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## The New Cold War: Geostrategic Rivalry and a Return to Political Warfare

Mason Connor Shuya  
*University of Texas at El Paso*

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THE NEW COLD WAR: GEOSTRATEGIC RIVALRY AND A RETURN TO POLITICAL  
WARFARE

MASON CONNOR SHUYA

Master's Program in Intelligence and National Security Studies

APPROVED:

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Larry Valero, Ph.D., Chair

---

Kiril Avramov, Ph.D.

---

Steven Coulthart, Ph.D.

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Stephen L. Crites, Jr., Ph.D.  
Dean of the Graduate School

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by

Mason Connor Shuya

2019

## **DEDICATION**

Dedicated to my parents Robert and Sandra Shuya for their constant support for me to continue my education and to my advisers at the University of Texas at El Paso's National Security Studies Institute, Dr. Larry Valero and Mrs. Carmen Medellin, for being there with me every step of the way, from my time as an Undergraduate Sophomore to now, finishing my journey with them and the completion of my Master's degree. I couldn't have done this without the constant guidance of any of you.

THE NEW COLD WAR: GEOSTRATEGIC RIVALRY AND A RETURN TO POLITICAL  
WARFARE

by

MASON CONNOR SHUYA, B.A.

THESIS

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## **ABSTRACT**

The current geopolitical climate is one which has seen a renewed state of tensions in the relationship between the United States and the Russian Federation dating to 2014 and Russia's annexation of Ukrainian territory. This current state of geopolitical tensions has led many to question: are we in a state of New Cold War today? If so, today's Cold War may be defined by the advancement of cyber capabilities and the use of propaganda and misinformation. How will this be the defining factor in the New Cold War? Through a comprehensive DIME analysis of the Russian Federation, the United States, and American allies in the West, this thesis makes the argument that there is indeed a new Cold War and offers qualitative analysis and policy recommendations in the face of this new threat.

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# LITERATURE REVIEW

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Twentieth Century saw the ultimate level of violence by a multitude of actors in one half and then the threat of complete and utter destruction in the other. The first half witnessed the end of a system of imperial subjugation that had been in place for centuries. The second half observed the beginning and end of a system in which two competing powers, known as bipolarity, where one actor in the contest outlasted the other until existence was no longer physically feasible. This second half century has been known as the Cold War and was contested between the Soviet Union in the East and the United States in the West. The consequences of that conflict are still being felt today and have given rise to a new Cold War between the same actors, although under new names.

To understand how this conflict today is a Cold War, one must examine what exactly one means by that term as well as characteristics from the first Cold War between these actors. The Miriam Webster dictionary offers a denotative definition of: “a condition of rivalry, mistrust, and often open hostility short of violence especially between power groups (such as labor and management).”<sup>1</sup> The Cambridge University Press dictionary offers a similar denotative definition for cold war: “a continuing and dangerous unfriendly situation existing between countries that is expressed in political ways, often including threats of war.”<sup>2</sup> Yet what comes to mind whenever the term is used happens to be the Cold War as mentioned in the previous paragraph: the state of conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States.

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<sup>1</sup> “Cold War,” *Miriam Webster*, accessed September 10, 2019, available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cold%20war>.

<sup>2</sup> “Cold War,” *Cambridge University Press*, accessed September 10, 2019, available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/cold-war>.

While it is controversial to openly declare, one must only use one of the two definitions listed above to realize that the United States and the Russian Federation (Russia), the successor state to the Soviet Union, are locked in a new state of Cold War. While the previous Cold War was waged between the Americans and the Soviets for half a century, it is unclear how long this new Cold War will last. At present, this conflict has been ongoing since 2014, or nearly half a decade. It has also seen the ongoing presidential administration on one side reminiscent of strong Soviet leadership while two administrations on the other in the continued democratic traditions of abdication of power through constitutional term limits.

This new Cold War is being fought across the four main instruments of power: Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic known as DIME. Within the Diplomatic realm, the United States has maintained its relationship with previous Cold War era allies (mainly NATO) as well as Cold War era adversaries in former Warsaw Pact countries who have joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This has increased the size of power of what is generally known as 'the West'. The Russian Federation has also turned to new allies, chiefly those already in contention with the United States and the West: China, Iran, North Korea, and Syria.

Militarily speaking, the Russian Federation has set out on a campaign to revitalize and modernize its military. This has led to the establishment of new military brigades, advancements in technology, and even a renewed focus on its nuclear arsenal. NATO and the West have responded in similar fashion, repopulating Europe with large numbers of American and other allied forces for the first time since the previous Cold War. While there in response to the fear of escalations, such fears may be realized due to proxy wars between Russia and the West being fought in Ukraine and Syria.

These proxy wars have also led to multiple rounds of international sanctioning by Western countries against Russia for its part in fomenting war in both Ukraine and Syria. The results of these sanctions have had mixed results but have led Russia to focus on new economic partnerships with countries already at odds with the West, which seems to further increase tensions and continuously drive the world into another East versus West confrontation. The final instrument of power used for this new Cold War is information, which might end up being the defining factor of this Cold War.

Reminiscent of the first Cold War, information and misinformation will play a pivotal role in the way that Russia and the West interact with one another. The West prides itself on the liberal access to information while Russia maintains a firm hold on what information is allowed to be published to its people. The advancements of technology that followed the end of the first Cold War led to the Internet and wide access to information at the press of the button. Today, those advancements have gone even further into “social media” whereby information can be gained or manipulated even faster than previously thought. It is in this realm, in conjunction with other cyber capabilities (such as cyber weapons and network penetration) that leads to this defining factor previously mentioned. In short, that as nuclear weapons were the defining weapons of the previous Cold War, so will cyber capabilities and information/disinformation be the defining weapons of this Cold War.

### **THE ESCALATION LADDER**

In 1956, American military strategist Herman Khan wrote *On Escalation: Metaphors and Scenarios* to discuss the state of security during the Cold War between the United States and Soviet Union. The most important aspect from the work comes in Chapter Two, where Khan details what he calls “the Escalation Ladder”, or a visual and metaphorical representation of the

escalation of tensions between opposing powers.<sup>3</sup> Khan's ladder has 44 rungs and is broken up into seven subsections: "sub crisis maneuvering", "traditional crises", "intense crises", "bizarre crises", "exemplary central attacks", "military central wars", and "civilian central wars."<sup>4</sup> The escalation ladder is visualized in the figure on the following page.

Khan also states within this work that it is important to note that the rungs of the escalation ladder are fluid, being dynamic and allowing for simultaneous ascension and descension within the various subsections of the ladder. While the contest that Khan witnessed in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century ended with the complete dissolvment of the Soviet Union, the nuclear arsenal possessed by that power has been transferred to its successor state and his theoretical framework in an era of geothermal nuclear warfare remains as important today as it did when he was writing the theory. For this purpose, it feels appropriate to apply Khan's escalation ladder to the current conflict between the United States and the Russian Federation as various rungs in Khan's model have been crossed in escalation of the crisis between the two powers. In the following sections of this literature review, escalation of the various subsections and rungs of the escalation ladder will be mentioned and demonstrated.

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<sup>3</sup> Herman Khan, *On Escalation: Metaphors and Scenarios*, (NY: Praegar, 1965), 37-51.

<sup>4</sup> Khan, *On Escalation: Metaphors and Scenarios*, 39.

**FIGURE 3**  
**AN ESCALATION LADDER**  
A Generalized (or Abstract) Scenario

AFTERMATHS	
CIVILIAN CENTRAL WARS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>44. Spasm or Insensate War</li> <li>43. Some Other Kinds of Controlled General War</li> <li>42. Civilian Devastation Attack</li> <li>41. Augmented Disarming Attack</li> <li>40. Countervalue Salvo</li> <li>39. Slow-Motion Countercity War</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">(CITY TARGETING THRESHOLD)</p>
MILITARY CENTRAL WARS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>38. Unmodified Counterforce Attack</li> <li>37. Counterforce-with-Avoidance Attack</li> <li>36. Constrained Disarming Attack</li> <li>35. Constrained Force-Reduction Salvo</li> <li>34. Slow-Motion Counterforce War</li> <li>33. Slow-Motion Counter-"Property" War</li> <li>32. Formal Declaration of "General" War</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">(CENTRAL WAR THRESHOLD)</p>
EXEMPLARY CENTRAL ATTACKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>31. Reciprocal Reprisals</li> <li>30. Complete Evacuation (Approximately 95 per cent)</li> <li>29. Exemplary Attacks on Population</li> <li>28. Exemplary Attacks Against Property</li> <li>27. Exemplary Attack on Military</li> <li>26. Demonstration Attack on Zone of Interior</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">(CENTRAL SANCTUARY THRESHOLD)</p>
BIZARRE CRISES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25. Evacuation (Approximately 70 per cent)</li> <li>24. Unusual, Provocative, and Significant Countermeasures</li> <li>23. Local Nuclear War—Military</li> <li>22. Declaration of Limited Nuclear War</li> <li>21. Local Nuclear War—Exemplary</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">(NO NUCLEAR USE THRESHOLD)</p>
INTENSE CRISES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20. "Peaceful" World-Wide Embargo or Blockade</li> <li>19. "Justifiable" Counterforce Attack</li> <li>18. Spectacular Show or Demonstration of Force</li> <li>17. Limited Evacuation (Approximately 20 per cent)</li> <li>16. Nuclear "Ultimatums"</li> <li>15. Barely Nuclear War</li> <li>14. Declaration of Limited Conventional War</li> <li>13. Large Compound Escalation</li> <li>12. Large Conventional War (or Actions)</li> <li>11. Super-Ready Status</li> <li>10. Provocative Breaking Off of Diplomatic Relations</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">(NUCLEAR WAR IS UNTHINKABLE THRESHOLD)</p>
TRADITIONAL CRISES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Dramatic Military Confrontations</li> <li>8. Harassing Acts of Violence</li> <li>7. "Legal" Harassment—Retortions</li> <li>6. Significant Mobilization</li> <li>5. Show of Force</li> <li>4. Hardening of Positions—Confrontation of Wills</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">(DON'T ROCK THE BOAT THRESHOLD)</p>
SUBCRISES MANEUVER- ING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Solemn and Formal Declarations</li> <li>2. Political, Economic, and Diplomatic Gestures</li> <li>1. Ostensible Crisis</li> </ul>
DISAGREEMENT—COLD WAR	

Figure 1.1: The Escalation Ladder



## **CHAPTER 2: DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS OVER THE COURSE OF THE CONFLICT**

### **THE UNITED STATES**

#### **The Obama Presidency**

The Obama Presidency saw tensions escalate and relations deteriorate. President Obama and his administration were responsible for punishing Russia following the events in Ukraine. This was a period where businesses and individuals associated with the Kremlin and President Putin were increasingly sanctioned by United States, further isolating Russia from the global community. These tensions, the actions in Ukraine, and international sanctions came to a forefront in 2014. As time went on, President Obama and President Putin had increasingly less contact. Both sides were also intent on reducing the level of communication channels between both nations. Rhetoric was becoming increasingly harsh, yet it was not until the end of 2016 when the Obama administration realized that it had directly been attacked by Russian agents in preparation for a new President.

Following the Presidential elections at the end of 2016, President Obama ordered the expulsion of several Russian diplomats ousted as Russian agents. President Obama also ordered two different Russian compounds on American soil to be raided and shut down by the FBI.

#### **The Trump Presidency**

President Trump has repeatedly stated that relations between the United States and the Russian Federation were the worst they have ever been. This has been supported by research from the Pew Center, which found that nearly 68% of Americans distrust Russians and President

Vladimir Putin.<sup>5</sup> President Trump has also publicly stated that he looks to rectify relations between the United States and Russia and justified doing so by reminding Americans that the two nations are the two largest nuclear powers. His sentiments are the antithesis to those of law makers on Capitol Hill.

Since the inauguration of President Trump, lawmakers from the Democratic Party have stated that Russia and the United States are enemies, with this originating from their blatant attack on the U.S. Presidential Election (which resulted in the presidency of Donald Trump). Lawmakers from the Republican Party had fought this assertion early on. Yet following the U.S.-Russian Summit in Helsinki in July of 2018, Republican lawmakers on Capitol Hill joined their Democratic counterparts in protesting the President's moves to reestablish relations with Russia. While intended to amend relations between the two countries, the summit only fanned the flames of hostilities on the part of the American public and increased the distrust that the American public have in their president. What the summit achieved was a further delegitimization of President Trump and to turn the Congress against the President in response to his failure of holding President Putin and Russia accountable for meddling in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Elections.<sup>6</sup> Congressional lawmakers have voiced their concerns over President Trump and U.S.

relations with the Russian Federation to his administration as well. At the Senate confirmation hearing for Mike Pompeo to be Secretary of State, Senator Bob Menendez of New Jersey asked Mike Pompeo what the administration would do to curb, "an aggressive Russia who seeks to undermine the international order we helped create after World War II."<sup>7</sup> Mr. Pompeo responded by stating that, if confirmed, he would do everything in his power to push for the end of Russian aggression in Ukraine, and work to ensure the security of other countries from Russian aggression.<sup>8</sup> Months later, in July of 2018, Mike Pompeo faced similar concerns from the Senate and announced that the U.S. would be revealing the "Crimea Declaration", which formally announces the U.S.

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<sup>5</sup> Kristin Bialik, "Putin Remains Overwhelmingly Unpopular in the United States," *Pew Research Center*, March 26, 2018, available at: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/03/26/putin-remains-overwhelmingly-unpopular-in-the-united-states/>.

<sup>6</sup> Lauren Fox, "Top Republicans in Congress Break with Trump Over Putin Comments," *CNN*, July 16, 2018, available at: <https://www.cnn.com/2018/07/16/politics/congress-reaction-trump-putin-comments/index.html>. Jamie Ehrlich, "Republican Sen. Ben Sasse: Trump Should Declare Russia an 'Enemy of America,'" *CNN*, July 16, 2018, available at: <https://www.cnn.com/2018/07/16/politics/ben-sasse-putin-trump-russia-enemy/index.html>.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Nomination of Hon. Mike Pompeo to be Secretary of State*, 115th Cong., 2nd sess., 2018, 7. Available at: <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/S.%20HRG.%20115%20339%20Pompeo1.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee, *Nomination of Mike Pompeo*, 104-133.

position of non-recognition of Russian control of Crimea.<sup>9</sup> The declaration itself specifically calls on the Russian Federation to, “end its occupation of Crimea” and respect the rules of the international order, under the auspices of the United Nations Charter, which Russia is an adherent to in, “pledging to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.”<sup>10</sup> Beyond this act of refusing to recognize the legitimacy of Russian control of Crimea, the administration has broken cooperation with the Russian Federation in other arenas, such as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty). On February 2, 2019, amidst continued alleges of Russian violation of the treaty, Secretary Pompeo formally announced the U.S. withdrawal from the INF Treaty.<sup>11</sup>

## **THE EUROPEAN UNION**

The European Union has officially taken a similar stance to the U.S. in condemning the Russian annexation of Crimea and destabilizing Ukraine. One particular action taken by the European Union has been to enact “EU restrictive measures in response to the crisis in Ukraine.”<sup>12</sup> Specifically, the diplomatic measures have been to cancel the “EU-Russia summit”, choosing to no longer hold regular bilateral summits as well as move the G8 summit (scheduled in 2014 to be in Sochi, Russia) to Brussels, and renaming it the G7 summit, deciding to forego the summit of 8 leading world countries in favor of 7, which continues to this day. The legal basis for the partnership between the European Union and the Russian Federation has been the

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<sup>9</sup> *An Update on American Diplomacy to Advance our National Security Strategy*, 115th Cong. (2018) (statement of Mike Pompeo, Secretary of State). Available at:

[https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/072518\\_Pompeo\\_Testimony.pdf](https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/072518_Pompeo_Testimony.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> State Department Press Service, “Crimea Declaration,” published July 25, 2018, available at: <https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2018/07/284508.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> State Department Press Service, “U.S. Intent to Withdraw from the INF Treaty February 2, 2019,” published February 2, 2019, available at: <https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2019/02/288722.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> European Council, “EU Restrictive Measures in Response to the Crisis in Ukraine,” accessed September 9, 2019, available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/ukraine-crisis/>.

“Partnership and Cooperation Agreement”, which was signed in 1997 and meant for renewal every ten years.

The European Parliament admits that in 2014, the European Council froze cooperation with Russia, “except on cross-border cooperation and people-to-people contacts.”<sup>13</sup> The Russian Federation, when announcing the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the agreement, acknowledged that “Bilateral sectoral dialogues became bogged down that used to provide effective mechanisms for direct cooperation between Russian federal executive bodies and relevant branches of the European Commission. A great number of channels of cooperation were frozen.”<sup>14</sup> The Russian mission to the European continued its statement by remaining hopeful that long-term goals will thaw these channels and cooperation may continue.

## **NATO**

In 2017, NATO Secretary Jen Stoltenberg unequivocally stated, “We do not want to isolate Russia. NATO does not want a new Cold War.”<sup>15</sup> That being said, NATO has taken the same actions as the European Union (of which the majority of member states are also EU members) and the United States in condemning Russia’s actions in Ukraine. NATO officially has stated, “All practical civilian and military cooperation under the NRC with Russia has been suspended since April 2014, in response to Russia’s military intervention and aggressive actions in Ukraine, and its illegal occupation and annexation of Crimea.”<sup>16</sup> The NRC, in the aforementioned quote, is the NATO-Russia Council, which is its diplomatic delegation to the Russian Federation. The alliance

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<sup>13</sup> European Parliament, “Relations Beyond the Neighborhood: Russia,” accessed September 9, 2019, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/177/russia>.

<sup>14</sup> Foreign Ministry Press Service, “Russia-EU Partnership and Cooperation Agreement Turns 20,” published December 1, 2017, available at: <https://russiaeu.ru/en/news/russia-eu-partnership-and-cooperation-agreement-turns-20>.

<sup>15</sup> NATO Press Service, “Speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Plenary session at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Bucharest,” published October 9, 2017, available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/ra/natohq/opinions\\_147635.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/ra/natohq/opinions_147635.htm?selectedLocale=en).

<sup>16</sup> “Relations with Russia,” *NATO*, August 5, 2019, available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/ra/natohq/topics\\_50090.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ra/natohq/topics_50090.htm).

has also publicly condemned Russia for a chemical attack on British soil in 2018 as well as voiced its collective judgement that Russia has violated the terms of the INF Treaty in 2019, supporting the U.S. decision to withdraw from the agreement in retaliation.<sup>17</sup> NATO's official policy is that relations with Russia cannot return to their former amiable state until Russia returns to "compliance with international law and its international obligations and responsibilities."<sup>18</sup>

## **THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

At the 2016 Munich Security Conference, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev stated, "speaking bluntly, we are rapidly rolling into a period of a new cold war."<sup>19</sup> Prime Minister Medvedev's declaration of a "New Cold War" was in realization of the current state of geo-politics. Since the actions of Russia in 2014, cooperation between the Russian Federation and its adversaries in the West have come to a halt. Another facet of this realization came in 2014 when President Putin approved a revised military doctrine which takes the official stance that NATO is the greatest existential threat to the Russian state.<sup>20</sup> Having faced international isolation from the West, Russia has opted to turn to the East for international cooperation.

In a bid to turn to the East, Russia announced interest in increasing bilateral relations and cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2014.<sup>21</sup> Also, in 2014, Russia was able to successfully implement its goal of a Eurasian Economic Union of former Soviet states and Eurasian countries. Russia has also been focused on increasing its bilateral relationship with

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<sup>17</sup> "Relations with Russia," *NATO*, 2019.

<sup>18</sup> NATO Press Service, "Warsaw Summit Communiqué," published July 9, 2016, available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_133169.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm).

<sup>19</sup> Kremlin Press Service. "Dmitry Medvedev's Speech at the Panel Discussion," published February 14, 2016, available at: <http://government.ru/en/news/21784/>.

<sup>20</sup> Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, article 12, sub a, sec. 2. Available at: <https://rusemb.org.uk/press/2029>.

<sup>21</sup> Foreign Ministry Press Service, "Remarks and Answers to Questions from the Media by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov During a Joint News Conference with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran Mohammad Javad Zarif, Moscow, 29 August 2014," published August 29, 2014 available at: [http://www.mid.ru/en/maps/ir/-/asset\\_publisher/HUPBmpXjn4Ob/content/id/672783](http://www.mid.ru/en/maps/ir/-/asset_publisher/HUPBmpXjn4Ob/content/id/672783).

China.<sup>22</sup> In 2018, at a press conference with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin stated, “We consider the strengthening of direct ties between Russian regions and Chinese provinces to be especially important.”<sup>23</sup>

## **CHAPTER 3: WEAPONIZATION OF INFORMATION**

### **STATE CONTROL OF INFORMATION**

In Russia, there is no foreign ownership of mass media allowed.<sup>24</sup> This law was furthered in November of 2017 when President Putin signed into law criminal penalties for breaking this law, which include prison time and fiscal penalties of up to 5 million Rubles, or roughly \$85,000.<sup>25</sup> The State Department protested this move by the Russian government, but as mentioned previously, has had the difficulty of dealing with a Russia that maintains the worst diplomatic relationship with the United States since the height of the Cold War.

### **STATE PROPAGANDA**

#### **RT**

RT, formerly known as Russia Today, is a Russian state-run propaganda machine. This is a unified view throughout the United States government, ranging from the Intelligence and Law Enforcement Communities to Congress and the State Department. In one of the last reports under the leadership of James Clapper, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) stated,

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<sup>22</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “Treaty on Eurasian Economic Union Signed,” published May 29, 2014, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/45787>.

<sup>23</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “Press Statements Following Talks with President of China Xi Jinping,” published September 11, 2018, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58528>.

<sup>24</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “Law Limiting Foreign Shareholders’ Stakes in Russian Media Outlets,” published October 15, 2014, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46796>.

<sup>25</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “Amendments to the Law on Information and the Law on the Media,” published November 25, 2017, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/acts/news/56179>. “Russian State Duma Eyeing Fines as High as \$85,000 for Violating Foreign Agent Media Law,” TASS, November 29, 2017, available at: <http://tass.com/politics/977957>.

“The Kremlin’s principal international propaganda outlet is RT.”<sup>26</sup> This assertion that RT is a Russian state-run organization was supported by the U.S. Department of Justice, who pressured T&R Productions to register as a foreign agent working on behalf of ANO TV-Novosti (the Russian government entity behind RT) in November of 2017.<sup>27</sup> Acting Assistant Attorney General Boente declared, “Americans have a right to know who is acting in the United States to influence the U.S. government or public on behalf of foreign principals,” when announcing the registration of T&R Productions under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA).

### **The Troll Factory**

Just as vital to the information war has been the use of propaganda through online “trolls” at Russia’s online “troll factory”. In 2015, British newspaper *The Daily Mail* reported that the Russian government was sponsoring the fabrication of stories on online social media to draw more attention to Putin and increase his popularity.<sup>28</sup> The article explained that the factory would be open 24 hours a day and teams would operate in groups of three, working 12-hour shifts and fabricating over 100 stories per shift, with the aim of spreading Anti-Americanism and Anti-Western sentiments. Later in that year, *The Guardian* had reported that a Russian court recognized the existence of the troll factory when a free-lance journalist, who worked for the

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<sup>26</sup> Office of the Director of National Intelligence, National Intelligence Council, *Background to “Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections”*: *The Analytic Process and Cyber Incident Attribution* (Washington D.C., 2017), 3, [https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ICA\\_2017\\_01.pdf](https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ICA_2017_01.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Department of Justice Press Service, “Production Company Registers Under the Foreign Agent Registration Act as Agent for the Russian Government Entity Responsible for Broadcasting RT,” published November 13, 2017, available at: <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/production-company-registers-under-foreign-agent-registration-act-agent-russian-government>.

<sup>28</sup> Sam Matthew, “Revealed: How Russia’s ‘Troll Factory’ Runs Thousands of Fake Twitter and Facebook Accounts to Flood Social Media with Pro-Putin Propaganda”, *The Daily Mail*, March 28, 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3015996/How-Russia-s-troll-factory-runs-thousands-fake-Twitter-Facebook-accounts-flood-social-media-pro-Putin-propaganda.html>.

troll factory, sued for damages and won.<sup>29</sup> The economic award was one ruble, but the symbolic award was forcing the government to admit its involvement in the sponsoring of propaganda on a massive scale.

The exposure of the troll factory does not seem to have slowed down the Russian propaganda machine. In fall of 2017, social media mega corporation *Facebook* announced that \$100,000 worth of advertisement space was purchased by Russian customers during and following the 2016 U.S. Presidential election.<sup>30</sup> *Facebook* announced that the money was linked to over 3,000 advertisements targeting the promotion of controversial domestic issues in the United States, such as race tensions, gun rights, immigration, and LGBT rights. The investment seems to have paid off as public division has increased. One of the ways that this was achieved was through meddling with political activist groups, such as *Black Lives Matter*, and influencing these social groups to draw negative attention and negative sentiments from their opponents.<sup>31</sup> However, this move may have become a double-edged sword for the Russians as American media focus on Russia quickly increased, and not in a positive manner.

## **CAMPAIGNS OF INFLUENCE**

### **The European Union**

Russia has conducted campaigns of influence across the European Union. It has particularly targeted the EU member states of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. In Hungary, this influence operation has included pushing pro-Kremlin propaganda in legitimate news sources

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<sup>29</sup> “Woman who Sued Pro-Putin Russian ‘Troll Factory’ Gets One Rouble in Damages”, *The Guardian*, August 17, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/18/woman-who-sued-pro-putin-russian-troll-factory-gets-one-rouble-in-damages>.

<sup>30</sup> Alex Stamos, “An Update on Information Operations on Facebook”, *Facebook*, September 06, 2017, <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2017/09/information-operations-update/>.

<sup>31</sup> Brian Ross, Matthew Mosk, Randy Kreider, Cho Park, and Alex Hosenball, “Russian Internet Trolls Sought to Co-opt Unwitting American Activists”, *Good Morning America*, October 18, 2017, <https://www.yahoo.com/gma/russian-internet-trolls-sought-co-opt-unwitting-american-210504700--abc-news-topstories.html>.



as well as through online blogs viewed by far-right populists.<sup>32</sup> Across the EU, Russian propaganda has been aimed at ethnic Russian populations to incite nationalist feelings in an attempt to undermine domestic support for member states and their stances of isolating Russia from the international stage.<sup>33</sup> In France and Germany, specifically, the target was governmental leadership, in the forms of the Presidency in France and the German Parliament.<sup>34</sup>

## **The United States Election**

In December of 2016, President Barack Obama announced a set of retaliations, “to the Russian government’s aggressive harassment of U.S. officials and cyber operations aimed at the U.S. election.”<sup>35</sup> In his announcement, President Obama referred to a government report that had been published earlier that year. The FBI and DHS released a joint statement that said that they were confident that the Russian government used cyber means to meddle in the US Presidential election.<sup>36</sup> In the detailed Joint Action Report (JAR), the two US government entities attributed the attacks to APT28 and APT29.<sup>37</sup> The JAR goes into detail how APT29 began targeting the Democratic National Committee (DNC) in 2015 while APT28 began its attack in spring of 2016.

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<sup>32</sup> Andrew Higgins, “Intent on Unsettling E.U., Russia Taps Foot Soldiers from the Fringe,” *The New York Times*, Dec. 24, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/24/world/europe/intent-on-unsettling-eu-russia-taps-foot-soldiers-from-the-fringe.html>.

<sup>33</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Putin’s Asymmetric Assault on Democracy in Russia and Europe: Implications for U.S. National Security*, 115th Cong., 2d sess., 2018, S. Rep. 115–21, 121–137, <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/FinalRR.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee, *Putin’s Asymmetric Assault*, 121 and 128.

<sup>35</sup> White House Press Service, “Statement by the President on Actions in Response to Russian Malicious Cyber Activity and Harassment”, published December 29, 2016, available at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/12/29/statement-president-actions-response-russian-malicious-cyber-activity>.

<sup>36</sup> “Joint DHS, ODNI, FBI Statement on Russian Malicious Cyber Activity”, *United States Department of Homeland Security*, accessed October 31, 2017, <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2016/12/29/joint-dhs-odni-fbi-statement-russianmalicious-cyber-activity>.

<sup>37</sup> Advanced Persistent Threats 28 and 29 are attributed to the Russian Intelligence Services. “GRIZZLY STEPPE - Russian Malicious Cyber Activity”, *United States Department of Homeland Security*, accessed October 31, 2017, [https://www.uscert.gov/sites/default/files/publications/JAR\\_16-20296A\\_GRIZZLY%20STEPPE-2016-1229.pdf](https://www.uscert.gov/sites/default/files/publications/JAR_16-20296A_GRIZZLY%20STEPPE-2016-1229.pdf).

The JAR states that APT29 began its assault by launching a spear phishing campaign that targeted over 1,000 US government personnel. The campaign sent malware to be installed on internal networks once personnel opened malicious links under the guise of opening honest and authentic links. The malware included many different Remote Access Tools (RATs) that allowed APT29 unauthorized systems access to these networks. APT28 launched a similar attack in 2016, but the objective was to steal user credentials by having personnel change passwords. This allowed APT28 access to the same networks to work its attack. Beyond the technical means, Russia was able to weaponize information for this campaign through the use of propaganda in an effort of “divide and conquer”, using the American public to achieve its end goal.

In fall of 2017, social media mega corporation *Facebook* announced that \$100,000 worth of advertisement space was purchased by Russian customers during and following the 2016 US Presidential election.<sup>38</sup> *Facebook* announced that the money was linked to over 3,000 advertisements targeting the promotion of controversial domestic issues in the United States, such as race tensions, gun rights, immigration, and LGBT rights. One particular method was through meddling with political activist groups, such as *Black Lives Matter*, and influencing these social groups to draw negative attention and negative sentiments from their opponents.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Alex Stamos, “An Update on Information Operations on Facebook”, *Facebook*, September 06, 2017, <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2017/09/information-operations-update/>.

<sup>39</sup> Brian Ross, Matthew Mosk, Randy Kreider, Cho Park, and Alex Hosenball, “Russian Internet Trolls Sought to Co-opt Unwitting American Activists”, *Good Morning America*, October 18, 2017, <https://www.yahoo.com/gma/russian-internet-trolls-sought-co-opt-unwitting-american-210504700--abc-news-topstories.html>.

## CHAPTER 4: MILITARY

### MODERNIZATION AND FORCE BUILDUP

While tensions between the United States and Russia have deteriorated and Russia has been waging an information war, it has also been modernizing and building its military. In 2009, then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev stated that Russia would be dedicated to conventional and nuclear weapon modernization.<sup>40</sup> Two years later, while still discussing friendly relations with the United States and the West, President Medvedev warned that both countries would remain focused on their own national interests, which could spark an arms race if American missile defense interfered with Russian nuclear parity attempts.<sup>41</sup> Fears of that arms race started to materialize within weeks of the formal American withdrawal from the INF Treaty: eight years after Medvedev's warning.

On August 5, 2019, President Putin declared that Russia would be monitoring American development of missiles that had been prohibited under the INF Treaty.<sup>42</sup> Within weeks, the Pentagon announced that they had test launched ground based Patriot Cruise Missiles, which are normally launched from ships.<sup>43</sup> Within the week, Moscow responded with President Putin ordering a "symmetrical response" to the U.S. missile test.<sup>44</sup> The following day, the Russian Ministry of Defence followed through with President Putin's orders and test fired submarine

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<sup>40</sup> Marcel de Haas and Henning Shroder, "Russia's National Security Strategy", *Russian Analytical Digest* 9, no. 62, June 18, 2009: 2-11, <http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/RAD-62.pdf>.

<sup>41</sup> Kremlin Press Service, "News Conference Following the G8 Summit", published May 27, 2011, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/11374>.

<sup>42</sup> Kremlin Press Service, "Statement by the President of Russia on the Unilateral Withdrawal of the United States from the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles", published August 5, 2019, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/61271>.

<sup>43</sup> Aaron Mehta, "Watch the Pentagon Test its First Land-Based Cruise Missile in a Post-INF Treaty World," *Defense News*, August 19, 2019, <https://www.defensenews.com/pentagon/2019/08/19/pentagon-tests-first-land-based-cruise-missile-in-a-post-inf-treaty-world/>.

<sup>44</sup> Kremlin Press Service, "Meeting with Permanent Members of the Security Council", published August 23, 2019, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/61359>.

launched ballistic missiles, the second such test within a span of three weeks.<sup>45</sup> Since Medvedev's promise, it seems that Russia has indeed been building up its military in the form of increasing naval size, increasing army size, modernization of aircraft, and concentration on buildup of nuclear weapons.

This focus on remilitarization has strained relations to a point where former Soviet satellite nations that are now American allies are split ethnically between Pro-American and Pro-Russian sentiments. NATO troops have also become a daily site as these nations prepare for an aggressive Russian invasion styled on the intervention in Ukraine. The presence of thousands of allied troops from Canada, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States being stationed in the region is a direct response to Russia conducting snap exercises with numbers estimated between 30,000 and 80,000 and the announcement of the creation of three new divisions in the western half of the country.<sup>46</sup> Further south, the alliance has created a new NATO station in Romania.<sup>47</sup> This force will consist of 900 US troops, 4,000 Romanian troops, and be supplemented with additional troops from other allied countries. This station will be tasked with monitoring Russia in the Black Sea while the force up north will monitor Russia's presence along the Baltic Sea and Baltic States. This increase in troops from the US to Europe marks the largest force that the US has sent to Europe since the height of the Cold War.<sup>48</sup> This large force, and large expanse of NATO territory since the end of the Cold War, have only

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<sup>45</sup> Amir Vera, "Russia Says it Launched 2 Ballistic Missiles in the Arctic Ocean as Part of Combat Training", *CNN*, August 24, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/08/24/europe/russia-test-fires-ballistic-missiles/index.html>.

<sup>46</sup> Eion Michael McNamara, "Securing the Nordic-Baltic Region", *NATO*, Accessed October 31, 2017, <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2016/Also-in-2016/security-baltic-defense-nato/EN/index.htm>.

Alexandrova Lyudmila, "Russia to Set Up 3 New Divisions to Counteract NATO\_ Defence Minister", *TASS News Agency*, May 04, 2016, <http://tass.com/defense/873755>.

<sup>47</sup> Robin Emmott, "NATO Launches Black Sea Force as Latest Counter to Russia", *Reuters*, October 09, 2017, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/nato-launch-black-sea-force-latest-counter-russia-091420591.html>.

<sup>48</sup> David Frum, "Trump Will Inherit the Biggest Buildup in Europe Since the Cold War", *The Atlantic*, January 10, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/01/trump-nato-europe-russia/512648/>.

moved to deteriorate tensions and further increase the state of the New Cold War.<sup>49</sup> One of these threats comes in the form of missiles and adhering to international treaties.

In the 2017 State Department report on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty), the US found Russia to be in continued violation of the INF Treaty, which was signed in 1987.<sup>50</sup> The INF Treaty is an international agreement between the US and Russia to eliminate nuclear capable ground-launched missiles with a range of 500 to 5,500 kilometers. In response to the perceived Russian violations of the INF Treaty, Congress voted to deny funding for the Open Skies Treaty as well as signed a provision in the new National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that the US would no longer be bound by domestic law to following the INF Treaty if Russia does not return to a state of following the treaty within 15 months of the signing of the provision.<sup>51</sup> The same provision would also halt funding of the START Treaty between the two nations and undo the efforts at reducing the US arsenal of nuclear weapons that helped end the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union.

## **PROXY WARS**

### **Ukraine**

Russia has fomented war and invasion of South Eastern Ukraine, in the provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk, known as the Donbass. This has been through covert means of deploying Russian forces to fight in southeastern Ukraine. These Russian forces, specifically special forces, are being deployed in unmarked uniforms and using other means to conceal their Russian

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<sup>49</sup> Stephen F. Cohen, “The New Cold War is Already More Dangerous than was its Predecessor”, *The Nation*, October 11, 2017, <https://www.thenation.com/article/the-new-cold-war-is-already-more-dangerous-than-was-its-predecessor/>.

<sup>50</sup> “2017 Report on Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments”, United States Department of State, accessed October 31, 2017, [https://www.state.gov/t/avc/rls/rpt/2017/270330.htm#PART II](https://www.state.gov/t/avc/rls/rpt/2017/270330.htm#PART%20II).

<sup>51</sup> The Open Skies Treaty is an international agreement that allows nations to monitor foreign militaries to fly over their territory and make observations.

*National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018*, Public Law 115-911, U.S. *Statutes at Large* 131 (2017): 383.

identity. When a small contingent of these soldiers were captured in southeastern Ukraine, they also stated that they were “on holiday”, but that refusal to fight meant prison terms for disobeying orders.<sup>52</sup> In a joint press conference with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk stated,

It seems to me that the only country who strongly deny clear military Russian boots on the ground is Russian Federation and personally President Putin. If they need, I can give them my glasses. While crystal clear that Russian military is on the ground, crystal clear that it was Russia who invaded Crimea, Russia invaded the east of Ukraine, because frankly, it's a little bit difficult to buy SA-11 and SA-22 and Russian tanks and Russian Howitzers and Russian artillery at the marketplace in Donetsk or Lugansk. We have strong evidences and grounds that Russian Federation violated an international law and Russian president ordered Russian troops to invade both Crimea and the east of Ukraine. We are not fighting with so-called rebels or guerillas. We are fighting with the Russian regular army.<sup>53</sup>

Secretary of State Kerry, for his part seemed to support Prime Minister Yatsenyuk's statement with,

Let me add to that that social media is filled with comment – and on occasion, photos – of Russian soldiers being returned to Russia dead, and parents in Russia being told a lie that their children, their sons, died in an accident somewhere. And there are other stories. I won't go into them at great length now except to say to you that there are intercepts of conversations of orders being given by people who are discernibly Russian. There are references – there's a person in captivity today who has recently given evidence of his own role with respect to these kinds of decisions. So enough is enough.<sup>54</sup>

Russia, for its part, still denies any involvement in sponsoring the war in southeastern Ukraine. In April of 2016, President Putin stated that Russia was intent on restoring peace in Ukraine, but that it was facing sanctions and international backlash from the West, that it was, in fact, the victim of Western aggression.<sup>55</sup> This is in stark contrast to President Barack Obama's statement that, “Russia is responsible for the violence in eastern Ukraine. The violence is encouraged by Russia. The separatists are trained by Russia. They are armed by Russia. They are

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<sup>52</sup> Terrence McCoy, “Russians Troops Fighting in Ukraine? Naw. They're Just on ‘Vacation’”, *the Washington Post*, August 28, 2014, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/08/28/russians-troops-fighting-in-ukraine-naw-just-on-vacation/?utm\\_term=.799832c8a770](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/08/28/russians-troops-fighting-in-ukraine-naw-just-on-vacation/?utm_term=.799832c8a770).

<sup>53</sup> State Department Press Service, “Press Availability with Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk After Their Meeting”, published February 5, 2015, available at: <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/02/237212.htm>.

<sup>54</sup> State Department Press Service, “Press Availability,” 2015.

<sup>55</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “Direct Line with Vladimir Putin,” published April 14, 2016, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51716>.

funded by Russia.”<sup>56</sup> In 2018, following in the footsteps of President Obama, the Trump White House released its position that Russia “invaded Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014” and continued by announcing further support for the Ukrainian government’s armed forces.<sup>57</sup>

In November of 2018, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko signed, “On the Introduction of Martial Law in Ukraine” in retaliation for “wide-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian armed forces” and an attack on Ukrainian naval vessels in the Kerch Strait.<sup>58</sup> In February of 2019, President Poroshenko also publicly announced his desires for Ukraine to join both NATO and the EU. He explicitly stated, “We know that only membership in NATO and the EU, which will ensure a strong development of democracy and the rule of law, economy and living standards of Ukraine, can guarantee peace and freedom to Ukraine, as well as to all the neighbors of Russia.”<sup>59</sup> To date, the conflict has seen over 10,000 deaths and over 1.3 million people displaced from their homes.

## **Syria**

The U.S. has been in Syria since the start of the conflict. The most drastic event involving U.S. forces was the 2018 airstrike on Syrian military assets. President Trump declared, “My fellow Americans, a short time ago, I ordered the United States Armed Forces to launch precision strikes on targets associated with the chemical weapons capabilities of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad.”<sup>60</sup> Russia entered the Syrian Civil War, in 2015, in defense of the Bashar Al-

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<sup>56</sup> White House Press Service, “Statement by the President,” published August 28, 2014, available at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/08/28/statement-president>.

<sup>57</sup> White House Press Service, “President Donald J. Trump Is Standing Up to Russia’s Malign Activities,” published April 6, 2018, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-standing-russias-malign-activities/>.

<sup>58</sup> President of Ukraine Press Office, “President signed the Law on the Introduction of Martial Law in Ukraine”, November 28, 2018, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/prezident-pidpisav-zakon-pro-vvedennya-voyennogo-stanu-v-ukr-51446>.

<sup>59</sup> President of Ukraine Press Office, “Head of State: Only Membership in NATO and the European Union can Guarantee Peace and Freedom to Ukraine, as Well as to All the Neighbors of Russia”, February 15, 2019, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/glava-derzhavi-garantuvati-mir-i-svobodu-ukrayini-yak-i-vsim-53130>.

<sup>60</sup> White House Press Service, “Statement by the President on Syria,” published April 13, 2018, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-trump-syria/>.

Assad Regime, albeit if officially to “fight international terrorism.”<sup>61</sup> Russia’s military presence in Syria was meant to be limited to air operations (with no mention of exclusion of special forces).<sup>62</sup> In 2016, Reuters reported that Russian forces were exceeding their declared presence in Syria by using private military contractors (PMCs).<sup>63</sup> The presence of these military contractors, or “mercenaries” in common usage, would also become important when kinetically contacting U.S. forces.

The direct contact between Russian and American forces came in the form of a fire fight when Russia’s “little green men” aided pro-Assad forces contact the Syrian Democratic Forces, who happened to be accompanied by U.S. Special Forces.<sup>64</sup> The Pentagon did not state the presence of the Russian forces in the pro-Assad attack in an immediate release, but in a New York Times article two months later, it appears that the Pentagon did admit to this.<sup>65</sup><sup>66</sup> The New York Times article claims that the pro-Assad and Russian force sustained 200-300 casualties while the U.S. backed Syrian Democratic Forces sustained no casualties. Also, in 2018, the White House released a briefing which stated that Russia was continuing to exacerbate the Syrian Civil War in support of Assad.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “Meeting with Government Members,” published September 30, 2015, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50401>.

<sup>62</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “Meeting with Defence Ministry Heads on Russia’s Operations in Syria,” published November 20, 2015, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50737>.

<sup>63</sup> Maria Tsvetkova and Anton Zverev, “Ghost Soldiers: the Russians Secretly Dying for the Kremlin in Syria,” *Reuters*, November 3, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-russia-insight-idUSKBN12Y0M6>.

<sup>64</sup> Todd Lindberg, “A U.S. Battlefield Victory Against Russia’s ‘Little Green Men,’” *the Wall Street Journal*, April 3, 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-u-s-battlefield-victory-against-russias-little-green-men-1522792572>.

<sup>65</sup> Terri Moon Cronk, “Pentagon Official Describes Response to Attack by Pro-Regime Syrian Forces,” *Defense News*, February 8, 2018, <https://dod.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1436435/pentagon-official-describes-response-to-attack-by-pro-regime-syrian-forces/>.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas Gibbons-Neff, “How a 4-Hour Battle Between Russian Mercenaries and U.S. Commandos Unfolded in Syria,” *The New York Times*, May 24, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/24/world/middleeast/american-commandos-russian-mercenaries-syria.html>.

<sup>67</sup> White House Press Service, “Donald Trump is Standing up to Russia,” 2018.



## CYBER WARFARE

In 2012, General Michael Hayden, former director of both the NSA and the CIA, declared that the modern era was one of cyber as a recognized domain of conflict. Hayden specifically stated, “We have entered into a new phase of conflict in which we use a cyberweapon to create physical destruction, and in this case, physical destruction in someone else's critical infrastructure.”<sup>68</sup> General Hayden was referring to the cyber attack on the Tehran nuclear facility attributed to a cyber weapon known as *Stuxnet*. Department of Homeland Security’s National Protection and Programs Directorate Deputy Under Secretary Philip Reiter testified to House Committee on Homeland Security

A real-world threat emerged last year that significantly changed the landscape of targeted cyber attacks on industrial control systems. Malicious code, dubbed Stuxnet, was detected in July 2010. DHS analysis concluded that this highly complex computer worm was the first of its kind, written to specifically target mission-critical control systems running a specific combination of software and hardware.<sup>69</sup>

In 2012, David Sanger wrote for *the New York Times* that *Stuxnet* was a part of a larger campaign of cyber weapons, citing sources “involved in the program.”<sup>70</sup> Sanger also discussed former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General James Cartwright, as wanting to design a new type of cyber weapon, which was authorized under the Bush administration and then accelerated under the Obama administration. The U.S. government then investigated the sources of the leak, and blamed Cartwright, going as far as to indict him for lying to the FBI

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<sup>68</sup> “Stuxnet: Computer Worm Opens New Era of Warfare,” *60 Minutes*, June 4, 2012, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/stuxnet-computer-worm-opens-new-era-of-warfare-04-06-2012/>.

<sup>69</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security Press Office, “Testimony of Deputy Under Secretary Philip Reiter, National Protection and Programs Directorate, Before the United States House Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Security Technologies, ‘Examining the Cyber Threat to Critical Infrastructure and the American Economy’,” published March 16, 2011, available at: <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2011/03/16/written-testimony-nppd-house-homeland-security-subcommittee-cybersecurity>.

<sup>70</sup> David Sanger, “Obama Order Sped Up Wave of Cyberattacks Against Iran,” *the New York Times*, June 1, 2012, [https://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/01/world/middleeast/obama-ordered-wave-of-cyberattacks-against-iran.html?pagewanted=1&\\_r=2&mtref=undefined&gwh=3F15B50A60BC9A0E00A1DE759DE84A4F&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL](https://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/01/world/middleeast/obama-ordered-wave-of-cyberattacks-against-iran.html?pagewanted=1&_r=2&mtref=undefined&gwh=3F15B50A60BC9A0E00A1DE759DE84A4F&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL).

during the investigation.<sup>71</sup> The leaks confirmed that U.S. cyber capabilities had evolved to a state to, as General Hayden stated, create physical destruction through the use of a cyber weapon. However, the U.S. is not the only state with this capability.

## **Russian Cyber Operations**

### ***Estonia***

Russia's cyber experiment started with a Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack against Estonia in 2007. The flood of traffic in Estonian cyber infrastructure was the result of punishment for Estonia altering with their Soviet past by moving a Soviet era statue from one location to another.<sup>72</sup> This successful episode of Russia's cyber experiment effectively shut down day to day online operations in Estonia's cyber infrastructure for weeks, from news outlets to government institutions, and increased Russia's confidence to continue experimenting with cyber means as a weapon against adversaries. The next targets would become Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2015.

### ***Georgia***

The cyber-attack on Georgia was conducted in tandem with the Five Days War of 2008, whereby Georgia was fighting separatists in a contested region and Russia intervened on the part of those separatists. This attack was another example of a DDoS attack, but the goals were to ensure that the Georgian people had no idea what was going on as well as ensure that communication between Georgian military forces was disrupted.<sup>73</sup> This was achieved with

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<sup>71</sup> Department of Justice Press Office, "Former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Pleads Guilty to Federal Felony in Leak Investigation," published October 17, 2016, available at: <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/former-vice-chairman-joint-chiefs-staff-pleads-guilty-federal-felony-leak-investigation>.

<sup>72</sup> Jason Andress and Steve Winterfeld, *Cyber Warfare: Techniques, Tactics, and Tools for Security Practitioners*, (New York: Syngress Publishers, 2011), 13.

<sup>73</sup> Richard A Clarke and Robert K. Knacke, *Cyber War The Next Threat to National Security and What to Do About It*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 19.

relative ease as Georgia's online infrastructure was reliant on connections based in Russia and Turkey. By controlling the flow of incoming traffic to Georgia, Russia was effectively able to counter Georgian defensive cyber actions, going as far as rerouting their attacks, to appear as if originating in China as Georgia attempted to block incoming Russian traffic.<sup>74</sup> The Russian attack on Ukraine went even further than the aforesaid DDoS attacks of the past.

### *Ukraine*

In December of both 2015 and 2016, power companies in Ukraine were attacked through cyber means. The 2015 attack targeted the Prykarpattiaoblenergo power facility in Western Ukraine while the 2016 attack targeted the Kyivoblenergo power facility north of the national capital.<sup>75</sup> The Prykarpattiaoblenergo attack was the first attack of its kind on a power company while the Kyivoblenergo attack was an escalation and confirmation of cyber capabilities. These attacks are also only the second ever recorded cyber-attacks against physical critical infrastructure (the first being the *Stuxnet* attack on the Iranian nuclear facility).<sup>76</sup> The cyber-attacks targeted Information Control Systems (ICS) for the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) network, which allow for operations of advanced systems at plants and factories. The level of sophistication needed for such an operation indicates that there was coordination between a nation state and criminal organizations.<sup>77</sup> To date, there has not been direct attribution to Russian Intelligence services, but a Russian criminal organization,

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<sup>74</sup> Clarke and Knacke, *Cyber War*, 2019.

<sup>75</sup> Robert M Lee, "Confirmation of a Coordinated Attack on the Ukrainian Power Grid," SANS Industrial Control Systems, accessed October 31, 2010, [https://ics.sans.org/blog/2016/01/09/confirmation-of-a-coordinated-attack-on-the-ukrainian-power-grid?utm\\_source=hs\\_email&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=25135530&\\_hsenc=p2ANqtz-87XLhYBXFcESdxOIJIB8DSOYBZ5sPrfHQv9xNUp11BwFsfcUBouRDj-R7y6YcJY2BsrUeKvRVbwO4lPcVAPgHLmDrj7w&\\_hsmi=25135530](https://ics.sans.org/blog/2016/01/09/confirmation-of-a-coordinated-attack-on-the-ukrainian-power-grid?utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=25135530&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-87XLhYBXFcESdxOIJIB8DSOYBZ5sPrfHQv9xNUp11BwFsfcUBouRDj-R7y6YcJY2BsrUeKvRVbwO4lPcVAPgHLmDrj7w&_hsmi=25135530).

<sup>76</sup> "Crash Override Analysis of the Threat to Electric Grid Operators," Dragos Inc., last modified June 12, 2017, <https://dragos.com/blog/crashoverride/CrashOverride-01.pdf>.

<sup>77</sup> Jose A. Bernat, "Inside the Cunning, Unprecedented Hack of Ukraine's Power Grid," *Wired Magazine*, March 3, 2016, <https://www.wired.com/2016/03/inside-cunning-unprecedented-hack-ukraines-power-grid/>.

Sandworm, has been attributed to be the source of the attacks. The likelihood of this being a Russian operation greatly increases when one acknowledges the fact that Russia has been sponsoring the armed conflict in the Donbass since early 2014. This likelihood also increases when one takes into account the US government attributing the US Presidential election meddling to APT28 and APT29: groups associated with the Russian Intelligence Services.

### ***United States***

When CIA Director Mike Pompeo spoke at the annual security conference at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, he discussed how the Russian meddling in the Presidential election was nothing new and will only increase in the future. He also stated, “Until there is a new leader in Russia, I suspect it will be a threat to the United States for a long time.”<sup>78</sup> Director Pompeo also stated that he believed that the United States can expect interference in the 2018 and 2020 election cycles. He also explicitly stated that it is the intelligence community’s job to ensure that no one, whether it be a nation state like China or Russia or transnational criminal groups like Al-Qaeda, can meddle with the Presidential elections. He ended this discussion with saying that they will, “find ways to push back against it. We are intent on doing that and we have a lot of resources devoted to it. I am optimistic that we will continue to reduce the capacity of anyone to meddle with the election.” Although their technology may have changed and increased, the Russians have found other ways to conduct their information war against the United States.

It has also come out that, like in Ukraine, Russia has begun experimenting with attacking key critical national infrastructure (KCNI) in the United States. This came in the form of

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<sup>78</sup> Mike Pompeo, “FDD’s National Security Summit”, interview by Juan Zarate, FDD’s National Security Summit, Foundation for Defense of Democracies, October 19, 2017, video transcript, <http://www.defenddemocracy.org/events/fdds-national-security-summit/>.

sustained attacks on energy, nuclear, commercial facilities, water, aviation, and critical manufacturing networks.<sup>79</sup> Unlike Ukraine however, following the successes of the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election, the Trump administration has ensured that the government would be prepared for continued cyber operations against the United States. As previously mentioned in this section, CIA Director Mike Pompeo declared that the view of the U.S. Intelligence Community was that Russia would attempt to repeat this attack on the American election cycle in 2018 (known as the *midterm* elections), and perhaps even 2020 with the next Presidential election. In August of 2018, Gen. Paul M. Nakasone stated,

U.S. Cyber Command and the National Security Agency are tracking a wide range of foreign cyber adversaries, and are prepared to conduct operations against those actors attempting to undermine our nation's mid-term elections...I have complete confidence in the forces under my command. We will work in conjunction with other elements of our government to make sure we bring the full power of our nation to bear on any foreign power that attempts to interfere with our democratic processes.<sup>80</sup>

In October of 2018, the *New York Times* reported that USCYBERCOM had begun to fulfill General Nakasone's declaration and had begun targeted operations against Russians in preparation for the 2018 *midterm* elections, but that defense officials with the DOD would not go into specific details on the ongoing operations.<sup>81</sup> The news from the *New York Times* article coincided with the timing of General Nakasone speaking to attendees at the 2018 Southeast Region Cyber Security & Technology Symposium at Chapel Hill regarding *Cyber Threats and Solutions to National Security*.<sup>82</sup> These efforts to combat Russian meddling attempts have

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<sup>79</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security Press Office, "Russian Government Cyber Activity Targeting Energy and Other Critical Infrastructure Sectors," published March 15, 2018, available at: <https://www.us-cert.gov/ncas/alerts/TA18-074A>.

<sup>80</sup> Jim Garamone, "National Security Agency, Cybercom Defend Against Election Meddling," *Defense News*, August 2, 2018, <https://dod.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1592000/national-security-agency-cybercom-defend-against-election-meddling/>.

<sup>81</sup> Julian E. Barnes, "U.S. Begins First Cyberoperation Against Russian Aimed at Protecting Elections," *the New York Times*, October 23, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/23/us/politics/russian-hacking-usa-cyber-command.html>.

<sup>82</sup> "Keynote Speakers: Southeast Region Cyber Security & Technology Symposium (Oct 11)," *North Carolina Military Business Center*, October 11, 2018, <http://www.ncmbc.us/keynote-speakers-southeast-region-cyber-security-technology-symposium-oct-11/>.

already resulted in the indictments of 13 Russians, including 12 Russian Military Intelligence (GRU) officer, in connection with the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election as well as the 2018 *midterm* elections.<sup>83</sup> However, the DOJ indictment indicates that the charged Russian, Elena Alekseevna Khusyaynova, was in charge of an operating budget of \$35 million, which is extremely alarming when one considers that only \$100,000 of advertisement space on *Facebook* successfully worked to divide and polarize the American public.

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<sup>83</sup> Department of Justice Press Office, “Grand Jury Indicts 12 Russian Intelligence Officers for Hacking Offenses Related to the 2016 Election,” published July 13, 2018, available at: <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/grand-jury-indicts-12-russian-intelligence-officers-hacking-offenses-related-2016-election>.  
Department of Justice Press Office, “Russian National Charged with Interfering in U.S. Political System,” published October 19, 2018, available at: <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/russian-national-charged-interfering-us-political-system>.

## CHAPTER 5: ECONOMIC

### INTERNATIONAL SANCTIONS

#### United States

On March 6, 2014 U.S. President Barack Obama issued Executive Order 13660, which began issuing economic sanctions against those responsible for the violations of Ukraine's sovereignty related to Crimea and Southeastern Ukraine.<sup>84</sup> These sanctions included property within the territory of the United States, financial donations or contributions made to sanctioned individuals, and certain financial transactions with individuals being sanctioned. The executive order concluded by authorizing the U.S. Treasury Department to immediately begin freezing assets and assuming control of the sanctioned property. According to the U.S. Treasury Department, penalties for violating these sanctions (on U.S. citizens) can range from \$250,000 to \$1,000,000 and prison time up to 20 years in prison.<sup>85</sup>

Two weeks later, on March 17<sup>th</sup> (the same day the EU enacted its sanctions), President Obama announced that he was taking further steps to sanction Russian individuals and entities connected to these violations against Ukraine.<sup>86</sup> In the same speech, President Obama stated, "I told President Putin yesterday, the referendum in Crimea was a clear violation of Ukrainian constitutions and international law, and it will not be recognized by the international community." With the said penalties, it seems that President Obama's declaration to President Putin was also a warning: we are serious and intend to end this aggressive assertive action.

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<sup>84</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury, *Executive Order 13660 of March 6, 2014 Blocking Property of Certain Persons Contributing to the Situation in Ukraine* (Washington D.C., 2014), [https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/ukraine\\_eo.pdf](https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/ukraine_eo.pdf).

<sup>85</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Asset Control, *Ukraine/Russia-Related Sanctions Program* (Washington D.C., 2016), <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/ukraine.pdf>.

<sup>86</sup> White House Press Service, "Statement by the President on Ukraine," published March 17, 2014, available at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/17/statement-president-ukraine>.

In 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump decided to take like action. In April of 2018, the administration released news that President Trump had decided to increase economic sanctions against Russian officials and entities. The information specifically states that seven oligarchs, 12 companies they own, 17 senior Russian officials, and state-owned weapons manufacturers would be targeted.<sup>87</sup> A Congressional Research Services report from January of 2019 states that Congress remains skeptical of the new administration's dedication to the previous administration's sanctions.<sup>88</sup> That being said, under the Trump administration, there have been two amendments to President Obama's Executive Orders on the sanctions to increase them, and include companies capable of transactions that would further Russian explorations in the Arctic for the purposes of oil and other natural resources.<sup>89</sup> As of 2019, it appears that the U.S. and its Western allies remain resolute on sanctioning the Russian Federation until its assertive actions in Ukraine come to a conclusion.

## **European Union**

On March 17, 2014, the European Union, through the European Council, adopted restrictive measures against those “threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine.”<sup>90</sup> Under Article 2 of the March 17<sup>th</sup> decision, economic assets belonging to persons or entities connected to the actions in Ukraine were to be frozen in EU member states.<sup>91</sup> Also on March 17<sup>th</sup>, the European Council sanctioned 21 individuals connected

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<sup>87</sup> White House Press Service, “Donald Trump is Standing up to Russia,” 2018.

<sup>88</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *U.S. Sanctions on Russia*, by Cory Welt, Kristin Archick, Rebecca M. Nelson, and Dianne E. Rennack, R45415 (2019), 1.

<sup>89</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Asset Control, *Directive 1 (as Amended on September 29, 2017) Under Executive Order 13662* (Washington D.C., 2017), [https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/eo13662\\_directive1\\_20170929.pdf](https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/eo13662_directive1_20170929.pdf).

<sup>90</sup> European Union, European Council, *Council Decision 2014/145/CFSP of 17 March 2014 Concerning Restrictive Measures in Respect of Actions Undermining or Threatening the Territorial Integrity, Sovereignty and Independence of Ukraine*, (Brussels, 2014), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?qid=1521625455688&uri=CELEX:02014D0145-20171121>.

<sup>91</sup> European Union, European Council, *Council Decision 2014/145/CFSP of 17 March 2014*, 2014.



to the territorial violations against the sovereignty of Ukraine. Starting on May 12<sup>th</sup> of 2014, entities began being sanctioned as well. This first materialized with the sanctions of PJSC Chernomorneftegaz (an oil and gas company in Crimea) and Feodosia Enterprises (a shipyard and ship builder in Crimea).<sup>92</sup>

The decision from March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014 was set to expire on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Since its adoption, and before its expiration, 161 individuals and 41 entities have been sanctioned. These individuals range from separatist leaders in Crimea and Southeastern Ukraine to members of the Russian government, such as Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, while the entities range from ship builders and weapons manufacturers to financial institutions like *Russian National Commercial Bank*.<sup>93</sup> Data from the World Bank has fossil fuels at 70% of Russia's total exports in 2013 and weapons from 6%-8% (depending on whether you are classifying them under metal and metal products or vehicles and equipment) for the same period.<sup>94</sup> The same report re-examined the percentages of Russian exports for 2017 and found that fossil fuels had gone down to 59% of exports while the arms (again under this classification) had risen to 8%-11%.<sup>95</sup> Vladimir Isachenkov of the Associated Press reported in 2017 that Russian arms exports were expected to hit \$50 billion for the year. In an article for the Jamestown Foundation, a policy think tank, Anna Borshchevskaya wrote that Russian arms exports were worth \$21.4 billion in the Middle East and North Africa alone, and that this region was second to Asia in terms of

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<sup>92</sup> European Union, European Council, *Council Decision 2014/265/CFSP of 12 May 2014 Amending Decision 2014/145/CFSP Concerning Restrictive Measures in Respect of Actions Undermining or Threatening the Territorial Integrity, Sovereignty and Independence of Ukraine*, (Brussels, 2014), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32014D0265>.

<sup>93</sup> European Union, European Council, *Council Decision 2014/145/CFSP of 17 March 2014*, 2014.

<sup>94</sup> World Bank Group. 2018. "Modest Growth Ahead". Russia Economic Report. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/29913/127254-WP-PUBLIC-ADD-SERIES-JuneFinalRussiaEconomicReportENG.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>95</sup> World Bank Group, "Modest Growth Ahead," 2018.

Russian exports.<sup>96</sup> The focus on selling Russian arms abroad seems to be a reaction to the sanctions from the European Union and the West, but also to the volatile global prices in oil, of which Russia depends on for its economy.

#### STATE OF OIL PRICES THROUGHOUT CONFLICT

Since 2014, oil prices have dropped and merely begun to recover in 2018 and 2019. With the Russian economy so heavily dependent on oil, analysts have predicted that Russia loses \$2 billion per 1 U.S. dollar drop in price per barrel of oil.<sup>97</sup> The reason this is so significant is that in 2014, the yearly high for price per barrel was \$107.95 per barrel of oil, but dropped to \$53.45 per barrel.<sup>98</sup> In 2018, the highest price soared back to \$76.41 per barrel, but since the drop in 2014, the lowest price had dropped to \$26.21 per barrel.<sup>99</sup> Another significance of these oil prices is that Russia's monetary unit, the Ruble, destabilized in reaction to both the sanctions and drop in oil prices.

In December of 2014, the first year of the drop of oil prices and sanctions, the Ruble hit a record low of 80.10 per 1 U.S. Dollar.<sup>100</sup> Then in 2016, the year with the lowest oil prices per barrel, the Ruble dropped to 80.92 per 1 U.S. Dollar.<sup>101</sup> There is also a theory that in 2014, the United States colluded with Saudi Arabia to flood the market, in efforts to punish both Russia (from the U.S. perspective) and Iran (from the Saudi perspective), knowing that these drops in oil

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<sup>96</sup> Anna Borshchevskaya, "The Tactical Side of Russia's Arms Sales to the Middle East," *the Jamestown Foundation*, December 20, 2017, <https://jamestown.org/program/tactical-side-russias-arms-sales-middle-east/>.

<sup>97</sup> Tim Bowler, "Falling Oil Prices: Who are the Winners and Losers?" *BBC*, January 19, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-29643612>.

<sup>98</sup> "Crude Oil Prices - 70 Year Historical Chart," *Macrotrends*, accessed September 12, 2019, <https://www.macrotrends.net/1369/crude-oil-price-history-chart>.

<sup>99</sup> "Crude Oil Prices," 2019.

<sup>100</sup> Alexander Winning and Vladimir Abramov, "Russian Ruble Suffers Steepest Drop in 16 Years," *Reuters*, December 16, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-rouble-exchange/russian-ruble-suffers-steepest-drop-in-16-years-idUSKBN0JU0KO20141216?feedType=nl&feedName=usdai>.

<sup>101</sup> Alexander Winning, "Oil Slump Sends Russian Ruble to All-Time Low," *Reuters*, January 20, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-markets/oil-slump-sends-russian-ruble-to-all-time-low-idUSKCN0UY1DD>.

price would be a way to weaponize oil, as had been done in the 1970's, 1980's, and 1990.<sup>102</sup> This theory is in allusion to a meeting held between Secretary of State John Kerry and the Saudi government in September of 2014.<sup>103</sup>

In his article for *Oil Price.com*, Topf lists historical cases of weaponizing oil over geopolitical disputes. Yet, the validity of this theory may also be held up when compared to the state of the Russian economy, which forecasted recession in 2015 in reaction to the global decrease in oil prices.<sup>104</sup> There is also further evidence with this theory as U.S. production has only increased while imports have decreased in this same period. At the same time that Russia was forecasting recession, *the Guardian* reported that the U.S. was importing 3.1 million barrels of oil per day less than in 2005 and that U.S. production had already increased 65% since 2009. Today, the U.S. Energy Information Agency forecasts further U.S. production will produce record numbers of oil at 12.3 million barrels of oil per day in 2019 and 13.3 million barrels of oil per day in 2020.<sup>105</sup> Figure II displays the global price of oil from 2010 to 2019, showing peak 2014 prices and the sharp decline in prices correlating with the recession in the Russian economy. This is important because, at the time, Russian government expenditures were based on the forecasts of oil being priced at \$100 a barrel.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Andrew Topf, "Did the Saudis And the US Collude in Dropping Oil Prices?" *OilPrice.com*, December 23, 2014, <https://oilprice.com/Energy/Oil-Prices/Did-The-Saudis-And-The-US-Collude-In-Dropping-Oil-Prices.html>.

<sup>103</sup> State Department Press Service, "Joint Press Statement With Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal," published September 11, 2014, available at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2014/09/231506.htm>.

<sup>104</sup> Darya Korsunskaya, "Russia Expects Recession in 2015 as Sanctions, Oil Prices Bite," *Reuters*, December 2, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-economy-recession/russia-expects-recession-in-2015-as-sanctions-oil-prices-bite-idUSKCN0JG0SF20141202>.

<sup>105</sup> U.S. Energy Information Agency, "Short Term Energy Outlook", published August 5, 2019. Washington, D.C. available at: [https://www.eia.gov/outlooks/steo/pdf/steo\\_full.pdf](https://www.eia.gov/outlooks/steo/pdf/steo_full.pdf)

<sup>106</sup> Tomas Hirst, "Saudi Arabia's Oil Price 'Manipulation' Could Sink the Russian Economy," *Business Insider*, October 13, 2014, <https://www.businessinsider.com/russia-saudi-arabia-and-oil-prices-2014-10>.



Figure 2.1: State of Oil Prices Since 2010

It may also be a credible theory as the U.S. has been boosting its production of oil and liquid natural gas (LNG), which also threatens Russian oil for Europe's energy demands. In his 2019 State of the Union Address, President Trump declared, "The United States is now the number-one producer of oil and natural gas anywhere in the world."<sup>107</sup> Currently, LNG is priced at \$6.20 per million British thermal units and the United States is producing 2,562 trillion cubic feet of natural gas to meet energy needs.<sup>108</sup><sup>109</sup> There are currently LNG import stations in 12 EU countries, including Poland and Lithuania, which offer direct threats to Russian oil pipelines racing to meet Europe's energy demands.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>107</sup> White House Press Service, "Remarks by President Trump in State of the Union Address," published February 5, 2019, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-state-union-address-2/>.

<sup>108</sup> Ekaterina Kravtsova, "Global LNG-Asian Spot Prices Hit New Lows as Oversupply Weighs," *Reuters*, February 22, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/global-lng/global-lng-asian-spot-prices-hit-new-lows-as-oversupply-weighs-idUSL5N20H5IN>.

<sup>109</sup> "How much natural gas does the United States have, and how long will it last?" *U.S. Energy Information Administration*, accessed September 10, 2019, <https://www.eia.gov/tools/faqs/faq.php?id=58&t=8>.

<sup>110</sup> "LNG in Europe 2018: An Overview of LNG Import Terminals in Europe," *King and Spalding*, accessed September 10, 2019, [https://www.kslaw.com/attachments/000/006/010/original/LNG\\_in\\_Europe\\_2018\\_-\\_An\\_Overview\\_of\\_LNG\\_Import\\_Terminals\\_in\\_Europe.pdf?1530031152](https://www.kslaw.com/attachments/000/006/010/original/LNG_in_Europe_2018_-_An_Overview_of_LNG_Import_Terminals_in_Europe.pdf?1530031152).

## TRADE DEALS WITH CHINA, IRAN, AND NORTH KOREA

Russia has been keen on fostering new economic ties with states that are currently at odds with the U.S. and its Western allies. Regarding China, President Putin has stated that, “We consider the strengthening of direct ties between Russian regions and Chinese provinces to be especially important.”<sup>111</sup> In this same speech, President Putin had stated that bilateral trade between Russia and China had exceeded \$50 billion for 2018 with hopes of reaching \$100 billion.<sup>112</sup> In June 2019, when Chinese President Jinping visited Russia, President Putin announced that trade had reached \$108 billion.<sup>113</sup> President Putin stated that “About 30 investment projects worth a total of \$22 billion are underway with our Chinese partners and Chinese capital. A substantial part of these funds is being invested in projects in the Russian Far East (\$3.5 billion).” This bilateral trade ranges from infrastructure projects to energy (oil and LNG) and from manufacturing of vehicles for both civilian and military use to agricultural projects in both countries. President Jinping’s visit to Russia in June coincided with an energy forum that had been agreed upon by both countries in June of 2018.

During President Jinping’s visit to Russia, President Putin announced at the energy forum that there were several projects being coordinated by Russian and Chinese companies in Siberia and Russia’s Far East.<sup>114</sup> In the joint press conference, President Putin announced that Chinese investment in a joint venture in the area was valued at \$3.5 billion while advocating for further foreign investment and stating that Russia would establish economic zones along its southern border that would allow investors to save up to 30% of costs involved in investments. President

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<sup>111</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “Press Statements Following Talks with President of China,” 2018.

<sup>112</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “Press Statements Following Talks with President of China,” 2018.

<sup>113</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “Press Statements Following Russian-Chinese Talks,” published June 5, 2019, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/catalog/persons/351/events/60672>.

<sup>114</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “Meeting with Participants of Second Russian-Chinese Energy Business Forum,” published June 7, 2019, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/catalog/persons/351/events/60706>.

Xi Jinping also mentioned that the value of Russian and Chinese energy in bilateral trade was worth \$40 billion in 2018. Both acknowledge the importance of energy in their economic partnership. While these two remain rivals, they have shown a willingness to open economic agreements and collaborate in military exercises, to the dismay of the United States and the West.<sup>115</sup> Should this be indicative of the future, one can argue that this is the formation of an “Eastern” coalition.<sup>116</sup> Beyond China, Russia has sought partnerships with nations deemed “rogue states” by the West. The two nations of most concern are Iran and North Korea.

In February of 2019, President Putin announced that trade between Russia and Iran had also increased, increasing to \$1.5 billion, with imports having increased by 40%, but did not state the time frame for the growth.<sup>117</sup> In 2017, the U.S. State Department also voiced concern over a possible increase in trade between Russia and North Korea.<sup>118</sup> This was in response to an article by *USA Today*, citing *Sputnik*, which found that Russia and North Korea had seen already seen a 73% increase in trade in 2017 ahead of a summit between the two countries.<sup>119</sup> With North Korea, this possible increase in trade was addressed as a concern by the U.S. State Department.<sup>120</sup> A Brookings Institute article, written by Robert Einhorn, also detailed how Russian entities were assisting North Korea circumvent international sanctions through the

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<sup>115</sup> “Game on: Russia and China hold the biggest military exercises for decades”, *The Economist*, September 6, 2018, available at: <https://www.economist.com/europe/2018/09/06/russia-and-china-hold-the-biggest-military-exercises-for-decades>.

<sup>116</sup> Allison, G. T., & Simes, D. K. (2019, Jan 30). A sino-russian entente again threatens america; the U.S. must revise its policy toward moscow if it is to meet the threat from a rising china. *Wall Street Journal (Online)* Retrieved from <https://0-search-proquest-com.lib.utep.edu/docview/2172436711?accountid=7121>

<sup>117</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “Meeting with President of Iran Hassan Rouhani”, published February 14, 2019, Moscow, RUS. press release, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59828>.

<sup>118</sup> State Department Press Service, “Department Press Briefing – June 6, 2017,” published June 6, 2017, available at: <https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-june-6-2017/>.

<sup>119</sup> Oren Dorrell, “As China pulls trade from North Korea, Russia gets cozy with Kim Jong Un,” *USA Today*, June 5, 2017, available at: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2017/06/05/russia-boosts-trade-north-korea-china-cuts/102389824/>.

<sup>120</sup> State Department Press Service, “Department Press Briefing - June 6, 2017”, published June 6, 2017. Washington, D.C. Press release, available at: <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2017/06/271605.htm>.

shipment of oil to North Korea.<sup>121</sup> When hosting Kim Jong Un for his first foreign state visit, President Putin and Kim both mentioned hopes of further increasing their bilateral trade, although there was no mention of the current value of the trade or any specific projects being conducted between the two nations.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Robert Einhorn, “Order from Chaos: Let’s Get Realistic on North Korea and Iran”, *Brookings Institute*, October 5, 2018, available from: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/10/05/lets-get-realistic-on-north-korea-and-iran/>.

<sup>122</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “Beginning of Conversation with DPRK State Affairs Commission Chairman Kim Jong-Un”, published April 25, 2019, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/60366>.

# ANALYSIS

## CHAPTER 6: ESCALATION

This subsection of the analysis section will serve as a guide for the duration of the work, discussing information already mentioned and introducing information that will be followed up in further detail in the subsequent subsections of the analysis. Herman Khan's Escalation Ladder can be applied to the crisis today, specifically the first three subgroups of the model can be applied to the confrontation between the Russian Federation and the West. In Figure II of the Literature Review, you see "subcrisis maneuvering", "traditional crises", and "intense crises" as these subgroups.

With "subcrisis maneuvering", you have rungs one through three of the model. Rung one is "ostensible crisis", and this is specifically applied to Ukraine. When the Maidan Revolution ousted Viktor Yanukovich, the Russian Federation responded with the illegal annexation of Crimea and the fomentation of war in the southeastern part of the country. This led to rung two, "political, economic, and diplomatic gestures", as a backlash. This came in the form of the United States and its allies in the West calling for emergency meetings of the United Nations Security Council and the threat of economic sanctions as well as diplomatic repercussions.<sup>123</sup> The final rung of this first subsection is "solemn and formal declarations", which came in the form of international condemnation and decisions from the United States and the European Union to economically sanction the Russian Federation, drop it from the Group of 8, and

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<sup>123</sup> United Nations Press Office, "Ukraine Briefing by Deputy Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights," published March 19 2014, available at: <https://www.whatsinblue.org/2014/03/ukraine-briefing-by-deputy-secretary-general-and-assistant-secretary-general-for-human-rights.php>.



freezing of dialogue between the European Union and Russian Federation on several bilateral projects.<sup>124</sup>

In the second subsection of the model, “traditional crises”, rungs four through nine are also all applied. With “hardening of positions” (rung four), the countries sanctioning the Russian Federation began to renew the economic sanctions and increase their scope and intensity. This led to shows of force from both Russia and the West as both began displaying the ability to inflict damage upon the other with mobilizations of troops and equipment to strategic areas across Europe (rung five: “show of force”). Inevitably, this led to rung six, “significant mobilization”, as the Russian Federation began moving thousands of troops to its western borders and in Kaliningrad, being matched by NATO mobilizations of thousands of troops to the Baltic states and Eastern Europe. This was being done simultaneously, on the part of Russia, by conducting political warfare across liberal democracies in the West in attempt to create political instability of NATO member states (rung seven: “legal harassment”). Rung eight, “harassing acts of violence”, has been demonstrated several times over with “near misses” in the Black Sea and Baltic Sea as Russian fighter jets would conduct unsafe maneuvers that nearly led to collisions with NATO fighter jets and naval vessels in the area. Within this final subgroup of the model, rung nine (dramatic military confrontations) was reached twice: the shooting down of a Russian plane over Turkish air space and a fire fight between U.S. Special Forces and Russian led forces supporting friendly forces in Syria. Thankfully, both of these events were de-escalated and stopped short of initiating an open conventional war.

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<sup>124</sup> European Union External Action Service, “The European Union and the Russian Federation,” accessed September 3, 2019, available at: [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/35939/european-union-and-russian-federation\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/35939/european-union-and-russian-federation_en).

In the third subgroup of the model, “intense crises”, two rungs can be applied to this conflict: rung 10 (“provocative breaking off of diplomatic relations”) and rung 16 (“nuclear ultimatums”). With rung 10, the United States has accused the Russian Federation of being in violation of the INF Treaty for several years before unilaterally announcing, and then formally, withdrawing from the treaty. The sanctions, mentioned from rung two, may also be applied to rung 10 as they prohibited American individuals and entities from conducting any type of business with those on the sanctions list, indicating intent of “containment” and barring the sanctioned Russians access to American capital. With rung 16, both the United States and the Russian Federation immediately began testing of nuclear weapons that were prohibited under stipulations of the INF Treaty. These tests were actions that supported the rhetoric of both American and Russian leadership warning that their respective states were focused on the maintenance, modernization, and buildup of their nuclear forces.

## CHAPTER 7: DIPLOMATIC

At the moment, diplomatically, world leaders in the West and the East admit that relations between the United States and the Russian Federation are worse than at any point during the Cold War of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. At a joint U.S.-Russia summit in Helsinki, Finland, President Donald Trump stated, “Even during the tensions of the Cold War, when the world looked much different than it does today, the United States and Russia were able to maintain a strong dialogue. But our relationship has never been worse than it is now.”<sup>125</sup> At that same summit, President Putin stated that it was apparent to everyone that relations between the United States and the Russian Federation were currently complicated in a tense atmosphere and that the only way to address modern problems was to work together, hoping that the United States felt the same way.<sup>126</sup> Similarly, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres also came out and said that the Cold War was back, but that the current situation was perhaps more dangerous than previously.<sup>127</sup> Clearly, as of 2018, these world leaders are acknowledging the fact that the United States and the Russian Federation are in a tense climate for international relations.

### CONTAINMENT

In February of 1946, Foreign Service Office George Kennan sent the infamous “Long Telegram” to the Secretary of State, which outlined the philosophy of Containment and curbing the expansion of Communism.<sup>128</sup> A year later, in order to reach the public, Kennan published this

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<sup>125</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “News Conference Following Talks Between the Presidents of Russia and the United States,” published July 16, 2018, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58017>.

<sup>126</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “News Conference Following Talks Between the Presidents of Russia and the United States,” 2018.

<sup>127</sup> United Nations Press Service, “UN Secretary-General's Remarks to the Security Council,” published April 13, 2018, available at: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2018-04-13/un-secretary-generals-remarks-security-council>.

<sup>128</sup> National Archives and Records Administration, Department of State Records (Record Group 59), Central Decimal File, 1945-1949, 861.00/2-2246; reprinted in US Department of State, ed., Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume VI, Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing

same philosophy of Containment in *Foreign Affairs* in an article entitled “The Sources of Soviet Conduct.”<sup>129</sup> While Kennan actually states the word “containment” in his article, he outlined the idea in his letter to the Secretary of State by suggesting that the U.S. patiently outlast the Soviet regime, meet Soviet expansion across the world with force and compel the Soviets to backdown, and look to other countries where the spread of Communism may face resistance. In his article, Kennan expands on this idea with the word “containment” and specifically states

In these circumstances it is clear that the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies... In the light of the above, it will be clearly seen that the Soviet pressure against the free institutions of the Western world is something that can be contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counterforce at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and maneuvers of Soviet policy, but which cannot be charmed or talked out of.<sup>130</sup>

While written seven decades ago, there are several things from Kennan’s “Long Telegram” and philosophy of Containment that remain true of Russia today. Among these ideas that still hold true are: the idea that government propaganda shapes the Russian understanding of the outside world, Russian leadership fearing outside governments influencing the population and threatening stability of their regime, the insecurity of the regime and need to flex toughness of Russian state, and the Russian state poisoning information and denying their population access to the truth.

Today, as during Kennan’s days in Moscow, the Kremlin controls the flow of information to the public. Officially, as outlined in the 1991 Constitution of the Russian Federation, there is freedom of speech.<sup>131</sup> In practice, the Kremlin smears any independent or foreign media. In violation of Article 29 of the Russian Constitution, the Russian Government

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Office, 1969), 696-709, [https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/6-6.pdf](https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/6-6.pdf).

<sup>129</sup> X. “The Sources of Soviet Conduct.” *Foreign Affairs* 25, no. 4 (1947): 852-68. Available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/1947-07-01/sources-soviet-conduct>.

<sup>130</sup> X, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” 1947.

<sup>131</sup> Russian Constitution, article 29, sec. 2. Available at: <http://www.constitution.ru/en/10003000-03.htm>.

has ensured that not everyone has been “guaranteed the freedom of ideas and speech” as well as pushed, “The propaganda of social, racial, national, religious or linguistic supremacy.”<sup>132</sup> In practice, the Kremlin has ensured that no more than 20% of media be owned by foreign citizens, or citizens with dual citizenship.<sup>133</sup> And while a clear practice of censorship, this law has been ruled Constitutional by the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation.<sup>134</sup>

On the topic of Containment itself, President Vladimir Putin, on two separate occasions, in 2014 declared that the United States and the West were still actively pushing this policy.<sup>135</sup><sup>136</sup>

That year, President Putin also stated

I would like to add that in the modern world extremism is often used as a geopolitical instrument to rearrange spheres of influence. We see the tragic consequences of the wave of so-called ‘colour revolutions’, the turmoil in the countries that have undergone the irresponsible experiments of covert and sometimes blatant interference in their lives. We take this as a lesson and a warning, and we must do everything necessary to ensure this never happens in Russia.<sup>137</sup>

What these statements reveal is that President Putin has revealed, as Kennan said in the 1940’s, his insecurity and fear of both the outside world and the stability of his regime. This belief that the United States and the West have continued the policy of Containment toward Russia also reveals opportunism for President Putin.

The reason that this reveals opportunity for President Putin is because 2014 was the year that relations between the United States and the Russian Federation really took a turn for the worse. It should not be forgotten that these comments and this rhetoric came in the wake of

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<sup>132</sup> Russian Constitution, article 29, sec. 2.

<sup>133</sup> U.S. Department of Justice Press Service, “Russia Key Developments in 2016,” published January 15, 2018, available at: <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1026386/download>.

<sup>134</sup> Russian Constitutional Court Press Service, “By the Judgement of 17 January 2019 No. 4-Π/2019 the Constitutional Court Appraised Constitutionality of Article 19.1, of the Law of the Russian Federation ‘On the Mass-media’”, published January 17, 2019, available at: <http://www.ksrf.ru/en/Decision/Judgments/Documents/Resume17012019.pdf>.

<sup>135</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “Address by the President of the Russian Federation,” published March 18, 2014, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>.

<sup>136</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly,” published December 4, 2014, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47173>.

<sup>137</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “Security Council Meeting,” published November 20, 2014, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47045>.

Western reaction to Russian actions in Ukraine, in both seizing territory and fomenting war. Those, it also must not be forgotten, were in reaction to the seeming color revolution occurring in Ukraine and the ousting of President Yanukovich. While supporting Ukrainian calls for transparency in their Democratic Elections and desires for a freer government would have been logical along Western lines, it was perceived by Russian leadership as an attempt to further penetrate into the former Soviet Union in order to directly attack Russia itself. The idea of true democracy at the borders of Russia proper is what truly frightened President Putin. Putin's assertion that "this must never happen in Russia" was not in the interest of the Russian people, but in the interest of his grip on national power.

Following international backlash to his attempts to prevent liberal democracy at the borders of Russia, President Putin was then able to shape the centuries old argument of the clash between Russia and the West, an argument that dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century with Nikolay Yakovlevich Danilevsky and his "slavophiles and panslavists", who concluded that "Europe and Russia were two distinct and mutually hostile 'historical-cultural types', civilizations."<sup>138</sup> Following this thinking, it also makes sense that President Putin has laid the groundwork for a new Cold War in an attempt to eradicate liberal democracy as a threat to his base of power. In the span of five years, Putin's attempts to reassert Russia onto the international stage seems to have been successful. Before the annexation of Crimea, Russia was not a major concern of the United States, even if it was always a concern to NATO allies. Today, Russia and Russia's President Putin are constantly featured in American news and media.

The mentions of Containment may have been surprising but may hold the answer as in how to effectively counter Russian aggression. Today, as in the 1940's, there are ample opportunities

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<sup>138</sup> Lauri Mälksoo, *Russian Approaches to International Law*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 40.

to meet Putin's Russia across the world. Russian incursions into Ukraine, Syria, and Venezuela, areas where leadership is contested after the people have voiced favoring liberal democracy, have come into direct opposition with Western support for self-determination. Today, as during the struggle against Communism, the United States and the West need to continue their presence in areas where struggles of self-determination in the face of authoritarian rule are occurring. The advantage today is that the United States is the only military on the planet that has the force capability to project anywhere there is one of these conflicts or struggles, and the NATO alliance is larger today than during the Cold War, meaning that the force projections in support of liberal democracy and self-determination may be larger than then, but also carries a louder voice of support through diplomatic rhetoric. This can only be done effectively if the West solves its own identity crisis, which has, in part, been a consequence of Putin's campaign to reignite the Cold War.

#### **IDENTITY AND THE WEST IN CRISIS**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the Post 9/11 World, another challenge, besides a revanchist Russia, has surfaced: an identity crisis in the international order. In 2014, Robert Kagan wrote, "an intellectual problem, a question of identity and purpose."<sup>139</sup> In 2017, John Bew wrote, "By the spring of 2016, as the presidential election cycle was fully under way, the linkage between the apparent crisis of world order and this national "question of identity and purpose" became more pronounced."<sup>140</sup> Republican candidate Donald Trump was moving with the campaign slogans of "America First" and "Make America Great Again" while his opposition, Hillary Clinton, represented a continuation of policies formed under the Barack Obama

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<sup>139</sup> Robert Kagan, "Superpowers Don't Get to Retire," *New Republic*, May 26, 2014, <https://newrepublic.com/article/117859/superpowers-dont-get-retire>.

<sup>140</sup> John Bew, "World Order: Many-Headed Monster of Noble Pursuit?" *Texas National Security Review*, 1 no. 1. (Fall 2017):14-35

administration.<sup>141</sup> Donald Trump went on to win the Presidency in the 2016 Election, but this has had several implications for the current conflict.

Since taking office, President Trump has elected to reject the current American led international order. Thomas Wright wrote, “He is deeply unhappy with America’s military alliances and feels the United States is overcommitted around the world. He feels that America is disadvantaged by the global economy. And he is sympathetic to authoritarian strongmen.”<sup>142</sup> President Trump seemed to convey just that during his 2019 State of the Union Address. In it, he proclaimed

For years, the United States was being treated very unfairly by friends of ours, members of NATO. But now we have secured, over the last couple of years, more than \$100 billion of increase in defense spending from our NATO Allies...I have great respect for President Xi, and we are now working on a new trade deal with China. But it must include real, structural change to end unfair trade practices, reduce our chronic trade deficit, and protect American jobs...Much work remains to be done, but my relationship with Kim Jong Un is a good one. Chairman Kim and I will meet again on February 27th and 28th in Vietnam.<sup>143</sup>

In the selected text from his State of the Union Address, President Trump has demonstrated a focus on holding military allies more accountable for their own security by pushing the “\$100 billion increase in defense spending”, as was one of his promises during the campaign, as well as this disadvantage in the global economy by pushing the idea of a new trade deal with China that would “end unfair trade practices, reduce our chronic trade deficit, and protect American jobs.” Like Wright had stated, President Trump also displayed his sympathy for authoritarian leaders when mentioning both President Xi Jinping and Chairman Kim Jong Un, leaders of countries with several claims of human rights abuses against their prospective

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<sup>141</sup> “About,” Trump Pence 2020: Keep America Great, Donald Trump for President Campaign, accessed September 16, 2019, <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/>.

<sup>142</sup> Thomas Wright, “Trump’s 19th Century Foreign Policy,” *Politico*, January 20, 2016, available at: <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/01/donald-trump-foreign-policy-213546>.

<sup>143</sup> White House Press Service, “State of the Union Address,” 2019.



regimes, including allegations from the United States.<sup>144</sup><sup>145</sup> These struggles with foreign policy seem to plague the administration as well as issues that arise domestically.

## **LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC ORDER**

The current state of geopolitical tensions today may also be attributed to President Putin's war with the Liberal Democratic Order. In December 2016, Dr. Robert Kagan (of the Brookings Institute) testified to the Senate Armed Services Committee that he believed Russia and China were the two greatest threats to the existence of the Liberal Democratic Order.<sup>146</sup> In 2017 Foreign Relations Committee member Senator Cory Gardner voiced this same stance in a joint meeting of the House and Senate before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, when discussing the threats of Russian hybrid warfare.<sup>147</sup> These stances come from recognizing the nihilistic rhetoric that President Putin espouses regarding the Liberal Democratic Order itself.

In June of 2019, Putin gave an interview to *the Financial Times* in which he continued this rhetoric. Putin specifically stated, "the liberal idea has become obsolete. It has come into conflict with the interests of the overwhelming majority of the population."<sup>148</sup> While this quote clearly states his position on the issue of the Liberal Democratic Order, it is not the only thing that Putin has publicly done to demonstrate this. In 2005, Putin famously stated, "we should

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<sup>144</sup> White House Press Service, "Remarks by Vice President Pence on the Administration's Policy Toward China," published October 4, 2018, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-administrations-policy-toward-china/>.

<sup>145</sup> White House Press Service, "President Donald J. Trump is Standing Up for Human Rights at the U.N.," published June 21, 2018, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-standing-human-rights-u-n/>.

<sup>146</sup> *Emerging U.S. Defense Challenges and Worldwide Threats*, 114th Cong. (2016) (statement of Dr. Robert Kagan, The Brookings Institute). Available at: [https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Kagan\\_12-06-16.pdf](https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Kagan_12-06-16.pdf).

<sup>147</sup> U.S. Congress, Joint Hearing before the Senate and the House, Committee on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *The Scourge of Russian Disinformation*, 115th Cong., 1st sess., 2017, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-115jhr26880/html/CHRG-115jhr26880.htm>.

<sup>148</sup> Kremlin Press Service, "Interview with the Financial Times," published June 27, 2019, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60836>.

acknowledge that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical disaster of the century.”<sup>149</sup> In March 2018, Putin was also asked by a reporter “Which event in the Russian history would you like to undo?” to which he replied, “The collapse of the Soviet Union.”<sup>150</sup> What may be less known is that in 2014, President Putin also publicly stated his view on the Liberal Democratic Order when he stated, “We see the tragic consequences of the wave of so-called ‘colour revolutions’... We take this as a lesson and a warning, and we must do everything necessary to ensure this never happens in Russia.”<sup>151</sup>

With that 2014 quote, from a Russian National Security Council meeting, President Putin admitted that the greatest threat facing Russia was Democracy and the threats to stability under Putin’s status quo. It may also serve to be admission of Putin’s greatest fear as this statement was made the same year that Russia illegally annexed Crimea and began fomenting war in Ukraine. The actions taken to support separatist movements around the world, conduct information operations within Liberal Democracies, and financial support for populist candidates/movements to undermine the stability of Liberal Democratic governments would only serve as further evidence. This also may be very important as some critics of the idea of a new Cold War use the argument that the first Cold War was an ideological conflict between Capitalism and Communism, believing that no such ideological conflict exists today. However, the argument being made here is that there is indeed an ideological conflict present today, involving open systems and closed systems: Liberalism and Realism. To clarify the aforementioned statement, the Kremlin under President Putin is waging war on the Liberal Democratic Order by attacking the confidence in the

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<sup>149</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation,” published April 25, 2005, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22931>.

<sup>150</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “Truth and Justice forum of regional and local media,” March 2, 2018, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56969>.

<sup>151</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “Security Council Meeting,” November 20, 2014, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47045>.

stability of international organizations and systems. By stressing state sovereignty and the strength of the state, Russia under Putin's leadership is conducting international affairs under the guise of realism in which great state power is the most important aspect. In order to protect his position as the leader of an authoritarian state (a kleptocracy, which will be discussed further in a subsequent section), Putin has to wage war on the institution that threatens his stability as a ruler, namely in the idea of honest and open elections.

In 2016, for *the New York Times*, German Jochen Bittner coined the term "orderism", which he described as conservative alternative to the morally chaotic laissez-faires societies of the West.<sup>152</sup> Orderism, Bittner continues, calls out the hypocrisies of liberalism and offers political stability instead of Democracy, relying on conservative values and the idea of a centralized power figure (such as the czar) to deliver greatness to the people. Also in 2016, Serhat S Çubukçuoğlu writes that orderism works in communal societies with long histories and established traditions, offering a "savior" who "promises only what he can deliver."<sup>153</sup> Bittner and Çubukçuoğlu have also both picked up on the importance of the state to enforce this revival and opposition to what the state labels moral corruption of the liberal democratic societies. This comes in the form of a strong state security apparatus for physical protection and, at times, repression of dissidence to the system while the Russian Orthodox Church has re-emerged as a power, having been attacked by the Soviet system of state atheism.

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<sup>152</sup> Jochen Bittner, "Orderism: The New Ideology of the New Cold War," *the New York Times*, August 1, 2016, [https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/02/opinion/the-new-ideology-of-the-new-cold-war.html?partner=rssnyt&emc=rss&\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/02/opinion/the-new-ideology-of-the-new-cold-war.html?partner=rssnyt&emc=rss&_r=0).

<sup>153</sup> Serhat S Çubukçuoğlu, "Orderism and Liberal Democracy," *Academia*, October 2016, [https://www.academia.edu/29681815/Orderism\\_and\\_Liberal\\_Democracy](https://www.academia.edu/29681815/Orderism_and_Liberal_Democracy).

In 2017, Marcus Papadopoulos wrote that the Russian Orthodox Church was benefitting from an alliance with the Kremlin dating back to the establishment of the Russian Federation.<sup>154</sup> Through the use of this alliance, the Church has become one of the largest land owners in the Russian Federation, built and reclaimed thousands of Churches, and hired in excess of 10,000 new clergymen, having them placed in either the new churches or even the Military. In exchange, the Church directly influences Russian society to reject foreign influences while promoting Russian patriotism, nationalism, and pushes for the independence and sovereignty of the Russian state.<sup>155</sup> Gregory Freeze, for *the Carnegie Endowment Center*, wrote later in 2017 that the Church has had to contend with a large society of Russian Orthodox Christians who belong to no parishes, having to depend on educating and exhorting the public through the release of academic papers and opinion pieces to be read by the general public.<sup>156</sup> While the expansion of the Church has worked to revive societal control over the Russian people in the absence of the Soviet Union's Communist Party, it has also led to backlash from secularists and has perhaps worked to further the divide between the "two-Russias".

In 2012, Mikhail Dmitriev and Daniel Treisman wrote for *Foreign Affairs* that there were two Russias: the first made up of sprawling metropolises and the other being the rest of the country, lagging behind the cities.<sup>157</sup> The majority of Russians, they argue, are nonideological and are only concerned with local problems and social welfare. However, this was before the events in Ukraine and Putin's push for expanding the importance of Russia on the global stage.

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<sup>154</sup> Marcus Papadopoulos, "Unorthodoxy in Russia. The Kremlin and the Russian Orthodox Church," *Global Research Center*, November 24, 2017, <https://www.globalresearch.ca/unorthodoxy-in-russia/5619700>.

<sup>155</sup> Papadopoulos, "Unorthodoxy in Russia," 2017.

<sup>156</sup> Gregory L. Freeze, "Russian Orthodoxy and Politics in the Putin Era," *the Carnegie Endowment Center*, February 9, 2017, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/02/09/russian-orthodoxy-and-politics-in-putin-era-pub-67959>.

<sup>157</sup> Mikhail Dmitriev and Daniel Treisman, "The Other Russia: Discontent Grows in the Hinterlands," *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 5 (2012), 59-72.

Whether or not this remains true of Russian society is something that must be researched once more. Yet Dmitriev and Treisman also point out the 2012 protests regarding Putin running for President once more. This idea of political protests in Russia seems to have resurfaced and has been constantly oppressed by Russian security services.<sup>158</sup> These crackdowns represent the physical arm of orderism in Russia.

Following the fall of the Soviet Union, the KGB (the state intelligence service) broke up into subsequent agencies: the Federal Security Service (FSB), the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) and the Central Intelligence Service Committee for State Border Guard. The FSB has emerged as the most powerful successor to the KGB and has become the most loyal service to President Putin, having been the director of the FSB before rising to the Presidency. Part of the power of the FSB has not only been its control of state information in the form of intelligence officers, but its expansion of influence across the Russian government and Russian businesses. In 2006, Olga Kryshтанovskaya, director of the Moscow-based Center for the Study of Elites, stated, “If in the Soviet period and the first post-Soviet period, the KGB and FSB [people] were mainly involved in security issues, now half are still involved in security but the other half are involved in business, political parties, NGOs, regional governments, even culture... they started to use all political institutions.”<sup>159</sup> According to Kryshтанovskaya, 78% of 1,016 leading Russian political figures (up to the date of the 2006 article) were former members of the KGB or its successor agencies. In 2015, the private Intelligence company *Stratfor*, wrote on the appointment

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<sup>158</sup> “Fresh protest draws Russians out against Kremlin 'repression',” *Deutsche Welle*, September 29, 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/fresh-protest-draws-russians-out-against-kremlin-repression/a-50633201>. “Thousands March in Moscow Protest Defying Authorities,” *Radio Free Europe*, August 31, 2019, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-s-liberals-vow-to-push-forward-with-moscow-protests-amid-warnings/30139130.html>.

<sup>159</sup> Peter Finn, “In Russia, a Secretive Force Widens,” *the Washington Post*, December 12, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/11/AR2006121101434.html>.

of three new former FSB officials, seeming to continue Kryshтанovskaya's 2006 observations of intelligence officers rising to government positions.<sup>160</sup> A year later, reports surfaced that President Putin was planning to merge the FSB and SVR into the "Ministry of State Security" (just as in the Stalinist era) and revive the KGB in all but name.<sup>161</sup>

Under the idea of orderism in Russia, only dissent of Western liberalism is allowed. This is because Putin's Russia is controlling society and working to control the thought of the Russian people. Through its alliance with the Russian Orthodox Church, the Putin regime is able to exert uncontested influence through God's messengers to reinforce his rule. Simultaneously, Putin's rule is absolute as the entirety of the Russian government is either directly or indirectly ruled by former intelligence officers working with or under Putin during his days with both the KGB and the FSB. The results have been public oppression of free speech against the Kremlin, media censorship, and oppression of sexuality as assaults against traditional Russian values.

#### **AFRICA, LATIN AMERICA, S.E. ASIA**

While Russia has had to face backlash from rivals in the West, it has sought to make up some of its diplomatic shortfalls since 2014 by renewing focus around the world with countries in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia. Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela have offered the greatest footholds for increased Russian influence within Latin America. In Africa, the Central African Republic, Libya, and Sudan have been the targets of the Russian Federation and its campaign of influence. In Southeast Asia, Russian influence is less active, but may threaten to increase as the Russian Federation recognizes that this area is the main area of conflict in the

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<sup>160</sup> "A Russian Intelligence Agency Expands Its Reach," *Stratfor World View*, April 8, 2015, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/russian-intelligence-agency-expands-its-reach>.

<sup>161</sup> Andrei Soldatov, "Putin has Finally Reincarnated the KGB," *Foreign Policy*, September 21, 2016, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/09/21/putin-has-finally-reincarnated-the-kgb-mgb-fsb-russia/>.

contest between the United States and China, yet it may also provide Russia further economic agreements as there are several strong economies within the region.

Regarding Latin America, President Putin set out on a tour to renew Russia's commitments to its bilateral relations with Brazil, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Venezuela in July 2014.<sup>162</sup> The following year, General John Kelly (U.S. Southern Command) gave his force posture statement to Congress and stated

“Periodically since 2008, Russia has pursued an increased presence in Latin America through propaganda, military arms and equipment sales, counterdrug agreements, and trade. Under President Putin, however, we have seen a clear return to Cold War tactics as part of its global strategy. Russia is using power projection in an attempt to erode U.S. leadership and challenge U.S. influence in the Western Hemisphere. Last year and again this year, a Russian intelligence ship docked in Havana multiple times while conducting operations in the Gulf of Mexico and along the east coast of the United States. Russia has courted Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua to gain access to air bases and ports for resupply of Russian naval assets and strategic bombers operating in the Western Hemisphere.”<sup>163</sup>

Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela's partnership with Russia has allowed it access to their military facilities, infrastructure projects, and capital that may be used in the long campaign against the West while also allowing it access to launch operations against American military and intelligence targets, should Russia so choose.<sup>164</sup> In 2019, this position became threatened with civil upheaval in Venezuela, to which Russia responded by sending in 100 official military personnel.<sup>165</sup> However, a particular concern was that Russia military contractors went in at this same time in case the regime in power were to fall.<sup>166</sup> These contractors are members of the Wagner group, the same company present in the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria. This also led for calls from Erik Prince, founder of American PMC Blackwater, to call for the United States to

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<sup>162</sup> Julia Gurganus, “Russia: Playing a Geopolitical Game in Latin America,” *Carnegie Endowment Center*, May 3, 2018, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/05/03/russiplaying-geopolitical-game-in-latin-america-pub-76228>.

<sup>163</sup> *Force Posture*, 114th Cong. (2015) (statement of John Kelley, Commander of U.S. Southern Command). Available at: [https://www.armedservices.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Kelly\\_03-12-15.pdf](https://www.armedservices.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Kelly_03-12-15.pdf).

<sup>164</sup> Mason Shuya, “Russia in Latin America: a Response to NATO,” *Journal of Strategic Security*, 12, no 2 (2019): 17-41, <https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.12.2.1727>.

<sup>165</sup> Shuya, “Russia in Latin America,” 2019.

<sup>166</sup> “Russian Mercenaries Arrive in Venezuela to Shore up Maduro's Rule,” *the Moscow Times*, January 26, 2019, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/01/26/russianmercenaries-arrive-in-venezuela-to-shore-up-maduros-rule-a64299>.

send its own private army of military contractors.<sup>167</sup> Yet, if PMCs from both the United States and Russia met in Venezuela, it would spark a civil war similar to that in Syria today and Angola during the Cold War.

Just as in Latin America, the Wagner group is being used to push and increase Russian influence into Africa. General Thomas D. Waldhauser, Commander of U.S. Africa Command, declared in his force posture statement to Congress

Russia is also a growing challenge and has taken a more militaristic approach in Africa. By employing oligarch-funded, quasi-mercenary military advisors, particularly in countries where leaders seek unchallenged autocratic rule, Russian interests gain access to natural resources on favorable terms. Some African leaders readily embrace this type of support and use it to consolidate their power and authority. This is occurring in the Central African Republic where elected leaders mortgage mineral rights—for a fraction of their worth—to secure Russian weapons. Russia also garners additional support at the United Nations and gains more customers for its military arms sales.<sup>168</sup>

In August 2019, investigate reporters for CNN followed up with General Waldhauser's statement with their own report. These journalists were able to interview one of these Wagner mercenaries, who stated, "Russia is returning to Africa... We were present in many countries during the time of the Soviet Union, and Russia is coming back to the same position. We still have connections and we are trying to re-establish them."<sup>169</sup> The report also gave several graphics, including an interactive map of Africa where Russia is pressing its presence. Each of the countries shown have natural resources, minerals, and violent conflict in common. By using the Wagner group and others from Russian oligarchs, the Russian government is able to take advantage of the natural resources while giving the impression that it cares more about African nations than other Western nations.

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<sup>167</sup> Aram Roston and Matt Spetalnik, "Exclusive - Blackwater Founder's Latest Sales Pitch: Mercenaries for Venezuela," *Reuters*, April 29, 2019, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-erikprince-exclusi/exclusive-blackwater-founders-latest-sales-pitch-mercenaries-for-venezuela-idUSKCN1S608F>.

<sup>168</sup> *Statement of General Thomas D. Waldhauser, United States Marine Corps, Commander, United States Africa Command Before the Senate Committee on Armed Services*, 116th Cong. (2019) (statement of Thomas D. Waldhauser, Commander of U.S. Africa Command). Available at: <https://www.africom.mil/about-the-command/2019-posture-statement-to-congress>.

<sup>169</sup> Tim Lister, Sebastian Shukla, and Clarissa Ward, "Putin's Private Army," *CNN*, August 13, 2019, available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2019/08/africa/putins-private-army-car-intl/>.



This may also be the reason that the Trump administration pushed for a new Africa Strategy in December 2018.<sup>170</sup> The same day, National Security Advisor John Bolton stated that advancing U.S. commercial ties with African nations, defeating terrorist organizations on the continent, and ensuring that U.S. tax payer money sent to foreign aid was properly used for its designated purpose.<sup>171</sup> In that same speech, Bolton referenced Russia's presence in Africa six times, stating, "In short, the predatory practices pursued by China and Russia stunt economic growth in Africa; threaten the financial independence of African nations; inhibit opportunities for U.S. investment; interfere with U.S. military operations; and pose a significant threat to U.S. national security interests."<sup>172</sup> What this may mean for Africa is returning to its position as being used in a global chess match between the United States and the Russian Federation (along with Russia's partner in China) that it held in the Twentieth Century while benefiting from economic investment in infrastructure and resource extraction. The foreign investments may also be used to leverage weapons from both the United States and the Russian Federation who already compete as the world's two largest arms exporters on the international stage.

In April 2019, PhD candidate Tomasz Burdzik wrote in *Russian International Affairs Council* (Russia's leading foreign affairs journal), that Russia is not currently significant in the Indo-Pacific region, but that it was focusing on increasing its presence and becoming significant, acting as a counter-balance for countries who are currently stuck between China and the United

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<sup>170</sup> White House Press Office, "President Donald J. Trump's Africa Strategy Advances Prosperity, Security, and Stability," published December 13, 2018, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trumps-africa-strategy-advances-prosperity-security-stability/>.

<sup>171</sup> White House Press Office, "Remarks by National Security Advisor Ambassador John R. Bolton on the Trump Administration's New Africa Strategy," published December 13, 2018, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-national-security-advisor-ambassador-john-r-bolton-trump-administrations-new-africa-strategy/>.

<sup>172</sup> White House Press Office, "Remarks by National Security Advisor Ambassador John R. Bolton," 2018

States.<sup>173</sup> Russia's expanding influence in Southeast Asia was also noted by Admiral Harry B. Harris, Commander of U.S. Pacific Command. In his 2018 force posture statement before the House Armed Services Committee, Admiral Harris called Russia one of the five greatest threats to Pacific Command and the region.<sup>174</sup> Admiral Harris also told Congress, "Moscow seeks to alleviate some of the effects of sanctions imposed following their aggression in Ukraine by diplomatically wooing select states in Asia." Admiral Harris followed that statement by stating that, "Russia also sees economic opportunities to not only build markets for energy exports, but also to build – or in some cases rebuild – arms sales relationships in the region."

A year later, Admiral Harris' successor, Admiral Philip S. Davidson, also stated that he viewed Russia as one of the five biggest threats to the region.<sup>175</sup> While Admiral Harris mentioned the diplomatic and economic efforts Russia was making in the region, Admiral Davidson was focused on the military, which included Russia reinforcing its Eastern military district as well as its Pacific fleet. Beyond mere military actions, President Putin demonstrated Russia's interest in the region by attending the 13<sup>th</sup> East Asia Summit (EAS) for the first time since Russia joined in 2010.<sup>176</sup> Russia, like the United States and China, is a dialogue partner within the 18-member state summit. While in Singapore for the EAS, President Putin also put out a joint statement with ASEAN members regarding the 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN-Russian Federation Summit on Strategic Partnership,

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<sup>173</sup> Tomasz Burdzik, "Slowly but Surely: Russia's Foreign Policy in Southeast Asia," *Russian International Affairs Council*, April 22, 2019, available at: <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/columns/asian-kaleidoscope/slowly-but-surely-russia-s-foreign-policy-in-southeast-asia/>.

<sup>174</sup> *Statement of Admiral Harry B. Harris J., U.S. Navy, Commander, U.S. Pacific Command Before the House Armed Services Committee on U.S. Pacific Command Posture*, 115th Cong. (2018) (statement of Harry B. Harris, Commander of U.S. Pacific Command). Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/AS/AS00/20180214/106847/HHRG-115-AS00-Wstate-HarrisJrH-20180214.pdf>.

<sup>175</sup> *Statement of Admiral Philip S. Davidson, U.S. Navy, Commander, U.S. Pacific Command Before the Senate Armed Services Committee on U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Posture*, 116th Cong. (2019) (statement of Philip S. Davidson, Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command). Available at: [https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Davidson\\_02-12-19.pdf](https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Davidson_02-12-19.pdf).

<sup>176</sup> Kremlin Press Service, "East Asia Summit," November 15, 2018, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59128>.

whereby both Russia and the countries of Southeast Asia declared their intents on further increasing trade and diplomatic relations.<sup>177</sup>

## **FORMER USSR COUNTRIES AND ZONE OF INFLUENCE**

In the years following the fall of the Soviet Union, former Soviet member states and members of the Warsaw Pact have joined the EU and NATO. These countries have been some of Moscow's most outspoken critics, but also the most apprehensive regarding a possible invasion of their territories similar to Russia's annexation of Crimea, as well as the fomentation of war in other parts of Ukraine. The states of Eastern Europe (with the exceptions of Belarus and Serbia) have stood firmly against Russian aggression and Russia's resurgent aspirations. This has come in the form of voting for sanctions, requesting increased NATO forces on their territory, and hosting components of the U.S. Anti-Ballistic Missile Shield in Romania and Poland.

Following World War II, the Soviet Union used these countries as a buffer zone to protect Russia from a Western invasion. Today, these countries are important to Russia as many of the militaries still rely on Russian small arms, but also as markets for Russian oil and energy. At the moment, Russia is the largest supplier of energy to the EU, but it depends on oil pipelines to flow to the West through Eastern Europe. At the same time, the NATO and EU member states in the region are being held hostage by that same fact as they are dependent on that same energy. Additionally, border disputes over recent years have led to visa requirements and begun to make crossing the border into Russia from the West (and vice versa) more difficult. Russia also considers this area its "backyard", the most strategically important territory for its ambitions, and is lashing out that these states have turned West. Ukraine was meant as a message and deterrent for more of these states: don't think of turning away from Moscow.

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<sup>177</sup> ASEAN Press Service, "Joint Statement of the 3rd ASEAN-Russian Federation Summit on Strategic Partnership," November 14, 2018, <https://asean.org/joint-statement-3rd-asean-russian-federation-summit-strategic-partnership/>.

## CHAPTER 8: INFORMATIONAL

### REFLEXIVE CONTROL

As a part of their information war, Russian intelligence and security services have practiced reflexive control since the days of the Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti, or KGB. In 1986, Diane Chotikul published a psychocultural study on the Soviet theory of Reflexive Control for the Naval Post Graduate School in California. Chotikul noted that an important aspect of reflexive control relied on the applications of *lozh* and *vranyo*.<sup>178</sup> Chotikul describes *lozh* as “actual lies and total untruths” while describing *vranyo* as “more subtle term referring to the dissemination of untruths which have some grounding in reality.” She also describes *vranyo* as a more clandestine strategy of implementing reflexive control, as the idea is to spread misinformation, while *lozh* is described as purely disinformation. Both of these terms have been demonstrated within Russia’s influence operations in the United States and the European Union through the use of the Internet Research Agency (IRA), also known as Russia’s Troll Factory, as well as other resources of state propaganda.

The strategy for operatives of the IRA was to work in groups to fabricate social media activity regarding sensitive topics. These operatives would employ both *lozh* and *vranyo* when working to further polarize target populations. In the United States, the target was to further divide Americans along partisan lines, both “Republican” and “Democrat”, by using historical issues of race and racial division. *Facebook* acknowledged that the most common topic was the “Black Lives Matter” movement, which erupted in reaction to the deaths of Black Americans by

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<sup>178</sup> Diane Chotikul, “The Soviet Theory of Reflexive Control in Historical and Psychocultural Perspective: Preliminary Study,” Master’s diss., (Naval Postgraduate School, 1986).

local law enforcement agencies across the country. This not only demonstrated with the IRA, but also by *RT* in their coverage of events in the United States.

Russian propaganda efforts were able to deploy *vranyo* in reaction to the riots in Ferguson, Missouri. Regarding the riots in Ferguson (which prompted the beginnings of the “Black Lives Matter” movement), American news companies focused on the actual protests. *Fox News* reported in 2014 that people were peacefully protesting in large numbers, sparking similar protests across the country, which would also lead to riots in some of those cities.<sup>179</sup> *CNN* reported similar findings, but also the presence of some rioters, interviewing concerned citizens worried about the riots and what this would mean for the future of their community.<sup>180</sup> *RT*, on the other hand, published several stories that sought to continue a divisive agenda. In one article, at the same time as American coverage, the article was entitled, “Arrests, protests & 'Xmas carols': Ferguson unrest enters fifth day, c15 detained”, with an image of a white Missouri National Guardsmen arresting a black protestor.<sup>181</sup> In a subsequent article, the headline was “Terror on American soil': #FergusonOctober stages 4-day rally as shooting anger rages.”<sup>182</sup> A year later, *RT* decided to publish another article related to the protests entitled, “Heavily-armed white men patrol Ferguson, ‘ready to confront authorities to defend US Constitution’” depicting seemingly White Nationalists patrolling the area, and continuing to work on racially sensitive issues to keep

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<sup>179</sup> “In Ferguson, Missouri, and Across U.S., Thousands Rally to Protest Grand Jury Decision,” *Fox News*, November 25, 2014, <https://www.foxnews.com/world/in-ferguson-missouri-and-across-u-s-thousands-rally-to-protest-grand-jury-decision>.

<sup>180</sup> “Ferguson: Fires and Chaos Erupts After No Indictment,” *CNN*, November 25, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/11/24/justice/ferguson-grand-jury/index.html>.

<sup>181</sup> “Arrests, Protests & 'Xmas carols': Ferguson Unrest Enters Fifth Day, c15 Detained,” *RT*, November 29, 2014, <https://www.rt.com/usa/209935-ferguson-dozens-arrested-protests/>.

<sup>182</sup> “Terror on American soil': #FergusonOctober Stages 4-Day Rally as Shooting Anger Rages,” *RT*, October 11, 2014, <https://www.rt.com/usa/195116-ferguson-shaw-st-louis-protests/>.

pushing an image of a racist America.<sup>183</sup> *RT* has done this same dissemination of misinformation in other areas as well, including the topic of U.S. government surveillance.

In 2013, former government contractor Edward Snowden leaked sensitive information regarding U.S. surveillance programs.<sup>184</sup> At the time, it was big news in the United States and the Western world because of its mention of surveillance on American citizens. Since then, Western coverage has focused on these programs and their successful surveillance of foreign targets (as were intended by design). In 2017, *CNN* reported that the National Security Agency (NSA) was surveilling over 100,000 foreign nationals.<sup>185</sup> In 2019, *Fox News* published an article that U.S. Senators were concerned about the risk of foreign spying on Americans and an additional article (the day before) detailing risks of Chinese cyber espionage on Americans.<sup>186</sup> In the same period (since 2017), *RT* coverage of U.S. government surveillance has been focused solely on surveillance of American citizens (something that Western news outlets had not focused on since the Snowden leaks in 2013). An *RT* article in 2018, stated that NSA spying of American citizens had increased to over 530 million electronic communications in 2017.<sup>187</sup> In 2019, *RT* published an article claiming that a Department of Homeland Security official had leaked that the U.S. government was spying on, and tracking, journalists covering the migrant caravans at the

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<sup>183</sup> “Heavily-Armed White Men Patrol Ferguson, ‘Ready to Confront Authorities to Defend US Constitution’,” *RT*, August 11, 2015, <https://www.rt.com/usa/312178-ferguson-oath-keepers-patrols/>.

<sup>184</sup> Mark Mazzetti and Michael S. Schmidt, “Edward Snowden, Ex-C.I.A. Worker, Says He Disclosed Surveillance Data,” *the New York Times*, June 9, 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/10/us/former-cia-worker-says-he-leaked-surveillance-data.html>.

<sup>185</sup> Jim Sciutto and Zachary Cohen, “NSA Reveals 100,000 Foreign Nationals Under Surveillance,” *CNN*, September 25, 2017, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/09/25/politics/fisa-section-702-surveillance-nsa/index.html>.

<sup>186</sup> “US Senators Demand Probe of Foreign VPNs Over Spying Risk,” *Fox News*, February 8, 2019, <https://www.foxnews.com/tech/us-senators-demand-probe-of-foreign-vpns-over-spying-risk>. Eric Shawn, “China Trying to Infiltrate US Colleges to Recruit Spies, Indoctrinate Students, Intelligence Agencies Say,” *Fox News*, February 7, 2019, <https://www.foxnews.com/us/china-infiltrating-us-colleges-to-recruit-spies-indoctrinate-students-intelligence-agencies-say>.

<sup>187</sup> “NSA Triples Spying Rate on Americans’ Phone Calls, Collects 530mn Records in 2017,” *RT*, May 5, 2018, <https://www.rt.com/usa/425900-nsa-spying-phone-records/>.

southern border.<sup>188</sup> This story was also reported on by the *New York Times*, but there was very little other coverage to substantiate the claims from *RT* than the one story from the *New York Times*.<sup>189</sup>

Here the use of *vranyo* is demonstrated by taking the reality that the U.S. government has a recent history of spying on American citizens and continuing to run with the story to influence the target audience that this is still the reality. This is also evident with the story of “spying on journalists” as the *New York Times* article came out a week before the *RT* article was published, lending some time to establish credibility for the story. This strategy was also evident in the stories regarding the riots in Ferguson, Missouri. There, *RT* was reporting on a live event, but the focus on the American history of racial divisions and issues allowed *RT* to continue invoking these memories and work to bring them back to the forefront of American consciousness, also working to effectively set the stage for a new era of racial struggle between American citizens not seen since the Civil Rights movement. Yet the Russian use of IRA operatives was just as effective at stirring these emotions, and arguably much faster than through the use of traditional media like *RT*.

By working in these groups, the IRA operatives could create fake accounts posing as activists and calling for violence against opposing parties. These operations were meant to be conducted 24 hours a day by requiring operatives to work 12 hour shifts and then swap out with their replacements at the end of their shift. *Facebook* also acknowledged that another sensitive topic was the existence of multiple secessionist movements that began springing up during the

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<sup>188</sup> “US Government Spies on Journalists! (Who Track Migrant Caravans, So This Time it's News),” *RT*, March 8, 2019, <https://www.rt.com/usa/453307-homeland-security-spying-journalists-migrants/>.

<sup>189</sup> Jose A. Del Real and Zolan Kanno-Youngs, “U.S. Tracked Activists and Journalists as Migrant Caravans Head to the Border,” *the New York Times*, March 7, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/07/us/migrant-caravans-activists-journalists-government-list.html>.

Obama administration. Particularly, these operatives focused on the Texas and California secessionist movements.

It is likely that they targeted these movements in reaction to the 2012 establishment of a White House program that allowed for citizens to draft and sign petitions. Texas was one of many states that drafted a petition for secession, but the White House rejected this (as well as all other calls) for secession these states.<sup>190</sup> It is also possible that these agents would have targeted the Texas secession movement for, if having conducted research, they would have discovered that Texas is the only state to join the United States via Treaty, not annexation, and maintained the right to leave the Union. Yet, supporting secessionist movements hasn't been limited to the United States. The U.S. Senate found that Russia was doing the same thing in Spain, supporting the Catalan secessionist movement as well.<sup>191</sup>

Spain is only one example of these attempts at undermining the cohesiveness of member nations within the EU. Another contentious example was Russia's attempt to influence the outcome of the UK's decision on whether to remain or leave the EU, famously dubbed "Brexit". The report that U.S. Senate released that indicated that Russia was sponsoring the Catalan secessionist movement also indicates that Russia was instrumental in influencing British voters before the Brexit vote in June 2016.<sup>192</sup> The information indicates use of *lozh* by Russian IRA agents, creating "bots" (computer programs of fake social media accounts) to spread disinformation, misinformation, and flat out lies to the British public on the morning of the vote. The report also indicates that traditional media outlets, like *RT*, were using *vranyo* to inflame

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<sup>190</sup> "White House Responds to Secession Petition, Says Texas Doesn't Have Right to Leave the US," *Fox News*, January 14, 2013, <https://www.foxnews.com/us/white-house-responds-to-secession-petition-says-texas-doesnt-have-right-to-leave-the-us>.

<sup>191</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee, *Putin's Asymmetric Assault*, 135.

<sup>192</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee, *Putin's Asymmetric Assault*, 116.



fears of migration into the UK around the time of voting, rooted in the recent migration crisis that was affecting the rest of the EU. The report also acknowledges that the British government and British people have effectively countered propaganda efforts by airing legislative sessions (similar to U.S. broadcasts of C-SPAN), but that, during this Russian attempt, seemed to have failed.

Russia attempted to do the same in France and Germany during Presidential and Parliamentary elections. Russian efforts in France succeeded in sponsoring a candidate who made it to the final round of the Presidential elections, but ultimately failed as candidate Emanuel Macron won the presidency instead of Marine Le Pen, who the Russian government had been sponsoring (physically through financial contributions and through influence with media coverage). In Germany, these Russian efforts were able to get the *Alternative for Germany* (AfD) party elected to the Parliament: the first Far Right party to enter the Parliament since the National Socialists of the 1930's and 1940's.

Chotikul moves beyond *lozh* and *vranyo* by discussing *maskirovska*, which she describes as camouflage, concealment, and deception in efforts to “warp the enemy's view of their combat missions.”<sup>193</sup> Chotikul describes the application of *maskirovska* as intended for psychological operations against adversarial military units. Yet, it would appear that, in the three decades since Chotikul's paper, the Russian government has decided to evolve *maskirovska* to use the traditional strategies of control (*lozh* and *vranyo*) to warp the perception of target populations in order to accomplish national objectives in a global information war.

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<sup>193</sup> Chotikul, “The Soviet Theory of Reflexive Control in Historical and Psychocultural Perspective: Preliminary Study.”

## TRANSPARENCY AND PUTIN

One option that should also be considered is to delegitimize President Putin in the face of his people. This can be done by being transparent and releasing evidence of Mr. Putin's alleged criminal activities, which date back to the 1990's. In 2012, *the Wilson Center* released an article regarding renowned Kremlinologist Karen Dawisha and her research into Mr. Putin's illicit activities.<sup>194</sup> The article detailed how Vladimir Putin used his position as Mayor of St. Petersburg to launder money, move money, and signed unauthorized contracts for the movement of money in and out of Russia in the early 1990's, while Russia was suffering an economic depression in reaction to the fall of the Soviet Union and shock therapy. The article also mentions that the St. Petersburg City Council hired an American private firm to investigate the allegations into this conduct, with their legislative reaction and decision also published.<sup>195</sup>

In 2014, Dawisha released *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?* which includes three chapters dedicated to the rise of Russia's oligarchs, Mr. Putin's time in St. Petersburg, and his alleged crimes.<sup>196</sup> In 1991 the KGB took control of large sums of Soviet money following a failed coup attempt and led to the establishment of the oligarchs, using that money to buy former state assets.<sup>197</sup> Dawisha argues that there is no Russian state, only the "Kremlin Inc." with the Russian Duma (the Parliament) working as an extension of the President that Mr. Putin can consolidate power by using the media, the security services, and the law to punish disloyalty and secure control over illicit financial accounts.<sup>198</sup> Dawisha continues her account of Mr. Putin's

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<sup>194</sup> Thea Cooke, "Has Vladimir Putin Always Been Corrupt? And Does it Matter?", Kennan Institute, the Wilson Center, accessed September 16, 2019, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/has-vladimir-putin-always-been-corrupt-and-does-it-matter>.

<sup>195</sup> *St. Petersburg City Council of People's Deputies*, Small Council Decision, No. 88 (1992), <http://anticomproamat.org/putin/salie92.html>.

<sup>196</sup> Karen Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014).

<sup>197</sup> Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy*, 16.

<sup>198</sup> Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy*, 36-37.

activities by mentioning that the current Russian government operates through people who were connected to him during his days as the mayor of St. Petersburg, that he was the “ultimate arbiter” among Russian economic elites and that his decision was final.<sup>199</sup> She also details that her research is rooted in study of extensive international criminal investigations into Mr. Putin and interviews with former diplomats from countries detailing extensive travel where Mr. Putin had the opportunity to meet with international organized crime syndicates.<sup>200</sup> Like Dawisha, the U.S. Senate report on Russian influence operations abroad mentions a list of Mr. Putin’s organized criminal activities, mentioning the word “criminal” three times in the Executive Summary alone.<sup>201</sup> The evidence of the accusations of Mr. Putin’s criminal conduct extend to his tenure as a leading figure, and including President, of the Russian Federation.

One of the most serious crimes levied against President Putin is from his time as Prime Minister of Russia (the first time) when Russia experienced a series of apartment bombings. The U.S. Senate report details that FSB agents, under orders from Putin, bombed apartment buildings in Dagestan, Moscow, Volgograd, and Ryazan (the Ryazan bombing was stopped before the explosives could be detonated) in order to provide justification for starting the Second Chechen War by blaming the acts on Chechen terrorists.<sup>202</sup> For FSB agent Alexander Litvinenko, who defected to the United Kingdom, also published a book in 2002 entitled *Blowing Up Russia: Terror from Within*, concluding that Vladimir Putin ordered the bombing of Russian citizens to start that military conflict.

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<sup>199</sup> Dawisha, *Putin’s Kleptocracy*, 36.

<sup>200</sup> Dawisha, *Putin’s Kleptocracy*, 105.

<sup>201</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee, *Putin’s Asymmetric Assault*, 1.

<sup>202</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee, *Putin’s Asymmetric Assault*, 165-166.

## COUNTERPROPAGANDA AND RUSSIAN LANGUAGE NEWS BROADCASTING

In 2012, Mikhail Dmitriev and Daniel Treisman published an article in *Foreign Affairs* entitled “The Other Russia: Discontent Grows in the Hinterlands”.<sup>203</sup> They argued that, within Russia, there existed two societies: the educated society (the minority) and the ignorant (the majority, primarily in the vast provinces of Russia).<sup>204</sup> Similarly, in 2014, Ilya Matveev suggests that this is an old theory that has been gaining ground since the 2012 Russian Presidential Election.<sup>205</sup> Following this idea, here is the problem: reaching the majority population which is only fed state propaganda and state news.

Knowing that the Kremlin propaganda machine is able to reach Russian speaking Americans, the United States decided to fight back by sponsoring a Russian language news operation of its own: Current Time (CT). CT is a 24-hour news operation that works to fight the Kremlin’s propaganda machine by offering Russian language news from Washington D.C. that offers a different view than that being pushed by the Kremlin and RT. It offers Russian speakers access to news that has not been pushed by the Russian state in an attempt to sever the strong connection between Russian expats and traditional Russian news organizations, which have fallen victim to the Kremlin’s tightening control on mass media.<sup>206</sup>

Having the power of funding a Russian language speaking news station, hosted by Russian ex-pats, the United States has realized one of its own weaknesses: the language barrier. During the first Cold War, the "United States Informational and Educational Exchange Act of 1948" intended for certain materials and information to only be disseminated to foreign

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<sup>203</sup> Mikhail Dmitriev and Daniel Treisman, “The Other Russia - Discontent Grows in the Hinterlands,” *Foreign Affairs*, October 2012, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/2012-09-01/other-russia>.

<sup>204</sup> Dmitriev and Treisman, “The Other Russia,” 2012.

<sup>205</sup> Ilya Matveev, “The ‘Two Russias’ Culture War: Constructions of the ‘People’ During the 2011-2013 Protests,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 113, no. 1 (2014): 186-195, <https://doi-org.lib.utep.edu/10.1215/00382876-2390482>.

<sup>206</sup> “About,” Current Time, accessed September 16, 2019, <https://www.currenttime.tv/p/6018.html>.

audiences (white propaganda).<sup>207</sup> In 2013, for *Foreign Policy*, John Hudson wrote an article detailing how the 2012 Amended Smith-Mundt Act effectively repealed the prohibitions of the U.S. Government to disseminate materials to U.S. citizens that were solely intended for foreign audiences.<sup>208</sup> The specific text of the 2012 Act states that the purpose of the bill was, “to authorize the domestic dissemination of information and material about the United States intended primarily for foreign audiences, and for other purposes.”<sup>209</sup> Having granted authority for dissemination of white propaganda, the State Department or other agencies of the Federal government can use the legitimacy model of propaganda to feed stories to Current Time in order to push alternative narratives to what is being pushed from the Kremlin.

Moreover, the United States government can identify Russian ex-pats or other academics from within “the minority” group to “own” operations of Central Time within the Russian Federation. What becomes difficult is the Russian restriction on foreign media ownership. The United States would need to identify Russian citizens who have become disillusioned with the Russian government in order to host the streaming of Central Time within Russia. In other words, the United States should seek to reciprocate Russia’s actions of broadcasting *RT* in the United States by broadcasting *CT* in Russia. It should also look to provide funding for *CT* to be broadcast amongst the different provinces of the Russian Federation, reaching the majority population which may only, at this time, be able to access state run news agencies like *Channel 1*. One way to do this would be to target the regions of the Caucasus where there is less support for the Federal government as a whole, as well as other fringe republics that are at odds with the Federal

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<sup>207</sup> U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948, Public Law 80-402, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 62 (1948): 6-15. <http://legisworks.org/congress/80/publaw-402.pdf>.

<sup>208</sup> John Hudson, “U.S. Repeals Propaganda Ban, Spreads Government-Made News to Americans,” *Foreign Policy*, July 14, 2013, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/07/14/u-s-repeals-propaganda-ban-spreads-government-made-news-to-americans/>.

<sup>209</sup> U.S. Congress, House, *to Amend the United States Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948 to Authorize the Domestic Dissemination of Information and Material About the United States Intended Primarily for Foreign Audiences, and for Other Purposes.*, HR 5736, 112th Cong., 2nd sess., introduced in House May 10, 2012, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/BILLS-112hr5736ih/pdf/BILLS-112hr5736ih.pdf>.

government frequently. Additionally, besides broadcasting of geopolitical news, a *CT* broadcast within the Russian Federation can offer news of Sports teams in the West as sports were demonstrated to be vitally important in the “culture war” during the first Cold War.

## **HOLLYWOOD MOVIES**

Another powerful tool that the United States has at its disposal is the cinematic power of Hollywood in Los Angeles, California. In 2018, The Motion Pictures Association of America reported that the U.S. film industry contributed \$134 billion to the U.S. economy by exporting four times more material than was being imported by U.S. audiences.<sup>210</sup> With the power and outreach that Hollywood has to reach audiences, there is an opportunity to shape narratives to reach these audiences. It would also not be the first time that the U.S. government would have utilized this asset, as it used Hollywood for a deception operation in 1980 to exfiltrate American Embassy workers from Iran.<sup>211</sup> Again, using the authority of the 2012 Amended Smith-Mundt Act, and basing this strategy on a legitimizing propaganda model, cinema focusing on Russia and delegitimizing the Putin regime would be possible.

During the first Cold War of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, there were dozens of films produced that detailed the struggle between the Capitalists and the Communists, the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>212</sup> Since the present conflict began in 2014, there seems to have been a resurgence in movies depicting struggles between the United States and the Russian Federation. The 2018 film *Creed II* seeks to be a decades in the coming sequel to the 1985 film *Rocky IV*, which pitted

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<sup>210</sup> “The Economic Contribution of the Motion Picture & Television Industry to the United States”, The American Motion Picture and Television Industry, accessed September 16, 2019, [https://www.mpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/MPAA-Industry-Economic-ContributionFactsheet\\_2016-FINAL-2.pdf](https://www.mpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/MPAA-Industry-Economic-ContributionFactsheet_2016-FINAL-2.pdf).

<sup>211</sup> Antonio J. Mendez, “A Classic Case of Deception,” Central Intelligence Agency, accessed September 16, 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/winter99-00/art1.html>.

<sup>212</sup> “Cold War Movies List,” IMDb, July 1, 2018, <https://www.imdb.com/list/ls022631272/>.

super athletes Rocky Balboa and Ivan Drago, from the West and the East respectively, against one another in a clash of cultures. The 2018 sequel brings this clash back to life 30 years after, following the children of two of the protagonists from the first film.<sup>213</sup> One issue that could arise from movies that follow a strategy of “us versus them”, or United States versus Russia, would be to add fuel to President Putin’s argument that this is how the West sees it: the West versus Russia, which allows President Putin to continue using a victim card for the Russian people.

The wiser alternative would be to promote fictional stories of U.S. assistance to the Russian people in the wake of oppressive regimes. In 2018, there were two instances of this: *Red Sparrow* and *Hunter Killer*. *Red Sparrow* is a fictional tale of a Russian intelligence operative who faces abuse and oppression from her government, going on to work with an American CIA operative that she ends up falling in love with, and her superior officer, providing intelligence to the United States in a coordinated effort to undermine the Russian regime.<sup>214</sup> *Hunter Killer* is a story of a U.S. naval commander and his submarine crew working to save the Russian President from a coup and attempt at igniting a war between the two countries.<sup>215</sup> These types of stories work to undermine a narrative that it is “us against them”, but would, rather, reinforce a narrative of cooperation and assistance based on moral high ground and combating a regime that is no stranger to human rights abuses. These types of stories can also work to subconsciously promote American ideals abroad as well as ideals of cooperation between the United States and the Russian people that is not possible with such regimes in power. Hollywood has the power and reach to produce such films and project them to the former Soviet Union and Russia proper.

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<sup>213</sup> “Creed II,” IMDb, accessed September 16, 2019, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6343314/>.

<sup>214</sup> “Red Sparrow,” IMDb, accessed September 16, 2019, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2873282/>.

<sup>215</sup> “Hunter Killer,” IMDb, accessed September 16, 2019, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1846589/>.

With the power of streaming services in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, it might also be wise for these projects to be done with companies like *Netflix*, who has 250 million subscribers worldwide.<sup>216</sup> The additional power of *Netflix* as a streaming powerhouse of Hollywood films and original content is that its content varies from country to country. That being said, if an agreement between *Netflix* and the U.S. government pushing for some of the Russian related works of fiction is that they would be able to broadcast these films in target areas to continue to subconsciously turn populations against the Russian government.

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<sup>216</sup> Amy Watson, "Netflix - Statistics & Facts," IMDb, May 27, 2019, <https://www.statista.com/topics/842/netflix/>.



## CHAPTER 9: MILITARY

### RETURN TO STATE ON STATE WARFARE

Under the Trump administration, the United States has recognized the reemerging threat from nation states looking to challenge the state of bipolarity that has been in place since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. In the administration's first National Security Strategy, the first threat listed states, "China and Russia challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity. They are determined to make economies less free and less fair, to grow their militaries, and to control information and data to repress their societies and expand their influence."<sup>217</sup> This comes in response to the 2015 Russian National Security Strategy that strongly advocates what it calls a "polycentric world", or pushing for its place in reshaping the unipolar world into a multipolar world.<sup>218</sup> Writing for *the Washington Post*, Andy Akin notes that the 2015 Russian National Security Strategy is focusing on "creating a new, more favorable balance of power in the international system; broadening access to new markets for funding and exports; and actively exerting influence in the former Soviet region."<sup>219</sup>

This marks a change in the perception of threats that has been present throughout the Twenty First Century thus far. In his 2002 National Security Strategy, President George W. Bush wrote, "Enemies in the past needed great armies and great industrial capabilities to endanger America. Now, shadowy networks of individuals can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than it costs to purchase a single tank. Terrorists are organized to penetrate open societies

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<sup>217</sup> White House Press Service, "National Security Strategy", published December 18, 2017, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>

<sup>218</sup> Spanish Ministry of Defense Press Service, "Russian National Security Strategy, December 2015 – Full-text Translation," published December 31, 2015, available at: <http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf>.

<sup>219</sup> Andy Akin, "What Do We Know About Russia's 'Grand Strategy?'" *the Washington Post*, May 2, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/05/02/what-do-we-know-about-russias-grand-strategy/?noredirect=on>

and to turn the power of modern technologies against us.”<sup>220</sup> This indicates that the focus of the first administration in the Twenty First Century was on terrorism and asymmetrical threats as opposed to traditional adversaries, such as state actors. President Bush’s administration continued this focus on terrorism and asymmetrical threats in his next National Security Strategy, released in 2006.<sup>221</sup> When Barack Obama became President, he also decided to focus on terrorism and the threats emanating from Al-Qaeda.<sup>222</sup> In 2015, with his second National Security Strategy, President Obama and his administration did acknowledge the rising threat of Russia, but focus was still centered on defeating terrorism while simultaneously reinforcing existing alliances and moving towards the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>223</sup> The seeds had begun to be planted, but it was not until the later stages of the Obama administration, and now the Trump administration, that serious focus on returning to a state of contention with state actors was considered.

#### **FORCE SIZE INCREASE AND INTEGRATION**

Military buildup and modernization has been a top Russian priority since the presidency of Dmitry Medvedev. In this promise, President Medvedev declared Russia’s intent to modernize its nuclear arsenal, buildup its force strength, and modernize all aspects of its military. In 2016, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) published a comprehensive work on the state of Russia’s military power. This DIA report found that the Russian military was attempting to abandon the Soviet Cold-War style force and, “a massive state armaments program was initiated, allocating 1.1 trillion rubles over 10 years, aiming at fielding a Russian military with 70% new or

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<sup>220</sup> National Security Strategy Archive, “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” published 2002, available at: <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2002.pdf>.

<sup>221</sup> National Security Strategy Archive, “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” published 2006, available at: <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2006.pdf>.

<sup>222</sup> National Security Strategy Archive, “The National Security Strategy,” published 2010, available at: <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2010.pdf>.

<sup>223</sup> National Security Strategy Archive, “The National Security Strategy,” published 2015, available at: <http://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2015.pdf>.

modernized equipment by 2020.”<sup>224</sup> According to the DIA report, the Russian military numbers Over the course of this program, the Russian Federation has started to trim down to one million servicemen, 900,000 personnel, and demonstrated the ability to mobilize over 300,000 at one time for official military exercises.<sup>225</sup> With increases in military exercises across the Russian Federation, observers have seen the creation of new divisions, worth as much as 80,000 personnel, particularly in the Western half of the country. The United States has seen fit to begin matching the Russian force increase under Donald Trump.

As a candidate, Donald Trump criticized the state of the military under the Obama administration (which was at odds with the leadership that he would eventually inherit).<sup>226</sup> Within two months of his inauguration, Donald Trump and his administration published a fact sheet indicating that increasing the size of the military, its budget, and effectiveness were a top administration priority.<sup>227</sup> For the administration’s first National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which funds the military for the fiscal year, Congress authorized the appropriation of \$695.9 billion, an \$84.7 billion increase from the \$611.2 billion under the 2017 NDAA in President Obama’s final year of office.<sup>228</sup> The 2018 NDAA (President Trump’s first) authorized

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<sup>224</sup> U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, *Russia Military Power: Building a Military to Support Great Power Aspirations* (Washington D.C., 2017), 12, <https://www.dia.mil/portals/27/documents/news/military%20power%20publications/russia%20military%20power%20report%202017.pdf>.

<sup>225</sup> “Size of Russian Armed Forces Decreases by Nearly 300 Personnel,” TASS, January 1, 2018, <https://tass.com/defense/983867>. Kremlin Press Service, “Vostok-2018 Military Manoeuvres,” September 13, 2018, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58548>.

<sup>226</sup> Andrew Tilghman, “Donald Trump Paints a Dismal Picture of Today’s Military,” *the Military Times*, October 3, 2016, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/2016/10/03/donald-trump-paints-a-dismal-picture-of-today-s-military/>

<sup>227</sup> White House Press Service, “President Trump is Rebuilding America’s National Security”, published February 27, 2017, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-trump-rebuilding-americas-national-security/>.

<sup>228</sup> “H.R. 2810 (115th): National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018,” Republican Policy Committee’s Summary, Govtrack, July 17, 2017, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr2810/summary>. U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Fact Sheet: Selected Highlights of the FY2017 National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 4909, S. 2943)*, by Lynn M. Williams, and Pat Towell, R44497 (2016), 1.

a force size of 1,322,500 active and 823,300 reserve personnel.<sup>229</sup> The 2019 NDAA authorized the addition of 15,600 active and 800 reserve personnel from the previous year for totals of 1,338,100 active and 824,100 reserve personnel.<sup>230</sup> The 2020 NDAA is seeking to increase active personnel to 1,339,500, an increase of 1,400 personnel but offers no additional numbers for reserves.<sup>231</sup>

Beyond mere troop sizes, the Russian Federation has also begun to reshape their doctrine of war, more akin to that of the United States. What is being called Russian hybrid warfare is actually an integration of various DIME instruments simultaneously and may be attributed to Russian Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov's observations of the events in the Middle East while the United States has been active in fighting the War on Terror. This is because Russian hybrid warfare is asymmetric in nature, (and is equivalent to covert black operations), and specifically blend regular and irregular components and units to blur the lines of how a unit operates.<sup>232</sup> Using 2001 to 2013 as a time frame, one can assume that the Russian military was studying U.S. Army General Stanley McChrystal, the pioneer of the U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) war machine in the war on terror.

McChrystal's understanding of the situation in Iraq and use of SOF in Iraq turned 2004's record of 18 specialized night raids against insurgents into 300 per month by August 2006.<sup>233</sup> McChrystal also acknowledges that part of what he and his subordinates did was learn from the

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<sup>229</sup> U.S. Congress, House, *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018*, HR 2810, 115th Cong., 1st sess., introduced in House June 7, 2017, <https://www.congress.gov/115/crpt/hrpt404/CRPT-115hrpt404.pdf>.

<sup>230</sup> U.S. Congress, House, *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019*, HR 5515, 115th Cong., 2nd sess., introduced in House August 13, 2018, <https://www.congress.gov/115/crpt/hrpt676/CRPT-115hrpt676.pdf>.

<sup>231</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Armed Services Committee, *FY 2020 National Defense Authorization Act*, 116th Cong., 1st sess., 2019, 13, <https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/FY%202020%20NDAA%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>.

<sup>232</sup> Frank Hoffman, "Conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars," *Potomac Institute for Policy Studies*, December 2007, [https://www.academia.edu/22883467/The\\_Rise\\_of\\_Hybrid\\_Wars](https://www.academia.edu/22883467/The_Rise_of_Hybrid_Wars).

<sup>233</sup> Stanley McChrystal and Gideon Rose, "Generation Kill: a Conversation with Stanley McChrystal," *Council on Foreign Relations* 92, no. 2 (2013): 2-8.

situation, increase communications across a wider geographic network, and utilize intelligence to begin eliminating countless insurgent targets each and every night. Alexander Salt writes that McChrystal's approach was network-centric and allowed for retention of traditional capabilities with professionalism, technology, and overwhelming force when needed in order to successfully conduct swift and precise operations.<sup>234</sup> Salt also writes that McChrystal's reforms were able, "to create a quasi-flattened command hierarchy for JSOC, which would allow for maximum organizational efficiency by attempting to streamline information gathering, analysis, and distribution."<sup>235</sup>

McChrystal's revolution in the way that SOF were able to swiftly and asymmetrically overpower targets was an example for other major conventional militaries to admire and adopt. The operation to swiftly take over the Crimean Peninsula is an example of other militaries following this lead. Following the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Special Operations doctrine definition of the capabilities of SOF, these capabilities can be attributed to this operation. Specifically, the capabilities listed are:

- (1) Conduct operations with CF, multinational partners, and IGOs. (2) Work closely with foreign military and civilian authorities and populations, when directed. (3) Deploy rapidly and provide tailored responses. (4) Gain access to hostile, denied, or politically and/or diplomatically sensitive areas to prepare the operational environment for future operations and develop options for addressing potential national concerns. (5) Conduct operations in austere environments with limited support and a low-profile. (6) Communicate worldwide using organic equipment. (7) Assess local situations and report rapidly. (8) Execute special operations missions using nonstandard equipment.<sup>236</sup>

In Crimea, the Russian SOF were able to deploy rapidly, gain access to the territory and prepare it for a future military operation, conduct their operation without any support, and execute their mission without any standard equipment. The speed was demonstrated when

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<sup>234</sup> Alexander Salt, "Transformation and the War in Afghanistan," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (2018): 98-126.

<sup>235</sup> Salt, "Transformation in Afghanistan," 2013.

<sup>236</sup> "Special Operations," *Joint Chiefs of Staff*, July 16, 2014, [https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3\\_05.pdf](https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_05.pdf).

President Putin admitted that these SOF were able to take over the parliament of Crimea four days following his decision to retake the peninsula.<sup>237</sup> This also paved the way for the Russian military to deploy 100,000 personnel so that the territory could not be retaken.<sup>238</sup> They also demonstrated the ability to conduct the operation without any support or standard equipment as they were in unmarked uniforms and lightly armed.<sup>239</sup> The application of McChrystal's revolution in SOF was also being used by the Russians elsewhere around the world, such as in Syria and Venezuela.

The Special Operations doctrine also discusses the SOF role in conducting irregular warfare and unconventional warfare. The doctrine specifically defines irregular warfare as, "a violent struggle among state and nonstate actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s)." It also states that the goal is to, "create instability and disrupt and negate state legitimacy and governance to gain and maintain control or influence over and the support of a relevant population."<sup>240</sup> According to the doctrine, this is paired with unconventional warfare to, "support an insurgency, or resistance movement against a nation state," in a hostile nation (Ukraine) and "support a nation state against an insurgency, resistance, or terrorists" (Syria and Venezuela). The Russian SOF have been supporting the nation states of Syria and Venezuela against resistance movements and an insurgency.<sup>241</sup> The Russians have also accomplished this by the use of military contractors.<sup>242</sup> The specific military contracting company, the Wagner Group,

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<sup>237</sup> Sergey Kraus, *Crimea. The Way Home*. YouTube, Produced by Rossiya 1, 2015, posted by Embaixada da Rússia on May 7, 2015, accessed February 15, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbGhKfWrfOQ>.

<sup>238</sup> Kraus, *Crimea. The Way Home*, 2015.

<sup>239</sup> Rod Thornton, "The Changing Nature of Modern Warfare", 2015.

<sup>240</sup> "Special Operations," 2014.

<sup>241</sup> Shuya, "Russia in Latin America," 2019.

<sup>242</sup> Maria Tsvetkova and Anton Zverev. "Ghost Soldiers: the Russians Secretly Dying for the Kremlin in Syria", *Reuters*, November 3, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-russia-insight-idUSKBN12Y0M6>.

emerged when they were engaged by U.S. SOF in Syria and suffered 200 casualties.<sup>243</sup> It was this same group that deployed to Venezuela in January of 2019 to shore up the security of President Nicolas Maduro as it seemed that his rule was in danger and a civil war would break out.<sup>244</sup>

The relevancy of the Russian SOF and their adoptions of American military doctrine would have wide implications for the security of Estonia, Poland, and Ukraine. These three countries have shown a dependence on the United States and NATO allies for their protection, but they have also shown a keen interest on the idea of guerilla forces and fighting an invasion via asymmetric means. The Russian experience has shown that, even having adopted the American doctrine, they cannot fully employ the tactics to an American level when fighting American forces. The 200 casualties in Syria display that. The casualties in Syria did something else, it showed that if you are willing to contact and destroy these Russian SOF conducting hybrid warfare operations, then you can stop the further progression and advance of their campaign.<sup>245</sup> In this regard, these three countries have the advantage as the United States has military personnel and SOF in each of these countries, preparing local forces in the event of such an invasion.<sup>246</sup>

## NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND ANTI-NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Under President Putin, Russia has declared plans for its nuclear arsenal through 2027, currently at an estimated \$10.8 billion a year (SIPRI estimate for 2016).<sup>247</sup> Russia's declaration of

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<sup>243</sup> Sergey Sukhanin, "War, Business and Ideology: How Russian Private Military Contractors Pursue Moscow's Interests," *The Jamestown Foundation*, March 20, 2019, <https://jamestown.org/program/war-business-and-ideology-how-russian-private-military-contractors-pursue-moscows-interests/>.

<sup>244</sup> "Russian Mercenaries Arrive in Venezuela to Shore Up Maduro's Rule", *the Moscow Times*, January 26, 2019, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/01/26/russian-mercenaries-arrive-in-venezuela-to-shore-up-maduros-rule-a64299>.

<sup>245</sup> Todd Lindberg, "A U.S. Battlefield Victory Against Russia's 'Little Green Men'", *The Wall Street Journal*, April 3, 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-u-s-battlefield-victory-against-russias-little-green-men-1522792572>.

<sup>246</sup> William Leasure, "U.S. Naval Special Warfare Operators Train with Ukrainian SOF at Sea Breeze 17," July 21, 2017, <https://www.socom.mil/soceur/Pages/USNavalSpecialWarfareOperatorstrainwithUkrainianSOFatSeaBreeze17.aspx>.

<sup>247</sup> "SIPRI Arms Transfers Database." *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*. September 16, 2019, <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-backgrounder/2018/how-much-does-russia-spend-nuclear-weapons>.

building and modernizing its nuclear arsenal has also led to an American response to do the same. The 2018 Nuclear Posture Review, released by Secretary of Defense James Mattis, states that the United States has been determined to reduce its nuclear arsenal since the 1990s, but that Russia has not. This report was in response to a 2017 memorandum from President Donald Trump requesting a review of U.S. nuclear capabilities and his dedication to modernizing these weapons. Following the request of the President for a new Nuclear Posture Review, the Congressional Budget Office released a report in January 2019 that estimated that proposed spending on nuclear force modernization through 2028 would be \$494 billion, or just under \$50 billion a year.<sup>248</sup> If the estimates from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) are accurate, then the \$50 billion U.S. and \$10.8 billion Russian annual investments in nuclear forces would prove former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev right: the U.S. and Russia are destined for a renewed arms race (2010 Address to the Federal Assembly).<sup>249</sup>

#### **CYBER WARFARE**

The weaponization of computer viruses and malware in the Twenty-First Century seems to be one of the most important developments in the conflict today, just as the development of nuclear weapons was during the Cold War in the Twentieth-Century. This is not because cyber weapons have the capability of erasing entire cities and nations off the face of the earth, but rather because they are asymmetrical tools being deployed every day. With nuclear weapons, they were only ever used against a targeted adversary's population twice (1945) and then stockpiled. Since being developed, there have been many recorded uses of cyber weapons. In this thesis, only the U.S. deployment of *Stuxnet* and the Russian uses of remote access tools have been specifically

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<sup>248</sup> Congressional Budget Office, "Projected Costs of U.S. Nuclear Forces, 2019 to 2028," published January 2019, Washington D.C., available at: <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files?file=2019-01/54914-NuclearForces.pdf>.

<sup>249</sup> Marcel de Haas and Henning Shroder, "Russia's National Security Strategy", *Russian Analytical Digest* 9, no. 62, June 18, 2009: 2-11, <http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/RAD-62.pdf>.



named, but there is a plethora of other recorded instances of their use. This is because cyber operations are relatively inexpensive means of attacking an adversary and can range in sophistication from network traffic flooding (like Russia in Estonia and Georgia) to sophisticated malware that can shut down entire factories (the U.S. with *Stuxnet*).

Just as important to the development of cyberweapons and cyber operations has been the response. To date, there has been no kinetic response to major states in retaliation for a cyber operation. Thus far, the only recorded evidence of a retaliatory strike for a cyber operation has been Israel against Hamas in 2019.<sup>250</sup> That being said, Hamas is a terrorist organization with limited conventional capabilities. While it was a “world first”, Iran had the opportunity to do exactly that in retaliation for the *Stuxnet* operation, which damaged physical infrastructure, but did not lead to any casualties or deaths. There may be an argument that attacks on power grids could lead to casualties and would be cause of a kinetic response, but even then, this would be due to secondary or tertiary effects, not directly as cyberweapons only disrupt digital signals. The main challenges that arise are the fact that U.S. KCNI are vulnerable to cyber-attacks.

As mentioned earlier, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security already warned that Russia had been attacking energy, nuclear, commercial facilities, water, aviation, and critical manufacturing networks.<sup>251</sup> The U.S. Department of Homeland Security also states that there are 16 KCNI, “whose assets, systems, and networks, whether physical or virtual, are considered so vital to the United States that their incapacitation or destruction would have a debilitating effect on security, national economic security, national public health or safety, or any combination

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<sup>250</sup> Zak Doffman, “Israel Responds to Cyber Attack with Air Strike on Cyber Attackers in World First,” *Forbes*, May 6, 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/zakdoffman/2019/05/06/israeli-military-strikes-and-destroys-hamas-cyber-hq-in-world-first/#77d4e6f7afb5>.

<sup>251</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security Press Office, “Russian Government Cyber Activity Targeting Energy,” 2018.

thereof.”<sup>252</sup> The U.S.-CERT report identifies six of the 16 sectors having been targeted by Russian cyber actors. This also would indicate that Russian Intelligence Services (most likely the GRU) are probing vulnerabilities in U.S. KCNI that may be used in the future for a variety of reasons, whether retaliatory for geopolitical policy moves, or first strike in a covert operation akin to the 2016 Election meddling.

Understanding that both the United States and the Russian Federation have similar cyber capabilities, one can also assume that the United States has reciprocated the moves and targeted Russian infrastructure. Perhaps the greatest escalation in a cyber confrontation between the two powers would be the use of “logic bombs”, or other cyber weapons secretly deployed within the adversary’s network meant to disrupt and destroy computer networks. At face value, this type of an attack may seem harmless. That being said, the nightmare scenario is that logic bombs are deployed in defense networks and power grids, rendering air defense systems useless and working in tandem with either nuclear or conventional forces to target the enemy. Again, the problem is that these operations are widely used and that there are currently no international norms or agreements on conducting this type of warfare against one another. During the Cold War, the concept of Mutually Assured Destruction kept the nuclear super powers in check. The absence of such a framework, and the difficulty in attributing attacks, lead to a chaotic system in which one can expect cyber attacks and operations daily, even hourly as Figure 3.1 shows:

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<sup>252</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security Press Office, “Critical Infrastructure Sectors,” accessed September 16, 2019, available at: <https://www.dhs.gov/cisa/critical-infrastructure-sectors>.

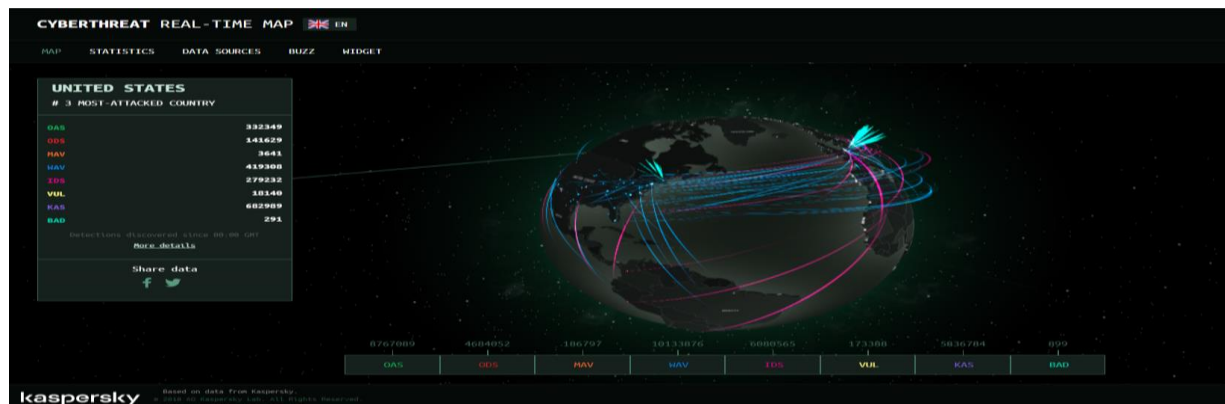


Figure 3.1: Cyber Threat Map

The above map from Kaspersky shows a live interactive map of cyber incidents happening around the world.<sup>253</sup> At the moment, there are no further policy recommendations regarding U.S. cyber conduct against Russia as the United States already has dedicated cyber military components as well as the NSA working both defensive and offensive cyber operations against U.S. adversaries. However, on the offensive side, these U.S. cyber assets should target Russian critical infrastructure in the same sectors that have been targeted by sanctions, but also Russia's reciprocal SWIFT system, which will be discussed further in the following section. By targeting and attacking these sectors, it would send the message to the Russian Federation that further attacks on U.S. infrastructure would be followed with like retaliation, and precision strikes would be meant to inflict maximum economic damage to critical systems. This would work, as Kennan pointed out, to make the Russians back down as they would understand the repercussions in such attacks. While this statement may at first appear to fall victim to the mirror image bias, or even "rational actor" bias, this thesis has also provided record of Russia backing down when being met with force as Kennan had suggested in the 1940's.

<sup>253</sup> "Cyberthreat Real Time Map," Kaspersky, accessed September 30, 2019, <https://cybermap.kaspersky.com/>.

## CHAPTER 10: ECONOMIC

### LIQUID NATURAL GAS AND ENERGY

The greatest weapon in an economic war against the Russian Federation is energy. With Russia so heavily dependent on exports of oil and energy, weaponizing oil was able to destabilize the Russian monetary unit while simultaneously forcing Russia into an economic recession. This is in allusion to the literature review and the belief that the United States had Saudi Arabia flood the market. By asking Saudi Arabia to flood the market, the United States was able to stunt Russian growth while the Saudis were able to strike at Iran.

According to the World Bank, the Russian GDP contracted 3.7 percent during this recession, or the period from 2014-2017.<sup>254</sup> During this same time, the United States overtook Russia for first place in gas production and second place in oil production.<sup>255</sup> Also during this time, ports for LNG importation began to increase in their utilization. According to the King and Spalding law firm, there are currently 28 large-scale facilities, 8 small scale facilities, and 22 planned large-scale facilities dedicated to storing LNG and regassifying it for energy purposes.<sup>256</sup> What this means is greater diversification for energy in the EU, and less reliance on Russia for oil needs. In May 2019, the European Commission released a statement, pledging to double EU intake of U.S. liquefied natural gas over the next five years with the annual total reaching the equivalent of 8 billion cubic meters in 2023, double the current annual rate of imports.<sup>257</sup> European Energy Commissioner Miguel Arias Canete stated, “Given our heavy dependence on imports, U.S. liquefied natural gas, if priced competitively, could play an increasing and strategic role in EU gas

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<sup>254</sup> “Russia Economic Report 35: The Long Journey to Recovery,” *the World Bank*, April 6, 2016, available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2016/04/06/russia-economic-report-35>.

<sup>255</sup> Vladislav Inozemtsev, “The Looming Russian Recession,” *the Moscow Times*, January 29, 2019, available at: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/01/29/the-looming-russian-recession-op-ed-a64318>.

<sup>256</sup> “LNG in Europe 2018 An Overview of LNG Import Terminals in Europe,” *King and Spalding*, accessed September 6, 2019, available at: [https://www.kslaw.com/attachments/000/006/010/original/LNG\\_in\\_Europe\\_2018\\_-\\_An\\_Overview\\_of\\_LNG\\_Import\\_Terminals\\_in\\_Europe.pdf?1530031152](https://www.kslaw.com/attachments/000/006/010/original/LNG_in_Europe_2018_-_An_Overview_of_LNG_Import_Terminals_in_Europe.pdf?1530031152).

<sup>257</sup> Irina Slav, “EU Promises to Double U.S. LNG Imports Within 5 Years,” *Oil Price.com*, May 6, 2019, available at: <https://oilprice.com/Energy/Natural-Gas/EU-Promises-To-Double-US-LNG-Imports-Within-5-Years.html>.

supply.”<sup>258</sup> What this signifies is the United States is looking to cut into Russia’s largest energy market, the European Union, by offering alternatives to Russian oil, which has likewise been weaponized in the past to punish countries that the Kremlin sees fit.

## **DOMESTIC ECONOMICS: DEREGULATE AND TAX INCENTIVES**

In his 2018 annual news conference, held annually right before Christmas, President Putin mentioned the economic sanctions from the West and what it has meant for Russia.<sup>259</sup> President Putin stated that Russia’s response to the sanctions in 2014 was to push for domestic output of goods to substitute those that were no longer being imported due to the sanctions and freezing of tensions with the West. Richard Connolly, professor at the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom, published his research that supported Putin’s claims in 2018.<sup>260</sup> Specifically, Connolly found that the Kremlin and state apparatus used the sanctions as a national security threat and used central authority to stabilize the three affected sectors (energy, defense, and finance) to increase domestic output, use of domestic technologies, and switching dependencies on foreign capital to markets that were not sanctioning Russia.<sup>261</sup> While increasing domestic output in the affected sectors has helped Russia recover from the sanctions induced recession, tax incentives were also introduced.

In 2016, following an “economic issues conference”, the Russian government introduced “special economic zones” as one of the options to assist in economic recovery.<sup>262</sup> According to

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<sup>258</sup> Slav, “EU Promises to Double U.S. LNG Imports,” 2019.

<sup>259</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “Vladimir Putin’s Annual News Conference,” published December 20, 2018, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59455>.

<sup>260</sup> Richard Connolly, *Russia’s Response to Sanctions: How Western Economic Statecraft is Reshaping Political Economy in Russia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>261</sup> Connolly, *Russia’s Response to Sanctions*, 2018.

<sup>262</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “Presidential Instructions Following Conference on Economic Issues,” published April 1, 2016, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/catalog/keywords/119/events/51710>.

the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, these “special economic zones” are territories that offer special benefits and incentives for investors in the industrial, technology, logistics and tourism sectors.<sup>263</sup> These were the same zones that President Putin mentioned in his joint press conference with President Xi Jinping in 2018.<sup>264</sup> During this same period, there have been calls in the United States for something similar.

In 2011, American news outlet *ABC* issued a “Made in America” challenge to its viewing audience.<sup>265</sup> The campaign was meant to shine a light on the American dependence on imports of goods and begin to boost domestic manufacturing, becoming a regular part of *ABC*’s evening news since its launch. The idea was one shared by President Trump as a similar initiative was one of the first things on his agenda after his inauguration. In July 2017, the Trump administration held “Made in America Week”, in which goods produced from all 50 states were displayed publicly on the White House lawn with vendors present as well.<sup>266</sup> This was followed up by an economic roundtable, whereby the President (and some members of Congress) held a roundtable discussion with representatives of 20 companies who manufacture their goods in the United States.<sup>267</sup> The initiative was meant to spark interest in the public ahead of the administration’s intent to enact tax cuts, which would simplify tax brackets for individuals and cut the corporate tax rate from 35% to 21% in order to incentivize businesses to return

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<sup>263</sup> Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, “Special economic zones of the Russian Federation,” accessed September 9, 2019, available at: <http://www.ved.gov.ru/eng/investing/sez/>.

<sup>264</sup> Kremlin Press Service, “Press Statements Following Talks,” 2018.

<sup>265</sup> “A Call to Buy Goods Made in America,” *ABC News*, February 18, 2011, available at: <https://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/call-buy-goods-made-america-us-manufacturing-labor-goods-economy-business-12945048>.

<sup>266</sup> White House Press Service, “Made in America,” published July 17, 2017, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/made-in-america/>.

<sup>267</sup> White House Press Service, “Made in America Roundtable,” published July 19, 2017, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/made-america-roundtable/>.

production on American soil.<sup>268</sup> This move was later passed by Congress and became the first major law that the Trump administration was able to push through.<sup>269</sup>

These initiatives become important for both countries for different reasons with the same conclusion: disruption in trade. With Russia, international backlash over their actions in Ukraine led to many of their major trade partners shutting Russia out from three of its most important economic sectors. With the United States, trade with China (perhaps the U.S.' most important trade partner) has been affected by a trade war that the Trump administration decided to wage on the Chinese government. The White House announced that this was in retaliation for Chinese economic espionage that led to theft of intellectual property, high Chinese tariffs on imports from the United States, and prohibition of certain American goods that would compete with their own markets.<sup>270</sup>

#### **PRESSURING ALLIES TO FORCE RUSSIA'S HAND**

Success of a containment policy akin to what George Kennan introduced in the 1940's is dependent on a continuation of international pressure on the Russian Federation. Since the economic sanctions were voted on by the United States and its Western allies, EU member states have questioned whether or not the European Union should continue to sanction Russia.<sup>271</sup> In 1947, Kennan stated that the U.S. could curb Russian aggression by remaining firm in its stance towards the Soviet Union, even as the two states were meeting at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points.<sup>272</sup> This holds true today: if the U.S. and its allies remain patient, while

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<sup>268</sup> White House Press Service, "The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act," published February 2018, available at: [https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/WH\\_CuttingTaxesForAmericanWorkers\\_Feb2018.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/WH_CuttingTaxesForAmericanWorkers_Feb2018.pdf).

<sup>269</sup> U.S. Congress, House, *An Act to Provide for Reconciliation Pursuant to Titles II and V of the Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2018.*, HR 1, 115th Cong., 1st sess., introduced in House November 2, 2017, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1>.

<sup>270</sup> White House Press Office, "President Donald J. Trump is Confronting China's Unfair Trade Policies," published May 29, 2018, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-confronting-chinas-unfair-trade-policies/>.

<sup>271</sup> Matthew Karnitschnig and Carrie Budoff Brown, "EU Leaders Seek Renewal of Russian Sanctions," *Politico*, June 7, 2015, available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/tusk-russia-sanctions-extension/>.

<sup>272</sup> X, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," 1947.

standing firm on their positions, it will outlast aggressive Russian foreign policy that seeks to expand Russian influence in states formerly loyal to Moscow. The sanctions have already forced Russia to change its economic strategy as it has been denied access to its most important markets. The drawback is that this has only strengthened the relationship between Russia and China: the other main rival to the United States on the international stage.

## **THE SWIFT SYSTEM AND CUTTING RUSSIA OUT**

One policy recommendation that has been mentioned before has been the possible exclusion of Russian banks from the SWIFT system. In 2014, *Bloomberg News* reported that the United Kingdom was pressuring the EU to ban Russian banks from the SWIFT system.<sup>273</sup> To be clear, SWIFT stands for the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications and is an international banking cooperative with (at the time) 10,500 member banks in over 200 countries processing trillions of dollars in transactions daily.<sup>274</sup> The UK was pressuring the EU to bar Russia from SWIFT, just as they had barred Iran from the system in 2012. With the fear of being banned from the system blatantly obvious, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev warned that if Russia was indeed banned, “our economic reaction as with any other reaction will be unlimited.”<sup>275</sup>

In the end, the EU decided not to kick Russia from the system. This is most likely due to the large volume of financial traffic between certain EU member states and Russian banks. Yet it is also likely due to fear of Russian backlash. While the sanctions prohibit certain transactions, removal of Russia’s access to the system would effectively destroy their access to these

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<sup>273</sup> Carol Matlack, “Swift Justice: One Way to Make Putin Howl,” *Bloomberg News*, September 4, 2014, available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-09-04/ultimate-sanction-barring-russian-banks-from-swift-money-system>.

<sup>274</sup> Matlack, “Swift Justice,” 2014.

<sup>275</sup> “Moscow Promises 'Unlimited' Response if SWIFT Limits Operations in Russia,” *Sputnik*, January 27, 2015, available at: <https://sputniknews.com/business/201501271017408345/>.



international bank transfers and transactions in their largest market. This threat is what led Russia to create its own international system and invite banks from China, India, Turkey, and Iran to join and circumvent the threat of Western sanctions and exclusion from certain markets.<sup>276</sup> However, this action seems to indicate that Matlack was correct in her article when she labeled the removal from the system a “nuclear option” as the Russian Federation was quick to warn of damaging retaliation and developed a reciprocal network, inviting partners in eastern markets as insurance in the event that Russia was to be barred from using SWIFT.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> “Russia Backs Global Use of its Alternative SWIFT System,” *Reuters*, March 19, 2019, available at: <https://uk.reuters.com/article/russia-banks-swift/russia-backs-global-use-of-its-alternative-swift-system-idUKL8N2163BU>.

<sup>277</sup> Matlack, “Swift Justice,” 2014.

## CHAPTER 11: CRITICISMS OF THE COLD WAR VIEW

There are still many who remain critical of the current situation being labeled “New Cold War”. This has to do with the power imbalance between the United States and the Russian Federation. During the Twentieth Century, the United States and the Soviet Union were the two global superpowers vying for supremacy. That ended with the complete defeat and breakup of the Soviet Union. The Russian Federation was one of 15 states to emerge from the Soviet Union and has simply not reached the level of power that its successor had. Rather than a bipolar contest between two global super powers, Harvard University’s Arne Westad believes that, “What we are seeing today is much more reminiscent of Europe in the 19th century—different powers conflicting over power, influence, and resources in ever-changing constellations.”<sup>278</sup> However, Westad also defines a Cold War as “a particular type of conflict that is highly ideological, long-lasting, bi-polar, and absolute.”<sup>279</sup> Yet this is not the definition of a Cold War that this thesis has been working with. In the introduction section, the term Cold War was defined as “a condition of rivalry, mistrust, and often open hostility short of violence especially between power groups (such as labor and management).”<sup>280</sup> An example of the latter would be the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran in the Middle East, as they contend for influence and power within the region.

Critics also point to the lack of an ideological conflict.<sup>281</sup> This is a favorite counter argument of historians as the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union was the ideological contest between Capitalism and Communism. Michael E. O’Hanlon and Sean Zeigler

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<sup>278</sup> Odd Arne Westad, “Has a New Cold War Really Begun? Why the Term Shouldn’t Apply to Today’s Great-Power Tensions,” *Foreign Affairs*, March 27, 2018, available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-03-27/has-new-cold-war-really-begun>.

<sup>279</sup> Shane Croucher, “A New Cold War with Russia? Historians Give Their Answer,” *Newsweek*, April 20, 2018, available at: <https://www.newsweek.com/new-cold-war-russia-historians-give-their-answer-894797>.

<sup>280</sup> “Cold War,” *Miriam Webster*, 2019.

<sup>281</sup> Odd Arne Westad, “Has a New Cold War Really Begun?”, 2018.

bring this argument up again in an article for *Brookings* where they remind the audience that the Soviet Union was intent on fulfilling Karl Marx's vision of a global socialist revolution, while Putin's Russia is not.<sup>282</sup> In fact, President Putin also admitted the fact that he felt it was impossible to restore Soviet socialism to Russia as, "there can be social elements in the economy and the social sector, but expenses will always exceed profits, and as a result, the economy would be at a dead end."<sup>283</sup> However, this counter argument has already been addressed within the body of this thesis when discussing today's ideological conflict as one between open systems (liberal democracies) versus closed systems (authoritarian states), as President Putin and Russia act as a Realist power and wage war on the Liberal Democratic Order and international institutions.

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<sup>282</sup> Michael E. O'Hanlon and Sean Zeigler, "No, We Aren't on the Brink of a New Cold War with Russia and China," *Brookings*, July 13, 2019, available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/07/13/no-we-arent-on-the-brink-of-a-new-cold-war-with-russia-and-china/>.

<sup>283</sup> Kremlin Press Service, "Vladimir Putin's Annual News Conference," 2018.

## CONCLUSION

In the Twentieth Century, the Cold War was a contest between two global superpowers: the United States and the Soviet Union. Decades later, the Soviet successor state, the Russian Federation, and the United States seem to have picked up where that conflict ended and entered a new conflict. Having offered a working definition of the term Cold War to be a condition of rivalry and mistrust or hostility stopping short of violence, this thesis has sought to answer the question on whether or not the United States and the Russian Federation are indeed engaged in a new Cold War.

Diplomatically, arguments have been made that diplomatic relations between the Russian Federation and the West (the United States and its allies) are worse than the period in the Twentieth Century. This is due to Western backlash over the Russian annexation of Ukrainian territory and sponsorship of war in the country. The backlash, in the form of economic sanctions, have resulted in Russia's expulsion from the G-8 summit, a freezing in dialogue between Russia and the EU, as well as a strengthening of Russia's relations with other states at odds with the West.

Informationally, Russia has been using its intelligence services to wage political warfare against targets in the West to undermine confidence in the stability of democratic governments. This has come in the form of propaganda and influence campaigns coupled with cyber operations. The most famous example in recent years has been the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election but has included almost every country within the European Union. As a top tier cyber actor, Russia has also demonstrated the ability to cause physical damage through cyber means and threaten physical infrastructure but has so far only sought to use its abilities for harassment and influence rather than targeted destruction of Western targets.

Militarily, Russia has sought to build and modernize its military to compete with and deter threats from NATO. This has led to increased force sizes from both Russia and NATO member states in the Western Russian and Eastern European region. This has also led to near miss events between aerial and naval assets between the opposing sides. This aspect has also witnessed confrontations between the American and Russian militaries in various parts of the world via proxy wars in Ukraine, Syria, and the possibility of another (should tensions escalate to civil war) in Venezuela.

Economically, the sanctions imposed by the United States and its Western allies have been greatly detrimental to the Russian economy. By targeting the defense, energy, and financial sectors, the sanctions, coupled with oil prices, sent the Russian economy into recession from 2014 to 2017. The oil prices were a result of the United States and Saudi Arabia weaponizing oil in 2014 to target both Russia and Iran. The recession, again as a result of sanctions and oil prices, led to Russia encouraging further domestic output of goods and a reciprocal move from the United States. Yet this also encouraged Russia to increase trade with the states diplomatically at odds with the West, such as Iran, North Korea, and China, two of which also happen to border Russia.

Through use of a comprehensive DIME literature review and analysis, the argument has been made that the state of geopolitical tension between the two powers is a new Cold War. This is because the rivalry aspect between Russia and the United States has become apparent, particularly in Europe (where the United States is dominating) but also in Latin America and Africa where Russia is increasing its presence. Both vehemently mistrust each other as they continue to accuse the other of everything from breaking international law to being in violation of international treaties. Finally, both states seem to attack each other in all dimensions but the

military dimension as physical violence would only conclude with total obliteration and a nuclear holocaust.

Today, unlike in the Twentieth Century, the development of, and weaponization of, computer programs have become one of the defining factors of this new conflict. Both the United States and the Russian Federation have demonstrated the ability to inflict physical damage using these digital weapons. Both have also demonstrated the evolution of using cyber means to attack infrastructure of adversarial nations. The far-reaching implications of the state of the cyber domain are that a majority of key critical national infrastructure are dependent on computer networks, there is no current agreement on cyber conduct, and that cyber-attacks are conducted daily. One question that may arise is how long will this situation continue and/or will tensions ever be de-escalated? While Khan seemed interested in answering this question during the Cold War, the understanding of mutual destruction persuaded actors to back down. Conventional wisdom would believe that, eventually, tensions will de-escalate, as they did in the Twentieth Century. However, as long as Putin's regime (or even like minded regimes) are in power in Russia, and asymmetrical tools like cyber are available, warfare, in one form or another, will continue between these states that stops short of open kinetic strikes.

For decisionmakers, there would be two major recommendations. The first would be to revisit George Kennan's strategy of containment. Kennan stressed strategically meeting the Soviets at global points of contention and being prepared to force the Soviets to backdown. In the contemporary era, Turkey did this to the Russian Federation with the shooting down of a Russian fighter jet in Turkish air space while U.S. Special Forces successfully contacted Russian led forces in Syria. Both resulted in Russia backing down as Russia stopped violating Turkish air

space and has since stopped its “near misses” of American military equipment in the Black and Baltic Seas.

The second major recommendation would be to establish a cyber strategy focused on Russia. For the same aforementioned reason, major event forcing the Russians to backdown, there has been no definitive action to cause the Russians to halt a cyber campaign against the United States. The primary focus of the United States, regarding cyber, is protecting Key Critical National Infrastructure. With every aspect of KCNI being interconnected in cyber space, and Russia showing an equivalent cyber capability to the United States, this KCNI is vulnerable. Couple this with the Obama administration’s move to exile Russian diplomats in response to the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election, and you get a situation where the Russians really have no reason to stop the attacks. Allowing U.S. cyber assets to conduct a strategic retaliatory strike within the Russian energy sector, being one of the main Russian economic sectors and being sanctioned, would send a message that this cyber campaign against the United States would no longer be tolerated. This may come in the form of ransomware against Rosneft (which acts as an extension of the Russian state) to hold the company’s computer networks hostage and deny access to internal servers, or this may come in a targeted strike in which several of their oil refineries are attacked and computer systems are shutdown. Whatever type of cyber strike is chosen, something of extreme value to the Russians must be chosen in a manner that will not end in physical casualties but takes a significant economic and symbolic toll.

Before ending this thesis, the limitations of the research should also be declared. First and foremost, this work relies exclusively on open source data, meaning that relies on the declared statements and observed actions of the governments in question. Secondly, the research was limited to data in English. The data from the Russian sources was accessed through their English

language results. Finally, the theoretical models that the project relied on may possibly be seen as dated. The Escalation Ladder, for instance, dates back to 1965 while the DIME model has been argued (in the past) to be expanded upon to include different instruments of national power. While conducting research in the future, it may become necessary to re-visit the Escalation Ladder to see where cyber fits, possibly coming up with a supplemental model to accompany the Escalation Ladder to indicate where cyber fits in a certain subgroup when comparing it to the traditional model.



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## VITA

Mason C. Shuya was born in El Paso, Texas in 1996. He is the oldest of three children born to Dr. Sandra L. Shuya and Robert J. Shuya. He graduated from Coronado High School in 2014 and enrolled at College of Mount Saint Vincent in Bronx, New York in the fall of 2014. In the Fall of 2015, he enrolled in the University of Texas at El Paso and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Security Studies in the spring of 2018. In 2018, he enrolled at the in the M.S. in Intelligence and National Security Studies graduate program at the University of Texas at El Paso.

As an Intelligence Community Center of Academic Excellence (IC CAE) Scholar, he has been awarded the National Security Studies Institute Graduate and Undergraduate Fellowships. He has been published in the *Journal of Strategic Security* and presented research at the 21<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Political Science and International Relations in London, UK, the Midwest Association for Latin American Studies in El Paso, Texas, and the University of Texas at El Paso 2018 Graduate Expo.

Contact Information: [mcshuya@miners.utep.edu](mailto:mcshuya@miners.utep.edu)

This thesis was typed by Mason C. Shuya