluate internal and vicarious experiences. More specifically, they examine conflicts in which their state participated directly, and those involving allied and rivaling nations. The lessons drawn from these incidents highlight the successes and failures of previous engagements and chart a new direction for military strategic thinking.⁵⁶ Overall, testing these variables with relevant data will help elucidate the intricate processes of creating and executing state policy on the shape and use of military force.

Case Background: The use of Military Force Towards Ukraine in 2014

An impetus for the conflict in Crimea was Russia's insecurity and dissatisfaction with the post-Cold War European security order. The westward orientation of neighboring Ukraine and the prospect of its integration into the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), intergovernmental organizations not controlled by Russia, antagonized the Kremlin and posed a threat to Russian military and economic security. When popular demonstrations mounted towards President Yanukovich in January and February 2014, fueled by his heavy-handed management of protesters during Euromaidan, Moscow perceived the incident as an ongoing anti-Russian coup d'état orchestrated by Western intelligence services.⁵⁷ A.S. Brychkov and A.G. Nikonov, researchers at the Academy of Military Science, accuse the United States of acting as the principal instigator and financier "of reformatting the global geopolitical map." They believe that the U.S. Congress decides which foreign governments to

⁵⁶ For more information see, Reiter and Meek, "Determinants of Military Strategy," 373-376. See also, Sechser and Saunders, "The Army You Have," 502-504.

⁵⁷ United States Army Special Operations Command. "Little Green Men": A Primer on Modern Russian Unconventional Warfare, Ukraine 2013-2014. Fort Bragg, NC: 2015, 27-30. <https://info.publicintelligence.net/USASOC-LittleGreenMen.pdf>.

alter, and special offices within the U.S. Department of State stage and manage “democratic revolutions” in the selected country. To avoid the spread of transformative social action in Russia, Brychkov and Nikonorov argue, the government must conduct well-measured internal and external policies.⁵⁸ In light of these circumstances, Russia responded swiftly and decidedly towards this challenge to security interests, making full use of the chaotic situation in Ukraine and Russian military, diplomatic and informational superiority.

Russian information warfare (use of cyberwarfare, propaganda, and deception) was pervasive during the intervention in Crimea as it allowed Russian forces to assume the mantle of liberators and furnished Moscow with an acceptable premise for invasion.⁵⁹ As a form of moral suasion, information warfare targeted proxies in Crimea, preparing them for resistance against Kiev, a separatist insurgency, and, finally, annexation by Russia.⁶⁰ On the heels of Yanukovich’s setbacks in late February, the Russian Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) dispatched several hundred members of the 45th SPETSNAZ Regiment to Crimea. Covert operators created a popular uprising aimed at facilitating Russia’s annexation of the region. Simultaneously GRU agents used bribery among the ethnic Russian population to win support for the intervention.⁶¹ With tangible resistance procured, Russian hackers began conducting cyberattacks against

⁵⁸ A.S. Brychkov and G.A. Nikonorov, “Colored Revolutions in Russia: Possibility and Reality.” *Vestnik Akademii Voennyh Nauk* 60, no. 3 (2017): 4-7.

⁵⁹ The Russians conceptualize cyber operations within the broader rubric of information warfare. IW, as the term is referred to by Russian military theorists, is a holistic concept that includes computer network operations, electronic warfare, psychological operations, and disinformation campaigns. In other words, cyber is a mechanism for enabling the state to dominate the information landscape, which serves as a warfare domain in its own right. For a more detailed examination of cyber strategies in Russian information warfare doctrine, see Keir Giles, “Russia’s ‘New’ Tools for Confronting the West: Continuity and Innovation in Moscow’s Exercise of Power,” prepared for The Royal Institute of International Affairs. London, UK: 2016. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/russias-new-tools-confronting-west>.

⁶⁰ Margarita Jaitner, “Russian Information Warfare: Lessons from Ukraine,” prepared for NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Center of Excellence. Tallinn, Estonia: 2015, 92-93. https://ccdc.org/sites/default/files/multimedia/pdf/CyberWarinPerspective_Jaitner_10.pdf.

⁶¹ United States Army Special Operations Command, “Little Green Men,” 53-55.

Ukraine's government, military, telecommunications, and private-sector information technology infrastructure. They used cyberattacks to interrupt communications, obtain and leak government documents and plans, and deface or take down public and private websites and computer systems.⁶² During this phase, the Russian objective was to create the political conditions necessary for later decisive military and paramilitary action.

The use of Russian military force in Ukraine first became discernable on February 27, 2014, when well-armed soldiers without insignia seized the building of the Crimean parliamentary assembly. Within days, Russian Special Forces (SOF) units and elite troops belonging to the Airborne Forces and Naval Infantry blocked entry points to Crimea as well as Ukrainian military bases and seized military command facilities.⁶³ Russia proceeded to bring in regular armed forces units to reinforce its military presence on the peninsula. Military units amassed along the Russo-Ukrainian border on February 26 when surprise inspection exercises in the Western Military District, ordered by President Putin, involved large amounts of personnel and equipment.⁶⁴

The occupation of Crimea, supported by local and arriving Russian militias and organized crime groups, provided control of public space and made it more difficult to identify Russian soldiers as key players in the assault.⁶⁵ A lack of clarity surrounding the crisis was important for the initial Russian political narrative of non-involvement. President Putin maintained that Crimean self-defense groups, not Russian soldiers, incited violence against

⁶² Michael Connell and Sarah Vogler, "Russia's Approach to Cyber Warfare," prepared for Center for Strategic Studies. Washington, DC: 2016, 14. <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/1019062.pdf>.

⁶³ United States Army Special Operations Command, "Little Green Men," 46-47.

⁶⁴ Johan Norberg, "Training to Fight: Russia's Major Military Exercises 2011-2014," prepared for Swedish Ministry of Defence. Stockholm, Sweden: 2015, pgs. 75-77. <https://www.foi.se/report-search/pdf?fileName=D%3A%5CReportSearch%5CFiles%5C8e2dc822-a31c-4f6c-aecd-954375e3fe31.pdf>.

⁶⁵ United States Army Special Operations Command. "Little Green Men": A Primer on Modern Russian Unconventional Warfare, Ukraine 2013-2014. Fort Bragg, NC: 2015, pg. 33. <https://info.publicintelligence.net/USASOC-LittleGreenMen.pdf>.

Ukrainian forces.⁶⁶ The beleaguered Ukrainian military units on Crimea eventually surrendered without fighting, and on March 16 Russian occupiers staged a referendum on the future status of the peninsula. Two days later, on March 18, the Russian Federation illegally annexed Crimea. Following the annexation, SOF and elite troops withdrew, and additional Russian units populated the peninsula as the armed forces laid the foundation for a permanent military presence.

Civil-Military Relations

Having outlined the Russian use of military force towards Ukraine, I now examine the civil-military relation aspects. The hypothesis guiding this line of inquiry assumes that states with weak civilian control over the military are more likely to adopt maneuver strategies. Using Stepan's dimension of military prerogatives as a benchmark, I aim to identify areas where the military as an institution assumes they have acquired the right to exercise effective control over its internal governance.⁶⁷ Analyzing the military's position within a polity is crucial for determining whether civilian apparatuses are able to dictate the strategic imperatives that supervise the use of a state's armed forces. In the context of the 2014 Crimean intervention, I look for indications of any circumstances in which Russian military officials acted independently of political authority figures.

Instances of military involvement in the formulation of state policy regarding Crimea will indicate a high-level of decision-making authority. Following Stepan's view presented above, state policy dictates the scope of the use of force, such as the initiation and termination, the escalation or de-escalation as well as the overall means for and the boundaries of a military

⁶⁶ Bill Chappell and Mark Memmott, "Putin Says Those Aren't Russian Forces in Crimea," *National Public Radio*, March 4, 2014. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/03/04/285653335/putin-says-those-arent-russian-forces-in-crimea>.

⁶⁷ Alfred Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), 92-98.

operation.⁶⁸ Determining the extent of direct military influence requires assessing established legal precedents that govern military affairs. The Constitution of the Russian Federation lays out the mechanisms of control over the use of Russia's armed forces. Aside from vesting the Federal Assembly (State Duma and Federation Council) with the authority to enact laws relating to war and peace, President Putin wields significant authority over Russia's military.⁶⁹ He occupies the position of Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation⁷⁰; approves the military doctrine of the Russian Federation⁷¹; appoints and dismisses members of the General Staff⁷²; and approves higher military ranks.⁷³ The composition of Putin's security council further attests to the marginalization of military participation in the political realm. Only one permanent member, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, is an active military officer.⁷⁴

When applied to Stepan's classificatory scheme measuring military dominance, these findings support the proposition that there exists objective civilian control over Russia's armed forces. Six selected prerogatives include: constitutionally sanctioned subordination of military institutions to the executive branch; the chief executive is de jure and de facto commander-in-chief; coordination of defense sector by the chief executive and civilian political appointees; legislative presence in handling of military affairs; intelligence agencies controlled by civilian chains of command; and executive control over military promotions.⁷⁵ Identifying apparent deviations from objective civilian control over the military requires assessing the actors that instigated military interference in Crimea. Any actions taken by Russian military officials

⁶⁸ Ibid., pgs. 92-98.

⁶⁹ Constitution of the Russian Federation, chapter 5, article 106.

⁷⁰ Ibid., chapter 4, article 87.

⁷¹ Ibid., chapter 4, article 83, line 8.

⁷² Ibid., chapter 4, article 83, line 11.

⁷³ Ibid., chapter 4, article 89, line 2.

⁷⁴ President of Russia, "Security Council Structure," July 3, 2014. <http://en.kremlin.ru/structure/security-council/members>.

⁷⁵ Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics*, pgs. 94-97.

without proper approval from political authorities would constitute a divergence from established mechanisms of control.

The Russian military began its advance in late February 2014. The combat operation commenced when SOF and Airborne Troops deployed to Crimea following the snapshot exercises conducted on February 26, 2014.⁷⁶ A number of treaty obligations between Russia and Ukraine strictly forbade military maneuvers against one another. A bilateral agreement signed in 1997 by Ukraine and the Russian Federation (Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership Between Ukraine and the Russian Federation) fixed the principle of strategic partnership, the recognition of the inviolability of existing borders, respect for territorial integrity, and a mutual commitment not to harm the security of each other.⁷⁷ President Putin indicated that previously negotiated agreements no longer pertained to Russia's relationship with Ukraine because the sitting government was illegitimate. Until President Yanukovich returned to power, Ukraine was a rogue nation that defied established legal norms, including treaty obligations. Putin remained adamant, however, that he would not commit Russian armed forces to Crimea.⁷⁸ If the Russian military establishment decided to violate the treaty, it would amount to a gross subversion of civilian political authority over military affairs.

Russian military leaders have historically been suspicious of political oversight. The decentralization of the armed forces under President Yeltsin's leadership fueled mass corruption and despondency. Perhaps the most glaring manifestations of the Russian officer corps' political

⁷⁶ Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, "Unexpected combat readiness inspection of troops of Western and Central Military Districts (February 26, 2014)," February 26, 2014. <http://eng.mil.ru/en/mission/practice/more.htm?id=12116567@egNews>.

⁷⁷ Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership Between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. *Federal Broadcast Information Services (FBIS)*, June 3, 1997. Doc # FBIS-SOV-97-124. <http://fbis.fedworld.gov>.

⁷⁸ President of Russia, "Vladimir Putin answered journalists' questions on the situation in Ukraine," March 4, 2014. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20366>.

activism were the frequent contestation of state policy and individual commanders' acts of direct insubordination to their civilian and military superiors. Russia's disastrous 1994 military campaign in Chechnya drew the ire of military commanders who threatened to resign their posts if politicians continued to intercede in their affairs. This frustration was particularly evident when General Vladimir Shamanov, one of the premier Russian military commanders in Chechnya, labeled political interference as the primary cause of the military's impotence.⁷⁹ Characteristic of the Yeltsin era, Shamanov asserted that "there will be a powerful exodus of officers of various ranks, including generals, from the armed forces, because the officers corps may not survive another slap in the face."⁸⁰ Vladimir Putin's accession to the presidency in 2000 marked a noticeable shift in the organization of Russia's military, but internal conflicts persisted. Putin targeted the misappropriation of state funds through illicit commercial activities in an address to the top brass of the armed forces. He claimed that military vehicles were used illegally to transport commercial freight, commanders were hiring soldiers out for jobs unconnected to the requirements of military service, and private shops opened on the territory of military installations were selling government property for profit.⁸¹ These findings show that Russian military officials have a history of circumventing political authority to achieve their own ends. Determining causality between the insubordination of military officials and the Crimean intervention requires assessing the extent to which President Putin dictated the use of military forces.

⁷⁹ Simon Saradzhyan, "Generals Tell Politicians: Hands Off," *The Moscow Times*, November 5, 1999. <http://old.themoscowtimes.com/sitemap/free/1999/11/article/generals-tell-politicians-hands-off/270491.html>.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Viktor Myasnikov, "Putin Attacks Chronic Commercialization of Russian Armed Forces," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, November 11, 2005. <http://www.spacefuture.com/lists/sf-discuss/November-2005/msg00006.html>.

Supporting evidence for weak civilian oversight holds that President Putin had no mandate prior to March 1, 2014 to order a military attack on Ukrainian forces and administrative facilities in Crimea. Constitutional provisions delegate to the Federal Assembly decision-making power over issues relating to peace and war. However, the Federation Council issued a standing mandate in 2009 that grants President Putin the power to deploy Russia's armed forces in two specific situations. First, he may use the military to repel an armed attack against Russian forces based abroad.⁸² The absence of Russian troops in Ukraine prior to 2014 renders this stipulation invalid for the purposes of instigating conflict. The second situation, however, has more merit in the context of Russia's incursion into Crimea. Putin may use the military to protect Russian citizens beyond the territorial boundaries of the Russian Federation.⁸³ Census data collected by the State Statistics Committee of Ukraine in 2001 shows that 58 percent of Crimean residents identified Russian as their primary language.⁸⁴ While these residents were not legal citizens of the Russian Federation, strong ethnic ties served as a pretext for the deployment of Russian troops. Putin commented after the annexation process that "the essential issue is how to ensure the legitimate rights and interests of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in the southeast of Ukraine."⁸⁵ The mandate issued by the Federal Assembly on March 1, 2014 gave the green light for an invasion of Crimea, highlighting the need to introduce troops "until the socio-political situation was normalized."⁸⁶ Putin's insistence on legitimizing Russian presence in Crimea

⁸² On Defence Law, in "The Amendments to the Federal Law on Defence of the Russian Federation," *Venice Commission*, December 17, 2010, pg. 3.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pg. 3.

⁸⁴ Number and Composition Population of Autonomous Republic of Crimea, part of *All-Ukrainian Population Census 2001*, State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, 2001. <http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/results/general/nationality/Crimea/>.

⁸⁵ President of Russia, "Direct Line with Vladimir Putin," April 17, 2014. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20796>.

⁸⁶ Shaun Walker, "Russian Parliament Approves Troop deployment in Ukraine," *The Guardian*, March 1, 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/02/russia-parliament-approves-military-ukraine-vladimir-putin>.

coupled with the existence of the 2009 mandate lends credibility to the counterpoint that he ordered the deployment of Russian military forces. The actions of the military leadership stemmed not from their own self-interests, but rather from the appointed supreme commander of the armed forces.

The notion that the military acted on the orders of President Putin receives support from an array of anecdotal and primary evidence. During a ring-in session broadcasted on Russian state media in 2014, Putin acknowledged that the ‘polite people’ present in Crimea were indeed Russian forces operating under the aegis of humanitarian intervention. He emphasized the need to cooperate with Crimean self-defense forces to demilitarize the Peninsula and ensure the peoples’ expression of their free will.⁸⁷ Moreover, on the anniversary of Crimea’s accession to the Russian Federation, Putin issued Executive Order #103 proclaiming February 27 to be Special Forces Day.⁸⁸ Openly confessing to the presence of Russian troops in Crimea supports the premise that Putin dictated the strategic imperatives of military operations. The clandestine nature of the conflict, as demonstrated by the use of special forces and other mobile units, also aligns with the state military doctrines approved by Putin.

Versions of the state military doctrine enacted in 2010 and 2014 explicitly state that the President of the Russian Federation determines the main priorities of military policy.⁸⁹ One commonality between both documents is that they describe the features of modern military conflicts with exceptional precision. More specifically, they claim that the possession of the

⁸⁷ President of Russia, “Direct Line with Vladimir Putin,” April 17, 2014. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20796>.

⁸⁸ President of Russia, “Congratulations to Special Operations Forces Service Personnel,” February 27, 2015. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53945>.

⁸⁹ Dmitry Medvedev, *Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation*, February 5, 2010, pg. 1. https://carnegieendowment.org/files/2010russia_military_doctrine.pdf. See also Vladimir Putin, *Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation*, December 26, 2014. <https://www.offiziere.ch/wp-content/uploads-001/2015/08/Russia-s-2014-Military-Doctrine.pdf>.

strategic initiative is dependent on speed, selectivity, a high level of target destruction, and rapidity in maneuvering troops. The preservation of sustainable military command and control systems requires securing supremacy on land, at sea, and in the air.⁹⁰ The provisions contained within these doctrines translate well into Russia's operational movements prior to and concurrently with the Crimean intervention. Table 1.1 details Russian military capabilities in the operational zones bordering Ukraine (Western and Southern MDs). One discernable trend in the data is that highly mobilized units comprised 71 percent of Russian forces in the region.⁹¹ The posture of these troops is conducive for a maneuver strategy because exploiting critical vulnerabilities in an enemy's force structure requires a relative speed of movement and superior strength.

Table 1.1 Possible Distribution of Ground Forces in Western and Southern Military Districts (2013)

Military District (MD)	Western	Southern
Combined-arms armies*	2	2
Brigades		
Motorized rifle	6	9
Tank	1	0
Artillery	3	1
Mobile rocket artillery	1	1
Surface-to-surface missile	2	1
Air defense	3	1
Airborne	0	1
Special forces	2	2
Total number of standing brigades in each MD	20	18

Source: Data from Hedenskog and Pallin (2013).

*Refers to the integration of different combat arms of a military to achieve mutually complementary effects (e.g., infantry and armor in an urban environment).

⁹⁰ Ibid., pg. 6; pg. 4.

⁹¹ Jakob Hedenskog and Carolina Pallin, "Russian Military Capability in a Ten-Year Perspective – 2013," prepared for the Swedish Ministry of Defense. Stockholm, Sweden: 2013, pg. 26. <https://www.foi.se/report-search/pdf?fileName=D%3A%5CReportSearch%5CFiles%5C4afd4665-7fca-451e-bdd6-d0ce7107c38a.pdf>.

Surprise military inspections conducted along the Ukrainian border (Western MD) on February 26, 2014 showcased a considerable increase in Russian military capabilities with 150,000 servicemen, 90 aircraft, 120 helicopters, 880 tanks, 1,200 pieces of equipment, and 80 naval vessels participating in combat readiness exercises.⁹² When evaluated holistically, three prominent conclusions emerge from these observations. The first is that Putin ordered and oversaw military mobilization efforts. A report issued by the Russian Defense Ministry in 2014 stated that Putin inspected the combat readiness of Russian forces that participated in the training activities.⁹³ Second, the military exercises involved all three principal service branches: army, navy, and air force. The utilization of all three branches reinforces their function as decisive factors in achieving military objectives. Mobilization training of the armed forces aims to protect the state and the population in wartime.⁹⁴ Third, there were significant formations of special forces and airborne units located near the Ukrainian border. The preparation of these units for combat scenarios may serve as an indication of their effectiveness during subsequent operations in Crimea. On balance, the Russian military was well equipped and well versed with the core facets of maneuver strategies (speed and mobility) to successfully engage foreign combatants.

The results of this data assessment do not support the premise of the first hypothesis that states with weak civilian control over the military are more likely to adopt maneuver strategies. Conversely, the evidence shows that strong civilian control does not necessarily lead to defensive or restrained military strategies. President Putin dictated the direction and scope of Russian

⁹² Johan Norberg, "Training to Fight: Russia's Major Military Exercises 2011-2014," prepared for Swedish Ministry of Defence. Stockholm, Sweden: 2015, pgs. 75-77. <https://www.foi.se/report-search/pdf?fileName=D%3A%5CReportSearch%5CFiles%5C8e2dc822-a31c-4f6c-aecd-954375e3fe31.pdf>.

⁹³ President of Russia, "Vladimir Putin Observed Western and Central Military District Forces Exercises," March 3, 2014. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20362>.

⁹⁴ Vladimir Putin, *Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation*, December 26, 2014. <https://www.offiziere.ch/wp-content/uploads-001/2015/08/Russia-s-2014-Military-Doctrine.pdf>.

military strategy through established instruments of control. Constitutional provisions name Putin Supreme Commander-in-Chief of Russia's armed forces and grant him the authority to oversee military affairs in their entirety. Despite past displays of frustration-induced aggression by military officials, there is no indication of Putin's subordinates flouting his orders during operations in Crimea. Rather, Putin's acknowledgment of Russian troops on the peninsula and his supervision of military exercises conducted before the intervention suggests that he played a paramount role in conceiving the operation. As a corollary to strict political oversight, the pursuit of highly mobilized forces, as expressed in state-issued military doctrines and observed in intelligence reports, classifies Russia's strategic initiatives in the maneuver category. Therefore, the evidence proposes that this is a case in which a state exhibiting strong civilian control over the military makes a maneuver strategy more likely. The presidential administration in Russia, sanctioned by popular vote, subsumed the parochial interests of the military establishment. Strategies, such as maneuver, which typically emphasize tangible military power and antagonistic tendencies can originate from civilian rather than military apparatuses of power.

Internal Learning Processes

The second line of inquiry focuses on the interrelation of strategic initiatives and past combat experiences. The hypothesis guiding the assessment of data sources assumes that states are more likely to adopt strategies that were used successfully in recent wars in which they participated, and less likely to adopt untried strategies. Russell Leng provides a useful framework for understanding how states incorporate lessons into strategy. He proposes that in strategy formulation, experiential learning focuses on the outcome of a preceding crisis. States will take stock of successful practices and model future strategies accordingly.⁹⁵ Conversely,

⁹⁵ Leng, "When Will They Ever Learn," 380.

states may interpret lessons with a *realpolitik* orientation that stresses the importance of a credible demonstration of power and resolve. This is not to say that a bold directive leads to unbound belligerency. Leng assumes that prudence restrains state military activities—that is, a careful calculation of the adversary’s power and the costs and risks relative to the interests at stake.⁹⁶ In the context of the 2014 Crimean intervention, I will examine publications from Russian military theorists and compare their positions to previous military engagements, namely the 2008 Russo-Georgian War. The existence of parallel movements may indicate the integration of lessons into strategy development.

In Russian government and academic circles, an evolving lexicon of terms and concepts dictates contemporary understandings of waging war. Military art is the theory and practice of preparing and conducting armed struggle on land, in the sea, and in the circumterrestrial space. Military art encompasses the basics of organizing, conducting, and comprehensively supporting all modern operations and combat actions.⁹⁷ At present, military science constitutes a system of knowledge about the strategic nature and regularities of war, preparation of the state for the latter, the development of armed forces, and methods of armed struggle. Military science is a system of theoretical knowledge about war. Military art, meanwhile, is an area of theoretical and practical activity implying the ability to apply this knowledge creatively depending on the specific conditions of the situation.⁹⁸ In addition to gauging the current threat environment, Russian theorists rely on future projections of related junctural sciences and disciplines to determine necessary adjustments to strategy.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 381.

⁹⁷ Sergei G. Chekinov and Sergei A. Bogdanov, “The Art of War in the Early 21st Century: Issues and Opinions.” *Military Thought* 24, no. 1 (2015): 27.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

Integral to Russian conceptualizations of the theory and practice of war is the usage of foresight. In a military setting, foresight is the process of cognition regarding possible changes in military affairs and determining the perspectives of its future development. The basis of the science of foresight is knowledge about the objective laws of war, the dialectical-materialist analysis of events transpiring in a given historical context.⁹⁹ Developing a scientific and methodological apparatus for decision-making that considers the multifarious character of military operations has significant implications for interpreting Russian actions in Crimea. If strategy is continually developing alongside the basics of planning and conducting war, then specific requirements and recommendations stem from previous military engagements. A systematic evaluation of publications submitted by Russian military theoreticians demonstrates the pervasiveness of concrete scientific approaches to the changing nature of military strategy.

One overarching theme among Russian military publications and practical applications is the primacy of nonmilitary means for achieving strategic goals. General Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Federation, authored an article in 2013 that postulates a new model for conflict development. Modern war, Gerasimov argues, focuses on intelligence and domination of cyberspace. Information technologies have reduced the spatial, temporal, and informational gap between the military and governmental bodies.¹⁰⁰ The prioritization of the informational sphere dates to Russian military operations during the 2008 Russo-Georgian War. Despite only lasting for several days, the conflict bore witness to the first successful employment of wide-scale offensive cyber operations by Russian hacker groups.¹⁰¹ The involvement of the

⁹⁹ Valery Gerasimov, "The Value of Science Is in the Foresight: New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying out Combat Operations." *Military-Industrial Kurier* 38, no. 2 (2013): 25-27. See also, Charles Bartles, "Getting Gerasimov Right." *Military Review* 96, no. 1 (2016): 30.

¹⁰⁰ Gerasimov, "The Value of Science," 24.

¹⁰¹ Michael Connell and Sarah Vogler, "Russia's Approach to Cyber Warfare," *Center for Naval Analyses*, September 2016, 13. <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/1019062.pdf>.

Russian government remains inconclusive, although the timing of the attacks and forensic evidence provided a strong indication that the Kremlin was orchestrating the assault. For example, as Russian military forces moved into South Ossetia, a slew of distributed denial of service attacks (DDoS) took down Georgia's information infrastructure, cutting off government communications and defacing government websites. Georgian banks, transportation companies, and private telecommunication providers were also attacked, disrupting services.¹⁰²

The success of Russian covert cyber operations in Georgia set a precedent for future strategic developments. Documents published before the 2014 Crimean intervention emphasize the need for the Russian military to counteract new information threats and challenges.¹⁰³ A version of the Russian state military doctrine approved in 2010 calls for the creation of basic information management systems, and their integration with existing command and control organs at the strategic level. According to the doctrine, one of the features of modern military conflicts is "the prior implementation of measures of information warfare in order to achieve political objectives without the utilization of military force and, subsequently, in the interest of shaping a favorable response from the world community to the utilization of military force."¹⁰⁴ By implication, the tools of information warfare can be brought to bear before the onset of military operations to achieve the state's objectives without a forceful response. Furthermore, should force be required, information warfare can disorient and demoralize an adversary and ensure that the state is able to justify its actions in the eyes of the public.

¹⁰² Ibid., 12. For a thorough discussion of the aftermath of Russian cyber operations in Georgia consider, Ariel Cohen and Robert Hamilton, "The Russian Military and the Georgia War: Lessons and Implications," *Strategic Studies Institute*, June 2011, 45. <http://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pdffiles/pub1069.pdf>.

¹⁰³ Chekinov and Bogdanov, "The Art of War," 31. See also, Sergei G. Chekinov and Sergei A. Bogdanov, "Strategic Deterrence and Russia's National Security Today." *Military Thought* 24, no. 4 (2015): 25-27.

¹⁰⁴ Vladimir Putin, *Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation*, February 5, 2010, 5. https://carnegieendowment.org/files/2010russia_military_doctrine.pdf.

The idea of waging war in the informational space gained widespread attention among Russian military theoreticians and its significance to characterizations of military strategy increased. Col. S.G. Chekinov and Lt. Gen. S.A. Bogdanov, leading experts on new-generation warfare, state succinctly that no goal will be achieved in future wars unless one belligerent gains information superiority over the other. Formerly fought in a three-dimensional environment, armed struggle has expanded from ground, sea, and aerospace into an entirely new arena—information.¹⁰⁵ Not all theoreticians agree that the cyber component of information warfare fits squarely with current force posturing. Lt. Gen. V.I. Kuznetsov, Col. Yu.Ye. Donskov, and Lt. Col. O.G. Nikitin assert that developments in “cyber-engagements” confuse command and control structures. Each tier of leadership (“commanders and staffs of brigades and battalions, company commanders and their deputies, platoon and section (crew) leaders”) require a proportional part of cyberspace to operate within. Once the appropriate “battlespace” (area of responsibility) works out, commanders can effectively utilize cyberattacks to disrupt an adversary’s combat assignments.¹⁰⁶ The diffusion of knowledge relating to information warfare highlights its role as a reference point for understanding emerging trends in strategy development. Conflicts exist relating to the incorporation of specific subcomponents, such as offensive cyberwarfare, but theorists agree that the informational sphere presents a new arena for engaging hostiles. Russian sources also show that the process of operationalizing information technologies relies on the experiences of outside actors, particularly the United States.

The notion that Russian military strategy advances vicariously through the experiences of other nations receives support from a plethora of primary documents. Russian theoreticians

¹⁰⁵ Sergei G. Chekinov and Sergei A. Bogdanov, “The Nature and Content of a New-Generation War.” *Military Thought* 22, no. 4 (2013): 13.

¹⁰⁶ V.I. Kuznetsov, Yu.Ye. Donskov, and O.G. Nikitin, “Cyberspace in Military Operations Today.” *Military Thought*, 22, no. 6 (2013): 22.

identify the United States' defense of the monopolar world system as a starting point for this vein of strategic thinking. During the Persian Gulf War in 1991, American forces used an "electronic knockdown" to stymie the offensive capabilities of the Iraqi Army. The electronic operation was launched simultaneously with aerial attacks by the air force and sea-based cruise missiles, reinforced with reconnaissance strike aircraft and artillery barrages.¹⁰⁷ By drawing on an analysis of armed conflicts and local wars fought in the past few decades, Maj. Gen. S.L. Pechurov considers the Gulf War to be the first engagement of the high-tech age. Introducing the latest information technologies to develop modern weaponry has significantly altered the patterns of manpower employment and the conduct of military operations.¹⁰⁸ American generals utilized "long-range high-precision weapons, and modern reconnaissance and communication capabilities" to defeat the Iraqis quickly and at low cost to human life.¹⁰⁹ Chekinov and Bogdanov contend that precision-based operations obviated the need to amass forces along the front lines as coalition forces struck regularly and selectively at enemy targets from considerable distances.¹¹⁰ These observations highlight the importance of supplementing conventional force applications with improved information technologies. However, American actions have also imparted to Russian military theoreticians the importance of obtaining information superiority beyond cyberspace.

Another discernable trend in Russian strategic thought is that new-generation conflicts, conceptualized through American participation in the 1991 Gulf War and Operation Iraqi Freedom, will seek to depress an opponent's armed forces personnel and population morally and

¹⁰⁷ Sergei G. Chekinov and Sergei A. Bogdanov, "The Nature and Content," 4. See also, V.I. Kuznetsov, Yu.Ye. Donskov, and O.G. Nikitin, "Cyberspace in Military Operations," 22.

¹⁰⁸ S.L. Pechurov, "Operation Iraqi Freedom – Revisited." *Military Thought* 23, no. 1 (2014): 143-144.

¹⁰⁹ Pechurov, "Operation Iraqi Freedom – Revisited," 148.

¹¹⁰ Chekinov and Bogdanov, "Nature and Content," 4.

psychologically. Analogous to American machinations of “electronic knockdowns” is the utilization of network-centric warfare during the 2003 invasion of Iraq. American military planners disabled elements of the Iraqi air defense system, control posts, communication centers, radar stations, and anti-aircraft missile batteries.¹¹¹ In addition to rendering the Iraqi Army powerless to resist military advances, U.S. forces began to effect geopolitical changes. The installment of political opposition through state propaganda, the internet, and nongovernmental organizations ensured the protection of long-term national interests relating to energy carriers. Furthermore, under the guise of democratization, U.S. forces assumed a peacekeeping role that solidified their hold over the direction of Iraq’s political system.¹¹² For Gerasimov, the task of a peacekeeping force is to “disengage conflicting sides, protect and save the civilian population, cooperate in reducing potential violence, and reestablish peaceful life.” With the proper amount of preparation, peacekeepers can pacify a country with supportive measures aimed at alleviating humanitarian costs.¹¹³ Lessons from American involvement in Iraq demonstrate that managing territorial acquisitions and legally enforcing the presence of the invader requires establishing favorable public opinion across multiple mediums. Non-contact methods, such as instilling political dissent, separatism, or deescalating conflict through specialized NGOs and peacekeeping, can be employed offensively or defensively to achieve dominance.

The practice of modern war over the last few decades has shown Russian military theoreticians that successful and uninterrupted logistical support of troop groupings is reliant on domination of the information space. In fact, Chekinov and Bogdanov urge their counterparts to “without delay” start researching the use of nonmilitary measures of confrontation in wars and

¹¹¹ Ibid., 148.

¹¹² Ibid., 149.

¹¹³ Gerasimov, “The Value of Science,” 27.

other armed conflicts.¹¹⁴ The integration of information superiority into Russian military strategy during the 2014 Crimean intervention exemplifies a willingness to deceive Ukrainian forces in the cyber domain and delude their population centers. An emphasis on remotely employing Russian forces using non-contact methods is a product of thorough investigations into the strategic initiatives used during previous military conflicts involving Russia, and those of other nations. The following section attempts to evaluate these lessons in light of Russian military activities in Crimea.

Russia appears to have used covert cyber activities in coordination with other information tools and military operations to create a general air of uncertainty regarding the Ukrainian government's ability to secure its information systems. Through the cyber campaign, Russia has quietly and persistently compromised the Ukrainian government and military's ability to communicate and operate, thereby undermining the legitimacy and authority of Ukrainian political and military institutions.¹¹⁵ Russian hackers have utilized spear phishing, malware, DDoS attacks, telephone denial of service attacks (TDoS), and other forms of cyber disruption and espionage to conduct a steady drumbeat of cyberattacks targeting Ukraine's government, military, and telecommunications infrastructure in Crimea.¹¹⁶ Unlike the concurrent digital attacks and military border crossings in Georgia, cyberattacks against Crimea disabled major Ukrainian websites and jammed mobile phones of key Ukrainian officials before Russian forces entered the peninsula.¹¹⁷ Cyber espionage before, during, and after Crimea's annexation also

¹¹⁴ Chekinov and Bogdanov, "The Art of War," 36.

¹¹⁵ Margarita Jaitner, "Russian Information Warfare: Lessons From Ukraine," *NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre*, 2015, 90-92.

https://ccdcoe.org/sites/default/files/multimedia/pdf/CyberWarinPerspective_Jaitner_10.pdf.

¹¹⁶ Connell and Vogler, "Russia's Approach," 14.

¹¹⁷ Emilio Iasiello, "Russia's Improved Information Operations: From Georgia to Crimea." *Innovations in Warfare & Strategy* 47, no. 2 (2017): 54.

leveraged information that could support short-term and long-term objectives, a tactic that had not transpired, was not reported or went unnoticed against Georgia.

Reconstructions of information sabotage provided by private security firms describe the attacks against Crimea as being particularly sophisticated. According to one security company, cyber espionage operations employed simultaneously with other methods of information collection appeared to accelerate battlefield tactics. Hackers targeted the computers and networks of journalists in Ukraine as well as Ukrainian, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and European Union (EU) officials.¹¹⁸ Exploiting such targets could have provided Russia with insight into opposing journalistic narratives and advanced knowledge of important diplomatic initiatives. Operation Armageddon, for example, began targeting Ukrainian government, law enforcement, and military officials in mid-2013—just as active negotiations commenced for an EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, which Russia publicly deemed a national security threat.¹¹⁹ While there is no evidence of collusion or direction on behalf of the Russian government, the attacks did lend to the overall confusion of the crisis, and might be reflective of the Russian military embracing General Valery Gerasimov’s strategy on the future of warfare—conflicts will retain an information aspect part of larger asymmetric possibilities for reducing the fighting potential of the enemy.¹²⁰ The use of an information-psychological model marks another contrast from Russian operations in Georgia and a noticeable deepening in strategic thought surrounding information warfare.

¹¹⁸ Brian Prince, “Operation Armageddon: Cyber Espionage as a Strategic Component of Russian Modern Warfare,” *Lookingglass*, April 28, 2015, 4. https://www.lookingglasscyber.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Operation_Armageddon_Final.pdf.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹²⁰ Gerasimov, “The Value of Science,” 25.

Unlike Russia's forceful invasion of Georgia, the contest over Crimea was more of an infiltration. In the absence of a direct threat, Russia relied on non-kinetic options such as propaganda, disinformation, denial, and deception to influence internal, regional, and global audiences. A noticeable improvement from its efforts in Georgia, Russia used television broadcasts to generate support for actions in Crimea and to bolster the theme of Moscow's necessary intervention to protect native Russian speakers.¹²¹ Additionally, pro-Russian online media mimicked anti-Russian news sources to influence opinion; for example, the website *Ukrayinska Pravda* was a pro-Russian version of the popular and generally pro-Ukrainian news site *Ukrains'ka Pravda*. The pro-Russian sources would communicate false narratives about actual events, such as denying the presence of the Russian military in Crimea or blaming the West for conducting extensive informational warfare against Russia.¹²² By adapting denial and deception strategies, outside interlopers remained confused during the military phase of the Crimean crisis. Denying involvement in the attacks until the later stages of conflict allowed Russia to continue messaging its desire to de-escalate the crisis while increasing chaos. Since the United States, NATO, and the European Union could not predict Russia's objectives, Russia could leverage reflexive control to operate within Western decision-making loops, to reduce the costs of its actions against Ukraine, and to keep the United States and its allies out of the conflict.¹²³ With the testing of the second hypothesis completed, the following section provides a summation of the data and its implications for understanding military strategy development.

The results of this data assessment are generally supportive of the second hypothesis. The first proposition that states are likely to adopt tried strategies is shown to be true on account of

¹²¹ Iasiello, "Russia's Improved Information Operations," 56.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 56.

¹²³ Jaitner, "Russian Information Warfare," 91.

the similar cyber practices used during the 2008 Russo-Georgian War and the 2014 Crimean intervention. Both conflict episodes featured distributed denial of service attacks (DDoS), and the explicit targeting of government operated information networks. Widespread discussion among Russian military theoreticians and logistical planners about the importance of implementing information warfare into existing strategic initiatives demonstrates its prevalence in academic and practical settings.

On balance, information warfare aligns with two guiding principles in the Russian military. First, the Russian General Staff uses foresight to develop the theory and practice of future war. An assemblage of nonmilitary methods, such as offensive cyber operations and the installment of political opposition through state propaganda, the internet, social media, and nongovernmental organizations, serve as appropriate measures for bolstering traditional forms of military interference.¹²⁴ Second, the role of mobile, mixed-type groups of forces, acting in a single intelligence-information space is an established method of engaging adversaries in combat situations. A strategic information standoff is important for disorganizing military and state governance, and systems of military aerospace defense, deluding the adversary, creating the desired public opinion, organizing anti-government demonstrations and conducting other events aimed at reducing the opposing side's determination to resist.¹²⁵ However, the second proposition that states are unwilling to adopt untried strategies incurs resistance when measured against the data.

Evidence shows that Russian military officials emulate successful strategies used by other states. Drawing lessons from U.S. military operations during the Gulf War and the 2003

¹²⁴ Gerasimov, "The Value of Science," 25-27. See also, Chekinov and Bogdanov, "The Nature and Content," 18.

¹²⁵ Chekinov and Bogdanov, "The Art of War," 37.

invasion of Iraq, and focusing attention on shaping reconstruction efforts, demonstrates the importance of viewing external military activities. Defeating the enemy's main forces and destroying the economic potential of the opposing nation constitute the principal objectives of a new-generation war fought in a network-centric environment.¹²⁶ The overwhelming success of U.S. military strategic imperatives in these conflicts suggested to Russian theoreticians that the full range of military, economic, political, and diplomatic measures, blended with effective psychological information activities, may be used to conceal preparations for an attack and the nature of impending operations.¹²⁷ Therefore, this is a case in which a state evaluates tried and untried strategies from its own successful experiences in war and those of other states to formulate its existing military strategies. The findings presented in this section point to the larger conclusion that a complete understanding of states' foreign policies must account for their historical and vicarious learning experiences.

V. Omitted Variable:

Exogenous Pressures

The absence of a formal alliance between Ukraine and the Russian Federation on the eve of the 2014 Crimean intervention renders the testing of a related hypothesis infeasible. However, the formation of alliance structures and their resulting impact on strategy development has significant implications within the literature. Given the importance of military strategy for the outcome of wars, alliances thus seem to be a likely candidate for coordinating the national military strategies of member states, and in particular provide a potentially valuable opportunity for more powerful states to disseminate their preferred practices to smaller allies. The

¹²⁶ S.L. Pechurov, "Operation Iraqi Freedom – Revisited," 143-144. See also, Chekinov and Bogdanov, "The Nature and Content," 16.

¹²⁷ Chekinov and Bogdanov, "The Nature and Content," 18.

institutional design of an alliance is an overriding factor in the overall success of coordination. While far from foolproof, institutional mechanisms can help assuage some of the grievances present in an alliance by creating a venue where members can voice and manage their concerns as well as provide more predictable routines for their interaction. Questions to consider are whether defining alliances in strict terms captures the full extent of state relations, and if informal alliances create affinities that compel forceful action.

A convergence of ideals and practices facilitated by alliances has significant influence over a state's military strategy in the literature. The dominant strand of research views alliances as tools for aggregating capabilities against a threat; nations form alliances to increase their security by massing capabilities against a common enemy. The need for the alliance ends when the threat passes. Conversely, other scholars examine the interdependencies formed through military alliances and different institutional designs. Both the degree of institutionalization and capability aggregation, identified as primary external factors, challenge the notion that states make military doctrinal decisions independently from one another.

To understand the logic of military alliances, scholars posit several theories that explain national choices to form and to break them. Altfeld presents a rational choice theory of military alliances that emphasizes the trade-off between increased security (a state's ability to maintain the current resolution of the issues that it wishes to preserve) and decreased autonomy (the degree to which a state pursues desired changes in the status quo).¹²⁸ Morrow broadens Altfeld's concept of autonomy to create the possibility of autonomy gains from alliances.¹²⁹ Finally, Morrow provides an autonomy-security trade-off model that explains both symmetric (where

¹²⁸ Michael Altfeld, "The Decision to Ally: A Theory and Test." *Western Political Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (1984): 533-535.

¹²⁹ James Morrow, "On the Theoretical Basis of a Measure of National Risk Attitudes." *International Studies Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (1987): 416-419.

both allies receive security and autonomy benefits) and asymmetric (where one ally gains security and the other autonomy) alliances and the conditions under which each type occurs.¹³⁰

One commonality between both alliance types is that a state's security varies with the capabilities it possesses to defend its interests. However, whereas symmetrical alliances require great harmony of interest, asymmetrical alliances allow member states to receive security benefits, particularly in weak areas.¹³¹ For example, the Anglo-Portuguese alliance of 1899 (the Windsor Treaty) stopped arms shipments to the Boers through Delagoa Bay in Mozambique. Because the cessation of shipments assisted the British in their goal of establishing control over the Transvaal and Orange Free State (i.e., a change in the status quo), Britain gained autonomy from the treaty. The Portuguese in return received security guarantees of their colonies in Africa.¹³² All three theories show that alliances require a critical choice between conflicting goals of security and autonomy. The pursuit of one exacts sacrifices on the other. Credible commitments require a careful matching of interests between allies; however, those interests need not be identical, just complimentary.

The variables most commonly used to measure shifts in military capabilities include total military expenditures, military personnel, total population, urban population, iron and steel production, and energy consumption.¹³³ While security and autonomy benefits are what a state can expect to gain from an alliance, the motivations for a state to break an alliance are a deterioration of its security or autonomy in an alliance; an improvement in its security and

¹³⁰ James Morrow, "Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances." *American Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 4 (1991): 905-906.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 915.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 912.

¹³³ Composite capabilities scores used in Morrow's (1991) analysis were obtained from the Correlates of War project directed by J. David Singer at the University of Michigan. For each indicator and each year, a nation's share of that indicator is calculated by dividing its score on that indicator by the sum total of all nations' scores on that indicator for a given year. A nation's composite capabilities is the average of its share of these six indicators, providing a measure of a nation's relative capabilities.

autonomy out of an alliance; or a shift in the nation's utility function. Any decline in a state's capabilities relative to its position before joining the alliance make withdrawal more attractive than continued participation.¹³⁴

The literature has also pointed out the need to distinguish between the demands of major and minor powers. States prefer alliances that equalize the mix of autonomy and security to an unaligned state with an unbalanced combination of the two. Minor powers have low levels of security and high levels of autonomy and so try to form alliances that increase security at the cost of some autonomy. The situation is different for major powers. They possess high levels of both autonomy and security. They have no overriding interest to raise either autonomy or security; some desire to enhance their security, while others are content with theirs. As a group, major powers will not be driven to pursue exclusively autonomy or security in their alliances.¹³⁵

The application of these variables to strategy selection demonstrates the importance of analyzing military behavior among states. Morrow finds that asymmetric alliances are more likely to display deeper levels of coordination and information sharing because differing goals (greater security versus greater autonomy benefits) are neutralized through a formal agreement.¹³⁶ Bearce, Flanagan, and Floros affirm these findings but add another dimension by demonstrating how the dissemination of internal information about military equipment, technology, and base facilities mitigates crises among member states. Providing information symmetries encourages efficient bargaining and the creation of unified goals and strategies.¹³⁷

The literature shows that states are inclined to form alliances to increase their security by

¹³⁴ Bruce Berkowitz, "Realignment in International Treaty Organizations." *International Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (1983): 86-87.

¹³⁵ Morrow (1991), "Alliances and Asymmetry," 913-914.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 925-926.

¹³⁷ David Bearce, Kristin Flanagan, and Katharine Floros, "Alliances, Internal Information, and Military Conflict Among Member-States." *International Organization* 60, no. 3 (2006): 604-605.

massing their capabilities against a common enemy. However, there is another line of inquiry that aims to determine how the characteristics of an alliance affect military decision-making.

The degree of institutionalization dictates the formation of military alliances. While some alliances involve little initial investment or joint planning, others involve significant peacetime costs in establishing formal structures and engaging in military coordination. Several scholars have addressed the reasons states are willing to pay these governance costs in establishing cooperation-through controlling risks of opportunism and coordinating policy more extensively, state leaders may be able to achieve higher benefits from cooperation.¹³⁸ What has received less empirical attention, however, is the comparative performance of less institutionalized and highly institutionalized alliances. The question guiding researchers in this area is whether alliances that represent “deeper” levels of cooperation have more influence over a state’s military strategy than their less institutionalized counterparts.

Leeds and Anac propose a classification system that attempts to measure various facets of an alliance’s level of institutionalization.¹³⁹ This conceptual framework considers information on provisions included in formal alliance agreements. The three provisions indicative of the highest levels of joint preparation include: integrated military command during both peacetime and wartime; common defense policies, such as integrated military plans, training, and weapons procurement; and joint troop placements and mutual exchange of bases.¹⁴⁰ Studies incorporating this framework into their analyses establish specific criteria for distinguishing between the levels of institutionalization in an alliance. Wallace, for example, considers an alliance to be highly

¹³⁸ Ibid.; Altfeld, “The Decision to Ally;” Morrow (1987), “On the Theoretical Basis;” Morrow (1991), “Alliances and Asymmetry.”

¹³⁹ Brett Leeds and Sezi Anac, “Alliance Institutionalization and Alliance Performance.” *International Interactions* 31, no. 3 (2005): 185-186.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 188-189.

institutionalized if the agreement contains any of the provisions identified by Lends and Anac. An alliance exhibits mid-level institutionalization if it provides for any of the following more moderate arrangements: peacetime contact among military officials; the creation of any formal intergovernmental military organization; provision of military training or technology; and specific plans for contribution levels in the event of conflict.¹⁴¹

Focusing on variation in the design of alliances challenges a good deal of existing work, which assumes alliances organize and operate in essentially the same manner.¹⁴² By not considering the ways in which alliances may differ, it is perhaps not surprising that several recent studies fail to find a consistent effect for alliances on a range of national policies.¹⁴³ Through various mechanisms of coercion and persuasion, highly institutionalized alliances appear to have the potential to act as devices for spreading military practices and coordinating the national strategies of member states around the leadership of more powerful states. Less institutionalized alliances lack adequate levels of interaction to overcome issues of uncertainty and effectively transfer knowledge and practices necessary for adopting parent strategies.¹⁴⁴ Implicit in the literature is that alliance structures should be considered as closely as domestic institutions when studying military strategy. Moreover, studies show that minor powers, despite possessing high levels of autonomy, are less likely to make strategy choices in the absence of external influences.

VI. Conclusion:

Framing strategy development through the lens of the 2014 Crimean crisis sheds light on a few larger theoretical concerns. Findings from the first hypothesis have important implications

¹⁴¹ Wallace, "Alliances, Institutional Design," 232-233.

¹⁴² Brett Leeds, Jeffrey Ritter, Sara Mitchell, and Andrew Long, "Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions, 1815–1944." *International Interactions* 28, no. 3 (2002): 242-243.

¹⁴³ Benjamin Fordham and Victor Asal, "Billiard Balls or Snowflakes? Major Power Prestige and the International Diffusion of Institutions and Practices." *International Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (2007): 48-49.

¹⁴⁴ Wallace, "Alliances, Institutional Design," 238-239.

for understanding the relationship between government and military functionaries. Under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, the executive branch enjoys virtually unbridled political authority to initiate policy and enforce its implementation without any authentic legislative or judicial opposition.¹⁴⁵ The lack of institutional constraints poses the question as to whether the scholarly community must distinguish between civilian control and presidential oversight. Traditional notions of civil-military relations hold that states with weak civilian control are more likely to exhibit hostile military strategies.¹⁴⁶ Regarding Crimea, however, Putin remained at the forefront of escalation, from openly denying Russian presence to expounding the need for a military force to safeguard indigenous peoples.¹⁴⁷ In contrast to Yeltsin's acquiescence to growing military activism and open insubordination from individual commanders during the First Chechen War, Putin elicited institutional change that effectively restored state control.¹⁴⁸ He imposed a super-presidential system that extended his command over all facets of national policy, including military affairs. The singular nature of Russia's political system suggests that the orientation of elected officials does not restrict them to a particular course of action, and high levels of centralization do not preclude aggressive military strategies.

While strategy selection and objectives sought from war are reflective of national policies established through a political track, the analytical concept of strategy remains apolitical. The intricacies of strategy (scientific, methodological, and practical applications) stem from calculated evaluations of past and present military initiatives. Theoreticians and logistical

¹⁴⁵ See, The Constitution of the Russian Federation, "Chapter 4. The President of the Russian Federation."

¹⁴⁶ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 47-50. See also Todd Sechser, "Are Soldiers Less War-Prone Than Statesmen?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 5 (2004): 762-764.

¹⁴⁷ President of Russia, "Vladimir Putin answered journalists' questions on the situation in Ukraine," March 4, 2014. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20366>. See also, President of Russia, "Direct Line with Vladimir Putin," April 17, 2014. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20796>.

¹⁴⁸ For a detailed analysis of Yeltsin's relations with the military consider, Zoltan Barany, "Civil-Military Relations and Institutional Decay: Explaining Russian Military Politics." *Europe-Asia Studies* 60, no. 4 (2008): 587-592.

planners oversee the preparation of the armed forces for conflict and the allotment of resources necessary to achieve victory. However, the depth and breadth of studies are not limited to conflicts in which the state directly participated. Russian military theorists frequently addressed American operations to better gauge the condition of their armed forces and the present combat environment.¹⁴⁹ Information warfare became an all-encompassing topic, and the employment of cyberattacks during the intervention in Crimea attests to the importance of learning processes for strategic thought. Russian publications show that states create intricate systems of knowledge to delineate shortfalls in planning methods and determine necessary adjustments to force structures. They also demonstrate the risks associated with assuming the relationship between strategy and victory. Uncertainty acts as an impetus for critical review and looking to internal and external experiences assists with reducing variability in strategy development. Overall findings also indicate several possible avenues for further inquiry.

First, on a theoretical level, further work should deepen understandings of the political risks of maneuver strategies, especially as they relate to civil-military relations. Additional studies might provide a more sophisticated portrayal of the costs and benefits of maneuver. Specifically, states undergoing democratization may be inclined to engage in warfare as the transition process grants militaries a greater voice in the making of foreign policy, leading the state to adopt a maneuver strategy. Concerning the general viability of an alliance-based explanation, a more detailed examination of the functioning and relative strength of specific institutional mechanisms requires further research. For instance, foreign bases provide a setting for close contact between military officials from different backgrounds to share knowledge and practices. Failure to balance these advantages against the backlash bases often create in host

¹⁴⁹ See, Chekinov and Bogdanov, "The Nature and Content." See also, Pechurov, "Operation Iraqi Freedom."

countries may hinder the home state's overall influence.¹⁵⁰ Examining the conditions under which these various mechanisms are more or less likely to operate, would have the additional benefit of contributing to the growing literature on the military and political effects of specific provisions within alliance agreements.

On an empirical level, future work could expand on the strategic choices of states across time as well as space, permitting an opportunity to examine when and why states change strategies. The scope of this study is limited to one specific case, so including several additional cases may produce more generalizable results on strategy alterations. Finally, political scientists should collaborate with information technology specialists to better gauge the relationship between cyber warfare and strategy. The scholarly community needs a better grasp of information technologies; their operationalization in a military context, the transmission networks used to attack the internet servers of the opposing side, and possible enhancements in military security. Studies should also investigate the infrastructural requirements necessary for an offensive cyber capability and whether the emulation of information-oriented strategies is feasible for smaller nations with fewer material resources.

¹⁵⁰ Wallace, "Alliances, Institutional Design, and the Determinants of Military Strategy," 230.

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