

Russia's annexation of Crimea and the military operations in eastern Ukraine have overturned the post-Cold War norms that provided stability and development for the former Soviet--now sovereign--countries bordering Russia. This archetypal constellation of factors--a destabilizing conflict that halts democratic consolidation, the presence of an ethnic Russian population to justify intervention, strategic geopolitical location--has implications for other vulnerable areas along the periphery, such as Transdniester and western Kazakhstan. o Neighboring countries are recalculating their security and foreign policies through the lens of Ukraine, assessing their own security and conflict dynamics based on Russia's newly aggressive policies and practices in Ukraine and the West's response. o The Georgia-Russia war in 2008 and the annexation of Crimea are emblematic conflicts and demonstrate a strategic pattern to Putin's interventions.