

Russian Escalation in Estonia

On September 5, Russian security forces crossed into Estonia and kidnapped an Estonian national working for the Estonian Internal Security Service. After a quick show trial in Moscow, he was convicted of espionage, but his death sentence was commuted to 20 years hard labor for “cooperating with the investigation.” Russia now claims that based on evidence obtained during that trial, the Estonian government was systematically harassing ethnic Russians in towns along the border in an attempt to get them to resettle, preferably in Russia. Moscow further claims that this “reprehensible violation of human rights of Russian minorities” (many of whom have Russian passports) was being done at NATO’s urging in order to “deny Russia’s historic responsibility to protect Russian-speaking people in any territories, but especially those detached from the homeland in clear violation of agreements between the Soviet Union and NATO in 1989-91.” The Estonian government has called these allegations “absurd” and NATO has reinforced its troop presence in the country but has chosen to deploy its forces no closer than 50 miles from the border with Russia. On November 15, mass protests by Russian-speakers in several border towns in Estonia ended with the local police forcibly dispersing some demonstrators but then retreating after exchange of gunfire. More than 50 people, mostly Russian-speakers, have died, the demonstrators have occupied the city halls, and have called upon Russia to protect them. Moscow has publicly stated that it is considering the request, and has called upon the Estonian government to recall the NATO troops before the situation gets any worse. Satellite imagery has revealed the movement of machinery and people across the border from Russia during the night of the 16th. Although Moscow has denied anything but humanitarian assistance, it has also warned that any attempt to interfere with that assistance would be met with force “for the protection of the Russian volunteers.”

You are directed to formulate United States policy. You are to analyze military and diplomatic options (or some combination, even possibly inaction), which may be unilateral, multilateral through NATO or through an ad hoc coalition, or multilateral through the United Nations. You will assume that all present signs indicate that if left unchecked, the Russian forces will equip the militants in Estonia, who are likely to demand autonomy and eventually independence.

Research and Analysis

Your memo should begin with an introduction summarizing the few major points of your analysis that you want your busy readers to take away (Executive Summary). In the background section (Background of the Problem) frame the problem from your client’s perspective (e.g., the President of the United States) by tracing its history up to November 2014. This section should be as concise as possible. Next, present your assumptions about the preferences of the players involved. Enumerate the options available to your client and predict their consequences (Options and Analysis). This section is the longest and most important: you should list options that you will not be recommending, and you should carefully evaluate possible consequences (good and bad) of each alternative, including an assessment of their relative likelihoods of success. You must make full use of the strategic tactics we have discussed in class. Finally, weigh the alternatives from your client’s perspective, and recommend a course of action (Conclusions).

Mechanics

The memo should be typed, and at least 10 (but not more than 12) double-spaced pages long. You must endnote major sources of information and provide a bibliography.¹ These do not count toward the page limit. The memo must use a font size of 11 points, and margins of 1 inch all around. Submit a cleanly printed copy. The essay is due on December 3, at the beginning of class. It will be graded using the criteria on the course website.

¹ You may use Wikipedia in the course of your research but you must verify all information obtained there from other sources. You must scrupulously credit other people's ideas if you decide to use them in any way. You need not cite the lecture notes for the theoretical arguments. On the course website, I have provided two real world analyses to give you a feel of what these things look like. You are, however, to adhere to the structure I outlined above, not the one used in these examples. Discuss nuclear deterrence and crisis stability with reference to the capabilities of the opponents.