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Just a year after the 2016 presidential election and on the eve of the midterm elections of 2018, fear and a sense of uncertainty about the integrity of the U.S. democratic process and its institutions is in the minds of many Americans. Increasing evidence points to the Russian government as the clear culprit for undermining the U.S. democratic and electoral processes, sparking social divisiveness, and exploiting what some Russians see as fundamental weaknesses in democracy and its institutions. Moscow's intent goes well beyond the election to create long-term damaging effects on the basic principles of democracy, a system that Russia sees as a threat to its political stability, social order, and foreign policy agenda. This paper will attempt to reveal that it was never solely about influencing an individual candidate or party; instead, Russia's plan was to weaken the foundations of the U.S. political system by sowing discord, confusion, and political unrest among the American people.

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A New Level of Political Warfare: How and Why the Russian Government Hijacked the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election.

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OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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Executive Summary

Title: A New Level of Political Warfare: How and Why the Russian Government Hijacked the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election.

Author: Mr. Jorge Velez

Thesis: The Russian government's interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election through overt and covert cyber, conventional, and social media platforms sought to undermine the U.S. government and its institutions by exploiting fissures in the U.S. democratic and electoral systems.

Discussion: Just a year after the 2016 presidential election and on the eve of the midterm elections of 2018, fear and a sense of uncertainty about the integrity of the U.S. democratic process and its institutions is in the minds of many Americans. Increasing evidence points to the Russian government as the clear culprit for undermining the U.S. democratic and electoral processes, sparking social divisiveness, and exploiting what some Russians see as fundamental weaknesses in democracy and its institutions. This paper will explain how and why Moscow's intent goes well beyond the election to create long-term damaging effects on the basic principles of democracy, a system that Russia sees as a threat to its political stability, social order, and foreign policy agenda. This paper will attempt to reveal that it was never solely about influencing an individual candidate or party; instead, Russia's plan was to weaken the foundations of the U.S. political system by sowing discord, confusion, and political unrest among the American people.

Conclusion: Given the recent success of Russia's political warfare, the U.S. must accept the fact that the Kremlin's new disinformation strategy, supported by its long-standing strategic culture, will continue attempting to undermine America's core democratic values. The primary means of countering it would be to develop and implement a comprehensive plan across the government, education system, and social media companies to counter the new Russia disinformation model.

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Introduction

Just a year after the 2016 Presidential election and on the eve of the midterm elections of 2018, fear and a sense of uncertainty about the integrity of the U.S. democratic process is in the minds of many Americans. Increasing evidence points to the Russian government as the clear culprit for undermining the U.S. electoral system, sparking social divisiveness, and exploiting what some Russians see as fundamental weaknesses in U.S. democracy and its institutions. Special Counsel Robert Mueller's recent indictment of three companies and thirteen Russian individuals accused of interfering with the 2016 U.S. presidential election provides ample evidence of the extent of the Russian government meddling in the elections. However, Mueller's indictment failed to emphasize Moscow's long-term strategic intent, which goes beyond one election and one specific candidate. Thus, the real question is how and why did the Russians interfere in recent and current American political processes?

This paper argues that Russia's intent goes well beyond the election to orchestrate long-term damaging effects on the basic principles of democracy, a system that the West sees as a threat to its democratic institutions, political stability, social order, and foreign policy agenda. The Russian campaign is not solely about influencing an individual candidate; instead, Moscow's plan was to weaken the foundations of the U.S. political system by sowing discord, confusion, and political unrest among the American people.

To understand Russia's new foreign policy objectives, this research addresses several fundamental concepts, starting with the significance of strategic culture and the role it plays in Russia's national defense and foreign policy doctrines.[1] This paper will describe the role that Russia's strategic culture plays in the country's foreign policy behavior and objectives. After defining disinformation as one of the primary tools in the Russian active measures toolbox, this

paper will show how Moscow has perfected this political warfare technique to interfere in other countries' internal affairs.[2] It will specifically explore how the Russian government, through its intelligence apparatus, has utilized cyber tools, social media platforms, and disinformation to exploit fissures in political systems to promote discord and undermine confidence in democracy, as seen through meddling in Ukrainian affairs and most recently, in the U.S. presidential election.

The crisis in Ukraine and the 2014 annexation of the Crimean peninsula serves as an excellent case study. The Russian government used Ukraine as a test case before deploying its full disinformation machine to target the 2016 U.S. Presidential election. This research will describe Russian intelligence disinformation Tactics Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) employed in Ukraine, which they closely mimicked during the U.S. elections.

The research approach for this thesis includes analysis of qualitative and quantitative data collected from various public and government sources. The data obtained and reviewed derives from recent online articles and unclassified government reports. Due to the novelty of the events surrounding this issue, there is a lack of formal literature addressing the specifics of this topic. The information analyzed herein nevertheless provides enough data points to support the central claims presented in this thesis. This research includes a historical study of how the Russians used active measures as a foreign policy instrument since the revolution of 1917. The study of the Russian intervention in Ukraine in 2014 could potentially help understand the Russia's new propaganda and disinformation TTPs against the U.S. An excellent parallel example that will be further analyzed in this paper is the Russian Military Intelligence Service (GRU) successful hacking of the U.S. Democratic National Committee (DNC) networks in July 2015.[3] U.S. intelligence agencies, investigative reporters, and some scholars already familiar with Russian

active measures activities have conducted most of the research on this matter. Although there is plenty of historical information concerning Russian propaganda and disinformation operations against the U.S. during the Cold War, there is a lack of formal literature regarding Russian disinformation campaigns after the fall of the Soviet Union—especially targeting the U.S.

However, current literature affords enough evidence to support the various theories of how and why the Russian government interfered in the 2016 U.S. election. Several articles focus on the new Russian foreign policy strategy against the U.S. The evidence in these articles suggests that Russia, under the helm of President Vladimir Putin, seeks to undermine the foundations of the U.S. democratic institutions using propaganda and disinformation operations.[4] Marcel H. Van Herpen, a security expert specializing in Russia, Eastern Europe, and the post-Soviet states, conducted a rigorous analysis of the new Russian propaganda and disinformation strategy after the fall of the Soviet Union. According to Herpen, Russia's new political warfare policy is a direct result of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and U.S.'s new posture throughout Eastern Europe.[5] Social policy researcher John Pollock provides another example as he examines in detail the way the Russian government used the Internet and cyber technology to deploy a well-coordinated propaganda and disinformation operation to manipulate the facts behind the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, during the Ukraine conflict.[6] Pollock uses the Malaysia flight incident to illustrate how the Russian government through its intelligence apparatus used the Internet, traditional media venues, and social media platforms to influence public opinion inside Russia, as well as across the West regarding any Russian involvement and responsibility concerning the downing of the Malaysian airline.[7]

In addition, *New York Times* reporter Neil MacFarquhar sheds some light on the role that the state-owned international Russian television network Russia Today (RT), plays in the spread

of Russian propaganda and disinformation across the West, including the U.S.[8]According to MacFarquhar, the Kremlin decided to launch the first all-digital Russian television network RT in 2005 to quickly spread voluminous disinformation to the West. It became Putin's first digital outlet to advance his new foreign policy model.[9] RT designed a communications strategy to take full advantage of the freedoms and lax regulations enjoyed by the West's press to carry the Kremlin's new and strategically customized foreign policy narrative.[10] MacFarquhar alludes to the key role conventional media channels such RT played during the Ukraine conflict and the subsequent downing of the Malaysian Airlines MH17 by a Russian missile by echoing the Kremlin's distorted and manipulative story behind these two events.[11] The Kremlin's propaganda machine led by RT and other Russian internet outlets concealed the truth that Crimean separatists using a missile supplied by the Russian military downed the Malaysian Airline plane.[12] Although all the evidence continues to aim to Russia as the main culprit, the Kremlin unshakably kept denying that it used disinformation to influence public opinion and accused the West of creating a state of "Russophobia" across Europe and the United States.[13]

Due to the still-unfolding events surrounding the Russian government meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, most of the investigative reporting concerning the extent of the Russian involvement in the election comes from reports in news outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Politico Magazine*, and other leading publications in Europe and the U.S.

In 2016, senior foreign affairs correspondent for *Politico Magazine* Michael Crowley explains how the Russian government employed RT to transmit manipulated propaganda and disinformation during the months leading to the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Crowley provides specific examples of how RT disseminated biased information intended to sway

American viewers towards a particular political party before the polls.[14] RT also presented distorted information concerning individuals and political groups in the United States that the Kremlin perceived as potential opponents to its new foreign policy.[15]

The most relevant and potentially accurate information regarding this issue comes from the unclassified report provided by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), as well as the testimonies to the Senate by the former Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Directors about Russian intelligence overt and covert activities during the U.S. presidential election. Of particular importance was January 6, 2017 ODNI intelligence assessment entitled *Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent U.S. Elections.* This unclassified report provides specific information about Russia's TTPs and intentions behind meddling in the U.S. election process. This assessment also explains how the U.S. Intelligence Community (USIC) was able to attribute most of the cyber intrusions related to the election to Russian actors, and proxy agents acting on behalf of the Russian intelligence services.[16] Finally, particularly convincing pieces of information came from the executives of some of the social media companies that became the channels, as well as the victims, of the Russian disinformation operation targeting the U.S. During a recent Senate hearing, senior executives from Facebook, Twitter, and Google, described in detail the extent of Russian manipulation of their social media platforms to advance their influence and disinformation campaign during the 2016 U.S. presidential election.[17]

Due to space constraints, this paper will not attempt to conduct an in-depth study concerning the specific technologies related to the cyber tools discussed in this research. Some readers will argue that to analyze the TTPs used by the Russians; one must dissect their cyber toolkit. However, this paper intends to delve into the social-political and cognitive elements

Russian intelligence exploited utilizing the internet and social media venues to intrude in the 2016 elections.

This paper has four major parts. First, it will analyze the concept of Russian strategic culture and its significance concerning its geopolitical and foreign policy doctrines. Second, it will explain the concept of Russian active measures as it relates to the use of disinformation as a strategic political weapon. Third, the paper analyzes how the Russian government exploited the political unrest in Ukraine in 2014 to test their active measures TTPs, in particular, their disinformation tradecraft to create social and political discord among the Ukrainian population. This event is a case study used to highlight similarities in how the Russians used disinformation both in Ukraine and later in the U.S. The final part will examine how and why the Russian government interfered in the 2016 U.S. Presidential election. This section will take a closer look at how the Russian intelligence services used cyber tools and social media platforms to disrupt Americans' electoral process by targeting weaknesses in the U.S. democratic and political systems. This paper will conclude by providing some specific recommendations that could help identify, understand, and counter Russian disinformation operations in the future. Overall, this paper may stimulate further research concerning Russia's new disinformation paradigm and its potential long-term social and political consequences for the U.S.—and democracy as a whole.

Russian Strategic Culture

"The Russian people and Russian culture are the linchpins, the glue that binds together this unique civilization."[18]

-Vladimir Putin.

Russia has once again attracted the attention of the West after the unexpected and swift annexation of Crimea, increased military involvement in Syria, and recent attempts to interfere in various internal political affairs of democratic nations in the West.[19] After the end of the Cold

War, the West, and in particular the U.S., stopped focusing on Russia as the significant military threat it once represented. The underestimated capabilities of the Russians by the West after the end of the Cold War, was rooted in the lack of understanding of what many experts referred as Russia's strategic culture. This strategic culture indifference is probably one of the major foreign policy oversights by the West since the end of the Cold War.[20]

The Russian strategic culture is a unique collection of commonly shared, strongly influential, and particularly enduring attitudes, outlooks, and responses to internal and external issues concerning national security in its broadest sense. This attitude ultimately drives social, political, and military behavior and policies.[21] Russian strategic culture is rooted in a long history of harsh military and political experiences that have shaped a unique mindset of mistrust and devious stratagems. This mindset holds that Russia's overall geopolitical, economic, and military position is distinctive from the West, and this uniqueness requires a customized approach to its national security from that of its enemies— a strategy designed to advance what the Russians see as their unique strengths—while exploiting the weaknesses of their neighbors and competitors.[22] Russians do not tend to see themselves as the rest of the world; instead, they see Russia as a unique nation built by centuries of cultural and military growth by which they have learned to adapt and survive against all the odds. Russia's strategic uniqueness comes from a deep belief that Russians have a duty to preserve, protect, and perhaps expand Russia's unique culture beyond their borders, a conviction that helped to justify their expansionism ideals and a strong sense of cultural supremacy.[23]

Russia's strategic culture is a crucial driver of its geopolitical posture since the Soviet era, a stance that has put Russia in direct opposition to U.S. foreign policy since the end of World War II. The country's unique strategic culture differs sharply with the U.S.'s idea of

exceptionalism; a concept based on the notion that America's values, social-political system, and history are unique and should serve as a positive role model for the rest of the word.[24] In their rejection of U.S.'s unique democratic model and innovative ideals, the Russians developed an attitude of incomparability and superiority that produced a strategically asymmetric approach to their defense and foreign policy doctrines.[25] Strategic culture is a continually existing feature in Russia's political, military, and social mindset. The new Russian government—under President Vladimir Putin—has revived this distinctive attitude towards the West, and in particular the U.S., since Putin took power in the late 1990s.

For the past eighteen years, the Kremlin has devoted vast amounts of resources in reviving, reshaping, and promoting its Russian strategic culture as Moscow seeks to reclaim superpower status. The new geopolitical strategy requires a new approach in the way Russia conducts and deploys the new asymmetric foreign policy. The Russians called this new approach "Hybrid Warfare," as explained by Stephen R. Covington, a Strategic Fellow at Harvard Kennedy School:

> Russia's approach to hybrid warfare is an excellent example of Russia's strategic uniqueness driving approaches that differ from the Western practice of "out of area operations" or "operations at strategic distance"… It is common in the West to think of the term "hybrid warfare" as being synonymous with 'ambiguous, non-attributable warfare.' Western attention to Russia's capability for employing Special Forces ("little green men"), information warfare, cyber attacks, political sabotage, economic pressure, "lawfare," and energy blackmail — routinely called Russian hybrid warfare—is justifiable. However, the attention to the ambiguous, non-attributable warfare dimension of Russia's campaign on occasion has obscured the fact that the Russians wage hybrid warfare uniquely.[26]

Russian strategic culture is unique for its use of all aspects of its culture as a nation, from its language, traditions, geography, and history to dictate how Russia fights wars and conducts its foreign policy, according to Maria Engstrom.[27] This whole of government approach paired with an aggressive hybrid warfare doctrine has become a new challenge for the West and the U.S. As

demonstrated in Ukraine in 2014 and later in the U.S., President Putin is determined to put Russia back on the world stage as a relevant player. As Putin continues to project Russia's power abroad, he has also intensifies Moscow's efforts to highlight the need to safeguard nationalism and the supremacy of Russian culture.[28] To a certain extent, Moscow's foreign policy continues depicting the world through Russia's unique strategic culture, which sees Russia surrounded by enemies determined to destroy its stability and territorial integrity. Thus, Russia validates the use of active measures as an integral part of its strategic culture; in particular, disinformation, as a statecraft weapon to protect and advance its internal as well as the external policy.[29] Russians strong affinity towards their strategic culture allows for flexibility in the way they respond to perceived threats, as well as the way they plan and execute their political warfare and hybrid operations against what Moscow sees as a constant attempt by the West to undermine Russia's foreign policy. Covington describes this Russian approach to conflict as a set of warfare tactics that can range from conventional to ambiguous capabilities based on a specific threat, and designed to function as part of an integrated hybrid warfare campaign.[30] Russian interventions in Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 are good examples of how Russia has reacted to both conflicts strategically and asymmetrically, which allows for tactical flexibility in the way Russia employs its foreign policy. Russian strategic culture has been a key element to its foreign policy doctrine, especially when it comes to its national security policy objectives. Russian political culture functions under a set of high belligerent values grounded on the principle of who dominates over whom by coercive power or status imposed by higher authority.[31] Russians see geopolitical issues as conflicts that are resolved by struggle, influence, and sometimes by force, but not by formal negotiations, agreements, or legal adjudication.[32]

In short, the Kremlin's aggressive foreign policy against the West seeks to reclaim the lost status of a great power, or as President Putin once said about the collapse of the Soviet Union, "About all, we should acknowledge that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical disaster of the century."[33] It is evident that Moscow's belligerent position is framed based on a strategic culture doctrine that serves to legitimatize its national defense and foreign policy narratives towards the West. This approach to acting or reacting to external threats does not contradict or weakens Russian's doctrine regarding threat perception to achieve political gain against its adversaries.[34] Russian strategic culture dictates a foreign policy behavior based on the way Moscow perceives threats to its sovereignty, national security, and sphere of influence outside its borders. This mindset also allows Russia to develop a strategic narrative against perceived threats such as the U.S., which in turn helps legitimize Moscow's disinformation and hybrid operations for political aims or deception purposes.

Disinformation as a Political Weapon

"A lie told often enough becomes the truth."[35]
-Vladimir Lenin.

Since the Cold War, Moscow has relied significantly on a group of strategies developed by the Soviets to advance political warfare objectives against the West, and especially the U.S.—called "active measures." These tactics are propaganda and political influence operations based on misinformation and disinformation and designed to influence other nations' social and political behavior.[36] Roy Godson claims that active measures are techniques designed to influence policies of a targeted nation by undermining the confidence of its leaders and political institutions and damaging the reputation of its government at home or abroad, which by default disrupt relations between countries.[37] During the Cold War, the primary Soviet intelligence

service known as the KGB was the agency assigned to develop and carry out active measures operations around the world, and through numerous intelligence officers assigned overseas tasked exclusively with the implementation of these tactics.[38] Active measures afforded the Soviets inexpensive and effective political tools to attain strategic effects against their primary opponents.

The Cold War provided the Soviet government the right environment to exploit the soft-power potential of active measures. Just as the Kremlin had relied on active measures as it tried to shape the new world order immediately following the end of the Second World War. The appetite for more significant influence throughout the West, especially the U.S., compelled Moscow to devote more resources to the improvement and expansion of active measures as a strategic political weapon.[39] Disinformation, or as the Russian government calls it "dezinformatsiya," is the process by which false, partial and ambiguous information—sometimes mingled with factual information—is intentionally manipulated and delivered with the intent to deceive or mislead governments and mass audiences.[40] Disinformation became one of most effective and strategically capable active measures techniques used to carry out political warfare against the West. As explained by the former deputy commander of the disinformation department of the Czechoslovak intelligence service Ladislav Bittman:

> Propagandistic disinformation developed by the KGB strives for internal demoralization and erosion of power in target countries, but the source and goals promoted are hidden from the audience. Disinformation messages frequently contain large segments of correct information and, to inspire confidence, may event criticize the leadership of the country from which the disinformation originates. Every effort is made to present the message in such a manner that it dissuades leaders of a target country from critical analysis of the deceptive segments. The overall purpose is not only to deceive but to cause damage to the target. The victim of disinformation must be led to inflict harm upon himself, directly or indirectly—either by acting against his interests by false information or by remaining passive when action is needed.[41]

Bittman's depiction of Soviet's disinformation demonstrates the Kremlin's elaborate strategy against its targets by fomenting confusion and self-doubt. This approach is a trademark that the Soviet government successfully implemented throughout the Cold War. An early example of how the Kremlin used disinformation to influence a political process occurred during India's parliament elections of 1967 and 1971.[42] During these elections, Moscow targeted each of the top candidates and their parties intended to influence the outcome of the elections. The Soviet government's goal was to help elect the candidate better positioned to support the Kremlin's foreign policy and to counter the U.S. influence in the region.[43] The Soviet intelligence services created news articles with disinformation that they provided to Indian reporters and newspapers controlled and paid by the KGB.[44] According to KGB files, it had ten Indian newspapers on its payroll as well as a press agency under its control by 1973. During 1972, the KGB claimed to have planted 3,789 articles in Indian newspapers, probably more than in any other country in the non-Communist world.[45] After its operations in India, the Kremlin quickly realized the potential of information operations as a political weapon, as well as the value of the free press in furtherance of their disinformation campaigns.[46]

Early on, Moscow discovered the need for strategic and long-term planning when it came to disinformation operations. The Kremlin became aware that a single disinformation operation, no matter how well developed and executed, was not sufficient to achieve the desired effect against a specific target, especially in the West.[47] The Russian government soon developed more successful disinformation operations based on a plan developed over a period of several years and involved the whole spectrum of the Soviet intelligence apparatus, as well as elements of the Politburo.[48] For Moscow, disinformation represented more than a set of sophisticated and clandestine activities designed to purvey bogus or deceptive information, wrapped in a wicked

plot to media channels around the world to create political mayhem.[49] Instead, and playing on the West's hazy perception about its meaning and real objective, the Kremlin sought to use disinformation as a very proactive political weapon intended to highlight, what they believe merely, where the real lies hidden behind the American political and economic system.[50] As the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the West advanced, and with the U.S. as their primary enemy, the Soviets continued honing their disinformation TTPs with the primary objective of discrediting and undermining the U.S. democracy and foreign policy aims.[51] Established under their strategic culture dogma, it was clear for the Kremlin that to preserve communist ideals and world status, as well as to increase its political power near and beyond its borders, it needed to challenge, and if possible, weaken every political, cultural, and economic pillar that sustained and defined the U.S. democratic principles.

The Soviet state understood and exploited the political and national security benefits afforded by the close relationship between active measures and strategic culture. In the early days of the Soviet Union, the Bolsheviks used propaganda as a key element of every social-political institution directed primarily at the population of the Soviet Union, but soon it became a key component of the Kremlin's foreign policy doctrine.[52] Active measures, and in particular, disinformation, demonstrated that political manipulation and influence campaigns were less costly and more efficient in the end that conventional military operations. The Russian government relied extensively on these types of political warfare techniques to advance specific political, foreign policy, and in some cases military objectives.[53] Today, there is little to no change in the way the Russian leadership—since the end of the Soviet Union—perceives the need for the use and constant development and implementation of deceptive tactics as part of their overall national security strategy.[54] During the Cold War, active measures served the

Soviet's cultural, social, economic, and political objectives under a more symmetric paradigm. However, today Moscow has redefined these tactics to obfuscate their internal social-political and economic issues while manipulating an internal and external narrative that provides them with a strategic advantage to further their political and foreign policy aims against the U.S. under a more asymmetric doctrine.[55]

Today's Russian intelligence services—notably the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), Federal Security Service (FSB), and military intelligence (GRU)—enjoy a close relationship with the Kremlin, and likewise, engage in a full spectrum of active measures operations that range from political computer hacking, developing potential compromising material, spreading disruptive disinformation, all the way to actively fomenting social unrest. The new Russian intelligence paradigm continues evolving as it faces new national security challenges under Russia's current strategic culture perceptions. Under these premises, it is vital to understand the past, present, and future social-political and military complexities laced in the never-ending antagonistic relationship between the Russians and the West. Russia's new political attitude and its increasing reliance on active measures techniques are evidence of a new political warfare framework aimed to study, assess, and exploit vulnerabilities in the U.S. social, political, and democratic systems.

Figure 1 shows how president Putin, at the center of the new Russian model, controls and coordinates active measures across the Russian government:

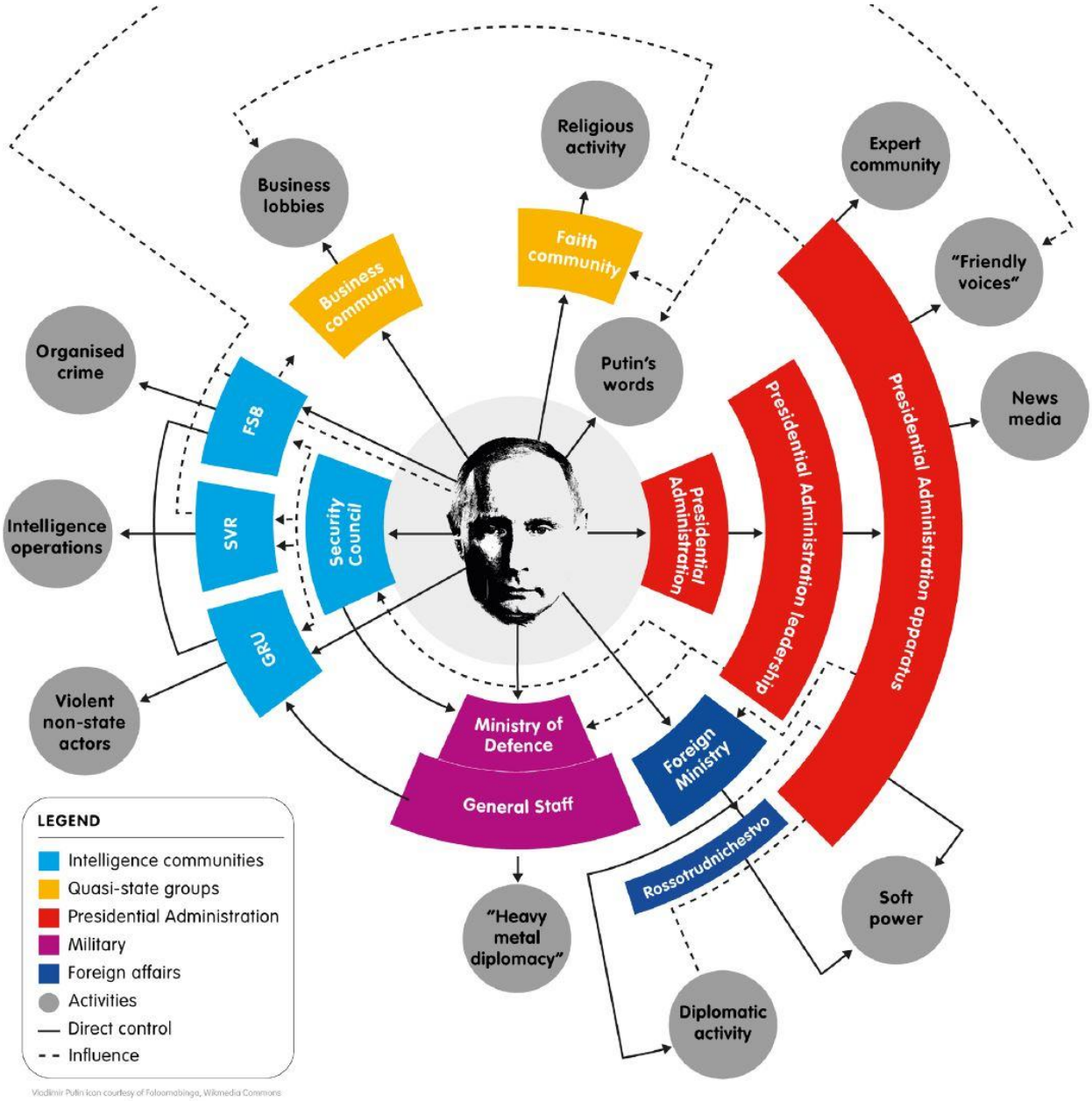


Figure 1: How Putin Coordinates Russia's Active Measures

Source: Mark Galeotti, *Controlling Chaos: How Russia Manages Its Political War in Europe*, European Council on Foreign Relations, August 2017, http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR228_-_CONTROLLING_CHAOS1.pdf.

The Ukrainian Experiment

"The Russian population is absolutely clear about the situation...the reunification of Crimea and Russia is just. The West's sanctions are not aimed at helping Ukraine, but at geo-politically pushing Russia back."[56]

- Vladimir Putin.

In early 2014, thousands of Ukrainians marched in the capital Kiev to protest against Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych's move against closer political and economic relations with the European Union (EU). The Russian government then initiated what would become the new Russian model of political warfare in the information age. Maria Snegovaya describes the Kremlin's new political warfare strategy employed since the beginning of the crisis in Ukraine as an innovation in Russia's foreign policy playbook, and cautions the West that, "The novelty of this approach should not be overestimated, however, as it is fundamentally based on older, well-developed and documented Soviet techniques. It appears different today partly because of the new characteristics of the global environment. It makes use in particular of Washington's neuralgic need to justify its foreign policy and military responses in highly legalistic ways."[57] Snegovaya explains that the Russians' unconventional approach in Ukraine depended on the concept of "information warfare." Snegovaya argues that this new idea of a Russian information war does not resemble anything the West has seen before. Instead, the new Russian method consists of a series of calculated cyber and disinformation operations designed to gain strategic advantage over enemies at a minimal cost.[58] The Russians saw Ukraine as an excellent opportunity to execute their new hybrid disinformation concept while testing the West's reaction to intervention in the conflict.

Current evidence demonstrates the Russian government's hostile and nefarious intentions before, during and after the Ukraine conflict, [59]indicating the Russian government's direct and

indirect involvement from the initial protests in Kiev's Independence Square until the annexation of Crimea. Moscow had been preparing for an opportunity near the buffer line with the West to deploy its new information warfare concept against two perceived imminent threats: the U.S. and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Moscow's fears concerning these two threats increased after the first "Color Revolution," a term used by some Russian officials after the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine in 2004, the "Tulip Revolution" in Kyrgyzstan in 2005, and the "Rose Revolution" that took place in Georgia in 2012, according to Anthony Cordesman from the Center for Strategic and International Studies.[60] The Russian government has also described the 2014 crisis in Ukraine as another "Color Revolution," and has since blamed the West and NATO as the main culprits for fomenting political unrest as a means of serving Western foreign policy and security interests in the region, a move that Russia perceives as an imminent threat to its sovereignty, wrote Cordesman.[61] Such an interpretation of this type of event supports an anti-Western mindset and provides the foundations for an offensive foreign policy that Moscow believes it will help maintain stability outside its borders.

To understand Russia's position and behavior in the Ukraine crisis, it is fundamental to discuss how Russian strategic culture fits within the Ukrainian conflict. The Russian government saw Ukraine as an opportunity to advance its new offensive foreign policy of expansionism and interventionism, as well as an opportunity to test the West's reaction to a strategic political move aimed to counter NATO's influence outside its borders. Russian President Vladimir Putin established the Russian government's new and abrasive approach to world politics during his Munich speech in 2007. During the same address, Putin indicated that Russia would no longer accept the U.S. monopoly of the world order and that the Russian government would execute new foreign policy in line with its geopolitical interests.[62] It is clear the Kremlin's intentions for

the new Russia went beyond its borders; however, the Russians also knew that to succeed beyond Ukraine, they needed to take their new political warfare strategy across Europe and directly into the U.S.

Disinformation played a very critical role during the Ukrainian and Crimean crisis. Before the political unrest in Ukraine, and during the annexation of Crimea, the Russian intelligence apparatus relied heavily on propaganda and disinformation operations to manipulate the facts and influence the people in Crimea, as well as inside Russia.[63] The Kremlin deployed a broad spectrum of disinformation and cyber operations in Crimea through news media and social networking websites to circulate false news as well as to conduct cyber attacks against governmental agencies.[64] These operations inside Ukraine, and in particular in Crimea, took advantage of existing social fractures and the lack of trust in the government's institutions to advance their political warfare objectives.[65] The Russians were fully aware that their success in Crimea also depended on the effectiveness of their disinformation campaign against the West, as well as their ability to reinforce the narrative they planted in the minds of the Crimean people at the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis.[66]

In his investigative report about the Russian cyber attacks during the Ukrainian conflict, Nolan Peterson provides one of the most compelling accounts of Russian intervention in Ukraine's internal affairs.[67] According to Peterson, the Russian intelligence targeted the Ukrainian presidential elections, on May 21, 2014, using a Russian hacking group operating under the name of CyberBerkut. CyberBerkut launched the attack against Ukraine's Central Election Commission computers systems four days before the actual elections. According to Peterson, Ukrainian news reported that the attack destroyed both hardware and software systems, and for several hours shut down programs responsible for monitoring voter turnout and tally

votes. On Election Day, specifically 12 minutes before polls were scheduled to close; CyberBerkut hacked the elections commission website and posted fake election results. Peterson's report also mentioned that immediately after CyberBerkut hacked the elections website, Russia's TV Channel One aired the information with the false results. Peterson further explained that according to Ukrainian officials, the cyberattack did not affect the outcome of the election; however, the investigators later discovered that CyberBerkut hackers had compromised the election commission's computers several months before the election.[68]

James J. Wirtz wrote in the NATO report on Russia's cyberwar in Ukraine that, "Russian strategic culture focuses on war as political activity; for cyber power to have a truly strategic effect, Russia believes that it must contribute directly to shaping political outcomes by altering the political perceptions of their opponents to better suit their interests."[69] The consequences of the Russian government's disinformation and cyber campaigns in Ukraine directly threatened Ukrainian society, assisted with the annexation of Crimea, weakened the political system of the country, and eroded the faith of the Ukrainian people in their government and institutions.[70] The Russians see their new soft power approach more like a modern political weapon designed to exploit their opponent's social-political vulnerabilities. The research shows that to test what Herpen referred as "hard power in a velvet glove," the Russians decided to use the 2014 crisis in Ukraine as proving ground for their new political warfare model.[71] The Ukraine experiment went beyond the annexation of Crimea and complemented by Moscow's growing hybrid political warfare style, a doctrine the Russian government has successfully embedded in its foreign policy and supported by effective active measure TTPs.[72]

How Russia Hijacked the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election

"Russia's meddling is an assault on us, our nation, our country, regardless of party…"[73]

-James Clapper.

Contrary to the American political system, many Russian government officials view the idea of free and fair elections, under a democratic system where citizens themselves determine the political makeup and future direction of their nation's government, as an unrealistic and perhaps dangerous concept.[74] This obsolete perception of democracy is perhaps one of the main reasons why an old generation of Russian officials born and raised under the old Soviet system has not been able to understand, and much less accept, America's values and democratic principles. However, there is a growing generation of young Russians born after the Cold War that does not necessarily agrees with this old view of democracy, and the majority of these Russians make up the only opposition to President Putin policies.[75] Before diving further into this longstanding geopolitical animosity, and for the sake of this analysis, this section will concentrate instead on examining the disinformation framework used by the Russian government to meddle and in the 2016 elections, with the ultimate goal of eroding the foundations of American democracy.

To understand how the Russians redesigned their disinformation TTPs as they prepared to interfere in the U.S. elections, it is essential to examine the man behind this belligerent political warfare strategy. It was not until the late 1990s, and soon after President Vladimir Putin assumed power that the new Russian Federation began to restore the lost status it once held by tapping into its well-rooted strategic culture, and by evoking the motherland narrative and its entire splendor.[76] The way the Cold War ended for the Russians, as well as Putin's pre-established perception of the role the U.S. played at the end of the Soviet Union, reignited old

Cold War sentiments against the West, and in particular the U.S.[77]According to Douglas E. Schoen, writer and political strategist, Russia's new geopolitical paradigm relies on a master plan founded on old Cold War sentiments, with the specific intent to split Europe, annihilate NATO, undermine the U.S., and ultimately reestablished Russian influence and global supremacy.[78]

After the demise of the Soviet Union, many Russians blamed the U.S. as the nation responsible for mounting the overall strategy and international plot to break the Soviet Union.[79] The Kremlin continually exploits, and repeats this opposing view against the U.S. inside and outside Russia. Soon after President Putin assumed power, the Russians engaged in a quest to regain the military strength and global status they enjoyed throughout the Cold War, by developing and concentrating their new geopolitical efforts in influence and cyber warfare operations as the new ways to level the playing field with the U.S.[80] The Kremlin soon realized that these new warfare tools were less expensive, easy to deploy and difficult for an open and free society like the U.S. to counter in today's cyber and social media environments.[81]

The Kremlin's 21st-century model goes beyond conventional forces. Instead, this doctrine follows an aggressive political and information warfare strategy driven by borderless propaganda and extensive disinformation campaign.[82] To elaborate further on the new Russia model, Marcel H. Herpen argues that:

> Without a doubt, Lenin's and Stalin's propaganda machines continued an old tsarist tradition, and Putin, in his turn, emulated these Soviet models. However, Putin did merely copy existing models; he is also an important innovator: the contemporary Russian propaganda effort has an entirely new character, taking into an account four elements: first is the unprecedented *generous budgets* allocated by the Kremlin to its propaganda efforts; second is the profound *modernization* of the propaganda machinery that has taken place under Putin. In a highly professional way, all media—not only TV, radio, and the press but the Internet and social media also—are employed in the promotion of the Kremlin's message. A third innovation is *psychological know-how* with which this new information warfare is conducted, which is far more sophisticated and elaborated than in Lenin's or Stalin's time. Finally, in the post-Cold War world, the Kremlin can make use

> of the relative openness of the Western media world for the Russian propaganda offensive, something that was not the case during the Cold War.[83]

Herpen's description matches Russia's behavior since Putin assumed control. As Moscow continues building and testing its new hybrid warfare model against the West, it realized that to sustain a long-term and effective political strategy it needed to up its information operations game, especially against the U.S.[84] To this end, the Russian government started to explore new ways to deliver vast amounts of disinformation faster, and more efficiently to achieve a higher level of impact on a mass scale.[85] The Kremlin recognized that the new disinformation warfare against the U.S. was going to take place in the dark corners of the cyber and information domains. In these new battle spaces, internet trolls and less expensive cyber tools quickly replace conventional and more expensive weapons systems. It is imperative to understand Moscow's new political stratagem as Russia continues advancing its foreign policy near and abroad at a pace not seen since the Cold War.

Russia's ability to incorporate information operations in their foreign policy strategy has allowed the Kremlin to shape world politics for over a century, a very effective political tool that shows no signs of slowing down in the near future.[86] This trend will continue across the geopolitical spectrum with an increased role in Russia's soft power strategy, as coined by Joseph S. Nye, "soft power is the ability to obtain preferred outcomes by attraction and persuasion rather than coercion and payment."[87] Based on Nye's definition, and to understand further Russia's new political character and information warfare posture against the U.S., one must examine Russia's new definition of soft power within the context of Russia's conspiratorial mindset. In his book, *Putin's Propaganda Machine*, Herpen introduces what he calls "hard power in a velvet glove." In this new definition of Russian soft power, Herpen differentiates three key parts: "mimesis," "rollback," and "invention." Herpen further explains each component as; "mimesis" is

an attempt to mimic Western public diplomacy, "rollback" is a tactic of undermining Western public diplomacy proposals, and "invention" is a concept based on new TTPs of information warfare.[88]

After success in Ukraine, and with the U.S. in its sights, the Kremlin sought to extend its new political warfare TTPs across the Atlantic and into the United States. According to an Intelligence Community Assessment (ICA) produced by the ODNI, Putin personally ordered his intelligence services to fashion an influence and disinformation operation to target the 2016 US election with the objective of discrediting the United States democratic process, and inducing a negative public opinion towards presidential candidate Hillary Clinton.[89] There is growing evidence that some of the cyber and disinformation operations conducted by the Russians in Ukraine and other parts of Europe resemble some of the activities undertaken by the Russians before and during the U.S. elections.[90] As in Ukraine, the Russian intelligence designed and directed its propaganda and disinformation operations against what they believe were existing fissures among different social and political groups inside the U.S. According to cybersecurity experts in Europe, Russia used the crisis in Ukraine to train and test Russian hackers to target the West in future operations.[91] The evidence demonstrates that President Putin had more in mind than just Ukraine when the first signs of a Russian disinformation campaign appeared before and during the Ukraine and Crimea crisis.

The FBI detected the initial evidence that the Russian intelligence was attempting to intrude in the U.S. election process circa September 2015, when a cyber investigation uncovered that Russian hackers had compromised a Democratic National Committee (DNC) computer system.[92] This would be the first of many more stealthy actions the Russian intelligence will

conduct on the eve of the presidential elections. A 2016 report by the *New York Times* describes how the U.S. government completely ignored the DNC incident, and no other agency responsible for these types of cyber violations took the appropriate action. *The Times* report also highlighted the significance of the breach by describing the DNC hack as the first time that a foreign government had tried to use cyber espionage tools to disrupt a U.S. Presidential election.[93] However, the Russians hackers did not stop at the DNC, for the next months after the first attack; the second group of Russian hackers targeted other members of Hillary Clinton's campaign.[94] The next major cyber attack by the Russians against the Clinton campaign targeted John Podesta, chairman of the Clinton campaign.[95] According to the Times report, the Russians also hacked and compromised Mr. Podesta's email, and approximately 60,000 emails ended up in the hands of Russian Hackers.[96] The pattern and sophistication displayed by the Russian hackers during these attacks suggested that the Russian intelligence services were operating behind a well-established cyber operation.

Approximately one year after the first attack at the DNC, a cybersecurity company hired to investigate the breach announced that Russian hacking groups known as "Cozy Bear" and "Fancy Bear" were responsible for the cyber intrusion.[97] These two groups are also responsible for disseminating thousands of emails, most of them from Clinton’s campaign chairman John Podesta and other DNC representatives, via another suspected Russian hacker by the name of Guccifer 2.0 who then leaked the information to WikiLeaks.[98] One day before the Democratic National Convention, WikiLeaks released the first group of emails it received from the Russians.[99] These attacks marked the beginning of Russia's most daring attack on the U.S. democratic institutions utilizing cloaked cyber actors. It was clear by the innovative and aggressive approach behind the Russian government actions throughout the U.S. elections that

the Russians primary objective was to compromise the legitimacy of the U.S. political system during one of the most sacred and important events of the U.S. democratic process.[100]

Though the cyber attacks against the DNC and personal emails of individuals associated with the election were the first display of the Kremlin's new political warfare strategy against the U.S., it was not the only, and last time the American people were going to fall victims of Putin's new propaganda and disinformation tricks.[101] In addition to cyber operations, the Russians also recognized the operational and cognitive value that social media platforms added to their overall disinformation strategy against the U.S. elections. The Russians were quick to identify and exploit Americans' unrestricted access and increase dependency on social media outlets to add volume and speed to their disinformation operations.

During a significant testimony to the Senate Intelligence Committee, Facebook's Vice President, Colin Stretch, Twitter's Acting General Counsel, Sean Edgett, and Google's Senior Vice President, Kent Walker provided specifics regarding the levels by which the Russian government penetrated and manipulated social media platforms to influence the 2016 U.S. presidential elections. According to Stretch, Facebook identified several accounts linked to Russia that purchased more than 3,000 ads worth approximately $100,000. During the same hearing, Facebook also indicated it discovered that manipulated messages posted by Russians acting as proxy agents reached over 126 million users. Edgett testified that Twitter identified approximately 200 accounts and 131,000 messages active during 2016 linked to Russian groups. Finally, Google's executive discussed the discovery of thousands of ads and YouTube videos, owned and uploaded by accounts traced to individuals associated with the Russian government.[102] As the analysis of the information provided by the social media companies

concerning the level of manipulation associated with their platforms continues, the behavior displayed by the Russian intelligence keeps pointing to more extensive propaganda and disinformation plan than previously assessed. (See Appendix B for samples of Facebook pages created by the Russians). Figure 2 shows the level of activity registered by six Facebook pages created by the so-called Russian "troll farms" between March 27, 2016, and April 23, 2017.

The scope of the Russian government meddling in the 2016 presidential via social media channels created a disinformation cascade effect that directly or indirectly managed to expose millions of Americans to some fake news stories, deceptive advertisements and other types of messages created by a Russian troll farm.[103] An approximately 470 accounts and pages linked to Russian disinformation sources and troll farms produced and disseminated roughly 3,000 ads seen by an estimated 10 million users just on Facebook.[104]

Figure 2 below includes a graph that tracked user interaction with six Facebook pages created by a Russian troll farm before the 2016 presidential election. Russian trolls at the IRA created these fake sites to spread false information about sensitive social-politic topics such as border security, police brutality and immigration.[105] Some of the Facebook sites studied and tracked in the graph appeared in social media as early as July 2015.[106] As shown in the graph, the peak interaction on these Facebook accounts occurred a few months before the election and continued at a steady rate after the presidential election. Some of these social media sites targeted specific states where some of the information contained and disseminated in the Facebook pages was an important theme in their main political debates taking place before the presidential election.[107]

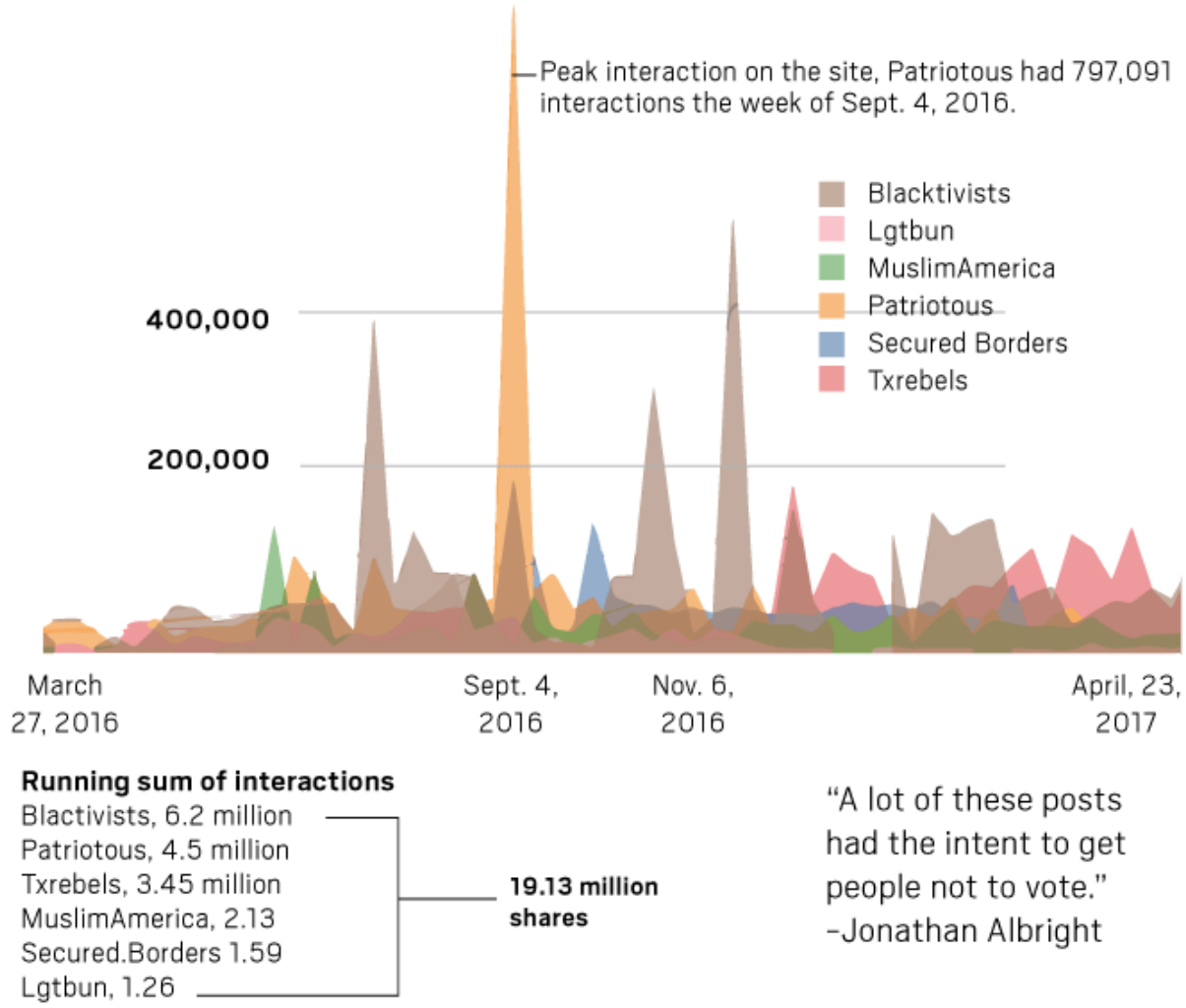


Figure 2: Russian Ads that Targeted Crucial Election States on Facebook and Twitter.

Source: Kurt Snibbe, "*Here Some of the Russian Adds that Targeted the Elections,"* Graph created by Jonathan Albright, a social media analyst from Columbia University, The Press-Enterprise, November 1, 2017, https://www.pe.com/2017/11/01/here-are-some-of-the-russian-ads-that-targeted-crucial-election-states-on-facebook-and-twitter/.

How did the Russian intelligence agencies become so effective, and on such a scale? To answer this question, it is essential to understand the elaborate disinformation and propaganda framework developed by the Russian government, as well as the vital role that other overt media channels like RT and Sputnik—another Russian government-funded radio and online media outlet—acting as proxy agents played in the overall success of the Russian disinformation campaign. Let's first examine one of the most innovative aspects of this success—the so-called

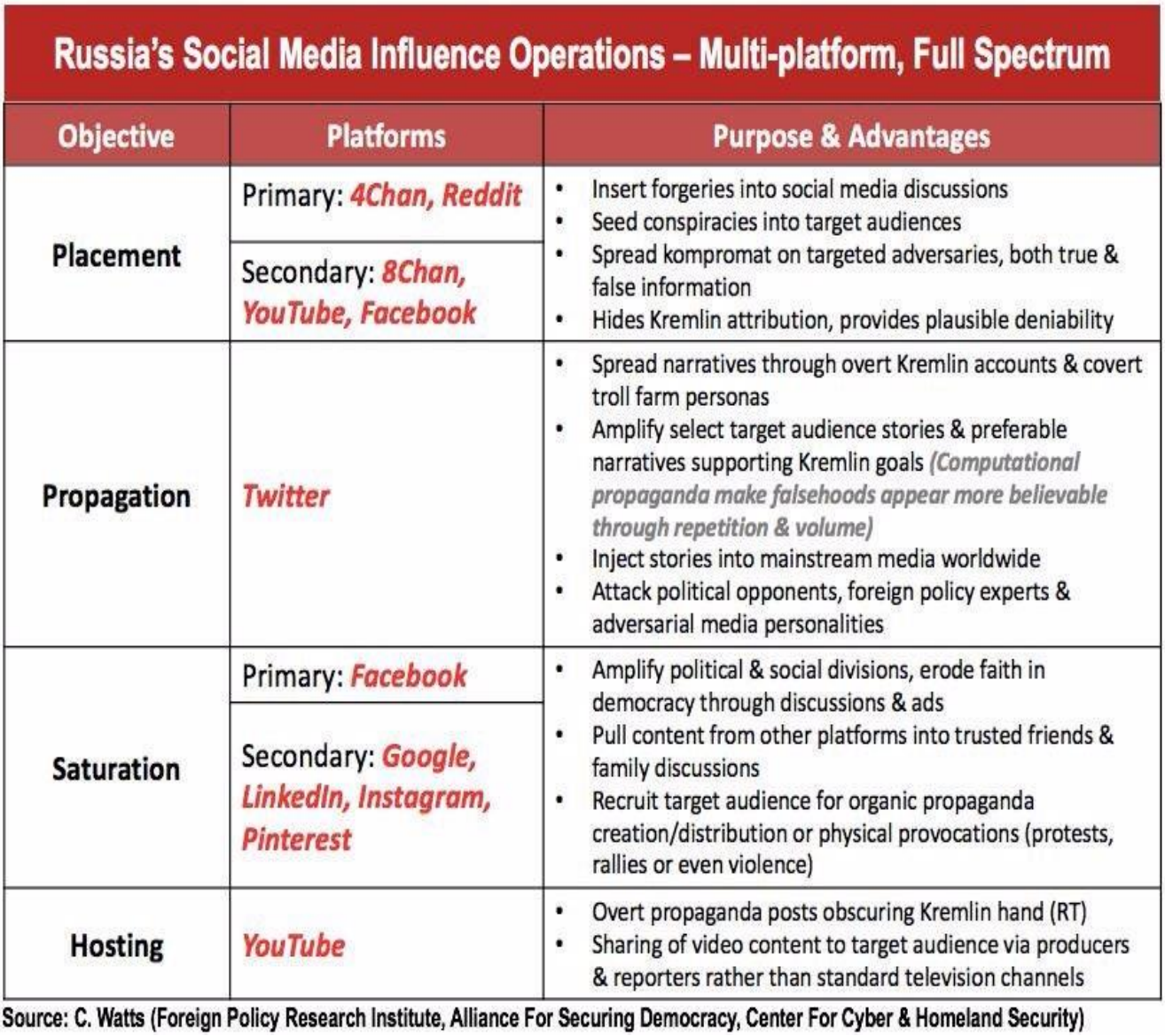
"Troll Farms." The definition of "troll" means someone who joins a social media conversation and posts provocative, confrontational, and in many cases inflammatory comments to sow discord and friction among specific groups of people.[108] Troll farms organized campaigns that included many users working in a factory-like setting in a specific place, or from different locations across a distributed network intended to create online traffic designed to influence public opinion and to spread disinformation.[109]

The troll farm platform hid behind a front company called the Internet Research Agency (IRA) based in St. Petersburg, Russia, financed by the Russian government and controlled by the Russian intelligence that employed several hundred people tasked with targeting the U.S. specifically.[110] According to Foreign Policy Research Institute Senior fellow Clint Watts, this group operated "social media accounts that look like Americans who then try and push or influence Americans into believing things that the Russian government wants."[111] Watts explained that the IRA also sent Russian operatives to the U.S. to set up a network platform designed to maintain computer terminals connected to the Internet to create a virtual private network that the IRA could use to dial into the U.S. from St. Petersburg—a process intended to make the trolls looked like there were real American accounts.[112] The trolls posted comments designed to criticize Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton and other Republican candidates other than Donald Trump.[113] The research shows the Russians did not just want to help support one specific candidate or political party, but instead to inject enough confusion and chaos in the minds of the American people before and during the election process.

The Russian government also used its state-run TV cable and online companies RT and Sputnik to influence the 2016 U.S. election by serving as disinformation and propaganda

platforms, and in many cases as an echo chamber for other disinformation operations run through separate cyber and social media channels.[114] In early 2016, RT started to produce segments openly supporting President-elect Trump's candidacy aimed at English-speaking audiences.[115] RT and Sputnik also began to generate information in support of Trump and Bernie Sanders and against Hillary Clinton, while targeting traditional U.S. media outlets that they claimed were biased and corrupted.[116] RT's coverage of Hillary Clinton before and during the presidential election was negative and consistently focused on her leaked e-mails while accusing her of corruption, mental and health issues, and ties to terrorism.[117] RT and Sputnik also exploited their special relationship with WikiLeaks' founder Julian Assange by collaborating with him in leaking information related to the hacking of the DNC and providing WikiLeaks with additional platforms to target and criticize the U.S.[118] RT and Sputnik afforded the Russian government with additional venues to attack and undermining audiences' trust in U.S. democratic procedures. An explicit goal of the IRA, as well as media outlets like RT and Sputnik, was to exploit animosities among America voters by producing disinformation and manipulating information to undermine the democratic process and make the U.S. look unstable to the rest of the world.

Figure 3 below obtained from The Foreign Policy Institute provides a matrix with a detailed explanation of how Russia uses a variety of platforms to conduct influence and disinformation operations with specific objectives across the full spectrum of social media:



Russia's Social Media Influence Operations – Multi-platform, Full Spectrum

Objective	Platforms	Purpose & Advantages
Placement	Primary: *4Chan, Reddit* Secondary: *8Chan, YouTube, Facebook*	• Insert forgeries into social media discussions • Seed conspiracies into target audiences • Spread kompromat on targeted adversaries, both true & false information • Hides Kremlin attribution, provides plausible deniability
Propagation	*Twitter*	• Spread narratives through overt Kremlin accounts & covert troll farm personas • Amplify select target audience stories & preferable narratives supporting Kremlin goals *(Computational propaganda make falsehoods appear more believable through repetition & volume)* • Inject stories into mainstream media worldwide • Attack political opponents, foreign policy experts & adversarial media personalities
Saturation	Primary: *Facebook* Secondary: *Google, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest*	• Amplify political & social divisions, erode faith in democracy through discussions & ads • Pull content from other platforms into trusted friends & family discussions • Recruit target audience for organic propaganda creation/distribution or physical provocations (protests, rallies or even violence)
Hosting	*YouTube*	• Overt propaganda posts obscuring Kremlin hand (RT) • Sharing of video content to target audience via producers & reporters rather than standard television channels

Source: C. Watts (Foreign Policy Research Institute, Alliance For Securing Democracy, Center For Cyber & Homeland Security)

Figure 3: Russia's Social Media Influence Operations-Multi-Platform, Full Spectrum.

Source: Graph obtained from Christopher Burgess, "*Russia: Skilled Political Warfare Adversary,"* Security Boulevard, November 7, 2017, https://securityboulevard.com/2017/11/russia-expert-active-measures-including-cyber-meddling/.

Conclusion

The 2016 U.S. Presidential election provided the Russian government with the right battlespace, as well as the right cyber and social media platforms to deploy a full spectrum of Cold War-tested active measures operations aimed to disrupt and influence the U.S. elections. However, the research revealed that the Russian government's intentions were more than just to disrupt the elections; instead, Moscow's primary goal was to create long-term damaging effects on the U.S. democratic system. The Russians sought to exploit fissures in American democracy to undermine public faith in the U.S. democratic process, and denigrate the U.S.-led liberal democratic order, a system that the Russian government views as a threat to its new political doctrine.[119] The framework of the above argument rests in the analysis conducted of the following factors:

First, after the social-political turbulence encountered by the Russians during the first post-Soviet decade, the Kremlin saw a need to reshape its foreign policy framework by realigning key elements of its traditional and prevailing Russian political culture strategy to reestablish and reassert the new Russian Federation under Vladimir Putin.[120] Russia's current geopolitical behavior is a reflection of a persisting strategic culture based on higher authority and designed to accommodate diplomacy and national security interest when the situation demanded it, as displayed by Moscow's aggressive foreign policy in the last two decades.[121] Russia's skeptical attitude sees the West and the U.S. as enemies or useful fools easily manipulated for the benefit of Russia. The Kremlin's main idea is to legitimize national expansion through a sense of national and cultural superiority.

Second, by weaponizing cyberspace, and saturating social media platforms with devious and obfuscated disinformation, the Kremlin boldly demonstrated that its aggressive strategy

against the U.S. has no boundaries in the new information domain. The Russians successfully exploited the speed and reach of cyber and social media platforms to develop and deploy effective influence and disinformation operations. Russian intelligence agencies and their surrogates successfully seeded a level of discord and ambiguity through overt and covert channels easy amplified by the fundamental freedoms enjoyed by every American. Adm. Michael S. Rogers, the Director of the National Security Agency (NSA) explained that the Russian interference in the U.S. election did not happen by accident; instead, "This was a conscious effort by a nation-state to attempt to achieve a specific effect."[122]

Finally, and as demonstrated by the Kremlin during the 2016 Presidential election, the Russian political warfare doctrine does not require a full-out conventional conflict to achieve victory. Instead, a desirable end state is easier to attain by other more efficient and less costly strategies. In the case of the 2016 U.S. election, the Russians saw an excellent opportunity to wage a war of principles and political interests designed to go beyond one party of one candidate. Instead, the Russians sought to create a state of chaos and political unrest with the ultimate goal of undermining the American democratic system, an objective the Russian government attained by efficiently exploiting freedoms and liberties afforded by the U.S. Constitution. The new Russian disinformation strategy created a new political warfare tool the Russians will continue to use against what they perceive to be vulnerabilities in the American democratic process. The West and in particular the U.S. must accept the inevitable fact that Putin's new disinformation machine, supported by a long-standing Russian strategic culture, will attempt again to undermine another one of America’s core democratic values without firing a single shot, or deploying another “green little man.”

Recommendations

Awareness through Education:

Political awareness and global education must be fundamental elements in our national education system from the middle school ages through high school to turn students into critical thinkers that learn how to discern and question information presented as news in any realm, be it through entertainment, social media or various forms of journalism. Students should learn how to formulate thoughtful opinions regarding current events and dissect information using history and in-depth knowledge. Without the appropriate and relevant education, future voters will receive any information that presents itself as news, and in turn, influence opinions that could contribute to the demise of America democracy.

Reestablishment of the Active Measure Working Group (AMWG):

In addition, the Federal government should re-establish the Active Measures Working Group (AMWG) initially established in the 1980s to counter Soviet disinformation. However, the new AMWG office will be responsible for more than just counter disinformation. The new agency will be accountable for providing awareness and further education to the public about how information and propaganda work, and how nations like Russia use it as a political weapon.

Social Media Companies' Accountability:

The U.S. government should establish new regulations and policies that would require social media companies and the Internet providers to devise and implement internal rules and systems designed to protect customers from disinformation and nefarious advertisement. Additionally, a new form of service agreement should be in place requiring both, advertisers and end-users, to disclaim sources of information, in particular, any for-profit information, or

information derived from a foreign government. These regulations need to be in place and enforced to ensure accountability and social responsibility regarding the quality of the sources and information social media companies and other Internet outlets deem as "news." As a valuable commodity, information should go through the maximum quality control by highly profitable companies like Facebook and Google. Social media and Internet companies bear as much responsibility as any other American to safeguard the freedoms and values of the U.S. Today more than ever, it requires a whole of government approach to protecting the country from the great risks that a misinformed and misled population can represent for its future. Therefore, as long as there is no accountability for the accuracy of the information that is floating through social media channels such as Facebook, Google, Twitter, and Youtube, the U.S. remains vulnerable to deception and potential manipulation by a foreign actor. This, in turn, influences Americans' behavior, choices and voting outcomes, which in turn shapes values, ethics, and beliefs. To filter these influences, all social media outlets should be required to display statements that caution the end-users when they come across a site known to contain or be associated with fake news.

Government regulations:

To avoid foreign money and potential foreign interests from purchasing and overtly manipulating information through legitimate social media channels, Congress should approve and pass the Honest Ads Act to bring more transparency to political ads on the internet by placing them under the same regulations as broadcast TV and radio. This bill will prohibit foreign agents or individuals acting on behalf of foreign companies from purchasing or financing the purchase of political ads in the U.S. In addition, the Disclosure Act can also help end secret spending by dark money groups, which can also serve as proxy platforms for foreign money to

find its way into political campaigns. This bill will ban spending by corporations, government contractors, and foreign-owned or–controlled companies.

Appendix A

Glossary

Active measures- Clandestine operations designed to further Soviet foreign policy goals and to extend Soviet influence throughout the world.

USIC- the United States Intelligence Community

ODNI- Office of the Director of National Intelligence

FBI- U.S. domestic intelligence, security service, and principal federal law enforcement agency.

CIA- The U.S. civilian foreign intelligence service tasked with gathering, processing, and analyzing national security information from around the world.

Disinformation- Leaking of false information and rumors to foreign media or planting forgeries in an attempt to deceive the public or the political elite in a given country or countries.

DNC- Democratic National Committee.

ICA- Intelligence Community Assessment

FCC- Federal Communications Commission.

FSB- The Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation and the principal security agency of Russia as well as the main successor of the KGB.

GRU- The foreign military intelligence main directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.

IRA-The Internet Research Agency, also known as Glavset and known in Russian Internet slang as the Trolls from Olgino or kremlebots, is a Russian company based in Saint Petersburg that engages in online influence operations on behalf of the Russian government.

KGB- The umbrella organization for the Soviet Union's premier security agency, secret police, and intelligence agency from 1954 to 1991.

NSA-National Security Agency.

SVR- the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation mainly for civilian affairs.

Troll- In Internet slang, a person who sows discord on the Internet by starting arguments or upsetting people, by posting inflammatory, extraneous, or off-topic messages in an online community (such as a newsgroup, forum, chat room, or blog) with the deliberate intent of provoking readers into an emotional response or of otherwise disrupting normal on-topic discussion.

TTP- Tactics Techniques and Procedures

RT- The Russian international television network funded by the Russian government.

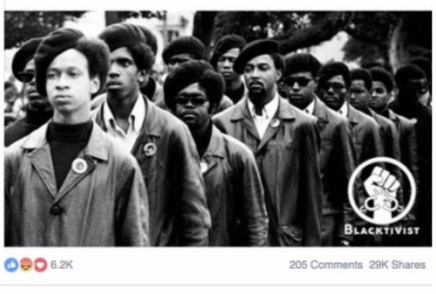
Appendix B


BM shared their event.
Sponsored
People are genuinely scared for their futures!
Racism won, Ignorance won, Sexual assault won
STOP TRUMP! STOP RACISM! JOIN THE PROTEST at Union Sq.
Saturday 12 PM
Bring signs, snacks, water!
NOT MY PRESIDENT
November 12. 12 PM. Union square, NYC
NOV
12
Trump is NOT my President. March aga…
Sat 12 PM EST · Union Square - 14th & Broadwa…
33,140 people interested · 16,760 people going
Interested
Like
Comment


LIKE AND SHARE
IF YOU WANT BURQA BANNED
IN AMERICA
STOP ALL INVADERS


SATAN: IF I WIN CLINTON WINS!
JESUS: NOT IF I CAN HELP IT!


CLINTON FOUNDATION
IS A "PROBLEM"


BLACKTIVIST
6.2K
205 Comments 29K Shares

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