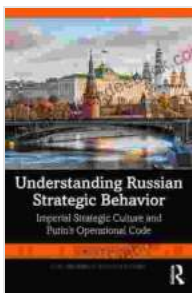


Understanding Russian Strategic Behavior: A Comprehensive Guide to Putin's Foreign Policy

Russia's strategic behavior has been a subject of intense debate and analysis in recent years. The country's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its ongoing military intervention in Ukraine have raised concerns about its intentions and its willingness to use force to achieve its goals. This article provides a comprehensive analysis of Russian strategic behavior, examining the factors that shape Putin's foreign policy and the implications for global security.



Understanding Russian Strategic Behavior: Imperial Strategic Culture and Putin's Operational Code (Contemporary Security Studies) by Graeme P. Herd

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Putin's Strategic Goals

Putin's strategic goals are rooted in his desire to restore Russia's status as a great power and to protect its national interests. He believes that Russia

has been humiliated and weakened since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and he is determined to reverse this decline. Putin's strategic goals include:

- Rebuilding the Russian military and restoring Russia's global influence
- Protecting Russia's borders and preventing NATO expansion
- Controlling the flow of energy resources from Russia to Europe
- Promoting Russian culture and values abroad

Factors Shaping Russian Strategic Behavior

A number of factors shape Russian strategic behavior, including:

- **History:** Russia's history has been marked by both periods of expansion and retreat. The country's vast size and its geographic position have made it a target for invasion from both the East and the West. This has led to a deep-seated sense of insecurity and a belief that Russia must be strong to protect itself.
- **Culture:** Russian culture is characterized by a strong sense of nationalism and a belief in the superiority of Russian civilization. This has led to a tendency to view other countries with suspicion and to see Russia's interests as being in conflict with those of the West.
- **Economics:** Russia's economy is heavily dependent on the export of energy resources. This has given Russia a vested interest in maintaining stability in global energy markets and has also made the country vulnerable to economic sanctions.
- **Military:** Russia has a powerful military that is capable of projecting power both regionally and globally. Putin has invested heavily in

modernizing the military, and he has shown a willingness to use military force to achieve his goals.

- **Leadership:** Putin has been the dominant figure in Russian politics for over two decades. He has a strong personalistic style of leadership, and he has centralized power in his own hands. Putin's worldview and his personal ambitions have a significant impact on Russian strategic behavior.

The Russia-Ukraine Conflict

The Russia-Ukraine conflict is a major turning point in Russian strategic behavior. The conflict began in 2014 with Russia's annexation of Crimea and its support for separatists in eastern Ukraine. The conflict has since escalated into a full-scale war that has killed thousands of people and displaced millions more. The conflict has had a profound impact on Russia's relations with the West and has raised serious questions about the future of European security.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict is a clear example of Putin's willingness to use military force to achieve his goals. The conflict has also highlighted the challenges of dealing with a nuclear-armed state that is increasingly willing to challenge the international order.

Russian Military Strategy

Russian military strategy is based on the principle of "maskirovka," or deception. Russian military planners strive to conceal their intentions and capabilities until the moment of attack. They also rely on a combination of conventional and nuclear forces to deter aggression and to achieve their goals.

Russia's conventional forces are large and well-equipped. The country has a powerful air force, a modern navy, and a large ground force. Russia has also developed a number of new weapons systems, including hypersonic missiles and advanced air defense systems.

Russia's nuclear arsenal is the largest in the world. Putin has repeatedly stated that Russia will use nuclear weapons to defend itself against any attack.

Russian Nuclear Doctrine

Russia's nuclear doctrine is based on the principle of "escalate to de-escalate." This means that Russia will use nuclear weapons to deter or respond to a nuclear attack. Russia's nuclear doctrine also includes a provision for the use of nuclear weapons in response to a conventional attack that threatens the existence of the Russian state.

The Russian nuclear doctrine is a major source of concern for the West. Western leaders believe that Russia's willingness to use nuclear weapons lowers the threshold for nuclear war.

Russian Energy Policy

Russia is one of the world's largest producers of oil and gas. The country's energy resources are a key source of revenue for the Russian government and a major lever of influence over other countries.

Putin has used Russia's energy resources to reward allies and punish enemies. He has also used energy as a weapon to pressure other countries to do his bidding.

The West's dependence on Russian energy has made it difficult to respond to Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Western leaders are reluctant to impose sanctions on Russia that would cut off the flow of energy to their countries.

Russian Information Warfare

Russia has been a pioneer in the use of information warfare. The country has developed a sophisticated network of troll farms, hackers, and disinformation outlets that it uses to spread its propaganda and to undermine its adversaries.

Russia's information warfare efforts have been used to influence elections, sow discord, and spread disinformation about the West. Russia's information warfare efforts have also been used to support its military operations in Ukraine.

Russian Cyberwarfare

Russia is one of the world's leading cyberwarfare powers. The country has a large and well-trained team of cyberwarriors who are capable of carrying out a wide range of cyberattacks.

Russia has used cyberwarfare to target a variety of targets, including government agencies, businesses, and critical infrastructure. Russia's cyberwarfare capabilities have also been used to support its military operations in Ukraine.

Implications for Global Security

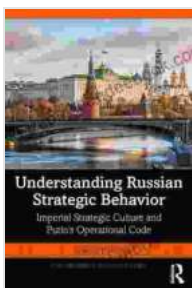
Russia's strategic behavior has a profound impact on global security. The country's willingness to use military force, its nuclear arsenal, and its use of

information warfare and cyberwarfare are all major threats to international peace and security.

The West must develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with Russia's strategic behavior. This strategy must include a mix of deterrence, diplomacy, and sanctions. The West must also work to reduce its dependence on Russian energy and to counter Russia's information warfare and cyberwarfare capabilities.

Russia's strategic behavior is a complex and challenging issue. The country's history, culture, economics, military, leadership, and energy resources all play a role in shaping its foreign policy. The Russia-Ukraine conflict is a major turning point in Russian strategic behavior. The conflict has highlighted the challenges of dealing with a nuclear-armed state that is increasingly willing to challenge the international order.

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