COLD WAR OR NOT, RUSSIA’S FOREIGN POLICY TACTICS TOWARD THE UNITED STATES AND THE WEST REMAIN UNCHANGED

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Abstract

This thesis argues that, notwithstanding the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the fall of Communism, the current aggressive foreign policy posture exhibited by the Russian Federation toward the United States is virtually identical to that of the Soviet Union during the height of the Cold War. This topic and the underlying argument are important as an acknowledgement of this truth will better equip law and policy makers to address the current challenges posed by Russia, how it relates to the historical challenges posed by the Soviet Union, and how best to address this challenge. Following a discussion of the foreign policies activities undertaken by the Soviet Union during the Cold War, this thesis underscores Russia’s foreign policy posture toward the US in three contexts or chapters. The first chapter analyzes Russia’s aggressive annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in Ukraine, and compares it to similar violations of the sovereignty of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Moldova and Georgia. This chapter provides historical context for Russia’s violation of international norms, and lays out why this behavior was both predictable and expected. The second chapter analyzes the Soviet Union’s, and later Russia’s, interference in US presidential elections. This chapter discusses a discernible shift in tactics and escalation in the invasiveness, from simply offering campaign funds to a favored candidate in the early 1960s, to the use of “active measures,” defined below, to spread disinformation regarding opposition candidates in the 1980s and 2010s. The final chapter explores the use of espionage and illicit intelligence collection operations by the Russian intelligence services during Soviet and Russian rule. This chapter highlights the slight variance in approach but underscores the fact that both the Soviet Union and Russia have relied heavily on this tool, to procure
intelligence related to not only US state secrets, but US government, political and economic information. This thesis concludes that while a number of factors have changed the landscape of the US-Russia dynamic, the only reasonable conclusion to be made is that Russia has maintained its aggressive foreign policy posture toward the US and its allies.

This thesis concludes by offering three possible avenues for future research. The first possible avenue is an attempt to understand the specific role Vladimir Putin plays in Russia’s foreign policy posture as a dictator and relic of the Soviet Union. The second avenue would be an exploration of the impact economic relations between US and Russian private businesses has on normalizing or thawing diplomatic relations between the governments of the same. A third possible area of research would be an analysis of how the current relationship between the US and Russia, which has been colored by both Russia’s aggressive foreign policy posture and the US-led eastward expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, impacts the relationship each has with the People’s Republic of China.

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Preface

“I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma. But perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest.”

–Winston Churchill
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Introduction

Irrespective of the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Soviet Union) and the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, the current aggressive foreign policy posture of the Russian Federation (Russia) toward the United States (US) and its allies is virtually unchanged from that of the Cold War. The relationship between the US and Russia is at its “worst since the Cold War and will remain dynamic in the coming years, with a lingering risk of escalation.”¹ Russia, and the Soviet Union before it, is a global power with a complicated and generally antagonistic relationship with the US.² In terms of geographic territory it is the world’s largest country by territory and is a leading exporter of oil and natural gas, giving it the world’s eleventh largest economy.³ Russia is also a prominent voice in global issues such as the nuclear weapons programs of Iran and North Korea.⁴ As highlighted by the Congressional Research Service, and of particular importance to the main argument posited by this thesis, while “Russian foreign policy has become increasingly sophisticated and aggressive under Russian President Vladimir Putin, observers note that some of its guiding principles have been consistent since the Soviet Union’s collapse in 1991.”⁵ Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has aggressively sought to maintain its sphere of influence over the former Soviet bloc states and deter, disrupt or at least mitigate the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty

³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid.
Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU), which it views as a direct threat to its political and national security. Additionally, Russia seeks to regain/maintain its stature as a dominant power in global politics, particularly one which is a successful competitor of the US.

Many in the West have lamented what they see as lack of respect for “fundamental international norms and have warned about the threats Russia may pose to the security and interests of the US and its allies and partners.” This fact notwithstanding, authorities in this area have maintained “the importance of continued engagement on certain issues of common interest.” Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union the US and Russia have labored to establish a constructive relationship that is built on the kind of trust that was absent for the entirety of the Cold War. There are multiple schools of thought that could provide an explanation into the Cold War style relationship that persists between the US and Russia, and, specifically, Russia’s continued adherence to an aggressive Cold War foreign policy posture. The first school of thought is that the personality of Russian President Vladimir Putin is largely responsible for the inability of the US and Russia to move past their Cold War animus. This school of thought holds that Putin is endeavoring to preserve Russia’s sphere of influence in Eastern Europe in an attempt to re-create the grandeur of the Soviet era, and to restore Russia’s prominence on the world stage. The second school of thought holds that the two nations are too ideologically dissimilar to reach common ground and to cooperate on international and...
regional polices. This school of thought fails on its face because of the fall of communism and the notional adoption, in form albeit with the ever-present specter of corruption, by Russia of democracy and free market economy.

The third school of thought holds that Russia maintains its confrontational posture and aggressive and invasive tactics because there exists no economic interdependence between the two adversaries. Without this modicum of economic interdependence there is no measured or even superficial attempt to resolve differences, as there is no potential economic downside or lost opportunity, due to a lack of a mutually beneficial financial relationship. The final school of thought notes that political realism, or power politics, is the standard for international relations, and that irrespective of ideology, economics or the idiosyncrasies of world leaders, nation-states will always engage in wide-ranging competition because all nation-states seek power for power’s sake. In this respect, Russia will stop at nothing to simultaneously bolster its position while undermining that of the US.

Political realism, or power politics, assumes that power is and should be the goal of foreign relations. Political realism assumes that interests “are to be maintained through the exercise of power, and that the world is characterized by competing power bases.” In foreign relations the nation-state is the relevant entity, and the community of nation-states is characterized by “anarchy” due to a lack of supreme authority and legal framework. Because this type of power politics seeks power/control for the sake of power/control, the proposition is that laws, ethics and morality does not apply or matter.

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12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
beyond the domestic border of the nation-state.\textsuperscript{14} Foreign relationships are by necessity amoral, and thus “the international environment is inherently unstable.”\textsuperscript{15}

Notwithstanding the relationship between two nation-states, power politics holds that these nation-states will continue to be locked in competition for the same resources and, in light of this fact, a nation has only itself to depend on.\textsuperscript{16}

This thesis argues that the true origin of Russia’s continued reliance upon an aggressive foreign policy posture toward the US, and consequently Russia’s continued reliance upon the Cold War tactics of territorial invasion, propaganda and espionage, is Russia’s utilization of power politics. This power politics drives Russia’s desire to mitigate its territorial and military losses, maintain its sphere of influence, bolster its one-dimensional economy, and undermine and marginalize the US and its allies. In this respect Russia’s adherence to power politics as a foreign policy roadmap is identical to the Soviet Union’s adherence to the same. Consequently, the relationship Russia has garnered with the US is similarly identical to one garnered by the Soviet Union. It is imperative to note that Russia’ loyalty to the Soviet Union’s Cold War foreign policy stance toward the US and the West is due, in equal parts, to both the US-led eastward expansion of NATO serving to inflame Russia’s historical paranoia of invasion, as well Russia’s desire to reclaim the territorial footprint and grandeur on the world stage of the Soviet Union.

This thesis is comprised of three chapters, each of which illustrates aggressive actions or techniques utilized by Russian which mirror or mimic similar techniques.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
utilized/employed by the Soviet Union. The only conclusion to be reached is that Russia’s adherence to an aggressive Cold War foreign policy posture toward the US remains unchanged from what it has been for approximately eight decades. Specifically, chapter one will outline that Russia’s annexation of the Crimean Peninsula of Ukraine came about due to its perpetual fear of encirclement by Western powers, particularly NATO, and the additional potential loss of its sphere of influence over the former Soviet bloc states. Case studies are provided outlining the Soviet Union’s invasion of both Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the Transnistria War in Moldova in about 1990, the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008, and finally the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014.

A review of these conflicts demonstrates that Russia has sought to systematically preserve its sphere of influence over the former Soviet bloc states, even using their territory as a buffer or physical defense against its adversaries; and the actions taken by NATO to include former Soviet bloc states all but forced the hand of Russia in invading Ukraine, as Russia had remained fearful of NATO encirclement. Of particular note is the fact that, in the case of the Soviet Union’s invasion of Hungary and Czechoslovakia a pretext of enforcing the Brezhnev Doctrine, highlighted below, was provided. In the case of the invasions/conflicts of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, the Russian government rationalized its aggressive military actions under the pretense of protecting thousands of Russians displaced after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, even going so far as to issue Russian passports for these displaced persons in an attempt to further legitimize the invasions.
The second chapter of this thesis outlines the history of Soviet and Russian interference in US presidential elections utilizing “active measures,” which are specifically defined as “covert offensive instruments of Soviet foreign policy aiming to systematically disrupt relations between other nations, discredit Soviet opponents, and influence policies of foreign governments in favor of Soviet plans and policies.”17 This use of disinformation was intended to amplify existing societal problems within Western democracies, and exploit the free access to information afforded their citizenry.18 Both the Soviet Union and Russia utilized active measures to interfere in US presidential elections of 1960, 1964, 1968, 1984, and 2016. Of additional note is the fact that the intensity and invasiveness discernibly escalated, initially attempting to provide aid to the presidential campaigns of Adlai Stevenson and Hubert Humphrey, and later maliciously targeting the presidential campaigns of Barry Goldwater, Ronald Regan and Hillary Clinton.

In utilizing active measures against Goldwater, Regan and Clinton, the Soviet Union or Russia disseminated weaponized disinformation. In the case of Goldwater the Soviet Union “orchestrated a disinformation campaign labeling Goldwater as a racist and a KKK sympathizer,” and further “produced and distributed printed material in the United States and overseas.”19 In the case of Regan the disinformation included characterizing Reagan as a racist who discriminated against minorities, painting his administration as corrupt, and concluding that he was a “war hawk who was engineering

18 Ibid at 110.
an arms race and catapulting the United States and Soviet Union toward nuclear Armageddon.” In the case of Clinton, Russian military intelligence effectuated unauthorized cyber intrusions that resulted in the theft of tens of thousands of electronic mail (e-mail) correspondence from Clinton campaign staffers. Russian military intelligence then “created a fake online group called Guccifer 2.0 and used that persona to share these emails with WikiLeaks,” which in turn released the correspondence prior to the election resulting in “frequent negative news cycles for Clinton and distracting from the message she hoped to send voters in the final days of the campaign.”

Chapter three of this thesis outlines the reliance of both the Soviet Union and Russia on espionage and other intelligence collection operations to illicitly acquire US military, political and economic information. This chapter will break these operations down into those undertaken exclusively by the Soviet Union, those which began under the purview of the Soviet Union but continued under the authority of Russia, and those which were initiated by the Government of Russia. The first category of operations include the arrests and convictions of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, John Walker, and Ronald Pelton. The second category of operations include the arrests and convictions of Aldrich Ames and Robert Hanssen. The third category of operations include the arrests and convictions of the Russian illegals investigated under Operation Ghost Stories, the Evgeny Buryakov spy ring, and Maria Butina.

Chapter three further outlines that, notwithstanding the increased reliance on Russian nationals (whether overtly or in their capacity as illegals present in the US under

20 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
false pretenses) to carry out its intelligence gathering operations, Russia did not move away from, lessen or otherwise minimize such operations with the fall of the Soviet Union. It relied just as much as its predecessor on these illicit intelligence gathering operations to exploit the openness of US society in an attempt to penetrate the US economy, its politics and its academic institutions. In fact, an argument can be made that Russia’s approach to espionage is even more bold and audacious since it has sought to rely much more on Russian nationals, many in positions of non-official cover, to accomplish the same goals for which it used to simply rely on US citizens. With an overall loss of economic power and an erosion of worldwide national prestige, Russia has not been able to rely upon US government officials to simply walk into Russian diplomatic missions to offer their services. They have had to brazenly place Russian nationals illegally into positions where these individuals may be able to cultivate relationships with Americans, who currently have, or who may have in the future, value in terms of their access to sensitive US government, political or economic information. This demonstrates unequivocally that Russian has not only refused to abandoned or lessen its adherence to hostile intelligence gathering operations, but has vigorously redesigned these operations to ensure their continued successful application.

The argument and conclusions delineated in this thesis are important, as an acceptance that Russia continues to embrace an aggressive Cold War foreign policy posture toward the US will go a long way toward confirming that future administrations “will be better equipped to ensure that US policy going forward is grounded in the most realistic understanding of the challenge that Russia poses and the right kinds of tools that
the United States should use to contend with it.” Eugene Rumer and Richard Sokolsky astutely note that there is a prevailing perception on the part of the US and its allies that “the collapse of the Soviet Union and the implosion of Russian power demonstrated the permanent superiority of the United States.” It is this very perception that has made US policy makers reticent to acknowledge and accept Russia’s pushback against varies US-led policies, most notably the expansion of NATO.

During the expansion of NATO, the White House largely ignored the protests and objections leveled by Russia, and ultimately underestimated “the lengths to which Russian counterparts were prepared to go to secure the homeland against perceived threats.” Additionally, the Russian people and government apparatus maintain a “lingering ideology of greatness,” and a sense of entitlement due to the significant losses it experienced during the second World War. President Vladimir Putin continues to exacerbate this sense of entitlement in an attempt to maintain his authority. Of note is the fact that he is effective in his exploitation as a recent poll cited by the Lowy Institute holds that 70% of Russians perceive the US as an “enemy state last year.”

During the past ten years Russia has become more “assertive and adversarial, constituting a multidimensional effort to expand its global influence at the expense of the United States and other Western countries.” Russian policies have focused on

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24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
“undermining democracy” in the US and its allied countries.\textsuperscript{31} This overall foreign policy has underscored a belief of the Kremlin that “the former Soviet republics formed a sphere of privileged Russian interests and that Moscow was entitled to control their policies and behavior.”\textsuperscript{32} With this in mind the acceptance of the reality that Russia continues to rely upon the same aggressive Cold War foreign policy posture toward the US and its allies since the time of Stalin, would serve US policymakers well and underscore the difficulty in attempting to navigate the middle way embraced, as outlined above, over the past decade.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid at 20.
Cold War Foreign Policy Posture Defined

In order to effectively convey the substantive argument of this thesis, a working definition and list of defining characteristics of Soviet Cold War foreign policy must be established. The Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union was a prolonged geopolitical conflict that did not involve direct military campaigns.\(^{33}\) The conflict was primarily pursued through economic and political actions, including propaganda, espionage and proxy wars, where both relied on others to fight their battles.\(^{34}\) As far back as 1950 the Committee on Foreign Affairs for the 81\(^{st}\) Congress, 2\(^{nd}\) Session, declared in an official report that “Since [World War Two] ended, Soviet propaganda for both internal consumption and as distributed through controlled outlets around the world has been violently and abusively anti-American. United States is pictured as imperialistic, reactionary, fascist, and striving for world domination through destruction of the U.S.S.R. in a third World War. The United States Government is alleged to be in the hands of a small group aiming at imposing its will on the world by force and as being entirely out of step with desires and aspirations of the American people.”\(^{35}\)

As noted in the report referenced above from the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Soviet Union and Russia have a long history of deploying dezinformatsia (disinformation) to deceive their enemies.\(^{36}\) A top secret dictionary utilized by the Soviet Committee for State Security (Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti or KGB) defined

\(^{34}\) Ibid.
\(^{35}\) 81\(^{st}\) Congress, 2\(^{nd}\) Session, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Background Information on the Soviet Union in International Relations (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1950), 48.
“disinformation data” as “especially prepared data, used for the creation, in the mind of the enemy, of incorrect or imaginary pictures of reality, on the basis of which the enemy would make decisions beneficial [to the Soviet Union].” The concept of disinformation must be contrasted with misinformation. “Misinformation is false information that a government officially and openly disseminates, whereas disinformation is false information that is covertly disseminated—with no fingerprints of the state attached to it.”

In this respect the use by the Soviet Union, and particularly the KGB, of disinformation was designed with the “inherent openness of Western democracies, with their freedoms of press and speech,” in mind. The use of disinformation was able to amplify existing problems within their societies, and exploit the free access to information afforded their citizenry. One of the reasons the KGB’s disinformation strategy was so successful was that the misinformation itself was never based wholly on fabrication, and was “anchored in some basis of fact, however small.” The bases for the disinformation could be actual societal disputes rooted in economic, racial or other inequities. The Soviet Union’s disinformation campaign became so widespread that the US Government at one point identified no less than thirteen organizations that proved to be nothing more than fronts for Soviet disinformation. Some of these organizations

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37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid at 110-111.
42 Ibid at 111.
43 Ibid.
included the World Peace Council, the World Federation of Trade Unions, and the
International Union of Students.\textsuperscript{44}

The persistent use of disinformation was essentially weaponized within the KGB
and is referred to in technical terms as aktivnye meropriyatiya (active measures).\textsuperscript{45}
Active measures can be further defined as “covert offensive instruments of Soviet foreign
policy aiming to systematically disrupt relations between other nations, discredit Soviet
opponents, and influence policies of foreign governments in favor of Soviet plans and
policies.”\textsuperscript{46} Active measures encompass a wide range of actions including the use of
media manipulation, shell groups, fake or forged documents, influence operations and
special actions.\textsuperscript{47} By the 1980s the KGB become so dependent upon active measures that
they “funded or sponsored 70 books and brochures, 4,865 articles in the foreign and
Soviet press, 66 feature and documentary films, 1,500 radio and TV programs, and 3,000
conferences and exhibitions.”\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid at 108.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
Chapter 1: Russia’s Infringement on the Territory and Sovereignty of its Neighbors.

I. Introduction

In the spring of 2014, Russia invaded Ukraine and subsequently annexed the Crimean Peninsula. Prior to the invasion the Ukrainian government had undergone a number of changes which resulted from protests, a subsequent revolution, and the ultimate departure of Viktor Yanukovych as President and the installation of new President Petro Poroshenko. Four chief reasons have been put forth by the academic, political and national security communities as the ultimate cause of the invasion and subsequent annexation. They are: 1) Russia asserts a historical claim to the Crimean Peninsula; 2) the actions taken by NATO to begin the membership process for the Ukraine; 3) Russia has sought to systematically preserve its sphere of influence over the former Soviet bloc states, even using the territory of the former Soviet bloc states as a buffer or physical defense against its adversaries; and 4) Russian President Vladimir Putin uses hostile military campaigns as a pretext to boost his popularity among the Russian populace.

Notwithstanding that each of these four theories are viable and reasonable, two of the four stand out. Specifically, this chapter argues that the two most simple and plausible explanations for Russia invading Ukraine and annexing the peninsula are: 1) that Russia sought to systematically preserve its sphere of influence over Ukraine; and 2) NATO’s membership overture to the Ukraine served to inflame Russia’s pre-existing fears over US-led Western encirclement. This inflammation resulted from NATO having already admitted the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as members, after the
West had made representations that it would not pursue former Soviet bloc states for NATO membership. In this respect, Russia felt as though it had been misled by the US-led Western powers.

II. **Sphere of Influence Context**

While the four specific theories noted above provide concrete arguments for the Russian annexation of Crimea, these theories must still be viewed within the context of the principle of the sphere of influence. Put another way, the assertion that all nations subscribe to power politics and the expansion of their spheres of influence provides additional context for the theories posited above. A sphere of influence is generally defined as “a geographical zone within which the most powerful actor can impose its will.”49 For centuries Russia has endeavored to exert its diplomatic, economic and military power over its regional neighbors.50 Of additional note is the fact that the practice of powerful nations systematically expanding their spheres of influence is more of the historical rule than the exception.51

This practice is used currently by powerful nations like the US and the People’s Republic of China (PRC), and has been used by historically by powerful nations like the Persian Empire, Athens, Sparta and even the Roman Republic.52 Experts point to two unassailable traits of power politics, which are “the need for security vis-à-vis rival powers and the desire to shape a nation’s immediate environment to its benefit.”53

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50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid at 21.
53 Ibid.
expansion of a nation’s sphere of influence serves the important function of providing barriers from the infiltration of foreign powers.\(^{54}\)

As outlined in the case studies below, Russia has never missed an opportunity to “humiliate and dismember former Soviet republics that committed the sin of tilting toward the West or throwing out pro-Russian leaders.”\(^{55}\) It can also be argued that the Western world should have acknowledged that, even in a relatively weaker state, Russia would not sit idly by while US-led NATO sought to expand its own sphere of influence by targeting former Soviet bloc states for membership. It is with this background that the arguments laid out in detail below become more compelling.

III. Literature Review

a) The Russian Federation Asserts a Historical and Legal Claim to the Crimean Peninsula

Historically, Russia asserts a claim to Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula. In 1783, under the leadership of Catherine the Great and following a war with the Ottoman Empire, Russia annexed the peninsula.\(^{56}\) It remained part of Russian until 1954, when it was subsequently transferred to Ukraine.\(^{57}\) In 1991, Ukraine, along with the remaining Soviet bloc states, entered into an agreement with the newly-established Russian Federation, whereby the parties agreed to accept the borders as then drawn.\(^{58}\) When viewed through this historical lens, the Kremlin’s annexation specifically violated the

\(^{54}\) Ibid.

\(^{55}\) Ibid at 25.


\(^{57}\) Ibid.

\(^{58}\) Ibid.
1991 agreement. Russian President Vladimir Putin, however, justified the invasion, annexation and ensuing referendum as an act of “self-determination” by ethnic Russians.\(^{59}\)

In 2008, while attending the NATO summit in Bucharest, Hungary, Putin remarked to US President George W. Bush that Ukraine was “not a real state” and that “half of its territory should belong to Russia.”\(^{60}\) Additionally, in his later speech justifying Russia’s annexation of the Crimea, Putin stated that “the world’s largest divided nation” should unite.\(^{61}\) Inferred in his statement is the premise that Russians, specifically Putin, view Ukraine is merely an extension of Russia. Putin has gone so far as to declare that Crimea is “an inseparable part of Russia,” and was stolen from Russia following the collapse of the Soviet Union.\(^{62}\)

In addition to asserting a historical claim for Crimea, Russia has managed to exploit existing principles of international law in its favor. While the United Nations (UN) charter states that territories acquired via force are not recognized as lawful, the charter simultaneously recognizes equal rights and the right of a population to self-determination.\(^{63}\) Russia has attempted to legitimize Crimea’s annexation by stating that the act conforms to standards of international law, however in doing so Russia has clearly chosen to align itself with the principle of self-determination over the principle of

\(^{59}\) Ibid.


\(^{61}\) Ibid.


terриториальной целостности. В его публичной речи Путин утверждал, что жители Крыма представляют собой отдельную группу людей, которая пострадала от систематического гнета со стороны украинского правительства. В завершение своей юридической аргументации в подтверждение законности его вторжения и аннексии, Путин заметил, что "эти русские этнические группы, включая некоторых российских граждан, были подвержены систематическому гнету, что является основанием для право на самодetermination в международном праве, заявив, что члены украинского правительства "националисты, национал-фашисты, русофилии и антисемиты" провели "проект закона для изменения языковой политики, что было прямым нарушением прав этнических меньшинств." В этом контексте Путин умел искать и манипулировать Уставом ООН и таким образом легитимировать свои внешние политические проекты.

b) The Actions Taken by NATO all but Forced the Hand of the Russian Federation in Invading the Ukraine, as Russia had Remained Fearful of NATO Encirclement Since the Dissolution of the Soviet Union

It is the position of Russia that, in or around 1990, representatives from the US and Germany made representations that neither would exploit the relatively weakened state of Russia, by increasing the membership of NATO to include individual Commonwealth of Independent State (CIS) nations.  With the expansion of NATO to include those CIS states closer to Russia’s doorstep, Russia felt “betrayed” and began to

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64 Ibid at 5.  
65 Ibid at 6.  
66 Ibid.  
“doubt their [US] trustworthiness.” During the Clinton administration for example, then Russian President Boris Yeltsin himself told President Clinton that if the US were to continue to push NATO membership to the CIS states, the US would be “sowing the seeds of distrust,” and that Yeltsin could not agree to NATO expansion closer to Russia as it “would constitute a betrayal of the Russian people.” While the sentiment expressed by the West has been that NATO promotes democracy, Russia no doubt views it as an attempt by the US to compel the former Soviet-bloc states to conform to Western norms. The dynamic fashioned as a result of NATO expansion served to “poison the relationship between Moscow and the West over the past two decades,” and undoubtedly emboldened Russia to interfere with the policies and government of the Ukraine. Former US diplomat, and current foreign policy analyst, Nelson “Strobe” Talbott warned in an internal US Government memorandum that “[a]n expanded NATO that excludes Russia will not serve to contain Russia’s retrograde, expansionist impulses…it will further provoke them.”

To underscore Talbott’s point, the war in Kosovo proved to be a watershed moment, with Russia becoming suspicious of Western intentions with its support of the breakaway republic at the expense of Russian-ally Serbia. To further complicate the expansion of NATO and its overtures to Ukraine, was the Crimean port of Sevastopol.

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68 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
72 Steil, “Russia’s Clash with the West.”
This port had served, and continues to serve, as a base of operations for Russia’s Black Sea Fleet. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, most of the Black Sea Fleet ended up being physically transferred to Russia.\textsuperscript{74} Notwithstanding the overall shift in assets, Ukraine agreed to lease the installation back to Russia thus permitting the Black Sea Fleet to continue its operations unfettered.\textsuperscript{75} This same agreement was in fact subsequently extended, within the last decade, to 2042.\textsuperscript{76}

The stressors posed by NATO expansion and the existence of the Sevastopol naval base became unduly inflamed by the flight of pro-Russian Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych from Ukraine, and the installation of pro-Western Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko.\textsuperscript{77} This event served as a tipping point, resulting in Putin ordering Russian special forces to occupy the peninsula under the auspices of affording protection to a valuable Russian naval asset.\textsuperscript{78}

A final note related to the role of NATO in Russia’s annexation of the peninsula is the fact that while Russia has contributed to, or exacerbated, military conflicts in Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, it has only actually annexed the Crimean Peninsula.\textsuperscript{79} One reason for this, astutely posited by Benn Steil, is that a nation with the presence of a “frozen conflict” is not eligible for membership in NATO while such conflicts are

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{79} Steil, “Russia’s Clash with the West.”
outstanding, due to the presence of unresolved border disputes.\textsuperscript{80} Additionally, “insufficient military capabilities to provide for credible national defense” is another ground for denying NATO membership.\textsuperscript{81} The insufficient capabilities of both Georgia and the Ukraine were no doubt exploited by Russia to ensure their denial of NATO membership. Of additional interest is the fact that Russia’s interference in both Georgia in 2008 and the Ukraine in 2014, was preceded by an overture made to both by NATO for potential membership.\textsuperscript{82}

c) \textbf{Russia has Sought to Systematically Preserve its Sphere of Influence Over the Former Soviet Bloc States, Even Using their Territory as a Natural Buffer or Physical Defense Against its Adversaries}

Russian foreign policy is built on three pillars. These driving forces have a deep history, and have been accepted by a litany of prior Russian leaders irrespective of their individual politics and political party affiliation.\textsuperscript{83} First, “Russia’s quest for strategic depth and secure buffers against external threats, which, considering the country’s geography and absence of natural protective barriers between it and neighboring powers, has guided its geographic expansion.”\textsuperscript{84} Second, Russia has an incessant need to be recognized as one of the world’s great powers, the recognition of which, in its assessment, validates its aggressive geographic expansion.\textsuperscript{85} Third, Russian foreign

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
policy has many complex and often adversarial relationships with the Western powers.\textsuperscript{86} What these three factors demonstrate is that Russian foreign policy has continually been used as a tool to expand its influence and borders outward, in an attempt to insulate it from external threats.\textsuperscript{87}

To further explain the prongs of Russia’s foreign policy one must consider the geography of Russia. Russia’s western border possesses no natural defenses, to include no mountain ranges nor defensive bodies of water.\textsuperscript{88} While the US and its allies typically view Russia’s paranoia surrounding invasion as disingenuous, Russian leadership points to history, be it Napoleon or Hitler, in support of its time-honed fear.\textsuperscript{89} In light of this fact, Russian’s military campaigns have been preemptive, with “the aim of dominating its neighbors to prevent borderlands from being used against it.”\textsuperscript{90} Additionally, to some Russian observers “the concept of Russia as a besieged fortress facing hostile Western designs and influences is a key tool the regime uses to mobilize the political support of Russian elites and ordinary citizens alike.”\textsuperscript{91}

In addition to understanding the three factors that have driven Russian foreign policy for centuries, it is also necessary to understand how Russians view themselves. It has been argued that Russians tend to associate their identity with language and culture, and not so much with traditional geographical boundaries.\textsuperscript{92} It has also been argued that

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{86}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{87}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{88}] Stowell, “Russian Expansionism is a Consequence of Geography.”
\item[\textsuperscript{89}] Steil, “Russia’s Clash with the West.”
\item[\textsuperscript{90}] Stowell, “Russian Expansionism.”
\item[\textsuperscript{91}] Ibid.
\end{itemize}
Russians view themselves and Ukrainians as one ethnic group, with the implication being that Ukraine is an “artificial state” with “artificial” boundaries. As far back as the sixteenth century Russia expanded its territory at a rate of 50 square miles per day, until the Russian empire comprised one-sixth of the world’s territory. Upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union approximately twenty-five million ethnic Russians became displaced, with about eight million of them being “reabsorbed by Russia” as of 2003.

In 2005, Putin described the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 as "a major geopolitical disaster of the century." He went on to note that "tens of millions of our co-citizens and compatriots found themselves outside Russian territory." Putin now appears to be endeavoring to counteract what he perceives to be past foreign policy mistakes, as evidenced by his annexation of Crimea which was given to Ukraine by Russia in 1954. Of the over two million residents of the Crimean Peninsula, it is estimated that the majority identify as Russian and/or speak Russian. Of additional note is the fact that the 2001 Ukraine census itself highlights that “most residents of Crimea identified themselves as ethnic Russians.”

One of the hallmarks of Russian foreign policy under the Putin regime has been a healthy admiration and emulation of the Soviet era. Similarly, former National

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93 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
100 British Broadcasting Corporation, “Ukraine’s Sharp Divisions.”
101 Gurganus, “Russia’s Global Ambitions in Perspective.”
Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter Zbigniew Brzezinski has noted that one of Putin’s foreign policy goals is to “reintegrate the former Soviet space under the Kremlin’s control.”\(^{102}\) Luke March points out that Putin has “talked about Rossiyskaya natsiya, not Russkaya natsiya (nation of Russian citizens rather than ethnic Russian nation).”\(^{103}\) Putin himself has bolstered this assertion by remarking that the areas of Kharkiv, Luhans'k, Donets'k, Kherson, Mykolayiv, and Odesa, currently located within the Ukraine, "were not part of Ukraine back then."\(^{104}\) He has further remarked that "Russia lost these territories for various reasons, but the people remained."\(^{105}\)

It is clear that Putin has, among other imperatives, the desire to recreate the Soviet Union, or at least to recreate the grandeur of the Soviet Union. The annexation of Crimea is simply the latest in a systematic approach to accomplishing this goal, which also includes the prior invasion of Georgia. While this imperative may not alone explain Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and subsequent annexation of the peninsula, it is impossible to ignore the fact that this aim played a part in Putin’s act of aggression.

One specific vehicle used by Russia to maintain its foothold in CIS is the practice of the passportization of separatist territories. Passportization is defined as Russian’s “systematic distribution of passports and citizenship to ethnic Russians, Russian speakers and other minorities residing in particular territories.”\(^{106}\) It has been theorized that this practice has been directed by Russia at disputed and separatist territories with an aim


\(^{104}\) Conant, “Ethnic Russians: Pretext for Putin's Ukraine Invasion?”

\(^{105}\) Ibid.

toward preserving or extending the Russian sphere of control by facilitating the proliferation of Russian citizens.\(^{107}\)

d) Vladimir Putin uses Hostile Military Campaigns as a Pretext to Boost his Popularity Among the Russian Populace

Another argument that has been posited for Russia’s annexation of the Crimean Peninsula is simply that it has served to reinvigorate Putin’s approval ratings among his constituents. In fact, it has been demonstrated that Putin actually enjoyed an increase in his public approval after the annexation.\(^{108}\) His approval rating as rose to 80%, which proved to be a costly achievement as it is estimated that Russia had to outlay $20 billion (US) through 2020 to integrate Crimea.\(^{109}\)

Former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili summed up this phenomenon perfectly, noting that Putin’s “invading a weaker neighbor delivers a cheaper and faster ratings boost than, say, improving Russia’s dystopian health care system.”\(^{110}\) He further noted that in 2015 “as the Russian economy floundered, the intervention in Syria served to shore up patriotism.”\(^{111}\) Further bolstering Saakashvili’s assertion is the fact that Putin continues to follow this blueprint for popular appeal by “supporting the pro-Russian separatists in Donetsk and Luhansk, bombing antigovernment rebels in Syria, and escalating a confrontation with Turkey over the downing of a Russian warplane.”\(^{112}\)

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\(^{107}\) Ibid at 187.

\(^{108}\) Pifer, “Five Years After Crimea’s Illegal Annexation.”

\(^{109}\) Amadeo, “Ukraine Crisis, Summary and Explanation.”


\(^{111}\) Ibid.

\(^{112}\) Treisman, “Why Putin Took Crimea,” 54.
Putin’s approval rating has never been as high as it was after the annexation, although it has suffered greatly in the aftermath due to higher energy prices and taxes.\textsuperscript{113} Max Fisher of \textit{Vox} has noted that in December of 2011, Putin’s popularity had plummeted to a subterranean low to the point where he feared losing control of his grip on Russia.\textsuperscript{114} In late 2013, he was able to use the state-run media to manipulate the message about the smoldering political situation in Ukraine.\textsuperscript{115} He successfully manufactured “a parallel universe in which American-backed fascists were toppling Ukraine’s rightful pro-Russian leader.”\textsuperscript{116} He was simultaneously able to fan nationalist flames by implying that these fascists were threatening not only Russian-speaking compatriots in Ukraine, but a strategic Russian port.\textsuperscript{117} As a result of his media manipulation, and controlled message, his popularity “soared” to 80\%.\textsuperscript{118} This level had not been seen in years.\textsuperscript{119} Putin’s manufacturing national pride out of the situation in Ukraine certainly underscores that he has developed a credible method for temporarily boosting his popularity when the economic realities of Russia undermine it.

\textbf{IV. Case Studies}

This chapter uses case studies to determine which of the four possible explanations of Russia’s annexation of the Crimean Peninsula most aptly explains causation. Specifically, this chapter uses case studies of the Soviet Union invading

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{113} Kim, “Why the Crisis Between Ukraine and Russia Has Taken to The Sea.”
\bibitem{115} Ibid.
\bibitem{116} Ibid.
\bibitem{117} Ibid.
\bibitem{118} Ibid.
\bibitem{119} Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
Hungary and Czechoslovakia, as well as Russia meddling in the former Warsaw Pact states of Moldova and Georgia. These case studies are in addition to a case study of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine itself. These case studies are a culmination of anecdotes, studies and interviews from scholarly journals, both US-based and foreign, and national news articles.

These case studies interweave the two most prevalent theories for Russia’s annexation of Crimea. These theories, as outlined above, are: 1) Russia has sought to systematically preserve its sphere of influence over the former Soviet bloc states, even using their territory as a buffer or physical defense against its adversaries; and 2) the actions taken by NATO all but forced the hand of the Russian Federation in invading the Ukraine, as Russia had remained fearful of NATO encirclement since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. While the other theories posited above are viable in an academic sense, they serve more as corollary reasons for the annexation and do not, by themselves, explain the actions of Russia.

In the end, the case studies demonstrate that Russian’s natural pre-existing paranoia of invasion and meddling by outsiders, particularly meddling by the US and its allies, was inflamed by the overtures made to Ukraine by NATO. The overtures reinforced Russia’s mistrust of the Western powers and further served to legitimize, in the minds of Putin and his cabinet, that NATO was seeking to encircle Russia. These same concerns fueled Russia’s earlier invasion of Georgia and Moldova, and serve as the best available theories for why it annexed the Crimean Peninsula.
In 1956, a newly appointed Nikita Khrushchev “denounced the policies of his predecessor” and began a process referred to a "de-Stalinization." Contemporaneously with the implementation of this policy, protests erupted in Hungary calling for both social and economic reforms. In an attempt to placate the protestors, Khrushchev replaced hardline communist Matyas Rakosi with “the more moderate Erno Gero.” The installation of Gero did little to quell the developing unrest, however, and by October a group of students put forward a series of demands “including the withdrawal of Soviet troops, democratization, a government more independent from Soviet control, and the replacement of Gero with former premier Imre Nagy as leader of the Communist Party of Hungary.”

In response to the student demands, Gero ordered the military to quash the demonstrations. The Hungarian soldiers, however, were reticent to take action against their own, and Gero ultimately requested assistance from the Soviet Union. By the end of October Soviet troops arrived in Hungary. Undeterred, the protests continued resulting in the loss of hundreds of lives. Gero was ultimately removed and replaced with Nagy, who “began the task of liberalizing government rule in the country.” In the face of mounting pressure from protestors, Nagy began to institute free elections and

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121 Ibid.
122 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
demanded greater independence from Soviet control and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary.\textsuperscript{129}

In response to Nagy’s demand, however, the Soviet Union deployed additional military assets prompting Nagy to declare that Hungary was withdrawing from the Warsaw Pact effective that November.\textsuperscript{130} The Soviet Union then accused Nagy of inciting a counterrevolution, and on the night of November 3rd approximately 60,000 Soviet troops surrounded Budapest in response.\textsuperscript{131} The next morning the troops “moved against Budapest with great force and crushed the remainder of the rebellion.”\textsuperscript{132} During the Soviet Union’s attack of Budapest thousands of Hungarians were murdered by the Red Army.\textsuperscript{133} Nagy was ultimately captured and replaced by a government which subservient to, and under the direction of, the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{134}

b) The 1968 Soviet Led Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia

In the 1960s a number of policy changes were enacted in Czechoslovakia “to soften or humanize the application of communist doctrines within Czech borders.”\textsuperscript{135} This was done, in part, to counter a stagnant economy and an escalating doubt about the viability of communism among the working class. These changes were implemented to bolster the economy.\textsuperscript{136} In 1968, conservative leader Antonin Novotny was replaced by Alexander Dubcek as the head of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.\textsuperscript{137} One result

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
of this change was the end of censorship by the Dubcek administration, and a discernable increase in “broad-based support for reform and a public sphere in which government and party policies could be debated openly.”

These initial changes led to the issuance of a formal reform plan wherein the “existing framework of the Marxist-Leninist State” would be liberalized, but not completely overhauled. Unfortunately, the announcement of this formal plan contributed to an ideological conflict between conservatives who felt it went too far, and liberals who felt it had not gone far enough. This conflict made it difficult for Dubcek to maintain authority. Simultaneously with this burgeoning conflict in Czechoslovakia, leaders within the Soviet Union grew concerned about the changes in Czechoslovakia. This concern was based, in part, on what had transpired in Hungary during the 1950s. Specifically, Soviet leaders opined that if the liberalization of Czechoslovakia went unchecked other Eastern European countries would follow suit, which the Soviet Union viewed as undermining its authority in the region.

Ultimately the Kremlin elected to “intervene” in the Czechoslovakian conflict to ensure that a “conservative and pro-Soviet government” emerged victorious. The Soviets marshaled troops maintained both in the Soviet Union, as well as troops maintained in Hungary, Poland, East Germany and Bulgaria, under the guise of “Warsaw Pact military exercises.” These troops were then used to quickly invade and capture

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138 Ibid.
139 Ibid.
140 Ibid.
141 Ibid.
142 Ibid.
143 Ibid.
144 Ibid.
145 Ibid.
control of Prague and other Czech cities. After some initial obstacles, in April of 1969 the Soviet Union successfully removed Dubcek from power in favor of a sympathetic government. What followed from here was the re-establishment of censorship and the reinstatement of restrictions in movement. In this respect, Czechoslovakia had been bullied by the Soviet Union into resuming its role as a member of the Warsaw Pact. Ostensibly the Soviet Union rationalized its invasion of Czechoslovakia by arguing it was adhering to the Brezhnev Doctrine, which held that “Moscow had the right to intervene in any country where a communist government had been threatened.”

c) Transnistria War

In or about 1990, a pro-Russian faction within the Moldovan area of Transnistria proclaimed its independence from Moldova. In 1992, this faction, which was predominantly Russian speaking and was concerned that Moldova would be subsumed by Romania due to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, carried out an armed campaign against the newly established Moldovan Government. In response to this conflict Russia sent troops as part of a “trilateral peacekeeping mission,” which ultimately

146 Ibid.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid.
149 Ibid.
150 Ibid.
resulted in a cease-fire agreement signed by then Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Moldovan President Mircea Snegur.\textsuperscript{153}

Russia’s involvement in this seemingly internal Moldovan conflict arguably had less to do with protecting Moldova’s Russian-speaking population and more about “a larger bid for influence over post-Soviet states, as well as its posture against the eastward expansion of Western institutions like NATO and the EU.”\textsuperscript{154} Further, while Russia chose, and continues to choose, to characterize its military presence in Transnistria as a peacekeeping mission, it had neither the support of the UN nor the Moldovan Government.\textsuperscript{155} While Russia did not annex any portion of Moldova, it is evident that its military presence in Moldova and its support of Transnistria has “influenced the political processes in Moldova and checked its drift towards the West.”\textsuperscript{156}

A final point related to Russian involvement in Moldovan affairs and the problem presented by Transnistria, is the fact that since the early 1990s Russia has provided consular services, including citizenship services.\textsuperscript{157} While Russia has not annexed Transnistria, like the case of the Crimean Peninsula, its facilitation of a peacekeeping campaign coupled with the accumulation of Russian citizens via passportization, evidence a systematic approach to preserving its position as the central power in Eastern Europe. This serves to mitigate the Russian-perceived threat posed by NATO, by


\textsuperscript{156} Tabachnik, “The Transnistrian Challenge.

\textsuperscript{157} Nagashima, “Russia’s Passportization Policy,” 195.
bolstering a “frozen conflict” to ensure strategic states like Moldova, Georgia and the Ukraine are not offered NATO membership.

   d) 2008 Invasion of the Republic of Georgia by the Russian Federation

   In August of 2008, Russia engaged in armed conflict with the Republic of Georgia. In a span of five days, Russian troops moved into the areas of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. There is much debate surrounding who bears the blame for this conflict, as each side has its supporters and detractors. However “few now doubt that Georgia was responsible for actually initiating the war by attacking the city of Tskhinvali [a city in the region of South Ossetia] on the evening of August 7—but Russian presence in the region is thought to be at least a partial catalyst.”158 There are two prevailing theories regarding the impetus for Russia’s involvement in this conflict.159 The first is that Russia was merely attempting to re-establish its dominance over Georgia following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The second is that Russia feared the influence of the west on nations associated with the CIS and that its participation in the conflict was designed to deter Georgia from associating itself with Western states.160

   While both of the theories involve a perception on the part of Russia that it must re-expand its sphere of influence, discussed in greater detail above, to mitigant Western influence, the second theory specifically “presupposes that if NATO had not attempted to offer Georgia the Membership Action Plan (MAP), Russia would not have pursued a preventive war as a ‘deterrent.’”161

   With this in mind, context and a brief analysis of the events leading up to the conflict are required.

158 Ellison, ”Russian Grand Strategy in the South Ossetia War,” 343.
159 Ibid at 344.
160 Ibid.
161 Ibid.
One of Russia’s apparent foreign policy objectives in engaging in armed conflict with Georgia was the delivery of a message. This message was that it refused to be surrounded by NATO’s expanded members, and would not cede its sphere of influence over any former Soviet bloc state.\textsuperscript{162} With this context Russia no doubt viewed Georgia’s interactions with NATO as part of a US-led effort to contain a reinvigorated Russia.\textsuperscript{163} When the NATO MAP for Georgia was initially rejected, Putin quickly officially sanctioned direct communications with the “separatist regions” of Georgia “followed by the spread of aid, Russian passports, and security assistance.”\textsuperscript{164} It can be argued that many of the inhabitants of the separatist regions were given Russian passports, possibly in an effort to later justify Russian military intervention on behalf of its now documented citizens.\textsuperscript{165} This fact further buttresses the argument above that Russia’s passportization policy toward unrecognized separatist republics was used as a tool to preserve its sphere of influence.

At the time of the 2008 conflict, former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev stated that “the majority of them [those inhabitants of South Ossentia involved in the conflict] are citizens of the Russian Federation. As president of the Russian Federation it is my duty to protect the lives and dignity of Russian citizens where they may be.”\textsuperscript{166} According to Second Secretary to the Embassy of Japan in Russia, Toru Nagashima, 90% of the residents of South Ossetia and Abkhazia had obtained Russian citizenship by the start of the conflict.\textsuperscript{167} This was seen by the West as a move on the part of Russia to

\textsuperscript{162} Ellison, “Russian Grand Strategy in the South Ossetia War,” 346-347.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid at 351.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid at 352.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid at 354.
\textsuperscript{166} Nagashima, “Russia’s Passportization Policy,” 186.
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid.
proliferate the population of Russian citizens in the disputed areas to justify a later show of military force.\textsuperscript{168} The use of passportization in Georgia began in 2002 with the dissemination of passports in Abkhazia in June of 2002, and later in South Ossetia in May of 2004.\textsuperscript{169} As a result of this effort, by September of 2004 the President of South Ossetia, Eduard Kokoity, declared “whether anyone likes it or not South Ossetia is already Russia, because 98 percent of the population are now Russian citizens.”\textsuperscript{170} Ultimately, “Russia’s recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in defiance of Euro-Atlantic positions can be seen as the tipping-point when Russia began to substantiate its rhetoric and to export highly nationalistic internal values in an attempt to revise the post-Cold War order.”\textsuperscript{171}

e) 2014 Annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by the Russian Federation

In late 2013, then Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych was reportedly prepared to sign a treaty of association with the EU, which would signify an agreement to engage in a formal relationship.\textsuperscript{172} Had he executed the agreement it would have been a complete affront to Vladimir Putin and Russia, with whom Yanukovych maintained a close relationship. This relationship between Yanukovych and Russia was further illuminated when Yanukovych opted not to affiliate with the EU, and was subsequently given $15 billion (US) of cheap credit and discounted fuel from Russia.\textsuperscript{173} Yanukovych’s movement away from Europe and closer to Russia resulted in a number of student

\textsuperscript{168} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid at 187.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid at 189.
\textsuperscript{171} March, “Is Nationalism Rising in Russian Foreign Policy? The Case of Georgia,” 188.
\textsuperscript{173} Ibid.
What began as simple protests, however, escalated. By February of 2014, a full-on revolution against Yanukovych and his policies had developed. This revolution came to be known as the Maidan Revolution. With the escalation of the Maidan Revolution Yanukovych fled Ukraine, which paved the way for the arrival of pro-Western Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko who financially supported the Maidan Revolution.175

After Yanukovych fled Ukraine near the end of February of 2014, “little green men” began to capture key assets in the Crimean Peninsula.176 While these individuals bore no identifying insignia or other indication of state-sponsorship, the Ukrainians recognized the weapons and other equipment as that of Russian soldiers.177 While Vladimir Putin initially denied a Russian military presence in Crimea, by April he conceded the little green men were in fact Russian soldiers.178 In March of 2014, Russian special forces moved into and occupied the Crimean Peninsula, ostensibly to preserve its port access to the Black Sea.179 In this case port access was specifically for the Russian Black Sea Fleet, which was housed in the Ukrainian city of Sevastopol on the peninsula.180 The efforts of Russia in 2014 effectively annexed Crimea from Ukraine, and while Russia made no further efforts to physically seize other portions of Ukraine Crimea presently remains in Russian custody and control.

174 Ibid.
176 Pifer, “Five Years After Crimea’s Illegal Annexation.”
177 Ibid.
178 Ibid.
179 Amadeo, “Ukraine Crisis, Summary and Explanation.”
180 British Broadcasting Corporation, “Ukraine's Sharp Divisions.”
With the specter of Yanukovych’s failure looming, there was reporting to suggest that Russia had begun planning an invasion up to six months before his precipitous fall as President of Ukraine.\textsuperscript{181} In particular Daniel Treisman has noted that Putin advisor Vladislav Surkov visited both Kiev and Simferopol, the capital of the peninsula, in the fall and winter of 2013.\textsuperscript{182} Of the many potential reasons for these visits his oversight over the construction of a bridge to join southern Russia and the peninsula is particularly noteworthy, as it would provide for more efficient and immediate troop movements in the case of annexation.\textsuperscript{183} Additionally, a memorandum surfaced in the Russian government in or around February of 2014, which suggested annexation in the event Yanukovych left or was removed from office.\textsuperscript{184} The memorandum went on to say that without the pro-Russian president in power the country would splinter into pro-Russian and pro-Western factions, which would result in a net loss to Russia.\textsuperscript{185}

V. Analysis

In reviewing the military and political interference on the part of the Soviet Union against Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and on the part of Russia against the sovereignty of Moldova, Georgia and the Ukraine, it becomes clear that Russia’s annexation of the Crimean Peninsula is best explained through the lens of: 1) the potential loss of its sphere of influence over the former Soviet bloc states; and 2) its perpetual fear of encirclement by Western powers, particularly NATO. While Russia may lay historical claim to the Ukraine, its logic for doing so would also permit it to lay claim to other former Warsaw

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\textsuperscript{181} Treisman, “Why Putin Took Crimea,” 50.
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{183} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid.
Pact countries. The ownership over these other countries, however, would do little to mitigate its overarching fear of Western encirclement. Additionally, while Vladimir Putin himself may have experienced an increase in popularity among Russian citizens after each military incursion into an Eastern European neighbor’s territory, the cost associated with each conflict, both the cost in terms of subsequent Western-induced economic sanctions as well as the financial costs of holding its positions in the various foreign territories, is by itself too great to justify the aggressive actions.

In terms of Russia’s historical claim of ownership of Ukraine, it provides more of a popular justification for invasion after the fact than an actual theory behind the underlying invasion itself. Including Russia there are approximately 15 independent states that comprised the former Soviet Union. These states include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Russia itself. Russia could posit a similar argument for an invasion of Kazakhstan which borders it to the south and is, relatively, expansive. It could also take a similar position relative to Belarus. That being said, in the case of both Kazakhstan and Belarus, and similarly situated states as well, such a claim of ownership would be both unwarranted and unnecessary.

The country of Kazakhstan, it can be argued, does not offer the same military or economic advantage as Ukraine and Crimea. It is south of Russia and can offer no natural barrier to the Western European powers, and, notwithstanding its use as a base of operations for the Russian space program, possesses no particularly valuable natural resources that require intervention and appropriation by Russia. Belarus, by contrast, is
situated strategically between Russia and the West, it is already essentially an extension of Russia. As such, invasion and annexation would seemingly be wholly unnecessary. Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia, conversely, sit northwest of Russia on the Baltic, and were all admitted to NATO in March of 2004 making any such argument of ownership by Russia difficult and impractical due to this western relationship. In this respect Russia’s historical claim of ownership of Ukraine is on its face a disingenuous attempt to legitimize its military invasion after the fact, and was no doubt done more to assuage the Russian populace than its Western rivals.

Like the theory surrounding Russia’s historical claim to Ukraine, the theory that the invasion and annexation was undertaken to bolster President Putin’s approval rating is intriguing but still insubstantial. While Putin’s approval after the annexation temporarily increased, as it did after Russia’s military campaign in Syria, political popularity is always fleeting by nature. It is also equally, and probably more, subject to the impact of the economy. Because of this fact, Putin’s popularity was just as apt to, and in fact did, plummet as a result of both the Western-imposed sanctions resulting from the annexation and the costs associated with maintaining the annexed peninsula. As noted above it cost Russia approximately $20 billion (US), through 2020, to maintain the annexation of the peninsula. By any standard this is a heavy cost to bear for a momentary increase in Presidential popularity, particularly when it will have a direct impact on the foundation of political popularity which is economic performance.

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Ultimately, the most simple, plausible and likely theory for Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and subsequent annexation of the Crimean Peninsula is a combination of the other two hypotheses. Russia most likely annexed the peninsula as a result of NATO’s offer to expand its relationship with Ukraine, which served to exacerbate Russia’s centuries old fear of Western encirclement. As previously noted, Russia has long maintained that after the dissolution of the Soviet Union the US-led West made a number of representations that it would not seek to take advantage of Russia’s relative weakness by offering NATO membership to the former Soviet bloc states. To offer such membership, from the perspective of Russia, would only further legitimize Russia’s historical practice of subsuming its neighbors in an attempt to bolster its own physical defenses and expand its sphere of influence.

When NATO admitted the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, Russia no doubt viewed the West as breaking its promise. With this promise broken, Russia no doubt reaffirmed its view that the West has historically attempted to, via such dictators as Napoleon and Hitler, and continues to attempt to encircle and influence Russia. In this context, Vladimir Putin in particular was able to continue Russian territorial expansion in attempt to re-establish the grandeur of the Soviet Union, the fall of which, as noted above, he characterized as "a major geopolitical disaster of the century."

In this respect the political landscape of 2014 was a perfect storm for Russia to annex Crimea. The confluence of Russia’s proclivity towards Western paranoia and perpetual desire to expand, the failure on the part of the US and NATO to intervene in the 2008 crisis in Georgia in a manner that deterred Russia in a meaningful way, and NATO and the EU’s overtures to Ukraine, all but ensured that Russia would invade Ukraine to
protect what it viewed as its military assets along the Black Sea as well as preserve its sphere of influence. The fact that the Baltic states had all been admitted to NATO ten years prior, and the fact that NATO had done nothing to protect the territorial integrity of Georgia during the military incursion by the Russian armed forces, undoubtedly left little to debate in Putin’s cabinet. While Russia certainly bears the brunt of the blame for its military bullying, blame can also be, albeit to a lesser degree, apportioned to the US and NATO for its reckless disregard of Russian history, the representations made by it to the newly formed Russian Federation in the early 1990s, and its impotence in coming to the aid of Georgia in 2008.

VI. Conclusion

In the end when analyzing the invasion by Russia of Ukraine, and its subsequent annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, the only conclusion that can be reached is that both Russia and the Western powers bear culpability for the annexation. NATO’s overtures to former Soviet bloc states, particularly those in the Baltic region, merely served to inflame Russia’s historical fear of invasion by Western powers that has resulted in its continual and systematic attempt to preserve its sphere of influence among the former Soviet bloc states. This is not to say that the US-led Western efforts to establish more robust diplomatic and military ties with former Warsaw Pact nations is alone the cause of the annexation, as it is not. This is to say, however, that the specific invasion of Ukraine by Russia could not have come as a surprise or unforeseeable, given Russia’s previous incursions into Moldova and Georgia.

Of additional note is that fact that most Russian policy analysts should also know that Russia’s history and geographical vulnerabilities have long molded its foreign policy.
This is particularly so as it relates to Russia’s foreign policy aimed at its Eastern European neighbors. These historical factors, coupled with the previous representations made by the US and its NATO allies that NATO would not encroach upon Russia by expanding its membership to include the former Soviet nations, all but ensured that Russia would move to preserve what it viewed as its military and territorial integrity. While Vladimir Putin did experience an abrupt increase in popularity after the annexation, this previously anticipated increase lapsed with the imposition of additional crippling economic sanctions by the Western powers. Additionally, the financial cost of holding the Crimean Peninsula greatly outweighs the fleeting uptick in popularity and its accompanying benefits. This fact must have been anticipated. Given these facts in totality the most reasonable explanation for the invasion and annexation is Russia’s perpetual fear of Western encirclement, and particularly its encirclement by NATO.
Chapter 2: Russia’s Reliance on Weaponized Disinformation and Propaganda

I. Introduction

In 2016, Russia not only sought to influence but successfully interfered with the US presidential election. What is up for debate is exactly what this profound interference says about the state of Russia’s foreign policy posture. Put another way, the natural question that arises from this event is whether the interference by Russia in the 2016 US presidential election demonstrates that Russia continues to adhere to the same aggressive foreign policy posture toward the US exhibited by the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Two schools of thought exist as to level of hostility and aggressiveness of Russia’s foreign policy posture towards the US. These competing schools of thought hold that either Russia’s foreign policy positions toward the US mirrors the hostility of those positions implemented by the Soviet Union, or the current posture is much closer to that of the Clinton-Yeltsin era than the Kennedy-Kruschev eras with actions like the 2016 election interference being unique to the character and goals of current Russian President Vladimir Putin.

As discussed below, one can only conclude that the interference in the 2016 US presidential election by Russia represents the strongest proof to date that the foreign policy posture of Russia toward the US has returned to that of the Cold War. To assert that the Putin regime is merely a bump in a road that is otherwise headed toward a thaw between the US and Russia, is to ignore the simple fact that the post-Soviet era is interchangeable with the Putin era and that the Putin era is a restoration of the Cold War foreign policy by Russia and its underlying animosity toward the US.
The ensuing discussion on this position will be divided into sections providing a literature review, case studies, analysis of all, and a conclusion. The literature review will highlight the two schools of thought on the current state of Russia’s foreign policy posture toward the US. The case studies will illustrate examples of Russia’s posture toward the US during the Cold War with greatest attention paid to Russia’s history of US election interference. Finally, an analysis will focus on how the active measures, proxy wars and targeted assassinations of defectors by the Russian Federation over the past five years mirrors those tactics employed previously by the Soviet Union against the US during the Cold War.

II. Literature Review

Currently two schools of thought exist with respect to Russia’s current foreign policy posture toward the US. This first school posits that there has been no substantive change in posture since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and that the tactics and strategies currently employed by Russia mirror those employed by the Soviet Union. The second school argues that a definitive thaw has occurred since the collapse of the Soviet Union which began with the administration of Boris Yeltsin. This second school asserts that while the current relationship is less than ideal, Russia’s current foreign policy posture is more a function of both the megalomaniacal persona of Vladimir Putin, as well as the aggressive expansion of NATO to Russia’s doorstep, than a continuation of Cold War tradecraft and statesmanship. Whatever minor offshoots of these viewpoints exist they are essentially a smaller portion of these two viewpoints.
a) The Current State of Russia’s Foreign Policy Posture Toward the US

Mirrors and is a Continuation of that Policy from the Cold War

Some experts have argued that Russia maintains its hostile and aggressive foreign policy posture against the US as a result of “the failure of U.S. policymakers to take account of Russian security interests.” This characterization is supported by a number of recent aggressive actions by Russia in particular. These actions include Russia’s annexation of Crimea in March 2014, its military support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad 2015, its interference in the US Presidential election described below, and even its assassination of Russian defectors living in the West to include Sergei Skripal in the United Kingdom (UK). John Feffer, the Director of Foreign Policy Focus at the Institute for Policy Studies, notes that the term “post-post Cold War” was already being used by The Economist as early as December of 1994. He went on to remark that “if you had the misfortune of falling into a coma just before the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 and only happened to wake up last year, you might actually think that you haven’t missed much at all.”

Dmitry Suslov, Deputy Director, Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, has noted that a number of issues have “created a conviction on the Russia side, that the US is a deliberately malevolent

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188 Ibid.
190 Ibid.
actor towards Russia.”¹⁹¹ Chief among these issues is a perception on the part of the Russian Government that the US utilizes the UN Security Council to strengthen the expansion of NATO and to even support the independence of certain territories within the boundaries of Russia to include Chechnya.¹⁹² This was all done, according to Suslov, while “ignoring…Russian objections” in an attempt to maintain the weakness of Russia.¹⁹³ Even the foreign press has acknowledged the existence of a new Cold War between the US and Russia. In December of 2016, *The Hindu* published an editorial posting that one of the bigger foreign policy issues awaiting the next US President was the “frosty relationship with an angry, resurgent Russia.”¹⁹⁴ The editorial characterized the current relationship between the US and Russia as a “throwback to the Cold War days with Russia and the U.S. fighting a proxy war in the Ukraine, leading two competing military operations in Syria and raising allegations and counter-allegations on a host of issues, ranging from human rights violations and breaking international norms to interfering with each other’s domestic politics.”¹⁹⁵

As recently as 2018, the US Department of Defense defined a “great power competition” as the greatest threat to the US.¹⁹⁶ What is particularly noteworthy about this declaration is that it represents a shift away from terrorism as the chief threat after approximately seventeen years.¹⁹⁷ Two months later US Army General Curtis Scaparrotti

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¹⁹¹ Dmitry Suslov, “The Russian Perception of the Post-Cold War era and Relations with the West,” *Harriman Institute, Columbia University* (November 9, 2016): 9.
¹⁹² Ibid.
¹⁹³ Ibid.
¹⁹⁵ Ibid.
¹⁹⁷ Ibid.
stated that the “highest strategic priority … is to deter Russia from engaging in further aggression and exercising malign influence over our allies and partners.” These remarks align with similar statements made by US Air Force General Philip Breedlove who similarly argued that “Russia … poses a long-term existential threat to the United States and to our European allies and partners.” This argument, in turn, dovetails with assertions made by the late US Senator John McCain and former US Senator and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton who both claimed that the Russian interference in the US Presidential election is itself an “act of war.”

Robert Legvold, the Marshall D. Shulman Professor Emeritus at Columbia University, has specifically noted that “it is important to call things by their names, and the collapse in relations between Russia and the West does indeed deserve to be called a new Cold War.” He argues that this “new” Cold War mirrors the old one in multiple respects. Firstly, he notes that both the US and Russia are already “framing the standoff in unforgiving terms.” He clarified this by noting that both nations have taken the position that if the other is not with them in terms of their politics and foreign policies then that other nation is against them. Secondly, both nations view “the conflict as a result solely of the actions—or even the nature—of the other.” Legvold asserts that both the US and Russia have elected to disregard the actual events, often complicated,
that have led to the current relationship, and instead have simply chosen to make broad-
sweeping condemnations of the character of the other.\textsuperscript{206} He even notes that this skewed
perception held by each of the other is reminiscent of the attitudes held by each “during
the late 1950s and early 1960s, when each side viewed the other as inherently alien.”\textsuperscript{207}

Legvold finally argues that while the meddling done by Russia in the affairs of
Georgia and others did not complete derail the possibility of a permanent thaw in US-
Russia relations, the Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in Ukraine effectively
“pushed the two sides over a cliff and into a new relationship, one not softened by the
ambiguity that defined the last decade of the post–Cold War period, when each party
viewed the other as neither friend nor foe.”\textsuperscript{208} The events in Ukraine in 2014, according
to Legvold, have spelled the death knell of US-Russian diplomacy and have reignited the
Cold War more than any other event.\textsuperscript{209}

b) The Current State of Russia’s Foreign Policy Posture Toward the US Has
Thawed Relative to the Cold War, and Actions Like the Interference in the
2016 US Presidential Election is Solely a Result of Vladimir Putin’s
Individual Policy Strategies

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russian active measures went into a
deep thaw as the KGB was in disarray and Moscow lost its Warsaw Pact allies to the
expansion of NATO and the EU. It was the position of US policy makers that Russia
“could be integrated into the Western-based international system.”\textsuperscript{210} Inasmuch as the

\textsuperscript{206} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{207} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{208} Ibid at 75.
\textsuperscript{209} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{210} Celeste Wallander, “Russian-US Relations in the Post Post-Cold War World,” \textit{PONARS Eurasia, PONARS}
members of NATO and the UN exhibit a variety of economic systems and success, as well as governance, a potential new member need not be a mirror image of the US or the UK. There are, however, certain expectations that new members will adhere to specified principles regarding access to economic markets, private property ownership, preservation of human rights and free participation in and access to elections.211

During the Clinton administration for example, Russian President Boris Yeltsin was viewed as a positive movant for change. So much so, that the White House used its influence with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to induce the IMF to extend a line of credit to Russia.212 This was done despite Yeltsin being viewed as “heavy-handed” in Russia’s invasion of Chechnya.213 Similarly, Russia was quick to stay away from interfering in the US policy against Iran, even though Iran would have proved a valuable ally to Russia in the Middle East and the former Soviet Union would no doubt have interfered in any US policy related to Iran during the Cold War.214

This period was viewed as a “Golden Age” of US-Russia relations as both nations were quick to ensure that any large-scale attempts to change the other’s approach were avoided so as not to undermine the thawing of overall diplomacy.215 It can be argued that this very unstable and delicate balance would have continued its trajectory towards closer unification between the US and Russian governments, economies and people, but for the rise to power of a Cold War relic and apologist by the name of Vladimir Putin.

211 Ibid.
213 Ibid.
214 Ibid.
215 Ibid at 3.
Current Russian President, and former Russian Intelligence Officer, Vladimir Putin is a product of the Cold War and the superpower status of the former Soviet Union. It is clear that Putin has, among other imperatives, the desire to recreate the Soviet Union, or at least to recreate the grandeur of the Soviet Union. As noted previously in chapter one, in 2005 Putin described the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 as "a major geopolitical disaster of the century." In furtherance of his imperative he has undertaken a litany of aggressive foreign policies to reinvigorate his approval ratings among his constituents. In fact, as demonstrated above, Putin actually enjoyed an increase in his public approval after the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula.

Alina Polyakova of the *San Francisco Chronicle* notes that Putin masterfully manipulates facts and “skillfully plays with this ambiguity: He has carefully crafted an image that often contradicts reality. In this image, he plays the roles simultaneously of defender of Christian values (even though the majority of Russians are not religious); savior of Russia from economic destitution (even though under his rule the Russian economy entered a period of stagnation and 25 percent of Russians are too poor to have an indoor toilet); and a strong leader as compared with the weak democratically elected leaders in the West (even though most Westerners who visit Russia outside the glitz of Moscow would likely not want to live there).” She then notes that Putin characterizing the US as a rival, enemy and even nemesis is absolutely necessary to effectively distract

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216 Ibid.
217 Steven Pifer, “Five Years After Crimea’s Illegal Annexation.
the Russian people from the economic, civil and political problems that plague their country.\textsuperscript{219}

Opponents of viewing Russia’s foreign policy posture toward the US as simply a resumption of the Cold War point out that the “dangers and fallacies of thinking in Cold-War, zero-sum, and military-first policies towards Russia are several-fold.”\textsuperscript{220} Michael O’Hanlon and Sean Zeigler of \textit{The Brookings Institute} note that Russia’s current territorial ambitions dwarf the “global ambitions of the Soviet Union.”\textsuperscript{221} O’Hanlon and Zeigler also argued that to view the current state of US-Russia relations as nothing more than a continuation of the Cold War is to ignore the relative effectiveness the US has enjoyed in working with Russia a number of issues related to global security.\textsuperscript{222}

It can be argued that Russia has even been somewhat supportive of US policy within the UN. While serious conflicts and disagreements exist related to the civil war in Syria, the US and Russian cooperation has been effective in combatting and reducing the presence of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.\textsuperscript{223} Additionally, any progress made in controlling the growing Iranian and North Korean nuclear arsenals was only possible due to the support and buy-in from Russia as a veto-holding member of the UN.

III. Case Studies

Below are exemplary case studies that demonstrate Russia’s reliance upon active measures, as defined above, and other Cold War foreign policy tactics. The case studies

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{tabular}{l}
\textsuperscript{219} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{221} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{222} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{223} Ibid.
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\end{footnotesize}
are divided into three categories. These categories are: 1) Russian interference in US presidential elections; 2) current proxy wars between the US and Russia as manifested in Afghanistan and Syria; and 3) the assassination of Russian defectors by the Russian intelligence services. Taken in totality the case studies outlined below illustrate that the current Russian foreign policy posture toward the US mirrors that of the Soviet Union during the height of the Cold War.

a) US Presidential Election Interference

A chief component of the active measures utilized by the Soviet Union was interference in US presidential elections. In 1960 then Soviet Ambassador to the US Mikhail Menshikov met with presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson, and presented Stevenson with a letter Menshikov had received from Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. The letter advised Menshikov that Stevenson was the favored candidate and admonished Menshikov to ask Stevenson “which way we could be of assistance to those forces in the United States which favor friendly relations.” Stevenson documented the contact and noted that he expressed gratitude for “this expression of Khrushchev’s confidence,” but advised Menshikov that “even if I was a candidate I could not accept the assistance proffered. I believe I made it clear to him that I considered the offer of such assistance highly improper, indiscreet and dangerous to all concerned.”

The Soviet Union elected to again interfere in a US presidential election in the 1960s. This time rather than offering aid to a candidate the Soviet Union pointed its

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225 Ibid.
226 Ibid.
propaganda machine at the opposition. In this case the candidate was US Senator Barry Goldwater, the Republican candidate for U.S. president.\textsuperscript{227} Goldwater so alarmed the Soviet Union with his anti-Soviet views that it “orchestrated a disinformation campaign labeling Goldwater as a racist and a KKK sympathizer,” and further “produced and distributed printed material in the United States and overseas.”\textsuperscript{228} While one Soviet intelligence official opined that interference like the one used against Goldwater was “much more successful in developing countries than here in the United States,” Goldwater still lost the election to Lyndon Johnson in a “landslide.”\textsuperscript{229}

Having interfered in the past two presidential elections, the Soviet Union was emboldened to continue its efforts. By the time the 1968 presidential election arrived, presidential candidate Richard Nixon, much like previous candidate Barry Goldwater, had made his anti-Soviet biases well known.\textsuperscript{230} Fearing a Nixon administration the Soviet Union covertly offered to financially support the campaign of Nixon rival Hubert Humphrey.\textsuperscript{231} Then Soviet Ambassador to the US Anatoly Dobrynin has been quoted as saying that “the top Soviet leaders took an extraordinary step, unprecedented in the history of Soviet-American relations, by secretly offering Humphrey any conceivable help in his election campaign—including financial aid.”\textsuperscript{232} While Humphrey astutely rejected the offer from a foreign hostile nation and also lost the election, this attempt to financially support a US presidential candidate represented an escalation in invasiveness of the tactics employed by the Soviet Union and specifically the KGB.

\textsuperscript{227} Jones, “Meddling,” 3.
\textsuperscript{228} Ibid at 4.
\textsuperscript{229} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{230} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{231} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{232} Ibid.
Prior to the Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election outlined below, the most systematic, wide-spread and invasive example of Soviet or Russian election interference was the 1984 US presidential election. A review of top-secret KGB archived documents revealed that “probably no American policymaker at any time during the Cold War…inspired quite as much fear and loathing in Moscow as Ronald Reagan during his first term as president.”233 Reagan did not garner much attention from the KGB campaigning for his first term.234 The Soviet Union had concluded that since then US President James Carter had an anti-Soviet National Security Advisor in the form of Zbigniew Brzezinski, it mattered little who won the White House.235 After his first term in office, however, “[e]nsuring that Reagan did not serve a second term thus became Service A’s most important objective.”236

When confronted by the specter of another four years of the Reagan administration the Soviet Union, specifically leadership within the KGB, commenced active measures to sabotage the President’s re-election campaign.237 According to archival documents from the KGB, personnel responsible for implementing operations against the US were to “begin planning active measures to ensure [Ronald] Reagan’s defeat in the [1984] presidential election” and to “acquire contacts on the staffs of all possible presidential candidates and in both party headquarters.”238 The active measures employed against Reagan during his second campaign were ultimately focused on

233 Ibid.
234 Ibid.
235 Ibid.
236 Ibid at 5.
237 Michel, “Interference.”
238 Ibid.
framing candidate Reagan as a “warmonger.” The KGB was not only successful in inserting its agents into the campaigns themselves, but were able to work with other anti-Reagan groups to target Reagan’s campaign with propaganda. This propaganda included characterizing Reagan as a racist who discriminated against minorities, painting his administration as corrupt, and concluding that he was a “war hawk who was engineering an arms race and catapulting the United States and Soviet Union toward nuclear Armageddon.”

In the fall of 2016, the Russian Federation interfered in the US presidential election. In his final report Special Counsel Robert Mueller stated that the interference was effectuated on two separate fronts. The first front was “the Russian government’s efforts to conduct computer hacking operations designed to gather and disseminate information to influence the election.” The second involved efforts by “a Russian organization, the Internet Research Agency (IRA), to conduct disinformation and social media operations in the United States designed to sow social discord, eventually with the aim of interfering with the election.” The Wall Street Journal described the Special Counsel’s report on the matter as “unambiguously clear” in its establishment of Russian election interference.

240 Ibid.
241 Ibid.
243 Ibid.
244 Ibid.
The 2018 Senate Intelligence Committee released the results of its own investigation regarding Russia’s interference in the 2016 presidential election. The committee noted that Russia implemented an “unprecedented, coordinated cyber campaign” against the US election framework.\textsuperscript{246} The committee further noted that the perpetrators of the cyber intrusion, thought to be operators with Russian military intelligence (Glavnoye Razvedyvatel'noye Upravleniye or GRU) had the capability to “alter or delete voter registration data.”\textsuperscript{247} Of note is the fact that at least twenty-one states were targeted in this interference assault carried out by Russia.\textsuperscript{248} As a result of the election hacking perpetrated by the GRU, in July of 2018 the Department of Justice announced that twelve Russian nationals, all of whom were members of the GRU, were indicted for the 2016 cyber intrusion.\textsuperscript{249} As it specifically related to the presidential campaign of Hilary Clinton, Russian military intelligence effectuated unauthorized cyber intrusions that resulted in the theft of tens of thousands of e-mail messages from Clinton campaign staffers.\textsuperscript{250} Russian military intelligence then “created a fake online group called Guccifer 2.0 and used that persona to share these emails with WikiLeaks,” which in turn released the correspondence prior to the election which resulted in “frequent


\textsuperscript{247} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{248} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{249} Department of Justice, Grand Jury Indicts 12 Russian Intelligence Officers for Hacking Offenses Related to the 2016 Election, 2018.

negative news cycles for Clinton and distracting from the message she hoped to send voters in the final days of the campaign.”

b) A Proxy War Resulting in Bounties on US Military Operators

In June of 2020, The New York Times reported that a Russian military unit “which has been linked to assassination attempts and other covert operations in Europe intended to destabilize the West or take revenge on turncoats,” had offered bounties to militants in Afghanistan for attacking US-led coalition forces. The Times further noted that while twenty US troops were killed in Afghanistan in 2019, it was unclear how many were related to the bounties offered by the Russian military. This was characterized, nonetheless, by the Times as “a huge escalation of Russia’s so-called hybrid war against the United States, a strategy of destabilizing adversaries through a combination of such tactics as cyberattacks, the spread of fake news and covert and deniable military operations.”

Days after the report noted above The Washington Post followed up with reporting that indicated that the bounties had, in fact, resulted in the death of US troops. The Russian Embassy to the US declared the story “fake news” on its official Twitter

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251 Ibid.
253 Ibid.
254 Ibid.
account, and the Taliban characterized the accusations as “baseless” noting that “the Taliban had stopped attacking US and NATO forces after they agreed in February to a phased troop withdrawal and to lift sanctions.”256 In return, the Taliban said they would not allow extremist groups to operate in areas they control.”257 Whether or not the actual bounties were effective and resulted in the assassination of specific US troops, this action taken by the Russian military represents a distinct escalation in aggressive tactics by Russia against the US and its allies and one not seen since the peak of the Cold War.

c) Defector Assassinations

In the past fifteen years, Russia has resorted to targeted assassinations of various former intelligence officers who have defected to the West. Of note are the murder and attempted murder of both Alexander Litvinenko and Sergei Skripal. Although the assassinations were attempted approximately ten years apart, both victims were former intelligence officers who had moved to Britain and received money from the British Intelligence Service. Both were also poisoned by current Russian Intelligence Officers near their homes in the UK.

In November of 2006, former KGB Officer, and outspoken critic of the Kremlin, Alexander Litvinenko died after he ingested radioactive polonium-210.258 It is believed that polonium had been put in his tea while he met with two former colleagues, Andrei Lugovoi and Dmitri Kovtun, at a London hotel.259 At the time it was revealed that

257 Ibid.
259 Ibid.
Litvinenko was a British citizen and was “being paid by the British secret service MI6.”

Both Lugovoi and Kovtun denied any involvement in Litvinenko’s murder, and Lugovoi himself at a press conference went so far as to claim “Litvinenko was a British spy who might have been killed by the British security services.” In 2015, an inquiry into the murder was ultimately opened by the British Government via the Royal Courts of Justice. Approximately one year later the inquiry concluded that Litvinenko’s murder was “probably” with the approval of Litvinenko nemesis Vladimir Putin. It is reported that Putin was Litvinenko’s superior while they were both employed at the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (Federal’naya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti or FSB), and that they “fell out over corruption within the FSB.”

In early March of 2018, two Russian intelligence officers made a covert trip to the UK to poison former KGB Agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia who was in town visiting her father. The two men exposed Skripal and his daughter to a military-grade nerve agent known as Novichok. Skripal had been previously convicted in a Russian court for spying on behalf of the UK and was part of a prisoner-swap back in 2006. The poisoning of Skripal led to what The New York Times characterized as “a Cold War-

\[260\] Ibid.
\[261\] Ibid.
\[262\] Ibid.
\[263\] Ibid.
\[264\] Ibid.
\[266\] Ibid.
\[267\] Ibid.
style confrontation between Russia and the West, with both sides expelling diplomats and wrangling over who tried to kill him and why.”

In August of 2019, US President Donald Trump issued an executive order imposing sanctions against Russia for the poisoning of Skripal. Moscow, incidentally, denied wrongdoing in the poisoning. In response to the sanctions Frants Klintsevich, a member of the Russian upper house’s defense and security committee, declared that the “introduction of new sanctions against Russia by Washington not only makes the possibility of normalizing Russian-American relations even more hypothetical, they are the latest attack on international relations in general and on strategic stability in the world.”

IV. Analysis

The interference by Russia in the 2016 US presidential election, outlined above, represents the strongest evidence to date that Russia maintains its hostile and aggressive Cold War foreign policy posture against the US. The systematic computer intrusions conducted by the Russian government to illicitly procure and disseminate information to influence the election, as well as the Russian government’s use of affiliated third party organizations like IRA to conduct disinformation and social media operations in the US to sow social discord and interfere with the election, is a classic and even modernized version of the aktivnye meropriyatiya (active measures) employed by the Soviet Union.

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270 Ibid.
271 Ibid.
during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Moreover, it is an actual escalation in the interference inasmuch as it represents not only the customary dissemination of misinformation but also involved the actual theft and redistribution of confidential and proprietary political information via an intrusive, government-directed, cyber intrusion.

Prior to the election hacking and interference in 2016, the argument that Russian President Vladimir Putin’s hostile military assaults in Moldova, Georgia and the Ukraine, to include the annexation of Crimea, were more a defensive response to his perceived encroachment by NATO was plausible. The election interference, and more precisely the illegal and hostile associated network intrusions, coupled with the massive and systematic dissemination of misinformation designed to delegitimize the entire US electoral system, represents a purely offensive assault on the US. It falls directly in line with the attempts by the Soviet Union to prevent the democratic nomination of John Kennedy in 1960, the election of Barry Goldwater in 1964, election of Richard Nixon in 1968, and is identical to the attempts by the Soviet Union to derail the re-election of Ronald Reagan.

Not only does Russia’s interference and attempted influence of the 2016 presidential election represent the strongest evidence to date that Russia continues to adhere to a Soviet-style foreign policy posture towards the US, but this act of aggression represents proof of a continual escalation in hostility by Russia. Much like the use of proxies in military conflicts to avoid direct combat against one another, the US and Russia continue to rely upon allies in their conflicts to take direct actions. The best recent example of this, which was noted above, is the current civil war in Syria.

The US and Russia have elected to engage in a proxy war in Syria, and thus have not directly engaged in combat with one another. Russia has provided direct military aid
to the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, while the US has provided military aid to the rebels fighting to overthrow al-Assad. This proxy war can be greatly contrasted, however, with the Russian military’s offering of bounties to Afghan militants to attack and kill US service members and their allies. The long-time Soviet Cold War practice of attempting to degrade or undermine the US electoral and judicial systems, as well as US military capabilities, is a far cry from the solicitation of contract assassinations. An additional escalation from more conventional proxy wars is the actual and attempted assassinations of Russian intelligence defectors on the soil of the oldest ally of the US. The brazen act of sending current Russian intelligence officers into the UK to poison and kill multiple Russian defectors who provided assistance to the West, represents a complete disregard for British territorial sovereignty and an unabashed dismissal of neutral diplomatic relationships in favor of a hostile Cold War foreign policy posture.

Just as Russia’s movement from anti-US proxy wars to targeted killings of US military operators represents a distinct escalation of hostility and tactics, so too does its transition from simply spreading disinformation to influence US elections to the theft of confidential political documents and communications via network exploitation to interfere in US elections. As noted above Russia’s interference in the 2016 US presidential election not only mirrors similar attempts to interfere in US elections over the course of three decades by the Soviet Union, it also, like the bounties on US servicemembers and poisoning of defectors, services as a visceral example of the trend by Russia to take Cold War foreign policy tools and techniques and escalate them in either invasiveness or violence.
Ultimately, the argument that the hostility of Russia’s foreign policy posture toward the US has diminished falls flat. While the Clinton-Yeltsin era provided a reprieve in tensions, outside of Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin, either as President or Prime Minister, has ruled Russia exclusively since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Putin has methodically and steadfastly attempted to regain the grandeur of the Soviet Union and has systematically done so while aggressively expanding the Russian sphere of influence and continually relying on Soviet foreign policy tools, techniques, and tactics, previously relied upon by Putin and his brethren in the KGB.

To notion that the Putin era is temporary change in Russian foreign policy dynamics belies the fact that since 2000 Putin has ensured that Russia has gravitated toward the governing and foreign policy positions of its Soviet predecessor for approximately twenty of the thirty post-Soviet years. It would in fact would be more accurate to state that the inverse is true, that the Yeltsin era provided a temporary reprieve in hostility between the US and Russia which have been tense and confrontational since the days of the Bolshevik Revolution. Putin is much more reminiscent of Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev, than Gorbachev and Yeltsin. In this respect it would be more accurate to say that Russia’s foreign policy posture toward the US never fundamentally changed after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, but rather enjoyed a neutral reprieve. A reprieve which ended with the departure of Boris Yeltsin.

V. Conclusion

In light of the foregoing, one can only conclude that the interference in the 2016 US presidential election by the Russian Federation represents the strongest proof to date that Russia continues to embrace a hostile and aggressive Cold War foreign policy
posture toward the US. It is also representative not only of the re-implementation of Cold War active measures previously relied upon by the Soviet Union, but an escalation in both the invasiveness and hostility of these measures. To assert that the Putin regime is merely a bump in a road that is otherwise headed toward a retreat in hostile foreign policies by Russia, is to plainly ignore the simple fact that the post-Soviet era is interchangeable with the Putin era. The last vestige of the Gorbachev/Yeltsin Cold War thaw was eliminated when Putin was elected, elected again, and when the relatively recent referendum passed permitting him to stay in office until 2036.

US policy makers must accept this disappointing truth in order to appropriately craft its Russian foreign policy. Vladimir Putin does not seek national security and economic cooperation with the US and the West. He does not view the former Eastern Bloc states as political and diplomatic equals. He does not wish to fully integrate Russia into the world economy or political apparatus. He views the US and its allies as a decadent enemy who seeks to encroach upon Russia’s sphere of influence. He also views his Eastern European neighbors as mere pawns and still parts of the Soviet empire to be threatened, maligned and manipulated via his version of the Brezhnev doctrine.
Chapter 3: Russia’s Reliance on Espionage and Illicit Intelligence Operations

I. Introduction

Since the beginning of the Cold War the Soviet Union, and its successor Russia, has engaged in espionage against the US in an effort to weaken its military, political and economic viability. This use of espionage, defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “the practice of spying or using spies to obtain information about the plans and activities especially of a foreign government or a competing company,” by Russia continues presently, and mirrors the tempo and invasiveness of the operations carried out by the Soviet Union during the Cold War. An argument can actually be made that Russian espionage operations have actually become more audacious in the last two decades, as they have not relied necessarily on the use of spotted, assessed and recruited US persons for their implementation, but rather Russian nationals in non-official cover. The more pressing issue, however, is what the continued use of espionage operations by Russia says about the state of Russia’s foreign policy posture toward the US. Put another way, the degree to which Russia continues to rely upon espionage unequivocally demonstrates that it maintains its hostile and aggressive Cold War foreign policy posture toward the US. Two schools of thought exist as to the nature of Russia’s foreign policy approach to the US. These competing schools of thought hold that either the current approach mirrors and is a continuation of that during the Cold War, or the current approach is neutral, less hostile, and is much closer to that of the Clinton-Yeltsin era than the Kennedy-Kruschev eras with actions like the use of Russian nationals illegally placed in the US as

unregistered agents, as detailed below, being unique to the character and goals of current Russian President Vladimir Putin.

As discussed below, one can only conclude that the continued use of espionage by Russia represents conclusive evidence that it continues to adhere to the same hostile and aggressive foreign policy posture against the US that was utilized by the Soviet Union during the Cold War. As discussed previously above, to assert that the Putin regime is merely a bump in a road that is otherwise headed toward a thaw between the US and Russia, is to ignore the simple fact that the post-Soviet era is interchangeable with the Putin era and that the Putin era is a restoration of the Cold War and its underlying animosities.

The ensuing discussion on this position will be divided into sections providing a literature review, case studies, analysis of all, and a conclusion. The literature review will highlight the two schools of thought on Russia’s current foreign policy posture toward the US. The case studies will illustrate examples of Russia’s posture toward the US during the Cold War with greatest attention paid to Russia’s history of espionage operations targeting US interests. Finally, an analysis will focus on how the use of espionage operations during and after the Cold War by the Soviet Union and Russia has changed slightly terms of approach, but has remained constant in its use as a tool to illicitly acquire sensitive US military, political and economic reporting.

II. Literature Review

Currently two schools of thought exist with respect to Russia’s current foreign policy posture toward the US. This first school posits that there has been no substantive change in foreign policy posture since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and that the
tactics and strategies currently employed by the Russian Federation mirror those employed by the Soviet Union. The second school argues that a definitive thaw has occurred since the collapse of the Soviet Union which began with the Clinton-Yeltsin administrations, continued through the Bush-Putin administrations, and culminated in a hybrid approach utilized by the Obama White House. This second school asserts that the hostility and aggressiveness that has historically characterized Russia’s foreign policy posture toward the US has waned and is more neutral than it was during the Cold War. As noted above, whatever minor offshoots of these viewpoints exist they are essentially a smaller portion of these two viewpoints.

a) The Current State of Russia’s Foreign Policy Posture Toward the US Mirrors and is a Continuation of that Policy During the Cold War

An argument can be made that Russia’s foreign policy posture toward the US is as hostile as it has been since 1985. Some experts have argued that the US and Russia have resumed their Cold War relationship as a result of “the failure of U.S. policymakers to take account of Russian security interests.” One need only review the past decade to see that the state of foreign affairs between the two nations remains relatively static. Russia’s interference in the 2016 and 2020 US presidential elections, its annexation of Crimea and launch of an ongoing war in southeastern Ukraine, plus its support for “Syria’s Bashar al-Assad in his brutal civil war, and for Venezuela’s Nicolas Maduro have raised tensions with the United States.” Putin, through his aggressive, Soviet era

274 Kramer, “U.S.-Russian Relations and the “New Cold War” Metaphor.”
275 Ibid.
style tactics, has ensured that Russia has become a “centralized, authoritarian state and has returned as a global player, competing with the United States for influence.”

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, many US observers predicted that Russia would immediately vacillate toward the West and seek inclusion in both the EU and/or NATO. The US even went so far as to send political and economic advisors to promote “democracy and markets” among the fledgling Russian private sector businesses. The early days of the Russian Federation were chaotic, and characterized by “enriching a few and impoverishing many.” The opinion, with the benefit of hindsight, is that Russia was “humiliated” by the presumption that it would simply accept the Western agenda while its “legitimate interests” were discounted by the US. Chief among these legitimate interests was, and continues to be, the right of Russia to exercise a sphere of influence among the former Soviet bloc states, and any inclusion of these former states into NATO or the EU represents a direct threat against that sphere of influence.

Russia does not define its border, at least in the sense of its security border, as limited to the geographic boundaries of the Russian Federation, but rather the geographic boundaries inclusive of the former Soviet Union. As a consequence it demands that the US and the rest of the West acknowledge and accept these same boundaries. Thus far, however, the US and its allies have steadfastly refused to accept this framework and

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276 Ibid.
277 Ibid.
278 Ibid.
279 Ibid.
280 Ibid.
281 Ibid.
282 Ibid.
actually “insists on Russia’s neighbors’ right to choose their foreign policy orientation.”

It must be acknowledged that there have been two periods in recent history where it appeared that the relationship between the US and Russia had turned a corner: “the immediate post-9/11 period when Russia assisted the United States in the first phase of the war in Afghanistan, providing information which it had collected from its decade-long war there; and during the 2008-12 period of the “reset” between Presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev, when Moscow and Washington cooperated on arms control, Afghanistan, Iran, and a range of other issues.” Notwithstanding this temporary thaw, relations began to cool and regain their Cold War norm when Putin was once again elected as Russian president in 2012. After his re-election Putin blamed US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for the unrest in Russia during the election season. In 2013 Putin granted political asylum to Edward Snowden, “the disgruntled NSA contractor who stole millions of classified documents and fled to Russia via Hong Kong.” When US President Barack Obama requested Snowden’s extradition, Putin balked and this resulted in Obama’s subsequently cancelling a planned summit with Putin. This trend toward a re-freeze in relations culminated in Russian’s annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and Russian interference with the US presidential election in 2016.

283 Ibid.
284 Ibid.
285 Ibid.
286 Ibid.
287 Ibid.
288 Ibid.
289 Ibid.
In a report prepared by Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s office “a troll factory in St. Petersburg worked round the clock to use social media to exacerbate the political polarization that existed in U.S. society, cast doubt among Americans about the legitimacy of the own democracy, and use these platforms to favor Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton.” Additionally, Russia also sought to compromise election machines in certain states, “raising the possibility that it could seek to change the outcome of future elections.” Russia continued to use social media to interfere with the US presidential election in 2020.

b) The Current State of Russia’s Foreign Policy Posture Toward the US Has Thawed Relative to the Cold War, and Russia’s Continued Reliance Upon Espionage is Solely a Result of Vladimir Putin’s Individual Policy Strategies

As outlined above, proponents of the position that Russia’s foreign policy posture toward the US has become more neutral and less hostile point to the Clinton-Yeltsin administrations and the US-induced line of credit extended to Russia from the IMF as the beginning of the that. Another example of this movement away from hostility and aggression was the decision by Russia not to interject itself, as an ally of Iran, in US foreign policy directed at Iran. This degree of cooperation/thawing continued during the beginning of the US-led global war on terrorism during the first term of President George W. Bush. Specifically, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Bush and Putin attempted to normalize or restore US-Russia foreign relations. The Bush

290 Ibid.
291 Ibid.
292 Ibid.
293 Bowen, “Russia: Foreign Policy and U.S. Relations,” 45.
Administration endeavored to reconstruct the US relationship with Russia via cooperation against terrorism and the economic integration of Russia with the West.\textsuperscript{294}

Proponents of this school of thought assert as support of their position that a “middle way” approach was developed by the administration of President Barack Obama. This middle approach involves condemnation of aggressive foreign policy moves, but is “defined by maintaining cooperation with Russia on key global issues that require Moscow’s involvement, such as the Iranian nuclear issue.”\textsuperscript{295} The utility of this middle way, as argued by its promoters, is that it avoids a new Cold War without having to “negotiate with Russia about the regional order on its periphery.”\textsuperscript{296} This hybrid middle way is intended to “reassure NATO allies and to deter Russian adventurism.”\textsuperscript{297}

Proponents of this position note that Russia’s foreign policy posture toward the US is undoubtably different due to the success of the middle way, citing the ability of both nations to overcome their political differences during the Obama era to attain the success of the P5+1 negotiations with Iran.\textsuperscript{298}

While the position advocating that there has been an overall movement away from hostility and aggression in Russia’s US foreign policy is compelling, the current Russia Government is seemingly incapable of moving past its hostile approach. To begin with, many current Russia government officials have shared Putin’s assessment that the fall of the Soviet Union was the “greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century.”\textsuperscript{299} They enjoyed great benefits as officials within the Soviet government, had

\textsuperscript{294}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{295} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{296} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{297} Ibid at 151.
\textsuperscript{298} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{299} Ibid at 18.
“promising careers in the security services—the elite institutions of the old regime—and the prospect of promising careers.” These expectations, however served to mitigate the extent to which free elections and the rule of law were accepted by rank and file Russians. Rather than accepting a Western model of democracy and market economy, Russia implemented a “hybrid system that combines elements of the free market with authoritarian politics and hostility to the West, fears of encirclement, Soviet nostalgia, and above all a sense of entitlement to its security rooted in the suffering and sacrifice of another generation.”

Nothing illustrates the unimpeachable fact that hostility and aggression persist than Russia’s foreign policy approach subsequent to its invasion of Ukraine. Specifically, Russia’s policy approach to France, Germany and the United Kingdom can only be characterized as consistently an “aggressive, opportunistic, zero-sum approach that shows no signs of interest in reconciliation or in lowering tensions caused by Russia’s posture in Europe.” By way of example, in 2020 British Prime Minister Boris Johnson advised Putin that there would be no normalization or relations between the UK and Russia until Russia stopped its “destabilizing actions.” This declaration was made after Russian intelligence officers poisoned Russia defector Sergei Skripal on UK soil in 2018. This current relationship mirrors the historical state of relations between Russia and the powers of Western Europe, which have been, and continue to be, characterized

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300 Ibid.
301 Ibid at 19.
302 Ibid.
303 Ibid at 23.
304 Ibid at 24.
305 Ibid.
by “ideological differences and rejection of each other’s values.”

306 Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has been quoted as remarking that “Western Europe has always sought to deprive the Russian people of the right to have their own faith and identity,” which underscores the fact that Russia reacts aggressively to any “perceived threat to its sovereignty.”

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A further illustration of Russia’s hostile foreign policy is Russia’s continued attempt to reestablish its control and influence over the Balkans. Russia vigorously opposed the NATO-led conflict against Serbia and established Kosovo over Russian objection. In furtherance of its mission to retain control over the Balkans and frustrate/mitigate NATO’s efforts to bring the former Soviet bloc states situated there into NATO membership, Russia has relied on the Cold War tools of “subversion, propaganda, influence operations, trade, energy, disinformation, and support for populist and nationalist movements.” Russia’s use of “disinformation, exploitation of ethnic and religious rivalries, and corruption to undermine Western influence in the region,” bears all the hallmarks of the Cold War era foreign policy tools of the Soviet Union.

III. Case Studies

Below are exemplary case studies that demonstrate Russia’s reliance upon espionage to further its national security, political and foreign policies, similar to how the Soviet Union relied upon espionage to effectuate the same. These case examples are

306 Ibid.
307 Ibid.
308 Ibid.
309 Ibid.
310 Ibid.
311 Ibid.
312 Ibid.
separated into espionage operations conducted by the intelligence apparatus of the Soviet Union, those undertaken by both, and those undertaken solely by the intelligence apparatus of the Russia. Notwithstanding the change in regime and slight changes in approach, the use of espionage by Russia mirrors the use of espionage by the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

a) Espionage Operations Targeting the US Undertaken During the Soviet Era

In 1949 the Soviet Union detonated an atomic weapon, leaving the US to conclude that its nuclear secrets had been illicitly acquired by the Soviets. This suspicion was confirmed when physicist Klaus Fuchs confessed to providing Russia with material he had acquired while working on the famous Manhattan Project. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) subsequently arrested Fuchs’ contact Harry Gold, who then implicated David Greenglass, who had worked at the atomic facility in New Mexico. Greenglass, in turn, advised that the masterminds of the operation were his brother-in-law, Julius Rosenberg, an engineer, and his sister Ethel Rosenberg.

The Rosenbergs, and other co-conspirators, were officially “indicted on the charge of conspiracy to commit espionage.” The charges was based chiefly on Julius Rosenberg’s provision to the Soviet Union of atomic industrial secrets gathered while employed for Emerson Radio beginning in the early 1940s. By the mid-1940s Julius

314 Ibid.
315 Ibid.
316 Ibid.
318 Ibid.
Rosenberg had retained the services of Greenglass, who was an Army mechanic working at the Los Alamos National Laboratory.\textsuperscript{319} The Rosenbergs were ultimately convicted and sentenced to death in 1951.\textsuperscript{320}

John Walker, a Warrant Officer for the US Navy, began spying for the Soviet Union in 1967 when he walked into its Embassy in Washington, DC, and provided Soviet government officials with “material that would allow the Soviets to read encrypted naval messages.”\textsuperscript{321} Walker was even given a mechanism that he was to place on a cryptographic machine which would allow the Soviets to “decipher all communication sent using the machines.”\textsuperscript{322} Walker escalated his approach by recruiting others to spy for the Soviets, to include a close friend, his older brother and even his own son, encouraging the last two to join the armed forces so they would have access to classified material.\textsuperscript{323} Walker, his friend, his brother and his son were all ultimately arrested in 1985 for selling US secrets to the Soviets.\textsuperscript{324} Walker and his brother were convicted and received life terms of imprisonment, while Walker’s son was also convicted but received a term of 25 years in prison.\textsuperscript{325}

Ronald William Pelton was a communications specialist with the National Security Agency (NSA) where he worked for fourteen years before resigning in 1979.\textsuperscript{326}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{319} Ibid.
\bibitem{320} Ibid.
\bibitem{322} Ibid.
\bibitem{323} Ibid.
\bibitem{324} Ibid.
\bibitem{325} Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}

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Like Walker, Pelton approached the Soviet Embassy in Washington in an attempt to sell US government secrets, however he actually did so after his resignation from the NSA.\textsuperscript{327} Among the state secrets sold to the Soviets by Pelton was information related to Operation Ivy Bells, which was an effort by the NSA and the US Navy to tap Soviet communications cables which were located under the ocean.\textsuperscript{328} Pelton was ultimately arrested in 1985 on “charges of selling information to the Soviets about signals intelligence between 1980 and 1985 for $35,000 plus expenses.”\textsuperscript{329} Pelton was sentenced to three life terms of imprisonment.\textsuperscript{330}

b) Espionage Operations Targeting the US Undertaken During Both the Soviet and Russian Eras

Aldrich Ames was a thirty-one year veteran of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), where he worked as a case officer specializing in targeting Russian Intelligence Officers for recruitment.\textsuperscript{331} In 1985, while assigned to the CIA’s Soviet/ East European Division at CIA Headquarters in Langley, Virginia, he volunteered to provide information to the Russian Intelligence Services at the Soviet Embassy in Washington.\textsuperscript{332} Ames continued to provide information to the Russians, regardless of his assignment or duty station.\textsuperscript{333} Ames passed classified information about CIA and FBI human sources,

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\textsuperscript{327} Ibid. \\
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\textsuperscript{333} Ibid. \\
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as well as technical operations targeting the Soviet Union, and was paid approximately $1.88 million by the Soviets during the first four years he worked for them.  

Contemporaneously with Ames’ espionage, both the “CIA and FBI learned that Russian officials who had been recruited by them were being arrested and executed.” These murdered individuals had been providing critical reporting on the Soviet Union which was being used by US policy makers to formulate Russian policy. The FBI began an investigation into Ames in 1993, and by early 1994 both Ames and his spouse Rosario Ames were arrested on charges of espionage. Rosario Ames was charged for aiding and abetting Ames in his espionage efforts. Ultimately both Ames and his wife pled guilty, and were sentenced to terms of life imprisonment and 63 months imprisonment respectively.

Robert Hanson was an agent with the FBI working counterintelligence matters. Like Walker, Pelton and Ames, Hanssen first volunteered to “furnish highly sensitive documents to KGB intelligence officers assigned to the Soviet embassy in Washington, D.C.” Hanssen systematically and illicitly provided highly classified national security and counterintelligence information in exchange for diamonds and cash worth more than $1,400,000. On over 20 occasions, Hanssen clandestinely left documentation and computer disks for agents of the KGB and then its successor the Russian Foreign

334 Ibid.
335 Ibid.
336 Ibid.
337 Ibid.
338 Ibid.
339 Ibid.
341 Ibid.
Intelligence Service (the Sluzhba Vneshney Razvedki or SVR). These documents and computer disks outlined the identities of human sources recruited to work for the US Intelligence Community, as well as “compromised FBI counterintelligence investigative techniques, sources, methods and operations.”

After a lengthy investigation, the “turning point” came when the FBI was able to secure “original Russian documentation of an American spy who appeared to the FBI to be Hanssen.” Subsequent investigation confirmed Hanssen’s identity. Finally, in 2001 Hanssen was charged with espionage and conspiracy to commit espionage by providing highly classified national security information to Russia and the former Soviet Union, and arrested. Hanssen was convicted, after pleading guilty to espionage, and sentenced to a term of life imprisonment.

c) Espionage Operations Targeting the US Undertaken Solely During the Russian Era

In the early 2000s the US Government became aware of a number of “deep-cover” SVR spies within the US, who were living as “illegals.” The term illegal is used to indicate that these Russian intelligence operatives were residing in the US illegally under assumed names and without diplomatic cover. The FBI code-

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344 Ibid.
345 Ibid.
346 Ibid.
349 Ibid.
named its investigation of these operatives Operation Ghost Stories, as six of the ten intelligence officers had assumed the identities of dead people. The illegals were tasked with building lives in the US and were sent to America to blend in and befriend US policymakers. Several had achieved success in getting close to “high-ranking officials,” with one working for a confidant of a US Cabinet member. One such illegal actually provided financial planning for Alan Patricof, a New York venture capitalist and top Democratic donor who was the finance chairman of Hillary Rodham Clinton’s 2008 presidential campaign.

The illegals were tasked with spotting and assessing US academics, entrepreneurs and government policymakers in an attempt to gain insight into or influence US defense and economic intelligence, without revealing their affiliation with the SVR or the Government of Russia. As such, all ten were ultimately charged and arrested for failing to register as agents of Russia. Ultimately the illegals all pled guilty and were convicted of the charges. The illegals were then beneficiaries of a prisoner swap between the US and Russia, orchestrated during the Obama and Dmitry Medvedev

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351 Ibid.
352 Ibid.
353 Ibid.
355 Ibid.
administrations. Of note is the fact that all were welcomed home by the Kremlin as national heroes, with one such illegal, Anna Chapman, being elevated to the “status of celebrity and fashion icon.” The fact that the Russian Government publicly lauded the SVR intelligence officers for their efforts and treated them as national treasures, further underscores the fact that Russia values and relies upon espionage as a foreign policy tool to virtually the same degree as the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

From March of 2012 to September of 2014, the FBI observed Russian nationals Evgeny Buryakov and Igor Sporyshev engage in 48 meetings. Many of these meetings involved Buryakov passing information to Sporyshev. Buryakov worked in the US as an employee of the Russian bank Vnesheconombank, which also happened to be on a US list of sanctioned entities. Buryakov was also, in fact, a Russian intelligence officer under non-official cover for the SVR. As an officer under non-official cover Buryakov lacked any type of official Russian governmental position, and as such was initially subjected to less scrutiny due to his lack of official affiliation with the Russian Government. Of additional note is the fact that Sporyshev and another individual, Victor Podobnyy, were also operating in the US as SVR officers. Unlike Buryakov,

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358 Ibid.
360 Ibid.
362 “Attorney General Holder Announces Charges Against Russian Spy Ring in New York City.”
363 Ibid.
364 Ibid.
however, Sporyshev and Podobnyy were official representatives of the Russian government, with Sporyshev serving as a trade representative of the Russian Federation in New York and Podobnyy serving as an attaché to the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the UN.\(^{365}\) Because of their overt affiliation with the Russian Government Sporyshev and Podobnyy were not required to register as foreign agents with the US Attorney General, however this exemption did not permit them to control and operate Buryakov as an unregistered agent of the Russian government.

The intelligence collection operation facilitated by Sporyshev and Podobnyy included “attempting to recruit New York City residents as intelligence sources for Russia; tasking Buryakov to gather intelligence; and transmitting intelligence reports prepared by Buryakov back to SVR headquarters in Moscow.”\(^{366}\) Specifically, the operation entailed Sporyshev receiving taskings from Moscow for intelligence collection operations to be undertaken by Buryakov, Sporyshev briefing Buryakov on these operations, and both Sporyshev and Podobnyy “analyzing and reporting back to the SVR” the results of Buryakov’s taskings.\(^{367}\) The directives from the SVR to Buryakov, Sporyshev and Podobnyy, as well as to other covert SVR agents acting within the United States, included requests to gather intelligence on potential US sanctions against Russian banks and the United States’ efforts to develop alternative energy resources.\(^{368}\) The three also assisted a Russian state-owned news organization in collecting reporting which Moscow thought would assist the SVR in its mission.\(^{369}\) In 2014, in the midst of the

\(^{365}\) Ibid.
\(^{366}\) Ibid.
\(^{367}\) Ibid.
\(^{368}\) Ibid.
\(^{369}\) Yuhas, “US charges Russian ‘spies’ suspected of trying to recruit New Yorkers.”
FBI’s investigation of the three, Buryakov even went so far as to meet with a confidential source of the FBI who was posing as a representative of a “would-be casino mogul interested in the Russian gambling scene.”

During the course of that meeting Buryakov “pressed” for information that fell outside of scope of his employment at Vnesheconombank, and “took fake US government documents that supposedly had information about sanctions against Russia.”

Ultimately, in January of 2015 Buryakov was charged with acting as an unregistered agent of the Russian government, and Sporyshev and Podobnyy were charged with conspiring to assist Buryakov in his intelligence operations. Buryakov was arrested at his home in the Bronx, NY, however both Sporyshev and Podobnyy had fled the country prior to their being charged. In March of 2016 Buryakov pled guilty to the charge, and in May of 2016 Buryakov was sentenced to 30 months of imprisonment. Then US Attorney for the Southern District of New York Preet Bharara remarked that “the arrest of Evgeny Buryakov and the charges against him and his co-defendants make clear that – more than two decades after the presumptive end of the Cold War – Russian spies continue to seek to operate in our midst under cover of secrecy.”

370 Ibid.
371 Ibid.
372 “Attorney General Holder Announces Charges Against Russian Spy Ring in New York City.”
373 Ibid.
375 “Attorney General Holder Announces Charges Against Russian Spy Ring in New York City.”
Between 2015 and 2017 a Russian national Maria Butina worked under the direction and control of Alexander Torshin, a deputy governor of the Central Bank of Russia who was previously a member of the legislature of the Russian Federation.\textsuperscript{376} Of additional note is the fact that, in April of 2018, Torshin had been sanctioned by the US Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control.\textsuperscript{377} Torshin was also an oligarch and high-ranking member of United Russia, the political party of Vladimir Putin, who had joined the National Rifle Association like Butina and was linked to organized crime.\textsuperscript{378}

During this time Butina acted as an agent of a Torshin, and at his direction Butina “provided key information about Americans who were in a position to influence United States politics and took steps to establish an unofficial line of communication between Russia and these Americans” for the “benefit of the Russian Federation.”\textsuperscript{379} Butina had been specifically tasked with developing relationships with American individuals and American political organizations for the purpose of “advancing the interests of the Russian Federation.”\textsuperscript{380} Among the actions undertaken by Butina in furtherance of the Russian government were the publishing of an article in a conservative journal “advocating close ties between Republicans and United Russia, the party of Vladimir


\textsuperscript{377} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{380} “Russian National Charged in Conspiracy to Act as an Agent of the Russian Federation Within the Untied States.”
Putin, citing shared values and the GOP’s support from ‘social conservatives, businessmen and those that support an aggressive approach to the war against Islamic terrorism.’” Additionally, Butina opportunistically engaged in a romantic relationship with a political operative who introduced her to his colleagues.

In July of 2018, Butina was arrested in the US for failing to register as an agent of a foreign power. She subsequently pled guilty and was sentenced to 18 months in prison. In court filings the US Department of Justice noted that the Russian government sought to “create wedges that reduce trust and confidence in democratic processes, degrade democratization efforts, weaken U.S. partnerships with European allies, undermine Western sanctions, encourage anti-US political views, and counter efforts to bring Ukraine and other former Soviet states into European institutions.” Of additional note is the fact that Butina received a “hero’s welcome” upon her return to Russia, which included flowers from Russian government officials.

This further underscores the fact that Butina was acting as an agent of the Russian government in following her taskings from Torshin to establish relationships with influential American politicians in order to influence their approach to Russian relations.

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382 Ibid.
383 “Russian National Charged in Conspiracy to Act as an Agent of the Russian Federation Within the Untied States.”
384 “Russian National Sentenced to 18 Months in Prison for Conspiring to Act As an Agent of the Russian Federation within the United States.”
IV. Analysis

The smooth hand-off of espionage as a tool of foreign policy against the US from the Soviet Union to Russia, underscores the fact that Russia vigorously adheres to the same hostile and aggressive Cold War foreign policy posture toward the US previously used by the Soviet Union. Notwithstanding the increased reliance on Russian nationals, whether overtly or in their capacity as illegals present in the US under false pretenses, to carry out their intelligence gathering operations, Russia did not move away from, lessen or otherwise minimize such operations with the fall of the Soviet Union. It relied just as much as its predecessor on these illicit intelligence gathering operations to exploit the openness of US society in an attempt to penetrate the US economy, its politics and its academic institutions.

Pundits have put forth multiple arguments against the above proposition. James Bamford of the New Republic has enthusiastically opined that a review of the case against Maria Butina suggests that she is “simply an idealistic young Russian, born in the last days of the Soviet Union, raised in the new world of capitalism, and hoping to contribute to a better understanding between two countries while pursuing a career in international relations.” Bamford goes on to note that inasmuch as Butina was fluent in English and interested in “expanding gun rights in Russia,” she elected to meet with US citizens in both Russia and the US to forge ties with “members of the National Rifle Association, important figures within the conservative movement, and aspiring politicians.” Bamford concludes that the US government’s case against Butina was “flimsy” and that

388 Ibid.
she was merely a victim of anti-Russian fervor in the US, and the US government’s pursuit of publicity. 389

Bamford’s position is both preposterous and naïve. Butina actually pled guilty to charges of operating as a representative of the Russian government, as noted above, and conceded that she took direction from OFAC-sanctioned, and Putin crony, Alexander Torshin. The fact that Torshin was the deputy governor of the Central Bank of Russia, a previous member of the Russian legislature, an Oligarch, high-ranking member of Putin’s United Russia, and a member of the NRA prior to Butina, makes Bamford’s assertion that Butina was simply an idealistic millennial merely hoping to expand gun rights in Russia with no objective direction and control from the Russian government ridiculous.

Another critique of the position that Russia’s foreign policy posture toward the US mirrors that of the former Soviet Union is the notion that Russia putting a premium on acquiring political and economic intelligence, and less emphasis on military and intelligence information, is representative of a less aggressive and less hostile focus on the part of Russian intelligence. This view is superficial and fails to acknowledge a fundamental change in the world stage. With Russia’s economy in shambles, reliant exclusively on the export of energy, and its military relatively weakened as a result, the US-led sanctions against it are particularly problematic. In the case of the Buryakov spy ring, Buryakov, Sporyshev, and Podobnyy sought economic information related to sanctions against Russia along with intelligence on alternative energy sources. Given the priority of this information for the modern Russian Government, intelligence operations to illicitly procure this type of intelligence is akin to the Soviet Union’s attempt to

389 Ibid.
procure intelligence regarding US troop movements, offensive military operations, reporting related to ballistic missile locations and the like. The fact that the nature of the Russian intelligence gaps has changed does not mean that Russia’s reliance upon espionage and other illicit intelligence collection operations has diminished. The case studies above indicate the opposite, that Russia’s reliance upon these operations has remained steady.

A final argument could be posited that, in the case of the ten SVR illegals, the SVR’s attempt to place its officers in positions within US society to spot, assess and recruit US persons who would eventually find themselves in high-level positions within the US government as well as its academic, economic and political spheres was not particularly successful prior to its elimination. This position belies a logical flaw that without a successful outcome an attempted hostile intelligence gathering operation does not represent a sufficient threat to US sovereignty to underscore the truth that espionage is alive and well as a tool of Russian US foreign policy.

With accommodation for the differences in government and economic structure between the Soviet Union and Russian Federation, Russia nonetheless continues to hold strong to the same hostile and aggressive Cold War foreign policy posture toward the US as the Soviet Union. Russia has continued its efforts to illicitly procure intelligence regarding the US, just like the Soviet Union before it. In fact, an argument can be made that Russia’s approach to espionage is even more bold and audacious since it has sought to rely much more on Russian nationals, many in positions of non-official cover, to accomplish the same goals for which it used to simply rely on Americans. With an overall loss of economic power and an erosion of worldwide national prestige, Russia has
not been able to rely upon US Government officials simply walking into Russian
diplomatic missions to offer their services. They have had to brazenly place Russian
nationals illegally into positions where these individuals may be able to cultivate
relationships with Americans who currently have, or who may have in the future, value in
terms of their access to sensitive US government, political or economic information.
This demonstrates unequivocally that Russian has not only refused to abandoned or
lessen it adherence to hostile intelligence gathering operations, but has vigorously
redesigned these operations to ensure their continued successful application.

V. Conclusion

A review of espionage and intelligence collection operations carried out by the
Soviet Union, both the Soviet Union and Russia, and exclusively by Russia, reveals a
uniform and consistent reliance upon them as a tool of foreign policy to illicitly procure
US military, political and economic intelligence. This continued reliance on such an
invasive and aggressive technique affirms and underscores the fact that Russia continues
to utilize the same hostile and aggressive foreign policy posture toward the US as the
Soviet Union during the Cold War. There are counterarguments to this proposition to be
certain. Some have argued, in the case of Maria Butina, that Butina was simply an
idealistic young woman who loved guns and was caught up on anti-Russia fervor at the
time. Some have also argued that the ten illegals that comprised the spy ring featured in
Operation Ghost Stories failed to obtain their objective, and thus posed no real threat to
the US. Finally, some have noted in the case of the Buryakov spy ring that information
related to economic sanctions and alternative energy sources, which is a far cry from
military secrets.
All of the foregoing notwithstanding, and irrespective of Russia’s increased reliance on Russian nationals (whether overtly or in their capacity as illegals present in the US under false pretenses) to carry out their intelligence gathering operations, Russia did not move away from, lessen or otherwise minimize such operations with the fall of the Soviet Union. It relied just as much as its predecessor on these illicit intelligence gathering operations to exploit the openness of US society in an attempt to penetrate the US economy, its politics and its academic institutions. In fact, an argument can be made that Russia’s approach to espionage is even more bold and audacious since it has sought to rely much more on Russian nationals, many in positions of non-official cover, to accomplish the same goals for which it used to simply rely on Americans. With an overall loss of economic power and an erosion of worldwide national prestige, Russia has not been able to rely upon US Government officials simply walking into Russian diplomatic missions to offer their services. They have had to brazenly placed Russian nationals illegally into positions where these individuals may be able to cultivate relationships with American who currently have, or who may have in the future, value in terms of their access to sensitive US government, political or economic information. This demonstrates unequivocally that Russian has not only refused to abandoned or lessen it adherence to hostile intelligence gathering operations, but has vigorously redesigned these operations to ensure their continued successful application.
Thesis Conclusion

I. Executive Summary

This thesis demonstrates that Russia continues to hold strong to the same hostile and aggressive Cold War foreign policy posture toward the US as the former Soviet Union. Neither the dissolution of the Soviet Union nor the fall of communism in Eastern Europe has tempered the hostile and aggressive foreign policies of Russia, nor resulted in realistic strategies by the US. Russia continues to endeavor to preserve its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, distance itself from Western institutions like NATO and the EU, and combat what it sees as a threat to its sovereignty by the US with a robust approach that includes: 1) engaging in aggressive military campaigns targeting the territorial sovereignty of former Soviet bloc states; 2) deploying aktivnye meropriyatiya (actives measures) to spread disinformation to target US presidential elections; and 3) relying upon espionage and intelligence collection operations to illicitly acquire US military, government, political and economic intelligence.

The Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union was a prolonged geopolitical conflict that did not involve direct military campaigns.390 The conflict was primarily pursued through economic and political actions, including propaganda, espionage and proxy wars, where both relied on others to fight their battles.391 One particularly effective tool relied by the Soviet Union was the use of disinformation, which is defined as data or messaging which is used as a “covert offensive” instrument of foreign policy, whose purpose is to “systematically disrupt relations between other nations, discredit

390 Petkar, “What is a Cold War, what’s the definition and where does the phrase come from?”
391 Ibid.
Soviet opponents, and influence policies of foreign governments in favor of Soviet plans and policies.”392 This use of disinformation was intended to amplify existing societal problems within Western democracies, and exploit the free access to information afforded their citizenry.393

In this respect the use by the Soviet Union, and particularly the KGB, of disinformation was designed with the “inherent openness of Western democracies, with their freedoms of press and speech,” in mind.394 The use of disinformation was able to amplify existing problems within their societies, and exploit the free access to information afforded their citizenry.395 One of the reasons the KGB’s disinformation strategy was so successful was that the misinformation itself was never based wholly on fabrication, and was “anchored in some basis of fact, however small.”396 The bases for the disinformation could be actual societal disputes rooted in economic, racial or other inequities.397

This thesis is comprised of three chapters, each of which illustrated hostile and aggressive foreign policy tools utilized by Russia against the US and its allies, which mirror or mimic similar techniques utilized/employed by the Soviet Union. The only conclusion to be reached is that Russia’s US foreign policy posture remains unchanged from what it has been for approximately eight decades, and that this fact is attributable to both Russia and the US’s embrace of power politics. Specifically, chapter one outlined Russia’s annexation of the Crimean Peninsula of Ukraine, which came about due to its

393 Ibid at 110.
394 Ibid.
395 Ibid.
396 Ibid at 110-111.
397 Ibid at 111.
perpetual fear of encirclement by Western powers, particularly NATO, and the additional potential loss of its sphere of influence over the former Soviet bloc states. Additional case studies were provided which outlined the Soviet Union’s invasion of both Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the Transnistria War in Moldova in about 1990, the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008, and finally the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014.

The review of these conflicts demonstrated that Russia has sought to systematically preserve its sphere of influence over the former Soviet bloc states, even using their territory as a buffer or physical defense against its adversaries; and the actions taken by NATO to include former Soviet bloc states all but forced the hand of Russia in invading Ukraine as Russia had remained fearful of NATO encirclement. Of particular note is the fact that, in the case of the Soviet Union’s invasion of Hungary and Czechoslovakia a pretext of enforcing the Brezhnev Doctrine, highlighted below, was provided. In the case of the invasions/conflicts of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, the Russian government rationalized its aggressive military actions under the pretense of protecting thousands of Russians displaced after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, even going so far as to issue Russian passports for these displaced persons in an attempt to further legitimize the invasions.

The second chapter of this thesis outlined the history of Soviet and Russian interference in US presidential elections utilizing disinformation as defined above. Both the Soviet Union and Russia utilized active measures to interfere in US presidential elections during 1960, 1964, 1968, 1984, and 2016. Of note is the fact that the intensity and invasiveness discernibly escalated, initially attempting to provide aid to the presidential campaigns of Adlai Stevenson and Hubert Humphrey and later maliciously...
targeting the presidential campaigns of Barry Goldwater, Ronald Regan and Hillary Clinton.

In utilizing active measures against Goldwater, Regan and Clinton, the Soviet Union or Russia disseminated weaponized disinformation. In the case of Goldwater the Soviet Union “orchestrated a disinformation campaign labeling Goldwater as a racist and a KKK sympathizer,” and further “produced and distributed printed material in the United States and overseas.”398 In the case of Regan the disinformation included characterizing Reagan as a racist who discriminated against minorities, painting his administration as corrupt, and concluding that he was a “war hawk who was engineering an arms race and catapulting the United States and Soviet Union toward nuclear Armageddon.”399 In the case of Clinton, Russian military intelligence effectuated unauthorized cyber intrusions that resulted in the theft of tens of thousands of e-mail correspondence from Clinton campaign staffers.400 Russian military intelligence then “created a fake online group called Guccifer 2.0 and used that persona to share these emails with WikiLeaks,” which in turn released the correspondence prior to the election which resulted in “frequent negative news cycles for Clinton and distracting from the message she hoped to send voters in the final days of the campaign.”401

Chapter three of this thesis outlined the reliance of both the Soviet Union and Russia on espionage and other intelligence collection operations to illicitly acquire US military, political and economic information. This chapter divided these operations into those undertaken exclusively by the Soviet Union, those which began under the purview

399 Ibid.
400 Abrams, “Here’s What We Knew So Far About Russia’s 2016 Meddling.”
401 Ibid.
of the Soviet Union but continued under the authority of Russia, and those which were
initiated by the Government of Russia. The first category of operations included the
arrests and convictions of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, John Walker, and Ronald Pelton.
The second category of operations included the arrests and convictions of Aldrich Ames
and Robert Hanssen. The third category of operations included the arrests and
convictions of the Russian illegals investigated under Operation Ghost Stories, the
Evgeny Buryakov spy ring, and Maria Butina.

Chapter three highlighted that, notwithstanding the increased reliance on Russian
nationals (whether overtly or in their capacity as illegals present in the US under false
pretenses) to carry out its intelligence gathering operations, Russia did not move away
from, lessen or otherwise minimize such operations with the fall of the Soviet Union. It
relied just as much as its predecessor on these illicit intelligence gathering operations to
exploit the openness of US society in an attempt to penetrate the US economy, its politics
and its academic institutions. In fact, an argument can be made that Russia’s approach to
espionage is even more bold and audacious since it has sought to rely much more on
Russian nationals, many in positions of non-official cover, to accomplish the same goals
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and an erosion of worldwide national prestige, Russia has not been able to rely upon US
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Russian has not only refused to abandoned or lessen it adherence to hostile intelligence gathering operations, but has vigorously redesigned these operations to ensure their continued successful application.

During the past ten years Russia has become more “assertive and adversarial, constituting a multidimensional effort to expand its global influence at the expense of the United States and other Western countries.” Russian foreign policies have focused on “undermining democracy” in the US and its allied countries. This overall foreign policy has underscored a belief of the Kremlin that “the former Soviet republics formed a sphere of privileged Russian interests and that Moscow was entitled to control their policies and behavior.” With this in mind the acceptance of the reality that Russia has refused to abandon the hostile and aggressive Cold War foreign policy posture toward the US of the Soviet Union would serve US policymakers well, and underscore the difficulty in attempting to navigate the middle way embraced over the past decade.

II. Take Away

The proposition that the US should attempt to normalize or reset its relationship with Russia is made repeatedly. Every presidential administration, in fact, from George H.W. Bush to Donald Trump has endeavored to improve/enhance its relationship with the Kremlin. The accompanying problem, however, is that every administration has failed to deliver on this goal. Former US president George W. Bush famously declared that he

403 Ibid.
404 Ibid at 20.
could get “a sense of his [Putin’s] soul” during a 2001 summit in Slovenia.\textsuperscript{406} By the end of Bush’s send term, however, Putin had directed a litany of troubling moves, including, among other things, “selling radars to Iraq as the United States was ramping up pressure on Saddam Hussein, recklessly murdering the Russian defector Alexander Litvinenko in London, driving a wedge between NATO allies over missile defense, supporting Iran’s supposedly civilian nuclear program, and stopping implementation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe.”\textsuperscript{407} Putin capped off these aggressive actions by then invading Georgia.\textsuperscript{408}

Notwithstanding this troubling history with Russia immediately preceding his ascension to office President Barack Obama also sought to reset US relations with Russia.\textsuperscript{409} This reset was attempted much to the consternation of the recently invaded Georgia, traditional US allies in the Baltic region, Poland, and the Czech Republic.\textsuperscript{410} Despite concern by existing allies, the US elected to “to seek greater cooperation with Russia by rewriting U.S. missile defense plans.”\textsuperscript{411} Unfortunately, the result of the attempt by the Obama Administration to reset its relationship and be more accommodating to Russia was Russia’s annexation of the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine and its support of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad’s murder campaign carried out

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{407} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{408} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{409} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{410} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{411} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
against his own subjects. While the White House imposed sanctions on Russia for the behavior outlined above, the reset was nothing short of a complete failure.

Even with the presence of the sanctions discussed in the preceding paragraph, Russia nonetheless engaged in invasive election interference and espionage directed at the US, as discussed in great detail already. With this context appropriately framed, it is of note that there are pundits who still believe that a US reset of relations with Russia is merited. This conclusion is flawed as it is premised on the notion that Putin’s aggressive and combative foreign policies are solely in response to the US’s own policies, and this assertion is wholly inaccurate. While there can be no doubt that Russia continues to rely on hostile US and Western foreign policies due to its perpetual fear of encirclement by the West, which has been inflamed by NATO’s eastward expansion and inclusion of former Soviet bloc states as members, Putin also seeks to preserve Russia’s sphere of influence and even restore it to that of the Soviet Union as well as reinstate Russia’s prominence on the world stage.

Russia, as currently constituted, has become an “increasingly authoritarian state determined to act aggressively against its neighbors, extend its disruptive influence in the Middle East and Asia, and strategically weaken and divide Europe and NATO.” The fundamental truth is that while Russia, and more importantly Putin, is driven by the eastward expansion of NATO and its inclusion of former Soviet bloc states into its membership, it is also driven by the simple fundamentals of power politics and not by singularly and solely reacting to the foreign policies of the US. Putin uses the specter of

412 Ibid.
413 Ibid.
414 Ibid.
415 Ibid.
the US as justification to keep his own repressive domestic policies in effect, and thus must continue to paint the US as a threat to Russian sovereignty rather than attempt to improve relations with it.\textsuperscript{416} An acceptance of these difficult facts will provide future US government leaders and policy makers with the patience to apply the necessary and comprehensive pressure against Russian necessary to foment change.\textsuperscript{417}

This is not to say that the US is not without blame for the state of relations between the US and Russia, as it is also driven by the principles of power politics. Rather, this is to say that the US must accept the version of Russia that exists not the version that is unattainable with simple relationship resets.\textsuperscript{418} These simple relationship resets not only provide Putin with a disincentive to change, they also telegraph an over-eagerness by the US for improved relations with Russia which Putin continues to manipulate.\textsuperscript{419} In the words of Kurt Volker of Foreign Policy, “For once, it is time for Russia, not the West, to rethink its policy.”\textsuperscript{420}

III. Avenues for Future Research

a) Putin’s Personality

As it relates to foreign policy and foreign relations, the personality of a head of state can play a definitive role depending on the type of governance. A dictator has much more latitude to interject his or her personality when the ruler does not have to garner the support or approval of a legislature, or voters in a free and fair election.\textsuperscript{421}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{416} David Kramer, “No, Now Is Not the Time for Another Russia Reset.”
\bibitem{417} Volker, “No More Resets with Russia.”
\bibitem{418} David Kramer, “No, Now Is Not the Time for Another Russia Reset.”
\bibitem{419} Ibid.
\bibitem{420} Volker, “No More Resets with Russia.”
\end{thebibliography}
Vladimir Putin, his foreign policy strategies are singularly guided by his personal goals. Early in this tenure, Putin was able to play the part of a more measured ruler. Former US President George W. Bush famously remarked that he found Putin to be very straightforward and trustworthy.” Putin’s personality, however, ultimately revealed itself through various foreign policy decisions. Notably, the Putin’s personality became “indomitable and the manifested audacity in situations like crushing [the Chechen] separatist movement” and the attack on Georgia highlighted above underscore this fact.

The role Putin’s personality plays on Russian foreign policy, particularly foreign policy targeting the US, is worthy of additional research. Any research into this phenomenon must begin with the impact the collapse of the Soviet Union had on Putin’s “psyche.” An argument can be made that Putin is driven almost singularly by his desire to recapture the prominence of Russia on the world stage. He was worked tireless in “portraying himself as a preserver of Russian pride” and this fact is evident in his foreign policy strategies outlined above. Even though his personality is much different from Joseph Stalin who always suffered from paranoia, Putin has some similar features to Stalin in terms of maintaining his sheer narcissism.

In considering the impact of Putin’s personality on Russian foreign policy towards the US, one would be remiss in not addressing the nuance that patronage plays in

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422 Ibid.
423 Ibid.
424 Ibid.
425 Ibid.
426 Ibid.
427 Ibid.
428 Ibid.
Russian government and society. The Russian government is replete with “people [who] ensure their own futures by attaching themselves to powerful patrons.”

When viewed from this vantage point “Putin is not simply an authoritarian state leader with normal state interests, but rather “the leading representative of a shady cohort of interconnected bosses who struggle to maintain their precarious positions at the top of the Russian pyramid.”

In this respect it is the personality of the leader and not necessarily the position he or she occupies that influences the policy in question.

This patronage network has a number of causal effects. Firstly, Russian leaders cannot be viewed as “capitulating to American pressure, as the strength of the patron “determines the wellbeing of the network.”

Additionally, leaders in this patronage network must both appear tough while seeking to escape “high-risk foreign policy actions that might damage the state whose resources they are milking.”

Finally, foreign policy directly related to Russia’s national security will be “viewed through the lens of the economic interests of core patronage network members.”

In this respect Putin’s personality plays such a role in Russia’s relationship with the US, that its examination merits further study.

b) **Economic Interdependence**

The economic interactions between the US and Russia can be distilled into four categories: 1) trade in goods and services; 2) integration of Russian companies into global supply chains; 3) foreign direct investment and portfolio investment; and 4)
questionable financial operations which are mostly for the benefit of the Russian oligarchs.\textsuperscript{435} Notwithstanding the relative complexity of the interactions, overall economic cooperation between the two nations is not particularly significant.\textsuperscript{436} Even during the peak of the US-Russia dynamic, Russia could not be found in the top twenty US trading partners (peaking at approximately twenty-sixth).\textsuperscript{437} Similarly, the US is among the top four countries from which Russia received imports and in tenth place as a destination for Russian exports.\textsuperscript{438}

The pinnacle of the US-Russia economic relationship was the early 2000s when Putin and Bush first occupied office.\textsuperscript{439} There were notable successes in the areas of energy, trade in metals, and information technology (IT).\textsuperscript{440} It was at this time that “Russia’s oil shipments to the United States started to rise steadily, and the country’s metal producers not only increased their share in the U.S. market but also made tangible investments, acquiring several American plants to become a link in the supply chain to the U.S. auto and aerospace industries.”\textsuperscript{441} Additionally, Russian IT businesses entered into transactions with US technology firms and banks.\textsuperscript{442} Similarly, it was also during this period that various US business began to make in-roads into the Russian market as well.\textsuperscript{443}

\textsuperscript{436} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{437} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{438} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{439} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{440} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{441} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{442} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{443} Ibid.
This progress, however, would ultimately hit multiple obstacles in the form of US-imposed sanctions resulting from Russia’s aggressive and antagonistic foreign policies related to the West. What is unclear, and would make for compelling additional research, is the degree to which private industry can force Russia to lessen the hostility and aggressiveness of its US foreign policy for the betterment of both economies. Put another way, can the American manufacturing and technology firms leverage their existing investment in Russia, and the Russian businesses in the US, to curb aggressive behaviors on both sides in support of continued economic development. In this respect, perhaps private industry can succeed where diplomacy and bureaucracy have failed.

c) The Specter of China

Since the conclusion of the second World War, the power players on the world stage have continued to be the US, Russia and the PRC. As a consequence, these nations have similarly occupied preeminence in the world of foreign relations.\(^{444}\) Traditionally two of these three powers have aligned against the third, with the only change being which two have notionally or legitimately aligned together and for how long.\(^{445}\) During the past five to ten years, however, the fluidity and relatively temporary nature of these series of alignments has begun to solidify. Specifically, the US and the PRC have hardened their stances vis-a-vis one another, and are moving toward “a seemingly irreversible trajectory of strategic competition”\(^{446}\)


\(^{445}\) Ibid.

\(^{446}\) Ibid.
Contemporaneously with the US increasing the pressure and rhetoric against the PRC, the PRC and Russia have enhanced their strategic competition against the US and “bilateral cooperation across multiple domains, while closely working together to offset U.S. pressure, counterbalance U.S. influence in multilateral forums, and rebuke the U.S.-led international order.”447 In fact in May of 2021, PRC diplomat Yang Jiechi remarked that the relationship between the PRC and Russia “has grown as solid as a rock through thick and thin,” while that same month Putin described the ties between the two nations as the “best level in history.”448 This is after PRC President Xi Jinping proclaimed in 2019 that Putin was his “best friend.”449 To underscore this strengthening relationship, the US Intelligence Community has assessed that Russia and the PRC are “are likely to remain aligned” in the future.450

Notwithstanding the current bond between Russia and the PRC, there are limitations to this relationship.451 While the two share a “deep disdain” for the US and its Western principles and policies, the sustained cooperation between Russia and the PRC could prove difficult particularly due to economic differences.452 Specifically, the “disparity between Russia’s low economic complexity and dependence on natural resources relative to [the PRC’s] diverse and modern economy” could prove to ultimately cool the relationship.453

447 Ibid.
449 Ibid.
450 Hoang, “The Modern China-Russia-US Triangle.”
451 Ibid.
452 Ibid.
453 Ibid.
The key point for future research would thus be to what degree would a greater pressure on Russia by the US would serve to bolster the burgeoning relationship between Russia and the PRC. Would Russia and the PRC be able overcome their cultural and economic differences in the face of what they perceive to be increased US aggression, or would the asymmetric nature of their politics, cultures and economics prove too much of an obstacle to complete cooperation. Ultimately, the strength of the Russia-PRC bond rests squarely on the approach the US takes with respect to both.\footnote{Ibid.} This last point was encapsulated well by the 	extit{Global Times}, a state-owned PRC news outlet, when it opined that the closer developing ties between Russia and the PRC can be attributed to “the U.S. and its main allies’ suppression of the two countries.”\footnote{Ibid.}
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Curriculum Vitae

Ian Riddle was raised, and currently resides, outside of Detroit. He obtained a BA, JD, and MBA from Loyola University Chicago. After receiving his JD, Ian worked as a corporate attorney in Chicago for approximately four years. Subsequent to his time as a private attorney, Ian elected to move to the public sector by accepting a position with the Department of Justice for whom he has worked for 16 years. While employed by the Department of Justice, Ian has resided in Washington, Cleveland and Detroit. Ian was fortunate enough to marry up and has a wonderful wife with two wonderful daughters.