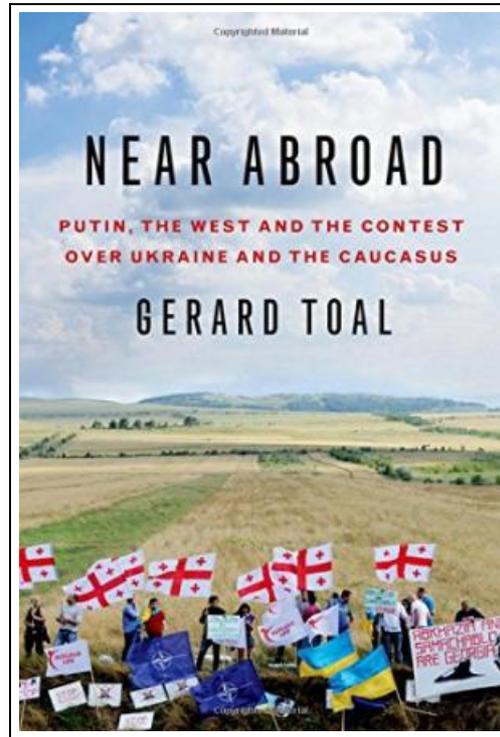


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## NEAR ABROAD: PUTIN, THE WEST AND THE CONTEST FOR RUSSIAS RIMLANDS

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Oxford University Press. Hardcover. Condition: New. 272 pages. Vladimir Putins intervention into the GeorgiaSouth Ossetia conflict in summer 2008 was quickly recognized by western critics as an attempt by Russia to increase its presence and power in the near abroad--the independent states of the former Soviet Union that Russia still regards as its wards. In the United States, conservatives like John McCain and Sarah Palin--running for the presidency at the time--immediately rose to the defense of Georgia, arguing that Russias actions not only represented a challenge to the post-Cold War order but also threatened a return to the world to the great power rivalries of yesteryear. Very quickly, though, the implosion of the global economy that began in the autumn of 2008 moved the Russian incursion to the metaphorical backburner. Six years later, the Russians acted again, but on a much larger stage. In response to political turmoil in the Ukraine, they invaded the heavily Russian Crimea--a possession of Ukraine by historical accident--and annexed it. They also threatened to liberate Eastern Ukraine from the allegedly fascist Ukrainian government, and set to work squeezing the Ukrainians supply of natural gas. In contrast to the earlier Georgia episode, this new conflict has generated a crisis of global proportions, forcing European countries to rethink their relationship with Russia and their reliance on it for energy supplies. In *Near Abroad*, the eminent political geographer Gerard Toal analyzes Russias recent offensive actions in the near abroad, focusing in particular on the ways in which both the West and Russia have relied on Cold War-era rhetorical and emotional tropes that distort as much as they clarify. In response to Russian aggression, US critics quickly turned to tried-and-true concepts like spheres of influence--a term that has a strong association with the iron curtain and Yalta--to condemn the...

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