PERSPECTIVES ON RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY: THE GERASIMOV DOCTRINE AND WAR BY OTHER MEANS

by
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Abstract

This thesis views interstate actions between the Russian Federation and its perceived adversaries through the lens of the so-called "Gerasimov Doctrine." It traces the difference in origins of sovereignty between the United States and Russia in its various forms. After showing that Russian sovereignty relies on the stability of the state over individual liberties, this thesis dissects Russian nationalism as a foreign policy tool in Ukraine. Finally, this thesis applies the Gerasimov Doctrine across a swath of foreign policy interactions between the Russian Federation and its adversaries: Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Through the Doctrine's lens, this thesis finds that Russian foreign policy actions are inversely proportionate to the adversary state's ability to create the potential for political upheaval in the Russian Federation. This thesis serves as a starting point from which future research can begin to quantitatively measure the impact of an adversary's information operations.

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Introduction

The Gerasimov Doctrine is a transcribed speech from Russian General of the Army Valery Gerasimov in 2013, one year before the Russian Federation annexed Crimea and covertly invaded eastern Ukraine. It describes political upheavals and the role non-military, covert intelligence actions play in said revolutions. In the West, the Gerasimov Doctrine has largely been misinterpreted as a "playbook" of Russian information confrontation.[1] Viewed this way, the Gerasimov Doctrine is a methodology dictating which non-military national levers of power to pull to create the same effect of an overt military operation. As the phrase's creator, Mark Galeotti, and separately, Charles Bartles, point out, this is not the case.[2] Instead, the Gerasimov Doctrine was a proposed way to understand what the Russian Federation believed to be Western

[1] Mark Galeotti, "I'm Sorry for Creating the 'Gerasimov Doctrine,'" *Foreign Policy*, March 5, 2018, accessed May 15, 2018, https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/05/im-sorry-for-creating-the-gerasimov-doctrine/.

[2] Charles Bartles, "Getting Gerasimov Right," *Military Review* 96, no. 1 (January-February, 2016): 31-32.

intelligence efforts to effect regime change in the Arab Spring and Ukraine's Euromaidan protests. In the same vein, it is a lens through which foreign policy can be understood. Interpreting the Gerasimov Doctrine as Bartles does provides a clearer understanding of nebulous topics that are typically shrouded in secrecy within intelligence agencies: cyber warfare, psychological operations, and denial and deception campaigns. These modern-day activities evolved from a Soviet military concept, *maskirovka*, which covered physical denial and deception in military operations.

To understand this evolution, the paper first looks at the origins and differing perceptions of the right to self-determination between Russian governments and the United States. This evolves into a discussion on using Russian nationalism as a foreign policy tool that, in turn, supports its domestic policy. Finally, interactions between the Russian Federation and the United States, United Kingdom, and Ukraine are evaluated according to the Gerasimov Doctrine. Doing so provides a distinct approach to foreign policy that differs greatly from Western beliefs.

In the first chapter, this thesis focuses on the founding ideas of the United States based on a perception of the people's right to self-determination. The U.S. view is then contrasted against a Russian perception of a similar idea, one that on the surface seems to be decided by its citizens but is instead driven by the state—which is charged with providing security and stability above all else. This difference, where one state is founded on the freedom of choice and difference of opinion, and the other on unifying its peoples under a central "idea," is critical to understanding the two states' clashing views on sovereignty.

Applying the Hegelian dialectic to these differences pits them against each other as opposing ideas in search of a central truth. How can the U.S. idea of a group's right of self-determination combine with a Russian perspective that places the state's security and stability

above the needs of its people? It is inherently contradictory to combine the two ideas, hence the struggle between these two states. No current form of government allows for the freedom of its people as a core tenet while simultaneously controlling them to ensure the continuity of the government at any cost.

Using the above as a foundation, the first chapter then examines the behavior of the United States and Russia—in its tsarist, communist, and democratic forms—on the world stage. Where Russia seeks to aid foreign governments in maintaining power, protecting historical cultural norms, and reducing outside interference of those states' internal politics, the United States works to spread democracy as a means to promote peace in a march toward a cosmopolitan world. The Russian approach is derived from a multitude of factors: historical rule by outsiders, a lack of natural environmental borders, humiliating military defeats, and a view as the duly appointed protectors of Christianity. The United States is quite the opposite: it has not known true foreign military invasion and occupation, is geographically protected, and has promoted its military and economic victories while downplaying its losses such that the phrase "American exceptionalism" plays a serious role in the American view of the world. The Russian and American perspectives are in constant tension, and their views on sovereignty affect sovereign states worldwide.

The first chapter concludes with an introduction to *maskirovka*, a recurring element in this thesis. Originally used as a military term to encompass physical denial and deception techniques on the battlefield, *maskirovka* today is interpreted as a whole-of-government approach to foreign policy using all intelligence tools at its disposal.[3] It follows a basic logic: if the role of the Russian government is to ensure its own survival, then it is morally justifiable to

[3] James Roberts, "Maskirovka 2.0: Hybrid Threat, Hybrid Response" (JSOU Press Occasional Paper, December 2015), accessed October 9, 2017, http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/1007494.pdf.

use all levers of state power in pursuit of that goal. This chapter has established that at the core, the United States and Russia have wholly different views of sovereignty. These can be framed by the Hegelian dialectic within each state and as state-on-state interactions. Through being locked in ideological conflict with each other, each state will naturally vie for victory. For the United States, this entails using democracy's conflict of ideas to reach a mutual understanding. For the Russian Federation, it is obligated to use *maskirovka* to disturb those democratic ideas because they are a threat to the continuity of the state.

In the second chapter, this thesis progresses from the origins of how the Russian Federation approaches foreign policy in dissecting a significant tool in its foreign policy toolbox: nationalism. The most appropriate physical location to witness Russian nationalism as a foreign policy tool is in Ukraine—the two states have a shared history that dates back nearly one thousand years. Ukraine is also a former Soviet Bloc country that is quite literally divided in half culturally and ideologically. Thus, Ukraine is both a potential existential threat to the "Russian Idea" and a prime location for the Russian Federation to protect itself.

Ukraine is ideologically divided into Western and Eastern halves based on religion, language, views of the EU and Russia, and other cultural factors. The Western half is more aligned with what is colloquially referred to as "the West," while Eastern Ukraine is more ethnically Russian and more aligned with Russian views. Such an internal conflict is a prime location for the Russian Federation to conduct its information warfare (known in Russian as information confrontation), the modern-day *maskirovka*. Likewise, the shared history between Ukrainians and Russians implies that Ukraine is a potential conduit for Western ideologies to infiltrate the "Russian Idea." This modern perception of the "Russian Idea" is one of shared cultural history amongst all its varied peoples, personified in Russian President Vladimir Putin. It

is a central component to unifying these diverse groups under a sole, federated government. It follows that any challenge to this Russian Idea is also a threat to the state.

Russian nationalism is used in Ukraine as a buffer against the existential threat from the West. It shores up support among ethnic Russians in Ukraine while challenging Ukrainian narratives.[4] Promoting nationalist behavior among Russians is not only effective, it is dangerous. Putin has used nationalism and the "Russian Idea" to validate military actions abroad, including the Georgian wars, suppressing Chechen rebellions, and the annexation of Crimea from Ukraine. The pull of nationalism beyond patriotism is strong, and Putin risks losing his grip on those under its spell.

Chapter Two also finds an unexpected threat in nationalism that may challenge the Russian Idea. Putin used nationalism as a foreign policy tool to justify ethnic Russians' right to self-determination outside the Russian Federations borders.[5] However, as discussed previously in Chapter Two, Russian self-determination is more the state's choice than it is a people's choice. This creates a problem for Putin's government: Russian nationalist pride may separate the modern Russian Idea from Putin and use his own words against him. These groups can use Putin's justification to claim they have that selfsame right to self-determination, and that they believe they will be better off without Putin's government. Historically speaking, when the Russian Idea separates itself from the identity of the ruler, revolution follows. This chapter concludes with implications of nationalism's use in Russian foreign policy and its potential domestic risks should Putin lose control of his nationalist base. Ukraine, for its part, is beset with

[4] Leonid Peisakhin and Arturas Rozenas, "Electoral Effects of Biased Media: Russian Television in Ukraine," *American Journal of Political Science* 62, no. 3 (March 30, 2018), accessed March 30, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12355.

[5] Vladimir Putin, "Russia: The Ethnicity Issue," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, January 23, 2012, accessed October 18, 2017, http://archive.premier.gov.ru/eng/events/news/17831/.

a difficult decision—as a state split in two and encroached upon by a significantly more powerful neighbor, how can it move forward to peace and prosperity?

In the third chapter, this thesis uses the Gerasimov Doctrine as a lens to view foreign policy actions. This differs significantly from the Western interpretation of the Doctrine, which views it as a playbook of sorts for Russian information confrontation. The Gerasimov Doctrine is not a playbook, but a perspective on the way states interact. This chapter evaluates actions and reactions between Russia and (separately) the United States, United Kingdom, and Ukraine, through the Gerasimov Doctrine. While the Doctrine is not an official Russian government document, it is a helpful tool to reduce misunderstandings and misinterpretations between Russia and the colloquial "West."

The third chapter begins with an overview of the Gerasimov Doctrine, which combines military and non-military actions on a joined scale of conflict. Blending the two on a shared scale is an important difference from the West, where non-military actions such as sanctions and diplomacy can be viewed as de-escalatory forks away from the road to conflict. Making this distinction reduces the potential for mirror imaging by either side—while the West and the Russian Federation may have the same destination (successful execution of their foreign policy), their approaches are quite different.

With this understanding, the third chapter then evaluates events between Russia and the United States, United Kingdom, and Ukraine, with each divided into social, information, and military spheres of activity. These spheres of state power are chosen because they reflect the growing interconnectedness of state behavior. Each of these events are cursory case studies that merit further research. This thesis opens the door to viewing multiple interstate relations and spheres of political influence through the Gerasimov Doctrine.

After evaluating each event through the Gerasimov Doctrine, this chapter finds that Russian actions toward an adversarial state inversely scale in aggressiveness according to that state's ability to affect the Russian status quo. For instance, the Russian Federation is significantly more active with its military toward Ukraine than Russia is toward the United Kingdom. Likewise, the Russian Federation conducted multiple assassinations within the United Kingdom, but Russian covert activities within the United States are far less aggressive. While these findings may seem obvious to an observer versed in governmental behavior, it is through comparing and weighing these events via the Gerasimov Doctrine that this chapter, and ultimately this thesis, contributes to scholarly discourse.

Many academics have, and continue to, call for additional research into measuring the effects of information confrontation. The fourth chapter of this thesis provides a brief summary of how Russian foreign policy advanced into the twenty-first century. A key component of their advances has been the exponential growth of worldwide access to telecommunication technology. The internet, and especially social media, are optimal tools for Russian information confrontation. Their modern-day *maskirovka* campaigns are used to sow discord among Western states as a means of competition on Gerasimov's scale of conflict. How can something so abstract be measured? This chapter provides a basic framework founded on existing scholarship and current, unclassified military doctrine.

Finally, policymakers and intelligence agencies alike may glean a variety of lessons from the approach and insights of this thesis. First and foremost, viewing both their own and the Russian Federation's actions through the Gerasimov Doctrine instead of from their native country's perspective may significantly reduce potential for mirror imaging and miscalculating Russian intent or their respective reactions. Second, the Gerasimov Doctrine is not an official

Russian Federation doctrine, but it is a rare insight on Russian governmental thinking and provides a new perspective for understanding that behavior. Third, the Gerasimov Doctrine is not a "playbook" on Russian information confrontation, it is a viewpoint that incorporates modern state-level non-military levers of power into a widely-accepted scale of conflict. It is, in essence, a modification of von Clausewitz's perspective on war: instead of war being policy by other means, policy is war by other means.

Chapter 1

A Dialectic of Self-Determination

1.1 Abstract

State behavior between Russia and the United States in contemporary time is a widely covered topic. However, research into Russian policies toward perceived adversaries—of which the United States is one—is lacking. There are two interrelated Russian concepts that stand out: a military practice of denial, deception, misinformation, and disinformation termed *Maskirovka*, and the Gerasimov Doctrine, an adaptation of *maskirovka* into non-military applications. Because there is an absence of scholarly work in this area, this paper looks at the origins of the concepts, and compared them to their American counterparts. More specifically, this paper has found that both the United States and Russia's perspectives of foreign policy derived from different understandings of sovereignty.

1.2 Introduction

By evaluating the evolution of foreign policy from the core concepts of sovereignty, this paper identifies essential elements that continue to bring the Russian Federation and the United States into conflict. A comprehensive understanding of the origins of these relations will direct future research by providing a solid foundation of knowledge. To do this, this paper divides perspectives into two schools of thought—divided by country—the United States and the Russian Federation. Following a summary of current research, this paper assesses the implications of *maskirovka* and the Gerasimov Doctrine in Russian actions against the United States. This literature review is a study of origins of the two states' foreign policy strategies, and not a direct study of the applications themselves. By illuminating the significance of these concepts and their implications, academics and policymakers alike can better research and analyze future Russian attempts to disrupt American society.

Understanding what defines the sovereignty enables us to view international relations from the perspective of a particular state. The modern-day interactions between the United States and the Russian Federation originated centuries prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Both states created different interpretations of what it meant to be a sovereign entity, and how its citizens should interact with their respective governments. This difference—minor in its initial formation—expanded and evolved into the global competition for influence seen today. From these origins, the United States and Russia have applied their versions of sovereignty onto other sovereign states as a method of influence and control.

The United States' interpretation of sovereignty is wholly different than the Russian Federation's perspective. The United States exists based on the concept of a people's right of

self-determination: that the people are the source of all power and legitimacy of their state. For the United States, these powers are created by the people, for the people, and designed to protect their "unalienable rights… [of] Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."[6] Where the United States government finds sovereignty to be a function of the voice of the people, the Russian Federation views sovereignty as a creation of the state to ensure the continuity of the state, at the expense of individual freedoms for its people. The stability and security of the Russian state is intrinsically linked to its people through the concept of the "Russian Idea," covered at length in Chapter Two.

1.3 Origins of Self-Determination

The most important theorist to the source of international relations is GWF Hegel with his concept of self-determination. The United States and Russia's have different interpretations of the Hegelian dialectic. "A nation does not begin by being a state." Hegel wrote, "the transition from a family, a horde, a clan, a multitude, &c., to political conditions is the realization of the Idea in the form of that nation."[7] During these transitions, the society modifies its cultural norms and adapts to new environments while advancing towards the creation of a nation. If the physical area controlled by the nation expands, the nation adjusts its policies and beliefs to either incorporate, accommodate, acknowledge, or reject newly assimilated nations.

Foreign policy, at a macro level, can be misdirected by mirror imaging to the point of policy failure. Mirror imaging is defined by the Central Intelligence Agency as "assuming that the other side is likely to act in a certain way because that is how the US would act under similar

[6] U.S. Congress, Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776.

[7] GWF Hegel, "The Philosophy of Right," in *The Nationalism Reader*, ed. Omar Dahbour and Micheline Ishay (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1995), 78.

circumstances."[8] For instance, the United States believes other countries would benefit from adopting American liberal democracy.[9] If it worked for the United States, it will work for everyone else—or so the logic goes. Conversely, Russia promotes sovereign stability and state security abroad, advocating for less international involvement in internal affairs. From a Russian perspective, because internal stability and security allowed Russia to focus on its international agenda, sponsoring it in other states must be the correct approach.

Differing political theories—especially regarding the concept of self-determination—drive the relationships of these two great states. Indeed, this is not a new concept. Tocqueville witnessed the different approaches to the success of the United States and then-Tsarist Russia in the early 19th century:

> All other peoples seem to have nearly reached their natural limits and to need nothing but to preserve them; but these two are growing. All the others have halted or advanced only through great exertions; they alone march easily and quickly forward along a path whose end no eye can yet see. The American fights against natural obstacles; the Russian is at grips with men.[10]

If this is not new, why does this matter, and how can analysis of this problem assist each state in understanding and cooperating—or combatting—the other? Fukuyama describes the Hegelian dialectic as a formula for societal progress: "History proceeds through a continual process of conflict, wherein systems of thought as well as political systems collide and fall apart from their own internal contradictions. They are then replaced by less contradictory and therefore higher ones, which give rise to new and different contradictions--the so-called dialectic."[11] In

[8] Richards Heuer, "Psychology of Intelligence Analysis," Central Intelligence Agency, March 16, 2007, https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/psychology-of-intelligence-analysis/art9.html (accessed December 1, 2017).

[9] Stephen Walt, "Why Is America So Bad at Promoting Democracy in Other Countries?," *Voice* (blog), *Foreign Policy*, April 25, 2016, http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/04/25/why-is-america-so-bad-at-promoting-democracy-in-other-countries/ (accessed November 6, 2017).

[10] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc, 2000), 413.

[11] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 60.

applying it to Russia and the United States, it is possible to identify any correlations among self-determination and foreign policy. Likewise, evaluating the two countries' origins and tying them to today's motives will identify potential areas for future research. This paper identifies a progression of thought—in both the United States and Russia—that begins with their respective perceptions of self-determination, and culminates with their behavior in contemporary international society. These two conflicting paths provide greater understanding of each state's conduct, and explains the "why" behind their actions today.

1.4 The United States

A core tenant of the American form of self-determination resides in liberty. Wood divides liberty into two groups: "Public or political liberty - or what we now call positive liberty - meant participation in government. And this political liberty in turn provided the means by which the personal liberty and private rights of the individual - what we today called negative liberty - were protected." [12] Liberty, then, allows a citizen to influence the direction of the state through their participation. Therefore, because a citizen's voice is heard at a federal level, they are involved in the process of determining the state's identity.

Tocqueville identifies sovereignty as a manifestation of this liberty, writing that "…in America the sovereignty of the people is neither hidden nor sterile as with some other nations; mores recognize it, and the laws proclaim it; it spreads with freedom and attains unimpeded its ultimate consequences."[13] Aligned with this argument for including citizens in the affairs of government is conflict within a democracy. Democratic conflict is a conflict of ideas and opinions that spurred opposing sides to compromise which limited the threat of oppression

[12] Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 104.
[13] de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 58.

through majority rule. In *Federalist No. 10,* Madison found this conflict best contained within a Republican Congress to act as representatives for the citizens.[14]

Ideological conflict has the potential to divide a nation if left unchecked, as the American Civil War has shown. By following this logical chain from civic citizenship reflected in the government's behavior, the American Civil War can thus be viewed as an ideological conflict between competing schools of thought of each belligerent's respective citizenry channeled through their elected officials. However, managed conflict is necessary for a healthy democracy. In *Federalist 51*, management is suggested in the form of a "compound Republic," described as a system of checks and balances between competing governmental branches which lowers the risk of a despotic state.[15] For the United States, liberty, checks and balances, and representative government also required equality of all under the supreme authority of the Constitution.

"Equality of opportunity," Wood wrote, "would help to encourage a rough equality of condition. Such a rough equality of condition was in fact essential for republicanism."[16] Equality adds reassurance to citizens that their voice is equal to all others, and provides legitimacy to the democratic republican system. According to Supreme Court Justice Breyer, a citizen's belief in the legitimacy of their government is a larger factor than the laws themselves in determining if the citizen will abide by laws the government sets forth.[17]

Each of these elements of American society created a belief that individual citizens have the right to interact with their government so they can see their needs addressed. In addition, the

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[14] James Madison, Federalist No. 10: "The Same Subject Continued: The Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection," *New York Daily Advertiser*, November 22, 1787, https://www.congress.gov/resources/display/content/The+Federalist+Papers.

[15] Alexander Hamilton or James Madison, Federalist No. 51: "The Structure of the Government Must Furnish the Proper Checks and Balances Between the Different Departments," *New York Packet*, February 8, 1788, https://www.congress.gov/resources/display/content/The+Federalist+Papers

[16] Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 234.

[17] Stephen Breyer, *Making Our Democracy Work: A Judge's View* (New York: Vintage, 2011), 22.

founding fathers ensured these rights would not be infringed by establishing checks and balances between governmental powers. Equality promoted a progressive, liberal sentiment among the public because no one had the right to be legally superior to another. As these beliefs solidified within the American public, they began to be expressed outwardly to other states through foreign policy. "We must stabilize a new international order in a vastly dangerous environment," Kissinger wrote in *American Foreign Policy*, "but our ultimate goal must be to transform ideological conflict into constructive participation in building a better world."[18] Note Kissinger's use of "ideological conflict," a call back to the Hegelian dialectic as interpreted by the founding fathers. Kissinger then translates this American perspective of governance into foreign policy.

Kissinger's injection of American democratic ideals into foreign policy implies that the United States is the superior world power. American exceptionalism reveals itself throughout history—perhaps most notably in "Manifest Destiny"—when the United States asserted its right to expand and spread its ideals over sovereign nations. John O'Sullivan celebrates Manifest Destiny with enthusiasm: "For this blessed mission to the nations of the world, which are shut out from the life-giving light of truth, has America been chosen."[19] The United States promoted democracy because it believed American democracy to be the best form of governing to ensure liberty and equality across the world.

Therefore, the United States was—by its very nature—the obvious choice for spreading democracy across the globe. During the twentieth century, the United States became one of two spheres of influence. Reinhold Niebuhr summed up the necessity of the United States' strong example to the world as such: "Today we have become the senior partners in a vast alliance of

[18] Henry Kissinger, *American Foreign Policy*, 3rd ed. (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1977), 305.
[19] John O'Sullivan, "The Great Nation of Futurity," *The United States Democratic Review* 6, no. 23 (November, 1839): 430, https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/osulliva.htm (accessed November 20, 2017).

nations, trying desperately to achieve sufficient unity and health to ward off the threat of tyrannical unification of the world."[20] In fact, Niebuhr goes so far as to declare that the United States has a responsibility to spread democracy.[21] Through his perspective, the United States is the shepherd of the international community, and to neglect its flock would be counter to the American beliefs of equality and liberty for all.

The transition from a relatively isolationist state to promoting democracy throughout the world is a heavily researched topic. While outside the scope of this paper, it is worth noting as the United States' sovereignty solidified and its borders expanded, so too did its belief in its duty to promote American democracy. Hartz described this interpretation of American exceptionalism as "messianic," an apt term to illustrate the United States' perceived infallibility.[22] In 1998, Robert Kagan argued that the United States' supremacy on the world stage was taken for granted, and thus the differences between American and Soviet foreign policy forgotten. Kagan showed how American foreign policy brought up less fortunate nations to promote the American ideal of—to use Wood's phrases— "equality of opportunity" which in turn would create a "rough equality of condition" across the globe:

> Beyond the style of American hegemony, which, even if unevenly applied, undoubtedly did more to attract than repel other peoples and nations, American grand strategy in the Cold War consistently entailed providing far more to friends and allies than was expected from them in return. Thus, it was American strategy to raise up from the ruins powerful economic competitors in Europe and Asia, a strategy so successful that by the 1980s the United States was thought to be in a state of irreversible "relative" economic decline —- relative, that is, to those very nations whose economies it had restored after World War II.[23]

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[20] Reinhold Niebuhr, "America's Precarious Eminence," in *Reinhold Niebuhr On Politics: His Political Philosophy and Its Application to Our Age as Expressed in His Writings*, ed. Harry R. Davis (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), 269.

[21] Niebuhr, 280-82.

[22] Louis Hartz, "The Coming of Age of America," *American Political Science Review* 51, no. 2 (June 1957): 478, https://doi.org/10.2307/1952203.

[23] Robert Kagan, "Benevolent Empire," *Foreign Policy* (June 1, 1998), http://carnegieendowment.org/1998/06/01/benevolent-empire (accessed October 22, 2017).

The long journey from the birth of the United States' right to self-determination guided the state along a path toward promoting inclusiveness, equality and liberty in its foreign policy. At the same time, there was significant criticism of the United States "spreading democracy" through involvement in sovereign states' internal affairs, often referred to as imperialist. Many theorists, especially Lenin, viewed Western democracy as a tool for capitalist exploitation of the less fortunate by the wealthy.[24] This assertion runs counter to the American democratic belief that bringing opportunity to all—and thus equality and liberty—increases the well-being of everyone involved. It also shows a deep misunderstanding of the origins and intent of American foreign policy, a misunderstanding returned in kind through American views on Russian foreign policy. As discussed previously, these misunderstandings often resulted from mirror imaging and failing to "walk a mile in their [someone else's] shoes."

1.5 The Russian Federation

Russian application of the right to self-determination takes a wholly different path. Centuries of oppression and military defeat helped create the cornerstones of Russian society: stability and security. Today, the Russian Federation outwardly promotes these beliefs through their foreign policy. Russia has also experienced a wider variety of governmental institutions than the United States. From the feudal and monarchist periods Tocqueville referenced, to the communist revolution, to its collapse seventy years later into what would become—as David Satter meticulously describes—a kleptocracy, Russian society held onto the desire for stability

[24] Vladimir Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Petrograd, Russia: 1917), https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1916lenin-imperialism.html (accessed October 10, 2017).

and security above all else, even above the value of human life.[25] The periods preceding the communist revolution are discussed at length in the following chapter on Russian nationalism.

The Russian quest for self-determination begins over a century after the West's Enlightenment. In 1905, Russia became the first European state to be defeated by an Asian power, Japan. For Russians, the defeat marked the final event in a long line of Tsarist failures. Communists called for an end to the Russian monarchy, resulting in the October Revolution of 1917. "Complete equality of rights for all nations;" Lenin wrote, "the right of nations to self-determination; the amalgamation of the workers of all nations - this is the national program that Marxism, the experience of the whole world, and the experience of Russia, teaches the workers."[26]

Lenin's call to unify international society started with the Russians, and a successful Russian example would then lead the way to an international communist revolution. Russian unification under communism was an interpretation of Prince Vladimir's call for a united Russia under Christianity, 900 years prior. Again, a nuanced discussion of this history is covered in the nationalism chapter. The belief of a culturally-unified Russia echoes in Stalin's 1914 essay, *Marxism and the National-Colonial Question*: "A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture."[27] Stalin's concept of a nation also established an umbrella of stability under which all elements of national identity must reside. Maintaining that absolute stability required placing security above the needs of citizens.

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[25] David Satter, *Darkness at Dawn: the Rise of the Russian Criminal State* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 59, 188.

[26] Vladimir Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination," in *The Nationalism Reader*, 211.

[27] Joseph Stalin, "Marxism and the National-Colonial Question," in *The Nationalism Reader*, 192.

Military failures in the Tsarist period created doubt to the legitimacy of a Tsar's power and authority. Consequently, the Soviet government needed a security apparatus that enveloped all facets of life. Adherence to a single political and economic thought—as defined by the Soviet government—solidified the Russian identity. Anton Shekhovtsov describes what are called "active measures," direct methods used by the *siloviki* (security services) to ensure adherence to the Soviet institutions:

> Active measures are implemented through 'actions aimed at creating agent positions in the enemy camp and its environment, playing operational games with the enemy directed at disinforming, discrediting, and corrupting enemy forces'. Oleg Kalugin, former Major General of the Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti (Committee for State Security, KGB), described active measures as 'the heart and soul of the Soviet intelligence'...[28]

For the Soviet government, these measures were essential to maintaining a unified front against external oppression and preventing the humiliation they experienced under Tsarist regimes. Indeed, the hundred-year head start Western Europe had over Russia concerning the Enlightenment and industrialization only amplified distaste for the Tsar. Communism seemed to be a way for Russians to regain lost ground, and for that, unity was essential. According to Satter, the Russian desire for unity during Soviet rule stemmed from glorification of work—which was performed only to advance the government's agenda—as a replacement for "the relation between man and God."[29]

Stability and security in Russia was at its weakest after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* dissolved Russian unity of thought and action as democratic ideologies flooded in. Russians, searching for a common sense of direction and a resurgence of Russian identity, looked to their cultural roots. William Pomeranz of The Kennan

[28] Anton Shekhovtsov, *Russia and the Western Far Right* (New York: Routledge, 2018), xx.
[29] David Satter, *It Was a Long Time Ago, and It Never Happened Anyway: Russia and the Communist Past* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 101.

Institute refers to the 1993 Russian constitution, which "speaks of the need to preserve Russia's historic 'state unity' and of renewing its 'sovereign statehood.' Article 5, part 3 further declares that the federative make-up of the Russian Federation shall be based upon its 'state integrity' and the 'unity of the system of state power.'"[30]

National identity is a major element of Russian foreign policy. The identity requires unity of thought—stability—and protection of all ethnic Russians, regardless of where they live. The implication, which Vladimir Putin used in the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, is that protecting the Russian national identity supersedes all other laws.[31] Therefore, Putin argued that it was not only necessary, but his constitutional obligation to protect ethnic Russians abroad. The best form of protection, then, was annexing the area into the Russian Federation, bringing to bear on Ukraine all the Russian military, economic, and diplomatic might.

Protecting the Russian identity must be accomplished through any means necessary. Stalin killed millions of Russians to protect his version of the identity, and Putin followed suit through his actions in the Chechen wars, invasions of Georgia and Ukraine, and by what Satter asserts as a false flag attack by the FSB in the 1999 Russian apartment bombings that killed 293 civilians.[32] Out of this string of events the *maskirovka* concept comes into view. To James Roberts, *maskirovka* is a Soviet military doctrine consisting of "camouflage, deception, denial, subversion, sabotage, espionage, propaganda, and psychological operations."[33]

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[30] William Pomeranz, "How "The State" Survived the Collapse of the Soviet Union," *Kennan Cable* no. 18 (September 8, 2016), https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/kennan-cable-no18-how-the-state-survived-the-collapse-the-soviet-union (accessed October 15, 2017).

[31] Vladimir Putin, "Speech to Federal Assembly" (Moscow, March 18 2014), accessed October 10, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/transcript-putin-says-russia-will-protect-the-rights-of-russians-abroad/2014/03/18/432a1e60-ae99-11e3-a49e-76adc9210f19_story.html.

[32] Satter, *Darkness at Dawn: the Rise of the Russian Criminal State*, 33.

[33] James Roberts, "Maskirovka 2.0: Hybrid Threat, Hybrid Response," *JSOU Press Occasional Paper* (December, 2015): 1, http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/1007494.pdf (accessed October 9, 2017).

Roberts recognized a shift from *maskirovka's* former military role into a post-Soviet application in line with the Gerasimov doctrine: "The purpose of Maskirovka 2.0 is a bit different in that it is being used to achieve peacetime illegal political and geographic gains while staying below the threshold that would trigger any direct military response from the West."[34] Valery Gerasimov, the Russian Federation's General of the Army, argues that implementing *maskirovka* is merely a defensive *quid pro quo*: fighting asymmetric targets with their own weapons. "Long-distance, contactless actions against the enemy," he wrote, "are becoming the main means of achieving combat and operational goals. The defeat of the enemy's objects [objectives] is conducted throughout the entire depth of his territory."[35] Both *maskirovka* and the Gerasimov Doctrine are evaluated in the third chapter, "Russian Interference and the Gerasimov Doctrine."

The course of Russian history is tied to its concept of self-determination. The Russian people, in consolidating themselves under a national identity, believe their right to self-determination is decided by the state—not the people. It seems a paradox to Western viewers, but from a Russian perspective the state provides the security and stability Russians deeply desire. As Pomeranz observed, "no matter what adjective one places in front of the term "state" in Imperial, Soviet, and post-Soviet history – absolutist, autocratic, socialist, totalitarian, secular, democratic – it is the state that always manages to survive."[36]

Therefore, it is the state that creates the Russian identity because the state protects its citizens and ensures their cultural legacy. In accomplishing those goals, the state is authorized to use any means necessary across any sector of its power, be it social, political, economic, or

[34] Roberts, "Maskirovka 2.0: Hybrid Threat, Hybrid Response," 2.

[35] Valery Gerasimov, "The Value of Science is in the Foresight," *Military Review*, January-February 2016, 24.

[36] Pomeranz, "How "The State" Survived the Collapse of the Soviet Union."

military. Since the Russian state must protect the Russian identity, it views its claim as superior to any international boundary or law. In this context, *maskirovka* can be seen as a defensive measure.

In using *maskirovka* against the United States, the Russian state prevents direct military conflict while protecting the Russian identity from what it sees as existential attacks on the state's legitimacy. Because the state *is* the manifestation of the Russian identity, it must protect itself from assaults to its unities of thought and action. When the Russian state works to undermine Western institutions, it is—through an inverse relationship—legitimizing the Russian state as protector of the Russian identity.

1.6 Assessment

The American and Russian interpretations of self-determination are well documented and researched. However, the implications of these origins into the Russian Federation's relationship with the United States are not. *Maskirovka* itself is a likely factor for this gap, as it creates a fog over the policies, actions, and reactions of the Russian state. That is not to say it is the sole or primary factor, but at the very least one worth investigating. The United States, for its part, has succumb time and again to mirror imaging with its foreign policy that has similarly reduced cross-cultural understanding. Therefore, it was necessary to start from a much larger question: "What makes a state?" The belief in a society's right to self-determination shows two diverging paths between the United States and Russia. The two paths refine the initial question into a direct, identifiable gap in knowledge: "What are the prospects and implications of future Russian actions toward the United States, and where can research be directed to provide the most informed response?"

In the absence of substantial, published research on this question, this paper sought to understand the greater historical origins behind today's interstate behavior. This resulted in the finding that both states can, for the majority of actions, derive their behavior from their respective concepts of the right to self-determination. In vying for ideological victory, the beliefs of the two states created a bipolar world that ruled the second half of the twentieth century. The remnants of that period are still evident, and relevant, today.

The United States, throughout its history, embarked on a mission to spread democracy because it—partly due to American exceptionalism—believes the American interpretation of a liberal democracy to be the most effective form of government to launch international society into what Fukuyama believes "may constitute the 'end point of mankind's ideological evolution' and the 'final form of human government,' and as such constituted the 'end of history.'"[37] Interestingly, Fukuyama bases his argument on an end of the Hegelian dialectic, the very concept interpreted by Karl Marx that resulted in Soviet communism. In Fukuyama's version, the end of the Hegelian dialectic comes about because "earlier forms of government were characterized by grave defects and irrationalities that led to their eventual collapse, [but] liberal democracy was arguably free from such fundamental internal contradictions."[38]

The clash of contradictions, or conflict of ideas, is essential to growing democracy. Marx, then, created a dialectic by opposing the Hegelian dialectic and submitting his own perspective. Whereas Hegel's theory applies to ideologies, Marx believes "the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought."[39] It is intriguing that both the United States and Soviet Russia adopted very different interpretations of

[37] Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, xi.
[38] Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, xi.
[39] Karl Marx, Capital: *A Critique of Political Economy*, ed. Fredrich Engels (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1887), 14.

Hegel's dialectic. This paper views these interpretations as reflections of their respective identities. While Marx's theories are not part of ethnic Russian history, their modification by Lenin, Stalin, and other Russians require noting.

By applying these dialectics to United States and Russian foreign policy, the link strengthens between self-determination and foreign policy. In the United States, Hegelian ideological conflict, which Kissinger argues for in "a fundamental clash of ideologies," fuels democratic debate while depressing material conflict, or in other words, war.[40] The inverse is true in Russia: there is no significant ideological conflict due to national unity of thought, and thus material conflict is necessary to maintain the state's legitimacy. Considering the constant combat American forces have seen compared to much smaller Russian actions, this seems counter-intuitive. However, this conventional wisdom neglects to include Russian *maskirovka*, which brings all facets of life into the context of war. It is a material war where the ideas are ammunition, and the weapons are the elements of society: media, government, economy, nationalism. If the United States seeks to spread democracy to lessen the chances of war, then it is necessary for Russia to upset this narrative to protect its national identity.

1.7 Conclusion

Shekhovtsov, through his in-depth analysis of Russian relationships with far-right political movements, identifies a portion of Russian influence in the West. He also recognizes a gap, necessitating "further, more narrow research into this phenomenon and its particular aspects."[41] National identity plays a large part in *maskirovka* because identity is a conduit that can be used to divide opinions in liberal societies. *Maskirovka* itself is documented in Russian

[40] Kissinger, *American Foreign Policy*, 303.
[41] Shekhovtsov, *Russia and the Western Far Right*, xxviii.

military texts—and alluded to in the Gerasimov Doctrine—but the reasons for its application are not. Media outlets refer to Russian misinformation campaigns in national elections, but the "why" is often only summarized as advancing Russian foreign policy. The broad explanation implies a lack of understanding, to which this paper proposes additional research.

It is not enough to study the methods of *maskirovka*, as intelligence agencies around the world are likely doing. Additional questions must be asked: What is the "end goal" of these efforts? If there are no limits to the extent of *maskirovka*, what can the United States do counter it? How can the two opposing schools of thought—the United States and Russia—identify their respective contradictions and create a dialectical solution?

This paper identified the causal links between each state's concept of self-determination and their behavior toward each other. In the United States, a quest toward equality and liberty for all created a belief that liberal democracy is the safest, most egalitarian option for international relations. The United States endeavors to spread liberal democracy to all states because "the fundamentally un-warlike character of liberal societies is evident in the extraordinarily peaceful relations they maintain among one another."[42]

Russia, throughout its varied systems of government, grew from a foundation of the need for stability and security. Protecting the Russian national identity required "the disregard for the individual in the face of the need to realize the tasks of the state."[43] In doing so, the Russian state created *maskirovka* to discredit and dissuade adversaries from challenging the Russian national identity. In practice, *maskirovka* is an extension of the Russian interpretation of self-determination in that it is a defensive mechanism directed at threats to the stability and security of the Russian state—which is, in fact, the Russian identity

[42] Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, 262.
[43] Satter, *It Was a Long Time Ago, and It Never Happened Anyway: Russia and the Communist Past*, 5.

Chapter 2

Nationalism in Russian Foreign Policy

2.1 Abstract

This paper finds Russian nationalism has significant benefits for Russian President Vladimir Putin's regime in the short-term, but creates the potential for severe consequences in the long term as his base becomes disillusioned. The disillusionment is likely caused by Russia's inability to fully commit militarily to regain what nationalists perceive as lost Russian territory in Ukraine. Such a military commitment would result in harsh Western responses that Putin cannot risk and thus leaves the Russian nationalist base feeling unfulfilled and disenfranchised. In Ukraine, Russian nationalism will be part of the equation in Ukraine's future decision concerning its relationship with Russia, as attrition through the current conflict can only lead to a Ukrainian collapse and Russian victory.

2.2 Introduction

Russian President Vladimir Putin's domestic approval is a well-known aspect of Russian society, yet debate continues on how he uses that support and whether it is his own creation or a pre-existing Russian condition. This paper views Putin's foreign policy toward Ukraine through the lens of Russian nationalism to better understand the intricacies involved. It seeks to answer, in part, a call from academics for a new conceptual approach to Russian foreign policy.[1] While the standard Western view is of Russian aggression as a return to former glory, this paper instead views Russian foreign policy as a means to retain its identity in a progressive world. By using nationalism to justify its actions in Ukraine, Putin inadvertently opened the Russian Federation to destruction from within. In what is an ironic twist of fate, the same justifications Putin used for annexing Crimea can be used by disparate Russian societies to secede from the Russian Federation. Therefore, Russian nationalism has a significant impact on Russian foreign policy toward Ukraine. Nationalist sentiment is integral to the stability and security of the Putin-led Russian government.

2.3 Methodology

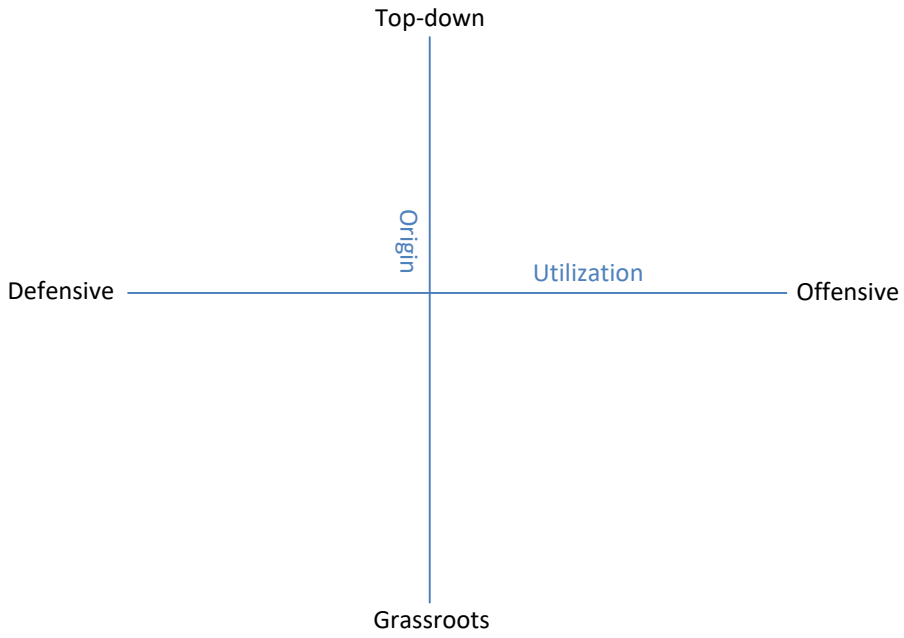
To evaluate Russian nationalism, this paper identifies differing views on its origins and uses. Prominent research behind these views are grouped into four divisions to understand how each viewpoint interacts with the others. Next, these viewpoints are applied to various Russian-Ukrainian events in recent history: Euromaidan, the Crimean referendum, and separatist movements in the Eastern Ukrainian oblasts of Donetsk and Luhansk. This paper finds the most probable source of nationalism comes from the top and is disseminated to the public in the form

[1] Roy Allison, "Russian 'Deniable' Intervention in Ukraine: How and Why Russia Broke the Rules," *International Affairs* 90, no. 6 (November 12, 2014): 1256, https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12170.

of a "Russian Idea" which feeds on grassroots nationalist sentiment already prevalent in Russian society. The modern "Russian Idea" is Putin's Russia: united under a common history and culture against ideological challenges from the West. The most significant Western challenge this paper investigates is of a culturally blended society that derives its strength from its diversity of thought. Unity of thought in the "Russian Idea" is a core tenet to regime stability and their domestic perception of a return to Russian prosperity with Putin at its helm. This top-down nationalism is then used for what this paper terms defensive nationalism, a method that slows adversarial decision-making processes and creates a permissive operating environment for non-military Russian national powers. Most prevalent of these powers is information warfare and a non-linear approach to conflict via the Gerasimov Doctrine.

Finally, this paper puts the top-down, defensive nationalism construct into context for both Russia and Ukraine. Doing so brings to light weaknesses and strengths in nationalism's use, and shows how it can threaten Russia in the future. By misinterpreting historical contexts, Putin created the potential justification for groups within Russia to secede. In a best-case scenario for Putin's Russia, he will need to shift away from nationalist messages while the Russian economy and demographics continue to suffer. Otherwise, Putin's domestic messaging that capitalizes on nationalistic goals could result in frustration and a loss of confidence in Putin by his base and oligarchs alike, leading to a Russian future that spirals downward.

Figure 1: Origins and Uses of Nationalism



2.4 Literature Review

There are four competing schools of thought regarding nationalism as a contributor to Russian foreign policy toward Ukraine. These four schools are depicted in Figure 1 as X and Y axes on a graph. For the X axis, Russian nationalism can be seen as defensive or offensive in nature. The defensive camp sees Russian foreign policy as a tool to fend off invaders, specifically the Western powers of the United States (U.S.) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).[2] These invaders are directly attacking a "Fortress Russia" while simultaneously chipping away at Russia's self-proclaimed sphere of influence.[3] The opposing

[2] Andrei Tsygankov, "Vladimir Putin's Last Stand: The Sources of Russia's Ukraine Policy," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 31, no. 4 (February 4, 2015): 290, https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2015.1005903.

[3] For descriptions of Fortress Russia, see: Ariel Cohen, "Putin's Crackdown Foretells 'Fortress Russia,'" *The Heritage Foundation*, October 18, 2012, accessed June 19, 2018, https://www.heritage.org/europe/commentary/putins-crackdown-foretells-fortress-russia; U.S. Senate, *Putin's Asymmetric Assault on Democracy in Russia And Europe: Implications for U.S. National Security*, Senate Report, 115-21 (115th Cong., 2d sess., January 10, 2018).

camp—and typically a view held by Western viewers—is an offensively-postured Russian foreign policy that uses nationalist rhetoric to justify Russia's "Right to Protect" Russian citizens abroad.[4] In doing so, this viewpoint attributes Russian actions to expansionist desires, seeking to overturn the status quo in Eastern Europe and assert a "great power" role.[5] Russia seeks to accomplish this by referencing historical concepts and norms, the most tangible of these being "Novorossiya" and the annexation of Crimea.[6]

The Y axis concerns where and how this nationalist thought originates: distributed downward by elites through propaganda, or spreading upward from grassroots nationalist movements as a result of decades of perceived injustices. The trickle-down nationalism asserts Putin cultivated nationalism through propaganda and rhetoric that frames the West as antagonistic. The gradual shift of Putin from center-right to the right, from 2000 to the present day, may be a calculated move to retain power, appease possible revolutionary forces within Russia, and manipulate populist sentiment to drive foreign policy. Conversely, the grassroots origin theory sees the Russian elites use of nationalism as a byproduct of greater societal change at the lowest levels.[7] This belief draws from various other grassroots uprisings in recent history, from the Arab Spring in the Middle East to the Orange Revolution and Euromaidan in Ukraine.[8]

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[4] Roy Allison, "The Russian Case for Military Intervention in Georgia: International Law, Norms and Political Calculation," *European Security* 18, no. 2 (December 22, 2009): 178, https://doi.org/10.1080/09662830903468734.

[5] Andrew Radin and Clint Reach, *Russian Views of the International Order* (RAND Corporation, 2017), 15-19, accessed June 21, 2018, https://doi.org/10.7249/RR1826.

[6] Mikhail Suslov, "The Production of 'Novorossiya': A Territorial Brand in Public Debates," *Europe-Asia Studies* 69, no. 2 (March 22, 2017): 202–221, https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2017.1285009.

[7] Louise G. White, Julia Korosteleva, and Roy Allison, "NATO: The View from the East," *European Security* 15, no. 2 (January 24, 2007): 169, https://doi.org/10.1080/09662830600903769.

[8] Radin and Reach, *Russian Views of the International Order, 28.*

2.2.1 Russian Defensive Nationalism

Nationalism with defensive justifications is more internationally acceptable than offensive justifications because it removes the aggressive connotation of forcing outside entities to accept the nationalist view. Typically, it is isolationist and focuses inward at internal divides, while some theorize Western expansion is causing a rise in Russian aggression.[9] Tsygankov argues for the preservation of cultural identity—specifically Russian language, norms, and accepted practices—and ties it to historical ownership of geographical areas.[10] In conjunction with this inward-looking belief, defensive nationalism blames outside actors for events that discredit Russian governmental activities or disrupt Russian society, with the predominant bad actor being the historically familiar U.S. and NATO.[11] Should an event outside Russia threaten their culture, this camp believes Russia is justified in defending Russians abroad as a defensive measure against external existential threats—a key point in Prime Minister Medvedev's speech concerning the Russian deployment to Crimea prior to its annexation.[12]

2.2.3 Russian Offensive Nationalism

On the other hand, offensive nationalism views this right to protect as an aggressive, expansionist tool to regain lost ground of former Russian lands from both Tsarist and Soviet periods, of which Aleksandr Dugin is a major proponent.[13] Dugin expands on this nationalist philosophy, and calls for a return of isolated cultures, at the same time calling for an end to

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[9] Stephen Walt, "Why Arming Kiev Is a Really, Really Bad Idea," *Foreign Policy*, February 9, 2015, accessed July 5, 2018, https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/02/09/how-not-to-save-ukraine-arming-kiev-is-a-bad-idea/?

[10] Tsygankov, "Vladimir Putin's Last Stand: The Sources of Russia's Ukraine Policy," 293–5.

[11] Allison, "Russian 'Deniable' Intervention in Ukraine: How and Why Russia Broke the Rules," 1273.

[12] Farangis Najibullah, "Russia Mulls Fast-Track Citizenship, Sparking Brain-Drain Concerns Elsewhere," *Radio Free Europe*, last modified March 12, 2014, accessed June 20, 2018, https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-mull-fast-track-citizenship-sparking-brain-drain-concerns-elsewhere/25294443.html.

[13] Alexander Dugin, *Last War of the World-Island* (London: Arktos Media Ltd, 2015), 4-11.

nationalism and a unity of being dictated by "our peoples, our countries, and our civilisations."[14] The concept of Novorossiya, or New Russia, derives its strength from the shared identity of Eastern Ukrainians—39% of Luhansk and 38% of Donetsk oblasts identify as ethnic Russians—with Russia, similar to Crimea in 2014.[15] These two areas, Eastern Ukraine and Crimea, are prime examples of offensive nationalism used in Russian foreign policy toward Ukraine.

2.2.3 Nationalism from the Top Down

Russian nationalism's use in foreign policy finds its strongest argument in a "top-down" structure: Rhetoric, goals, and initiatives are created at the highest levels, and then disseminated to the Russian people for consumption. In their interviews of Russian students, Kasamara and Sorokina found that propaganda—or state-sponsored media outlets—had the largest effect on political perceptions.[16] The propaganda drew on defensive nationalist sentiments: historical grievances, dated attitudes and opinions from the Cold War, and the perception of a Russian culture under siege by the West.[17] These attitudes toward Ukraine changed with the narrative provided by the Russian state media as Russia dealt with various Ukrainian presidents and their friendliness—or lack thereof—toward Russia.[18] This top-down use of nationalism created substantial Russian public support for the 2008 Georgian War, which tested the "right to protect" concept on the international stage. Allison believed, correctly, that this logic would be used in

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[14] Alexander Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory* (London: Arktos Media Ltd, 2012), 195-7.

[15] Suslov, "The Production of 'Novorossiya': A Territorial Brand in Public Debates," 209-10. See also State Statistics Committee of Ukraine. "Всеукраїнський Перепис Населення (All-Ukrainian Population Census)." *National Composition of Population*. Last modified 2001. Accessed July 31, 2018. http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/results/general/nationality/.

[16] Valeria Kasamara and Anna Sorokina, "Rebuilt Empire or New Collapse? Geopolitical Visions of Russian Students," *Europe-Asia Studies* 69, no. 2 (March 14, 2017): 281, https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2017.1295023.

[17] Kasamara and Sorokina, "Rebuilt Empire or New Collapse? Geopolitical Visions of Russian Students," 281.

[18] Tsygankov, "Vladimir Putin's Last Stand: The Sources of Russia's Ukraine Policy," 283, 289.

future conflicts because it provided enough gray-area legality on definitions of citizens and self-determination to normalize its use.[19] By declaring Georgian citizens to be of ethnic Russian origin, Russia tapped into the nationalist sentiment of protecting its own people against all enemies. This same argument was used in annexing Crimea six years later.[20]

2.2.4 Nationalism from The Ground Up

A grassroots source of Russian nationalism would fall in line with the global phenomena between 2004 and 2014. The common argument identified in a meta-analysis of Russian citizens' views were ones of historic distrust of the West that were at least partially based on a lack of understanding of Western entities like NATO.[21] A separate study found that "historical ignorance" among young Russians contributed to their acceptance of Russian state media.[22] Far-right nationalist movements, like Dugin's, feel that Putin doesn't go far enough with his policies, giving credence to the notion that Putin only uses nationalist sentiment when it is convenient to him.[23] However, Suslov and Szostek separately argue that grassroots nationalism is not effective in altering Russian foreign policy or forcing the Russian government to change its course.[24] With that in mind, it is important to note that "top-down" nationalism would not work without at least

[19] Allison, "The Russian Case for Military Intervention in Georgia: International Law, Norms and Political Calculation," 191.

[20] ""Little Green Men": A Primer on Modern Russian Unconventional Warfare, Ukraine 2013–2014" (United States Army Special Operations Command, nd), accessed March 11, 2018, http://www.jhuapl.edu/Content/documents/ARIS_LittleGreenMen.pdf.

[21] White, Korosteleva, and Allison, "NATO: The View from the East," 165–190.

[22] Kasamara and Sorokina, "Rebuilt Empire or New Collapse? Geopolitical Visions of Russian Students," 273.

[23] Alexander Dugin, *Putin vs Putin* (London: Arktos Media Ltd, 2014), 157-160.

[24] For Suslov's argument, "The Production of 'Novorossiya': A Territorial Brand in Public Debates," 218; and for Szostek's analysis, Joanna Szostek, "Popular Geopolitics in Russia and Post-Soviet Eastern Europe," *Europe-Asia Studies* 69, no. 2 (March 22, 2017): 195–201.

a basic form of grassroots nationalist beliefs from which elites could form the basis of effective messaging.

2.3 Russian Foreign Policy Through a Nationalist Lens

The Russian government uses nationalism to provide acceptable justifications to its citizens for its actions outside Russia. First, Russian government officials cite notable historical cultural figures in official addresses. These figures typically espouse a larger national entity than current Russian borders. Second, the Russian government compares its people to "little Russians:" a derogatory Russian phrase for Ukrainians and Belorussians to show that Russia as an idea is greater than the state.[25] Third, Russian nationalism appeases a desire to increase national credibility on the world stage. The states of the former Soviet Union are generally regarded as belonging to Russia's current sphere of influence.[26] Fourth, nationalism helps justify claims to a right of self-determination by groups wishing to align with Russia. This is most evident in the Russian justifications for the 2014 Crimea annexation and 2008 Georgian War invasion.

These four points draw on the top-down theory for spreading nationalism and are backed by defensive statements to delay international actions that could stop Russian intervention. For Ukraine, it is especially relevant because it shares a 1,000-year history with the Rus civilization, the genesis of both Ukraine and Russia. Russian nationalism is dangerous when used as a soft power foreign policy tool against Ukraine because it attacks the social fabric within Ukraine. Ukraine is visibly divided by culture: language, religion, views of Russia and the West, all

[25] James Sherr, *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad* (Baltimore, Maryland: Chatham House, 2013), 57.

[26] Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*, (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 265.

follow the same general fault lines between Eastern and Central Ukraine.[27] Russia exploits this divide by tailoring its messaging to adopt these nationalist sentiments and refer back to periods of Russian unification as a call to support the Russian government in expanding its influence abroad.

2.3.1 Protecting Historical Territory

History is a major facet of the Russian identity: Putin refers to Prince Vladimir as a reminder of Crimea's importance to Russians.[28] This is an attempt to justify to the world that Russia is not only a sovereign state, but a civilization that has historical rights to lands outside its current border. To this end, calls from Russian officials for returning Crimea and "Novorossiya" to Russia evoke nationalist sentiments among ethnic Russians.[29] There is, however, a significant threat: if the Russian government cannot deliver on these demands, they risk losing the support of their right-leaning political base.

This threat is already coming to fruition in Ukraine: fighting in the East is at a relative stalemate. While this is precisely the outcome the Russian government wants, it will not satisfy the portion of their base that wants to re-unite the area with Russia. A low-intensity conflict stalemate prevents Ukraine from joining the EU and NATO, thus leaving it to fend for itself and increasing its vulnerability to Russian interference.[30]

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[27] Razumkov Center and All-Ukrainian Council of Churches, *"Релігія, Церква, Суспільство і Держава: Два Роки Після Майдану" (Religion, Church, Society and State: Two Years after Maidan)* (Razumkov Center, May 26, 2016), accessed October 10, 2017, http://old.razumkov.org.ua/upload/Religiya_200516_A4.compressed.pdf.

[28] Vladimir Putin, "Address by President of the Russian Federation" (presented at the Presidential Address at the Kremlin, Moscow, March 18, 2014), accessed June 30, 2018, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603.

[29] Allison, "Russian 'Deniable' Intervention in Ukraine: How and Why Russia Broke the Rules," 1264–5.

[30] Allison, "Russian 'Deniable' Intervention in Ukraine: How and Why Russia Broke the Rules," 1274.

Re-claiming and protecting historical territory creates additional legal issues for Russia. First, what international legal claim does Russia have to areas owned by former Russian systems of government, and what international body would recognize it? The Russian Federation is not a continuation of the communist Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), it is—by its own admission—a democratic federal republic. Moreover, to lay claim to area owned by governments twice removed, in this case Tsarist Russia, further stretches any legal interpretations the Russian Federation may provide to the world regarding continuity of ownership.

Second, who or what governmental body in Ukraine allows for a legal secession of Eastern Ukraine? If this cannot be accomplished by a legal and democratic vote, what justification will Russia provide for interfering with an internal Ukrainian civil war? The current Russian argument is multifaceted but centers predominantly on its self-professed right to protect Russians anywhere in the world.[31] This argument directly ties nationalist ideology to concerns about a perceived threat to Russian identity: because Ukrainians share a very intimate history with Russians and are culturally similar, the ongoing revolutions in Ukraine risk spreading into the Russian diaspora.

2.3.2 Cultural Similarities: The Risk to the Russian Idea

The Russian government's fear that a revolution in Ukraine against kleptocracy could spread to Russia is well founded. Human rights repression, corruption, economic stagnation, and a patrimonial business system risk inflaming social-class tensions in Russia, as it did in Ukraine. Gurr's theory of relative deprivation applies here.[32] First, Ukraine as a whole is geographically and culturally closer to Western Europe by way of Central Europe and could more readily see the

[31] Putin, "Address by President of the Russian Federation."
[32] Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, 4th edition. (London New York: Routledge, 2011), 24.

difference in quality of life between the democratic West and formerly-communist East. Second, the civilizational divide within Ukraine further agitated the perception of relative deprivation: Ukrainians in Western Ukraine adopted democratic, progressive ideas and began to seek Ukrainian induction into Western institutions—namely NATO and the EU. Eastern Ukrainians, more culturally tied to Russia, viewed these events as encroaching on their Ukrainian identity and sought to protect it.

It is in this way that Ukraine is a true cultural threat to Russia. The Russian Idea that Putin draws heavily on in his speeches proposes that Western and Russian ideals are insoluble. The Russian Idea is a nationalist tool to solidify all of Russia under a shared Russian identity without regard to country of origin: an individual who culturally identifies as Russian is a part of the Russian Idea by default.[33] It is the basis from which the Russian government created its domestic messaging about "Fortress Russia," right to protect, Novorossiya, and the Crimean annexation. The Russian Idea is a probable driver for Putin's lofty approval ratings. It focuses domestic attention away from a dismal outlook that includes a declining population, severe alcohol abuse, poor healthcare, corruption, and political repression. By attributing Russian internal problems to external actors, Putin can solidify Russians against Western beliefs. The weakness to the Russian Idea lies in Ukraine's unique position between Russia and the West: because of their close cultural ties, Ukraine is the measuring stick against which Russians can measure their relative quality of life.[34]

Should NATO and the EU absorb Ukraine, the adoption of Western practices—especially economic and legal processes that reduce corruption, patrimonial influence, and expand human

[33] Vladimir Putin, "Russia: The Ethnicity Issue," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, January 23, 2012, accessed October 18, 2017, http://archive.premier.gov.ru/eng/events/news/17831/.

[34] White, Korosteleva, and Allison, "NATO: The View from the East," 166.

rights—Ukrainian standards of living could slowly rise to that of its Western neighbors. Russians, seeing these improvements in quality of life, would likewise feel deprived under the Russian Idea and seek adoption of Western ideals. This is what the Russian government fears. As enmity increases between Russia and Ukraine, it is possible Ukraine will shift further West.[35] Putin, through his promotion of the Russian Idea, risks losing Russian approval as Russians look to reduce their relative deprivation with Ukrainians. For Putin and the Russian government, such an event would likely equate to the collapse of the USSR.

Therefore, Putin must ensure the Russian Idea—and by proxy, the Russian government—cannot be threatened. Russian nationalism is the most efficient and low-risk option available for this defense. It provides arguments for defending the Russian people, thus keeping his base appeased, while giving enough murky justification to the international community to confuse, restrict, delay, and prevent outside intervention. The Russian Idea, as a nationalist tool, gives Putin the flexibility he needs to execute foreign policy and maintain the Russian sphere of influence.

2.3.3 Maintaining the Sphere of Influence

The existential threat to the Russian government should not be taken lightly by the West because it has significant implications for how Russia will interact on the world stage. Putin cannot afford to allow Ukraine to join Western institutions—and not because of the threat of NATO bases on its borders. The physical threat of Western militaries is an outdated misconception that Russian nationalist sentiment takes advantage of: the amount of military

[35] "Ukrainians, Russians More Polarized on Future of Relations," *Gallup*, last modified February 23, 2018, accessed February 23, 2018, https://news.gallup.com/poll/228086/ukrainians-russians-polarized-future-relations.aspx.

equipment required to directly threaten the entire Russian military is far beyond what NATO could realistically stage at permanent bases in Ukraine. Both Russia and NATO have sufficient means to destroy each other from their current geographical positions. While a close physical presence of NATO on Russian borders would certainly have a psychological effect on Russians, the fear of such a situation is more useful in stoking domestic Russian support for Putin's government.

Putin and the Russian government are intrinsically tied to the Russian Idea—it is what has sustained the social cohesiveness after the collapse of the USSR and tumultuous post-Soviet period of the 1990s. Protecting the government is akin to protecting the Russian way of life, with the relationship between the two possibly reflected in Putin's approval ratings. It is logical, then, that both Putin and Russian nationalists would align in pursuit of that defense.[36] With a very real threat to this way of life filtering through many former Soviet countries, it is again logical that both parties would focus their efforts in this space. What is perceived in the West as a return to a Soviet Russian sphere of influence as a form of neo-imperialist expansionism could be viewed instead as a security measure for regime continuity.[37] There is a small but significant difference between the two views: the predominant Western view is one of Russian aggression to force Western acquiescence in Eastern European affairs, while the Russian perspective is the limited use of national powers to maintain and protect stability in Russia.

Russia's small sphere of influence is more susceptible to its national powers partly because of their geographical closeness, but more so due to cultural similarities and shared history with Russians. If the Russian "Gerasimov Doctrine" is to be believed, and there is a solid argument that it should be, then we should expect to see a non-linear (or asymmetric) approach

[36] Tsygankov, "Vladimir Putin's Last Stand: The Sources of Russia's Ukraine Policy," 280.
[37] Walt, "Why Arming Kiev Is a Really, Really Bad Idea."

to Russian foreign policy.[38] Typical Russian actions include cyber-attacks, "gray-area" warfare, energy grid disruption, and heavy use of propaganda through misinformation and disinformation campaigns. Allison believes that traditional warfare would be unappealing because "senior Russian officers originally trained in Soviet military academies alongside officers from the Ukrainian Union Republic can hardly welcome the reality of combat with the 'fraternal' Ukrainian people, which offers neither recognition, career advancement nor a sense of personal accomplishment."[39] Open conflict between Russia and Ukraine would expose Russia to possible direct Western military intervention with little or no benefit to regime stability. A cultural understanding of the interactions between Russia and Ukraine is therefore vital for Western states and institutions in applying their foreign policy to accomplish their own goals. To that end, there is a significant flaw in Putin's argument for Crimea's right of self-determination: it can just as easily be applied in Russia.

2.3.4 Right of Self-Determination

In March 2014, Putin asserted Crimea had the right to vote for secession from Ukraine without acceptance from the Ukrainian government.[40] He justified this with the democratic ideal of a people's right to self-determination—a critical element to both US and French revolutions in the 1700s. However, Putin's argument was critically flawed. In supporting Crimea's secession, however forced and illegal it may have been, he established a precedent for other peoples to secede from non-aligned parent governments. More to the point, disparate communities within the Russian Federation now have a basic framework to organize their own secessions from

[38] For an evaluation of the Gerasimov Doctrine in foreign policy, see Chapter Three of this thesis. See also Valery Gerasimov, "The Value of Science Is in the Foresight," *Military Review* 96, no. 1 (February 2016): 23–29.

[39] Allison, "Russian 'Deniable' Intervention in Ukraine: How and Why Russia Broke the Rules," 1281-2.

[40] Putin, "Address by President of the Russian Federation."

Russia. As previously mentioned, the Russian Idea is critical to maintaining regime continuity. Putin has, in effect, given Russian citizens who feel they do not fit into the Russian Idea an opportunity to revolt.

The Russian Idea, Russian society, and Russian culture are three overlapping elements that form the social fabric of the Russian Federation. Russian society is more clearly divided than the Idea, as Siberian, central steppes, Caucasus, and Muscovite regions are distinctly different.[41] Likewise, Russian culture is not uniform across Russia: traditions, mores, values, and religion vary significantly. If the Russian Idea is meant to encompass and unify both the entirety of Russia and areas outside its borders, then fragmentation of the Idea could create a cascading collapse of not only this identity but the state itself. It seems a significant oversight on Putin's part to relate the Crimean right of self-determination to states whose creation involved the removal of an oppressive and unwanted parent state.

2.4 What Does Nationalism Accomplish for Russia?

There is a significant threat to Putin's regime continuity embedded in using Russian nationalism as a foreign policy tool. Leaders of hyper-nationalist movements, such as Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, may take advantage of Putin's nationalist messaging and use it to work against the Russian government.[42] Kadyrov serves a purpose in the "Russian Idea": he controls and violently suppresses anti-establishment sentiment to maintain order in an area notorious for separatist movements against Russia. Applying these brute force techniques to future separatist movements in Russia risks alienating significant portions of its population. Different

[41] Allison, "Russian 'Deniable' Intervention in Ukraine: How and Why Russia Broke the Rules," 1283-4.

[42] Alexey Kovalev, "Putin's Surprise Myanmar Challenge from Chechnya," *Coda Story*, September 4, 2017, accessed June 18, 2018, https://codastory.com/disinformation-crisis/information-war/putin-s-surprise-myanmar-challenge-from-chechnya.

interpretations of stability and security—in nationalist contexts—are likely causes of fracturing a united Russian nationalist message. In Ukraine, "institutional preferences of citizens were more likely to connect to certain group identities (especially ethnicity) and particular ideological orientations towards Ukraine's place in the world, the ethnic basis of citizenship and the market."[43] Because Putin ties Russian and Ukrainian ethnicities together by their shared cultural history, this existential threat becomes a plausible risk to his regime's continuity.

Until such fracturing occurs, if it occurs at all, Putin can use nationalist rhetoric to justify foreign policy to his domestic audience while delaying negative reactions internationally. Putin can tailor the government's messaging to address both shortcomings at home and necessary Russian actions abroad. During periods of stymied economic growth, he blames Western sanctions instead of addressing the reason for those sanctions—except for his spokesman to label them "unjustified and illegal asset freezes under the guise of sanctions."[44] Within the construct of Ends-Ways-Means, nationalism is a means organized through the ways of information warfare to accomplish the ends of Russian foreign policy objectives.

2.4.1 Russia's Quest for Validation

Validation of Russia as a great power is another important factor to the "Russia Idea" where nationalism plays a role.[45] In the Russian quest to return to great power status, Putin uses

[43] Paul Chaisty and Stephen Whitefield, "Citizens' Attitudes Towards Institutional Change in Contexts of Political Turbulence: Support for Regional Decentralisation in Ukraine," *Political Studies* 64, no. 4 (October 15, 2016): 825, https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321716684845.

[44] Henry Meyer, "Putin Tries to Lure $1 Trillion Home as Sanctions Fear Grows," *Bloomberg.Com*, December 26, 2017, accessed July 11, 2018, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-12-26/putin-tries-to-lure-1-trillion-home-as-sanctions-fear-deepens. See also Peter Pomerantsev and Michael Weiss, *The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money* (Institute of Modern Russia, 2014), accessed June 20, 2018, https://imrussia.org/media/pdf/Research/Michael_Weiss_and_Peter_Pomerantsev__The_Menace_of_Unreality.pdf.

[45] Kasamara and Sorokina, "Rebuilt Empire or New Collapse? Geopolitical Visions of Russian Students," 266.

nationalism and the "fortress Russia" concept to align Russian citizens to his world-view. This alignment plays off an already deep-seated notion "that Russia is encircled by a group of enemies, led by the United States."[46] By projecting power outward, Putin accomplishes two objectives. First, it provides validation that Russia is no longer in the weakened state it found itself post-Soviet collapse. Second, it fuels a top-down, defensive nationalist perspective where Putin leads the fight against Western oppression and exploitation of that previously-weak Russian state. However, annexing new areas based on an argument of historical ownership or relations does not mesh well with a modern "fortress Russia" argument: Russia cannot claim both a return to centuries-old territorial boundaries and a defense of modern-day borders.

The potential for internal contradictions among these two viewpoints can divide the nationalist base along the defensive and offensive fault lines. By promoting both ideologies, Putin unifies Russian citizens in the short-term. As the differing goals become realized—or fail to be realized—those divisions will become clearer. Dugin, a proponent of a more imperialist Russia, risks separating his base from Putin's message if Putin fails to fulfill his messaging to Dugin's satisfaction.[47] Putin will need to manage the expectations of these disparate groups in the long-term to maintain regime stability, a risk he recognized publicly in 2014.[48]

2.4.2 Right to Protect Geopolitical Realignment

As an instrument of nationalism in foreign policy, Russia's "right to protect" narrative has significant implications on the geopolitical stage. According to Tsygankov, Putin's mid-2000s shift toward an anti-Western approach welcomed Russian nationalists to his narrative,

[46] Ibid., 265.
[47] Alexander Dugin, *Putin vs Putin*: 193-5.
[48] Allison, "Russian 'Deniable' Intervention in Ukraine: How and Why Russia Broke the Rules," 1297.

with Ukraine as his "last stand against global American hegemony."[49] Putin's "right to protect" justification of military intervention in the 2008 Georgian War and the 2014 Crimean annexation tested its international acceptance. In both cases, the international response was tepid—there was no direct military action taken to combat Russian aggression. A lack of international response validated Putin's argument, giving it a form of precedent and enabling him to use this narrative for future justification.[50] Establishing a precedent for a "right to protect" plays into Putin's "Russian Idea:" Russia is greater than its state borders and is justified in protecting the Idea in any situation and location.

The "right to protect," then, is a geopolitical realignment in Russia's favor. It casts off the accepted international standards of rule of law and state sovereignty. It provides enough gray area justification that stymies international response to Russian aggression.[51] Finally, it boosts the Russian domestic perception of Russia as a great power because it can affect and manipulate internal affairs of other sovereign states in ways Russians attribute to the West. Combined, these elements give Putin enough leeway to execute his foreign policy without needing to worry about an international military response, setting a dangerous precedent for the future.

2.4.3 Neo-Imperialism

Using the "right to protect" narrative helps expand Russia's sphere of influence across its near abroad. Expanding their sphere of influence is itself a contradiction to Putin's defensive nationalism argument: if Russia seeks only to retain its current status, why does it need to expand its influence? Doing so shifts the geopolitical landscape in Central and Eastern Europe by

[49] Tsygankov, "Vladimir Putin's Last Stand: The Sources of Russia's Ukraine Policy," 292.

[50] Allison, "The Russian Case for Military Intervention in Georgia: International Law, Norms and Political Calculation," 178.

[51] Roy Allison, "Russia Resurgent? Moscow's Campaign to 'Coerce Georgia to Peace,'" *International Affairs* 84, no. 6 (October 17, 2008): 1152, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2008.00762.x.

upsetting the norm and returning to an imperialist perspective akin to the Soviet era. Soviet Russia was imperialist in the sense that it sought to control states within its purview and exploit their resources for Russian gains. Stalin's collectivization of farmlands eradicated 3.9 million Ukrainians in the 1930s, a point in history that still causes significant contention between Russia and Ukraine today.[52]

In modern Ukraine, there are signs that Russia again seeks to control its neighbors. The continuing low-intensity conflict in Eastern Ukraine prevents Ukrainian applications into NATO and the EU, forcing them to fend for themselves. In doing so, Russia can flex its economic power over Ukraine to maintain Russian influence. Russian nationalism serves as a conduit for a Russian neo-imperialist argument; because Ukraine is beholden to Russian interests and historical ownership, it is therefore appropriate for Russia to restrict Ukrainian access to Western organizations.[53]

2.4.4 Controlling the Narrative

The narrative is essential to the Putin regime's legitimacy and continuity. Putin must balance the far-right elements like Dugin and Kadyrov with more internationally-acceptable foreign policy. However, Putin cannot maintain both in the long-term: appeasing one will result in the upset of the other. Likewise, he cannot maintain a middle ground between the two eternally. Should Putin attempt to balance the two, he risks disenfranchising his base with failed promises or upsetting the international norm to such an extent that they respond with force.

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[52] David Patrikarakos, "Why Stalin Starved Ukraine," *The New Republic*, November 21, 2017, accessed June 19, 2018, https://newrepublic.com/article/145953/stalin-starved-ukraine.

[53] Tatyana Malyarenko and Stefan Wolff, "The Logic of Competitive Influence-Seeking: Russia, Ukraine, And the Conflict in Donbas," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 34, no. 4 (February 15, 2018): 202, https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2018.1425083.

In the near-term, Putin's use of a zero-sum argument toward NATO keeps the far-right in line. The far-right view NATO as a historical enemy to Russian power, a cultural element that Putin uses domestically to great effect.[54] At the same time, Putin disappointed the far-right by not officially recognizing Eastern Ukrainian separatist movements and not intervening with direct and overt military support.[55] Regardless of which side Putin chooses to appeal to, there is a common trend: the enemy is always external to Russia. In 2009, Allison predicted Russia would use an external threat to Russians abroad as pretext for intervention.[56] Since 2008, Putin has used the "right to protect" argument in his narratives to normalize nationalist foreign policy.

There are solutions to Putin's balancing problem outside acquiescing to one side or the other. Putin can capitalize on the differences of one far-right nationalist with another and present either side as an avenue for an external actor who seeks to threaten the "Russian Idea." For example, if Kadyrov begins to challenge Putin's authority outside Chechnya, Putin could cast him as an Islamic extremist affiliated with an external terrorist organization, and deploy Russian forces to Chechnya and remove Kadyrov and his enforcers. While the scenario may not be likely, it is plausible and retains the general Russian nationalist rhetoric. In a similar fashion, if Putin can maintain steady economic growth for Russia as a whole, much of the internal issues can be dismissed as unimportant to Russian life in relation to economic prosperity.

[54] Oksana Antonenko and Bastian Giegerich, "Rebooting NATO–Russia Relations," *Survival* 51, no. 2 (March 24, 2009): 15, https://doi.org/10.1080/00396330902860751.

[55] Tsygankov, "Vladimir Putin's Last Stand: The Sources of Russia's Ukraine Policy," 295.

[56] Allison, "The Russian Case for Military Intervention in Georgia: International Law, Norms and Political Calculation," 191.

2.5 Conclusion

As White et al identified, economic success on Russia's part may have a positive effect on retaining these disparate Russian peoples.[57] If these successes do not continue while access to information increases, these disaffected groups may adopt anti-Russian views.[58] The Russian government faces a tenuous future if economic growth slows and its citizens grow tired of conflicts that do not benefit them. To mitigate this, Putin will again need to shift the domestic focus toward a new external problem while drawing down on the need to reclaim historical territories and unite Russians in and out of the state.

This shift will have a few indicators for observers. First, Putin's ties to nationalist Russian ideas may shift in either direction, but likely toward a more centrist position. Shifting to a far-right nationalist position would require Putin to use national powers at a level that would almost certainly draw direct Western intervention, which the Russian government would not be able to compete against directly. Second, disparate groups—to include far-right nationalists—in Russia may become more outspoken and possibly violent if they perceive the new direction to be counter to their interpretation of the Russian Idea. It is also possible that some of these groups become disillusioned with the Russian Idea entirely. Third, in response to the above, the Russian security services would likely re-enact more brutal measures to repress the protests and prevent them from spreading, similar to security crackdowns common in the Caucasus regions. Finally, oligarchs may begin withdrawing their support from Putin and redistributing their finances outside Russia. During previous times of economic stress, Putin has called for Russians to return

[57] White, Korosteleva, and Allison, "NATO: The View from the East," 169.
[58] Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, 22-24.

money to Russian banks.[59] If oligarchs separate themselves from Putin during such a crisis, it would further exacerbate financial stress on the Russian government.

Using nationalism as a tool for foreign policy gave Putin significant elasticity in the short-term but creates multiple scenarios where it may rebound negatively. He uses a top-down defensive nationalist approach to slow negative reactions while tapping into a latent nationalist base that gives Putin legitimacy on both domestic and international stages. Russian nationalism significantly affects Ukrainians because of their intertwined cultural history and geographically important location. The location is not as important in a military sense as it is in acting as an ideological buffer between Western ideals that run counter to the Russian Idea. Putin must protect this sphere of influence while finding creative ways to show domestic economic progress, or risk losing his support. A lack of faith in Putin has greater negative implications on faith in the Russian Idea because Putin is the embodiment of the Idea in modern-day Russia. If the cohesion in Russia under the Russian Idea deteriorates, the impact of domestic society on governance increases, lessening the power of the government.[60]

Ukraine is in a unique position: it straddles the division between Western and Russian ideologies that carry with them serious first, second, and third order effects on how Ukraine's future will unfold. It cannot combat Russia directly, and it has no safe solution to its problems. If it aligns with the West and joins the EU or NATO, Russia will certainly use all of its non-military national powers to decimate the Ukrainian economy. If it acquiesces to Russia, Ukraine can abandon any hope of retaining sovereignty over its internal affairs. As Oppenheimer et al

[59] Henry Meyer, "Putin Tries to Lure $1 Trillion Home as Sanctions Fear Grows," *Bloomberg.Com*, December 26, 2017, accessed July 11, 2018, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-12-26/putin-tries-to-lure-1-trillion-home-as-sanctions-fear-deepens.

[60] Chaisty and Whitefield, "Citizens' Attitudes Towards Institutional Change in Contexts of Political Turbulence: Support for Regional Decentralisation in Ukraine," 827.

wrote, “Ukraine cannot go it alone and will need to make a geopolitical choice in the near future.”[61]

[61] Peter Oppenheimer et al., *Ukraine 2020: Three Scenarios* (Chatham House, December 5, 2011), accessed June 21, 2018, https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Russia%20and%20Eurasia/051211summary.pdf.

Chapter 3

Russian Interference and the Gerasimov Doctrine

3.1 Abstract

This paper addresses a deficiency in the Western approach to Russian foreign policy and its interference in sovereign states. Through an application of the Russian Gerasimov Doctrine, this paper measures a variety of foreign policy actions from Russia, alongside the responses of the target country, as a comparative case study. The Gerasimov Doctrine views diplomatic and military actions as equivalent foreign policy tools on a shared scale of escalation of force. To evaluate these actions, this paper divides them into three spheres of power: social, information, and military. Through this lens, Russian foreign policy actions—and thus the level of aggression in its interference of other states' affairs—is inversely related to the target country's ability and willingness to retaliate within each sphere (or across multiple spheres) in a manner that would negatively affect the Russian government's domestic authority.

3.2 Introduction

Russian interference in sovereign states' domestic affairs is a fact of 21st century politics. Current investigations into Russian actions evaluate the effects of this interference on the target state's activities; they do not focus on the extent to which Russian interference accomplishes Russian foreign policy goals within a targeted state. It is for this reason this paper asks the question: how does Russia's implementation of its foreign policy alter political behavior of adversarial states to accomplish Russian foreign policy goals? Determining precise foreign policy goals outside of documents released for public consumption is a murky and difficult process due to national security concerns.

Current Russian doctrine is an evolution of Soviet doctrine. There are a few key concepts and doctrines that help us understand Russian interference from the Russian perspective. First, a Soviet military doctrine of military denial and deception—called *maskirovka*—is the cornerstone of current policies of dis- and misinformation. From various Russian wars in the late 1990s to today, *maskirovka* doctrine contributed to success on the battlefield and in international media through disputing or conflating Western findings.[44] In 2013, Russian General Valery Gerasimov shaped *maskirovka* into a non-physical tool to support Russian foreign policy, a document many in the West call the "Gerasimov Doctrine." While the concepts of denial and deception are at least as old as Sun Tzu, Gerasimov's correlation of nonviolent foreign policy tools—such as sanctions, removal of diplomats, and official condemnations—to kinetic military action on an ever-shifting scale of war is a different approach to the same goal of war as the United States: "to impose our will on the enemy."[45] The Gerasimov Doctrine provides a perspective from which an

[44] RT, "MH17 Might Have Been Shot Down From Air – Chief Dutch Investigator," RT, October 27, 2014, https://www.rt.com/news/199891-dutch-investigation-mh17-crash/ (accessed October 12, 2017).

[45] U.S. Marine Corps, Warfighting (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, 1997), 4.

observer can view state actions on the world stage, it is not a playbook for Russian military actions.

With that in mind, we are better equipped to evaluate what Russia—through the writings of its senior doctrinal strategist—deems as Western aggression, and then look to measure the successes and failures of Russian responses as it seeks to accomplish its foreign policy goals. Three major ongoing cases of Russian interference are evaluated here: actions against the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ukraine. This comparative case study seeks to identify Russian foreign policy goals toward these three states, and to determine whether those goals were accomplished.

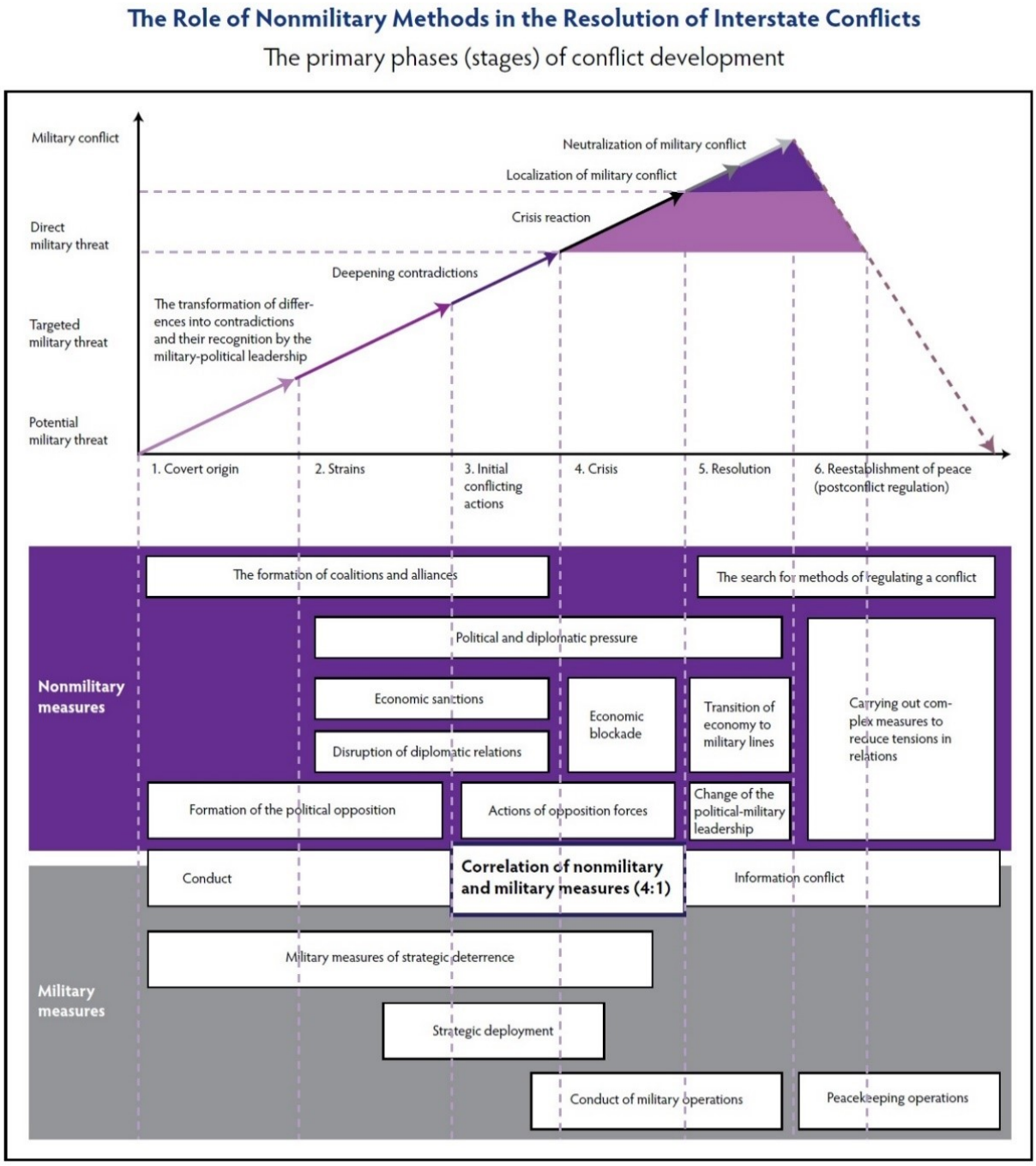
For the purposes of this study, Russian and target country foreign policies are evaluated through the lens of the Gerasimov Doctrine. Similarly, capabilities of adversarial states toward Russia are evaluated according to Gerasimov's defined "primary phases (stages) of conflict development."[46] This paper divides the capabilities into three spheres of power: social, information, and military. As with the Gerasimov Doctrine, these spheres overlap, but providing general divisions between different forms of power creates a measurable base for this exploratory research.

Figure 2 is a translated version of Gerasimov's concept of escalation of force. It encompasses a variety of soft and hard power measures along a shared scale of aggression. The Gerasimov Doctrine is not a tool, but a measuring stick we can use to understand foreign policy actions from a Russian perspective. This paper contends that in a comparison of state behavior following Russian interference, states with less capability to impose their will on Russia are

[46] Valery Gerasimov, "The Value of Science is in the Foresight," *Military Review* 96, no. 1 (January-February, 2016): 28.

more susceptible to forceful Russian interference than states with a greater capability to impose their will on Russia.

Figure 2: The Gerasimov Doctrine[47]



[47] Source: Gerasimov, "The Value of Science is in the Foresight," trans. Charles Bartles, 28.

3.3 Literature Review

There are two common schools of thought regarding Russian interference: a perspective from the West (loosely defined here as NATO and U.S.-aligned nations), and the stance of the Russian Federation. The Western perspective maintains Russian interference "efforts have "weaponized" four spheres of activity: traditional and social media, ideology and culture, crime and corruption, and energy."[48] Dutch government reports, based on investigations from their intelligence service, describe Russian actions as "an attempt to undermine the democratic process,"[49] an important distinction. The democratic process, by its very nature, allows input from any perspective. For the West, this is both a strength, in terms of egalitarianism, and a weakness, in its susceptibility to malign influence.

Because Western democracies espouse freedom of speech and press, they are prime targets for misinformation (altering facts) and disinformation (creating false facts). On a related note, Stephen Walt believes past wars are useful indicators for future behavior, in that the experiences gained in war can shape their foreign policy for decades.[50] These two thoughts are tied together through Russian experiences following the collapse of the Soviet Union: their "loss" of the Cold War, and subsequent restructuring of their social order, saw a brief influx of Western ideals that disrupted the status quo. Western schools of thought—democracy and capitalism—challenged Russian social ties. These are now viewed as historical examples of Western campaigns to interfere in internal Russian affairs. This theme provided Russian

[48] Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Putin's Asymmetric Assault on Democracy in Russia And Europe: Implications for U.S. National Security, 115th Cong., 2d sess., 2018, S. Rep. 21, 37.

[49] Huib Modderkolk, "Dutch Agencies Provide Crucial Intel About Russia's Interference in US-Elections," *de Volkskrant*, January 25, 2018, https://www.volkskrant.nl/tech/dutch-agencies-provide-crucial-intel-about-russia-s-interference-in-us-elections~a4561913/ (accessed February 8, 2018).

[50] Stephen Walt, "Great Powers Are Defined by Their Great Wars," *Foreign Policy* (September 21, 2017), http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/09/21/great-powers-are-defined-by-their-great-wars/ (accessed February 8, 2018).

President Vladimir Putin with justification for using *maskirovka* as a foreign policy tool in the 2000s: if the West can interfere in Russian internal affairs, then Russia can do the same to the West.[51]

Another instance of political *maskirovka* shows how Russia's government-backed media outlets capitalize on Western failures through a *tu quoque* logical fallacy: if there are problems in the West related to a certain economic or social sector, then the problems within Russia on the same issue are of no concern.[52] This misdirection—or deception—of the Russian people provides internal support to Russian foreign policy by focusing the population's attention outward. While a lack of public support may not affect the course of Russian foreign policy, the visual of Russian citizens supporting the government is itself a tool that can be used in *maskirovka*. The Gerasimov Doctrine "economizes the use of force," using any tool or capability in its arsenal to keep an adversary off-balance.[53] In the early years of the Cold War, Francis Parker Yockey believed Soviet Russia would use "any inner agitation within the West... class-war, race-war, social degeneration, crazy art, decadent films, wild theories and philosophies of all kinds" to dismantle the West.[54]

Andrew Wilson, a British scholar, believes Russia went too far in Ukraine, and was not prepared to handle the shift from nonlethal information operations—a major part of hybrid warfare—to an open war.[55] In the Gerasimov Doctrine, war is an acceptable and expected part of

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[51] Charles Bartles, "Getting Gerasimov Right," *Military Review* 96, no. 1 (January-February, 2016): 31-32.

[52] Maxim Trudolyubov, "Why the Kremlin Loves Foreign News," *The Russia File* (blog), *The Kennan Institute*, October 6, 2017, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/why-the-kremlin-loves-foreign-news (accessed October 15, 2017).

[53] Christopher Chivvis, "Understanding Russian "Hybrid Warfare" And What Can Be Done About It," RAND Corporation, March 22, 2017, https://doi.org/10.7249/CT468 (accessed February 8, 2018).

[54] Ulick Varange [Francis Parker Yockey], *Imperium: The Philosophy of History and Politics* (New York: The Truth Seeker, 1962), 582-583.

[55] Andrew Wilson, "Russian Active Measures: Modernized Tradition," The Institute for Statecraft, January 3, 2016, http://www.statecraft.org.uk/research/russian-active-measures-modernised-tradition (accessed November 12, 2017).

the flow of conflict development, but only in localized, quick bursts of violent action. After all, the Gerasimov Doctrine seeks to use nonmilitary measures to avoid an escalation to full-scale war.[56]

What we see from the Western perspective are Russian actions that, when viewed together, seem entirely antagonistic, belligerent, and inconsiderate of external consequences. The Russian Federation's foreign policy is unified under the direction of one man, Putin, so that Russia can "withstand internal and external challenges."[57] Viewing Russian foreign policy from the Western perspective has led to mirror imaging. The West believes Russia is unjustifiably escalating tensions through increased interference. This is based on a Western understanding of diplomacy as a foreign policy peacekeeping tool and not as a soft power tool to instigate conflict.

Coincidentally, the Russian Federation's view of Western foreign policies is likewise mirror imaged. It creates a perception of aggression on both sides that fuels reciprocal aggressive reactions. Aggression here is defined by each side's interpretation of escalation of force. Where the West views sanctions as appropriate nonlethal diplomatic peacekeeping measures, Russia views sanctions as a "targeted military threat" which leads to a "crisis reaction."[58] From the Russian perspective—per the Gerasimov Doctrine—sanctions are equivalent to a "strategic deployment" of military forces, tantamount to a final warning shot before engaging in a direct military conflict.[59] In each of the case studies below, this paper will show how this confusion created environments conducive to Russian foreign policy goals.

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[56] Gerasimov, 28.

[57] Quote of Vladimir Putin's 2013 Valdai speech, as discussed by Anton Shekhovtsov, *Russia and the Western Far Right* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 81.

[58] Gerasimov, 28.

[59] Ibid.

The difference between what qualifies as an offensive or defensive action is also subject to Russia's own information operations, whose appropriate Russian terminology is information confrontation. Two years before the Russian annexation of Crimea, Putin stressed the importance of unity across "Greater Russia," with the implication that Russia, as an idea that must be defended by the Russian Federation, is multifaceted and extends beyond official Russian borders.[60] The "Russian Idea" is a nationalist concept from which Russians derive their sense of identity: through shared culture, religion, language, traditions, norms, and mores. Putin is the manifestation of the modern Russian Idea, similar to how historic figures like Peter the Great, Ivan the Terrible, Vladimir Lenin, and Josef Stalin were the embodiments of the Russian Idea during their respective times. As Russia annexed Crimea, Putin again argued that he was merely defending the Russian Idea.[61] Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov expanded on this defensive concept, stating "we have responded and will respond to any hostile actions against Russia and our citizens in a way we deem the most optimal for ourselves."[62]

These statements from Russia's most senior officials—Putin, Lavrov, and Gerasimov—form the core of the Russian perspective on foreign policy actions. At its center, Russian foreign policy is a tool to defend the traditional Russian Idea, in all its forms, using any means necessary. This differs from Western foreign policy that is limited by international standards and the rule of law. The Gerasimov Doctrine plays to Russia's decades-old strengths in combatting threats through asymmetrical means on an unbalanced battlefield it has created. "No matter what forces

[60] Vladimir Putin, "Russia: The Ethnicity Issue," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, January 23, 2012, http://archive.premier.gov.ru/eng/events/news/17831/ (accessed October 18, 2017).

[61] Vladimir Putin, "Speech to Federal Assembly" (Moscow, March 18 2014), https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/transcript-putin-says-russia- will-protect- the-rights- of-russians-abroad/2014/03/18/432a1e60-ae99- 11e3-a49e- 76adc9210f19_story.html (accessed October 10, 2017).

[62] Sergei Lavrov, interviewed by Interfax News Agency, December 28, 2017. http://www.interfax.com/interview.asp?id=801512 (accessed February 8, 2018).

the enemy has," Gerasimov wrote, "no matter how well-developed his forces and means of armed conflict may be, forms and methods for overcoming them can be found. He will always have vulnerabilities, and that means that adequate means of opposing him exist."[63] Deriving modern Russian foreign policy from Soviet *maskirovka* enables Russia to compete on the world stage at its own pace, in locations of its own choosing, using nonmilitary means. There are many terms used to describe this concept and its parts: active measures, denial and deception, grey-area warfare, information operations, hybrid war, mis- and disinformation campaigns, to name a few. The common theme among them involves the use of nonmilitary assets and avenues to degrade or deter adversarial capabilities.

The Gerasimov Doctrine is a sliding scale of warfare that can escalate from covert influence operations to lethal action in an instant. It is adaptable and persistent. This differs from the U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine because the U.S. doctrine limits its operational scope to combatting insurgents in a sovereign state. It does not aim to impose the U.S.'s will on the state itself, it seeks to restore the rule of law in a sovereign state.[64] However, it is possible to modify U.S. doctrine to fit state-on-state conflict. In acting out Russian foreign policy, the intended level of action—and the rate of change between levels—is carefully weighed against the ability of the target country to react decisively against Russian interests. From the Russian perspective, diplomacy is a step on the road to limited military conflict, it is not a tool used to avoid military conflict. With the Gerasimov Doctrine, Russia "create[s] a permanently operating front through the entire territory of the enemy states, as well as informational actions, devices, and means that are constantly being perfected."[65]

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[63] Gerasimov, 29.

[64] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-24: Counterinsurgency* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2013), I-3.

[65] Gerasimov, 25.

Each case study below consists of three parts: a discussion of Russian actions directed at the target country, an evaluation of the target country's counter-actions, and application of the Gerasimov Doctrine's spectrum of conflict to determine efficacy of Russian actions. In this way, actions can be measured to verify or disprove this paper's hypothesis. To be specific, this paper asserts that there is an interactive relationship between the level of Russian interference and the ability of the target country to retaliate against Russia across the spectrum of conflict as defined by the Gerasimov Doctrine.

3.4 The United States

Russian foreign policy goals concerning the U.S. are often put in Western context by English-speaking media, thus masking its purpose and end state. In an interview, former U.S. Director of National Intelligence James Clapper stated:

> Their [Russia's] first objective in the election was to sow discontent, discord and disruption in our political life, and they have succeeded to a fare-thee-well. They have accelerated, amplified the polarization and the divisiveness in this country, and they've undermined our democratic system. They wanted to create doubt in the minds of the public about our government and about our system, and they succeeded to a fare-thee-well.[66]

Accounts of Russian "trolls" tend to agree with this mission statement.[67] However, they do not address the motives behind the actions. What advantages does Russia derive from a divisive U.S.? How does the Gerasimov Doctrine play a part in affecting the U.S., and did it further Russian foreign policy goals? Where does Russian foreign policy draw the line between

[66] James Clapper, interviewed by Susan Glasser, October 30, 2017. https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/10/30/james-clapper-russia-global-politico-trump-215761 (accessed November 1, 2017).

[67] Eugenia Kotlyar, "«У нас была цель... вызвать беспорядки»: интервью с экс-сотрудником «фабрики троллей» в Санкт-Петербурге ('We Had a Purpose... to Cause Unrest': an Interview with an Ex-Employee of the 'Troll Factory' in St. Petersburg)," trans. Google, Dozhd, October 14, 2017, https://tvrain.ru/teleshow/bremja_novostej/fabrika-447628/ (accessed January 25, 2018).

information warfare and kinetic warfare? Why did Russia use routes outside standard diplomatic channels to advance their foreign policy with the U.S.?

3.4.1 Russian Actions

Extensive cataloguing of Russian social media use for *maskirovka* (in this political context, disinformation and misinformation) campaigns leading up to the 2016 U.S. presidential election provides a foundation for understanding how Russia interfered with internal U.S. affairs. Troll factories published thousands of intentionally erroneous and inflammatory social media posts, and in many cases creating entirely false news targeted at locales, groups, or topics with methodical precision.[68] These Russian efforts served as conduits not to create new discontent within the U.S., but to magnify existing social tensions in a way that would force Americans to question the authenticity of all information.[69] This "heightening [of] the contradictions" in the U.S. is an anti-capitalist strategy attributed to Karl Marx and a central theme to the Marxist dialectic: through contradiction, a society engages in conflict with the end result of a new state of being (in Marx's case, it was the internal contradictions of capitalist materialism that stoked conflict to create socialist thought).[70,71] Coincidentally, Marx's theories still play a role in the ideological battle between East and West. Russia's commitment to *maskirovka*—and application of the Marxist dialectic—is evident in the slogan of state-sponsored Russian international media outlet RT, formerly Russia Today: "Question More."

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[68] Adrian Chen, "The Agency," *The New York Times Magazine*, June 2, 2015. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/07/magazine/the-agency.html (accessed January 20, 2018).

[69] Laura Sydell, "How Russian Propaganda Spreads On Social Media," NPR, October 29, 2017, https://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2017/10/29/560461835/how-russian-propaganda-spreads-on-social-media (accessed November 1, 2017).

[70] Cass Sunstein, "Russia Is Using Marxist Strategies, and So Is Trump," Bloomberg View, October 19, 2017, https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2017-10-19/russia-is-using-marxist-strategies-and-so-is-trump (accessed October 19, 2017).

[71] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, ed. Fredrich Engels (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1887), 15.

Alongside the social media campaigns, Russia conducted cyber-attacks on U.S. energy infrastructure, according to both the U.S. Intelligence Community and cybersecurity firms.[72] Based on these reports, the attacks on U.S. energy infrastructure were not destructive in nature; they were intended to probe networks and retrieve information. The lack of energy disruption or destruction is significant here because it shows these efforts are the initial steps of intelligence gathering before shaping a battlespace, and not measures of conflict escalation. In other cyber activity, the U.S. Intelligence Community was prepared to pay for a return of U.S. spy tools from a Russian, only to cancel the deal "because they were wary of being entangled in a Russian operation to create discord inside the American government."[73]

A third sphere of the Gerasimov Doctrine resides in Russian military action to support the Syrian regime, starting in 2015. Russia's relationship with Syria dates back to the Soviet era, but Russia's recent direct military support appeared to the West as a response to the U.S. military's counterterrorism activity in Syria and to force the U.S. "into coalition with Assad."[74] However, Putin's Press Secretary—Dmitry Peskov—stated in September, 2015, that Russia would only intervene at the request of the Syrian government.[75] In the following years, Russia would conduct extensive military operations in Syria to validate military doctrine and showcase military equipment for arms sales—ranging from an aircraft carrier to ballistic missiles. Russia provided the military power necessary to combat both Islamic extremist groups and U.S.-backed Syrian

[72] Andy Greenberg, "Your Guide to Russia's Infrastructure Hacking Teams," *Wired*, July 12, 2017. https://www.wired.com/story/russian-hacking-teams-infrastructure/ (accessed September 8, 2017).

[73] Matthew Rosenberg, "U.S. Spies, Seeking to Retrieve Cyberweapons, Paid Russian Peddling Trump Secrets," *New York Times*, February 9, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/09/us/politics/us-cyberweapons-russia-trump.html (accessed February 9, 2018).

[74] David Petraeus, interviewed by Senate Armed Services Committee, September 22, 2015. https://www.c-span.org/video/?328261-1/cia-director-david-petraeus-testimony-us-middle-east-policy&start=840 (accessed February 9, 2018).

[75] ITAR-TASS, "Минобороны РФ опровергло публикации об отправке контрактников в Сирию (The Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation Has Refuted Publications on Sending Contract Soldiers to Syria)," trans Google, TASS, September 18, 2015, http://tass.ru/politika/2273660 (accessed February 9, 2018).

opposition groups while occasionally using state media to infer U.S. support of Islamic extremists.[76]

These three spheres—social, information, and military—comprise the majority of Russian interference on U.S. activity. Each of the events above resulted in a response from the U.S., usually in the form of diplomatic tools such as press releases, official warnings, direct attribution of activity to the Russian government, and sanctions. For the U.S., these responses constitute an escalation of force in diplomacy as a path away from war.

3.4.2 U.S. Responses

Prior to the 2016 U.S. presidential election, multiple official inquiries began to investigate Russian influence in swaying American popular opinion. Both legislative chambers created lengthy reports, alongside a continuing FBI investigation, into possible collusion between the U.S. President and Russia. The findings of those reports detail much and more of what is listed in the preceding section and arrive at the conclusion of definite Russian interference in U.S. affairs. Interestingly, the FBI would not allow its investigation's officials to be questioned by the Senate Judiciary Committee, implying a lack of trust in the Senate's confidentiality.[77] As a result of the reports, Congress passed multiple iterations of sanctions against specific Russian elites, closed Russian consulates, and expelled a number of Russian diplomats.[78] The phrase "fake news" became a new buzzword to describe any questionable—and sometimes just unfavorable—news, social media postings, or other commentary. The

[76] RT, "Iran Accuses US of Alliance With ISIS, Claims to Have Proof," RT, June 12, 2017, https://www.rt.com/news/391879-iran-claims-has-proof-us-alliance-isis/ (accessed December 18, 2017).

[77] Eric Tucker, "Justice Department Won't Allow FBI Officials to Speak to Senate Panel in Russia Probe," PBS News Hour, September 13, 2017, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/justice-department-wont-allow-fbi-officials-speak-senate-panel-russia-probe (accessed September 13, 2017).

[78] Krishnadev Calamur, "America's Tit-for-Tat With Russia Is Adding Up," *The Atlantic*, August 31, 2017. https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/08/russia-san-francisco-closure/538599/ (accessed August 31, 2017).

divisiveness in the media, a rejection of anti-Russian legislative recommendations by the U.S. President, lack of faith between federal institutions, all indicate Russian interference succeeded in the social sphere.

The U.S. cybersecurity failures went relatively unnoticed in major U.S. media outlets until the recent revelations of Cambridge Analytica's involvement with both Russian entities and Facebook, which resulted in requests for criminal investigation of Cambridge Analytica for foreign influence on U.S. elections.[79.80] By April of 2018, Facebook had lost $66 billion in market capitalization, was sued in a class-action lawsuit, and thousands of users deleted their Facebook accounts.[81.82] In 2017, Facebook was the sixth largest company in the world—ranked by market value—valued at $407.3 billion U.S. dollars.[83] The ability to create a massive negative impact on a large scale showcases the effectiveness of these campaigns when they are uncovered. Maintaining cover for Russian actions is critical to Russian foreign policy success, and its failure resulted in significant embarrassment for the Russian military via its private military contractors.

[79] Carole Cadwalladr and Emma Graham-Harrison, "Cambridge Analytica: Links to Moscow Oil Firm and St Petersburg University," The Guardian, March 17, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/mar/17/cambridge-academic-trawling-facebook-had-links-to-russian-university (accessed March 17, 2018).

[80] Noah Bookbinder and Fred Wertheimer, "Request For Investigation of SCL Elections Ltd., Cambridge Analytica LLC, Alexander Nix, Unknown Foreign Nationals, Stephen Bannon, John Bolton Super PAC, And Donald J. Trump For President, Inc." (request submitted to U.S. DoJ and FBI, Washington, D.C., March 29, 2018), https://s3.amazonaws.com/storage.citizensforethics.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/29210647/CA-complaint.pdf (accessed April 22, 2018).

[81] Jonathan Stempel, "Facebook, Cambridge Analytica Sued in U.S. by Users Over Data Harvesting," Reuters, March 21, 2018, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-facebook-cambridge-analytica-lawsuits/facebook-cambridge-analytica-sued-in-u-s-by-users-over-data-harvesting-idUSKBN1GX1XK (accessed March 21, 2018).

[82] "Facebook Historical Market Cap Data," YCharts, last modified April 25, 2018, https://ycharts.com/companies/FB/market_cap (accessed April 25, 2018).

[83] Statista, "Top companies in the world by market value 2017," Statista, 2018, https://www.statista.com/statistics/263264/top-companies-in-the-world-by-market-value/ (accessed March 21, 2018).

Russia's military actions in Syria have accomplished their stated objective and kept President Assad in power. Islamic extremist groups are remnants of their former power, yet the Syrian opposition groups continue to fight the Syrian government. In the only significant contact between Russian and U.S. forces in Syria, somewhere between 60 and 200 Russians were killed as they attempted to assault a U.S. compound.[84] The incident's cause is still unknown, but the results are clear: Russia was not capable of confronting U.S. forces directly. When U.S. forces engaged the Russians, Russia could not, or would not, provide immediate fire support to their engaged forces. This lack of commitment implies doubts in Russian military leadership directed at either their ability to confront the U.S. military, or at their faith in the Russian doctrine. In addressing Russian military actions abroad, U.S. Senator Ben Cardin said "the numbers [of legislators] were overwhelmingly in support of taking a tough stand against Russia. If Russia's conduct continues… I think Congress will remain united in demanding that action be taken against Russia."[85]

3.4.3 Effectiveness of the Gerasimov Doctrine

Russian foreign policy regarding the U.S. and viewed through the lens of the Gerasimov Doctrine answers the questions posed at the beginning of this case study. A divided U.S. is beneficial to Russia because it creates distrust in the democratic establishment, forces the U.S. to react to Russian actions, and restricts preemptive capabilities. By enflaming social tensions in the U.S., Russia can use its standard *tu quoque* attacks to deflect any internal pressure. Whatever

[84] Joshua Yaffa, "Putin's Shadow Army Suffers a Setback in Syria," *The New Yorker*, February 16, 2018. https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/putins-shadow-army-suffers-a-setback-in-syria (accessed February 16, 2018).

[85] Ben Cardin, interviewed by Susan Glasser, November 20, 2017. https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/11/20/ben-cardin-global-politico-full-transcript-215844 (accessed January 8, 2018).

social problems exist in Russia are surely problems in the West, and therefore not worth worrying about. If this is the case, then it is possible—and logical—that Russian foreign policy is a mechanism to strengthen its domestic policy in an attempt to maintain power.

The most significant weaknesses in Russia's approach to the U.S. appear when Russian actions are brought out of the darkness. Fact-based, direct attribution with tangible evidence can force Russia to admit—at least in some small part—its actions. To wit, Russian ground troops operating in Syria on the front lines have long been denied by the Russian government. However, when U.S. forces killed the assaulting forces on a U.S. outpost in Syria and proved their Russian origin, Russia was forced to admit there were Russians on the front lines. Even though Russia officially labeled them private military contractors—as in Ukraine—the admission in and of itself is a significant failure for the Russian government.

Therefore, as it relates to the U.S., Russia is most effective at sowing social distrust through mediums that make attribution difficult—actions found on the low end of the Gerasimov Doctrine. Russia succeeded in widening the chasm of political discourse but was more prone to failure the higher Russian actions rose on the scale of conflict in the Gerasimov Doctrine. Ironically, Putin's approval ratings among U.S. citizens increased by 9% from 2015 to 2017, largely due to a 20% and 11% uptick among Republicans and Independents, respectively (Democrat's opinions of Putin dropped 5% during the same period).[86]

To extrapolate on this, a 2018 Gallup poll puts worldwide approval of U.S. leadership at an all-time low—30%—and also states that for the first time ever, more people worldwide

[86] Art Swift, "Putin's Image Rises in U.S., Mostly Among Republicans," Gallup, February 21, 2017, http://news.gallup.com/poll/204191/putin-image-rises-mostly-among-republicans.aspx (accessed March 21, 2018).

disapprove of U.S. leadership than approve.[87] There are certainly other variables affecting this rating, yet the empirical data stands: Russia's ability to affect narratives in international media and within the U.S. should not be underestimated. Russian efforts may also have contributed to the declining international view of U.S. leadership. Harming the perception of U.S. leadership has global implications if the U.S. wants to remain the world power.

If Russian interference in domestic U.S. affairs can alter the outcome of a U.S. foreign policy goal, then more research is required to evaluate the degree to which it is altered. For the purposes of this paper, Russian interference maintains an interactive relationship with the U.S. Through the lens of the Gerasimov Doctrine, the closer Russian foreign policy gets to direct military action with the U.S., the less likely its foreign policy will be advantageous for Russian goals. Because diplomacy correlates to low-level military action in the Gerasimov Doctrine, it is not a useful tool for Russia to implement its foreign policy with the U.S. To that end, *maskirovka* remains the most effective tool to accomplish Russian foreign policy initiatives toward the U.S.

3.5 The United Kingdom

Russian behavior is more aggressive toward the U.K. than toward the U.S. All three countries are nuclear powers, but the U.K.'s ability to affect Russia has diminished over the last century, especially after the European Union Referendum—colloquially referred to as the E.U. Referendum or "Brexit"—on July 24, 2016. Specifically, the U.K.'s influence in the E.U. is significantly reduced. The U.K. created a variety of gaps in economic and defense ties to both North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and E.U. countries and has become more susceptible to Russian interference as internal U.K. debate concerning its international position

[87] Jon Clifton, "Rating World Leaders: 2018 The U.S. vs. Germany, China and Russia," Gallup, 2018, http://news.gallup.com/reports/225587/rating-world-leaders-2018.aspx (accessed March 25, 2018).

increases. Russian kinetic activities within the U.K. are also significantly more aggressive than in the U.S.: since 2003, there has been a consistent string of Russian-attributed assassinations in U.K. territory.[88] The U.K.'s Shadow Home Secretary—Andy Burnham—warned of a tepid British response to these assassinations:

> The Home Secretary [Theresa May] indicated that there will be new diplomatic pressure, and I welcome that, but I have to say, having listened carefully to her, that I am not sure that it goes anywhere near far enough in answering the seriousness of the findings in this report. Indeed, it could send a dangerous signal to Russia that our response is too weak. What has been announced today cannot be the end of what the British Government are prepared to do.[89]

Russian foreign policy toward the U.K. is a middle ground between its covert approach to the U.S., and its nearly overt application in Ukraine. The U.K.—like the U.S.—attempts to maintain a democratic international peace and use diplomatic means to avoid any possibility of escalation into overt war. The problem lies in the U.K. (and U.S.'s) misidentification of Russian behavior via mirror imaging. The Western governments apply Western rationale to Russian actions instead of viewing those actions with a Russian perspective, namely the Gerasimov Doctrine.

These misunderstandings obscure a clear view of Russian foreign policy toward the U.K., and pose the following questions: Why does Russia view the U.K. as a more permissive operating environment than the U.S.? What indicators exist that Russia will become more aggressive within the U.K.? Is there a different Russian approach to interfering in the U.K. vis a

[88] Rob Price and Shona Ghosh, "All the Times Russia Allegedly Carried Out Assassinations on British Soil," Business Insider, March 6, 2018, http://www.businessinsider.com/list-alleged-russian-assassinations-in-britain-litvinenko-2018-3 (accessed March 6, 2018).

[89] Andy Burnham, "Litvinenko Inquiry" (lecture, House of Commons, London, January 21, 2016), https://www.theyworkforyou.com/debates/?id=2016-01-21b.1569.0 (accessed February 12, 2018).

vis the U.S., and if so, what is different? What is the same? Finally, what foreign policy goals does Russia achieve through its actions in the U.K.?

3.5.1 Russian Actions

Like its behavior in the U.S., Russian actions can be separated into three spheres: social, information, and military. In the social sphere, Russian actions focus on existing tensions. The primary tension in recent history pertains to U.K. sovereignty and its role in the European Union. Within the information environment, Russia capitalizes on spreading misinformation through social media and the Russian state-sponsored news outlets of RT and Sputnik, in addition to disruptive cyberattacks. The military aspect is relegated to covert operations predominantly focused on assassinations, and overt operations of airborne intelligence gathering and other provocative maneuvers.[90] These actions represent an escalation of force when compared to Russian interference in the U.S. and can provide valuable insights into how Russia executes its foreign policy with respect to the target country's ability to affect Russian interests.

The 2016 E.U. Referendum, referred to hereafter as Brexit, represented a culminating event of social tensions within the U.K. On the "vote leave" side, voters wanted a return to traditional values, an isolationist approach to foreign policy, and a removal of E.U. interference in U.K. political and economic policies. Conversely, the "vote remain" side embraced the E.U., desired a more progressive stance of integration with supranational entities, and believed E.U. integration to be essential in improving the U.K.'s ability to influence international politics and their own economy. Alongside the Scottish independence referendum, Brexit posed a significant

[90] Ministry of Defence, "UK Fighter Jets Intercept Russian Bombers Approaching UK Airspace," gov.uk, January 15, 2018, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-fighter-jets-intercept-russian-bombers-approaching-uk-airspace (accessed March 11, 2018).

threat to the U.K.'s identity. Russia capitalized on the strong sentiments on both sides of the aisle through an intense social media campaign.

Similar to the 2016 U.S. presidential election, Russian social media campaigns comprised of vast troll factories and botnets to influence the online social narrative. According to an in-depth analysis of Twitter postings, there were at least 13,493 Russian-attributed bots that posted 63,797 tweets relating to Brexit.[91] For comparison, the same study also identified only 30,122 of the 794,949 twitter accounts tweeting about Brexit as located within the U.K.[92] The narratives used in the botnet tweets promoted far-left (vote remain) and, to a larger degree, far-right (vote leave) messages in attempts to cause what Bastos and Mercea term "cascades"—or compounding amounts of retweets indicative of quickly spreading (mis)information.[93]

A collaborative paper between students at Swansea University and University of California, Berkeley, corroborates the identification and narrative of these Russian botnets.[94] Interestingly, both studies conclude that the bots were able to affect human dialogue on Twitter while not interacting directly with human tweets, and those human cascades were quicker and more widely dispersed than the botnet's.[95] In conjunction with social media postings, Russian state-sponsored media promoted closer ties between the U.K. and Russia outside E.U. constructs

[91] Marco Bastos and Dan Mercea, "The Brexit Botnet and User-Generated Hyperpartisan News," *Social Science Computer Review* 20, no. 5 (October 10, 2017): 8-9, https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439317734157 (accessed January 9, 2018).

[92] Bastos and Mercea, 7.

[93] Ibid., 11-14.

[94] Yuriy Gorodnichenko, Tho Pham, and Oleksandr Talavera, "Social Media, Sentiment and Public Opinions: Evidence From #Brexit and #USElection" Univeristy of California, Berkeley, and Swansea University, October 24, 2017, 10-15, https://www.nber.org/papers/w24631.

[95] Bastos and Mercea, 14-15, and Gorodnichenko, 37.

well before Brexit.[96] After Brexit, Russian media used *tu quoque* arguments to imply Western elites manipulated the Brexit vote.[97]

For the U.K., Russian interference in the information sphere poses a significant national security threat. By using the aforementioned state-sponsored media to increase tensions, Russian efforts sought to influence the Scottish independence referendum.[98] Had the referendum succeeded, the U.K. would be forced into complicated negotiations to retain its only nuclear submarine base, located at Faslane, Scotland. Regarding Russian cyber activity, the U.K.'s National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) attributed "60 cyber-attacks a month" to Russia, with the attacks focusing on national defense, "media, telecommunications, and energy sectors."[99.100] Russia's combination of the information output of state-sponsored media with directed cyber-attacks constrains the U.K.'s ability to manage threats and mitigate attacks: the U.K. cannot effectively diffuse the effects of Russian efforts without impeding basic democratic freedoms of speech and press.

Russia also takes advantage of campaign funding loopholes in the U.K. to provide financing through European companies to U.K. politicians and organizations aligned with Russian goals.[101] A key politician in these misinformation campaigns is Nigel Farage, head of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), whose platform aligns with Russia's anti-E.U.

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[96] RT, "Nigel Farage: 'UK May Need to Join Putin and Assad to Battle ISIS'," RT, November 27, 2015, https://www.rt.com/uk/323669-farage-syria-russia-isis/ (accessed February 12, 2018).

[97] RT, "Not all Russia's Fault! Meet the Foreign Billionaires Pulling Britain's Political Strings," RT, February 12, 2018, https://www.rt.com/uk/418560-russia-government-billionaire-influence/ (accessed February 13, 2018).

[98] Peter Foster and Matthew Holehouse, "Russia Accused of Clandestine Funding of European Parties as US Conducts Major Review of Vladimir Putin's Strategy," *Telegraph*, January 16, 2016, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/12103602/America-to-investigate-Russian-meddling-in-EU.html (accessed February 9, 2018).

[99] Richard Kerbaj, "Russia Steps Up Cyber-Attacks on UK," *Sunday Times*, February 12, 2017, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/russia-steps-up-cyber-attacks-on-uk-rl262pnlb (accessed March 10, 2018).

[100] Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Putin's Asymmetric Assault on Democracy in Russia And Europe: Implications for U.S. National Security, 117.

[101] Ibid.

stance. While Farage is likely not working for the Russian government, he serves as a "useful idiot" for Russia, a Soviet-era phrase to describe knowing or unknowing contributors to Russian narratives. The UKIP's platform regarding the E.U. is a misinformation gold mine for Russian efforts to increase tensions among voters.[102] Furthermore, Russian state-sponsored media coverage of terrorist attacks in the U.K. stokes xenophobic sentiment and provides a plausible alternative source of Russian-directed assassinations.

Assassinations on U.K. territory are Russia's most provocative foreign policy tool in the U.K.—and the most dangerous for Russia. Since 2006, there have been 15 successful assassinations within the U.K. attributed to the Russian government.[103] Assassinations serve two purposes: they are reminders to other countries that Russian foreign policy trumps international standards, and as a warning to would-be leakers, whistleblowers, and spies that the Russian government recognizes no safe haven for defectors. To legitimize their efforts, Russian law amended and expanded the definition of "extremist" to include any party or actor that speaks against the Russian government.[104] Because extremist behavior is a federal crime, it falls under the jurisdiction of the Federal Security Service (FSB), the Russian equivalent of the FBI and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) combined with additional international authorities. Inquiries into these assassinations have attributed the killings to the FSB.[105]

Each of these examples show an increased acceptability of risk on Russia's behalf. Their foreign policy approach to the U.K. is aggressive and disregards international standards of state sovereignty. Even though Russian behavior continues to test the limits of the U.K.'s stance on

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[102] RT, "Nigel Farage: 'UK May Need to Join Putin and Assad to Battle ISIS'."

[103] Price and Ghosh, "All the Times Russia Allegedly Carried Out Assassinations on British Soil."

[104] Peter Roudik, "Legal Provisions on Fighting Extremism: Russia," Library of Congress, April, 2014, https://www.loc.gov/law/help/fighting-extremism/russia.php#_ftnref32 (accessed March 15, 2018).

[105] Robert Owen, "The Litvinenko Inquiry" (presented to U.K. House of Commons, London, January 21, 2016), 244, https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/3859366-Litvinenko-Inquiry-Report.html#document (accessed March 10, 2018).

acceptable foreign policy, the U.K. has remained relatively passive in its responses despite a robust military and intelligence structure.

3.5.2 U.K. Responses

Like the U.S., the U.K.'s responses to Russian interference are purely diplomatic in nature. Social and information sphere misinformation campaigns are reactively prosecuted through inquiries, attribution to state actors, diplomatic expulsions, and sanctions.[106] The U.K. also established the NCSC to boost pre-emptive defenses against cyber-attacks. In 2015—prior to Brexit—the E.U. also established the "E.U. vs Disinformation Campaign" to "address and respond to pro-Kremlin disinformation."[107]

Like the misinformation campaigns, military actions—including FSB-linked assassinations—are met with diplomatic responses. Both the U.S. and U.K. respond to Russian interference in accordance with international standards: through diplomacy. However, these responses are both a misunderstanding of Russian intent and a misrepresentation of Western behavior in the context of Russian foreign policy (via the Gerasimov Doctrine). Despite Russia showing it will not abide by international agreements, U.K. officials continue to operate under the belief that Russia will eventually fall in line.[108]

Following the most recent assassination attempt, the U.K. made the same predictable, standard response: expelling diplomats. While this measure is typical, it's worth noting the number of diplomats expelled, 23, is "the biggest expulsion in 30 years," in addition to future

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[106] Digital, Culture, Media & Sport Committee, "Fake News Inquiry," parliament.uk, May 3, 2017, https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/culture-media-and-sport-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/inquiry2/ (accessed March 11, 2018).

[107] "EU vs Disinformation Campaign: About," EU vs Disinfo, November, 2017, https://euvsdisinfo.eu/about/ (accessed March 11, 2018).

[108] Theresa May, "European Council 2016" (speech, House of Commons, London, December 19, 2016), https://www.theyworkforyou.com/debates/?id=2016-12-19c.1176.9#g1188.3 (accessed March 11, 2018).

absence of U.K. elites at Russian events and increased scrutiny of Russian travelers.[109] Regarding sanctions and other U.K. diplomatic measures, it seems that U.K. policymakers understand there is a defect in their approach:

> There is a question about how the Government go about formulating their response [to Russian-linked assassinations] and the considerations that will guide them. Although the Home Secretary [Theresa May] ordered this review, it is important to note that she originally refused to do so, citing international issues. She has mentioned them again today, but should not it be considerations of justice, not diplomacy, that lead the Government's response? Will she give a categorical assurance to that effect? There can be no sense of the Government pulling their punches because of wider diplomatic considerations. If we were to do that, would it not send a terrible message to the world that Britain is prepared to tolerate outrageous acts of state violence on its soil and appease those who sanctioned them?[110]

3.5.3 Effectiveness of the Gerasimov Doctrine

Russian interference in the U.K. is a step above Russian efforts in the U.S. Where there were cyber probing attempts in the U.S., there were disruptive attacks in the U.K. Where military efforts existed outside U.S. sovereign territory, Russia conducts assassinations within the U.K. Where Russia used trolls and bots in the U.S. to further divide groups, they effectively helped split the U.K. internally (through independence referendums) and externally (through Brexit). Furthermore, these efforts are more inter-related, and thus more effective, in the U.K. than the U.S.

Russian foreign policy views the U.K. as a testbed for pushing the limits of Western tolerance through the Gerasimov Doctrine. The U.K. has strong ties to the U.S. through the Five Eyes intelligence sharing program—and collaborative defense through supranational structures like NATO—yet these seem to have no effect on Russian foreign policy decisions outside

[109] Richard Perez-Pena, "Britain Expels 23 Russian Diplomats Over Ex-Spy's Poisoning," *New York Times*, March 14, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/14/world/europe/uk-russia-spy-punitive-measures.html (accessed March 14, 2018).

[110] Burnham, Litvinenko Inquiry.

preventing Russian overt, kinetic military action. If these structures were effective, we should expect to see equal Russian interference in the U.S. and the U.K. We can therefore assume that Russia views the U.K. as a weaker partner within these structures, creating a more permissive operating environment for Russian *maskirovka* campaigns.

If we apply this logic to the Gerasimov Doctrine, we can draw out indications of future Russian actions. For instance, when the U.K. provides a lukewarm response (according to the Gerasimov escalation of force, not the Western perspective), we can expect Russia to increase its aggressiveness at the next opportunity. For Russia, the usefulness of the Gerasimov Doctrine lies both in denial of operations and its quick-shifting between escalation and de-escalation as a situation unfolds. Unlike the Russian foreign policy goals with the U.S.—to increase tensions as proof that the West has the same, if not more, problems as Russia, and is therefore irrelevant—its goals with the U.K. are more destructive.

The aggressiveness with which Russia applies its foreign policy tools toward the U.K. imply Russia desires more tangible results than it does with the U.S. Specifically, Russian foreign policy goals are related to the disruption of Western coherence through the E.U. Brexit removes the E.U.'s most direct tie to the U.S. and thus one of the E.U.'s strongest anti-Russian voices. This disruption accomplishes a multitude of objectives. With the U.K. removed from the E.U., it reduces "the likelihood that a unified West would enforce sanctions against Russia."[111] The U.K.'s absence also serves as a warning to prospective E.U. countries like Ukraine and Turkey that Russian state-sponsored media exploits: The E.U. is not as stable or as desirable as the West makes it seem, even its strongest member is leaving.

[111] Mark Kennedy, "Brexit Is a Russian Victory," *Foreign Policy* (June 30, 2016), https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/06/30/brexit-is-a-russian-victory/ (accessed March 13, 2018).

For the U.K., Russian foreign policy via the Gerasimov Doctrine has proven effective across covert misinformation campaigns and covert assassinations. The U.K. is more susceptible than the U.S. to intense escalations, and continued lukewarm diplomatic responses only confirm to Russia that the U.K. is unwilling to confront Russia directly. A combination of Russian misinformation and covert military actions is the most effective method for Russian foreign policy toward the U.K. This leaves the U.K. with few options that do not escalate into war, and U.K. responses to Russian interference have, to date, been ineffective in preventing future Russian operations.

3.6 Ukraine

Russian interference in Ukraine is by far the most overt, aggressive, and deadly of these three case studies. Following the Orange Revolution in 2004, Russia recognized a threat to its security: a possible Western-leaning country sharing a border with Russia. It was not seen as just a military threat, but an economic and ideological threat. Economically, Ukraine was poised to apply to the E.U., and with that reap the benefits of reduced trade restrictions, proper anti-corruption guidance and supervision, as well as a variety of ethical measures. Ideologically, Russia's "little Russians"—a diminutive familial Russian term for Ukrainians—adopting a Western way of life threatened Russia's sphere of influence that includes the former Soviet Bloc. This threat is perhaps the most significant because of the similarities of Ukrainian and Russian cultures: If it could happen to Ukraine, then Russia itself was at risk.[112]

To combat these perceived Western aggressions, Russia implemented its own union, the Eurasian Economic Union (E.E.U.), consisting mostly of former Soviet countries. Its

[112] Shekhovtsov, 76.

predecessor, the Eurasian Economic Community, included Ukraine as a founding member, but Ukraine then refused to join the E.E.U. and instead favored the European Union.[113] For the Russian government, Ukraine is considered a part of Greater Russia, giving Russia the right to defend Russians abroad by any means necessary. [114] This logic remains the current Russian defense for its interference in Ukraine. Likewise, many Westerners still refer to Ukraine as "the Ukraine," which infers it is a region under the control of a state (in this case it was USSR), similar to "the Donbass" being a region within the Ukrainian state.

Unlike the U.S. and U.K., Ukraine lacks any robust offensive structures—it cannot retaliate against Russia to a large enough degree that would alter Russian foreign policy. Ukraine surrendered its nuclear arsenal following the collapse of the Soviet Union and has failed to become a member of major supranational organizations. Its responses to Russian interference are predominately physical due to a lack of relative diplomatic or economic strength in relation to Russia. Ukraine has a centuries-old history of conflict both with the West and Russia, which has left it as an isolated cross-civilizational melting pot for violence.

The questions this case study seeks to answer are directed at the full use of the Gerasimov Doctrine in Russian foreign policy: How effective is the Gerasimov Doctrine when applied to a non-peer adversary? What are the indicators that Russia will use the full extent of the Gerasimov Doctrine toward a country? What are the Russian foreign policy goals with Ukraine, and how does the Gerasimov Doctrine help reach those goals? Why does Russian foreign policy toward Ukraine differ significantly from the other case studies? According to this paper's hypothesis,

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[113] European Union, "Strategic Framework for Customs Cooperation," European Union, May, 2012, https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/sites/taxation/files/resources/documents/customs/policy_issues/international_customs_agreements/geomoldukr/strategic_framework_ukraine.pdf (accessed November 3, 2017).

[114] Vladimir Putin, "Speech to Federal Assembly" (Moscow, March 18 2014), https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/transcript-putin-says-russia-will-protect-the-rights-of-russians-abroad/2014/03/18/432a1e60-ae99-11e3-a49e-76adc9210f19_story.html (accessed October 10, 2017).

Russian foreign policy will be most aggressive in Ukraine—in comparison with the U.S. and U.K.—because Ukraine lacks the ability to retaliate against Russian interference to any significant degree.

3.6.1 Russian Actions

Russian interference in Ukraine involves *maskirovka* campaigns, lethal support to separatists, destructive cyber-attacks, and annexation of sovereign territory. Over the last four years, Russian interference in Ukraine has been at the forefront of international media and subject to innumerable academic studies. A brief list of relevant Russian foreign policy tools follows below. These actions constitute the most significant, and aggressive, form of Russian foreign policy in the post-Soviet era:

- Russian state-sponsored media had a positive effect on pro-Russian political sentiment in Ukraine.[115]
- *Maskirovka* campaigns discredited Western media and created doubt concerning official Western narratives within Ukraine.[116]
- Russian cyber-attacks disrupted Ukrainian energy grids and on other occasions caused significant financial losses to international businesses.[117.118]
- Covert Russian lethal support is directly responsible for the downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17.[119]
- Russia's annexation of Crimea is based on a dubious election with a massive misinformation campaign.[120]

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[115] Leonid Peisakhin and Arturas Rozenas, "Electoral Effects of Biased Media: Russian Television in Ukraine," *American Journal of Political Science* (March 30, 2018): 14-15, https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12355 (accessed March 30, 2018).

[116] RT, "MH17 Might Have Been Shot Down From Air – Chief Dutch Investigator."

[117] Pavel Polityuk, Oleg Vukmanovic, and Stephen Jewkes, "Ukraine's Power Outage Was A Cyber Attack: Ukrenergo," Reuters, January 18, 2017, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-cyber-attack-energy/ukraines-power-outage-was-a-cyber-attack-ukrenergo-idUSKBN1521BA (accessed October 21, 2017).

[118] BBC, "UK and US Blame Russia for 'Malicious' NotPetya Cyber-Attack," BBC News, February 15, 2018, http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-43062113 (accessed February 15, 2018).

[119] Netherlands Public Prosecution Service, "Presentation Preliminary Results Criminal Investigation MH17 28-09-2016," Netherlands Public Prosecution Service, September 28, 2016, https://www.om.nl/onderwerpen/mh17-vliegramp/presentaties/presentation-joint/ (accessed October 12, 2017).

[120] United Nations, "General Assembly Adopts Resolution Calling upon States Not to Recognize Changes in Status of Crimea Region," United Nations, March 27, 2014, https://www.un.org/press/en/2014/ga11493.doc.htm (accessed October 19, 2017).

Dividing these events into the three spheres analyzed in the previous case studies—social, information, and military—will aid in evaluating this paper's overall hypothesis. Within the social sphere, Russian efforts in Ukraine tend to be more effective than in the U.S. or U.K. Russians and Ukrainians share a common civilizational history, simplifying a translation of thoughts and ideas. This shared history also created "local corruption and patronage networks" that "have become dangerous conduits of political and economic influence."[121] It is through this shared connection that Russian messaging improved pro-Russian sentiment among Ukrainians with pre-existing, pro-Russian beliefs.[122] Russia's understanding of this connection allowed their state-sponsored media to target demographically-Russian areas of Ukraine—the Northeast regions—to stir up anti-Western rhetoric and further Russian foreign policy goals through a Ukrainian civil war.

Concerning related efforts within the information sphere, social media trolls amplified disinformation campaigns, spreading inflammatory messages targeting all sides of the Ukrainian conflict.[123] Like the U.S. and U.K. instances, trolls and botnets worked together to spread disinformation. In the cyber realm, Russian interference increased in severity from data extraction to destruction and disruption. These cyber-attacks were more detailed than ones experienced in the West. The attackers took control of Ukraine's energy grid, shutting off power in the middle of winter to over 225,000 Ukrainians.[124] This was the first known cyber-attack in

[121] Heather Conley et al., "The Kremlin Playbook: Understanding Russian Influence in Central and Eastern Europe," *Center for Strategic and International Studies* (October, 2016): 25, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/1601017_Conley_KremlinPlaybook_Web.pdf (accessed October 23, 2017).

[122] Peisakhin and Rozenas, "Electoral Effects of Biased Media: Russian Television in Ukraine," 11-13.

[123] Andrei Soshnikov, "Inside a Pro-Russia Propaganda Machine in Ukraine," BBC News, November 13, 2017, http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-41915295 (accessed November 13, 2017).

[124] Kim Zetter, "Inside the Cunning, Unprecedented Hack of Ukraine's Power Grid," *Wired*, March 3, 2016. https://www.wired.com/2016/03/inside-cunning-unprecedented-hack-ukraines-power-grid/ (accessed October 21, 2017).

the world to disrupt a country's energy grid. In separate Russian-attributed cyber-attacks, various European corporations with Ukrainian ties had their data stolen and held for ransom, "costing hundreds of millions of pounds" in production delays and repairs.[125]

The militarization of information is a key aspect of the Gerasimov Doctrine.[126] Open conflict in Ukraine allowed Russia to experiment with various insurgency-support tactics that it has learned through previous wars in Afghanistan, Georgia, South Ossetia, and Chechnya. In order to maintain plausible deniability and prevent open confrontation with the West, it was imperative for Russia to funnel support through Russian "volunteers," referred to during the Crimean annexation as "little green men."[127] However thin the cover may seem, the international community decided it was sufficient to prevent a direct military response from the West, and to date no foreign military has directly intervened on Ukraine's behalf.

3.6.2 Ukrainian Responses

Ukraine lacks the capability to form effective responses to Russian interference. Russia dominates the social, information, and military spheres through overwhelming power. Ukraine's only course of action has been to appeal to other countries or supranational organizations to respond on Ukraine's behalf. At its most extreme—Russia's annexation of Crimea—the only responses were international sanctions and condemnation of the action. When Ukraine then

[125] BBC, "UK and US Blame Russia for 'Malicious' NotPetya Cyber-Attack."

[126] United States Army Special Operations Command, *"Little Green Men": A Primer on Modern Russian Unconventional Warfare, Ukraine 2013–2014* (Fort Bragg, North Carolina: United States Army Special Operations Command, n.d.), 51-52, http://www.jhuapl.edu/ourwork/nsa/papers/ARIS_LittleGreenMen.pdf (accessed March 11, 2018).

[127] John Haines, "How, Why, and When Russia Will Deploy Little Green Men – and Why the US Cannot," Foreign Policy Research Institute, March 9, 2016, https://www.fpri.org/article/2016/03/how-why-and-when-russia-will-deploy-little-green-men-and-why-the-us-cannot/ (accessed March 11, 2018).

threatened to turn off power to Crimea, cyber-attacks shut down large swaths of the Western Ukrainian power grid.[128]

Russian military interference in Eastern Ukraine forced a protracted civil war, one that Ukraine does not seem capable of progressing past a stalemate. This, in turn, creates a significant financial and human drain on Ukraine, as it is forced to fight the separatists or risk additional gains by Russia and its proxy combatants. Although Ukraine is not a member of NATO, Russian interference in Ukraine added new training doctrines to NATO's capabilities. Based on lessons learned from the Crimean annexation, NATO created a new exercise—Noble Jump—comprising "2,100 troops in a simulated… response to 'unattibutable [sic] infiltration… [of] an ally by irregular or special forces'."[129]

3.6.3 Effectiveness of the Gerasimov Doctrine

Ukraine is the most extreme, current case to study Russian foreign policy. Russia is only constrained from executing a full scale kinetic war because direct, open war would likely result in an equal response from the West. Open war crosses the threshold between diplomacy and military force in the Western perspective of foreign policy. However, open war is likely not its ultimate foreign policy goal. For Ukraine, Russian foreign policy intends on maintaining a constant state of unattributable kinetic conflict, as it benefits Russia in a variety of ways. First and foremost, it provides a domestic narrative in Russia that Western powers are corrupt and seek to destabilize Russia. This falls in line with Putin's "Fortress Russia" narrative: that Russia is under economic and ideological attack from the West, and Russia must defend itself

[128] Zetter, "Inside the Cunning, Unprecedented Hack of Ukraine's Power Grid."

[129] Roland Oliphant, "Russia and NATO 'Actively Preparing For War'," *Telegraph*, August 12, 2015, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/11797351/Russia-and-Nato-actively-preparing-for-war.html (accessed October 9, 2017).

accordingly.[130] By combining this narrative with Putin's commitment to defending Russians abroad, Russia is thus legitimized in its information warfare and covert support in Ukraine.

Second, keeping Ukraine in a state of war prevents it from applying to the E.U. and NATO, another blow to perceived Western expansionism in the eyes of Russia. Third, Russian interference in Ukraine serves as a warning to other former Soviet-bloc countries that may be looking to adopt Western standards. Finally, Russian foreign policy in Ukraine allows Russia to test the effectiveness of the Gerasimov Doctrine—combining military and nonmilitary actions on a shared scale of conflict—with little fear of physical reprisals: reprimands, diplomatic expulsions, and sanctions are both known and predictable entities.

In a permissive environment such as Ukraine, the Gerasimov Doctrine's perspective provides measurable benefits to Russian foreign policy goals. Misinformation and propaganda campaigns have demonstrated a positive effect on Russian sympathizers in Ukraine while stoking tensions among anti-Russian groups in the same area.[131] Cyber-attacks created a first-ever energy grid disruption as a hybrid soft and hard power tool to influence Ukrainian actions. Lethal support to separatists, combined with massive *maskirovka* campaigns, allowed freedom of movement and operation, increasing separatist's effectiveness of combat operations and pro-Russian messaging. The annexation of Crimea confirmed to Russia that viewing foreign policy through the Gerasimov Doctrine is overwhelmingly effective when directed at non-peer countries.

[130] Ariel Cohen, "Putin's Crackdown Foretells "Fortress Russia"," Heritage Foundation, October 18, 2012, https://www.heritage.org/europe/commentary/putins-crackdown-foretells-fortress-russia (accessed March 11, 2018).

[131] Peisakhin and Rozenas, "Electoral Effects of Biased Media: Russian Television in Ukraine," 14.

3.7 Evaluation

Each of the above case studies provide sufficient examples of Russian actions and target country reactions. A problem exists in the West: Western interpretations of both Russian actions and Western responses are evaluated with a Western understanding of escalation of force. Namely, diplomatic responses are viewed as separate from military responses. However, this does not provide ample rationale for Russian perspectives because diplomacy and military actions are viewed as integral parts of a shared scale.

3.7.1 Methodology

To provide a better understanding of this dynamic, this paper has taken the examples of Russia's foreign policy actions from each case study, separated by sphere of power (social, information, and military), and applied them to the Gerasimov Doctrine's phases of conflict development in Figure 3 and Table 1. Likewise, Figure 4 and Table 2 depict the target country's reactions, as evaluated through the Gerasimov Doctrine. The point values assigned to each sphere correlate to the level of conflict listed in the doctrine. For example, the U.S.'s military response to the Russian assault on a U.S.-flagged base in Syria receives a point value of "4," as it falls under the Gerasimov Doctrine's "Military Measures: Conduct of Military Operations."[132] Conversely, Ukraine's lack of response to Russian interference in the social sphere receives a point value of "1." Half values are assigned in situations where the response includes elements of two separate point values.

Following the point value assignment, the mean value of each country's sphere scores is plotted over the chart. This mean value is the overall value of the actions in the context of the

[132] Gerasimov, 28.

Gerasimov Doctrine. The mean value assists in validating the hypothesis: there is an interactive relationship between the level of Russian interference and the ability of the target country to retaliate against Russia across the spectrum of conflict as defined in the Gerasimov Doctrine.

In Figure 3, higher mean values indicate the ability and willingness of Russia to use more aggressive foreign policy tools than in instances with lower mean values. A higher mean value in Figure 4 indicates the ability of the target country to retaliate against Russian interference within the respective spheres of power, indicating Russian interference will be at levels that are less likely to receive a military response from the target country. A lower mean value in Figure 4 indicates a target country that is unable to respond to Russian interference, and thus more likely to experience aggressive Russian foreign policy actions.

3.7.2 Analysis

This is an exploratory evaluation that serves as a starting point from which researchers can conduct additional research. Testing the hypothesis in this manner provides essential, broad-scope analysis into the effectiveness of Russian foreign policy tools from a Russian perspective.

Figure 3: Russian Interference in Target Country According to the Gerasimov Doctrine

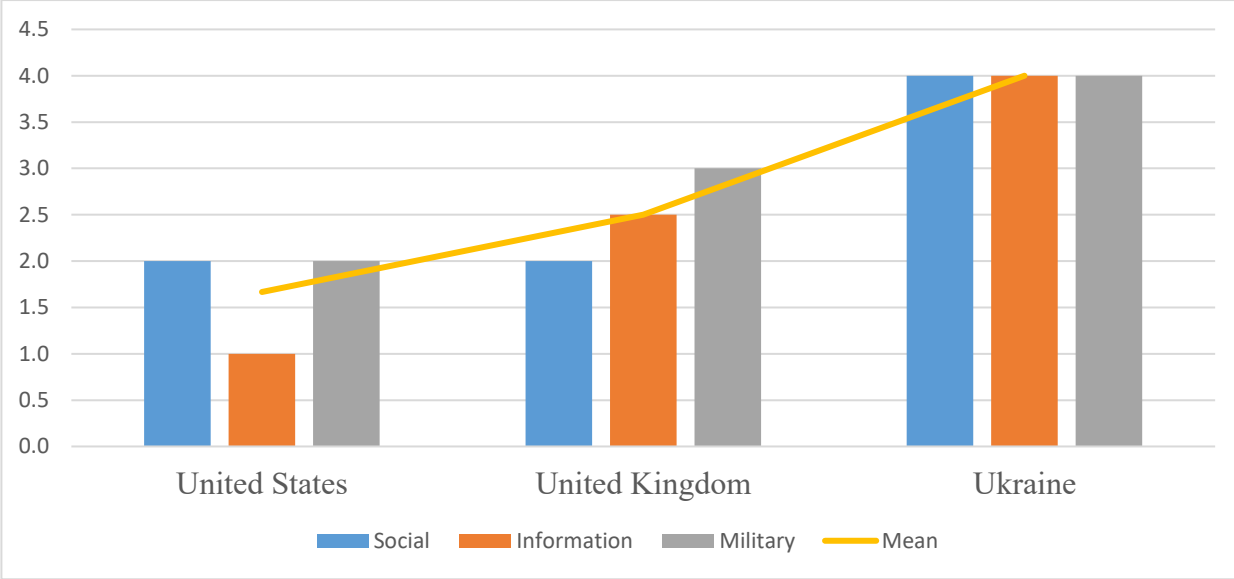

Table 1: Russian Interference in Target Country According to the Gerasimov Doctrine

	Social	Information	Military	**Mean**
United States	2.0	1.0	2.0[133]	**1.7**
United Kingdom	2.0	2.5	3.0	**2.5**
Ukraine	4.0	4.0	4.0	**4.0**

Figure 3 depicts Russia's escalation of force in its foreign policy, as applied to the U.S., U.K., and Ukraine. As expected, Russian efforts are least aggressive in the U.S., and most aggressive in Ukraine. Further investigation—through an evaluation of a larger dataset of events—is warranted to confirm or refute these exploratory findings.

[133] The U.S. case study uses the Russian assault on a U.S. base in Syria as an example, but it is an anomaly in what is otherwise a non-confrontational Russian military approach to the U.S. Therefore, a more realistic scoring of Russian interference in the military sphere of the U.S. is assigned a "2," owing to a variety of strategic deterrence methods.

Figure 4: Effectiveness of Target Country Responses According to the Gerasimov Doctrine

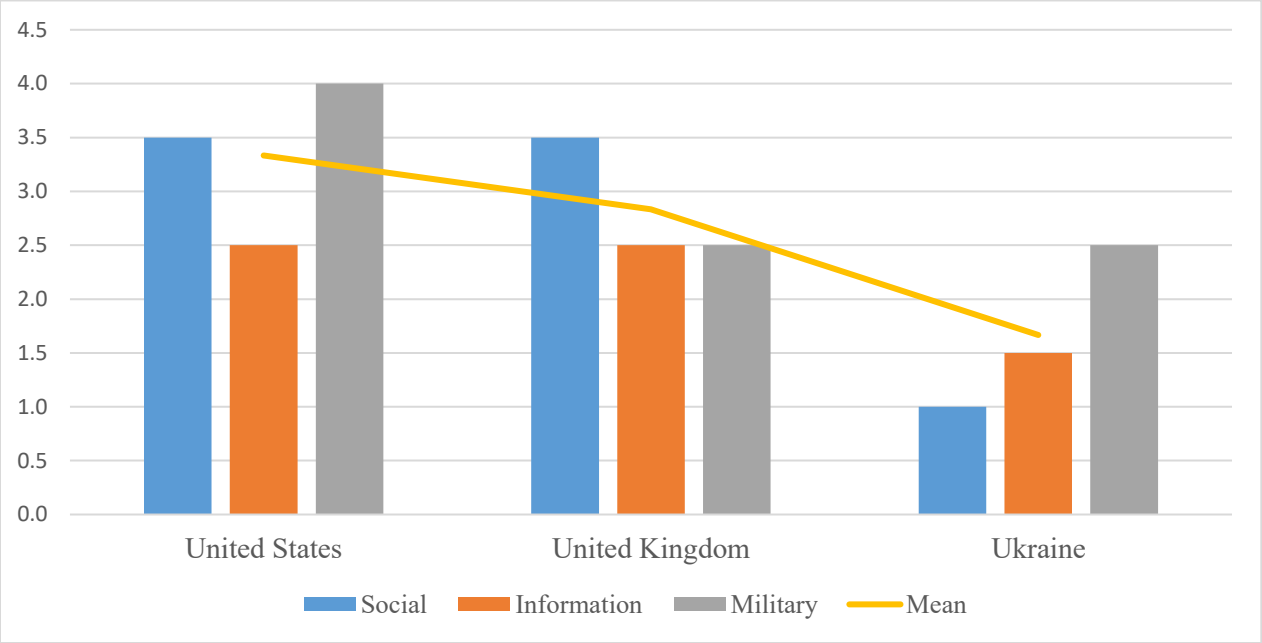

Table 2: Effectiveness of Target Country Responses According to the Gerasimov Doctrine

	Social	Information	Military	**Mean**
United States	3.5	2.5	4.0[134]	**3.3**
United Kingdom	3.5	2.5	2.5	**2.8**
Ukraine	1.0	1.5	2.5	**1.7**

Figure 4 depicts the target country's responses to Russian interference (shown in Figure 3). There is an inverse relationship between Russian interference and the ability of a target country to retaliate. In this sampling, the potential for effective retaliation by the U.S. toward Russia limits the aggressiveness of Russian foreign policy tools, whereas Ukraine's limited

[134] The U.S.'s military response to the Russian attack is retained for this dataset because it displays the willingness of the U.S. to counter direct Russian military action with American military action. While the event is not typical, the U.S.'s response in this case is a useful gauge of possible future reactions to overt Russian military aggression.

capabilities encourage extensive Russian aggression. The U.K.'s non-military response to Russian assassinations on U.K. territory further encourages aggressive Russian foreign policy.

3.7.3 Implications

The Gerasimov Doctrine's strengths lie in its ability to apply all forms of power onto a target country, removing the classical front lines of military conflict and engaging the entirety of a target country's sovereignty. Social sphere influence is effective in expanding upon pre-existing fears, prejudices, stereotypes, and tensions.[135] This is especially evident in debates concerning democratic institutions, domestic integrity, and international sovereignty. Use of cyber-attacks as a foreign policy tool is a dangerous gray area between soft and hard power—they are effective at intelligence gathering and have also shown to be capable of physical disruption of a target country's infrastructure. Military coercion through covert support is most effective with an adjoining *maskirovka* campaign that increases difficulty of attribution back to Russia.

However, there are several weaknesses in the Gerasimov Doctrine's perspective on international relations. Social media manipulation is not effective at creating new lines of tension, nor is it able to shift the larger conversation outside regional or localized events in Russia's favor.[136] Cyber-attacks in the information sphere are attributable to nation-states due to the complexity, motives, and amount of resources required. Military actions must remain covert or risk attribution and direct retaliation, as witnessed in Syria. That is not to say low-level state-sponsored actions such as assassinations are ineffective—they are effective until the target

[135] William Brady et al., "Emotion Shapes the Diffusion of Moralized Content in Social Networks," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 114, no. 28 (June): 7313-18, http://dx.doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1618923114 (accessed February 8, 2018).

[136] Bastos and Mercea, 15.

country escalates its response higher than Russia is willing to go. Similarly, counter-cyber offensives may result in a reduction of Russian cyber probing, but this doctrine is yet to be tested.[137]

This comparative case study does not analyze the intricacies of specific foreign policy events, and research at the individual level may not corroborate the findings of this paper. Additionally, this paper's hypothesis would benefit from expanding the number of case studies to include non-Western countries in Africa, South America, the Middle East, and Asia. The relationship between Russia and China is of particular interest. Finally, a more thorough application of external variables into foreign policy decisions may help answer the "why" questions behind scenarios that do not fit the hypothesis.

3.8 Conclusion

Russian interference in adversarial countries has a measured effect both on that country's foreign policy, and on future Russian aggression. The Gerasimov Doctrine is a useful tool for evaluating both Russia's, and its adversary's, actions. It corrects a Western mirror imaging error in international relations while providing a measurable and definable reference in approaching Russian foreign policy. Prior to enacting a foreign policy tool, Russia uses the Gerasimov Doctrine to weigh its desired aggressiveness against the target country's ability to retaliate. These two factors share an inverse relationship: The more likely a target country will retaliate against Russia, the lower Russian aggression in foreign policy will be. Conversely, a target country with few retaliation capabilities is more likely to receive more aggressive Russian actions in foreign policy.

[137] Cory Bennett, "John Bolton, Cyber Warrior," POLITICO, April 1, 2018, https://www.politico.com/story/2018/04/01/john-bolton-cyber-hawk-russia-451937 (accessed April 1, 2018).

Russian foreign policy toward the U.S. is characterized by low-intensity actions across the social, information, and military spheres. This low-intensity is likely due to the U.S.'s robust abilities to retaliate across all spheres at all levels. However, the U.S. has shown itself to be unwilling to respond-in-kind or escalate non-physical Russian actions, and instead prefers using diplomatic foreign policy tools. There is potential for Russia to perceive these actions as conciliatory—based on its actions in the U.K. and Ukraine—and increase its aggressiveness in the U.S. Russia seeks to undermine democratic institutions in the U.S. as a signal to other countries—and domestically—that Western democracy is weak and susceptible to manipulation.

The U.K. takes a similar approach, preferring diplomatic courses of action. Russia is more aggressive toward the U.K. because the U.K. is less willing to escalate responses to Russian aggression. Brexit is a significant benefit to Russia—it provides inroads to a more favorable E.U. for Russia. The U.K. is also a safer environment than the U.S. for Russia to test its foreign policy tools against the West because the U.K. consistently refuses to use its national security relationships in its response to Russian aggression. The continuing trend of assassinations within the U.K. represents a substantial Russian foreign policy escalation when compared to its approach to the U.S.

Ukraine has the worst forecast of the three countries. It is unable to join supranational entities, and unwilling to bend to Russian aggression. Ukraine is stuck in perpetual violence that is quickly becoming a war of attrition with Russia. Russia is most aggressive in Ukraine because there is minimal possibility of Ukrainian—or international—military response. However, there is a clear line that Russia has not yet crossed: open military action against Ukraine. The standard diplomatic foreign policy tools the West uses as responses to Russian actions in Ukraine are known quantities that Russia has spent decades learning to circumvent and mitigate.

The most significant finding of this comparative case study is Russia's ability to adapt to target country responses quickly and effectively. Russia has taken Soviet-era doctrines and shaped them into effective foreign policy tools through years of experimentation. The combination of *maskirovka*-like campaigns and military action is a new twist on centuries-old concepts of total war. The Gerasimov Doctrine takes the total war concept and applies it in limited fashion: striking only at the opportune moment.

This is also a boon to countries seeking to combat Russian interference. Understanding the Russian concept of the spectrum of warfare allows policymakers to forecast future Russian actions. While Russian foreign policy differs toward each country, the themes and methods of escalations remain the same. First, Russia will identify and manipulate sources of social tension to create discord and turn a country's focus inward. Then, Russia can begin to probe defenses to look for weaknesses in social cohesion, civilian infrastructure, governmental procedure, and military capabilities. These are used to evaluate the target country's response threat to Russia. Russia can then implement both soft and hard power tools, as described in the Gerasimov Doctrine, to achieve its foreign policy goals.

Countering this doctrine requires the full scope of national power and utilization of supranational organizations to overwhelm Russian capabilities or increase risk of retaliation to the extent that increased aggression is no longer viable for Russia. Education in critical thinking, open dialogue between intelligence communities and citizens, and a re-evaluation of diplomatic responses, are all possible solutions to Russian interference. Escalating diplomatic sanctions to a complete blockade may be the level at which Russia draws the line between non-kinetic and kinetic action. However, it has not been tried and runs the risk of creating a full-scale war.

Whatever the solution, it is imperative to measure Russian actions—and our reactions—with the Gerasimov Doctrine if the West hopes to limit Russian interference.

Conclusion

War by Other Means

This thesis framed Russian foreign policy within the so-called "Gerasimov Doctrine" construct. Doing so reduced potential for mirror imaging from the West by providing an alternate concept to understand how non-military levers of power can be used to effect regime change in sovereign states. This concept is further expanded to apply Gerasimov's modified scale of conflict across a variety of engagements between the Russian Federation and the United States, United Kingdom, and Ukraine. While the Gerasimov Doctrine is not a "playbook" for Russian governmental behavior, it is a useful tool for researchers to begin experimenting with measuring the effectiveness of information confrontation campaigns. Before providing a way ahead, this thesis evaluated the path through the past into the present—historical context is crucial.

Chapter Review

The first chapter found significant differences between the United States' concept of a people's right to self-determination and the Russian state's version that is more akin to a state's right to self-determination. In the United States, sovereignty comes from the people via their right of self-determination, which guarantees liberty, equality, and freedom of choice for all; the government exists to ensure and protect those rights. In the Russian Federation, sovereignty originates with the state and is used to ensure the state's survival at the expense of individual liberties of its citizens. The Russian state, in its various forms, justifies this stance by emphasizing the need for unity across all of Russia's disparate communities. Without unity of purpose, the government argues, these populations become susceptible to outside powers that threaten to destroy or alter their cultures and way of life. This unity of thought in Russian government is a centuries-old concept: Tsarist Russia used the state's supremacy to force unification of all Russians under the Tsar, Soviet Russia forced unity of thought to ensure obedience to the state's narrative, and the Russian Federation uses the concept of the "Russian Idea" to argue that the state must survive for Russian culture to survive. The Russian Idea is the current phrase enveloping a unified Russian identity, culture, ethics, and mores.

The genesis for each of the above arguments lies within the Russian state's concept of sovereignty. Instead of the Russian people's right to self-determination, the state provides a perception of choice while retaining power. That is not to say the Russian people are powerless—that is far from the truth. As history has shown, when the "Russian Idea" becomes disassociated from the state, revolution is not far behind. Therefore, maintaining congruence between the Russian Idea and the state is of the utmost importance: stability and security above all else, including the people's freedom of choice.

This belief is quite obviously at odds with the United States' concept of sovereignty, which originates in a people's right of self-determination. For the United States government, power comes from diversity of thought—which is dictated by the authority of the people through democratic institutions. No person and no entity is above the law in this construct, including the state. The notions of freedom of choice and government for the people, by the people, are sacred tenets to the understanding of sovereignty by the United States government. Stability in the United States is created not by unity of thought, but through compromise, where a difference of opinions is cherished and seen as a way to include all views in government. Security is likewise placed lower than individual freedoms because these freedoms have a higher intrinsic value for both the government and its citizens. For the United States, finding the proper balance between security and liberty is an ongoing debate.

Applying these differences in sovereignty to each state's foreign policy prepares the Gerasimov Doctrine for evaluation. If the Russian Federation's view of sovereignty relies on unity of thought to provide security and stability, then the Western democratic approach to sovereignty as an open discussion of differing opinions is an existential threat. Furthermore, because stability and security is held above all else for the Russian Federation, it is therefore justified in using all facets of national power.

The key facet for this thesis is the modern-day interpretation of *maskirovka*, a Soviet-era phrase regarding military denial and deception activities. *Maskirovka* has evolved to include the information and social spheres, with activities ranging from cyber-attacks to mis- and dis-information campaigns across all forms of media. *Maskirovka* is directly related to the Gerasimov Doctrine because it is these very activities General Valery Gerasimov believed the West engaged in to create the Arab Spring and Ukraine's Euromaidan protests.

It is worth noting that the Gerasimov Doctrine may be a case of mirror imaging, where General Gerasimov projected Russian methods of covert action onto the West and combined them with historical regime change efforts by the United States. If Gerasimov himself fell victim to mirror imaging in describing these revolutions, it validates his speech as a Russian government perspective on using non-military means in conflict. Similarly, if Gerasimov spoke from his own interpretation of world events, his "doctrine" remains a valid method to understand geopolitical events because of his position as Chief of the General Staff—a rough equivalent to the United States' Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff with added powers and responsibilities.

The second chapter found that Russian nationalism is an effective conduit through which Russian intelligence agencies can conduct *maskirovka* campaigns in Ukraine. Building off the first chapter's discussion on the Russian Federation's concept of sovereignty, the second chapter investigated nationalism as a foreign policy tool. Nationalism consolidates Russian opinions under the umbrella of the Russian state's views on domestic policy and international order. Russian nationalism sources its power from pre-existing grassroots nationalism—deep-seated beliefs among far-right-leaning Russians concerning oppression from external actors, defense of the Russian Idea, the role of Russia as protector of Christianity, and the need for a stable government. The Russian Federation uses these beliefs to project a defensively-postured nationalist rhetoric: the state is merely protecting all Russians, regardless of state sovereignty, because it is obligated to protect the Russian Idea. This is opposite the standard Western understanding of Russian nationalism, a view that claims the Russian Federation seeks to expand its territory in a return to historical boundaries calling back to tsarist and communist eras.

If Russian nationalism is defensive in nature, the state can more easily create misinformation (altering facts) and disinformation (creating false facts) campaigns arguing for its

defensive posturing as a response to external threats. This is much more palatable on the international stage and at home. On the world stage, a defensive posture is less aggressive and therefore less threatening. At home, the defensive argument blends well with the Russian Federation's concept of sovereignty and protecting the Russian Idea.

Russian nationalism is a double-edged sword for President Putin. It benefits Putin in the short-term by shoring up sentiment that supports the state's narratives concerning Western encroachment on the Russian way of life. There is potential, however, for this sentiment to continue to grow toward more extreme ends. Far-right ideologues like Aleksandr Dugin have been used by the state in the past to support the nationalist rhetoric. Should this far-right base grow, and its demands not be met by the Russian Federation, Putin risks alienating them and distancing himself from the Russian Idea he molded. In the past, separating the state's leader from the Russian Idea has not ended for the leader or the state.

Ukraine, one of the targets of Russian nationalist messaging against the West, is stuck in a geopolitical no-man's-land. It cannot join the European Union nor the North Atlantic Treaty Organization because of its ongoing conflict and border disputes. Ukraine also turned down the offer to join the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union, leaving the United Nations as its only chance for recourse. If Ukraine wants to regain its territories, it is possible to leverage its shared past with Russia as a threat to the Russian Idea.

Ukraine is a threat for the same reasons Russian nationalism is effective: the two share a significant and lengthy cultural history. If Western ideologies take hold in Ukraine and Ukraine prospers from it, there is a serious possibility that these may spread to ethnic Russian Ukrainians, and then into the Russian community as a whole. Gurr's theory of relative deprivation explains this transference: If Ukrainian quality of life improves and Russian life remains static, improves

at a slower rate, or declines, Russians would see an increasing disparity between themselves and the Ukrainians. Because the two cultures share a lengthy history, the transfer of Western ideas is much easier when funneled through Ukraine rather than going directly from the West into Russian culture. This culture play is not without significant risks: threatening the Russian Idea without a substantial defensive pact can result in more destructive Russian state actions against Ukraine.

The third chapter explored why and how the Russian Federation behaves toward different levels of Western state adversaries. It used the construct of the Gerasimov Doctrine's scale of conflict to evaluate state-on-state actions between the Russian Federation and three separate states: The United States, United Kingdom, and Ukraine. Ukraine is included as a Western adversary in this chapter because of the threat it poses as a conduit of Western ideals into Russia, as discussed in the second chapter. The third chapter found that Russian state actions across the three spheres evaluated (social, information, and media) are inversely proportional to the potential of the target state to retaliate and negatively affect the Russian Federation.

Actions directed toward the United States have been exploratory and non-damaging. Examples include social media influence campaigns, intelligence gathering on critical U.S. infrastructure, and observation of military activities. Of the three Western countries evaluated, the United States poses the most significant threat to the Russian Federation. The United States promotes itself as the leader of the free world, a strong backer of democratic institutions, and as the single most powerful state on Earth. Whether or not these are true is irrelevant, it is the international audience's perception of the United States that matters. Based on these perceptions, Russian state messaging can frame the United States as an oppressive international bully intent on destroying cultures for the sake of creating a cosmopolitan world. Once again, this ties back

to the defensive nationalism argument and the Russian state's concept of sovereignty: The Russian Federation is obligated to protect the Russian Idea from these threats.

The United Kingdom is similar to the United States, but less threatening to the Russian Federation. It is therefore susceptible to more aggressive Russian state actions, such as assassinations, stronger efforts to influence voting campaigns, and more threatening military maneuvers. The relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom also has interesting corollaries to the Russian Federation's relationship with Ukraine. Both groups have significant shared history, cultures, and ideologies. The United Kingdom is the United States' strongest link to the European Union, just as Ukraine is the largest conduit for Western ideas into Russia. Both groups shared a "special relationship," with Ukraine and the Russian Federation's relationship ending with the Ukrainian refusal to join the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union. As such, it is logical for the Russian Federation to try and sever the ties between the United States and the European Union. Brexit was a perfect target of opportunity.

Confronting the United States head on is too dangerous for the Russian Federation. By attacking its relationships via intermediaries, like the United Kingdom, it can mitigate that risk. Influencing the Brexit campaign for it to succeed would remove the United States' strongest voice from the European Union, leaving the E.U. more susceptible to Russian foreign policy initiatives that would fill the power void. For the United Kingdom, there is little the state can do to affect the Russian Federation.

Ukraine has the least realistic leverage against the Russian Federation. Outside the ideological threats previously mentioned, Ukraine is relegated to a proving ground for what the West would consider the more dubious side of Russia's foreign policy tools. Across all three spheres, Russian actions are just below the threshold of open war against Ukraine. Social

campaigns have been discussed at length in the chapter on Russian nationalism. Russian information-sphere activities created real-world impacts by shutting down western Ukrainian power plants with a cyber-attack, the first of its kind. This was likely in response to Ukraine threatening to cut off its power supply to Crimea post-annexation. Russian military activity in Ukraine is only obscured by the thinnest of veils: Russian weapons are responsible for the downing of Malaysian Airlines' MH-17 over eastern Ukraine. The Russian Federation also provided direct military support in annexing Crimea and occupying Ukraine's sovereign territory across eastern Ukraine. Due to its unique geographic and ideological position between the West and the Russian Federation, events in Ukraine merit much closer analysis.

Impacts

The conclusions drawn in this thesis have three distinct forms of impact. First, to the policymaking bodies of the states discussed. Second, to the intelligence agencies guided by their state's respective policies, laws, and social norms. Third, to researchers and as a foundation for future study. The impacts of this thesis are wide ranging because information warfare, or information confrontation, can affect all facets of life. From altering perspectives on sovereignty, to driving nationalist campaigns, and ultimately to distorting the "ground-truth" on a battlefield, information warfare must be interpreted and understood within its proper context to reduce the potential for miscalculation. Using the framework of the Gerasimov Doctrine as an approach to understanding foreign policy, of which information warfare is a part, is a step toward reducing miscalculations with the Russian Federation.

Creating and directing foreign policy is an incredibly complex challenge on its own. Overlaying the potential for biases and misunderstandings only makes it more difficult. This thesis provided perspectives from each of the states involved, with a special focus on the Russian

Federation. Policymakers in one state should make a point of understanding the origins of another state's concept of sovereignty in relation to its own—they are likely to be quite different. Interpretation and execution of foreign policy are derived from this selfsame concept of sovereignty, and policymakers must understand the difficulties involved in avoiding mirror imaging. This thesis does not presume to support one form of government over another, it has found strengths and weaknesses in each that policymakers can use to form effective and beneficial policies in the future. Perhaps this approach is beneficial in itself: to accept that there may not be a "one size fits all" form of government, and that unnecessary competition or "one-upmanship" is not always the answer. These are not new lessons gleaned from this thesis, but the findings within these pages help confirm the notions.

A word of caution to policymakers regarding the power of information in the twenty-first century: Information is only as powerful as it is believed or perceived. Facts lose their power in social discourse when they are not understood, or worse, misunderstood. This is incredibly crucial in devising policy to combat misinformation and disinformation. As this thesis has shown, emotion—be it through personal experiences of a citizen or a state's ideological rhetoric—is powerful enough to reject facts both at the individual and societal levels. Influence campaigns that use information should therefore be treated as dangerous weapons in the toolbox of national powers. Likewise, they must be used with extreme precision and caution, their effects are often wider ranging and more impactful than originally intended.

If a state is targeted by such an influence campaign, serious debate must occur at the national and international levels on how to react. Current laws in most states and supranational organizations do not properly define nor address the significance of information warfare. Should these "cyber bullets" be treated as if they were physical bullets and artillery shells? What is the

difference between a cyber-attack that shuts down a power plant and a military special forces raid that takes control over that same plant? Is there a difference? In terms of effect on a sovereign state, this thesis argues there is no difference, and that the information realm should be treated with the same caution and apprehension as entering a hot war. Such a change in policy across the world will be long forthcoming, but the United States and Russia are prime forces for change in this sphere. Policymakers looking to make an impact in the information world need only look at the dearth of legislation and laws controlling state activities therein.

Intelligence agencies have differing roles according to their respective state's laws and norms. Nevertheless, the findings in this thesis are applicable to all. As the executor of policy in both military and non-military realms, intelligence agencies must hone their offense and defense to be pinpoint accurate. Within the construct of the Gerasimov Doctrine, both the military and non-military realms affect a shared scaled of conflict. Whether in the offense or defense against the Russian Federation, it is important to understand this context. Intelligence analysts must understand the full scope and implication of actions across both realms, and that one realm affects the other.

Moreover, it is possible for intelligence actions in one realm to drive actions, intelligence-derived or not, in the other realm. For example, an intelligence agency conducting influence activities of a non-military nature may inadvertently create an equivalent or escalatory military response from the target state. In the same vein, a military intelligence action may drive a non-military response, such as an economic blockade or removal of diplomatic personnel from the state. These are not new concepts in the West, yet it is a new perspective by placing them on the same scale.

Intelligence collectors, especially those responsible for human intelligence, should be well-versed in the effects of various ideological "-isms" on their target population. Within the scope of this thesis, nationalism's effects are of particular note. The rise of nationalist ideologies across the world in the beginning of the twenty-first century is a force that will affect the judgment and decision-making spaces from the smallest level of society to the largest policymaking bodies. Collectors must be cognizant of nationalism's potential to distort a source's perceived ground-truths beyond typical source bias.

Leaders within the intelligence communities must keep their fingers on the heartbeat of the quickly evolving information sphere. They are responsible for adhering to updated laws and rules of war, and they must be held accountable as such within their respective forms of government. Intelligence community leaders must not only be aware of their state's laws and norms, but of those states which they are targeting, collecting, and analyzing. This is not to say the leaders should be held accountable by the target nation—and they may well be—but instead leaders must be aware of how their intelligence activities will be perceived and reacted to. Constructs such as the Gerasimov Doctrine, however unofficial they may be, provide crucial insights into these perceptions.

Academics interested in Russian foreign policy, particularly information confrontation, have plenty of space to contribute knowledge. This thesis opens the door to viewing foreign policy through the lens of Valery Gerasimov, for all its merits and faults. Attributing the Arab Spring and Ukraine's Euromaidan protests to Western intelligence activities may seem far-fetched to the Western mind, but Gerasimov provides his context for this belief. Researchers can use his context and this thesis to create a deeper understanding of how intelligence activities intertwine across all levers of national power. Furthermore, researchers seeking to measure the

effectiveness of Russian information confrontation campaigns can begin to tease out the thought processes and logic behind the campaigns.

Future Research

The Gerasimov Doctrine is not a playbook for new-age warfare, but it is an insight into understanding how General Gerasimov views it. Using the Gerasimov Doctrine in this way could enable researchers to reverse engineer known influence campaigns. Similar to Peisakhin and Rozenlas' work on the effectiveness of Russian television along the Ukrainian border, future research can start with a baseline and known quantities prior to, during, and after an event.[138] Both the 2016 United States presidential elections and the United Kingdom's 2015 European Referendum—"Brexit"—are prime starting points. Both events are quite studied and provide an abundance of data, but they are yet to be evaluated for their effectiveness as known Russian information confrontation campaigns.

This thesis found that Russian nationalism is an effective foreign policy tool when directed at Ukraine. Nationalism played similarly important roles in the United States and United Kingdom during the aforementioned voting periods. Just how much of those votes were affected by the Russian Federation's influence campaigns remains to be seen. This thesis' findings could be combined with Peisakhin and Rozenlas' methodology and the United States' unclassified information operations doctrine to reverse engineer the campaigns and evaluate their effectiveness.

First, this thesis serves as a blueprint for the logic and rationale behind the influence campaigns. Future research would need to operate under the assumption that rational actors

[138] Leonid Peisakhin and Arturas Rozenas, "Electoral Effects of Biased Media: Russian Television in Ukraine," *American Journal of Political Science* 62, no. 3 (March 30, 2018), accessed March 30, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12355.

designed and executed the campaigns. Next, the United States, perhaps to its own detriment but in the interests of transparency, publishes unclassified versions of its military doctrine. The doctrine regarding information operations dictates how to measure the effectiveness of its own activities. Reversing these steps, using the logic provided in this thesis, could provide a clearer understanding of the intent, scope, and target audience of the influence campaigns. Finally, Peisakhin and Rozenlas' work in measuring the effectiveness of Russian messaging, in which they account for the difference between a broadcast being received and a message being consumed (or viewed), is the missing link in how to analyze these campaigns. Their methodology, with the perspective provided by this thesis, and combined with the United States' information operations doctrinal framework, may create a model that can then be validated and expanded upon to improve its generalizability. This thesis is a proposed first step on that path.

The Gerasimov Doctrine is not a doctrine, but a lens with which a reader can view interstate behavior on a scale of conflict. It is important because it helps pull back the veil on the Russian Federation's perspective of conflict—not because it is official (it's not)—but because it is from Valery Gerasimov, Putin's Chief of the General Staff. The Gerasimov Doctrine puts into context various military and non-military intelligence operations as elements on a shared scale of conflict, citing the Arab Spring and Ukrainian Euromaidan protests as examples. These are significant because this combination of military and non-military actions has the potential to threaten the Russian Idea, which is a core tenet of Russian sovereignty. The Russian state, today represented by the Russian Federation, capitalizes on the Russian Idea by personifying it in President Putin. Putin, in turn, uses Russian nationalist rhetoric to shore up support for the Russian state as ideological protectors of the Russian Idea. This thesis sought to tie these links together to provide a more complete picture of the Russian Federation's perspective on foreign

policy toward the West. That perspective may be summed up by modifying von Clausewtiz's view of war: diplomacy is war by other means.

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