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# Calculating Russian Force Projection Capability

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The Russian Armed Forces implemented many reforms after the 2008 Georgian War, consolidating military districts, streamlining command-and-control structure, and switching from a division- to a brigade-centric order of battle. Overall, these reforms acknowledged the futility of retaining a theoretically mass mobilization-capable force in a time when the political conditions for using it are almost impossible to fathom. Instead, the reforms aimed for a military capable of rapidly generating force of flexible size in any of the multitudinous peripheries of the Russian sphere of influence.

However, the surface appearance of these reforms somewhat obfuscates how the Russian Armed Forces now practices and executes force generation. Russia's peacetime order of battle reflects how it trains more than how it will fight. Mobilizing an entire brigade remains a rare occurrence in Russia. In 2021, Russia conducted only 4 brigade-scale tactical exercises as opposed to 87 battalion-scale ones.

In the twenty-first century, Russia predominantly relies upon the so-called battalion tactical group (BTG) to field these smaller units in potential isolation from classic Soviet-style echelons. These BTGs carry a disproportionately large proportion of indirect fires by Western standards. They are designed to be able to deliver sufficient firepower in a high-intensity tactical engagement such that they do not require the support of other manoeuvre units.

Calculating the potential number of BTGs Russia can field from its order of battle requires knowledge not only of the order of battle but the patterns in training and political-military pressures on a unit's area of responsibility (AOR). Determining how many BTGs can be spared in a particular campaign requires balancing all these factors.

If Russia's order of battle boasts the actual combat strength as it is supposed to have on paper, a Ground Forces brigade should be able to generate 4 BTGs and a division up to 12 BTGs simultaneously. An Airborne Troops (VDV) division would be able to generate 2 BTGs per regiment and a brigade probably 3 BTGs; the decreased quantity is somewhat offset by increased quality and greater deploy-ability including by *desant* tactics.

In Poland's case, Russia would be primarily expected to generate force primarily from its Western Military District (ZVO). The ZVO consists of four SV components: 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Tank Army (Moscow), 6<sup>th</sup> Army (St. Petersburg), 20<sup>th</sup> Guards Army (Voronezh), and 11<sup>th</sup> Army Corps (Kaliningrad). Based on the above calculation, this gives the following maximum possible strength for SV units as of the end of 2021:

