

Country Profile: Russian Federation

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Active armed forces ¹	Helicopters & fixed-wing transport	Defense Budget	UN Peacekeepers	UN Contribution Breakdown	Other Significant Deployments
798,000 World Ranking (size): 5 Army: 240,000 Navy: 148,000 Air: 145,000 + 34,000 Airborne Spec. Ops: 1,000 Command & Support: 150,000 Paramilitary: 489,000	Attack helicopters: 296+ Transport: 532 (Heavy: 32, Medium: 500) EW: 54 TRG: 30	2015: \$51.6bn (4.2% of GDP) 2014: \$64.5bn (3.5% of GDP) 2013: \$66.1bn (3.2% of GDP) World Ranking (defense spending): 5	98 (7 women) (31 Aug. 2016) Ranking: 68th	MINURSO 16 experts MINUSTAH 9 police MONUSCO 29 (1 troop, 28 experts) UNFICYP 3 police UNISFA 1 expert UNMIK 1 police UNMIL 2 experts UNMISS 28 (22 police, 3 experts, 3 troops) UNOCI 4 experts UNTSO 5 experts	OSCE Bosnia-Herzegovina 2 OSCE Kosovo 2 OSCE Ukraine 16 Armenia 3,300 Georgia 7,000 Kyrgyzstan 500 Moldova 1,500 (350 peacekeepers) Tajikistan 5,000 Ukraine: 20,000 (Crimea) 300+ (Donetsk/Luhansk)
Defense Spending / Troop: ² US\$63,991 (compared to global average of approximately US\$79,369).					

Part 1: Recent Trends

While the first Russian peacekeepers were sent to the Middle East in 1973, Moscow's peacekeeping policies today are heavily influenced by its experiences deploying peacekeepers to the Balkans in the 1990s, as well as the operations Russian forces have led in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) territory, a regional organization consisting of ten former Soviet states.³ The dissolution of the Soviet Union saw an increase in Russian interest in multilateral operations and contributions to UN peacekeeping (see Figure 1). While the increase was mostly tied to Russian contributions to UN missions in the Balkans, two in ten Russian peacekeepers were also sent to Angola, Cambodia and the Golan Heights. Nevertheless, the military operations in the Balkans came to be seen as a failure and subsequently influenced Russian perception of peacekeeping operations performed together with the West.⁴ In Kosovo, Russia viewed the Western powers as operating illegally and forcefully in its sphere of influence. Russian contributions to UN peacekeeping subsequently declined towards the end of the 1990s. Since then, Russia has taken a much more cautious stance towards UN peacekeeping. In the Security Council, Russia frequently sanitizes peacekeeping mandates, particularly from including any actions or parameters that might be perceived as encroaching upon the national interest of the host state. But even when mandates pass without the use of the Russian veto, Russia continues to criticize how peacekeeping missions are managed. Its rhetoric often stresses that senior peacekeeping leadership is inclined to take operational decisions closely aligned with

Western interests⁵, which the present Russian government perceives as being in opposition to its own national interests. Thus, while Russia has a say in the legal parameters of a peacekeeping mission set by a mandate, it often argues that it has less influence over how the mandate is subsequently carried out on the ground.

In parallel, the Russian military has long needed reforms to address the challenges of modern warfare. Meeting much resistance in the military's senior ranks, modernization efforts finally started in 2008 and continued through 2015. However, there are still large discrepancies within the Russian military, since some groups, especially regular ground forces, have continuously been overlooked in terms of training, equipment and funding. Only elite units and Special Forces, which were used in the annexation of Crimea, showed improvement compared to the performance of some regular forces in Georgia in 2008.



Today, a typical Russian deployment to a UN peacekeeping operation is a small and specialized unit, sometimes only a limited number of military experts. Those teams are spread across multiple locations in order to retain a presence but with few overall contributions. Nevertheless, the government's annual report on peacekeeping from March 2014 along with other official declarations consistently underscores the importance of increasing Russia's role in peacekeeping as a way of strengthening its authority on the world stage. Russia has prioritized increasing the number of Russians in senior posts in both peacekeeping missions and in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

Similarly, Russia has emphasized its influence over the choice of the new UN Secretary-General as a way to shape UN peacekeeping. While a strong supporter of Chapter VIII operations, it has been cautious of delegating peacekeeping mandates to other organizations, in particular those that Russia is not part of, due to the potential it claims the CSTO has to [handle peacekeeping mandates through its 17,000 troops strong Collective Forces for Operational Reaction \(CORF\)](#) as well as the potential use of its specialized

peacekeeping brigade (see below) as a reaction force. Russia has therefore consistently opposed the idea of a UN “reserve-force” which could negatively affect Moscow’s ability to control operational decisions in peacekeeping missions, especially since there is very little Russian presence in senior positions in the UN Secretariat. As such, both its position as permanent member of the Security Council and as the 7th largest financial contributor, has been seen as a way of getting more weight in peacekeeping policy.

Russia did not attend or sign the declaration of the World Leaders’ Summit on Peacekeeping organized by the Obama administration in September 2015, where some 40 countries pledged new contributions to boost UN peacekeeping. Nor did Russia attend the September 2016 follow-up summit in London. The report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) was not well received by the current Russian administration, which opposed what it sees as increasing UN encroachment on the sovereignty of its member states⁶.

Looking forward, Russia sees peacekeeping as mostly associated with the activities of the Russian-led regional organization the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) consisting of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Russia. The CSTO regularly performs multilateral exercises, but for the first time this year, it [conducted an exercise](#) that envisaged a UN peacekeeping scenario. With regards to the current conflict in Ukraine, both the CSTO Secretary-General and the Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov have previously issued [statements](#) on the possibility of the deployment of a peacekeeping mission there, particularly one led by the CSTO, [extending a long tradition of using Russian-led “peacekeeping” forces](#) to protect Russian interests in its near abroad, [building on](#) the previous military cooperation from the CIS.

Part 2: Decision-Making Process

Any decisions to deploy international peacekeepers are governed by national laws and presidential decrees, with the decision-making in theory shared by the president, the government and the upper chamber of the parliament, the Council of the Federation. According to the [Russian Constitution](#), the President is the Commander in Chief, and while he has the prerogative to use Russian troops in international peacekeeping operations, the Council of the Federation has the final say in deciding whether or not Russia’s troops can be deployed beyond the national borders of the Russian Federation. The President must issue a request for parliamentary approval with a defined date of leave and return, with an additional request needed if the operation is prolonged – though this practice has not always been followed. The lower chamber of parliament, the Duma, is also to be informed.

The main principles of the deployment of Russian troops abroad are set out in the [Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation from December 2014](#). While reference to participation in UN peacekeeping operations is mentioned in several articles spread across the doctrine (Art. 21, 30, 32, 55, and 56), a clear set of defining principles, parameters, and perspectives is absent, in the same way that it was absent in previous military doctrines. Consequently, a clarifying document for the *Concept of Russian participation in peacekeeping activities* started to be developed in 2006, but was never finished due to budgetary constraints.⁷ Russian policy on participation in peacekeeping was however most recently mentioned in the [Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation](#) of February 2013. This signals Russia’s “intent to participate in international peacemaking activities under the UN auspices and within the framework of collaboration with regional and international organizations, regarding international peacemaking as an effective instrument for settling

armed conflicts and fulfilling post-crisis nation-building tasks” and to “actively contribute to improving the United Nations preventive anti-crisis capacities” (para. 32(I)).

The main legal framework for providing peacekeepers to the United Nations is the [Russian Federation Federal Law No. 93-FZ of June 23, 1995](#) *On Procedures for Deploying Civil and Military Personnel for Activities Related to the Maintenance or Restoration of the International Peace and Security*. Article 16 states the Government is responsible for issuing a yearly report to the Council of the Federation and the parliament’s lower chamber, the Duma, on Russian participation in peacekeeping around the world. A separate provision limits the participation in foreign military operations to professional officers and volunteers, prohibiting the service of draftees. Furthermore, Article 10 creates a permanent peacekeeping contingent, which is to be specially equipped and trained for peacekeeping activities through a separate budget line. A new contingent was never formed, but peacekeeping training functions were designated to the 15th Samara Division of the Russian Armed Forces.

The Russian Ministry of Interior is in charge of seconding police officers and Internal Force servicemen, who have been active participants in UN peacekeeping activities since April 1992. This is reliant upon the order of the Russian president. Officers of the Russian Ministry of Interior have served in UN, OSCE and EU missions in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, East Timor, Kosovo, Macedonia and Haiti.

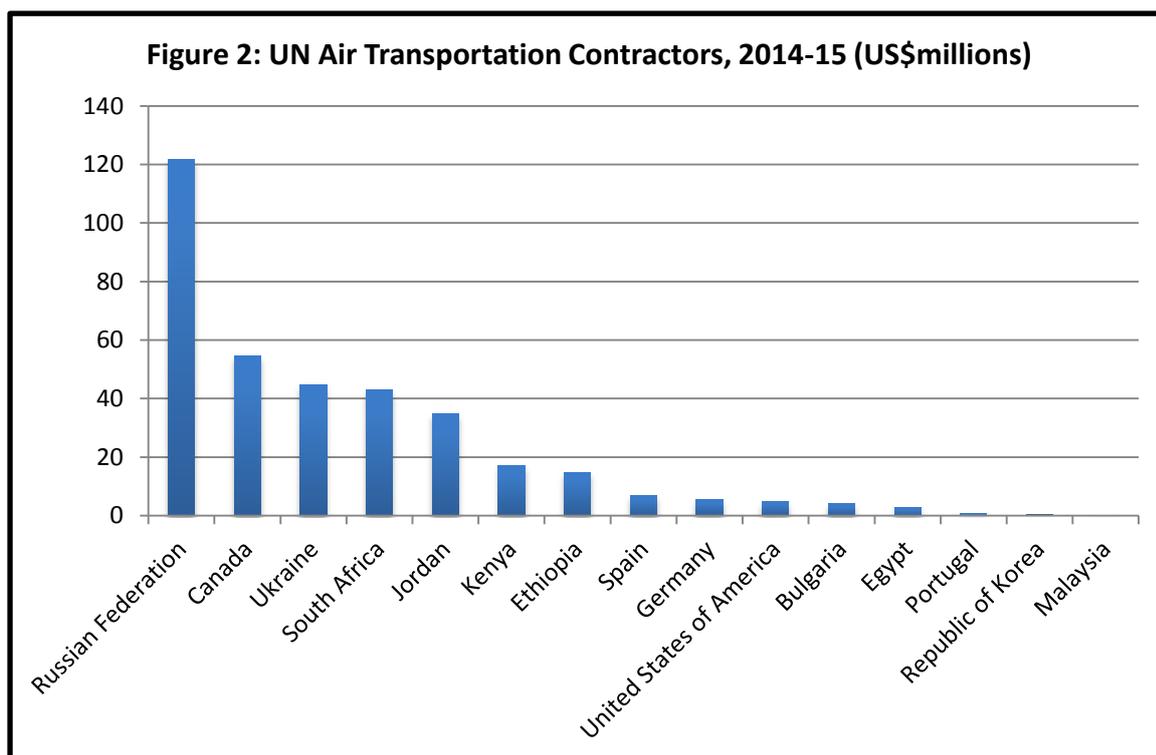
Part 3: Rationales for Contributing

Political Rationales: Russia is committed to projecting its role as a “great power” by retaining a crucial say on issues relevant to international peace and stability. While peacekeeping contributions have remained low since the end of the 1990s, Russia has taken an increasingly proactive stance in shaping the policies of the UN Security Council towards international conflict resolution, often taking an opposing view to the P3, as illustrated by the resolutions blocked on Libya, Syria and South Sudan. More recently, Moscow has [expressed a wish to contribute more to UN peacekeeping](#) and take a more active role, which is seen as instrumental in increasing Russia’s role in the UN and strengthening its influence in decision-making processes beyond the UN Security Council. However, to this day, no concrete steps have been taken in this direction, which questions Russia’s real commitment to the UN if it does not directly align with the current government’s heavily securitized view of its national interest. Russia’s offers to increase troops is usually focused on areas of high strategic importance, such as Ukraine, inside Syria and on its border with Israel (with the 2013 [Russian proposal to replace Austrian peacekeepers in UNDOF](#)), and is in clear violation of the basic UN peacekeeping principles – impartiality in particular, given Russia’s engagement in Syria. In order to gain more influence over UN peacekeeping, Russia has focused on getting more of its nationals into senior management positions within the UN structure. In the case of Syria, Russia is supportive of a strategy, where [the UN enables a continuation of the status quo](#) which is advantageous to the Assad government, for example through supporting UN air drops exclusively to besieged government-controlled areas, while restraining the UN and putting conditions on the delivery of humanitarian aid to rebel-held areas.

Since Vladimir Putin assumed power in 1999, Russia has slowly regained interest in Africa, and this can to some extent explain Russian participation in peacekeeping missions there. While bilateral ties have been strengthened with African countries, increased participation in peacekeeping operations is also seen as a way of gaining political influence on the

continent, which is helpful for building support for Russia's actions in the UN. When the [UN General Assembly voted to condemn](#) Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014, [most African countries abstained](#) from taking a stance on the confrontation between Russia and the West, and two African votes (Sudan and Zimbabwe) were actively given in Russia's favor. Nevertheless, the limited number of Russian personnel deployed shows this is a peripheral issue.

Economic Rationales: Russia does not make big profits from its few deployed peacekeepers. However, a significant economic factor is Russian domination in service provision to UN peace operations. Russia is the second largest supplier of contractor services to UN peacekeeping operations, and the main supplier of air transportation services. In the



financial year 2014-15, Russian aviation and cargo companies held contracts from the UN worth \$122m, which composed 34% of UN air transportation services. Most of these contracts are held by UTair, a Russian air charter company with its local authority majority stakeholders and headquarters located in Russia's central oil-producing regions. According to a UN audit report from 2009, UTair together with its subsidiaries won just under \$1.3 billion in UN air transportation contracts from June 2005-June 2013. Other countries have long criticized the possibility of collusion, lack of transparency and exclusionary bidding specifications in UN procurement methods and opted for internal budget reform, which Russia has consistently blocked as it would threaten directly its commercial interests at the UN. Similarly, not in favor of the HIPPO-recommendations to render UN peace operations more field-focused, [Russia has opposed](#) the delegation of authority for leasing helicopters to field missions and logistical hubs, as it would limit the influence and decision-monitoring of its powerful headquarters lobby.

Security Rationales: Russia is more concerned with controlling and containing conflict in its "near abroad," which explains its large troop deployments in the CIS-region compared to its very low participation in UN peacekeeping operations. As such, Russian peacekeeping is aligned with its political interest in the region.

Institutional Rationales: While proponents of increasing Russian participation in UN operations argue that peacekeeping could potentially be an attractive source of operational experience for the army, the current negligible number of Russian troops in UN operations hardly adds to this. Rationales based on improving the capacity of the military which has high potential for improvement, is likely to meet substantial resistance from the Russian army given the weak interoperability of Russian armed forces and their fear of losing image and prestige if their weaknesses are revealed by participating in an international military coalition.

Normative Rationales: In official statements, Russia often emphasizes its imperative to contribute to UN peacekeeping as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and the responsibility it thus carries towards maintaining international peace and security. However, its contribution of personnel remains low, as its attention is diverted towards conflicts in its own region. In the last decade, Russia has sought a more assertive role in the UN Security Council ([compared to a relative pause in Russia's veto diplomacy between 1980-2005](#)), often representing an alternative position to the P3. Historically, Russia has wielded its veto more than the other permanent members, continuing a Soviet tradition, where the Soviet veto was an important element in retaliating against Western (proposed) actions. Russian vetoes on Syria and on events related to Ukraine have been notable recently. On the ground, these have largely acted as measures to shelter the interventions of the Russian government in these countries from outside interference. To some extent Russia has sought to mark UN peacekeeping as a “Western” mechanism of conflict resolution, particularly since its experience with multilateral operations with the West in the Balkans. Presenting an alternative to the West has been a core strategy of Russian foreign policy since the 1990s, recently through engaging with the BRICS-countries. This explains to some extent Russia's lack of commitment to UN peace operations. However, as the other BRICS-countries have taken a leading role in contributing to UN peace operations (particularly Brazil, China and India), this could be a possible opening for Russia to reevaluate its engagement.

Part 4: Barriers to Contributing

Alternative institutional preferences for crisis management: Along with Russia's strategic focus on its “near abroad,” it has a preference for managing crisis prevention outside UN auspices through the promotion of its regional CSTO Peacekeeping Forces. The Russian Ministry of Defense states it has a “special responsibility for maintaining security in the CIS”. It is also important to note that these operations that the Russian government designates as “peacekeeping” do not conform to the basic UN peacekeeping principles, particularly with regards to impartiality. For Russian forces to be deployed outside of the CIS area, a clear Russian national interest must be defined.

Alternative political or strategic priorities: Russia sees its military involvement in the CIS-area as crucial for national security. This, in addition to the nature of the “peacekeeping” operations Russia has been involved in its region, attest to the fact that it has been more about “projecting Russian power than settling the various conflicts,” as they have been characterized by a close attachment to the Kremlin's geopolitical and strategic agenda.⁸ While Russia sees a certain interest in participating in UN peace operations through what it views as gaining influence abroad, it currently has a limited capacity to send more troops to UN operations, particularly due to its current engagements in Ukraine and Syria.

Financial costs: The Russian economy is currently in a very bad state, and continues to

suffer from embargos inflicted by the West in response to the crisis in Ukraine. Economic constraints and the current military reform have thus complicated Russian willingness and capacity to participate in UN peacekeeping. Another possible barrier to UN peacekeeping contributions deals with institutional financial processing. Peacekeeping reimbursements from the UN go directly to the state budget, which is at the disposal of the government, and not to the Ministry of Defense, which controls most of Russia's armed forces. This creates a disincentive for the Ministry of Defense to urge the President to provide more peacekeepers to UN operations; a crucial step in the decision-making process to send Russian troops abroad. The military are not interested in training and dispatching peacekeepers at their own expense, and have not been able to resolve the compensation issue, despite criticism and alternative mechanisms proposed by relevant government agencies over the last 14 years in the support of the Ministry of Defense.

Discomfort with expanding the UN peacekeeping agenda: Ironically, though Russia's concept of peacekeeping is closer to "peace enforcement" than "peacekeeping," it often objects to more robust mandates for UN peacekeeping. This can be explained by the fact that Russia views UN peacekeeping as dominated by the US, France and UK. In official statements Russia argues that engaging in actions that move beyond traditional peacekeeping to peace enforcement has the potential to infringe upon state sovereignty. In this regard, Russia can be said to have a strict reading of the UN Charter, which is also enshrined in the recent formulation of its foreign policy: "[Russia] strongly supports elaboration of precise peacekeeping mandates allowing for no arbitrary interpretation, particularly those implying the use of force, and the establishment of strict control over their implementation in the course of preparation of UN Security Council decisions on international security, including the launch of new peacekeeping operations or the extension of current ones".⁹

Consequently, Russia often abstains from voting on Security Council resolutions that stipulate peacekeeping mandates if it perceives that they violate the need for host country consent. Most recently, it abstained on Resolution 2304 (2016) revising the mandate of UNMISS in South Sudan and on Resolution 2285 renewing MINURSO's mandate in Western Sahara. With regards to UNMISS, the abstention was largely due to the fact that the resolution called for deployment of a regional protection force against the consent of the host country. Russia also expressed opposition to the potential arms embargo since it has long been uncomfortable with linking peacekeeping resolutions to the threat of sanctions.

Russia regularly objects to language related to the protection of civilians, as it views this to lie outside the responsibility of the international community, even in instances where the host governments fails to provide such protection. Compared to the other Council members, with the exception of China, Russia only sporadically attends expert-level group meetings on the protection of civilians. Similarly, Russia often objects to language on women, peace and security in negotiations of Security Council resolutions, as it is concerned that this agenda is "[infringing on state sovereignty or the competencies of other parts of the UN system](#)".

The 2015 HIPPO report and the subsequent reform efforts had a lukewarm reception in Moscow, particularly the message on the "primacy of politics" and the use of "peace operations" as opposed to "peacekeeping". Russia has reservations about the UN getting increasingly involved in more active political peacemaking. It also collides with Russia's view of international developments, which it views as necessitating increasingly military

solutions and thus also the possible intervention of their CSTO peacekeeping force. At the recent closing ceremony of CSTO exercises, the Secretary-General, Nikolay Bordyuzha, [said](#) “Political influence is the main instrument of the organization. But the way the [world] situation is developing suggests just the opposite: the increase in the role of the military component of the organization.”

Finally, Russia has long expressed reservations about the use of drones. This is mostly connected to its arguments about upholding state sovereignty, but the use of drones for aerial reconnaissance is also viewed as a possible threat to Russia’s economic interest with its dominance of the supply of helicopters to UN peace operations, which have previously been used for such activities.

Exceptionalism: In contrast to its foreign policy rhetoric that stresses the need to go through international legal mechanisms to manage conflict, in practice, Russia views the UN as only one of several foreign policy mechanisms it can work through. Moscow expresses the wish to resolve conflict in the CIS-area through the UN, but with the UN being secondary to the CSTO: Russia is ready to act to enforce peace in its “near abroad,” even if a UN mandate is not provided. Russia’s concept of “peacekeeping” relies on a tradition of “muscular peacekeeping” and is as such closer to “peace enforcement” than “peacekeeping”. This is evident in the Russian word for “peacekeeping” – “*mirotvorchestvo*,” which is directly translated as “peace creation”. This nuance in Russian thus tends to lend itself to a more coercive interpretation of peacekeeping. As such, Russian peacekeeping operations in the “near abroad” take on a much proactive role, often taking sides in favor of separatists, as in the cases of Moldova and Georgia. The operations in Chechnya were also labeled as peacekeeping. As for UN peacekeeping, Russia views it as largely reflecting the interests of the US, and often criticize the US for using the UN to “rubber stamp” its interventions, such as those in Kosovo and Libya.

Absence of pressure to contribute: Russia feels some pressure to contribute, since the other BRICS are contributing so much more, and this is an identity Russia wants to retain. However, even the BRICS-identity can be seen as Russian foreign policy created in opposition to the US, and since the US is currently lagging massively behind in peacekeeping contributions as well, Russia sees no pressure to change its role. It is however possible that this might change, if US contributions to peacekeeping rose significantly, and it is likely that the Chinese strengthened engagement in UN peacekeeping might have an impact on Russia’s willingness to contribute.

Difficult domestic politics: Russia’s engagement in peacekeeping abroad is seen as essential for its foreign policy and mostly supported by the public when a clear national interest is articulated, though it must be emphasized that the Russian public views peacekeeping in the above-expressed Russian terms where peacekeeping is seen as an instrument of national influence. The siege of Sarajevo played a particular role in turning Russian public opinion against more internationalist voices in the public space that were advocating for the use of the UN as a mechanism for conflict resolution and management.

An obstacle to Russia’s increased participation is the current government’s foreign policy. As such, the current political elite is more pragmatic and cynical about the Russian national interest, rejecting ideology and grand projects since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and emphasizing the need to use resources for material development. Furthermore, with the creation of an educated middle class and some improvement in living conditions in the first

decade of the 2000s, the majority of Russians think it's important for Russia to regain a dominant role on the world scene, and for Russia to seek an active role that cements its independence from Western-led institutions, rather than isolating itself from them. This can be compared to China's interest in gaining a more active role at the UN to exchange isolation with independence, and can thus be seen as a window of opportunity for increasing Russian contributions to peacekeeping.

UN peacekeeping very rarely comes up in the public debates, except the discussion about a potential multilateral peacekeeping mission in Ukraine (which Russia supports if it were to have Russian forces). Some liberals oppose Russian engagement in peacekeeping because they believe it is too challenging for the Russian troops who are still seen as demoralized. The ultra-nationalist Liberal Democrats (such as Vladimir Zhirinovskiy) consider Russian soldiers "too good to have their lives wasted in somebody else's war".

Damage to national reputation: Russia enjoys upholding a strong image for its troops, and the military elite still revels in the glory of its Soviet army. The current state of Russian troops does not however live up to this image, and Russia might be fearful of engaging troops in UN peacekeeping in order to protect their reputation. Russia is also skeptical of exchanging military information with other countries, particularly Western ones. As such, Russia prefers to engage in bilateral military exercises for instance, and not multilateral ones. The only exception to this is engagement with other CIS countries.

Resistance in the Military: There is some resistance in the army to accepting outside command, and thus the Russian forces are unlikely to participate in peacekeeping missions where the Force Commander is not Russian. However, the current military reform has aimed to remove strong voices in the military, largely for domestic political reasons. But it is possible that this could make Russian troops more flexible and able to participate in multilateral UN missions.

Part 5: Current Challenges and Issues

The current government has continuously expressed interest in increasing Russia's role in UN peacekeeping, in order to secure its image as a great power and to gain more control of decision-making in missions and the UN. In spite of much potential for Russia to participate more broadly in UN peacekeeping and on a larger scale, the main challenge and limitation Russia faces today is a poor economy and its engagement in wars in Syria and Ukraine, which makes it difficult to prioritize other engagements. Furthermore, Russia has yet to finalize and see the effect of its reform of the military. An ongoing challenge remains the recruitment of professional servicemen and women due to the army's bad domestic reputation. Russia still experiences a large shortage of personnel: in 2014, the services were only manned to 82% of the requirement.¹⁰ However, in terms of increasing contract-service personnel this might be changing, as there was strong Russian public support for operations in Crimea, which in turn boosted the armed forces' popularity, adding to the prestige of military service, and contributing to a much-needed improvement of morale within the armed forces. Simultaneously, several levels in the military have seen salary improvements, and can increasingly be seen to be a competitive remuneration, which is likely to have an impact on recruitment. Looking ahead, with Russia's role in Syria, it is likely to be more active in discussions on UN peace operations and their future.

Part 6: Key Champions and Opponents

There are very few vocal champions or opponents of UN peacekeeping in Russia. Russian

literature on peacekeeping largely deals with Russian operations in the CIS-area. However, it can be noted that previous UN soldiers play a particular role in lobbying the interests of the UN through the Russian Association of Veterans of UN Peacekeeping Missions. One notable figure in public debate on UN peacekeeping is the President of the Association, Sergei Vadimovich Lavrov. The Association regularly criticizes Russia's low involvement in UN peacekeeping as they see it as "hampering both the opportunities for Russian troops to get a first-hand peacekeeping experience and Russia's ability to influence crises in various corners of the world, uphold its stance on current international problems proactively and shape the future of the world". The veterans have argued for the introduction of a national peacekeeping concept, which has yet to come to fruition, as well as a special body under the aegis of the Russian president to supervise, control and guide the activities of all governmental and public organizations engaged in peacekeeping. The latter is seen as a possible solution to overcome the current institutional challenges to UN financial reimbursement.

The peacekeeping training institute in Zelenograd outside of Moscow regularly holds information sessions on UN peacekeeping, though it mostly caters to older veterans, of whom there are few. They run a museum as well as the online information portal peacekeeper.ru. Dmitry Trenin, the director of the Carnegie Moscow Center, is another person who from time to time comments on the topic.

Part 7: Capabilities and Caveats

Historically, Russia is well positioned to benefit from its interoperable capabilities. Indeed, generations of officers from not only Eastern Europe and Central Asia but also ex-Soviet allies as diverse as Somalia, Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Cuba, Iraq and Syria have been trained in Soviet doctrine at the Patrice Lumumba Academy in Moscow. Furthermore, Soviet and Russian equipment is currently being used and deployed in peacekeeping missions by large troop-contributing countries such as India and Bangladesh. However, Russian forces lack key language skills such as English and French and have little experience in participating in multilateral training exercises outside the CIS, limiting their capability of interoperability. Russia did designate the 15th motorized rifle brigade (MRB) as a specialized brigade to perform peacekeeping tasks. Theoretically, the use of the 15th Brigade, as well as airborne elements trained under Russia's peacekeeping training program, could potentially be incorporated into a UN Rapid Reaction Force, as the HIPPO-report calls for. The same applies to the peacekeeping forces of the CSTO. However, it has been deployed mostly to the CIS-area, and frequent rotation has made it impossible for these capabilities to spread around to the rest of the armed forces.

Russia is becoming more aware of the need for integrated, multidimensional peacekeeping, and has in more recent official documents stressed the need for increased cooperation between military, civilian and police components. Nevertheless, the focus has insufficiently been on the civilian component, as the Ministry of Defence has emphasized improving coordination between Russian troops and police and internal security troops, which has been a central goal of reforms.¹¹

As the ongoing military reform of the Russian forces has so far focused on leadership and organization, it has not yet touched on the decades of deficiencies in military doctrine and training, which leave Russian forces poorly prepared for low-intensity and asymmetric conflict environments. Russian combat training and military culture has for decades emphasized "quantitative parameters, high firepower, and manpower-intensive operations,"

which has influenced their blurred distinction between combat operations and peacekeeping missions.¹² However, following hard lessons learned against Chechen insurgents and current combat experience in the asymmetric environments of Ukraine and Syria, Russian forces have become more prone to undertake non-conventional military missions. However, operating in a complex UN peacekeeping environment remains a big challenge for Russian forces because their methods are not up to the level of the UN's human rights standards. Russian methods are known to be very forceful, and the soldiers receive little to no training in human rights and international humanitarian law. The army culture of Russia is violent and frequently involved in scandals of harassment, sexual abuse and even dismemberment (through a prominent hazing system called "dedovchina"), which attest to its poor reputation domestically. There have also been several [violent sexual scandals](#) with Russian contractors involved in UN peace operations.

Part 8: Further Reading

[Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation](#) approved by the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir V. Putin on 12 February 2013.

[Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, December 2014](#)

Allison, Roy, *Russia, the West and Military Intervention* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

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Johnson, Rebecca J., "Russian Responses to Crisis Management in the Balkans: How NATO's Past Actions May Shape Russia's Future Involvement," *Demokratizatsiya*, 9:2 (Spring 2001): 292-309.

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Lynch, Dov, "Post-Imperial Peacekeeping. Russia in the CIS," IFS Info 2/03 (2003).

Mackinlay, John & Peter Cross (eds), *Regional Peacekeepers. The paradox of Russian peacekeeping* (UN University Press, 2006).

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Notes

¹ Unless stated otherwise, the data is from IISS, *The Military Balance 2016* (London: IISS/Routledge, 2016).

² This number is the defense budget divided by the number of active armed forces.

³ The Commonwealth of Independent States was formed in 1991 upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union and consists of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

⁴ While initially providing support to NATO's air strikes in Bosnia, Russia's support vanished with Operation Deliberate Force in August 1995, which it argued was against the actions mandated by previous UN Security Council resolutions. The subsequent Operation Allied Force received even more criticism from Russia as it was entirely seen as a breach of international law, given that it had been using force without being first authorized and mandated by the Security Council.

⁵ See A. Nikin and A. Kazantsev (eds.) (2011). *In Search of a New Role: International Security Organizations in Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian Regions*, MGIMO, Moscow.

⁶ Interview with Russian diplomat, New York, February 12, 2016.

⁷ V. Zaemskiy, *UN and Peacekeeping* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnie Otnosheniya, 2012).

⁸ Lo, *Vladimir Putin*, p.92.

⁹ *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*, para. 32(m).

¹⁰ IISS, *The Military Balance 2014* (Taylor & Francis, 2014).

¹¹ Facon, "Integration or Retrenchement?" p.39.

¹² Facon, "Integration or Retrenchement?" p.32.