AFTER CRIMEA

Time for a New British Geostrategy
for Eastern Europe?

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Both authors write here strictly in a personal capacity.

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Contents

Executive Summary

- Russia's belligerence, invasion and ongoing destabilisation of Ukraine and illegal annexation of Crimea have fundamentally undermined European security, re-emphasising the importance of geopolitics and ending post-Cold War dreams of peaceful and democratic change on the periphery of the Euro-Atlantic region;

- Given the character of the increasingly unpredictable government in Moscow, as well as its geostrategic activity in countries surrounding Russia, it is not entirely clear where or when Russia's revanchist geopolitical agenda will end;

- The United Kingdom (UK), as one of the key strategic powers alongside the United States (US) within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), and alongside France and Germany within the European Union (EU), has played a leading role in creating and upholding the European liberal order since the end of the Second World War, a system which is both expansive in scope and provides all allies with enormous strategic depth and a high level of security and prosperity;

- This order has become part of a kind of wider UK 'geostrategic defence system' – a system which greatly benefits British interests, insofar as the Euro-Atlantic structures act to dampen European geopolitical competition, thus enabling the UK to concentrate its strategic and economic resources on building up its wealth, prosperity and position in the wider world;

- However, it is often forgotten just how fundamental the European system is to Britain's national outlook – history has shown again and again that should a geopolitical threat rise on the European continent, it will quickly jeopardise British global interests if left unimpeded, warranting a massive transfer of UK strategic resources towards Europe to confront it and press it back down;

- Therefore, to maintain the European liberal order cost effectively, particularly when it faces uncertainty, while simultaneously maintaining a global orientation, the UK must reinforce its efforts in assisting its allies and partners on NATO's eastern frontier, not least the Baltic states and Romania, to enhance their ability to deter Russia from future provocation and aggression;

- Simultaneously, the UK, working with its allies and partners, and alongside NATO and the EU, must prevent Moscow from enhancing its influence or annexing further territories in the 'grey zone' between Russia and the European security system, thus upholding the right of self-determination for the countries concerned, while preventing illiberal forces from surging just beyond the 'eastern flank' of the Euro-Atlantic structures.

Introduction

As the next Strategic Defence and Security Review fast approaches, the United Kingdom (UK) is facing, once again, an old geostrategic dilemma. Russia's annexation of Crimea and destabilisation of Ukraine has demonstrated, somewhat brutally, that the more the world changes, the more it stays the same. To the East, on the European mainland, a large terrestrial power – with the capacity to disrupt the continental peace – has re-emerged, just as London has sought to globalise the British strategic presence even further (while simultaneously holding military spending firmly in check).[1] Indeed, for 20 years, the UK has come to assume that European geopolitics is outmoded and that general European war is done. London has sought a more global approach to British foreign and security policy: engagements – often humanitarian, and both short- and long-term – have been assumed in Mesopotamia (1991, 1998, 2003, 2014), Sierra Leone (2000), Afghanistan (2001), and Libya (2011). More recently, the UK has sought to boost its presence 'East of Suez', in the Indo-Pacific, with new strategic relationships forged with some of the Gulf states; South-East Asia; Japan; and Australia.[2] As Asia's maritime rim rises in prominence, and the United States (US), Britain's closest non-European ally, concentrates more and more assets in the region, London's interest 'East of Suez' makes sound strategic and economic sense.[3] In turn, this mandates a significant role for the deployment of British naval and air power, to enhance the nation's 'defence engagement', often in permanent overseas military facilities, such as the UK naval station recently upgraded in Bahrain.[4]

Yet, Russia's resurgence and territorial revisionism in Eastern Europe reopens the question as to how the UK should balance both geographic vectors – the global and the continental – of its foreign and security policy. This report seeks to provide an answer to this question, through a reappraisal of the eastern flank's geopolitical utility and significance to the overall Euro-Atlantic security architecture. For the UK, this is as much a political necessity as it is a strategic imperative: developments at the subregional level, particularly around the Baltic and Black Seas, pose a litmus test, decisive for future European architectures and their resilience in the face of both symmetric and asymmetric threats; protracted conflicts; and further territorial revisionism. In response, this report will advocate the development of a UK-backed geostrategy to prevent the re-emergence of a serious threat within Europe which could jeopardise British objectives overseas. In particular, it will assert that the UK needs to pioneer – and underwrite – a preventative European posture, called 'compound deterrence', to reaffirm the significance of strategic deterrence in a European context. British politicians and strategists must understand that military spending cannot be held in stasis

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[1] According to the Royal United Services Institute, in 2015, British military spending may decline to below two percent of gross domestic product, for the first time in recent history. See: Chalmers, M., 'The Financial Context for the 2015 SDSR: The End of UK Exceptionalism?', Royal United Services Institute (2014), available at:
https://www.rusi.org/downloads/assets/201409_BP_Financial_Context_of_the_2015_SDSR.pdf.
[2] For a good overview of the changing British commitment 'East of Suez', see: Rogers, J., 'European (British and French) geostrategy in the Indo-Pacific', Journal of the Indian Ocean Region 9.1 (2013): pp. 69-89; see also: Kelly, S. and Gareth Stansfield, 'A Return to East of Suez? UK Military Deployment to the Gulf', Royal United Services Institute (2013), available at:
https://www.rusi.org/downloads/assets/East_of_Suez_Return_042013.pdf; see also: Tsuruoka, M., 'The UK, Europe and Japan: Forging a New Security Partnership', RUSI Journal 158.6 (2013): pp. 58-65.
[3] On the US 'pivot' or 'rebalance' to East Asia, see: Holmes, J. and Toshi Yoshihara, Red Star over the Pacific: China's Rise and the Challenge to U.S. Maritime Strategy (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2010).
[4] On UK 'defence engagement', see: 'International Defence Engagement Strategy', UK Ministry of Defence (2013), available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/73171/defence_engagement_strategy.pdf.

when so many threats are emerging – and simultaneously – so close to the British Isles.[5] The UK is one of the few powers that cannot shirk its responsibilities, especially its European obligations, lest the geopolitical structures – like the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the European Union (EU) – which it has constructed and underwritten with the US (as well as France and Germany), and are designed to maintain the European peace, are to decay and collapse around it. After all, this would give real meaning to the concept of 'uncertainty', Whitehall's latest buzzword.[6]

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[5] See: Lindley-French, J., Little Britain?: Twenty-First Century Strategy for a Middling European Power (Kindle e-Book, 2013).
[6] The 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review contained this buzzword. See: 'Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review', UK Government (2010), available at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/62482/strategic-defence-security-review.pdf.

The 'Continental' and the 'Global': Aligning British Geostrategic Options

As Figure 1 (see Appendix) shows, the UK is, and will likely remain, a global power, having crafted for itself – and with its allies – an intricate geostrategic defence system that includes both maritime and terrestrial vectors.[7] However, history has shown again and again that the nation is only able to pursue an 'expansive' – or, 'global' – foreign policy if its 'ramparts', 'bulwarks', and 'counterscarps' on the European mainland are secure.[8] Geographic proximity dictates that these have traditionally included the English Channel as the the 'rampart', manned with the 'Wooden Walls' and later metal hulks of the Royal Navy; the Low Countries, France's Atlantic coast, and the gateways to the Baltic, the Mediterranean, and the Black Seas as the 'bulwarks'; and the eastern frontier – whether in the Holy Roman Empire, West Germany or the contemporary line running from the Baltic states to Bulgaria – acting as the 'counterscarp'. These key locations could act either as 'trampolines' for an enemy to attack the British Isles or British maritime communication lines, or – alternatively, and favourably – as gateways or nodes for the UK to project and institutionalise its power deep into the heart of the European continent.[9] This has often been difficult, not least because the Low Countries and the Baltic and Black Sea regions, in particular, have long been the locus of shifting modes of resource control and systems of governance, where geoeconomic forces alternated with outright manifestations of geopolitical power. British statesmen and strategists have long understood that no continental power, either European (i.e. France, Germany, or Spain) or extra-European (i.e. Russia), could be allowed to gain command – let alone control – over these vital spaces, lest it gradually become a threat to British influence or security.[10] Until the late 19th century, this was achieved through a 'balance of power' approach, whereby the UK maintained a navy sufficient in size to control access to its maritime communication lines, and a small, but professional, army – which could be speedily reinforced – to act as a strategic enabler for a coalition put together through British financial support.[11] Both the Royal Navy and the British Army could be periodically activated – through coalitions – to counterbalance any potential tyrant.

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[7] According to a study by the United States National Intelligence Council, the UK is likely to remain within the world's top five powers into 2030, ahead of France; Germany; and Russia. See: 'Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds', National Intelligence Council (2012), available at: http://www.dni.gov/files/documents/GlobalTrends_2030.pdf.

[8] To be clear, a 'rampart' is a defensive wall, often topped with a platform; a 'bulwark' is strongpoint, often projecting outwards from within a fortification, and a 'counterscarp' is the outer ditch of a defensive system, which, much like a membrane, allows defending soldiers to pass over easily, but prevents attackers from coming in. See: Simms, B., Three Victories and a Defeat: The Rise and Fall of the First British Empire, 1714-1783 (London: Allen Lane, 2007).

[9] See: Spykman, N., America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2008), pp. 98-103; see also: Cole, D., Imperial Military Geography (London: Sifton Praed and Co., Ltd., 1956), pp. 44-45.

[10] As Sir Winston Churchill put it: "For four hundred years the foreign policy of England has been to oppose the strongest, most aggressive, most dominating Power on the Continent, and particularly to prevent the Low Countries falling into the hands of such a Power. [...] Observe that the policy of England takes no account of which nation it is that seeks the overlordship of Europe. The question is not whether it is Spain, or the French Monarchy, or the French Empire, or the German Empire, or the Hitler régime. It has nothing to do with rulers or nations; it is concerned solely with whoever is the strongest or the potentially dominant tyrant." See: Churchill, W., The Second World War – Vol. 1: The Gathering Storm (London: Guild Publishing, 1985).

[11] See: Spykman, America's Strategy, pp. 103-07.

However, British capabilities – particularly territorial size, population, and economic mass – have often been limited, relative to the mainland European powers (especially France, Germany, and Russia). The UK has had to be more inventive than its competitors, to make up for its limitations in size. First, it has had to exploit the technological inventiveness of British society. Second, it has had to create a commercial environment suited to financial and industrial activity. Third, it has had to target its resources in a geostrategically informed way; this was achieved by funding and building up a powerful 'go anywhere' naval fleet, further underpinned by a maritime forward presence of naval – and, later, air – stations.[12] As an island nation, unless the UK could deny its enemies access to the ocean during times of tension, it would become very vulnerable and exposed to having its trade routes to raw materials and overseas markets cut. To prevent this, the Royal Navy created technologically sophisticated warships (and, later, submarines and aircraft) which could expel opponents from the sea or send them to the deep, as well as deliver armies to the shore. Yet, the industrial revolution – initiated, paradoxically, by British innovators – eventually unleashed technologies that undermined London's favoured geostrategic approach.

The dawn of the modern age (of industrialised and near continent-sized states), allied with the advent of mobile warfare on the land, meant that both the European and global vectors of British geostrategic policy began to conflict with one another.[13]   For, by the time that Britain could have financed a coalition and put an army into the field, the enemy's forces could have rolled across the European plain to their destination (London's 'counterscarps' and 'bulwarks' such as the Low Countries), with the spectre of continental primacy in sight. Even upholding the Royal Navy at a 'two-power standard' would no longer suffice: a powerful country in command of ports on the North Sea; the English Channel; France's Atlantic coast; the Black Sea; or the Eastern Mediterranean could deploy warships and submarines, at its leisure, to cut the UK's maritime communication lines. No event illustrated this problem as harshly as the two World Wars, both of which witnessed a massive transfer of British resources from the 'global'/'maritime' vector, to the 'continental'/'terrestrial' flank.

The immediate aftermath of the Second World War, and the ensuing Cold War, merely compounded this trend. To hedge against German resurgence and prevent the Soviet Union from reaching further into Western Europe, the UK came to place a heavy emphasis on maintaining a large, permanent ground force in West Germany. Alongside its US ally, the UK deployed tens of thousands of troops – as part of the British Army of the Rhine – backed up with armour and jet-fighters, to intersect with the UK–US nuclear deterrent. Yet, this action was to the detriment of its global posture. Maintaining an effective and well-resourced navy has always been expensive; simultaneously sustaining a large and potent ground force on the European mainland is cost-prohibitive. In order to push its security barrier deeper into Central Europe, the UK had to draw down its navy and 'de-globalise' its foreign and security policy.

As a result, the Royal Navy was gradually recomposed from a global expeditionary force into primarily an anti-submarine warfare fleet, to monitor Soviet naval activity in the North Atlantic and

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[12] The UK is still one of only three nations – the other two being the US and France – that maintains an array of overseas military and supply facilities, in locations as dispersed as the South Atlantic; the Indian Ocean; and South-East Asia.
[13] This is one of the – often overlooked – components of Sir Halford Mackinder's seminal piece on the terrestrial–maritime struggle in Eurasia. See: Mackinder, H., 'The Geographical Pivot of History', The Geographical Journal 23.4 (1904): pp. 421-37, available at: http://intersci.ss.uci.edu/wiki/eBooks/Articles/1904%20HEARTLAND%20THEORY%20HALFORD%20MACKINDER.pdf.

– should the need arise – sink Soviet strategic submarines, thereby preventing them from unleashing their deadly cargoes. The strategy worked, forcing the Soviet Union into a 40-year geostrategic competition in which it lacked the politico-economic organisation and financial power to win, enabling the UK and its allies to eventually prevail.

The resulting expansion of the liberal order in Europe (epitomised by the consolidation of NATO and the EU; their enlargement into Central and Eastern Europe; and their inroads into the Western Balkans – backed, in no small part, by British strategic foresight and resourcefulness) did not solely provide a security umbrella for the region, but also acted as a driver for the very first democratic reforms during the post-Communist transition period. These arrangements, linking liberal and democratic domestic reforms with national security, generated an embryonic security system from the Baltic to the Black Seas, motivating elites to disengage from Russia's economic; political; and strategic model, without requiring great military efforts or costly multilateral co-ordination. In effect, such processes of democratisation and liberalisation were subservient to British foreign policy and strategic objectives, transforming the Euro-Atlantic space and pushing NATO's 'eastern flank' – the ultimate border of the UK geostrategic defence system (see Figure 1) – thousands of kilometres away from the British homeland.

For some in the UK, the new order meant that the nation could effectively turn its back on the European mainland, with the progressive withdrawal of British military forces from Germany and other parts of Europe and a growing emphasis on global 'expeditionary' operations simultaneously facilitating the wholesale 're-globalisation' of British geostrategy. This began with the 1990 'Options for Change' and 1994 'Front Line First' defence white papers, but intensified with the 'Strategic Defence Review' in 1998; the 2002 'New Chapter'; and the 2003 'White Paper'.[14] In addition, the temporary collapse of Russian power in the 1990s and the rise of the Islamist terror threat in Afghanistan and the broader Middle East pulled British resources far away from the nation's traditional European zone of interest. This was not just a military realignment; in some quarters, the 'rediscovery' of the UK's global legacy elicited a new isolationist attitude vis-à-vis Europe (which has been portrayed, and mistakenly – particularly on the political right – as increasingly provincial, old, and closed).

However, the protracted conflict in Eastern Ukraine, following the Russian annexation of Crimea, proves that the post-Cold War European architecture is by no means finalised, or even secure (see Figures 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 in Appendix). An arc of instability threatens the democratic advancements in Eastern and Central Europe, as well as the Balkans, along with Britain's 'bulwarks' and 'counterscarps', perpetuating a novel spectrum of geostrategic challenges while reopening 'old', almost forgotten, wounds. The uncertainties that mar the modern European continent continue to run deep into the very fibre of its construction, and even in the project to integrate its various nations. Indeed, with successive enlargement waves, the 'new' member states have gained confidence in challenging the established approach favoured by some Western European countries. This has become more visible over the changing rapports with Russia, prompted by an emergent geopolitical setting which Western European political architects and strategists were (initially) ill-prepared to understand, let alone act upon. For example, Germany (the most vivid example) did not want to

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[14] For an excellent and succinct overview of British defence strategy, see: Taylor, C., 'A Brief Guide to Previous British Defence Reviews', House of Commons Library (2010), available at: http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN05714.pdf.

forego its long-standing partnership and rapprochement with Russia, in contrast to some newer member states which have posited a more robust approach – such as Poland or the Baltic states, which are debilitated by high energy-dependency rates and threatened by Russia's arbitrary and often coercive behaviour (i.e., the energy crises of 2006 and 2009). Wider regional realities, diverse and essentially idiosyncratic, have, thus, fostered spaces of discord and dissent between member states and their envisioned trajectories of enlargement.

This institutional dissonance and lack of political cohesion at the European level – exacerbated by the financial crisis and brought to the fore by Russia's resurgence – have given the first indications that Europe's resilience can be easily scotched. Russia's invasion of Georgia, in 2008; the dissolution of Viktor Yanukovych's 'loyalist' regime; the thunderous annexation of Crimea, following the Maidan uprisings; the subsequent, protracted conflict in the Donbas region; and the threat of yet another 'frozen' enclave at the fringes of the European construct have all measured the limits and capabilities of the European security system, as well as the prowess of Euro-Atlantic political ventures. Yet, the disparate responses, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, to this Russian aggression have prevented the EU from taking a coherent standpoint.

Thus, in light of Russia's resurgence; territorial revisionism; and military modernisation, the UK is now being forced to reappraise the way in which it connects the 'global' and 'continental' vectors of its overall geostrategic approach.

A New 'Eastern Question'? Russia's 'Area Denial' and 'Modulated' Warfare

The tensions in Ukraine, culminating in the Russian annexation of Crimea and the illegal secession of breakaway republics in Donbas, reveal a Russia that is now very much at odds with British foreign and security policy, both in a European and global context. After all, due to its size, Russia is one of the few European powers with the means to exert a commanding influence over large swathes of surrounding territory, threatening Britain's defensive 'bulwarks' and 'counterscarps' on the European mainland. This is a recurrent problem in London–Moscow relations: even if they have occasionally aligned, the two powers have always been competing centres of influence, with very different geopolitical outlooks and very different geostrategic agendas.[15] Indeed, British concerns over the potential economic and political ramifications of Russian geopolitical expansion are long-standing; Captain Edmund Spencer's military and expeditionary accounts during the Crimean (Eastern) War of 1853-1856 show this clearly:

> [...] such a position would enable [Russia] to hold in her hands the keys to Europe and Asia and must be regarded as one of the most disastrous events that could happen. The Black Sea, the Caspian and the Baltic would then indeed become Russian lakes; the Danube, that fine outlet of Central Europe, entirely her own; while with the Adriatic on one side, the Aegean, the Dardanelles and the Mediterranean on the other with an accession to her strength of millions of the most warlike races in the world, she might indeed dictate laws to half the world.[16]

Indeed, from the Crimean War to the tussles of the Cold War, the UK has looked to Russia's imperial ambitions around the Baltic and Black Seas as potential threats to British interests. For example, London used to fear that if St Petersburg succeeded in opening the Bosphorus – and, ultimately, the Eastern Mediterranean – to Russian naval power, while simultaneously facilitating the extension of Russia's influence overland (through the western littoral and the Danubian principalities, into the Balkans), it would put the Tsar's empire in a position to cut UK maritime communication lines to the Middle East and North Africa. This 'Eastern Question' had become almost eternal by the 19th century and, with the ebbs and flows of Russian and Turkish power, has continued to rise and fall ever since.

Even today, almost two centuries after Captain Spencer's expeditions, nothing much has changed. With Russia's resurgence, Moscow is seeking to alter, once again, the established order on the eastern periphery of the European continent. As the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, has

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[15] British and Russian interests have, in the past, become similar, if not entirely coterminous, when a great power challenger (such as France or Germany) has risen up in between them; examples include the Napoleonic Wars, the First World War, and the Second World War.
[16] Spencer, E., Turkey, Russia, The Black Sea, and Circassia (London: George Routledge and Co., 1855), pp. 94-95.

pointed out, the Kremlin is simply trying to rip up the post-Cold War-era rulebook.[17] Russia's new 'power-elite' is using the pretext of Civis Russianus sum (or, in a contemporary context: 'I am a Russian speaker') – i.e. the idea that Russia has an obligation to protect Russian-speaking peoples in surrounding countries, irrespective of the sovereignty of those countries or whether or not the Russian-speakers have even requested 'protection' – to assert the supremacy of the authoritarian regime that they have sought to implement and expand.[18] This mandates a Russian nationalist project designed to regain command over areas once under Moscow's control and reassert Russia's status as a hegemon.[19] Connectedly, Russia seeks to monopolise the east–west energy supply (one of the foundations of contemporary Russian power), by blocking off the West's gateways to the energy reserves of Central Asia. This means that it must prevent the Euro-Atlantic structures (i.e. NATO and the EU) from gaining further influence in regions where the key gateways are located, such as the South Caucasus.[20]

However, Moscow knows that it faces stiff competition from Western powers like the UK and the US – as well as NATO and the EU – particularly from their attractive democratic models, which are underpinned by their significant economic resources. The Kremlin's objective is, therefore, simple: *denial* of Western access to areas which it considers to be geostrategically vital. To achieve this 'area denial', Russia is utilising a murky – though carefully calculated, but sometimes impromptu – form of geostrategic offensive, which has been described mostly as "ambiguous" or "hybrid" warfare.[21] Contrary to the arguments put forward by some analysts, this kind of action – particularly in Georgia and Ukraine – is nothing particularly new; it simply utilises Russia's available tools to transform the status quo.[22] As such, it is 'hybrid' because it involves numerous different tools of military and non-military power: both overt and covert, legal and criminal. However, rather than focusing on the tactics, which are incidental (though important), attention should instead be placed on the desired impact of this form of operation. What Russia is doing is modulating its focus, for strategic effect, giving rise to a form of offensive that might be better described as "'modulated' warfare".[23]

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[17] 'David Cameron calls on Nato to rethink Russia relationship', BBC News, 2 August 2014, available at: http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-28619188.

[18] For good overview of the Ukraine crisis, see: Rasmussen, M. et al., 'The Ukraine Crisis and the End of the Post-Cold War European Order: Options for NATO and the EU', Centre for Military Studies, University of Copenhagen (2014), available at: http://cms.polsci.ku.dk/english/publications/ukrainecrisis/Ukraine_Crisis_CMS_Report_June_2014.pdf.

[19] For an excellent overview of Russia's geostrategy, see: Fedorenko, K., 'Welcome the "New Holy Alliance"', Fruitful Politics, 8 October 2014, available at: http://fruitpol.com/2014/10/08/welcome-the-new-holy-alliance/.

[20] For an overview of Russian energy geostrategy, see: Barysch, K., ed., 'Pipelines, Politics and Power: The future of EU-Russia energy relations', Centre for European Reform (2008), available at: http://www.cer.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/pdf/2011/rp_851-271.pdf.

[21] For good overviews of the character of 'hybrid' warfare, see: Hoffman, F., 'Hybrid Warfare and Challenges', Joint Forces Quarterly 52 (2009), available at: http://ndupress.ndu.edu/portals/68/Documents/jfq/jfq-52.pdf; see also: Freier, N., 'The Defense Identity Crisis: It's a Hybrid World', Parameters (2009), available at: http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/Articles/09autumn/freier.pdf; see also: Hsu, J., '"Ambiguous" Warfare Buys Upgrade Time for Russia's Military', Scientific American, 12 August 2014, http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/ambiguous-warfare-buys-upgrade-time-for-russia-s-military/.

[22] See, for example, Bērziņš, J., 'Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defense Policy – Policy Paper No. 02', Center for Security and Strategic Research, National Defence Academy of Latvia (2014), available at: http://www.naa.mil.lv/~/media/NAA/AZPC/Publikacijas/PP%2002-2014.ashx.

[23] A. Wess Mitchell and Jakub Grygiel have come close to explaining this mode of warfare, with the term 'limited war'. However, this phrase is inadequate, as it does not fully capture the scale of Russia's approach. Ultimately, Moscow's agenda is not 'limited'; any seeming 'limitations' are merely transitory, to buy time while Russia waits to orchestrate the next phase of the offensive. For more on the concept of 'limited war', see: Grygiel, J. and A. Wess Mitchell, 'Limited War Is Back', The National Interest, 28 August 2014, available at: http://nationalinterest.org/feature/limited-war-back-11128.

In this context, 'modulation' has two intrinsic meanings. First, Moscow is deliberately boosting and then reducing the tempo of its operations, to try and 'massage' political opinion both at home and abroad – particularly in Central and Southern Europe. In this way, it hopes to achieve a fait accompli as quickly and painlessly as possible, while simultaneously generating political division within both NATO and the EU (to reduce their ability to respond either rapidly or cohesively). In order to facilitate this component of 'modulated' warfare, the Kremlin is engaged in a vigorous (dis)information campaign at the politico-strategic level, designed to control and 'Russify' the dominant discourse on the conflicts which it has initiated.[24] It is also using, actively and passively, various political agents in Western countries – often known as 'useful idiots', during the Cold War – to help it achieve these objectives.[25]

In the second aspect of 'modulation', Russia is seeking to strategically control and manage the situation on the ground and beyond. It wants to generate 'chaos' which can be 'managed', to destabilise those countries courted by the West (without affecting itself too much).[26] The reason for this is that Moscow knows that the UK and its allies will not accept semi-stable or unstable states into their ranks, particularly those without the requisite territorial cohesion – a necessity for membership of NATO, due to the potential invocation of Article 5. Thus, by generating 'manageable' chaos in key areas (see Figures 4, 5 and 6 in Appendix), the Kremlin has sought to disincentivise further bouts of European 'enlargement', thereby reducing the threat posed to the Russian regime. Moscow's fear is that democratic agitators in countries along the Russian border may serve as a source of inspiration for its own downtrodden liberal forces to rise up and challenge its writ. The Russian elite is afraid that democratic revolutions in neighbouring countries, often supported by the West, are a threat to their own existence and their wider Eurasianist geopolitical project.

The generation of this 'manageable' chaos also serves a second purpose, which points to Russia's ultimate geostrategic objective. Though Ukraine's position as an energy gateway; its proximity to Russia; its lack of formal allies; and its harbouring of Russian-speaking minorities made it a prime candidate to suffer dislocation, Moscow targeted the country, in no small part, to push forward with its aim of undermining the UK–US security guarantees provided to Eastern European countries (particularly those inside NATO). London; Washington; and Moscow were all party to the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, which guaranteed Ukraine's territorial integrity in exchange for Kyiv's relinquishment of Soviet-era nuclear weaponry.[27] Though the Memorandum does not carry the same weight as NATO's Article 5, by voiding it, Moscow has sought to encourage other Eastern Europeans to question whether or not London and Washington would come to their aid in the future, should Russia seek to expand its agenda.[28] The Kremlin's objective may not be to prise these countries fully away from the West; but it is certainly attempting to reduce the willingness to confront Russian demands.

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[24] Pomerantsev, P., 'Russia and the Menace of Unreality', The Atlantic, 9 September 2014, available at:
http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/09/russia-putin-revolutionizing-information-warfare/379880/.
[25] See: Lucas, E., Deception: The Untold Story of East-West Espionage Today (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).
[26] In this context, Russia has undermined Western security strategies in two ways: first, by reigniting geopolitical conflict; second, by exacerbating 'cross-sector' threats (i.e. the threat from 'zones of chaos').
[27] Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, 5 December 1994.
[28] See: Sherr, J., 'James Sherr. Ukraine Crisis Media Center. April 11, 2014', Ukraine Crisis Media Center, 11 April 2014, available at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_4skeV97Kk.

NATO's Response: 'Compound Deterrence' and 'Area Penetration'?

Nobody in London – or other NATO capitals – should misunderstand the danger posed by the combination of 'area denial' and 'modulated' warfare, which Russia has been busily perfecting since the invasion of Georgia in 2008. In Ukraine, if not in Georgia, Moscow has revealed, decisively, that it has the political will to challenge the prevailing European order: it has shown, on two occasions, that it is prepared – and able – to redraw the map of Europe using military force, both overtly and covertly. If Georgia and Crimea were first, other parts of Ukraine and Moldova's breakaway region of Transnistria may be next, with the objective of opening fissures in the West's frontier and propelling 'chaos' deeper and deeper into them. The geopolitical outline of the Black Sea, in particular, already marks a return to the late 1940s architecture, with Moscow rapidly recovering most of the northern littoral (including the strategic outpost of Crimea). Russia's close proximity to NATO countries such as Romania – as well as the Baltic states – poses renewed national-security concerns, limiting their potential to effectively utilise their surrounding air; maritime; and terrestrial spaces, both strategically and commercially. Should Russia succeed in those locations – and face little resistance from the UK and allies – it might then seek not only to close off the 'New East' completely, but also to attempt to expand its revanchist agenda, to gain influence over certain nations within NATO itself.[29] It is in this context that Russia's attempted 'area denial', from the Baltic to the Black Seas, and military modernisation programmes correspond with a new kind of 'Eastern Question', with the 'grey zone' between the Euro-Atlantic structures and Russia – once described as the 'intermarium' – emerging as a new kind of 'shatterbelt' or 'crunch zone' on the very edge of the UK's geostrategic defence system.[30]

Clearly, Moscow's problematic expansionism and revisionism (which threatens to dislocate the post-Cold War interface between Russia; the EU; and NATO, as well as that amongst post-Soviet actors) has come increasingly to the forefront of the European political agenda. As depicted by Figure 1, for the UK – due to the enlargement of the Euro-Atlantic structures, which has taken the geography of the British defence system further East than ever, allied to the UK's position as a key (and nuclear) underwriter of NATO – this has particular salience. Britain has numerous allies along its contemporary European 'counterscarp' (from the Baltic states, through Central Europe, to Romania; Bulgaria; and Turkey); it has pledged to protect them all, under NATO's Article 5. As such, the growing strategic uncertainty in Eastern Europe cannot be left unanswered by London.

There is, thus, a need to reconfirm the significance of the European vector of British geostrategic policy, to ensure that dangers do not arise, in the nation's backyard, which could threaten wider

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[29] See: Bērziņš, J., et al., 'What does Hybrid Warfare mean to Europe? Four experts weigh in.', European Leadership Network, 21 October 2014, available at: http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/what-does-hybrid-warfare-mean-to-europe-four-experts-weigh-in_2034.html.
[30] The 'intermarium' was a term developed by the Polish geostrategist Józef Piłsudski, during the interwar period, to account for the lands resting between the Atlantic powers and Russia. He hoped that this territory would be unified under Polish leadership, to prevent future Russian or German encroachment. The terms 'shatterbelt' or 'crunch zone' are geopolitical parlance for regions comprised of smaller countries that are squashed between two or more great powers, which often destabilise them for their own geostrategic ends.

national interests and force London to relinquish its growing global attentiveness – particularly 'East of Suez'. Given the risks involved – not least, nuclear escalation – and, in line with the thinking set out in the National Security Strategy, any potential destabilisation would be best confronted through the adoption of a preventative approach. As the 2010 National Security Strategy put it:

> We will use all the instruments of national power to prevent conflict and avert threats beyond our shores: our Embassies and High Commissions worldwide, our international development programme, our intelligence services, our defence diplomacy and our cultural assets. [...] Where we can, we will tackle the causes of instability overseas in order to prevent risks from manifesting themselves in the UK, while being prepared to deal with them if they occur. [...] Therefore a strategy must also be based on creative insight into how best to achieve our own objectives and prevent adversaries from achieving theirs.[31]

It is for this reason that, prior to the recent NATO Summit in Wales, the UK – supported by the US – placed such heavy emphasis on encouraging the Alliance to adopt measures to stall the threat from Russia's 'modulated' warfare.[32] This resulted in the NATO 'Readiness Action Plan', including various so-called 'assurance measures', such as:

1. a commitment, amongst the Allies, to stop the decline in military spending;
2. the pre-positioning of military equipment and capabilities necessary for the rapid reinforcement of the 'eastern flank'; and
3. the development of a NATO 'Very High Readiness Joint Task Force' – or 'Spearhead Force' – capable of projecting power and effectively responding to potential aggression in the eastern proximity.[33]

Additionally, a 'Framework Nations Concept' was agreed. London announced the formation of a British-led multinational Joint Expeditionary Force, including components from the Baltic states; Denmark; the Netherlands; and Norway (potentially, also Canada), which could be mobilised rapidly to provide defence and to operate overseas to encourage greater interoperability and readiness between the participating nations.[34] Berlin also announced a capability-development plan, which would boost regional Allies' military preparedness.

However, these 'assurance measures', while widely acknowledged to be a step in the right direction, are unlikely to be sufficient in the longer term – either in 'reassuring' nervous Allies, or, more importantly, in deterring Russia's 'modulated' warfare, particularly if Moscow becomes more

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[31] 'Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty', UK Government (2010), pp. 9-10.
[32] For example, during summer 2014, the House of Commons Defence Committee prepared a report focusing on the threat posed by Russia, and the UK response. This report, recommending a reinforcement of UK and Allied strategic posture in Eastern Europe, was published on 31ˢᵗ July 2014. It was followed, two days later, by an open letter from the British Prime Minister to the Secretary-General of NATO, outlining many of the Defence Committee's recommendations. See: 'Oral evidence: Towards the next Defence and Security Review: Part Two: NATO, HC 358', UK House of Commons Defence Committee (2014), available at: http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/defence-committee/towards-the-next-defence-and-security-review-part-two-nato/oral/11292.pdf. For the Prime Minister's letter, see: 'PM writes to NATO leaders ahead of NATO Summit Wales 2014', UK Prime Minister's Office, 2 August 2014, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-writes-to-nato-leaders-ahead-of-nato-summit-wales-2014.
[33] 'Wales Summit Declaration', NATO, 5 September 2014, available at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm.
[34] 'International partners sign Joint Expeditionary Force agreement', UK Ministry of Defence, 5 September 2014, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/international-partners-sign-joint-expeditionary-force-agreement.

confident as its military modernisation programmes bear fruit.[35] Indeed, the covert dimension of Russia's recent operations is particularly alarming. Anyone who has watched the amusing rantings of the Chief Scientific Advisor in the British television comedy series Yes, Prime Minister will understand where this might lead: Moscow will likely continue to refine its "salami tactics" – 'modulated' warfare involving 'hybrid' methods – to secure its 'limited' spatial objectives, particularly if it feels that NATO will not respond with sufficient speed.[36] The Allied countries most likely to suffer future Russian destabilisation or attacks are geographically isolated, small, and narrow; if NATO's ability to deter Moscow breaks down, Russia might be able to alter the geopolitical status quo before the Alliance even has a chance to respond.[37] In turn – and to take Ukraine as an example – this could lead to the rise of volunteer paramilitary groups with potentially dubious ideologies in the fight against Russian occupation. The result could only be festering sores of chaos and instability and the deaths of countless European citizens within the eastern 'counterscarp' of Britain's own geostrategic defence system.

This calls for the UK – as well as its stronger NATO allies – to develop a more sophisticated, potent, and durable response to the threat from Russia. At the highest strategic level, Moscow's behaviour, allied to Scotland's decision to remain in the UK, must surely put to bed the debate over whether or not the British should renew or reduce their continuous at-sea nuclear deterrent. Without Trident (or its successor), Britain's ability to deter Russia in a traditional context would be jeopardised, with substantial reverberations throughout NATO (insofar as the UK is the only nation within the Alliance with the potential to draw the US into any European war, irrespective of whether or not it wanted to get involved).[38] However, an over-reliance on the existence of Trident (or its successor) would be equally disadvantageous; after all, during the Cold War, Allied strategists realised that a nuclear deterrent is only credible if it is reciprocally aligned with forwardly deployed non-nuclear forces. That was a key justification for the maintenance of the British Army of the Rhine, as well as other detachments of British (and American) troops in parts of Northern and Southern Europe. Indeed, without forwardly deployed; credible; and effective British conventional forces to underpin Trident, it was thought that the Soviet Union would consider NATO's Article 5 as nothing more than a bluff. This is precisely the situation NATO may now be starting to face: without a larger and more permanent UK (and US) conventional posture along NATO's contemporary frontier, it may lose its ability to deter provocation, leaving its exposed members to be splintered gradually by Russia and its 'modulated' warfare. To put it bluntly, without British (or American) 'human shields' along NATO's 'eastern flank', Moscow may not think London (or Washington) is willing to sacrifice its cities for the sake of Narva in Estonia or Daugavpils in Latvia, let alone slithers of land down the east of any of the three Baltic states. This may then actually invite Russian aggression, making the risk of nuclear escalation more likely, insofar as NATO would have no other effective means to respond.

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[35] Personal interview with a Senior Baltic Official, 20 June 2014.

[36] 'The Grand Design', Yes, Prime Minister, BBC, 9 January 1986.

[37] Personal interview with a Senior Baltic Officer, 15 October 2014.

[38] As the UK uses the Trident missile-delivery system, an enemy with sufficiently sophisticated air-defence warning systems, while it could identify the missile speed and trajectory (thus revealing the likely attacker), would not necessarily know whether it was being struck by the UK or the US, leaving it with no other option but to launch a counter-strike against both countries. In turn, this has implications for the entire NATO ensemble, simultaneously placing the UK–US alliance at the crux of the organisation's defensive capacity.

NATO therefore needs a credible deterrent to Russia's geopolitical revanchism and 'modulated' warfare. It should utilise both conventional and nuclear deterrence capacities – and in a reciprocal relationship, both from larger (i.e. the UK and the US) and smaller allies. Ultimately, as NATO's principal European military power, the UK needs to take the lead in reinforcing and then underwriting its 'counterscarp' down the 'eastern flank' of NATO. As a a 'counterscarp', this line would not be an impervious barrier – like the failed French 'Maginot Line' of the 1930s, or the Soviets' notorious 'Iron Curtain' during the Cold War – but would rather allow Western influence to flow over, while preventing Russian power from coming in. Geography dictates that the key countries along this 'counterscarp' are the three Baltic states – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – and Romania, as well as, in a supplementary context, Poland and Turkey (which act, respectively, as its rearward and southern 'bulwarks'). By stabilising the geostrategic environment of these peripheral but highly strategic outposts of the NATO security system, London would drum up greater resiliency at the fringes of Russian expansionism. Behind them would sit the strategic power of the UK, as well as – in a supplementary context, particularly as it gets drawn further into the Indo-Pacific zone – that of the US.

This deterrence strategy might be described as 'compound deterrence': by aligning small pockets of forwardly deployed UK conventional forces – 'human shields' – with those of local allies, the aim would be to generate 'trip wires', which would lead to the rapid activation of the UK–US strategic systems (conventional and nuclear), should they be crossed by an invader. These pockets would be comprised of ground troops, tailored to work in conjunction with local militaries, to deter Russian military aggression or provocation.[39] Vitally, these garrisons would need to be 'fortified' into the allied nations hosting them, to make them credible, not in the sense of a new Maginot Line, but, rather, in such a way that they are simply made permanent.[40] Once deployed, they would have to be deliberately calibrated to depend on local forces; logistical systems; and host-nation support, therefore making it impossible for an attacking enemy to bypass or ignore them, or for them to be swiftly withdrawn by the UK.[41]

Thus, British, augmented by other NATO, forces would act as the 'fortified' centre of gravity, whereas local forces – much smaller, but robust, and involving both regular and irregular (or, in this context, national-guard and special-forces) components – would function to infiltrate; harry; and divert any potential invasion force, irrespective of its form.[42] The logic behind 'compound deterrence', then, is to deter 'modulated' attacks on NATO's 'eastern flank', by making it so costly and so disadvantageous for such action to even be contemplated. This is because the potential targets would be always ready to act as 'strategic quagmires', or 'sticky' zones of destruction for any attacking enemy, thereby generating an integrated NATO 'anti-access' force, further intersecting with UK (and US) strategic conventional and nuclear forces, thus dissuading and deterring the initiation of any hostility.

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[39] Russia's next incursion utilising 'hybrid' methods may not involve 'little green men', but some kind of entirely different threat, for example: civilian agitators, armed police, nationalist paramilitaries, and so on.

[40] By 'fortification', this does not mean the construction of fortresses, which are, of course, vulnerable to modern precision guided munitions, but rather in the abstract sense of 'embedding' or 'strengthening' these garrisons – such as through "alliances, diplomacy, technology, terrain, agility and other factors". See: Huber, T., ed., Compound Warfare: That Fatal Knot (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: United States Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2002), p. 3.

[41] Not only troops, but also their families, increasing the significance of the potential target for the 'deterer' and the deterred alike.

[42] 'Compound deterrence' relies on the fact that British forces would be completely 'embedded', or 'fortified', to such an extent that it would become almost impossible for London to withdraw them, for, if an opponent – the deterred – comes to think that these forces might not remain on station in the event of hostilities, deterrence would break down.

How can this be achieved? To begin with, it is vital to point out the UK should not suddenly bolster the British Army at the expense of the Royal Air Force or the Royal Navy, which have been greatly run down in quantity of aircraft and vessels in recent years. Russia's resurgence in Eastern Europe does not change the basic fact that the world's economic and strategic fulcrum is moving rapidly away from Europe, towards other regions, and that London is well-positioned to exploit this shift by enhancing its maritime and aerospace capabilities in the broader Indo-Pacific – especially the Middle East – where other forms of threat to the national interest are continuing to emerge. Equally, as the Russian Navy is likely to increase its operational capabilities and presence in the North; Baltic; and Black seas, the Royal Navy may be called on to re-concentrate its efforts regionally, strengthening partnerships and synergies with Norway; the Baltic states; Romania; Bulgaria; and Turkey, and securing the maritime stability of Northern and South-Eastern Europe. Accordingly, the UK's upcoming Strategic Defence and Security Review must ensure that the nation's power-projection capabilities are upheld and, even, reinforced. This means providing the financial means for an air force and maritime fleet with sufficient ability to deliver destructive power from the air and sea using multiple platforms to deter potential opponents and uphold British military reach.

However, London will, in conjunction with local and regional allies, need to establish permanent NATO military garrisons in Estonia; Latvia; Lithuania; and Romania, the four most exposed countries along the 'eastern flank'. The defence chiefs of the three Baltic states have already invited NATO to establish a permanent presence in their respective countries.[43] In this sense, the build-up of 'compound deterrence' will depend on the political will of Britain's Eastern allies. So far, the restructuring; capability acquisition; and enhancement of most Eastern European armed forces has been conducted on the basis of their contribution to distant expeditionary missions, at the expense of conventional deterrence; defence; and national-security doctrines.[44] However, such premises must now, in part, be reappraised. In any case, the UK will be aided by the fact that Russia's 'area denial' and 'modulated' warfare are likely to intensify Eastern European countries' perceptions of threat and attitudes towards deployment or preparedness.[45] Hence, to amplify 'fortification', the UK's allies' national-security agendas might do well to resume imperatives such as border stability and local force projection – including improvements to transport systems – thereby catalysing national-defence assets within NATO's eastern proximity, to halt potential spillovers or escalations. In the mid- to long-term, such processes may involve the reconsideration of acquisition platforms; capability upgrading; and a more efficient pooling of resources, as well as the establishment of centrally directed programmes to counter Russia's (dis)information campaigns.

The UK should also stress and intensify the necessity of NATO interoperability, which involves not only the doctrinal reformulation of strategic objectives, but also the provision of sectoral expertise aimed at identifying pathways for the restructuring; modernisation; and even – in keeping with the logic of 'compound deterrence' – the 'specialisation' of the armed forces of certain key Eastern European countries, towards homeland defence. This implies extending the scope of host-country

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[43] The Baltic states' request took the form of a letter sent to NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, Gen. Philip Breedlove, asking for the deployment of a brigade-sized unit across the three nations. See: Haynes, D., 'Britain to be asked to base troops in Baltic', The Times, 13 May 2015, available at: http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/defence/article4438384.ece.
[44] See: Hurt, M., 'Lessons Identified in Crimea: Does Estonia's national defence model meet our needs?', International Centre for Defence Studies (2014), available at: http://www.icds.ee/fileadmin/media/icds.ee/failid/Martin%20Hurt%20-%20Lessons%20Identified%20in%20Crimea.pdf.
[45] Personal interview with a Senior Baltic Official, 20 June 2014.

support, or defining each member's attributions within specifically tailored strategic and tactical packages, on a case-by-case basis. Moreover, reforms to military and defence infrastructure – including communication routes (particularly in countries likely to host future NATO military facilities) – require a new impetus to render them capable of responding to fast-paced transformations within their geopolitical surroundings, especially when confronted with the tactics of 'modulated' warfare. As such, the optimisation of national and regional response capacities depends on the quality of industrial partnerships, or the flow of technology transfers, at both inter- and intra-state levels.

At the same time, the UK should push harder for a NATO-wide missile defence umbrella (including various strategic and sub-strategic components) in which it plays a leading role. The US; Romania; and Poland are already starting to benefit from ballistic-missile shields, which are likely to be rendered operable this year; but these do not yet cover adjacent European territory, and the operationalisation of such systems still requires further assessment. Thus, national budgetary allocations and military investments ought to focus on lower-tier missile defence systems as an intermediate step. Such reasoning could be applied to NATO itself, by taking into account already existing platforms such as the US-led European Phased Adaptive Approach (Phases 1 and 2) – which essentially constitutes the foundation of NATO's interim ballistic-missile defence system. Beyond ensuring the coverage and defence of national territories, these intermediary steps will, in the mid- to long-term, strengthen regional clusters, as a necessary measure towards a more robust form of 'compound deterrence', providing another layer of dissuasion. Such processes are likely to foster not only co-operation between like-minded regional actors determined to coalesce against what is perceived to be an historical threat, but also embed a sustainable regional security system that would empower Eastern European nations to act cohesively and synergistically in securing territories within the 'intermarium'.

However, 'compound deterrence', no matter how effective, will not protect countries presently just beyond the 'counterscarp' of NATO's UK-supported defensive umbrella. As Russia attempts to project and enforce its 'area-denial' narrative in the eastern neighbourhood, Euro-Atlantic responses can no longer minimise the gravity of a 'shatterbelt' (i.e. protracted or frozen conflicts with unpredictable, cross-border spillover potential) emerging at the fringes of the European order. Consequently, the nations surrounding the Black Sea, like Moldova; Ukraine; and Georgia, cannot be allowed to languish forever in some kind of 'grey zone' between the Euro-Atlantic world and Russia, for Moscow is unlikely to pass on the opportunity to press home its recent successes by further destabilising and/or 'absorbing' them in one way or another.

To push back against the Russian strategy, the UK should redouble efforts to enable NATO and the EU to press into these regions too. London should pioneer the development of a geostrategic approach predicated on 'area penetration' – through the provision of arms; expertise; and training to countries in the grey zone beyond the 'membrane', while supporting their sovereign right for ultimate admission into the Euro-Atlantic structures. By using the Ukraine crisis to draw attention to the lack of cohesiveness at the EU level, both politically and strategically, the UK might facilitate a more concerted approach towards the European Neighbourhood. Here, the fact that some EU capitals genuinely believed that Russia could be treated as an equal partner has eventually taken its toll, forcing those countries to reconsider their overall approach. After all, the annexation of Crimea has pushed the possibility of EU concessions and negotiations far over the horizon, as Russia appears determined to preserve its influence in its so-called 'near abroad', at all costs.

To achieve 'area penetration' in the 'New East' more effectively, and press down those Europeans who still believe in their ability to 'resuscitate' Moscow, the UK might do well to leverage and actively support countries around the Baltic and Black Seas – like Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, and Poland. These states have repeatedly sought to prop up the position of their region, through numerous attempts (including various multilateral arrangements) at stabilising the peripheries beyond the 'eastern flank', even before the Ukraine crisis took effect. As such, it is utterly vital that the UK seeks to direct the full might of NATO and the EU towards the resolution of so-called 'frozen conflicts', a process which must be understood, universally, as a necessary step towards regional stability and as a political deterrent to the wider Russian 'area denial' geostrategy. This would continue to ease these nations' transition towards a modern European vocation and, thus, keep the Kremlin permanently on the back foot, shaping a new era for European and regional security and stability – especially in the eastern proximity. In addition, London could also encourage, more proactively, Sweden and Finland not only to boost their defence outlay, but also to finally join NATO. By reducing the 'grey zone' to the north, recently emphasised by Russian aircraft violating Swedish airspace and a suspected Russian submarine surfacing in the archipelago around Stockholm,[46] this would build up a potent 'bulwark' in Northern Europe, potentially dissuading Moscow from provocative activity there (see Figure 2 in Appendix).[47]

Finally, Russian revisionism calls into question the Montreux Convention, which grants Turkey complete sovereignty over the Bosphorus and Dardanelles. Departing from the historical resurgence of the 'Eastern Question' suffusing European agendas, London would do well to open discussion on the generation of a new regional architecture which would likely ensure and guarantee long-term stability. This is especially important given that Turkey seems to be asserting itself as a more autonomous regional power. While the Black Sea has frequently been defined as a continental sea, its conflicts and enduring instabilities are not localised or confined to its shores and adjacent territories, but – as recently witnessed – can resolutely affront the entire European project. Much like the Baltic, the idiosyncratic nature of this historically contested region presents its specific sets of threats; opportunities; and limitations to engagement. Thus, a more robust British strategic approach and mid- to long-term measures demand a consistent appraisal and redefinition of such regional specificities, relative to European or trans-Atlantic scopes. Consequently, the Pontic vectors should be geostrategically redefined as a central component of the UK's strategic outlook – along with Turkey, as the south-eastern anchor of the entire British geostrategic defence system on the European mainland.

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[46] To be clear, there were at least two confirmed sightings of a small submarine in Swedish waters during late 2014 and early 2015, although the latter – but not the former – was confirmed as a civilian vessel. The Swedish Armed Forces confirmed the former as a foreign vessel.
[47] For more on the emergence of a 'Wider North', see: Rogers, J., 'Geopolitics and the "Wider North": The United Kingdom as a "Strategic Pivot"', RUSI Journal 157.6 (2012): pp. 42-53.

Conclusion

For the UK, the challenges resulting from the emerging regional and global systems are considerable and threaten to dislocate established post-Cold War British policy. London's historical interest in countries along the European continent's 'eastern flank' can be effectively revitalised through a geostrategy of 'compound deterrence', utilising targeted contributions and expertise (in terms of troops, technology transfers, and sectoral co-operation – both defence and intelligence related). The UK – with its overarching, historically instilled capacity of 'power projection' and, more importantly, 'power extension' (i.e. the institutionalisation of projected power, through alliances and coalitions) – can assume a leading role in informing and guiding the strategic inclinations of other Europeans, both friend and foe alike.[48] Of course, economic sanctions may yet force Russia to comply with the established European order; but the implementation of additional measures along the 'eastern flank' (not least 'tripwire garrisons'), as well as transparently empowering the armed forces of its Eastern European allies, will allow the UK to engineer a more predictable and legitimised security system. This will make intervention from outside far less probable, while simultaneously encouraging the ongoing commitment to and belief in, amongst allies, NATO's ability to deter.

With US power in relative decline and a 'rebalance' to East Asia underway, coupled with a modulating and uncertain threat along the 'eastern flank' of NATO, British strategists must step up. With its growing population and economy, not only is the UK the one power to which other Europeans will start to look for support when they are confronted by tyrants and thugs, but it will also – so long as sustains its defence spending – remain the US' most capable European ally.[49] Although potentially costly, a British-backed and reinforced 'counterscarp' in Eastern Europe, underpinned through 'compound deterrence', will cement the nation's European influence, allowing the US to support other theatres. It will also ensure that NATO is a future-oriented alliance, facing new geostrategic realities. While yesterday's NATO was designed to merge – as Sir Halford Mackinder put it – a French "bridgehead" and a British "aerodrome" with North America's industrial and agrarian power, to constrain Soviet aggression and prevent a resurgence of Germany,[50] today's Alliance needs a different geostrategy: a membranous 'counterscarp', running south from the Gulf of Finland to the Black Sea, including the Baltic states and Romania; forward 'bulwarks' in Poland and Turkey, to act as staging points; and a strategic 'rearguard' in the UK, with supplemental support from North America, which can be thrust forward at any moment to reinforce the East, should it come under direct threat.

Interdependent military systems (backed by a decisive UK strategic commitment) and an effective pooling of regional capabilities would make NATO's stand against territorial revisionism crystal clear. It would reaffirm a geographically structured unity and also respond to domestic and European strategic considerations – thereby continuing to stabilise the security environment,

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[48] For more on the concept of 'power extension', see: Rogers, J., 'Why do Europeans need armed forces?', FRIDE (2013), available at: http://fride.org/download/PB_168_Why_do_Europeans_need_armed_forces.pdf.
[49] According to Eurostat, by 2060, the UK's population will be just under 80 million, while France will have just over 75.5 million and Germany around 71 million. See: 'Population projections', Eurostat, 30 October 2014, available at:
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tps00002&plugin=1.
[50] See: Mackinder, H., 'The Round World and the Winning of the Peace', Foreign Affairs 21.4 (1943): p. 604, available at:
https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1943-07-01/round-world-and-winning-peace.

through the maintenance of a regional bloc. In turn, this would also encourage the more peripheral countries just beyond the 'eastern flank' – those directly threatened by Russia's lumbering clout – to pursue sustainable but progressive alignment with the Euro-Atlantic structures. Indeed, empowering the Baltic states; Romania; Poland; and Turkey to act as vectors of geopolitical and democratic stability against Russia's quasi-imperial incursions in the European Neighbourhood ought to be considered as part of Britain's fundamental geostrategic outlook. Thus, by bolstering its European 'bulwarks' and 'counterscarps', the UK will generate sufficient strategic slack to focus, simultaneously, 'East of Suez', allowing itself room to nurture the global foundations – economic and financial – of British power. In turn, this will further consolidate and amplify London's ability to help underwrite European security in the 21st century, to the benefit of both the UK and its allies alike.
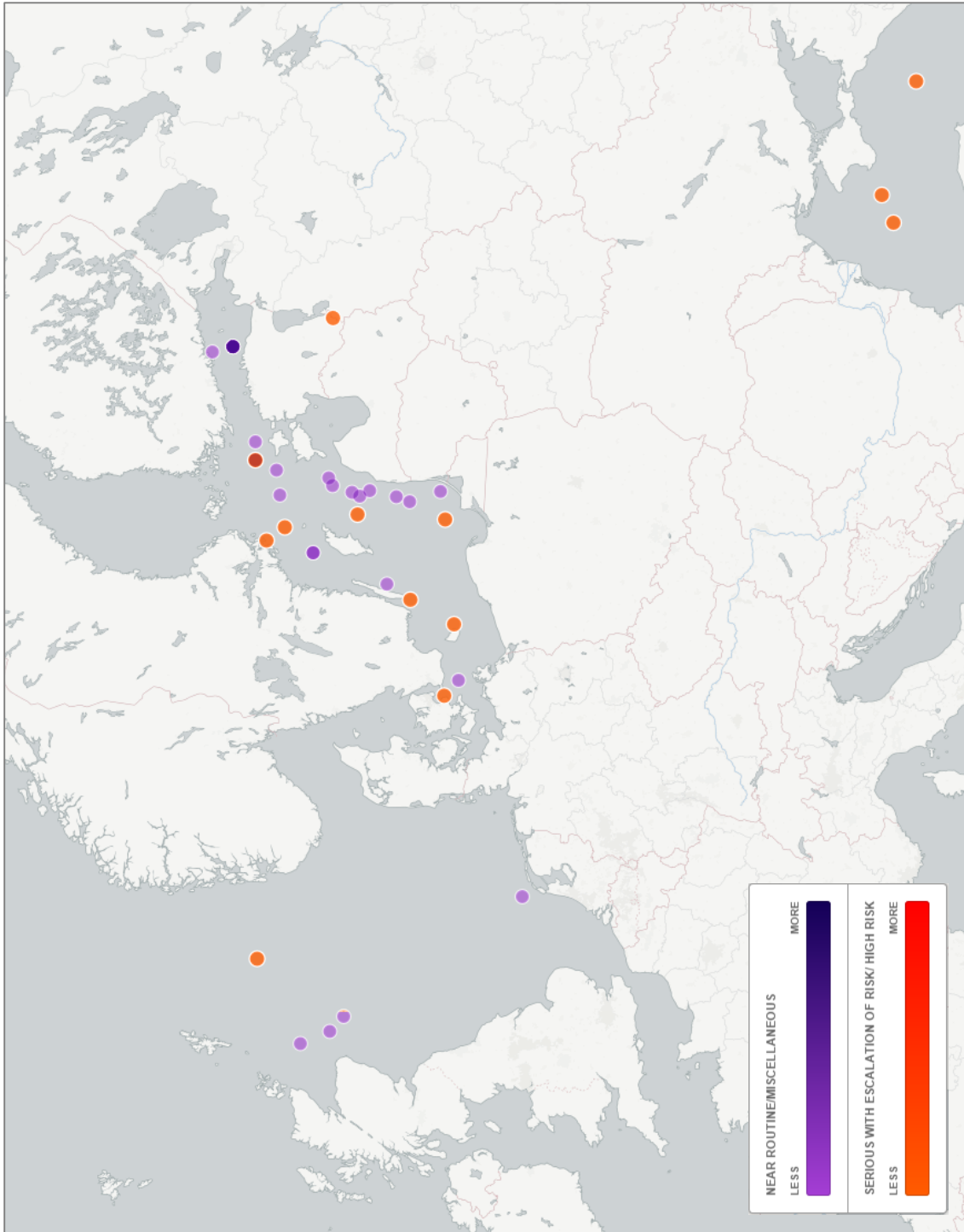
Appendix

Figure 1: Outline of the UK Geostrategic Defence System[51]

[51] 'Outline of the UK Geostrategic Defence System'. Map based upon file obtained from Wikimedia.

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Figure 2: Military Encounters Between Russia and the West, 2014

Note: Map generated using Cartodb software and with data input recoded from the report published by the European Leadership Network, 'Dangerous Brinkmanship: Close Military Encounters Between Russia and the West in 2014', http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/dangerous-brinkmanship-close-military-encounters-between-russia-andthe-west-in-2014_2101.html.
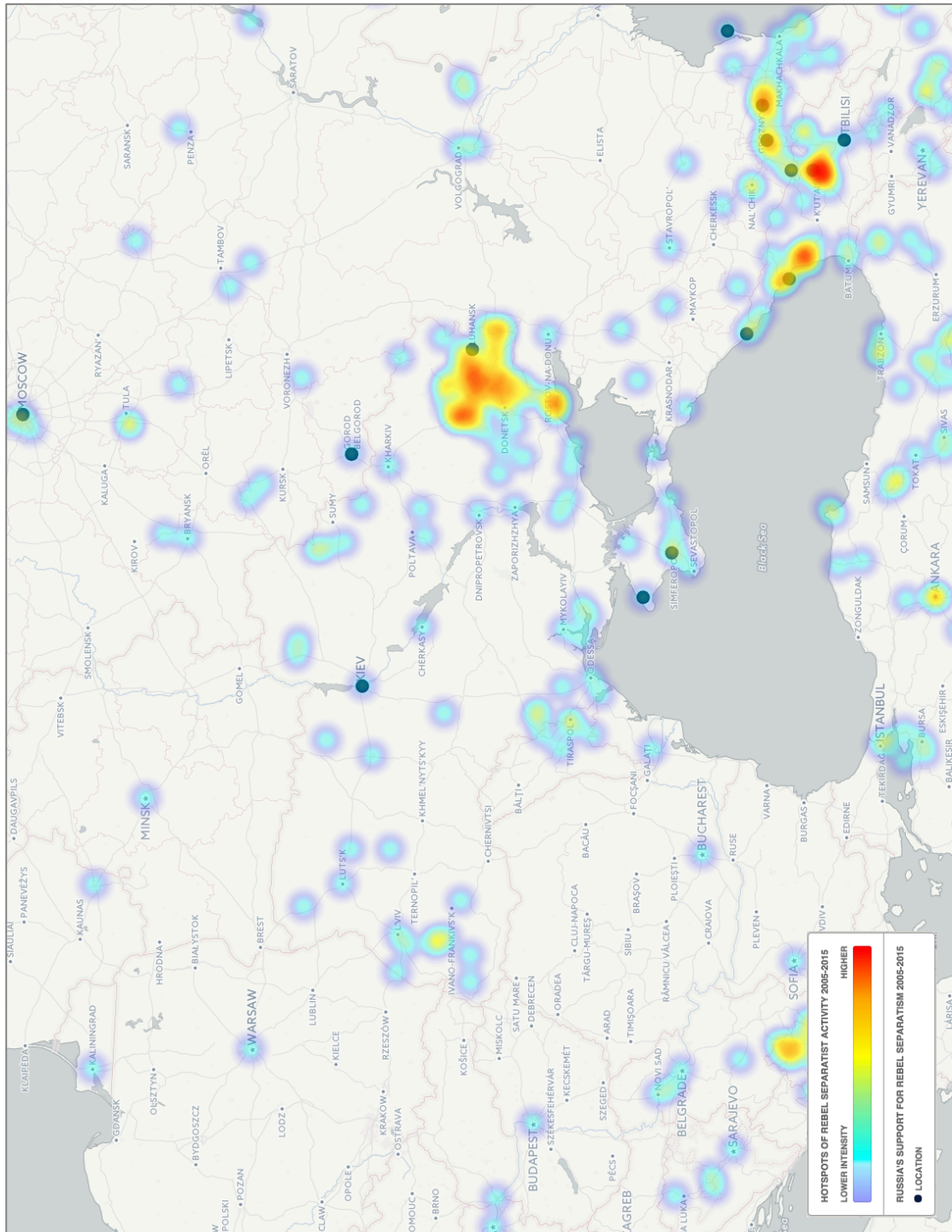
Figure 3: Heatmap of Material Conflict Across Ukraine Between 2014-2015
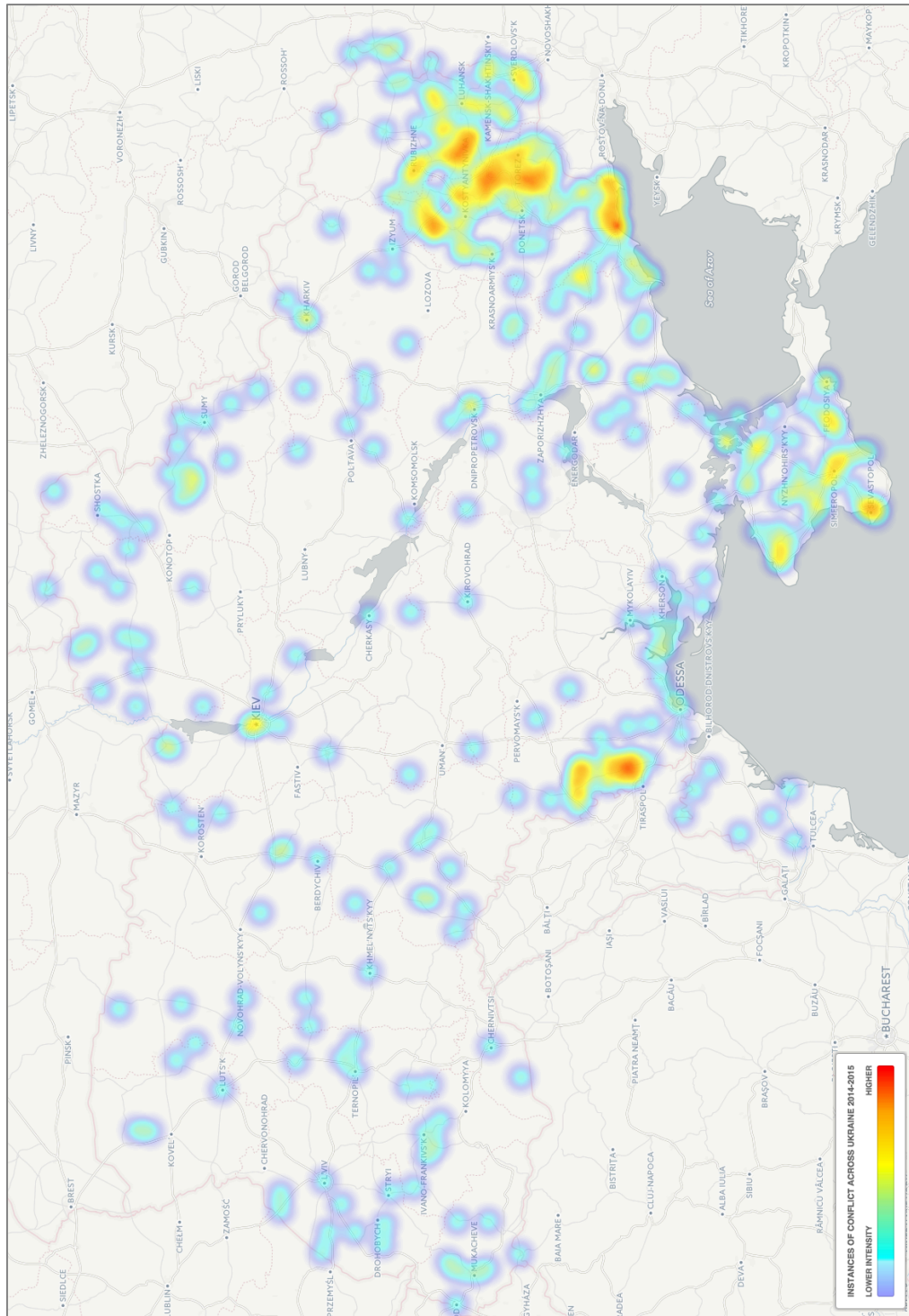
Note: Map generated using Cartodb software, whilst data has been collected and recoded (in some instances) using open source Gdelt Database and Google Biq Query. The inputs follow CAMEO taxonomy (Conflict and Mediation Event Observations Event and Actor Codebook). The map indicates the intensity of material conflict across Ukraine between 2014 and 2015 based on the number of worldwide reported events, with higher values forming bright red hotspots. Based on CAMEO taxonomy, "fight / material conflict" refers to actions such as: use of conventional military force; imposing of blockade, restriction of movement; occupying a territory; fighting with small arms and light weapons; fighting with artillery and tanks; employing aerial weapons; employing precision-guided aerial munitions; employing remotely piloted aerial munitions; and, violating ceasefire.

Figure 4: Map Showing Hotspots of Rebel Separatism, Conflict, and Russia's Support for Separatist Movements in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, 2005-2015

Note: Map generated using Cartodb software, whilst data has been collected and recoded (in some instances) using open source Gdelt Database and Google Biq Query. The inputs follow CAMEO taxonomy (Conflict and Mediation Event Observations Event and Actor Codebook). The map captures rebel separatist activities, the gradient indicating levels of intensity. The bright red hotspots also point to instances of material conflict. The other layer displays Russia's provision of aid, and engagement in material cooperation with separatist movements. According to CAMEO taxonomy, material cooperation denotes: acts of cooperating economically, militarily, judicially; the sharing of intelligence or information, whereas provision of aid refers to all provisions, extension of material aid (economic, military, humanitarian etc) not otherwise specified.
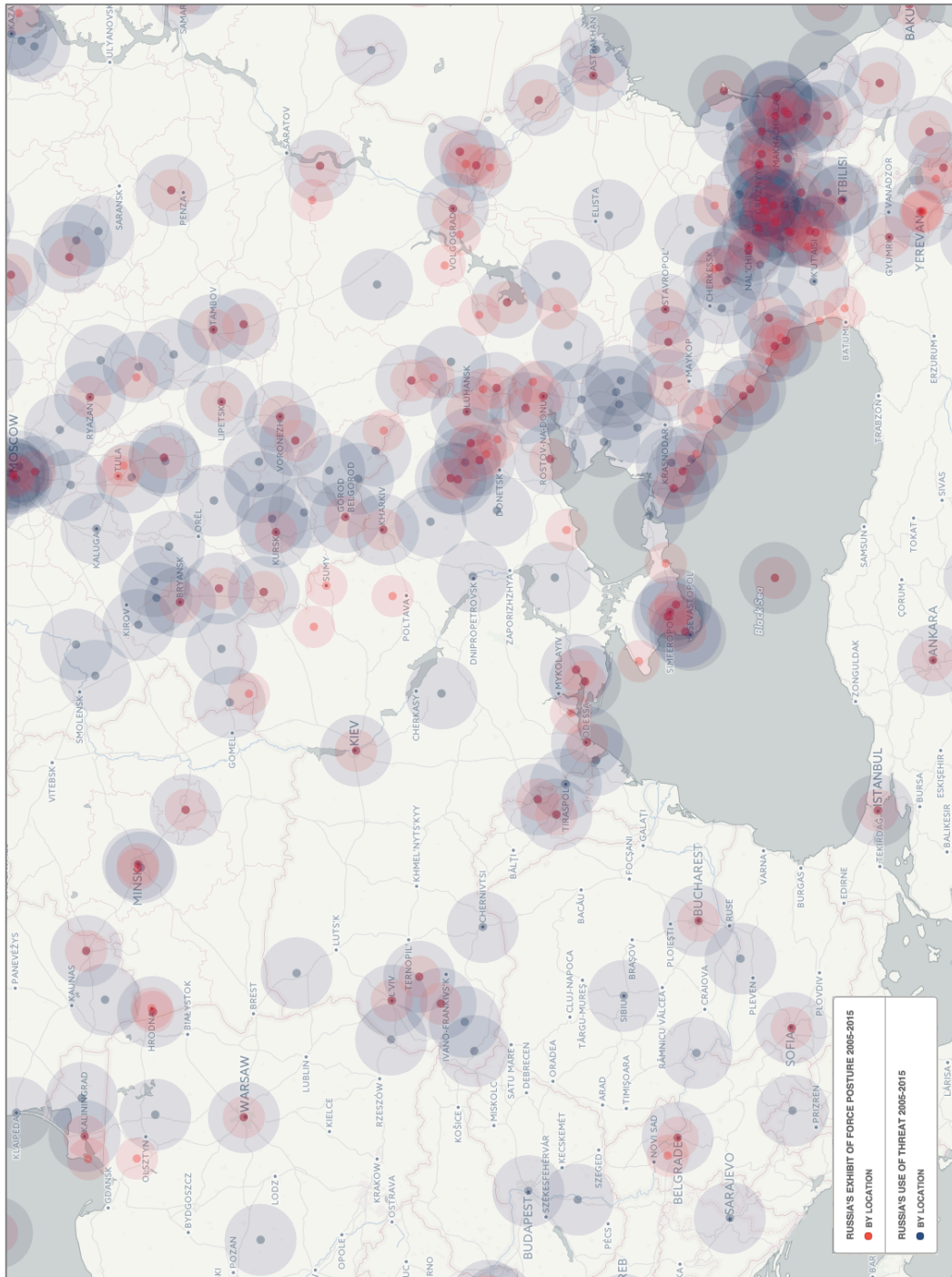
Figure 5: Map Showing Russia's Acts of Coercion in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, 2005-2015
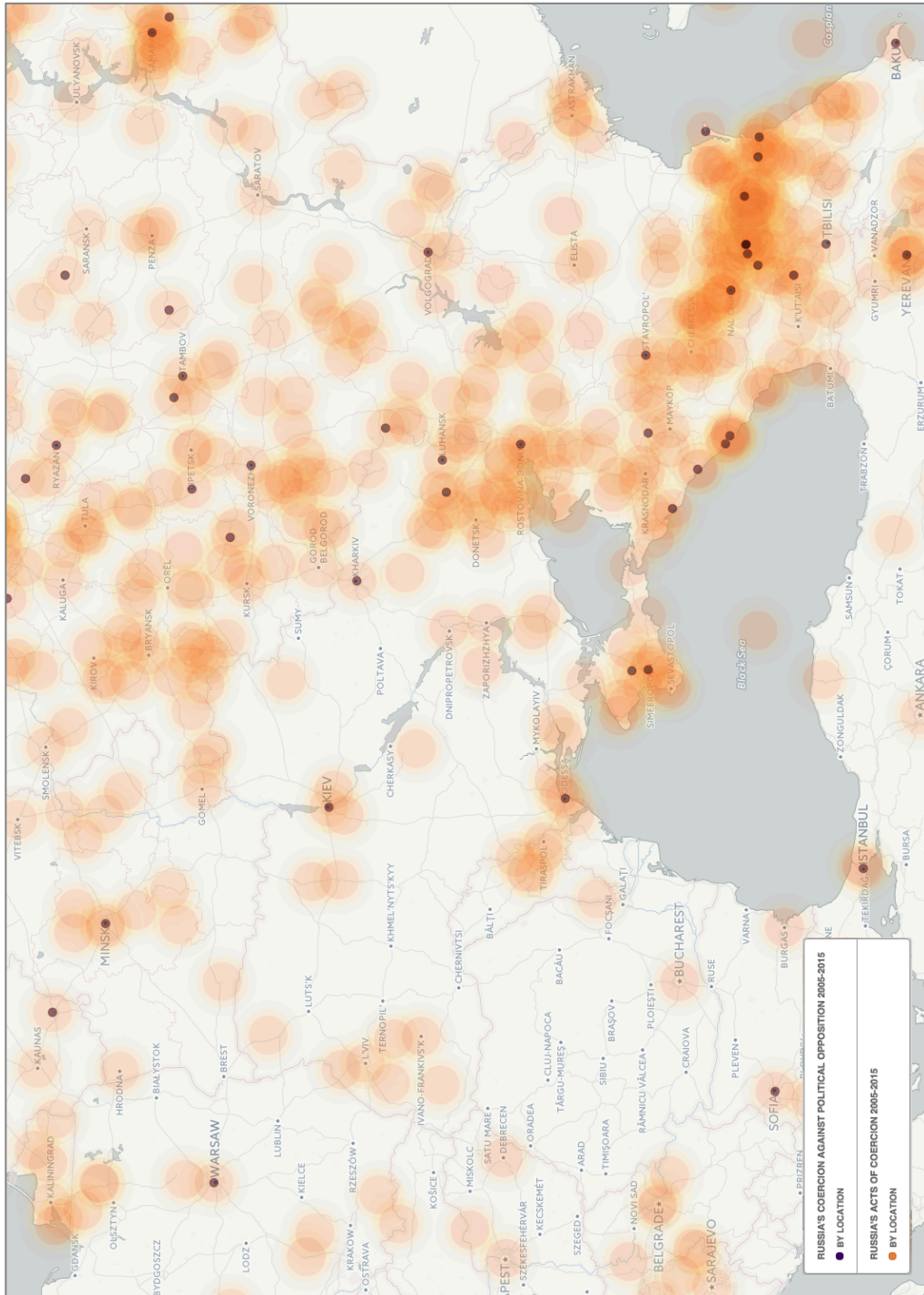
Note: Map generated using Cartodb software, whilst data has been collected and recoded (in some instances) using open source Gdelt Database and Google Biq Query. The inputs follow CAMEO taxonomy (Conflict and Mediation Event Observations Event and Actor Codebook). This map indicates reported acts of coercion perpetrated by Russia, and based on location, forms of coercion directed against political opposition. Based on generic CAMEO categorisation, 'coercion' includes actions such as repression, violence against civilians, or their rights and properties (also cyber-attacks), etc. not otherwise specified.

Figure 6: Map Showing Russia's Use of Threats and Exhibits of Force in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, 2005-2015

Note: Map generated using Cartodb software, whilst data has been collected and recoded (in some instances) using open source Gdelt Database and Google Biq Query. The inputs follow CAMEO taxonomy (Conflict and Mediation Event Observations Event and Actor Codebook). As coded through CAMEO taxonomy the event 'use of threat' refers to all threats, coercive or forceful warnings with serious potential repercussions. It can incorporate the following - threaten to reduce/ stop aid, boycott, or sanction; to reduce/ break relations; threaten with administrative sanctions, restrictions on political freedoms; threaten political dissent; with repression, military force, blockade, occupation, (un)conventional attack, unconventional mass violence; to give ultimatum. Also based on CAMEO taxonomy, 'exhibit of military posture' refers to all military or police moves that fall short of the actual use of force, not otherwise specified.

Just as the United Kingdom initiates its next Strategic Defence and Security Review, Russia is rekindling geopolitics on the edge of the Euro-Atlantic security system. For seventy years, London has worked with Washington (and others) to entrench and expand this liberal zone. To prevent Russia from extending its 'anti-access' geostrategy in Ukraine to adjacent countries, British policymakers - working in alignment with their Allied counterparts, particularly in the Baltic states, Romania and Poland - must steadily re-emphasise strategic deterrence. This will likely require a new British military footprint in Eastern Europe, including the permanent stationing of British troops in exposed Allied nations, to ensure the European mainland - a critical component of Britain's geostrategic defence system - remains prosperous and secure.

"If you believe in the cause of freedom, then proclaim it, live it and protect it, for humanity's future depends on it."

Henry M 'Scoop' Jackson
(31 May 1912 - 1 September 1983)
US Congressman and Senator for Washington State from 1941 - 1983

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