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It is regrettable that many Western commentators repeated Putin's narrative that the problem came from an aggressive NATO expansion aimed at encircling Russia.

Time for a reset of narratives. Here are some simple insights, informed by our work on the game theory of alliances. 🧵



NATO is a voluntary association, and an association with Russia would also have (initially) been largely voluntarily.

But Eastern European countries \*demanded\* to join NATO. While NATO countries were initially not warm about this prospect.

#### Visegrád Group [\[edit\]](#)

In February 1991, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia formed the [Visegrád Group](#) to push for [European integration](#) under the [European Union](#) and NATO, as well as to conduct military reforms in line with NATO standards. Internal NATO reaction to these former [Warsaw Pact](#) countries was initially negative, but by the [1991 Rome summit](#) in November, members agreed to a series of goals that could lead to accession, such as market and democratic liberalization, and that NATO should be a partner in these efforts. In subsequent years, wider forums for regional cooperation between NATO and its eastern neighbors were set up, including the [North Atlantic Cooperation Council](#) (later the [Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council](#)) and the [Partnership for Peace](#).<sup>[21]</sup>

What about countries from the former USSR (Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine)? Russia proposed an economic integration, the “Community of Independent States” (CIS). It failed because the other countries resisted integration.

CIS 📌



The reasons are now obvious for everybody to see. Small countries run the risk of being bullied in an alliance with a hegemonic partner. In such an alliance, they have very low bargaining power 🐾 they are at the mercy of later “revisions” of the terms of the alliance.



The reaction from satellite countries was not paranoid. Russia used pressure to force Georgia and Moldova in the CIS. Then it established the “Monroeski Doctrine”, stating its right to intervene in CIS states to “protect” the right of ethnic Russians.

**MONROESKI DOCTRINE.** The “Monroeski Doctrine” was a colloquial description of **Boris Yeltsin’s** foreign policy strategy in the **near abroad**. Adapted from the **United States’** 19th-century Monroe Doctrine, which prohibited European colonization of the newly independent Latin American republics, the Monroeski Doctrine affirmed the Russian Federation’s position as the dominant power in the entire former Soviet Union. Moscow often invoked the doctrine when it intervened in post-Soviet conflicts in the **Newly Independent States** of Eurasia, such as the **Tajik Civil War** and the **separatist** conflicts in **Nagorno-Karabakh**, **Transnistria**, **Abkhazia**, and **South Ossetia**. Articulated by **Andranik Migranyan**, the Monroeski Doctrine used historical and **geopolitical** logic to argue that Russia—rather than **Turkey**, **China**, **Iran**, or the United States—was better equipped to solve issues in its “backyard,” particularly through organizations like the **Commonwealth of Independent States**. Political elites in the former Soviet Republics, particularly in the **Baltic States**, **Georgia**, **Moldova**, and **Uzbekistan**, criticized the policy as neo-imperialist. The term fell out of favor by the end of the 1990s, but the concept still girds the **foreign relations** theories of Russia’s **Eurasianists**, among other schools of thought.

The “protection of an ethnic minority” argument is a go-to excuse to interfere in another country, and therefore could not provide confidence in the future attitude of Russia. The current events provide, unfortunately, a vivid demonstration.



As a consequence of these concerns. Countries skeptical about an integration with Russia created in 1997-99 the GUUAM group (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova), to increase their bargaining power against Russia,

## **GUUAM and the Future of CIS Military Cooperation**

FLEMMING SPLIDSBOEL-HANSEN

*This study analyses the establishment and development of the GUUAM cooperation and offers an assessment of the future implications of this regional grouping for the CIS military alliance. It presents three key arguments. First, that the GUUAM members have bandwagoned with western states at the system level and balanced against Russia at the regional level. Second, that there is a dialectical relationship between these two policies, with one getting added momentum from the other. And finally, that on this background we should expect to see increased future balancing by the GUUAM states – and possibly by other CIS members as well – causing a further undermining of the CIS military cooperation.*

These concerns are why Eastern European countries have been interested to join the EU and NATO: they try to escape the threat of being vassalised in an alliance with Russia.

And NATO's aggressive expansion? NATO countries have rejected Ukraine's and Georgia's membership.



**Ukraine**

## Nato allies divided over Ukraine and Georgia

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**Ian Traynor** in Brussels

Tue 2 Dec 2008 11.02 AEDT

Washington and several of its European allies were divided last night over how to respond to Georgia's and Ukraine's bids to join Nato and over whether to resume high-level Nato-Russia contacts frozen because of the Russian invasion of **Georgia** in August.

On the eve of a meeting of Nato foreign ministers today in Brussels, the Americans pushed for a new formula that would put **Ukraine** and Georgia on a slow path to Nato membership. But at least six European Nato members opposed the US move, which is backed by Britain, suggesting that the two-day Nato meeting will result in an ambiguous fudge.

Since 1999 prospective **Nato** members have had to follow a roadmap known as the Membership Action Plan (MAP) to qualify for membership. At a Nato summit in Bucharest in April President George Bush pressed for Ukraine and Georgia to be awarded the MAP, but he was defeated by Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany who argued that such a step would increase friction with Russia.

It is mind-boggling how many commentators in the West have blamed NATO's aggressiveness. When, instead, NATO has repeatedly opted not to fight to stop Russian military interventions in Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine.

**WORLD**

### Tucker Carlson Backs Russia, Compares Ukraine Joining NATO With China Controlling Mexico

BY BRENDAN COLE ON 1/19/22 AT 10:16 AM EST

THE  TIMES Today's sections Part six days Explore Times Radio Log in

UKRAINE CRISIS

### Ukraine crisis: Corbynites criticise Nato 'expansion'

In short, Eastern European countries had a choice, they opted for the European Union and NATO, when they could, for the security it offered them. Remember, this was Kyiv in 2014.



We need to stop the “NATO aggression” narrative. It has been used as an excuse by an authoritarian state to:

- crush the democratic aspirations of peoples in several European countries,
- reinforce the police state in Russia against the aspirations of Russian citizens.

NEWS

### Anti-war protesters march through Moscow

Thousands of demonstrators have marched through the Russian capital of Moscow to protest Russia's reported participation in the Ukraine conflict. Fighting in Donetsk has died down following heavy overnight gunfire.

Date: 21.09.2014

Keywords: Vladimir Putin, Dmitry Medvedev, Kremlin, Ukraine, Donetsk, Russia, Kyiv, Ukraine, Ukraine, Donetsk, Kremlin, protests, march, anti-war

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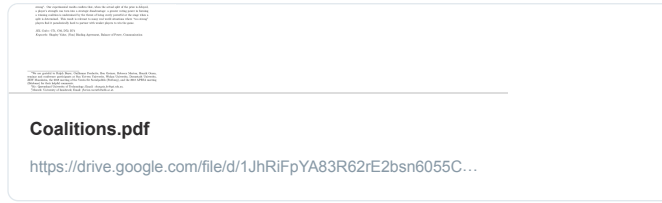
ALAN TAYLOR | FEBRUARY 24, 2022 | 20 PHOTOS | IN FOCUS

## Anti-war Protests in Russia

On Thursday, Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an invasion of Ukraine, launching missiles and sending thousands of troops across its borders. Following the attack, protests erupted in countries around the world—including Russia. Hundreds of people gathered in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and other Russian cities to demonstrate against their government's actions, and calling for an end to the war. Most of these protests were disrupted by police, and many of the demonstrators were detained.

/end

These insights are informed by our work on coalitional game theory, where we used Russia and its alliance as an illustration of a “too big to prevail” paradox.



### Too big to prevail: The paradox of power in coalition formation\*

Changxia Ke<sup>1</sup> Florian Morath<sup>2</sup> Anthony Newell<sup>3</sup> Lionel Page<sup>4</sup>

#### Abstract

In standard coalition games, players try to form a coalition to secure a prize and a coalition agreement specifies how the prize is to be split among its members. However, in practical situations where coalitions are formed, the actual split of the prize often takes place *after* the coalition formation stage. This creates the possibility for some players to ask for a renegotiation of the initial split. We predict that, in such situations, a player can suffer from being “too strong”. Our experimental results confirm that, when the actual split of the prize is delayed, a player’s strength can turn into a strategic disadvantage: a greater voting power in forming a winning coalition is undermined by the threat of being overly powerful at the stage when a split is determined. This result is relevant to many real world situations where “too strong” players find it paradoxically hard to partner with weaker players to win the game.

As an illustrative example, Russia’s inability to convince former soviet countries to join an economic union under its umbrella can be interpreted as a “too big to prevail” situation. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia tried to foster an economic association with other post-soviet states with the Community of Independent States (CIS). But this attempt has mainly been a failure with other states resisting deeper integration and often looking for alternative alliances instead (Kubicek, 2009). This may seem surprising a priori given the economic, cultural and linguistic bonds between these different countries and between these countries and Russia. But the history of the CIS illustrates the concerns of tying oneself in an alliance with a hegemonic partner. Very early on, Russia used pressure to force the participation of some states (Georgia, Moldova) and stated explicitly, via the so-called “Monroski Doctrine”, its right to intervene in CIS states to protect the right of ethnic Russians. CIS skeptics countries formed a specific alliance without Russia, the GUAAM

group (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova).<sup>42</sup> This choice is strikingly evocative of an alliance of small players in our experiment with the goal of counter balancing the strength of a potential hegemonic coalition partner. One of the challenges Russia faces in its endeavour to convince other states to join its alliance is a credible commitment to a long term governance agreement. The lack of democratic rule of law at home and a record of military and hybrid interventions in other countries undermines Russia’s credibility about the guarantee of future relationships.

By comparison, the European Union is, if anything, politically weak and ineffective internationally. But as a coalition of countries it does not suffer from the two issues faced by the CIS. The European Union credibly guarantees the respect of the sovereignty of its members and it is composed of middle-sized and small-sized countries with which a new country can build flexible coalitions without risking being systematically isolated. These characteristics offer to new members the prospect of participating on an equal footing in future intra-bloc negotiations. It likely explains why, in spite of its weaknesses, the European Union has acted as a magnet for Eastern European countries (Vachudova and Hooghe, 2009).

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