Abstract

Vladimir Putin’s national security, foreign policy, and military doctrines have been designed to demonstrate Russia’s pacific intentions and firm commitment to international law to the rest of the international community. However, the Russian leadership’s rhetoric has grown increasingly divorced from the reality of its national security policies, dating back to the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Since then, the Putin regime has undertaken several distinct policy breaks with the past, including the return to meaningful military alliances and mutual security arrangements such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, unilateral diplomatic actions such as granting political recognition to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and using hydrocarbons as a tool of foreign policy. While the rhetoric of the Russian leadership suggests that the state remains on the path of providing good international governance, the state’s policies indicate that Putin is willing to challenge the international community over Russia’s national security interests.
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Fields of Study

Major Field: Slavic and East European Studies
### Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framework</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 1: International Developments</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctrinal Views on International Developments</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctrinal Changes: 2008-2010</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Intervention</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Military Measures</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPRK</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authorization of Military Force</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territorial Conflicts</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abkhazia and South Ossetia</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section II: Russia’s Sovereign Interaction in the World</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Set of Putin Doctrines</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change and Continuity in the Medvedev Administration</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliances, Military Cooperation, and Power Projection</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear and Conventional Arms</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia’s Economic Levers of Power: Natural Gas and Oil</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I: UN Charter (Selected Sections)</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Vladimir Putin has just been sworn in as the next president of the Russian Federation; barring some unforeseen circumstances, he will control Russia’s foreign and national security policies for at least the next six years, and possibly longer. In order to understand what Russian foreign security policy might look like in the future, it is important to examine and understand the roots of Putin’s foreign security policies in the past. Putin’s tenure in office – as President and Prime Minister with effectively presidential powers – spans the entire 21st century and enables close analysis of policy progressions, changes, and impact. Given the multiplicity of international incidents and Russia’s responses to them over this period, an analysis of Putin’s foreign security policy should be able to identify trends, patterns, cleavages, and deliberate misrepresentation and obfuscation.

This paper explores and analyzes Russian foreign security policy – that is, the confluence of foreign policy and national security policy spheres – by establishing a tripartite cross-referencing methodology. Russia’s National Security Concepts/Strategies, Foreign Policy Concepts, and Military Doctrines constitute the official, unclassified views of Russia’s leadership on the state’s aims, means, and strategies with regards to foreign security policy and serve as the core sources for this analysis. The specific foreign security policies adopted and actions taken by Russia in response to external stimuli or doctrinal imperatives constitute the second arm of the analysis. Lastly, the
official justifications for Russia’s foreign security policies and acts are examined. Inspecting official rhetoric and the state’s concrete actions together offers the best opportunity for identifying opacity and transparency in Putin’s approach to the various domains of foreign security policy.

As a whole, Putin’s foreign security policy has been fairly mixed with regards to the internal consistency of words and deeds. There is a significant amount of continuity across many cases, as found in Russia’s preference for the peaceful resolution of outstanding conflicts and limiting nuclear stockpiles and halting nuclear proliferation. However, there are also significant divergences found between official rhetoric and actions in other cases, such as with Russia’s policies towards Abkhazia and South Ossetia and its emerging alliance structures. The dividing line between internal consistency and deviation is largely a product of proximity to Russia’s core national security interests; the more a given issue or development affects the Russian state, the greater the chance that rhetoric will not fully reflect reality, as would be expected from a country that above all else values its sovereignty.
Methodology

Foreign security policy is a term used here to describe the aims, behavior, and means employed by a state in the international sphere to fulfill its national security obligations and secure its national interests. In Russia’s case, foreign security policy is primarily\(^1\) specified in three sets of documents that constitute the official guidelines, directions, and frameworks of state policy: National Security Concepts/Strategies (NSC/NSS), which cover both domestic and international national security priorities, goals, and policies in a broad manner, Foreign Policy Concepts (FPC), which supplement NSCs by giving greater attention to regional and country priorities and more specific policy plans, and Military Doctrines (MD), which do not cover operational planning but do identify possible threats to national security and enumerate the government’s views on the acceptable and unacceptable uses of force in international relations. Collectively, these doctrines constitute “the officially recognized system of strategic priorities, goals, and measures in the spheres of domestic and foreign policy that shape the state of national security”\(^2\) and are intended to establish useful parameters and frameworks for the future conduct of the state apparatus in pursuing foreign policy goals, ensuring national security, and contributing to the provision of international stability and order. Putin

\(^1\) The state also publishes a Naval Doctrine and a Concept for Long-Term Socioeconomic Development, which supplement the core doctrines within their specific domains. They are not included here because the information they cover is readily found within the core set, albeit without all of the particular details.

\(^2\) 2009 NSC, 1.
authorized his NSC, FPC, and MD in 2000, while newer iterations of each appeared within the first three years of the Medvedev presidency – the FPC in 2008, NSS\(^3\) in 2009, and MD in 2010.\(^4\)

As guidelines and frameworks for later policy formulation, these doctrines are not intended to offer direct solutions to emerging problems; rather, they merely inform policymakers of long-term goals and priorities. Since there are so many inherent limitations with political rhetoric, such as misrepresentation, deceit, and incomplete information, and it must always be examined within the specific context (audience, purpose) of its appearance, it is tempting to ignore it altogether. The problem with ignoring rhetoric is that state behavior can easily be misconstrued by outside observers as well-intentioned, ill-intentioned, or erratic without a foundation against which it can be compared and from which expectations of behavior should be derived. On the other hand, analyzing rhetoric without relating it back to actions would be a foolhardy task given the propensity of state leaders and policy makers to engage in misinformation and deception, but rhetoric can be used in conjunction with other indicators of state behavior to provide a clearer and more complete picture of a state’s or leader’s intentions and strategies.

The analysis presented below consists of just such a coupling of rhetorical and demonstrative indicators to identify instances of concurrence and divergence between Russia’s anticipated or expected behavior, derived from doctrine, and actual behavior as it has occurred. In analyzing Russia’s foreign security policy, a third, and final, element

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3 Name changed from ‘National Security Concept,’ (NSC) to ‘National Security Strategy,’ (NSS).
4 The Putin and Medvedev administrations are generally treated here as a single entity since there is little to no doubt that Putin maintained his primacy even as Medvedev’s Prime Minister. When they are referenced separately it is to clarify the period in question (i.e. the ‘Medvedev administration’ refers to the period 2008-2012 but does not imply that Medvedev was dominant).
of the study is employed: the rhetorical justifications issued in direct anticipation of or response to concrete actions taken by the state. These justifications typically invoke some element(s) found in doctrine that may or may not reflect the leaders’ true motivations; nevertheless, they reveal the manner in which the state or leader wishes specific policies to be understood. Since this analysis can only cover official rhetoric intended for public consumption and cannot include information that is kept secret by the Russian leadership, identifying Putin’s ‘true motivations’ is beyond the scope of this work. However, as noted above, it is hoped that analyzing even accessible rhetoric and state actions can offer insights into the underlying motivations and intentions, even as attributing motivation and intention remains an extremely precarious task. The tripartite approach of this analysis – checking doctrine, behavior, and justifications against one another – comes with inherent informational limitations on exposing motivation and intention, so it is far from perfect. Nonetheless, it is a better alternative to approaches that rest solely or predominantly on demonstrative or rhetorical analysis alone and offers greater insights into the Russian leadership’s intentions and motivations in the foreign security policy sphere. Though this analysis cannot hope to address every aspect of Russian foreign security policy, it should serve to clarify the true goals, directions, and thought underlying policy by exposing both inconsistencies and areas of agreement between words and deeds.
Framework

This analysis of Russian foreign security policy is not presented with respect to US or other interests. Rather, it is an exploration of primary sources, including Russian source material translated and interpreted by the author, statements made by the Russian ambassador to the United Nations (UN) in Security Council (UNSC) meetings, and statements made by key Russian policy makers in the foreign security sphere. It is the author’s intent to present the views and policies of Russia’s leadership as faithfully as possible to their original intent. This, of course, involves a degree of subjectivity that cannot be eschewed, but every effort has been made to support any and all claims made by the author regarding the intentions and purposes of specific actions and rhetoric.

The analysis falls into two main sections: international developments and Russia’s sovereign interaction in the world. The first section covers developments in international relations that Russian policy makers view as critical to Russian foreign security. As will be shown, Putin’s foreign security policy relegates action on nearly all international developments to the UNSC, such as the key issues of authorizing the use of force against a sovereign state, intervening in domestic affairs, and dealing with potential, alleged, and proven cases of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferation. The second section covers Russia’s own forays into the provision of national security in the international sphere. This section explores those elements of economic and military power that have

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emerged and changed in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. Lastly, the findings of this analysis will be synthesized and their implications discussed.
SECTION I

International Developments

The Putin and Medvedev administrations have continually stressed Russia’s commitment to the rule of law and to the United Nations as the ultimate source of international legitimacy and authority, with the UN Charter\(^6\) serving as the foundation for all international law and relations between states.\(^7\) Putin and Medvedev have framed every policy and decision in the foreign security sphere within the basic principles enumerated in the UN Charter, especially Chapters I and VII that govern the interaction of sovereign states with the UN and with one another as well as the role and domain of the UNSC. While the UN Charter includes many safeguards to protect state sovereignty,\(^8\) the UNSC reserves the authority to “determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression” and to “make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken…to maintain or restore international peace and security.”\(^9\)

The use of force under the aegis of the UN to intervene in a country’s domestic affairs and/or to challenge the regime itself is a highly contentious issue and one that is fraught with complexities. As will be examined below, the Russian leadership has nearly always been opposed to direct intervention in another country’s domestic affairs and even

\(^6\) Selected sections of the UN Charter can be found in Appendix 1.
\(^7\) 2000 FPC, 1; 2008 FPC, 2; 2000 MD, 2; 2000 NSC, 2; 2009 NSS, 5.
\(^8\) UN Charter, Ch. I, Art. 2, No. 7.
\(^9\) UN Charter, Ch. VII, Art. 39.
less willing to approve of and authorize the use of military force against another state. The two circumstances under which the Russian leadership has authorized some form of intervention (diplomatic, economic, and/or military) are when a state seems to be pursuing nuclear weapons and when a state has a significant destabilizing influence on its neighbors, especially if that state has been conclusively tied to support for terrorism. The authorization of force is extremely rare in the UNSC and Russian leaders have resisted even the application of harsh economic sanctions against states as a form of punitive action when they are convinced that such action is not in Russia’s national security interests and/or that such action is counterproductive.

Respect for sovereignty and international law have formed the core of Russia’s foreign policy doctrine since independence. Given Russia’s extremely vulnerable geopolitical position following the collapse of the Soviet Union, dependence on foreign loans, and the separatist conflicts in Chechnya in the 1990s, it is hardly surprising that concerns over two of the most basic concepts of statehood and international relations dominated Russia’s strategic thinking in the early post-independence period. Interestingly, Russian policymakers have clung rigidly to their view of state sovereignty and respect for international law as the foundation of the international system through to the present; though Russia’s geopolitical position has improved considerably and supranational organizations have been increasing in salience, Russian foreign policy is characterized by a strong desire to create a multipolar world and avoid US-dominated unipolarity. There is a logical connection between respect for sovereignty, international law, and multipolarity that Russia is trying to harness as a non-confrontational counterweight to the US. With the economic and political stability that followed Putin’s
rise to the presidency, Russia assumed a greater role in international affairs and policy makers turned their inward-looking doctrine of respect for sovereignty and international law into a model of international relations that they knew would be extremely popular throughout much of the world, especially among rising powers such as Brazil, China, and India.

The Russian leadership has expressed its firm conviction that protecting and guaranteeing Russia’s sovereignty is among the highest national security goals and that the desire to safeguard state sovereignty transcends the domestic front and assumes an international character as one of the state’s core concepts relating to the conduct of international relations and the mechanisms of international law. Medvedev’s 2008 FPC states:

Attempts to lower the role of a sovereign state as the fundamental element of international relations and to divide States into categories with different rights and responsibilities undermine the international rule of law and lead to arbitrary interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States.

Putin’s 2000 FPC notes that “Russia proceeds from the premise that the use of force in violation of the U.N. Charter is unlawful and poses a threat to the stabilization of the entire system of international relations” and that one of the first priorities of the Russian state is to help form “a stable, just and democratic world order, built on generally recognized norms of international law, including, first of all, the goals and principles in the U.N. Charter, on equitable and partnership relations among states”. The first step, according to the UN Charter in which the Russian leadership has continually expressed

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10 2000 NSC, 1; 2009 NSS, 1.
11 2008 FPC, 5.
12 2000 FPC, 6.
13 Ibid., 1.
faith, in determining the level of punitive action to take against a state is for the UNSC to determine whether or not the state in question has failed to comply with previous UNSC decisions.\textsuperscript{14} If a state is deemed as having failed to comply with a UNSC resolution, non-military measures are then contemplated, including economic and diplomatic sanctions.\textsuperscript{15} Only if/when such non-military measures have been or would be demonstrably inadequate may the UNSC contemplate authorizing military means of compliance.\textsuperscript{16}

**Doctrinal Views on International Developments**

Putin’s 2000 NSC lays out numerous key points with respect to state sovereignty, international intervention against states, and the use of force in international relations. First, it condemns the US and the developed states of Western Europe for providing “unilateral solutions to the key problems of global politics, above all with the use of military force, in violation of fundamental norms of international law.”\textsuperscript{17} NATO’s planned operational expansion “beyond the zone of its responsibility and without the sanction of the UNSC…threatens to destabilize the global strategic environment.”\textsuperscript{18}

Peacekeeping efforts are considered vital to maintaining international security but they must be carried out under the auspices of the UN and other international organizations.\textsuperscript{19} Pursuing ‘humanitarian interventions’ without the approval of the

\textsuperscript{14} UN Charter, Ch. VII, Art. 40.  
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., Art. 41.  
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., Art. 42.  
\textsuperscript{17} 2000 NSC, 1.  
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 6.  
\textsuperscript{19} 2000 NSC, 15.
UNSC, thereby bypassing the commonly-accepted principles and norms of international law (UNSC authorization for breaching sovereignty) and disregarding the existing mechanisms of ensuring international security – chiefly the UN and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) – are viewed as extremely destabilizing actions.\textsuperscript{20} In the event of a peacemaking operation, the military goals should be to separate the armed forces of the opposing sides, supply humanitarian relief to civilians and evacuate them from the conflict zone, isolate the conflict region to implement sanctions passed by the international community, and reach the preconditions for a political settlement (2000 MD, 19).

Putin’s 2000 FPC states that Russia desires to influence the formation of “a stable, just, and democratic world order built on generally recognized norms of international law, including, above all, the goals and principles in the UN Charter on equitable and partnership relations among states.”\textsuperscript{21} This new world order should be based on collective problem solving, the primacy of law, and the democratization of international relations.\textsuperscript{22} Russia will adamantly oppose all attempts to circumvent the UN and wants to reduce the role of military power in international relations.\textsuperscript{23} Only the UNSC is considered to have the legal authority to sanction the use of force.

\textsuperscript{20} 2000 MD, 2; 2000 FPC, 6.
\textsuperscript{21} 2000 FPC, 1.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 3.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 5.
International relations in the first decade of the 21st century were marked by the US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003, respectively. US efforts to garner international support for intervention against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan were met with overwhelming international support and Russian support was crucial to the deployment of US forces and the acquisition of forward operating bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The 2008 FPC states that:

The deepening crisis in Afghanistan poses a threat to the security of the southern CIS boundaries. Russia, in collaboration with other countries concerned, the United Nations, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and other multilateral institutions, will make consistent efforts to prevent the export of terrorism and drugs from Afghanistan, find a just and lasting political solution to the problems of this country while respecting the rights and interests of all country’s ethnic groups and achieve post-conflict rehabilitation of Afghanistan as a sovereign and peace-loving state.  

However, in making the case for armed intervention in Iraq in 2003, the US was unable to convince the international community of the urgency and necessity of military action. That the US proceeded to invade regardless was seen by Russian policy makers as a dangerous precedent and a flagrant breach of international law. Realizing that the diplomatic channels of the UN and, specifically, the UNSC, had been so readily and handily circumvented and that Russia’s ability to influence international relations had been severely curtailed by its inability to prevent the US from intervening, the Russian leadership grew more skeptical of the efficacy of relying on the UN and nuclear

24 2008 FPC, 18.
deterrence as the sole guarantors of Russian national security and international stability. While the dominant rhetorical framework of multilateralism and non-military means of conflict resolution remained the cornerstones of Russian foreign security policy, Russian policy makers began looking to regional international organizations as complements or alternatives to the UN in their capacity as forums for problem solving, conflict resolution, and security guarantees.

Consequently, Russian policy makers recognized that the precedent of unauthorized intervention set by the US in Iraq could, without the concerted effort of the other great and major powers, turn America’s ‘unipolar moment’ into a much longer period of US global hegemony. The Medvedev administration sought to cast Russia as not only a proponent of states’ rights and international law but as their champion at the highest level of international relations.

The Medvedev administration noted with alarm that the existing global and regional architecture of international relations had failed to act as a guarantor of legality and international security, though the role of regional organizations in crisis and conflict resolution had nonetheless become a fundamental part of the international system (2009 NSS, 3; 2010 MD, 3). Russia resisted, with renewed vigor, NATO having a role in global security (2009 NSS, 5). Preventing global and regional wars and conflicts became a strategic aim of national defense (2009 NSS, 7).

The 2008 FPC calls for achieving a “strong position of authority in the international community”25 – a statement that, given Russia’s permanent seat in the preeminent international forum, only makes sense in light of the UNSC’s failure to

25 2008 FPC, 1.
prevent the US from intervening in Iraq even without UNSC authorization. The 2008 FPC also affirms the state’s commitment to international law with a strong reference to collective action under UN auspices constituting the only legitimate form of intervention in breach of state sovereignty.\(^{26}\) The FPC states that unilateral action “destabilizes the international community, provokes tensions and arms races, exacerbates interstate differences, stirs up ethnic and religious strife, endangers other states’ security, and fuels intercivilizational conflict.”\(^{27}\) However, the Medvedev administration also left a huge escape clause from such strict interpretations of unilateral actions. The 2008 FPC reserves Russia’s sovereign right to act unilaterally as a measure of last resort: if Russia’s partners are unwilling to act, then “Russia, in order to protect its national interests, will have to act unilaterally but always on the basis of international law.”\(^{28}\) In condemning other states for unilateral action while simultaneously defending Russia’s own ability to resort to it, the Medvedev administration unconsciously highlighted the hollowness of its own rhetoric on this point, for if Russia is relegated to pursuing a given action without international (UN or OSCE) support, by definition it cannot be considered in keeping with international law (which requires international recognition and acceptance).

**Russian Intervention**

In the 21\(^{st}\) century, Russia has authorized the application of non-military measures, especially economic sanctions and diplomatic penalties, against Afghanistan, Libya, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), Iraq, and Iran, among

\(^{26}\) Ibid., 2.  
\(^{27}\) Ibid., 4.  
\(^{28}\) Ibid., 6.
The Taliban regime in Afghanistan had been a proven sponsor of international terrorism, Libya under Muammar Gaddafi had both attempted to produce nuclear weapons and been accused of sponsoring terrorism, the DPRK has defied and resisted UNSC resolutions aimed at terminating its nascent nuclear program, Iraq under Saddam Hussein had used WMD and failed to comply with numerous UNSC resolutions, and Iran has failed to comply with provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and UNSC resolutions. However, of these five countries, Russia has only embraced or allowed the authorization of military force against Afghanistan (2001) and Libya (2011). For the other cases – Iraq, the DPRK, and Iran – Russia has resisted US-led pressure to sanction the use of force, deeming such ends potentially destabilizing, dangerous, and ineffective.

The two territorial disputes covered below – over the status of Kosovo and the de facto independent republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia that are claimed by Georgia – are treated separately as well since they are so intimately related and the 2008 South Ossetian War was not an instance of UN-sanctioned use of force against a sovereign state.

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29 Sanctions have also been leveled against the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote D'Ivoire, Eritrea, Lebanon, Liberia, Somalia, and Sudan. These cases are not included here because of their strategic unimportance to Russian policymakers; the African states are all treated collectively in one small section of the FPCs and Lebanon is overshadowed by Russian relations with Syria and Israel/Palestine.
Non-Military Measures:

Iraq

Resolving the regional stability and security issues pertaining to Iraq’s weapons disarmament in the 1990s and early 2000s was one of the central challenges of international diplomacy. Russia, along with the other permanent members of the UNSC, supported a number of resolutions targeting the Saddam Hussein regime in response to noncompliance with international weapons inspectors and disarmament. The dynamics of the negotiations changed markedly on February 5, 2003, when the US presented intelligence reports to the UNSC in which it claimed to have evidence of ongoing weapons programs in Iraq in breach of numerous resolutions. The ensuing diplomatic and legal debate over how the international community should interact with Iraq became a flashpoint of international relations. Russia, like most other states, remained unconvinced of the alleged Iraqi weapons programs and called for further rounds of inspections. When the US-led coalition began its military campaign against Iraq, Putin expressed his shock and outrage that the US would so flagrantly violate international law.

Prior to the US-led invasion, the Goods Review List established under Resolution 1409, which was co-sponsored by Russia, served as the foundation of UN involvement in Iraq.\(^\text{30}\) The Goods Review List imposed greater monitoring of potential dual-use (civilian and military) materials and helped to expedite the flow of civilian goods.

\(^\text{30}\) SC/7395 May 14, 2002.
session on October 17, 2002, the Russian representative, Sergei Lavrov, noted that much progress had been made in resolving any outstanding concerns over Iraq’s disarmament as a result of some 7,000 inspections made by the UN and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and that Russia desired to lift sanctions as soon as certain criteria were met, including the return of weapons inspectors. However, after Iraq rescinded its previously expressed permission for inspectors to return, Russia voted in favor of Resolution 1441, which held that Iraq was in ‘material breach’ of its disarmament obligations and was being offered a final chance to comply by allowing inspections within 45 days. Resolution 1441 was passed unanimously, but Lavrov stressed that the resolution “did not contain any provisions for the automatic use of force” and that all UNSC members “respected the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq.” Lavrov stated that Russia’s support of Resolution 1441 was a result of its commitment to international peace and security and that the resolution would further the diplomatic resolution of Iraq’s disarmament. The next significant UNSC resolution concerning Iraq was a proposal to adjust biological, chemical, and missile-related areas of the Goods Review List. Russia abstained from the vote, which passed, with Lavrov noting that the measure did not mention any proposals for lifting sanctions once Iraq complied.

The US presentation of intelligence concerning alleged Iraqi weapons programs began to expose the growing rift between those states that were convinced of dangerous Iraqi transgressions and those, like Russia, that thought only minor obstacles were

33 Ibid.
preventing the complete resolution of the issue. Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Igor Ivanov spoke at the UNSC and impressed Russia’s desire to study and attempt to verify the information presented by Powell. Ivanov appealed to all states to assist the inspectors with any and all relevant information pertaining to disarmament and asserted that the new information on the Iraqi weapons system only strengthened the need for close international cooperation.\textsuperscript{35} In session on February 14, Ivanov asserted that “the Council had a unique opportunity to solve the problems by peaceful means in conformity with the United Nations Charter” and that “force could be resorted to only when all other means had been exhausted. The international community was not now at that point. Energies must be directed, not at fighting, but at uniting efforts.”\textsuperscript{36}

By March, a new report to the UNSC by Chief UN Weapons Inspector Hans Blix had provided much more insight into the ongoing negotiations with Iraq. Ivanov observed that:

Thanks to pressure on Baghdad, \textit{including through military build-up} [italics added], progress had been achieved in implementing Resolution 1441 (2002). Enhanced inspections were under way. Inspectors had been given immediate and unconditional access to all sites, and, on the whole, the level of cooperation was thoroughly different from the practice that UNSCOM [United Nations Special Commission] had encountered.\textsuperscript{37}

Ivanov continued on to note, in agreement with Blix, that long-term monitoring of Iraq’s weapons programs would be a crucial means of ensuring that Iraq would not produce WMD in the future. Finally, Ivanov conceded that “nobody [is] in possession of the truth. Therefore, it [is] natural that there [are] different points of view. Such differences

\textsuperscript{35} SC/7658 Feb 5, 2003.
\textsuperscript{36} SC/7664 Feb 14, 2003.
should, however, not lead to a rift” and insisted that “only acting in solidarity can we effectively face up to new global threats and challenges.” In session on March 19, 2003, amid growing tensions between the US and UK-led coalition and the rest of the international community, Ivanov noted that:

The Council must, with a view to the further development of the situation, come back to the issue of the continuation of that work, pursuant to resolutions 1284 (1999) and 1441 (2002). Not one of those decisions had authorized the right to use force against Iraq outside the United Nations Charter. Not one of them had authorized the violent overthrow of the leadership of a sovereign State.

Furthermore, Ivanov stressed that the current crisis could only be overcome “on the solid basis of the United Nations Charter and international law,” which would enable effective multilateral cooperation to combat global threats and challenges within the framework of the UNSC.

The crisis truly broke upon when military force was used against Iraq on March 19, 2003. Putin addressed the invasion on March 20, 2003, sharply criticizing the US decision:

Military action against Iraq is a big political mistake. I have already talked about the humanitarian aspects. However, we are no less concerned about the threat of the collapse of the complex system of international security. If we allow international law to be replaced by the rule of the fist, according to which might is always right and is authorized for everything, and there are no constraints on the means used to achieve one’s goals, then one of the fundamental principles of international law – the inviolability of state sovereignty – will be called into question. And then no one, not a single country in the world, will feel safe. The emerging and spreading flashpoint of instability will grow and bring about negative consequences in different regions of the world.

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38 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
In the ensuing UNSC meeting, Lavrov, declared that “unprovoked military action had been undertaken in violation of international law against Iraq,” and described the coalition attack as constituting “illegal military action.”\(^{42}\) In particular, Lavrov pointed to a lack of evidence in corroborating the alleged casus belli: that Iraq was in possession of weapons of mass destruction and assisting international terrorism. Importantly, he added that “the Russian Federation would continue to oppose attempts to legitimize the use of force or shift responsibility to the international community through the United Nations.”\(^{43}\) However, by July of that year Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Gennady Gatilov made it clear that Russia was committed to broader UN participation in post-war nation-building, so long as that process ensured Iraq’s sovereignty.\(^{44}\)

Collectively, Russia’s decisions in the UNSC closely mirror the doctrinal tenets of its foreign security policy. First and foremost, Russia was an active participant in the UNSC arbitration of Iraq’s WMD disarmament, which was consistent with the doctrinal calls for ensuring regional and international security and stability, as well as the non-proliferation of WMD. Russia also engaged in diplomatic and economic sanctions against the Hussein regime in accordance with the UN Charter and UNSC decisions and even allowed that the military buildup in Saudi Arabia was useful, demonstrating that the Russian leadership was concerned about the Hussein regime. With hindsight it would be easy to make a normative judgment on Putin’s abstention from supporting the use of force against Iraq as being justified given the subsequent absence of WMD, but, as shown by the ongoing negotiations and Hussein’s opacity in the face of UN and IAEA observer

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\(^{43}\) Ibid.

missions, no one really knew what capabilities Iraq still had. What Putin was disputing was not so much whether Iraq had WMD or illegal weapons programs as whether it was cooperating with the UNSC and IAEA and whether the use of force to challenge the regime was the safest and most efficacious means of resolving the outstanding issues. Putin had made it very clear that Russia would not support the use of force without solid evidence that diplomatic and economic sanctions had “proved to be inadequate.”

Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK)

A full account of UNSC resolutions targeting the DPRK cannot be provided in this analysis, so only a few key resolutions are included to highlight the most significant developments in the DPRK’s relationship with the international community and Russia’s political stances. The DPRK’s first and subsequent successful nuclear tests, beginning in October 2006, were the culmination of several decades of development and severely strained tensions with the UNSC and the rest of the international community. However, Russia’s leadership displayed caution and a strong desire to resolve the nuclear program through careful negotiations.

In the last UNSC resolution prior to the first successful DPRK nuclear tests, the UNSC condemned recent, unauthorized ballistic missile launches and expressed its concern over the DPRK’s failure to comply with past resolutions and its abstention from the six-party talks to resolve the nuclear issue. The key point for the Russian Federation

\[45\] UN Charter, Ch. VII, Art. 42.
was that the resolution “should work to strengthen peace and security in the region.”  

Since the DPRK had refrained from initiating hostilities with its neighbors, its missile testing, though provocative, was seen as more of a bargaining chip in negotiations than as an act of planned hostility. 

When the DPRK’s first successful nuclear weapons tests were carried out on October 9, 2006, the UNSC, with Russia’s full and active support, reacted swiftly. Russia’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Vitaly Churkin, supported Resolution 1718 condemning the nuclear test and imposing sanctions on nuclear technology, large-scale weapons, and luxury goods. Churkin argued that the DPRK’s actions were sure to “complicate the settlement of the nuclear problem on the Korean peninsula, pose a threat to international peace and security and undermine the non-proliferation regime.”  

Churkin further elaborated that Resolution 1718 was aimed at making the DPRK “immediately review its dangerous course, come back to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and resume, without preconditions, its participation in the six-party talks” and that such ends could be achieved “only through political and diplomatic means.” 

In spite of the serious sanctions levied upon it, the DPRK continued developing its missile and nuclear weapons programs. Another round of nuclear weapons tests was commenced on May 25, 2009, leading the UNSC to again sanction the use of economic measures to pressure the regime without harming the civilian populace. UNSC

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47 Ibid.
48 SC/8853, October 14, 2006.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
Resolution 1874 condemned the most recent nuclear weapons test, sanctioned an arms embargo, asset freezes against certain individuals and organizations, and called for inspections of all import and export traffic.\textsuperscript{51} Churkin stated that:

\begin{quote}
The resolution was an appropriate response to the actions of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, and demonstrated the commitment to a negotiated solution. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s actions had undermined international laws on non-proliferation; that demanded strong action that could bring the country back to the negotiating table. The provisions of the resolution were well targeted and the sanctions did not harm the welfare of the Korean people.\textsuperscript{52}
\end{quote}

He went on to stress that the sanctions would be lifted as soon as the DPRK complied with the measures set forth in previous resolutions.

No action on the DPRK has since been taken in the UN, but Russia’s responses to the DPRK’s actions have been clear and consistent with its foreign security doctrine. The Russian leadership does not want to see an increase in the number of nuclear-armed states as this would only serve to disrupt international and regional stability. Additionally, even though Russia’s massive nuclear deterrent would not be threatened by a new state gaining a small nuclear capability, such a development would certainly reduce Russia’s ability to influence bilateral and multilateral arrangements with that country. Russia has consistently applied the level of punitive action vis-à-vis the DPRK that is deemed appropriate both in its doctrines and in the UN Charter from which Russian leaders have framed their approaches to international relations.

\textsuperscript{51} SC/9679, June 12, 2009.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
Iran

Iran has been accused by the US and other Western powers of possessing a covert nuclear weapons program that is still only in the early stages of development. The IAEA has not confirmed these accusations but has acknowledged that Iran was, prior to 2003, developing certain nuclear capacities that are only applicable in a military application, and that some elements of research and testing may have continued after 2003.\(^53\) Iran’s nuclear program, civil or otherwise, has been at the center of UNSC meetings and negotiations for years. The Russian leadership has consistently denied that Iran has been pursuing nuclear weapons since its program was shut down in 2003 and maintains that the Iranian nuclear program is only intended for civilian use.\(^54\) Additionally, Putin has stated on several occasions that Russia wants to see Iran obtain nuclear weapons no more than the United States, as expanding the pool of countries with nuclear weapons is not in Russia’s national security interests.\(^55\) Given this rather sanguine rhetoric, it seems surprising that Russia has authorized the application of strict sanctions against the Iranian regime on several occasions.

On July 31, 2006, the UNSC adopted Resolution 1696, which demanded that Iran “suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and


\(^55\) Ibid.
development, and gave it one month to do so or face the possibility of economic and diplomatic sanctions to give effect to its decision.\textsuperscript{56} Resolution 1696 passed because the UNSC was gravely concerned that the IAEA was still unable to “provide assurances about Iran’s undeclared nuclear material and activities after more than three years.”\textsuperscript{57} Churkin stated that the resolution “expressed the need for Iran to establish full cooperation with IAEA, to clarify outstanding questions and for restoring confidence in its nuclear program.”\textsuperscript{58} While noting that failure to comply would result in further steps taken under Article 41, Churkin was careful to point out that the use of military force was not a possibility.

After several months of non-compliance by Iran, the UNSC convened again to discuss Iran’s nuclear program and to determine what, if any, further action to take. Russia engaged in intense consultation with the other UNSC members and approved Resolution 1737 blocking the import or export of sensitive nuclear material and equipment and freezing the financial assets of persons or entities supporting the development of delivery systems for nuclear weapons or sensitive nuclear activities.\textsuperscript{59} As Churkin had stated when commenting on the adoption of Resolution 1696, Russia voted in favor of levying economic sanctions against Iran as a commensurate step for its non-compliance. Churkin noted that “solutions could be found exclusively in the political and diplomatic spheres” and that the use of force was not permitted as a means of ensuring

\textsuperscript{56} SC/8792, July 31, 2006.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} SC/8928 December 23, 2006
Russia’s intention was to restore confidence in Iran’s nuclear program by returning transparency to Iran’s dealings with the IAEA.

Russia then backed Resolution 1747 in 2007, banning Iranian arms exports and expanding the number of persons targeted for asset freezes and travel limitations, and Resolution 1803 in 2008, which again added to the number of personal bans but also called for greater monitoring of Iranian banking activity and cargo. However, Churkin commented that “the constraints introduced by the resolution were aimed at eliminating IAEA’s concerns, and were in no way aimed at punishing Iran.” In all of these instances, the Russian leadership had moved forward with arms embargos and economic sanctions while simultaneously stressing the peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear program. One the one hand, expanding the circle of nuclear-armed states would only serve to weaken, however marginally, Russia’s military power relative to a state with newly-acquired nuclear weapons. On the other hand, it is conceivable that Russian policy makers have been content to allow Iran to pursue its own nuclear interests since Iran is one of Russia’s closest geopolitical allies in the otherwise pro-US Persian Gulf region.

Since even the IAEA and the most advanced Western intelligence agencies have remained, at least publicly, unconvinced that Iran is currently developing a nuclear weapons program, it is extremely difficult to know what Iran’s true intentions are. What is clear, however, is that both Putin and Medvedev have publicly called on Iran to comply with IAEA and NPT protocol, offered their own enriched uranium for purely peaceful

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60 Ibid.
purposes in accordance with IAEA and NPT protocol, agreed to economic and diplomatic sanctions on numerous occasions, and continually stressed the need for open negotiations, political and economic means of generating compliance on the part of the Iranians, and abstention from military solutions. All of these actions are fully consistent with Russia’s foreign security policy as established under the Putin and Medvedev doctrines. However, even though Russia’s policies have matched its policy prescriptions, its averred trust in Iran and repeated assurances that Iran has nothing to hide are undermined by Iran’s resistance to IAEA security guarantees and standard protocol. It is entirely possible – and indeed likely – that even Russia’s leadership does not know the full details of Iran’s nuclear program. Iran gaining a nuclear weapon capability is not in Russia’s interests, despite that view’s prevalence in US popular opinion; Russia’s leadership has shown through its cooperation and engagement that Russia is not engaging in a zero-sum game with America over military hegemony, and while ending US unipolarity is a priority, a nuclear-armed Iran will mostly serve to undermine peace and security in Russia’s geopolitical neighborhood. It seems most likely that Russia’s leadership is truly trying to pressure a wayward Iran, over which it is thought to have considerable influence, to end its power play and reveal its true, peaceful intentions (this scenario predicated on Iran not actually having serious plans for nuclear weapons), or trying to offer Iran a means of saving face while it drops its development of military capabilities.

Syria

Violence erupted in the Syrian city of Homs in May 2011 as government forces attempted to forcibly halt protests against the Assad regime. Over the course of the year, thousands of Syrians died and, as of this writing, violence continues to rage between those opposed to Assad and his supporters and government forces. After months of conflict and attempts by the Arab League to negotiate solutions, the issue was finally raised in the UNSC on Jan 31, 2012. The US, UK, and France, among others, pressed the UNSC to fully support the latest Arab League proposal to negotiate an end to hostilities. As part of the proposal, President al-Assad of Syria would step down from his post. Russia resisted any attempts at regime change or coercive diplomacy on the grounds that such steps could “spark catastrophic civil war and destabilize the region.” The representative of the Russian Federation to the UNSC, Vitaly Churkin, emphasized that his country “would not stand for any sanctions or any window allowing military intervention in the future.” Russia also sought to draw more attention to the violent acts committed by the opposition forces and argued that any solution to the crisis must not be imposed from abroad but led by Syria.

On February 4, 2012, the UNSC voted on a draft resolution that demanded that all parties in Syria stop all violence and reprisals and that the Syrian government protect its population, release all persons detained arbitrarily, withdraw all military and armed forces from cities and towns, and guarantee the population the freedom to hold peaceful

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65 Ibid.
demonstrations. In addition, it called for “an inclusive Syrian-led political process conducted in an environment free from violence, fear, intimidation, and extremism.”

Russia, along with China, exercised its veto to block the resolution. Russia’s UNSC representative Vitaly Churkin stated that though the violence must be ended immediately, regime change was unacceptable and the draft resolution sought to send an unbalanced message to the Syrian government while not targeting the armed groups and extremists who were also involved in the conflict (SC/10536).

In the ensuing months, a UN- and Russia-backed ceasefire was agreed upon but its implementation remains, as of this writing, spotty. Putin made his position extremely clear in late February when he declared that a repetition of the “Libyan scenario” must not be allowed. He argued that the international community should work to assist reconciliation from within Syria and to work to stop the violence without foreign interference and while maintaining Syrian sovereignty. He also provided further justification for Russia’s veto of the proposed UNSC resolution on February 4th, stating that it “would have stimulated violent actions on the part of one of the parties to the internal conflict.”

In April, Lavrov warned against arming the Syrian opposition, as some Gulf States had indicated a willingness to do, arguing that the opposition could never hope to defeat the country’s military apparatus and that arming them would only lead to

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66 SC/10536
67 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
“slaughter for many years.” Here, the duplicity is quite obvious, for in January 2012 a Russian tanker was found to be carrying ammunition destined for the Syrian security forces – just part of an estimated $1.5 billion in Russian arms sales to the Syrian government. Russia’s arms sales were not a violation of any arms embargo but were certainly provocative given the time in question. The Putin administration’s equivocation of the Syrian and Libyan situations and its commitment to prevent a similar result from unfolding are difficult to square with even past precedent, given the Libya campaign’s apparent success. The regime’s argument all along has been that the NATO campaign in Libya was unacceptable due to civilian casualties, even as it effectively writes off the many thousands of Syrian civilians and soldiers to have perished thus far in the conflict with few signs that the ceasefire is working.

72 Ibid.
Authorization of Military Force:

Afghanistan

The terrorist attacks carried out by members of al-Qa’ida in the United States on September 11, 2001 certainly had a profound effect on the future conduct of international relations and US foreign security policy, but Putin’s rhetoric and actions remained constant. Radical Islamists had carried out numerous terrorist attacks on Russian soil, especially during the Second Chechen War, and Russian political and military decision makers had long been concerned about the detrimental effects of Taliban rule on security in the region. Putin’s concern about Afghanistan was all the more heightened by its location directly adjacent to the CIS – it can easily be inferred that the frequent references in the Putin doctrines to ‘destabilizing regions along the borders’ were in large part directed towards Afghanistan.\(^7^3\) As has been noted, international terrorism had already climbed to the top of the state’s list of external threats prior to al-Qa’ida’s attacks in the US.

Direct intervention in another state’s domestic affairs, especially such a drastic measure as forcible regime change, is prohibited under the UN Charter except in such cases as the UNSC deems appropriate.\(^7^4\) Appropriate cases might be those when a state or

\(^{73}\) 2000 MD, 3; 2000 FPC 2, 6; 2000 NSC, 6.

\(^{74}\) See UN Charter, Chapter I, Article 2:7 in Appendix.
the regime poses a direct threat to international security. Putin’s decision to throw Russia’s support behind the overthrow of the Taliban regime conformed to Russian conceptions of international law: international terrorism was a transnational concern that directly affected Russian security and was considered to be the principal threat to national security and the Taliban regime had been cited by the UNSC in the past for its failure to provide stability and guarantee the security of its neighbors.

The issue of intervention in Afghanistan highlighted the principle contradiction of UN authority over an international system comprised of sovereign states: though there are many safeguards installed into UN mechanisms to protect state sovereignty from external, including UN, intervention, state sovereignty can ultimately be compromised by a UNSC decision. In this case, Russian policy makers clearly thought that the Taliban regime had a destabilizing effect on Central Asia and possibly on Chechnya as well. The Russian leadership also had nothing to gain from supporting the Taliban regime or al-Qa’ida, which, after all, had been formed to combat Soviet forces, while the continued presence of the regime served to undermine regional security in Russia’s own geopolitical neighborhood.

Interestingly, the clauses from the UN Charter that were applied to the US intervention and affirmed in several UNSC resolutions from 2001 were the “inherent right of individual or collective self-defense in accordance with the Charter” and the notion that states are to be held accountable for harmful acts perpetrated by their citizens.

75 See UN Charter, Chapter VII, Article 42
if the states do not take action themselves.\textsuperscript{77} The UNSC, with full Russian support, further noted “the need to combat by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.”\textsuperscript{78} Russia worked within the framework of the so-called “six plus two” group of Russia, the United States, China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan to “find a political solution to the Afghan crisis” and stressed that the solution must come from the Afghans themselves with UN support.\textsuperscript{79} The Russian Ambassador to the UN, Sergei Lavrov, noted that “preventing that threat [the Taliban] from endangering the security of the region and the international community fell squarely within the purview of the United Nations.”\textsuperscript{80}

While the UN-approved invasion of Afghanistan was a rare case indeed, Putin’s support for the overthrow of the Taliban regime was not without rhetorical grounding in Russia’s foreign security policy. Putin had long noted the threat to regional and international stability posed by the regime and the international terrorism it sponsored, and since the Taliban had shown no willingness to punish Al Qa’ida there was no moral or legal dilemma. In addition, an exception to the 2000 NSC was made to permit US to lease military facilities in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan to support the NATO invasion. This unprecedented level of cooperation between NATO/US and Russia was not to last for long, as Russia did not want a permanent NATO/US force so close to its borders, but the exception itself was a sign that Putin was seeking closer cooperation and flexibility

\textsuperscript{77} UNSC Resolution 1368, Sept. 12, 2001.  
\textsuperscript{78} UNSC Resolution 1373, Sept. 28, 2001.  
\textsuperscript{79} SC/7210 Nov. 13, 2001.  
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
even within the Russian-led CIS. Russia’s response to the crisis was in conformity with its foreign security policy and followed its own prescription for pursuing armed intervention within the confines of international law.

Libya

The Libyan regime headed by Muammar al-Gaddafi came under intense pressure from rebellious citizens as part of the broader Arab Spring of 2011. Whereas the Tunisian and Egyptian mass protests had led quite quickly to the overthrow of the old regimes, Gaddafi clung to power and sought to crush the rebellion through force. Much like in the discussion over the fate of Afghanistan, the issues of regional security and stability featured prominently in the UNSC deliberations. Whereas Russia gave its full support to the overthrow of the Taliban regime and US intervention in Afghanistan – at least while it seemed that US intervention could achieve regional stability – Russia was more conservative and cautious in its approach to Libya, probably at least in part because of the destabilizing aftereffects of the overthrows of the Taliban and Hussein regimes in the previous decade.

On February 26, 2011, Russia supported UNSC Resolution 1970 that cited Article 41 of the UN Charter and demanded an end to violence and the referral of the case to the International Criminal Court, imposed an arms embargo, and froze the assets of al-Gaddafi’s family and certain government officials. At this stage, Churkin condemned Libya’s government for its actions but also noted that Russia wanted to “preserve the
united sovereign state of Libya with its territorial integrity. As the civil conflict continued to rage well into March, UNSC Resolution 1973 was proposed to tighten sanctions against key figures in the regime and impose a no-fly zone as well as to demand an end to attacks against civilians. The resolution passed, albeit with abstentions from Russia, Brazil, Germany, India, and China, and “authorized Member States, acting nationally or through regional organizations or arrangements, to take all necessary measures to protect civilians under threat of attack in the country” so long as such measures did not include a foreign occupation force of any kind on Libyan territory. Russia’s abstention is interesting because Churkin expressed his country’s serious concerns over how and by whom the resolution would be enforced as well as what the limits of engagement would be but still refrained from utilizing the veto in response to such ambiguity. Other than stating that Russia had not prevented the resolution and stressing the Russian leadership’s view that calling for a ceasefire was the most efficacious means of ending the conflict – a view contradicted by the continuing nature of violence in spite of the call for a ceasefire dating from February 26 – Churkin did not elaborate on why Russia merely abstained, rather than vetoed, the resolution given the leadership’s rather fundamental concerns.

It is possible that the Russian leadership assumed that NATO would not get involved in Libya owing to the US domestic political climate, which was overwhelmingly against intervention, and the inability of the European members of the alliance to agree on intervention. However, Putin and Medvedev must certainly have

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82 SC/10200 Mar 17, 2011.
been aware of the possibility of NATO involvement due to NATO’s history of airstrikes against targeted opponents in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Serbia, and Bosnia. The Russian leadership clearly wanted an end to the conflict and a restoration of peace and regional stability, but the NATO air campaign also enabled Russian leaders to simultaneously impress the international community with their respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and their expressed desire to protect innocent civilians from harm while criticizing the US and NATO for the ensuing civilian casualties of the air campaign.\textsuperscript{83} By not vetoing Resolution 1973, the Russian leadership could pass on the burden of responsibility for any concrete actions taken against the Libyan regime while claiming the moral high ground by noting Russia’s continuing desire to protect civilians and restore the peace, even though its repeated calls for a ceasefire went unheeded in Libya. Russia was indirectly hedging against the US but not directly challenging it, and again there was internal agreement between the state’s foreign security doctrines and its actions.

\textsuperscript{83} SC/10241 May 4, 2011.
Territorial Conflicts

Abkhazia and South Ossetia

Russia has long concerned itself with the autonomous and *de facto* independent regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are considered by most of the international community to be Georgian territories. Abkhazia and South Ossetia became involved in a civil war with the central Georgian state during the 1990s that created significant disruptions to regional security and stability. The war displaced hundreds of thousands of people and prompted the Russian government to intervene with peacekeeping forces under UN authority. Russia’s military and political role in these breakaway regions has been decried by the Georgian government as Russian interference in Georgia’s domestic affairs. Russia’s position vis-à-vis the autonomous republics is in stark contrast to and seems distinctly at odds with its repeatedly stated regard for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of states as the cornerstone of international relations. How then can these same leaders support Russia’s active political and military intervention inside another state’s borders?

As with many complicated issues, the answer seems to lie in interpretation. The issue of Abkhazian and South Ossetian independence illustrates one of the principle

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84 Abkhazia and South Ossetia are being treated in this section rather than in the later section on Russia’s sovereign interaction in the world because the dispute over their legal status had been a UN matter for over a decade prior to the 2008 war and Georgia has been cited by the EU’s fact-finding body as the ultimate initiator of the 2008 conflict. See *Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia*.

contradictions within international law: the legal concept of the right of national self-determination necessarily conflicts with and contradicts the long-established and highly-valued notion of state sovereignty and territorial inviolability. If a national minority within a given state is geographically concentrated and desires its own state, theoretically it should be able to claim and act on that right. However, most states are reluctant to part peaceably with their constituent territories and will resist independence movements, leading to a drawn out and intractable state of affairs. In the case of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, yet another factor colors the legal debate: most Abkhazians and South Ossetians hold Russian citizenship and are treated as such by the Russian authorities. Since most of the citizens of both republics are considered legal Russian citizens they are guaranteed protection according to Russia’s foreign security doctrines.\footnote{2000 NSC, 1; 2000 FPC 6, 8.}

In August 2008, war broke out between Georgian and South Ossetian forces. Each side has accused the other of initiating and/or instigating the conflict. Outside bodies, such as the OSCE and US intelligence agencies, have been cautious in ascribing blame, but it seems by most accounts that Georgian forces were responsible for initiating the armed conflict.\footnote{Russia is by no means considered blameless, but its actions in the earliest phase of the conflict have been deemed justifiable by the OSCE as a matter of defending its UNSC-authorized peacekeeping forces from Georgian attack. Russia’s swift escalation of the conflict from self-defense to an invasion of Georgia proper and its role in provoking the conflict have been widely condemned. See \textit{Independent Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia}.} In light of the conflict, the Russian leadership decided to move forward with a near-unilateral recognition of both Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent, sovereign states.\footnote{A small group of other states have since recognized Abkhazian and South Ossetian independence: Nicaragua, Venezuela, Nauru, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu (Abkhazia only).}
In the first full UNSC session since the outbreak of violence in South Ossetia, Vitaly Churkin strongly denounced Georgia’s role in the conflict as well as the interference of several Western countries and invoked a series of diplomatic agreements on the status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia that had been broken by Georgia as a means of justifying Russia’s response to the crisis:

Georgia continued its treacherous attack on South Ossetia, despite the Russian leadership’s appeal for an immediate ceasefire, an end to the fratricidal conflict and the resumption of talks. The Russian Federation abhorred the connivance of a number of Security Council members, who last night had blocked passage of the Russian assessment of the situation. The aggression being perpetrated was in violation of the United Nations Charter on the non-use of force, the 1996 agreement signed by Georgia, the South Ossetia parties and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the 1992 basic agreement between the Russian Federation and Georgia on the principles for settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict. That agreement obliged the belligerents to undertake measures to halt military confrontation, to cease fire and to withdraw armed units. A demilitarized zone had been created under the accord and the 1996 memorandum of understanding, compelling parties to the conflict to renounce the use or threat of use of force, had been signed by the High Representative of Georgia and the OSCE representative.  

Churkin continued on to stress that Georgia’s actions had initiated a humanitarian crisis and constituted a “gross violation of international law, primarily the protection of civilians from military operations.” The fact that many of the civilian victims of the attacks were citizens of the Russian Federation – due to Russia’s active conferral of citizenship – was also cited as a grave concern and a justification for a swift Russian response. Most crucially, Churkin affirmed that “the Russian Federation was intervening as a real peacekeeper; it was present on Georgian territory on an absolutely legal basis

89 SC/9418
90 Ibid.
and in line with international agreements.” This statement draws attention to Russia’s official position vis-à-vis the disputed territories at the outbreak of war – that they were, under international law, Georgian territories – and highlights Russia’s compliance with the stated aims of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMiG). In another UNSC session held two days later, Churkin reminded the representatives that Russian peacekeepers – who had been assigned to South Ossetia on the basis of a 1992 treaty signed by Georgia – had been attacked by Georgian forces and that the Russian peacekeeping force was not an occupying army. As the conflict continued to unfold, the EU presidency under Nicholas Sarkozy sponsored a six-point “Moscow peace plan” that Russia and Georgia eventually supported. The Russian leadership made it very clear that it wanted to work through international channels to resolve the issue, much as it had been attempting to do since the initial conflicts in the mid-1990s.

However, the situation changed drastically on August 26, 2008, when Medvedev officially recognized the independence of both South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Two days later, the UNSC was summoned by the Georgian delegation to discuss Russia’s decision. Russia was accused of violating Georgia’s territorial integrity and of unilateral military action in breach of the UN Charter. In Churkin’s address to the UNSC he read aloud the two decrees that Medvedev had just signed recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and then justified Russia’s recognition with the following statement:

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91 Ibid.
92 UNOMiG was established by UNSC Resolution 858 Aug 24, 1993 to implement a ceasefire between the warring sides in Abkhazia.
93 SC/9419 August 10, 2008.
95 SC/9438 August 28, 2008.
Russia has done everything in its power to assist in settling those problems on the basis of the recognition of the territorial integrity of Georgia. Russia took that position despite the fact that Georgia, in declaring its own independence, had violated the rights to self-determination of the people of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In accordance with the law of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the procedure for the resolution of issues linked to the secession of a republic from the Union, autonomous entities within the Union’s republics had the right to independently resolve the issues of whether or not to remain part of the Union and of their legal status in the event of the republic’s cessation from the Union. Georgia prevented Abkhazia and South Ossetia from exercising that right. Nevertheless, Russia has consistently maintained its policy, while in good faith carrying out its peacekeeping and mediating functions. Russia has attempted to help achieve peace agreements and demonstrated restraint and patience in the face of provocation. Nor did we abandon our position after the unilateral proclamation of Kosovo’s independence.

Through the aggressive attack on South Ossetia on the night of 8 August 2008, which caused numerous casualties, including among peacekeepers and other Russian citizens, as well as preparations for similar actions against Abkhazia, Saakashvili himself put an end to the territorial integrity of Georgia by using crude and blatant military force against people whom, in his own words, he wanted to see as part of his State. Saakashvili left them no other choice but to provide for their own security and to seek to exercise the right to self-determination as independent States.96

The law in reference, the 1990 USSR Law on Secession, does indeed contain a set protocol for the secession of autonomous entities from within Soviet Republics. Article 3 notes that, “the people residing in the autonomous entities are given the right to independently decide whether to remain in the Soviet Union or in the seceding Republic as well as to decide their entity’s legal status.”97 Furthermore, it is true that Georgia did annul the results of the 1990 referendum held in Abkhazia – in which the Abkhaz voted

overwhelmingly, at 98.6%, in favor of remaining with the Soviet Union— and first denied South Ossetia autonomous republic status and then rescinded its autonomous oblast’ status before declaring a state of emergency in the region, imposing martial law, and then refusing to observe a 1992 referendum held by South Ossetians in which the vast majority supported secession and integration with the Russian Federation and the 1992 decision of the South Ossetian Supreme Council to back integration into Russia.

The Russian leadership solidified its new understanding of Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-South Ossetian relations in 2009 by vetoing a draft resolution that would have extended the mandate for the 16-year UNOMiG. Citing irreconcilable changes stemming from ‘Georgian aggression’ against South Ossetia, the Russian representative to the UN explained his country’s veto as the only appropriate response: Georgia had forfeit its claim to territorial integrity by attacking South Ossetia. Whereas under the previous observer mission Russia had accepted Georgia’s claim to Abkhazia and South Ossetia provided it implement the necessary measures outlined in the resolutions, Russia’s leadership argued that the attack had revealed the necessity of including the two republics in any new resolution as equal partners to reflect their sovereignty.

One can argue that Georgia had no need to observe the Soviet Law on Secession in the first place since it did not consider itself a Soviet entity by that point, but Russia can make a legally grounded argument that Georgia’s claim to Abkhazia and South Ossetia is limited at best and illegal at worst. The Georgian referendum on independence

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in 1991 (not to be confused with the Soviet referendum that was boycotted by Georgia) asked the population whether it supported the restoration of Georgia’s 1918 borders when the Democratic Republic of Georgia was proclaimed. At the time, Abkhazia had limited autonomy and South Ossetia was held only by defeating a series of popular uprisings. Both regions could just as easily assert their continued allegiance to the Russian Empire as to the newer Georgian state; the continued tensions and Georgian military actions in Abkhazia and South Ossetia following the dissolution of the Soviet Union coupled with the cloudy past of opposing national claims to the territories and the ‘Georgia for Georgians’ slogan of the Gamsakhurdia regime suggest that Georgia’s legal claim to the territories is far from guaranteed under international law.

In any event, Russia’s position vis-à-vis the republics has actually been quite consistent. Russia’s leadership recognized from an early stage that a resolution of the issue of Abkhaz and South Ossetian independence and/or (re)integration into Russia need necessarily entail UNSC involvement. Though it may be impossible to fully ascertain whether Russian or Georgian forces were to blame for the initiation of military hostilities in 2008, Georgia does have a history of such military intervention in both regions. If Georgia is actually at fault, then Russia’s defense of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and its own peacekeeping force is completely justified, though its aggressive pursuit of Georgian forces beyond the peacekeeping zone has been deemed an inappropriate and unlawful escalation of the conflict.\(^{101}\)

Nevertheless, one can certainly criticize Russia for uneven treatment on the issue of self-determination with regards to Chechnya and Kosovo, which share very similar

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\(^{101}\) Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, 31.
circumstances to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. What this suggests is that while Russia’s rhetoric is grounded in respect for international law, exceptions can and will be made given the exigencies of power politics: Russia’s support for the right of self-determination in Abkhazia and South Ossetia makes sense within the confines of a zero-sum game with Georgia, while Russia’s defense of territorial integrity vis-à-vis Kosovo and Chechnya is logical given that the former is claimed by an ally and the latter is a valuable region of Russia itself. This means that like most great powers, Russia will seek to use international law to justify its actions when convenient and reserve the right of sovereign states to pursue national security aims when the given aim cannot be achieved through international law alone.’

Kosovo

The political status of Kosovo provides another clear example of the limitations of international law in resolving fundamental issues such as sovereignty and territorial integrity. Since there are competing narratives of the natural right to self-determination and the territorial inviolability of states, tensions are bound to arise if both parties – the minority population wishing to secede and the host state – cannot agree on a set outcome. In the case of Kosovo, the legal vacuum left by the standard principles of international law has opened the issue up to different interpretations that reflect the national interests of the great powers involved. Russia, as the traditional ally of Serbia, has long stressed the unacceptability of Kosovar independence given an alleged lack of legal precedent and violation of the norms of international law. It seems quite likely that Russia’s position
was also a logical response to the quite real prospect of Chechen secession from the Russian Federation.

Kosovo’s status had remained unsettled for many years when it unilaterally declared its independence in February 2008. In response, the Russian Federation called an emergency session of the UNSC. Vitaly Churkin insisted that Kosovo’s declaration of independence was illegal under the norms and principles of international law, violated Serbia’s sovereignty, and flouted the UN Charter, the Contact Group accords, Kosovo’s Constitutional Framework, UNSC Resolution 1244, and the Helsinki Final Act. Specifically, Churkin asserted that changes to state borders, as stated in the Helsinki Final Act, could only be made “in accordance with international law, by peaceful means and by agreement.” The Russian leadership chose to ignore Section VIII of the Helsinki Final Act – on the ‘Equal Rights and Self-Determination of Peoples,’ which notes that:

The participating States will respect the equal rights of peoples and their right to self-determination, acting at all times in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and with the relevant norms of international law, including those relating to territorial integrity of States. By virtue of the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, all peoples always have the right, in full freedom, to determine, when and as they wish, their internal and external political status, without external interference, and to pursue as they wish their political, economic, social and cultural development.

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102 Rambouillet Agreement
103 SC/9252 Feb 18, 2008.
104 Ibid.
105 Helsinki Final Act, Section VIII. Retrieved from http://www.hri.org/docs/Helsinki75.html#H4.8
Instead, the Russian leadership focused on Section IV, which states:

The participating States will respect the territorial integrity of each of the participating States. Accordingly, they will refrain from any action inconsistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations against the territorial integrity, political independence or the unity of any participating State, and in particular from any such action constituting a threat or use of force.\textsuperscript{106}

Though Section VIII provides a solid legal basis for even a unilateral declaration of independence, Russia has not acknowledged this part of the Act and has argued that any decisions that would transfer sovereignty over a given territory to another state must be based upon mutual agreement.

Russia’s case is bolstered, however, by UNSC Resolution 1244, adopted in June 1999, which reaffirmed the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and called only for “substantial autonomy and meaningful self-administration for Kosovo,” rather than specifying any process whereby Kosovo could achieve independence.\textsuperscript{107} The fact that so many UN resolutions and other international agreements, such as the Helsinki Accords, the EU Rule of Law Mission, and NATO’s Rambouillet Agreement, have been applied to resolving the issue of Kosovo’s status, each with its own specific tenets and priorities, has left the issue up to interpretation.

Putin and Medvedev have been able to ground their arguments against recognizing Kosovar independence in international law, which has consistently been their favored approach to Russia’s foreign security policy, while simultaneously disregarding those provisions of past international agreements that conflict with their foreign security

\textsuperscript{106} Helsinki Final Act, Section IV. Retrieved from http://www.hri.org/docs/Helsinki75.html#H4.8
\textsuperscript{107} SC/6686 Jun 10, 1999
policy priorities. Clearly, the vagaries of ‘international law’ and the ‘norms of international law’ can be easily exploited by the Russian leadership to promote a wide range of policies that can nonetheless be viewed as internally consistent: while decrying Kosovo’s unilateral declaration of independence as an affront to Serbia’s natural right to national sovereignty and territorial integrity and a breach of UNSC resolutions and other international agreements, Russia can support the unilateral declarations of independence by Abkhazia and South Ossetia by drawing upon relevant international agreements. The Russian leadership has portrayed the minority Abkhaz and South Ossetians as the victims of Georgian aggression even as it declares the need to protect the minority Serb population of Kosovo from Kosovar aggression. This approach has led many critics to complain about Russia’s unfair and/or asymmetric responses to these crises – which, given Putin and Medvedev’s selective approach to international law on a case-by-case basis, is justified – but what is equally important is that Russia has consistently sought out legal and diplomatic solutions to these crises and has largely stayed away from direct confrontation even though it is a much stronger power than its would-be adversaries.
SECTION II

Russia’s Sovereign Interaction in the World

Whereas the previous section demonstrated Russia’s desire to use UN diplomacy to resolve international issues, this section will focus on those specific plans, actions, and justifications given for what can be described as the state’s sovereign policies in the 21st century. Russia has shown a commitment to international arbitration of significant developments in peace, security, and stability, especially through diplomatic and economic means. Putin and Medvedev have contributed Russian forces to peacekeeping and peacemaking missions of the UN and have retaliated harshly against Georgian troops for attacks on Russian peacekeeping forces in South Ossetia, but otherwise have refrained from using force to resolve outstanding issues with other states or non-state actors in the 21st century. The state still regards military power as a crucial element of international relations, but Russia’s foreign security policy has consistently called for a greater emphasis on economic and diplomatic levers of power to advance the state’s national and foreign security interests.108

Original Set of Putin Doctrines

With regards to Russia’s place in the world and the leadership’s assessment of threats to national security and priorities in international relations, there is much

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108 2000 NSC, 1
continuity but also significant change between the Putin and Medvedev doctrine sets as well as significant internal contradiction. Beginning with Putin’s FPC, one of Russia’s top priorities has been “achieving a prestigious position in the international community as a great power.” The 2000 MD notes that Russia desires to further reduce its nuclear forces on a bilateral basis with the US and on a multilateral basis with other states. Putin’s MD also maintains that building trust between militaries is important, so Russia will pursue “mutual exchanges of military information and agreement on military doctrines, plans, military deployments, and military activities” with friendly states. The 2000 MD posits that the Russian military should only participate in wars and armed conflicts to prevent and repulse aggression, defend the country’s territorial integrity and inviolability, and ensure the military security of Russia and its allies. The treatment of local wars and armed conflicts is particularly valuable to this analysis because of the events of the 2008 South Ossetian War: in a local war – as opposed to a full-scale war – the politico-military aims of the state are to contain the center of tension, create the conditions for ending the war at an early stage, neutralize the aggressor and reach a settlement on conditions favorable to Russia and its allies.

According to the 2000 FPC, EU-Russian relations are important but Russia’s bilateral ties with the member countries of the EU will be maintained and Russia wants to be consulted more on EU expansion in order to balance its needs. The 2000 FPC also states that while regional and subregional integration are important developments in

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109 2000 FPC, 1.
110 2000 MD, 5.
111 Ibid., 13.
112 Ibid., 16.
international relations, attempts to undermine state sovereignty through integration enable arbitrary interference in states’ internal affairs.\textsuperscript{113}

Russia’s leadership has been much less consistent in its treatment of the military aspects of international relations and Russia’s military forces. Putin’s 2000 NSC notes that “the level and scale of military threats have been increasing,”\textsuperscript{114} but the 2000 MD states clearly that “direct military aggression is declining largely due to nuclear deterrence.”\textsuperscript{115} Even as Putin drew attention to NATO’s expanded area of operations beyond its traditional mandate and stated, in his 2000 NSC, that NATO’s eastward expansion was a threat to Russia’s national security, he also noted that there was a marked “decrease in the danger of large-scale war.”\textsuperscript{116} He also expressed his concern over the threat posed by the “possible appearance of foreign (Western) military bases and large military contingents in direct proximity to Russia’s borders.”\textsuperscript{117} The 2000 FPC articulates Russia’s desire to reduce the role of military power in international relations and further reduce global arms stockpiles, but the 2000 NSC articulates the necessity of reviving Russia’s military potential in order to address the myriad, often asymmetric military threats to national security, especially terrorism.\textsuperscript{118}

Interestingly, even as Putin decried the expansion and rededication of military blocs and alliances (NATO) and asserted that “military and political rivalries are

\textsuperscript{113} 2000 FPC, 3.
\textsuperscript{114} 2000 NSC, 6.
\textsuperscript{115} 2000 MD, 3.
\textsuperscript{116} 2000 MD, 2-3. NATO is never mentioned directly in the 2000 MD, but is certainly referenced on several occasions. As an example, the ‘expansion of military blocs and alliances’ is noted as ‘detrimental to the military security of the Russian Federation,’ but poses nothing like an existential or even direct threat.
\textsuperscript{117} 2000 NSC, 14.
\textsuperscript{118} 2000 FPC, 5; 2000 NSC, 8; 2000 MD, 3.
dangerous," he made it clear that one of Russia’s top priorities in the realm of foreign security policy was to strengthen the Collective Security Treaty of the CIS to “guarantee effective collaboration and cooperation on military security” and to create a unified defensive region among the CIS states, especially against the specter of international terrorism. Additionally, this support for greater integration with the CIS, CSTO, and SCO is at odds with Russia’s strong rhetoric about the necessity of protecting state sovereignty. The 2000 FPC notes that Russia can cooperate with NATO but only if NATO adheres to the 1997 “Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation, and Security” in which NATO agreed to refrain from the use or threat of force and deployment of conventional and nuclear weapons on the territory of its new members.

Change and Continuity in the Medvedev Administration

As noted above, several key differences emerge in the Medvedev doctrines, particularly with regards to Russia’s conception of the world order and international relations. The 2009 NSS describes the world as one in which crises and disputes are increasingly settled on a regional basis without the participation of non-regional great powers. The NSS also cites the “failure of the existing global and regional architecture” and the “imperfections of legal instruments and mechanisms” as threats to

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119 2000 FPC, 3.
120 The Collective Security Treaty of the CIS morphed into the CSTO.
121 2000 MD, 5.
122 Ibid., 25
124 2000 FPC, 10.
125 2009 NSS, 3.
the provision of international security, especially with regards to NATO’s active role in international affairs and the failure of the UN and other intergovernmental organizations to prevent the Georgian attacks on South Ossetia. The NSS asserts Russia’s status as a great power due to its economic prowess and affirms the view that great power warfare poses less of a threat than asymmetric challenges such as terrorism and economic crises, which could cripple states on a level comparable with a full-scale war. The 2010 MD noted that although the threat of full-scale aggression against Russia had decreased, the threats to Russia’s security as a whole had increased. Whereas in past iterations of the foreign security doctrines the Russian leadership had proclaimed that Russia was a great power – a rather hollow sentiment that was repeatedly undermined in the documents themselves – the NSS takes on a more concrete tone with its call to “transform the Russian Federation into a global power, an activity that is directed at supporting strategic stability and mutually-beneficial partnership relations in a multipolar world.” Medvedev’s FPC echoes this sentiment, asserting that Russia has “finally acquired a full-fledged role in global affairs.”

Russia also codified its national defense priorities in its strategic deterrence concept. Strategic defense is defined as “the set of interconnected political, diplomatic, economic, information, and other measures directed at pre-empting or weakening the threat of destructive action on the part of an aggressor state (or coalition)” and entails

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126 Ibid.
127 2010 MD, 3.
128 2009 NSS, 3-4.
129 2010 MD, 3.
130 2009 NSS, 6.
131 2008 FPC, 3.
using the country’s economic capabilities as levers of power.\textsuperscript{132} Though the Russian leadership has continually stressed its desire for international cooperation, the Medvedev FPC notes that if Russia’s partners are unwilling to join in its efforts to maintain global and/or regional security, “Russia, in order to protect its national interests, will have to act unilaterally, but always on the basis of international law.”\textsuperscript{133} Of course, any unilateral action would present a legal problem for Russia’s leaders since the FPC also claims that unilateral action necessarily involves contravening the UN Charter, which Russia’s foreign security doctrines treat as sacrosanct.\textsuperscript{134} However, there is no legal contradiction in the Russian leadership reserving its sovereign right to take whatever actions it deems necessary, only a rhetorical contradiction in that Putin and Medvedev criticize the US for unilateral actions (which have actually been coalitions of numerous states) but take the exact same position on states’ sovereign rights.

Continuity is found in the stated desire to make closer bilateral and multilateral cooperation with CIS states the primary direction of Russia’s foreign policy.\textsuperscript{135} Similarly, the document reaffirms Russia’s desire to avoid confrontations and arms races and to further engage multilateral forums such as BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China), the Groups of 8 and 20, the CSTO, the SCO, and the Eurasian Economic Community.\textsuperscript{136} The CSTO, in particular, is projected to play a much larger role in Russia’s future foreign security policy, and Russia wants to see it emerge as a more centralized institution.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{132} 2009 NSS, 7; 2008 FPC, 11.
\item \textsuperscript{133} 2008 FPC, 6.
\item \textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 4.
\item \textsuperscript{135} 2009 NSS., 5.
\item \textsuperscript{136} 2009 NSS, 5.
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capable of organizing and executing joint actions.\textsuperscript{137} Potential NATO expansion to the east, notably to Ukraine and Georgia, is still viewed as an extremely negative possibility, but the potential for closer cooperation on terrorism, WMD proliferation, regional crises, drug trafficking, and natural disaster responses exists.\textsuperscript{138}

The Medvedev doctrines claim that Russia is prepared to conclude new disarmament and weapons monitoring treaties with the US and to cooperate on WMD non-proliferation, terrorism, and settling regional conflicts.\textsuperscript{139} The NSS even goes so far as to call withdrawal from international arms limitation and reduction treaties a threat to Russia’s military security\textsuperscript{140} and to call for a nuclear-free world.\textsuperscript{141} However, as long as the current balance of nuclear forces holds, Russia will maintain parity in strategic nuclear weapons with the US as a response to the US plans for a global anti-ballistic missile (ABM) system.\textsuperscript{142} The Medvedev FPC states that Russia is willing to establish a collective response system with the US to protect against ballistic missiles but is adamantly opposed to a solo US ABM shield as this could disrupt the balance created by nuclear parity.\textsuperscript{143} The Medvedev FPC also echoes earlier sentiments with regards to regional conflicts, stating that Russia will seek diplomatic resolutions to those problems within the international community and will work to engage all sides in meaningful

\textsuperscript{137} 2008 FPC, 14.
\textsuperscript{138} 2009 NSS, 5; 2008 FPC, 16.
\textsuperscript{139} 2009 NSS, 6; 2008 FPC, 17.
\textsuperscript{140} 2009 NSS, 8.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 23.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 24.
\textsuperscript{143} 2009 FPC, 8, 2010 MD, 8.
dialogue.\textsuperscript{144} Since Russia’s worldview places great emphasis on statehood, Russia’s bilateral ties with European states often take precedence over Russia-EU relations.

Alliances, Military Cooperation, and Power Projection

As made abundantly clear in the Putin and Medvedev doctrines, Russia’s topmost priorities in international relations are to strengthen ties to the SCO, CIS, and CSTO. Much of the ongoing activity within these intergovernmental organizations is economic in nature,\textsuperscript{145} but the closely-intertwined CSTO and SCO are collective security organizations designed to increase military cooperation. Since 2005, Russia has participated in several rounds of war games – called “Peace Missions” – with China within the framework of the SCO and with the CSTO in the “Rubezh 2008” and “Center-2011” war games on a larger scale than even the SCO exercises.\textsuperscript{146} The security aims of the SCO are to jointly combat terrorism, separatism, and extremism, while the CSTO is more of a traditional security alliance.

Russia’s recently-increased support for joint military exercises and cooperation with the SCO and CSTO represents a marked departure from the language of the Putin doctrines and, to a lesser extent, of the Medvedev doctrines as well. It is extremely difficult to ascertain what the leadership’s true intentions are, but it is evident that Russia now places significant value on military power. Whereas in the earliest years of the first

\textsuperscript{144} 2009 NSS, 9.
\textsuperscript{145} With the obvious exception of the CSTO
Putin presidency the foreign security doctrines noted the reduced role of military power in international relations and the necessity of resolving crises through non-military means, by the Medvedev period the “failure of the existing mechanisms” of international security and stability had, apparently, compelled the Russian leadership to assume a greater military role. While there is certainly continuity to be found in the fact that both sets of doctrines stress Russia’s need for closer cooperation and dialogue with the SCO and CSTO, their language on military blocs and the threat they pose to international security and regional stability is undermined by the reality of ever-greater joint military exercises and collective security mechanisms, including the CSTO’s Collective Rapid Reaction Force. CSTO General Secretary Nikolai Bordyuzha stated in 2007 that “we have no plans to compete with NATO” and that “on the contrary, we are striving to cooperate with NATO.”

It is also no coincidence that Putin announced the resumption of long-range strategic bomber patrols by the Russian Air Force during the 2007 SCO war games. Strategic bomber patrols with nuclear armaments are of no utility against terrorists, separatists, and extremists, but do increase Russia’s ability to project its second-strike capability against the US and thus increase its security, however marginally. While the SCO and CSTO represent nothing near the cohesive force that is NATO, Russia’s increased participation in both is a clear signal that the leadership’s views on the use of force in international relations – both within a UN framework of

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peacekeeping and in a traditional collective security alliance – have changed and reflect a
greater willingness to project military power.

Another facet of Russia’s newly reclaimed power projection is the resumption of
blue-water naval tours. As of February 2008, the Russian fleet began tours of the North
Atlantic and Mediterranean. The Russian Minister of Defense at the time – Anatoly
Sardyukov – claimed that the naval tours were being resumed in order to maintain a naval
accordance with international law and there is no real threat posed by the small naval task
forces assigned,\footnote{The primary group includes an aircraft-carrying heavy cruiser, two anti-submarine vessels, two large tankers, and a guided-missile cruiser.} but at the same time there is no credible threat to shipping in the North
Atlantic and Mediterranean posed by pirates or hostile states, so the act would seem
almost certainly intended as a symbolic gesture of Russia’s renewed desire to play an
active role in international affairs and possibly as an alternative to the US as a “protector”
of certain states.

Nuclear and Conventional Arms

With regards to arms reduction and limitation agreements, which both the Putin
and Medvedev doctrines cite as important elements of ensuring Russia’s national
security, the years of negotiation that went into producing the 1990 Treaty on
Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) and its post-Cold War successor, the 1999
Adapted Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE II), have not borne much
success. The primary obstacle to the full implementation of CFE II is Russia’s continued military presence in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria. As part of the OSCE’s 1999 Istanbul Commitments, Russia pledged the “complete withdrawal of Russian forces from the territory of Moldova by the end of 2002,” to reduce the levels of its TLE in Georgia to preset levels, and to close the Russia’s military bases at Vaziani and Gudauta, Georgia. Russia signed and ratified CFE II, which included the Istanbul Commitments, but NATO and its constituents refused to ratify the treaty, citing Russian non-compliance on the above issues.

During an OSCE session in 2004, the Russian delegation stated that the issue of Russian forces in Moldova and Georgia were a matter of bilateral relations that fell outside the purview of CFE II. The delegation claimed that progress with Georgia could only be resumed once Tbilisi responded constructively to further negotiations and that the Gudauta base, located in Abkhazia, had been closed and was being transferred to Russian peacekeeping forces under the UN mandate. In addition, Russia held that any troop reductions in Moldova would be contingent upon final settlement of the Trans-Dniester conflict. Putin was indicating a willingness to abandon Russia’s previous

\[151\] Transnistria does not receive its own section in this analysis because no significant developments have occurred in Russo-Transnistrian or Russo-Moldovan relations that require a full section. However, Transnistria does feature in later sections as necessary.
\[155\] Ibid.
\[156\] Ibid.
commitments to arms reduction based on what he perceived as the more urgent need to maintain regional stability and security in the *de facto* independent regions.

In December 2007, Putin finally announced Russia’s suspension of CFE II, citing the NATO bloc’s refusal to ratify and abide by the “spirit and letter of the treaty.” Putin had argued earlier in the year in his annual address to the nation that “it is time our partners made their own contribution to the reduction of armaments, by deeds, not words,” but that “instead, they keep building up their armaments. It’s time for them to contribute to armament reduction at least in Europe.” However, as noted by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Russia did not withdraw from the treaty, thus preserving the possibility of reviving the treaty’s implementation at a later date. Lavrov also asserted that it is crucial for Russia’s interests that CFE be saved in an adapted form that better reflects the current realities. Russia’s refusal to remove its troops from Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria, coming well before Russia had formally recognized Abkhazian and South Ossetian independence and not pertaining to Russia’s UN-mandated peacekeeping forces in those regions, constitutes a violation of CFE II. It is highly possible that Putin’s largely symbolic suspension of CFE II (given that the treaty had not come into force in the NATO bloc) was a means of further shoring up his

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158 Ibid.


160 Ibid.

161 Russia maintains a roughly force of roughly 1200 men, of which some 350 serve in the Joint Control Commission along with Moldovan and Transnistrian forces. Further information: http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/548978?stamp=634722806201997341

162 Interestingly, Russia has not officially recognized Transnistria as an independent state even though it has forged ahead with recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The reasons for this (non)decision are unclear.
domestic support by presenting Russia as a victim, forced to suspend CFE as a result of
NATO intransigence.

Russia also has significant interests in reducing global levels of nuclear
armaments and maintaining the status quo with respect to first- and second-strike
capabilities, which explains Russia’s opposition to a US ABM shield in Europe. After US
President Bush approved plans to establish lead elements of an ABM shield in Poland
and the Czech Republic in 2007, the Putin administration sought to arrange for a joint
US-Russia missile defense system centered on an existing Russian radar facility in the
North Caucasus and possible further measures through the NATO-Russia Council. When
the Bush administration rejected this proposal, First Deputy Prime Minister Sergei
Lavrov responded, saying, “If our proposal is not accepted we will take adequate
measures. An asymmetrical and effective response will be found.”

Later that year, Russia’s Chief of the General Staff, Gen. Yuri Baluyevsky, stated that “the issue of
confrontation with Russia, especially direct confrontation, is still, unfortunately, kept
alive by our Pentagon partners.”

Russia’s strong concerns, coupled with a change of presidents in the US, shelved
the issue for several years, but in 2011 the idea of a European ABM shield surfaced
again. Medvedev gave a televised address to the nation in which he outlined Russia’s
repeated offers to participate in a joint missile shield with the US and NATO that were
ignored or discounted. Stressing that without an effective means of guaranteeing that the

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ABM shield would not upset the delicate nuclear balance between the US and Russia, such as running the system jointly, Russia would have to take steps on its own to ensure its own nuclear security.\textsuperscript{165} Medvedev even offered a warning to the US that if the ABM shield was put in place Russia would deploy weapons in Kaliningrad and western Russia to target US missile defense sites and might opt out of New START (see below) if Russia’s concerns were not satisfactorily addressed.\textsuperscript{166}

In 2002, when the US unilaterally withdrew from the long-standing ABM Treaty with Russia that regulated and limited the deployment of ABM systems by both countries, Russia responded by withdrawing from the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START II)\textsuperscript{167} that banned the use of multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs) that can be used to carry multiple nuclear warheads. START II had not been ratified by the Russian Duma until 2000 and was made contingent upon the continuation of the ABM Treaty. However, both sides still wanted to reduce their strategic nuclear arsenals, so a new treaty was quickly signed – the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT), which was written even before the withdrawal of Russia from START II and the US from the ABM Treaty and entered into force shortly thereafter. Under SORT, both parties agreed to limit their total number of warheads to 1700-2200 by the end of 2012, but there were no enforcement mechanisms established.\textsuperscript{168}

\textsuperscript{167} The treaty had never entered into force, so this was merely a symbolic gesture.
A more comprehensive and effective nuclear reduction and limitation agreement emerged with the negotiation and signing of New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) in 2010. New START replaced SORT, which was set to expire by 2012, and established a nuclear arms and delivery systems reduction regime with limits on intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and heavy bombers, as well as the aggregate ICBM and SLBM launchers.\footnote{New Start, Article 2. Retrieved from http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/140035.pdf} The final limit of 1,550 deployed strategic nuclear warheads, while somewhat flexible because of the counting system established in the treaty, is another significant reduction of both parties’ nuclear arsenals. Putin and Medvedev have remained firmly committed to nuclear arms reduction and have backed up their rhetoric and doctrines with real reductions in accordance with bilateral treaties with the US. While the US-Russia relationship is beset by outstanding trust issues and relapses into stern rhetoric by both sides, Russia has displayed resolve in limiting and reducing its nuclear arms and delivery systems. In addition, the most salient point of disagreement between the two sides – the proposed and partially established ABM shield – does represent a significant disruption to Russia’s second-strike capability.\footnote{On this count, it truly does not matter whether the shield is intended as a defense against an Iranian missile or a Russian strike because the effect is the same: mutually assured destruction rests on the guarantee of mutual destruction, which could be compromised by the US ABM shield.}

Russia’s Economic Levers of Power: Natural Gas and Oil

Not surprisingly, given Russia’s abundance of oil and natural gas reserves and their vast transportation links to the outside world, the Russian leadership has attempted
on numerous occasions to gain political leverage through price fluctuations and supply shortages to targeted recipients. Russia’s foreign security doctrines specify that the state can use “all available economic leverage, resources, and competitive advantages to protect its national interests.”\footnote{2008 FPC, 11. ‘Strategic deterrence’ (2009 NSS, 7) also calls for using the state’s economic capabilities to preempt or weaken adversaries.} Withholding natural gas and oil supplies, in particular, has been seen by many in Europe and the US as a favorite strategy of the Putin and Medvedev administrations vis-à-vis their Western neighbors. The Russian leadership has maintained that it is a disinterested partner in every gas and oil dispute and that such matters are strictly apolitical, a matter of economics. However, looking at the timing of the disputes, it is easy to surmise that something more than economics has been at play in many of the oil and gas supply cutoffs: during the Orange Revolution protests in Ukraine during the 2004 election, Russia cut gas supplies to Ukraine for three days, citing a price dispute;\footnote{Kramer, Andrew E. (n.d.) Russian oil to Czech slows after U.S. pact. \textit{The New York Times}. Retrieved May 9, 2012. From http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/11/world/europe/11iht-czech.4.14439409.html?_r=1} in 2006, when a state-auctioned Lithuanian oil refinery was sold to a Polish company rather than to its Russian competitor, the Russian pipeline operator shut off the pipe, citing leakage (at present it remains off);\footnote{Ibid.} oil flows to the Czech Republic were reduced by 40% the day after the Czech government signed the July 8, 2008 agreement with the US to host radar elements of the proposed ABM shield.\footnote{Kramer, Andrew E. (July 22, 2008). Putin Orders Restored Oil Flow to Czechs. \textit{The New York Times}. Retrieved May 9, 2012. From http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/22/world/europe/22czech.html?fta=y}

The justifications given for these shutoffs or supply disruptions are plausible – and there lies the crux of the issue. Russia’s leadership recognizes that its vast hydrocarbon reserves and near-monopolistic hold on the transportation infrastructure,
especially in Eastern and Central Europe, give the state enormous economic leverage. Leverage can be gained through real or threatened supply interruptions, using pricing policy to punish or reward, using existing energy debts or creating new ones, and performing negotiated or hostile takeovers of energy companies and/or infrastructure.\textsuperscript{175}

At the same time, that leverage only works if applied in limited situations, because Russia is very much dependent on the revenues derived from the export of oil and gas to Europe. As a result of this rather delicate balance, the Putin regime has steered clear of direct confrontation and has instead sought out scapegoats to redirect blame away from the ‘reliable supplier’ that Russia would like to be seen as, and in many cases this has been a straightforward task: state leaders who are trying to cheat Russia by demanding superficially low prices that are not commensurate with capitalist practices and leverage their position as transit countries to gain Western backing during disputes that threaten supplies to the West and leaking pipelines.\textsuperscript{176} During the 2004-2005 price dispute with Ukraine, reports surfaced that Ukraine had, in fact, stored a large reserve supply of gas in breach of the contract, which fueled Russian accusations of stealing.\textsuperscript{177}

In the case of the 2008 Czech dispute, reports surfaced in which Putin and his Deputy Prime Minister for Energy Policy, Igor Sechin, blamed ‘offshore energy companies’ over which Russia has no control for the initial cutback,\textsuperscript{178} but the vice president of Transneft, the Russian supplier, said that there were “technical and

\textsuperscript{176}Ibid., 206.
\textsuperscript{177}Ibid., 203.
commercial reasons” for the cutback, noting that two of the subsidiary producers wanted to switch to processing the oil domestically to maximize profits. Likewise, though the Putin regime talks about ‘market prices’ driving their hydrocarbon policies, the uneven price distribution reveals the hollowness of such rhetoric. A perfect example is how Transnistria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia continue to have their gas deliveries almost wholly subsidized while Moldova and Georgia proper faced 100% price increases in 2006.

One of Russia’s most significant forays abroad has been the development of the huge Nord Stream and South Stream pipelines, which were expressly conceived to limit the negotiating power held by the current and former transit countries. In 2011, upon completion of the Nord Stream pipeline that currently supplies gas directly to Germany via the Baltic Sea, Putin noted that Ukraine “will not be tempted to take advantage of its position as a transit country.” Though the South Stream pipeline is still just under construction, its course through Southeastern Europe has been hotly contested by US-backed plans for an alternate pipeline that would exclude Russian supplies and transit companies altogether. With such policies in place, it is clear that the state is trying to use its leverage to increase Russia’s political influence in neighboring states rather than to increase profits, since the alternate routes have been much costlier than the traditional routes through Belarus and Ukraine and prices have not been raised evenly across

countries. The justifications given by the Putin regime for its economic policies abroad are unlikely to fool the leaders of the countries affected, but they seem to be viewed as important by Putin for Russian public relations purposes and to bolster the legitimacy of their policies.

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Conclusions

This analysis of Russian foreign security policy reveals a mixed record on the internal coherence between rhetoric from Russian policymakers, Russia’s foreign security doctrines, and Russia’s foreign policy actions. The Putin and Medvedev administrations have sought to cast Russia as an impartial yet influential member of the larger international community that seeks to apply the principles of international law within a multilateral format to resolve international crises. Russia’s record in the UNSC demonstrates a nuanced and varied approach to crises as they emerge, rather than a one-response-fits-all method. While the basic outlines of Russia’s positions have remained consistent both with Russia’s doctrines and with international law when the matter in question does not directly affect Russia’s security (i.e. an issue arising in the UN), Putin deviates from the loftier aspirations of his doctrines quite frequently, though always with a guise of plausibility, on issues of national security.

The Russian leadership has been very reluctant to authorize the use of force in the UNSC against a sovereign state and has also shown a desire to pursue the diplomatic resolution of territorial conflicts in which Russia has a direct interest. Putin and Medvedev have committed Russia to sanctions against Iran, the DPRK, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, while always urging caution and respect for the sovereignty
of those states. Russia’s leaders have also remained committed to nuclear reduction and limitation, as evidenced by their approval of bilateral agreements with the US. Russia’s concerns about the ABM shield seem legitimate and the US has adjusted its position to try to allay Russian concerns. The one instance of Russia actually using its military power against an external adversary in the 21st century came against Georgia and, as noted above, international bodies have found that while Russia’s response was excessive and it shares the blame for helping to provoke the conflict in the first place through its troop deployments, Georgian forces initiated the war. Russia’s military signaling – returning to strategic bomber patrols and blue-water navy tours – seen in the West as provocative, is not actually threatening the regional or global balance of power or foreign interests, and is consistent with Russia’s foreign security policy, according to which Russia, as a great power, needs to be capable of force projection.

On the other hand, there are still several outstanding aspects of Russia’s foreign security policy that reveal internal dissonance or just outright deception and obfuscation. Russia’s selective approach to such legal norms as the territorial integrity of states and the right of nations to self-determination in the cases of Kosovo, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia Transnistria demonstrates that even where international law is concerned, there are plenty of loopholes that can be exploited to justify position A in one case and its polar opposite in case B without contravening ‘international law’ as such. It is also unclear what the Russian leadership truly knows about the Iranian nuclear program, but all signs from Western intelligence and military officials, as well as recent comments by Israeli

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183 In Afghanistan’s case, the regime was deemed by the UNSC to be illegitimate. The Russian Federation referred to the ‘sovereignty of the Afghan people.’
Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Benny Gantz, indicate that Iran still has not committed to producing nuclear weapons.

The Putin’s regime’s foreign security policy is frequently marked by attempts to portray Russia as an impartial arbiter, but the realities often reveal or suggest the opposite. Putin’s rigid position on Syria, which calls for peace and internal solutions despite the failure of peace and internal dialogue (which caused the rebellion in the first place), suggests either naïveté or, more likely, a continuation of the pattern of diplomatic obfuscation present when Russia’s core foreign security interests – in this case, an important regional ally and recipient of huge arms deals – clash with its stated ideals. Likewise, Russia’s economic policies, and the leverage it is able to accrue in regional relations as a result, constitute anything but the friendly and market-driven economic relations Russia seeks according to its doctrines.

Russia’s renewed attention to the CSTO and SCO, especially in their capacity as military alliances – whether acknowledged as such or not by the Russian authorities – indicates that the rhetoric used to characterize all military blocs as ‘dangerous to international stability’ is really just a jab at NATO and US hegemony. Russia’s forays into collective security and military alliances do not at this stage represent a challenge to the US-led international system and may even be directed more towards stifling internal dissent than resisting foreign aggression (which is already unlikely given nuclear deterrence).

It remains to be seen what, if anything, will change during the current Putin presidency, but it is clear that all of his foreign security policies will be framed within the context of upholding Russia’s commitment to international law. Given Russia’s
permanent seat on the UNSC, Russia will never be on the receiving end of a UNSC resolution and its actions can never be condemned or considered ‘illegal’ so long as the UN constitutes the core of the international system. Russia can hide behind the UN and international law to present the rest of the world with a façade of legitimacy whenever it deems such steps necessary. This does not mean, however, that the rhetoric analyzed here is useless: it reveals how Putin wants the international community to view Russia and demonstrates that Russia is committed to diplomacy and is very much a part of global governance, not the ever-antagonistic leftover of the Soviet Union that many in the West like to imagine.
Appendix 1: UN Charter (Selected Sections)

Chapter I:

Article 2:

1. The Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members.
2. All Members, in order to ensure to all of them the rights and benefits resulting from membership, shall fulfill in good faith the obligations assumed by them in accordance with the present Charter.
3. All Members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered.
4. All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.
5. All Members shall give the United Nations every assistance in any action it takes in accordance with the present Charter, and shall refrain from giving assistance to any state against which the United Nations is taking preventive or enforcement action.
6. The Organization shall ensure that states which are not Members of the United Nations act in accordance with these Principles so far as may be necessary for the maintenance of international peace and security.
7. Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter; but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII.

Chapter VII:

Article 39: The Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression and shall make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken in accordance with Articles 41 and 42, to maintain or restore international peace and security.
Article 40: In order to prevent an aggravation of the situation, the Security Council may, before making the recommendations or deciding upon the measures provided for in Article 39, call upon the parties concerned to comply with such provisional measures as it deems necessary or desirable. Such provisional measures shall be without prejudice to the rights, claims, or position of the parties concerned. The Security Council shall duly take account of failure to comply with such provisional measures.

Article 41: The Security Council may decide what measures not involving the use of armed forces are to be employed to give effect to its decisions, and it may call upon the Members of the United Nations to apply such measures. These may include complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations.

Article 42: Should the Security Council consider that measures provided for in Article 41 would be inadequate or have proved to be inadequate, it may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security. Such action may include demonstrations, blockade, and other operations by air, sea, or land forces of Members of the United Nations.
References

Official Documents and Statements


Helsinki Final Act, Section VIII. Retrieved from http://www.hri.org/docs/Helsinki75.html#H4.8


Articles


