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Research Article

Russia's Digital Awakening

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Abstract: Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia has been unprecedented in its embrace of modern technology for the execution of its foreign policy and intelligence operation. This article examines Russia's relationship to the internet and computer technology, beginning with the early 1990s and detailing the growth of technology's popularity with the Russian public and Russian government up through 2017. Particular attention is paid to the skill with which Russia's illiberal political institutions and security services exploit the 'wild west' nature of the internet and the manipulable nature of modern technology and media, as well as how and why the West and U.S. failed to anticipate Russia's rise as a digital superpower and continue to fail to counter its dominance.

Keywords: Russia, cybersecurity, cyber warfare, intelligence, foreign policy, information operations, Eastern Europe.

A popular anecdote about modern Russia claims that the post-Cold War Russian Federation was until recently so backwards in its economic and technological development that few Russians understood anything about the internet or computers. This is likely an exaggerated claim which plays on comedic moments like then-President Dmitri Medvedev's visit to Twitter in 2010 during which he sent his awkward, first tweet and appeared charmingly lost around technology. The anecdote goes on to say that Russia did not figure out what a blog was until a few years ago, but now Russia has an enormous web presence and the Kremlin has weaponized the internet into an impressively powerful cyber tool. Within the last 20 years the Russian government expertly learned how to use technology and the internet in pursuit of its broader political goals. Russian cyber dominance is a direct result of its theatrical political culture and history, as well as its rich intelligence tradecraft in misdirection and deception. Russia's political cul-

ture is a perfect fit for the internet era and allows it the unique ability to deftly manipulate the potential of the internet more than other major cyber actors. The U.S. failed to see Russia's dominance coming and can learn much from an examination of Russia's cyber policy, including how to better counter Russia and develop a more cohesive cyber policy of its own.

To understand the centrality of cyber capabilities to Russian policy and government, one must first examine the development of its modern political culture and major cyber policy successes: implementation of early cyber operations abroad, blending of organized crime and hacktivist groups with state security, and Russia's overall aura of denial and deception concerning its cyber prowess. Outlining these major points elucidates why Russia has been very successful in transitioning into the internet age and how the United States can adapt and respond to Russian dominance.

Russia's adoption of the internet and technology as a key element of their political and military power projection was a foregone conclusion if one looks back to the rich history of Soviet intelligence and national security policy. Many Western pundits and analysts today focus heavily on what they deem as 'new' Russian 'hybrid warfare' capabilities which include a significant cyber component, in particular Russia's information operations within Ukraine and the United States during the last few years.[1] However, not only is there broad debate around the term 'hybrid warfare' (and it is just one of many similar concepts trying to pin down a complex phenomenon), but Russia's use of mixed political, military, economic, and information coercion tactics are not a new phenomenon – a critical missed point in many popular analyses.

The Soviet strategy of 'active measures' is the precursor to what is known today as hybrid warfare. The term refers to Soviet actions of political warfare used to influence the course of world events, including supporting communist and socialist opposition groups, revolutionary conflicts in other countries, terrorist and criminal groups, and general targeting of Western institutions. Former KGB Major General Oleg Kalugin referred to active measure as "the heart and soul of Soviet intelligence."[2] Active measures sought to conduct "subversion and measures to weaken the West, drive wedges in the Western community alliances, particularly NATO, to sow discord among allies, weaken the U.S., and prepare the ground in case war really occurs."[3] Former KGB informant Yuri Bezmenov estimated that in the 1970s, active measures comprised around 85% of total KGB activities, yet the programs received far less attention and scrutiny

[1] Molly K. McKew, "The Gerasimov Doctrine," *Politico*, September/October 2017, https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/09/05/gerasimov-doctrine-russia-foreign-policy-215538.

[2] Oleg Kalugin, "Inside the KGB: An Interview with Retired KGB Maj. Gen. Oleg Kalugin," *Cold War Experience*, *CNN*, January 1998, http://web.archive.org/web/20070627183623/ and http://www3.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/episodes/21/interviews/kalugin.

[3] Kalugin, "Inside the KGB."

from the international community compared to more popular conceptions of espionage and intelligence activity.[4] Active measures were about exploiting asymmetries in one's adversary – recognizing your state's inability to prevail in conventional conflict but identifying where a target had disproportionate weaknesses that could be exploited efficiently. For the Soviet Union, the openness of Western media, politics, and culture were a prime target for destabilization through disinformation and manipulation. This remains true today, except Russia has far more tools at its disposal to achieve the same ends.

With the history of Soviet active measures in mind, Russia's impressive transition into the internet age makes perfect sense and functions as a modernization of Soviet policy. The strategy of active measures translates cleanly into the digital age and such techniques are enhanced through the vast anonymity and manipulability of the internet. While active measures during the Soviet era constituted broad information operations, media manipulation, disinformation, counterfeiting, supporting insurgent or opposition political movements, etc., these campaigns required significantly more effort, time, and funding during the Cold War than in the 21st century. Russia quickly recognized that increasing globalization and interconnectivity of technology via the internet could facilitate the use of active measures as Russia sought to reestablish its presence in the world after the fall of the Soviet Union. Explicit articulations of this policy position by two of Putin's closest advisers since 1999 cemented Russia's tech-centric approach to projecting power and influence around the world.

While Russian active measures and hybrid warfare are not new phenomena, Russian officials Vladislav Surkov and Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces Valery Gerasimov of Russia are two individuals who helped make cyber capabilities a central part of the Kremlin's grand strategy. Gerasimov wrote an article in the Russian Academy of Military Science's *Military-Industrial Courier* in 2013 titled "The Value of Science in Prediction," in which he laid out the necessity to strengthen and evolve existing policy for the conflicts of the 21st century.[5] Gerasimov wrote, "In the 21st century we have seen a tendency toward the blurring the lines between the states of war and peace. Wars are no longer declared, and having begun, proceed according to an unfamiliar template."[6] Gerasimov proposed a ratio of non-military to military measures of 4 to 1, emphasizing political, economic, and social measures to shape the landscape of the target state through subversion, espionage, and propaganda in concert with cyberattacks.[7]

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4 Yuri Bezmenov and G. Edward Griffin, *Soviet Subversion of the Free World Press: A Conversation with Yuri Bezmenov, former propagandist for the KGB* (Westlake Village, CA: American Media, 1984), www.youtube.com/watch?v=RzKl6OF9yvM.

5 Mary Ellen Connell and Ryan Evans, "Russia's 'Ambiguous Warfare' and Implications for the U.S. Marine Corps," Occasional Paper (Arlington, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, May 2015), 3, https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/DOP-2015-U-010447-Final.pdf, accessed May 18, 2018.

6 Connell and Evans, "Russia's 'Ambiguous Warfare'."

7 Connell and Evans, "Russia's 'Ambiguous Warfare'," 4.

The classic Soviet doctrine of *maskirovka*, focusing on denial and deception, is once again front and center in Gerasimov's writings in order to keep opponents wondering and hesitating through the denial of Russian involvement in ongoing operations.[8]

Similarly, top Putin aide Vladislav Surkov's major achievement is his masterful blending of politics and theater, arguably a core characteristic of the Putin era, as well as the development of his "sovereign democracy" ideology and the implementation of his policies in Chechnya and Ukraine, among others. Surkov was the main ideologist of the early 2000s Kremlin which articulated a Russian version of "guided democracy" in which a state calls itself democratic but in practice exhibits more authoritarian qualities.[9] Via "sovereign democracy" Surkov enabled the Kremlin to pursue its goals of consolidating rule by squashing civil society, free press, and liberalism under this illusion of democracy. He also developed modern Kremlin policies of co-opting, marginalizing, and manipulating political opponents wherein the Russian government did not shut down opposition media outlets but instead gained control of the entire media cycle and pushed opposition groups to the margins, effectively disarming them but maintaining plausible deniability.[10]

Surkov also articulated the Kremlin strategy for destabilization in Ukraine via tacit support for separatists in the Donbas region, something greatly facilitated by the manipulation of international media in a broad information campaign to sow confusion about the identities of rebel forces in the region.[11] Surkov combined the use of new technologies and the internet with traditional Russian forms of coercion and control – he in essence modernized Soviet-era political machinations for the 21st century.

While the work of these two men may not appear to have a direct hand in Russia's cyber presence, their contributions to Russian national security policy have actually played a critical role in Russia's dominant position today. Gerasimov was correct in identifying modern conflicts as no longer having concrete beginnings and ends, and this point has influenced Russia's involvement in the Ukraine conflict, its ongoing aggression toward the United States, and other political destabilization campaigns across Europe. Gerasimov and Surkov's fondness for misdirection and deception is central to Russia's cyberstrategy of causing widespread confusion about Russia's intentions and pervasive uncertainty about what is fact and fiction. Russia arguably succeeded more than any country

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8 Connell and Evans, "Russia's 'Ambiguous Warfare'."

9 Julia Ioffe, "Kremlin Henchman: The Only Thing I Like About America is Tupac (And Sanctions Won't Keep Me from Listening)," *New Republic*, March 17, 2014, https://newrepublic.com/article/117053/vladislav-surkov-responds-sanctions-will-miss-tupac-shakur.

10 Ioffe, "Kremlin Henchman: The Only Thing I Like About America is Tupac."

11 Reid Standish, "Hacked: Putin Aide's Emails Detail Alleged Plot to Destabilize Ukraine," *Foreign Policy*, October 25, 2016, https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/10/25/ hacked-putin-aides-emails-detail-alleged-plot-to-destabilize-kiev-surkov-ukraine-leaks/.

at weaponizing the internet in a cost-effective and efficient manner. Surkov's "managed democracy" also allowed the Kremlin to reestablish centralized power and rule over Russia as well as the country's nascent internet presence, leading to Russia's infamous surveillance and communications interception program.

Russia's System for Operative-Investigative Activities (SORM) is the government's lawful system for private communications surveillance in Russia, launched by the Federal Security Service (FSB) in 1995. While the program on paper only allowed FSB access to communications data with a warrant, SORM required the installation of "black box" rerouting devices in every Internet Service Provider (ISP) which routed traffic through the FSB and in practice granted the agency total access to all communications regardless of legal procedure.[12] From a 2017 perspective, skeptics may balk at the idea that Russia's SORM is any worse than programs like China's *Great Firewall* or the U.S.'s infamous PRISM system, but analysts tracking SORM have described it as "PRISM on steroids" due to its increasingly-invasive evolutions since 1995.[13]

As of 2017, SORM-3 allows for the following: monitoring phone calls, email traffic, web browsing, IP addresses, all credit card transactions, monitoring all social networking sites and requiring them to install the black box tracking systems, user phone numbers, email addresses, and has the ability to perform deep packet inspection (DPI).[14] DPI ability is significant as it allows the reading of not just the metadata or header of information packets sent and received, but also the payload or content of the packets themselves.[15] As well, the law was quickly expanded upon inception to grant surveillance access to the Russian tax police, Kremlin/Duma/Presidential security guards, border patrol, and customs agents.[16] More recently, this year Putin finally moved to ban the use of proxies, virtual private networks (VPNs), and anonymous messaging apps in a further move to restrict dissent.[17]

It is easy to overlook SORM as one drop in the sea of Russian authoritarianism, but it is key to Russia's cyber presence and a significant Kremlin weapon for

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[12] Jen Tracy, "New KGB Takes Internet by SORM," *Mother Jones,* February 4, 2000, http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2000/02/new-kgb-takes-internet-sorm/.

[13] Nick Shchetko, "Forget its Hotels, Sochi's Tech Has Been Up for the Olympic Challenge," *Ars Technica*, February 20, 2014, https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2014/02/forget-its-hotels-sochis-tech-has-been-up-for-the-olympic-challenge/.

[14] Nathalie Marechal, "Networked Authoritarianism and the Geopolitics of Information: Understanding Russian Internet Policy," *Media and Communications* 5, no. 1 (2017): 29-41, 33.

[15] Marechal, "Networked Authoritarianism and the Geopolitics of Information."

[16] Tracy, "New KGB Takes Internet by SORM."

[17] Harriet Sinclair, "Putin Bans VPNs in Crackdown on Anonymous Internet Use in Russia," *Newsweek*, July 31, 2017, http://www.newsweek.com/putin-bans-vpns-crackdown-anonymous-internet-use-russia-644136.

disarming and targeting opposition leaders and enemies.[18] It is clear the Putin regime established control and dominance over the "Russian internet" and internal Russian connectivity and communications in the late 1990s and early 2000s. From there, as the government began to further understand how the internet could function as a force multiplier for Russian influence and power projection, the Kremlin began to experiment with using cyberattacks to destabilize its neighbors.

The era of rapid technological development of the 21st century, beginning with the advent of the internet, has always been rife with issues of attribution and anonymity. Security professionals have long grappled with the difficulty of attributing cyber intrusions and attacks and how to prove attribution and appropriately respond to them. However, within the last decade the world has become even more interconnected through the development of smart phones, social media, and the Internet of Things (IoT) as more personal devices become networked and part of the broader internet. Today is an era in which there is an overabundance of information available to anyone at any time. Humans created and stored more information and data in 2017 than in the previous 5,000 years of human history combined.[19]

The world today is one in which the average person accesses a staggering amount of information, news, and content on a daily basis and there are no substantial barriers to publishing on the internet. This is a double-edged sword – the internet has allowed unprecedented advancement in areas of education, research and development, and social connection among people around the world. Those who strive to make the internet a free and fair marketplace of ideas have proliferated accessible, truthful information so others may learn and grow. However, due to the unrestricted nature of the internet and the proliferation of social media and anonymity, there are also many with nefarious intentions who seek to flood the cyber marketplace of ideas with deliberate disinformation to intentionally make the truth both difficult to determine, and ultimately meaningless. One can certainly argue that the objective fact and truth have to some degree lost their power as the foundation of society as the internet has developed into a figurative hall of mirrors where information is distorted and it becomes near impossible to determine objective fact. Denial and disinformation are two key consequences of information proliferation, both of which have been weaponized by the Russian Federation.

Russia first tested out its cyber capabilities in cyberattack campaigns in Estonia in 2007 and since then has incorporated other aspects of traditional Kremlin control into its cyber measures, such as private industry and Russian organized

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[18] Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, "Russia's Surveillance State," *World Policy Journal* September 12, 2013, www.worldpolicy.org/journal/fall2013/Russia-surveillance.

[19] Richard Harris, "More Data Will Be Created in 2017 than the Previous 5,000 Years of Humanity," *App Developer Magazine,* December 23, 2016, https://appdevelopermagazine.com/4773/2016/12/23/more-data-will-be-created-in-2017-than-the-previous-5,000-years-of-humanity-/.

crime. Organized Russian distributed denial of service attacks (DDoS) against Estonia's government and civic infrastructure were the first large-scale coordinated use of cyber capabilities by Russia to affect a strategic goal in an adjacent state, supposedly in response to a diplomatic spat over the relocation of a statue of a Soviet soldier in Tallinn.[20] The Estonia attacks were a coming-out party for Russia's cyber capabilities and succeeded in taking down Estonian websites and other technical infrastructure for over a month, a significant attack for a country that prides itself on being technologically advanced and having an essentially paperless government.[21] The attackers, which included organized crime and private hacking groups, used botnets worldwide inflicting DDoS attacks to overwhelm Estonian servers, including servers of governmental organizations, banks, political parties, and most news media websites. In the real world, the Russian government applauded and encouraged the hackers but denied any involvement in the attacks themselves.[22]

While the Estonia attacks appeared to accomplish little in terms of concrete gain for Russia, they were crucial in demonstrating the value of simple, widespread cyberattacks, especially when used alongside other economic and political coercion. While NATO created the Cooperative Cyber Defense Centre for Excellence in Tallinn after the attacks, the tolerable international response and Russia's ability to deny and deflect accusations of involvement surely emboldened the Kremlin to wield cyberattacks more. Russia would go on to combine cyber operations with kinetic military operations in the 2008 Georgian War, the first combined cyber-military conflict of its kind, and continue to use destabilizing cyberattacks in Ukraine starting in 2014. Russia's ability to feign innocence while combining state security and criminal hackers in their operations has been key to their success.

The U.S. Intelligence Community's 2015 Worldwide Threat Assessment concluded that Russia and china are the "most sophisticated nation-state actors" in cyberwarfare and that Russian hackers "lead in terms of sophistication, programming power, and inventiveness" – an assessment that holds true today.[23] Putin's Russia appears to have put substantial effort into developing cadres of state hackers, often co-opted from the ranks of the criminal underground. FireEye cyber threat analyst Jonathan Wrolstad concluded Russia has had a "symbiotic relationship" with organized cybercrime syndicates for "at least 10 years, if not longer," developing a quid pro quo where pending criminal cases against hackers

[20] Michael Connell and Sarah Vogler, "Russia's Approach to Cyber Warfare," Occasional Paper (Arlington, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, March 2017), 13, https://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/DOP-2016-U-014231-1Rev.pdf.

[21] Connell and Vogler, "Russia's Approach to Cyber Warfare," 13.

[22] Connell and Vogler, "Russia's Approach to Cyber Warfare," 14.

[23] Owen Matthews, "Russia's Greatest Weapon May Be Its Hackers," *Newsweek*, May 7, 2015, http://www.newsweek.com/2015/05/15/russias-greatest-weapon-may-be-its-hackers-328864.html.

mysteriously disappear in return for assistance to the security services.[24] The Kremlin receives expert hacking teams, as well as "the best pieces of malware," and importantly maintains plausible deniability from the activities of co-opted groups.[25] This practice again goes hand in hand with traditional Russian and Soviet active measures and smokescreens designed to knock adversaries off balance and create confusion and discord.

Furthermore, Russia's ability to co-opt private business and industry into its web of security services has also proven to be an effective tactic for extending its cyber reach globally. No case better demonstrates this than that of Kaspersky Labs, the Russian cybersecurity and antivirus company popularly used around the world and long suspected of having ties to Russian security and intelligence agencies. While there was a time in which Kaspersky was a respected name in personal cybersecurity and its antivirus products have been used by hundreds of millions the world over, including U.S. government agencies, questions about its relationship to the Russian government, willing or otherwise, have bubbled up over recent years. The company has always dismissed such inquiry as dubious and absurd, but in a country where SORM and the FSB essentially monitor and control the entirety of the Russian internet, it certainly is not out of consideration. Those scrutinizing Kaspersky's operations were rewarded in 2017 when leaked emails and details of hacks involving Kaspersky revealed a close-knit relationship with FSB, with Kaspersky directly developing security technology for the agency and working on joint projects.[26] The relationship was further revealed by a high-profile hack of a U.S. National Security Agency contractor's personal computer upon which he improperly stored classified NSA documents – the NSA discovered that the contractor has Kaspersky software on his PC which played an active role in scanning for classified U.S. files and transmitted them to either Russian hackers (government affiliated or otherwise) or directly to Russian intelligence.[27]

One can estimate that the Russian government has had a long and fruitful relationship with Kaspersky as a technically overt tool for spying on Russian adversaries – but it is safe to say that relationship may be coming to an end as Kaspersky's reputation is now crashing and the U.S. government has banned its use. Kaspersky is now suing the U.S. government over the ban, a lawsuit that

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[24] Cory Bennett, "Kremlin's Ties to Russian Cyber Gangs Sow US Concerns," *The Hill*, October 11, 2015, http://thehill.com/policy/cybersecurity/256573-kremlins-ties-russian-cyber-gangs-sow-us-concerns.

[25] Bennett, "Kremlin's Ties to Russian Cyber Gangs Sow US Concerns."

[26] Jordan Robertson and Michael Riley, "Kaspersky Lab Has Been Working With Russian Intelligence," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, July 11, 2017, accessed May 28, 2018, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-07-11/kaspersky-lab-has-been-working-with-russian-intelligence.

[27] Nicole Perlroth and Scott Shane, "How Israel Caught Russian Hackers Scouring the World for U.S. Secrets," *New York Times*, October 10, 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/10/10/technology/kaspersky-lab-israel-russia-hacking.html.

itself could be considered a continuance of Russian operations as it will likely entangle the U.S. (at least to an extent) in an annoying legal battle to prove Kaspersky's duplicity.[28] The point still stands – Russia has proven itself adept at finding creative ways to insert Kremlin influence in all facets of Russian cyberspace in pursuit of its policy and intelligence goals around the world. Russia's digital journey arguably culminated in the creation of the "Internet Research Agency" and the destabilization of the United States political system.

A New York Times article from June 2015 titled "The Agency" gave a prescient look into Russia's "troll factories" and disinformation campaigns long before such operations achieved worldwide notoriety in 2016. The article, one of the first major published pieces to reveal Russia's cyber information operations, detailed what is known as the Kremlin's "Internet Research Agency," an organization based out of a nondescript office complex in St. Petersburg with several hundred employees tasked with waging "information war" – spreading disparate and false narratives about a multitude of political and social issues around the world to blur the line between truth and falsehood for the benefit of the Kremlin.[29] The article clearly describes what is the precursor to Russia's information operations in the U.S. in 2016 but fails to make the connection between the phenomenon of government-funded disinformation campaigns and how vulnerable the United States was and is to such a strategy on a grand level. "The Agency" article is reflective of the attitudes and perspectives of the American government and public back in 2015 – capturing so much detail about this dangerous phenomenon but falling short of understanding why Russia is doing this and what its full potential is. One can draw a straight line from the operations described in the article to the Kremlin campaign to destabilize the 2016 U.S. election, which gave Putin a staggering return for a reported cost of under $500,000.[30] Even two years later, "The Agency" article feels dated and naïve after recent world events. It remains a perfect example of the lack of imagination of the U.S. concerning cyber capabilities and demonstrates some of the qualities that allowed Russian leadership and intelligence to evolve so quickly in cyberspace.

Russia's cyber development from the late 1990s to today shows a consistent pattern of skillful adaptation to the changing realities of the world and a clear adjustment of traditional Soviet intelligence strategy and tradecraft to new technology. One can make a clear argument that Russia's ascent to cyber proliferation and dominance is owed in large part to the unique qualities of Russia's his-

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[28] Dustin Volz and Jim Finkle, "Kaspersky Lab Asks Court to Overturn U.S. Government Software Ban," *Reuters*, December 18, 2017, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-cyber-kasperskylab/kaspersky-lab-asks-court-to-overturn-u-s-government-software-ban-idUSKBN1EC2CK.

[29] Adrian Chen, "The Agency," *New York Times*, June 2, 2015, www.nytimes.com/2015/06/07/magazine/the-agency.html.

[30] Greg Miller, Greg Jaffe, and Philip Rucker, "Doubting the intelligence, Trump Pursues Putin and Leaves a Russian Threat Unchecked," *The Denver Post*, December 14, 2017, https://www.denverpost.com/2017/12/14/trump-pursues-putin.

torical, cultural, and political character. Russia, albeit initially slow to recognize the possibilities of the internet and 21st century technology, eventually made cyber a crucial part of its national security and foreign policy strategy in a way that even China and the United States have not done. The major exploitation of cyber as a tool for power projection and foreign interference is arguably most possible in states with an authoritarian nature such as Russia, which acted quickly in the late 1990s and early 2000s to re-centralize power in the hands of Putin and the Kremlin and curbed media and internet freedom in such a way that greatly empowered the state security services and government. The Russian state, despite the vocal proclamations of Vladimir Putin and others in Russia's leadership, is arguably amoral at its core, which allows it to fully exploit the political and disruptive potential of the internet and modern technology without grappling with the moral and ethical quandaries inherent in such technology.

Russia also benefits from the very nature of the global tech industry – Silicon Valley and other tech hubs continue to fail to recognize that the platforms and applications they develop have the potential to be wielded unethically to cause political and economic chaos, a failure in perspective which greatly benefits groups and states like Russia. Again, it is not just a failure to predict how hostile states and non-state groups could commandeer social media, journalism, and cyber infrastructure to destabilize entire states, but Silicon Valley's lack of a moral conscience and deliberate refusal to engage with the reality that technology is not ethically neutral. For a state like Russia whose government is unconcerned with such considerations in the pursuit of realpolitik-based international power goals, the shortsightedness of American and Western tech companies is one of the greatest boons to Russia and other such states. Only after the events of the 2016 U.S. election is American society beginning to grapple with these questions and asking how technology affects and shapes American democracy and society.[31]

Finally, Russia also skillfully adapted to the internet age because its culture of anonymity, duplicity, and distortion is perfectly suited to Russia's rich history of deception and confusion at the heart of its political culture. A core characteristic of the Soviet Union's active measures strategy was to create mass confusion and uncertainty about Russia's global activities, policy positions and goals, and disorient popular perceptions of other states and create broad political and economic destabilization. The nature of 21st century technology and the internet acts as a powerful force multiplier for these purposes. One should not give Russia too much credit – it is unlikely that Russia actually predicted this future and specifically planned for a reality in which the global population is inundated with information and disinformation and simple, cheap information operations could be surprisingly effective in achieving major policy goals. However, it certainly was not difficult to predict such a future, as authors such as Aldous Huxley in 1932's

[31] Irina Raicu, "Rethinking Ethics Training in Silicon Valley," *The Atlantic*, May 26, 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2017/05/rethinking-ethics-training-in-silicon-valley/525456/.

Brave New World anticipated a dystopian future in which "the truth is drowned in a sea of irrelevance," rather than the information-deprived society of George Orwell's *1984*.[32] Huxley himself later remarked in his follow-up essay *Brave New World Revisited* in 1958 that, "The development of a vast mass communications industry, concerned in the main neither with the true nor the false, but with the unreal, the more or less totally irrelevant. In a word, they failed to take into account man's almost infinite appetite for distractions."[33] It is neither difficult nor unrealistic to see how much society today resembles this predicted future and how states like Russia have exploited to an almost unfathomable degree the deluge of information and noise that individuals encounter daily. Hague Center for Strategic Studies Fellow Alexander Klimburg described cyberspace today as "like Europe in 1914, before World War I – governments are like sleepwalkers, they do not comprehend the power of new technology and consequences of misunderstanding each other's activities."[34] This is a reality that will not soon change – Russia's cyber supremacy acknowledges and embraces that. What remains to be seen is how the United States and Russia's neighbors will respond to this challenge.

U.S. cyber intelligence in the 21st century must acknowledge a number of realities to adapt to the ever-changing present and develop effective policy and response to countries like Russia. The U.S. Intelligence Community (USIC) must take seriously the vulnerabilities inherent in consumer technology all over the world – Russia already demonstrated the immense chaotic power of social media, and Silicon Valley has been slow to take the issue seriously and genuinely address the ways in which its products can be abused by malicious actors. It is difficult to claim that the USIC should have a hand in the entirety of the private tech industry, but more cooperation is needed with the U.S. government to ensure events like the 2016 election interference do not happen again. Some analysts argue the old adage "the best defense is a good offense" is key here, that the U.S. must put its offensive cybercapabilities front and center.[35] This is to some degree misguided – while it would be foolish to argue that offense should not be a focus of U.S. cyberpolicy, the experiences of the Russian government's cyberattacks (and those of other states and groups) show that cyberwar of the present and future targets political, economic, and social infrastructure of countries through their weak defenses and cultural qualities of transparency and free exchange. These are the parts of American society most requiring a robust cyber defense. Certainly, the U.S. must protect concrete infrastructure, borders, and

[32] Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2007), xix.

[33] Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World Revisited* (New York: RosettaBooks, 2000), 31.

[34] Matthews, "Russia's Greatest Weapon May Be Its Hackers."

[35] Gillian Rich, "As Russia Hacks, Is the Best Cyber Defense a Terrifying Cyber Offense?" *Investor's Business Daily*, December 19, 2016, https://www.investors.com/news/preventing-cyberattacks-is-the-best-defense-an-almighty-offense/.

possess strong kinetic deterrents, but as 2016 demonstrated, manipulating information and public perception can be more effective than bullets and bombs.

However, like with most things relating to modern Russia and its current resurgence, there is a timer on Russia's cyber dominance of which the Kremlin must be wary. Russia today has a number of serious political, economic, and demographic issues that will play a significant factor in the state's ability to wield power even in the case of cost-effective cyberattacks and relationships with criminal hacking groups. There is significant danger in working with non-state actors and groups that lack the experience and temperament of government and military officials – any mistakes by hacking groups could quickly and dangerously escalate into a situation beyond the Kremlin's control.[36] The Kremlin also risks getting "in too deep" with criminal groups that it may not be able to control. Putin succeeded wildly in redefining Russian political and cultural identity around his vision of nationalism and conservatism, which drew in cadres of "patriotic hackers" more than willing to contribute to Russia's resurgence – patriotic Russians contributed to the botnets which targeted Georgia in 2008. But nationalism will not likely be enough to continue bonding private hackers to the Russian state in the long-term – Russia's negative economic outlook due to its overreliance on oil and gas and the country's aging population and continuing brain drain may eventually deprive the Kremlin of its elite criminal hackers.[37] Especially as hacking becomes a more globalized and widespread criminal phenomenon and with the advent of cryptocurrencies, Russian hackers may eventually not need Kremlin backing in order to launder their ill-gotten funds and many will likely move outside Russia's borders and beyond the reach of Kremlin coercion.[38]

Russia's cyber goliath appears to be an insurmountable challenge, and while in 2017 Russia was at a high point of cyber dominance, there will be an inevitable decline. Russia's supremacy is not sustainable, both due to its internal economic, political, and demographic issues, and to the fact that the world is taking notice now and countries like the U.S. and China are ramping up their cyber strategies and preparedness. However, the Kremlin too likely understands that its preeminence may be temporary, and for this reason policymakers and intelligence officers should expect Russia to wield its formidable power with a degree of brazen impulsivity while it still can and especially as the Putin regime begins to decline. Though any number of factors could also influence the timeline and allow Russia more time on top. The fact that the world should have seen earlier remains – the internet and globalized technology as they exist today are the perfect tools for

[36] Cyberreason Intel Team, "Russia and Nation-State Hacking Tactics: A Report from Cyberreason Intelligence Group," *Cyberreason.com*, June 5, 2017, https://www.cybereason.com/blog/blog-russia-nation-state-hacking-the-countrys-dedicated-policy-of-strategic-ambiguity.

[37] Cyberreason Intel Team, "Russia and Nation-State Hacking Tactics."

[38] John Leyden, "Russia is struggling to keep its cybercrime groups on a tight leash," *The Register*, June 6, 2017, https://www.theregister.co.uk/2017/06/06/russia_cyber_militia_analysis/.

modern Russia and its long mastery of duplicity and distraction. Recognizing that Russia has outplayed the world and understanding how and why are the first steps to stopping the Kremlin.

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Research Article

The Age of Post-Truth: State Influence and Strategic Communication – Contemporary Security Challenges on Europe's Eastern Flank

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Abstract: The role of strategic communication has changed in the context of Russia's relations with its partners, including the West, the post-Soviet space and the Western Balkans since 2013 with the declaration of the close integration of communication with other means of Russian influence. Moscow has allocated more resources than ever and weakened the traditional western media superiority. However, it is not the media per se but its integration with the realization of strategic objectives that has represented the main differences compared to earlier times. It is not Russia's primary intention to convince but to raise doubt in the messages of other actors and gain influence in societies and over governments. In the area of the former Soviet Union, strategic messaging is part of a continuum that includes the eventual use of military force. The West faces a dilemma as it must not undermine its own values and must preserve the freedom of speech and the press while Russia protects its media monopoly and has effectively eliminated the freedom of electronic media at home. The West has reacted belatedly and hesitantly as far as its strategic messaging, although it is gradually catching up with taking certain counter-measures not only nationally but also through its institutions.

Keywords: Fake news, information warfare, media, Russia, state influence, strategic communication, strategic messaging.

Introduction

Between 14-18 May 2018, the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies brought together 54 civilian, law enforcement and military mid- to senior level security policy practitioners and experts from 19 countries in order to collaborate on the third European Security Seminar-East (ESS-E). The course addressed "The Age of Post-Truth: State Influence and Strategic Communication – Developing strategies to address contemporary security challenges on Europe's eastern flank." Not much later, between 4-8 June 2018, the Senior Executive Seminar (SES) followed on a related topic "Countering Hostile Influence Operations from State and Non-State Actors." The heightened attention to the topic is fully understandable as strategic communication has acquired new dimension over the past years. Addressing communication was also a logical continuation of the previous ESS-E that addressed hybrid threats and strengthening resilience.[1] States whose propaganda machinery was neither particularly credible, nor successful, have changed their mechanisms and means to meet the challenges and better integrate communication with their strategies.

Although primary attention has been paid to the Russian Federation, for various reasons the strategic communication of many other actors should also be monitored more closely, in part because the means of addressing populations of other countries is more widely available and can be used more cost effectively than ever. This applies in particular to the decentralized use of social media. Partly, as although strategic communication is not a new phenomenon, " …[h]ow they are used or how they are hidden in their use, is the new part of this hybrid war."[2]

It is known that states cannot enjoy great power status unless they act and operate on a complex power base. It includes various elements, ranging from military power to a large and competitive economy, including innovation, a relatively youthful and educated population, a model that can be followed by other states and some who actually do follow the lead of the great power. Other factors, like a language spoken in some other countries and culture may also be listed among them. It is also essential that the country could reach out to others and its messages would carry some credibility. Some elements are more strongly present than others in different states. However, no state can belong to those at the "high table" that does not invest in a broad power spectrum. Smart states usually move from their strengths to weaknesses and reallocate resources accordingly. They may also allocate resources to their areas of strength in order to

[1] For the outcome of that seminar see Pál Dunay and Ralf Roloff, "Hybrid Threats and Strengthening Resilience on Europe's Eastern Flank," *Security Insights*, no. 16 (March 2017), http://www.marshallcenter.org/mcpublicweb/mcdocs/files/College/F_Publications/secInsights/security_insights_16.pdf.

[2] Jim Garamone, "NATO Commander Breedlove Discusses Implications of Hybrid War," U.S. Department of Defense, March 23, 2015, www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/604334/nato-commander-breedlove-discusses-implications-of-hybrid-war/.

make them even stronger. The former is horizontal strengthening (from strength to weakness), the latter is vertical (further strengthening in areas of strength). There are several examples to illustrate this point. China that has been the production hub of the world industry has diversified successfully its power base and developed a performant military, has become the second largest spender on defense and has also promoted the Chinese culture and language. As far as the Russian Federation, it has major strengths, like the world's largest arsenal of nuclear weapons, the largest land mass, the second largest oil and gas production, a large armed force, a large and well-trained diplomatic and intelligence service, and a sphere of influence in the former Soviet republics and to some extent elsewhere, like in Syria and in the Western Balkans.

Russia's predecessor, the Soviet Union, had spread propaganda internationally. However, as the Soviet Union was spreading an ideology that was not at all credible, its propaganda was successful only in those parts of the world where it was backed by the force of arms.[3] The Russian Federation, which tripled its total GDP between 1999 and 2013, used its resources to diversify its activities to areas with perceived weaknesses compensating the flaws of its reach-out by international communication. Although we may address an enduring process, the development gained all the more attention when the Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, General Valeriy Gerasimov integrated the importance of communication in his "non-doctrine – doctrine."[4] In sum, since 2014 an assertive strategic communication program has formed part and parcel of Russia's grand (and military) strategy. There are four notable aspects to emphasize:

1. Pragmatism. The external relations of the Russian Federation, in sharp contrast with the foreign relations of its predecessor, the Soviet Union, can be characterized as pragmatic. This gives more opportunity to communicate various messages without sticking to a set of incredible ideological tenets.
2. Strategic communication has been strongly integrated with a revised defense doctrine. This association created the impression that it is not part

[3] As George Kennan generally put it: "Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach. It cannot be otherwise." Cited in Louis Menand, "Getting Real: George F. Kennan's Cold War," *The New Yorker*, November 6, 2011, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/11/14/getting-real.

[4] Memorably, many spoke about the so-called Gerasimov doctrine, until the moment the 'inventor' of the term apologized for having invented it. Mark Galeotti, "I'm Sorry for Creating the 'Gerasimov Doctrine'," *Foreign Policy*, March 5, 2018, http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/05/im-sorry-for-creating-the-gerasimov-doctrine/. Even though a similar conclusion had been drawn by Michael Kofman, "Mif o 'Doktrine Gerasimova': Amerikanskiy voennuy ekspert o tom pochemu rossiyskiy general stal znamenitostyu na Zapade (Myth about the 'Gerasimov Doctrine': American military expert about why the Russian general has become famous in the West)," *Izvestiia*, January 30, 2018, https//iz.ru/651301/maikl-kofman/mif-o-doktrine-gerasimova, it was Galeotti who has given the impression that it was an exaggeration to speak about a full-fledged Gerasimov doctrine.

of cooperation but confrontation. This was certainly unfortunate and alerted Russia's partners in Europe and North America.

3. It is a broader array of measures and activities that the world at large will have to be prepared to react to than just the strategic communication that is on the visible end of the political process.
4. The Russian leadership, due to the background of its several members, including President Putin, has considered favorably a more assertive campaign to communicate the country's messages to the world at large.

The Challenge of Strategic Communication and How Severe It Is

The fact that strategic communication and gaining state influence from it have become fashionable topics does not make it easier to adequately measure the role of this factor in interstate relations. It is certain that the Russian Federation has emerged as an actor that wants to influence its environment. In this sense Moscow is not different from any other state. However, there is difference as far as its ambitious and assertive appearance in the international scene to claim its place in communication internationally. Moscow has embraced active measures, the establishment of and financing front organizations, psychological operations, including generating hate, fear and hope. Another difference is that lately the Russian Federation has been active in a very broad spectrum of communication means and methods.

Among the means of communication we can see reliance on various media sources tailored to different audiences. Cost efficiency has been an issue here. Russia gives preference to electronic media, including social media and television. Russian national television is widely available in the area of the former Soviet Union, including the Baltic states. Its effect is noticeable when we take a look to opinion polls reflecting sympathy to Russia and the views represented by the Russian state. They are regularly higher where such programs are available. This means that Russian television programs, first and foremost channels like Pervuy Kanal and RTR Planeta achieve a lot in the immediate neighborhood of the country. Russia also uses international television broadcasting in various foreign languages. Russia Today television, or RT as it has been renamed, is available now in Arabic, English, French, German and Spanish. It is available both on satellite and in cable packages. RT also has an internet site in the same languages and also in Russian. It has been established and generously funded by the Russian state.[5]

RT has been widely discussed internationally as a TV channel, spreading propaganda and often fake news. This went so far that French President Emanuel Macron, in a press conference held together with Russian President Vladimir Putin, pointed out that Russian state-backed media outlets, RT and Sputnik [are]

[5] Executive Order on Measures to Make State Media More Effective; Executive Order on Measures to Raise Efficiency in the Work of State Mass Media Outlets, http://eng.kremlin.ru/acts/6387.

'agents of influence' that spread falsehoods about him during his election campaign.[6] Russia presents their activity differently and puts the emphasis on the contribution of RT to improving the image of the country in the world. It is apparent that the concerns are not so much about broadcasting per se but using it as platform to interfere in the internal politics of states, complementing other often hidden means. In sum, the concerns may well be related to a broader array, some kind of conglomerate of Russian power potential that includes the television program as part of it or as cover. The question is whether media communication is in its center or it is the complementary element of a set of more or less clandestine means. This is underlined by the fact the data about actual viewing of RT is unimpressive. For instance, in the UK, RT was never watched by more than in 4,300 households. On this basis it would be an exaggeration to regard it a source of major influence.

Russia is also projecting its messages on the internet using platforms like Sputnik (including Sputnik news) and various social media websites that project certain views. When they are compromised or "get beyond their shelf lives," they simply disappear and give place to new ones with more credibility. In print media, that has more limited influence on societies, Russia also applies a variety of means. That includes providing foreign journalists sympathizing with Russia with access to Russian leaders as well as providing easy access to the Russian version of different events. It is important that Russia provides journalists with information in many languages. Often, the quality of translation from Russian was closer to the early version of Google translate but more recently it has improved significantly, indicating Russian readiness to invest in translation. Western journalists pressed by time to deliver and not sacrificing time and energy to check facts are often glad to rely on easily accessible 'ready-made' information. Consequently, we can see a multiplicator effect of the Russian version of facts in the media of other countries.

Russia takes advantage of the unity of its own message and profits from a divided set of views in the West. This asymmetry presents a problem as it gives advantage to Russia that the West cannot compensate. Or actually, as will be presented later, an attempt to compensate and balance the asymmetry would entail political costs some of which the West cannot accept and bear. This contributes to the impression that the West is reactive and hesitant *vis-a-vis* unfriendly if not outright hostile Russian strategic communication.

A further complication results from information overload, when it is ever more difficult to identify reliable sources of information, especially as social media disaggregated the old patterns of communication and the new actors can directly reach out to the population of other countries. Similar concerns already appeared in the 1980s in conjunction with satellite television broadcasting that

[6] Nicholas Vinocur, "Macron, standing by Putin, calls RT and Sputnik 'agents of influence'," *Politico*, May 29, 2017, https://www.politico.eu/article/macron-and-putin-agree-on-restart-of-ukraine-talks/.

provides access to the electronic media of the population in other countries. There are three factors to call for attention here:

1. Social media has made access more cost effective and influence hence can be 'bought' at a lower price
2. It is easier to send tailor-made messages, and
3. Some social media networks, including very wide-spread ones like Facebook, facilitate the reinforcement of perceptions by pre-selecting those messages that one allegedly sympathizes with in light of the record of messages red earlier. Other social media select what messages to emphasize on the basis of websites consulted earlier. This results in people reading messages that reaffirm their earlier views further deepening their conviction.

All this contributes to further deepening of political division in societies.

Multitude of Problems Requiring Adequate Reaction

The new opportunities for strategic communication involve numerous challenges that, apparently, require adequate response. However, finding the adequate and most effective response presents many difficulties. The reasons can be summarized as follows:

1. Strategic communication forms part of a broad political strategy, or as it is sometimes called, grand strategy, and thus the role of the former can only be assessed in light of the latter and the relationship between the two. Do states have grand strategy? Is strategic communication in line with the grand strategy of the state and does it contribute to it or is there discrepancy between the two?
2. The focus of strategic communication has changed over time. Whereas in 2014 Russian strategic communication focused primarily on spreading 'fake news' it has become more diversified lately. It has also become better integrated with other state activities as will be illustrated below.
3. The nature of hostile communication activities makes it difficult to react. They are often not spreading a cohesive alternative view of events/ developments but some variation that aims to undermine the still dominant—usually western—discourse. In other cases, it aims to deprive the West from the monopoly of its message. Last but not least, it occasionally appears as a 'moving target.' It changes the messages in order to retain the media presence and keep the focus of attention 'on message.'
4. The messages often combine elements of reality with falsehood. It also uses messages, where all the elements are in concord with facts but are

connected in a manner that has unrelated issues look like closely related to each other.[7]

It is clear that the Russian Federation has a grand strategy that dates back to the consolidation of Russian statehood following the coming to power of Vladimir Putin. This is partly a reflection based on current and not so recent history. Namely, the starting point of the Russian Federation's strategy is that strong statehood is the only guarantee for the country's respect and international recognition. As the 1990s were identified with weak statehood, a discourse is being built that arbitrarily identifies weak statehood with chaos and liberalism as its underlying cause. This means that strong statehood is preferable in order to avoid malaise. If liberalism means weakness, strength should be associated with the denial of liberalism. A thorough analysis would prove easily that equating strong statehood with the denial of liberalism and weakness with liberalism is fundamentally false. However, what matters for the Russian leadership is the image generated in the country's population.

Although Russia's objectives have evolved over the last two decades, there are objectives that have remained largely unchanged. The grand strategy of the Russian Federation prioritizes status over achievement. Consequently, it is essential for the Russian leadership to present the country as highly successful. In some sense it is possible, as the ostensible political stability, including leadership stability, helps gain such an impression. Domestic strength is also portrayed as power internationally (which is not unusual for many states). However, due to the uneven level of the development of Russia, strategic communication is there to emphasize, among others, achievements and de-emphasize weakness. That is why it is often mentioned that the Russian leadership plays "a weak card strongly."

The most important international objective of Russia is to retain its independent statehood and sovereign political choice and restore its standing on the basis of power and strength. It is underlined by a declared assumption according to which when Russia took a conciliatory attitude in the 1990s, it was not 'rewarded' for it; on the contrary, its weakness was exploited by the West. While Russia is of the view that the perceived Western encroachment made its response necessary, western speakers do not share this view. Russia's main aspiration is to be a pole in a multipolar international system. In order to realize this

[7] It is sufficient to mention an article that called the attention to the news that Poland would like to host U.S. forces permanently and is ready to spend a large amount (USD 2 billion) towards that purpose, adding that Poland will also open brothels for the troops stationed there. This title may contain elements that are in concord with the truth. Indeed, Poland would like to host a forward-deployed U.S. headquarters on its territory. If it is established, it might happen that there will be brothels in its vicinity. However, the latter will not be established by the Polish state but by the market if there is demand. Still, those that do not read the title with due attention may have false impressions. See Viktor Baranets, "V Pol'she zhdut yenki i gotovyat dlya nikh bordel (The Polish are waiting for the Yankees and prepare brothels for them)," *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, May 31 – June 6, 2018, 4.

objective, Russia found necessary to maximize its relative power in the international system. As strengthening its own position faces limitations, first and foremost due to the limited role in the world economy and its weakness as a role model – an important element of soft power, this can be achieved, according to Russia's understanding, by the relative weakening of other centers of power. Targets in this respect may be the composite elements, i.e. individual states, and elements that contribute to their cohesion, including alliances and other integration formats. The Russian Federation applies various means to weaken states and alliances. However, doubts are expressed widely whether the means thus used are appropriate and proportionate or not.

Many experts would like to see the Russian Federation integrated in the international system at acceptable terms and thus avoid turning Moscow into an alienated pariah or a leader of those that coalesce against the international order where the West (even though with weakening unity) is still dominant. The question is whether internal developments in the Russian Federation can provide foundations for such developments. The main worries relate to economic matters that are fully subordinated to politics. With less integration in the world economy this tendency cannot be turned around as three-quarters of Russia's economic development is a result of implementation of western technology and methods of production. Russia exports nine times less than China, whereas its capital export is on the level of that of Denmark and equals approximately USD 150 billion.

Even in the post-Soviet space Russia does not realize its significant potential. It enjoys recognition for its symbolic leadership but is less successful in finding ways to turn leadership into economic opportunity. It suffices to mention that Chinese investments are 7-8 times larger than Russian investments in Kazakhstan. The effects of the sanction regime, often blamed for economic malaise by Russian leaders, are apparently more lasting than expected in Moscow. Furthermore, there is a consensus among macro-economists that the eventual lifting of sanctions would not result in increase of Russian export. Although Russia will continue to generate modest growth of about 1.5 to 2 per cent per year, this will not be sufficient to keep up the competition. In such a situation, if social dissatisfaction increases there is danger to "tighten the screws" and further rely on authoritarian means more than ever. It is also possible that the regime, noticing its declining popularity, steps back from adopting radical measures and continue to meddle. This might maintain social consensus in the foreseeable future but could contribute to decay in the long run. Furthermore, unlike the Soviet Union Russia invests in human potential, including education and healthcare, insufficiently and that further makes sustainability questionable.

The gap between performance and claimed status creates a situation where the broad array of communication is indispensable. While Russia has generally not been successful to diversify its strengths, it has increased the role of communication substantially. However, the problem of the world at large is not with Russia's strategic messaging. It is not necessarily with the so-called 'fake news'

as it is possible to reveal such cases and embarrass Russia's leadership. The problem is with the broad array of measures, scattered from unfounded messages at one end to active measures and other ways of interfering in the domestic processes on the other.[8] Further, Russian interference would spread from the disagreeable to the morally questionable, and further to the illegitimate and the outright illegal.

Reaction to the Russian Strategic Communication Challenge

When the West is facing the challenge to react to Russia's behavior it faces a number of sensitive asymmetries ranging from the unity of the Russian message to the consideration whether to react individually or collectively and thus the unity of the West's message. As the Russian Federation aims to mobilize (and demobilize) public opinion with its messages, western societies simply do not have the option to stand idle short of reaction. Furthermore, the dilemma is that the West is united by values, including the freedom of expression and the press, and thus it has to accept or at least tolerate various expressions of freedom of other countries, including ones that pursue malign intentions with their messages.

Modern societies are exposed to information more than ever before. We continuously receive news from various sources, and many of those news sources are not verified in regard to their content and intent. The print and mainstream electronic media is expected to be verified as far as the quality of its content. The social media from the onset has been regarded as uncontrolled and thus the 'most free.' However, as developments have illustrated, freedom must face limitations in order to safeguard the freedom of others and in order to protect the public interest also in this sphere. For states the problem stems from the fact that, short of lasting experience, it is difficult to agree on certain basic matters like the protection of the public without depriving it of access to information. For the societies, the problem is partly identical, and in part different. The similarity relates to the importance of protecting the people without unnecessarily depriving them from information, e.g. by some kind of censorship. The problem is different as far as societies do not have dedicated organizations and resources to react in a concentrated and time sensitive manner.

Clearly, the main challenge is due to the fact societies that are inadequately prepared to cope with the information their members receive. People are inad-

[8] This may not be unprecedented as it happens between other actors and in other contexts as well. It was James Woolsey, former director of the CIA when asked on television whether the U.S. interferes in the domestic political processes of other countries, responded as follows: "Well… only for a very good cause. In the interests of democracy." Eric Boehm, "Former CIA Director and Fox News Host Share a Laugh Over American Interference in Foreign Elections: James Woolsey says America only interferes in other nations' elections "for a very good cause," but he can't keep a straight face while saying it," Reason, February 20, 2018. Accessed July 20, 2018, https://reason.com/blog/2018/02/20/former-cia-director-and-fox-news-host-sh.

equately educated and face difficulties in selecting or deselecting the news and the interpretation that the media presents. Furthermore, genuine multilinguality is also an issue as most people tend to consume news in their first language (mother tongue). Hence, those providers that offer media content in the mother tongue of the audience enjoy comparative advantages. However, precisely in the post-Soviet context, it is necessary to qualify this. Namely, in several post-Soviet states the use of Russian language continues to be widespread, and in at least one, Belarus, it is actually used as first language. In several other countries Russian is widely used. This presents a challenge as Russia may have significant media influence in states ranging from Tajikistan to Ukraine.

It is open to question whether introducing some administrative measures, like taking channels out of the cable packages, is an adequate reaction. The democratically minded would possibly have the instinct not to advocate such radical steps. However, what if two countries are in high intensity conflict (war) and one intends to undermine the resolve of the other's society to fight. That is how Ukraine arrived at the decision to take Russian channels with significant news and propaganda content out of cable packages. Moldova followed Ukraine with a more limited effort of removing Russian news programs from the packages. In no way this should be interpreted as banning Russian television programs in those two countries. The programs remained accessible via internet and satellite. Nobody banned households from owning a satellite dish and in overwhelmingly Russian speaking habitations one could see a forest of such equipment.[9] Although unwelcome, one may conclude that there are exceptional circumstances when it may be necessary to live with such temporary constraints introduced by Ukraine and Moldova. It may not be so well-known, but in some other former Soviet republics, e.g. Tajikistan, the number of accessible Russian channels has also been reduced. Again, in others, Georgia for example, the demand has dropped as particularly the younger generation lost Russian fluency and is interested in media in other languages, like in English, and their national programs.

Nevertheless, most states have no intention to ban Russian communication channels on their territory. Although in some cases, on the basis of reciprocity, administrative requirements of registration of Russian media outfits have been upgraded (e.g. in the U.S) as far as RT is concerned. It is open to question what would happen if some foreign media representations are obliged to wind up their activities in Russia (e.g. BBC). Will then states that are hosting Russian media feel compelled to reciprocate and, for instance, close RT in London.

The unity of the West faces delicate choices in responding to this challenge beyond eventual administrative measures. The West is a diverse entity and states may be exposed to different degrees and, hence, do not feel compelled to react in the same manner. There is also some division between the U.S. (and not

[9] In the spring of 2018, one could see a very dense forest of satellite dishes in the city of Odessa.

because of the current leadership) and its European allies, most notably in regard to active counter-measures by using fabricated messages. Hence, this is one of the first issues in the search for an adequate framework, whether the reaction is national, international, or collective. There are some foundational points where consensus prevails: The credibility of the public electronic media and trust in the communication of the governmental forces are essential preconditions. In those countries where people generally trust their government and do not have reason to often doubt what the government says and does, it is more difficult for other countries to take advantage of discord between those who hold power and the population. There is illustration of this, including the failure of RT's attempt to gain influence in Sweden. In the Scandinavian country, efforts have been made to improve media literacy among schoolkids and youngsters, develop resilience and address fake news on time.[10] There is also a complex link between a deeply split political class and the possibilities of gaining external political influence. When there is a broad political consensus on some foundations of the socio-political and socio-economic life and the international alignment of the country,[11] external interference fostered by various media channels has less room.

Ant to the contrary – deep-seated internal divisions, cleavages in the society, unsettled international orientation help such external players that would like to use their influence. It suffices to mention some states of the western Balkans where building social cohesion has been unsuccessful. In some cases, the lack of success has ethnic grounds and also historic roots. It suffices to mention states like Bosnia and Herzegovina, where Russia is backing the Bosnian Serbs in order to maintain internal division and put pressure on the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Serbia, Russia plays on orthodox Christianity like a civilizational foundation, in Croatia it speaks about the solidarity of Slavic nations, whereas in Northern Macedonia deeply divided internal politics and mutually exclusive agendas have provided the opportunity to interfere.

Communication appears on the most visible end that is backed by less visible forces ranging from diplomacy, and intelligence, to credits and investment. A corrupt establishment always appears helpful particularly in such small and poor countries where corrupting leaders does not incur unbearable costs. It is a further interesting feature of multi-layer Russian measures that when the leadership of a country is made dependent upon the Russian Federation, the latter usually pays less attention to achieving and maintaining decisive influence in the media space. It is sufficient to mention Hungary as an example, where the multi-channel dependency of the government complemented by remarkable political stability make the focusing upon gaining bottom-up influence in the society redundant. And indeed, Russia is satisfied to benefit from using Hungarian proxy media channels to widen its influence in that country. Overall, it is fairly simple

[10] For such efforts see https://www.stopfake.org/en/tag/sweden.

[11] RT spread the fake news in its Spanish language program according to which Sweden would like to leave the EU. See "RT: Sweden wants out of the EU," July 14, 2016, https://www.stopfake.org/en/rt-sweden-wants-out-of-the-eu/.

to summarize the factors of successful resilience of those states that do not intend to fall into dependency from Russia: good governance (its credibility, communication), national unity, and low level of corruption form part and parcel of it. Media literacy in the society, i.e. being able to make difference between truth and distorted messages, is an essential component of resilience. Hence, the level of political culture and efforts to develop it further matter a lot.

There are some highly successful examples, many of them in the Nordic and Baltic area, where attempts to increase the Russian influence had a rather limited effect. In those cases, there was a certain return to rely on traditional means. This is noticeable in the Nordic area, where Russia uses its public policy channels to reach out to both the Finnish and Swedish governments to warn them against approaching NATO. In the Baltic states the situation is understandably more complex due to the existence of large—though shrinking—Russian ethnic minorities. However, those states that have demonstrated more determination proactively, like Estonia, and where good governance has been unquestionable for a long time, Russian attempts, irrespective of media influence on e.g. the Russian speaking population of Estonia, have become more nuanced and reserved in order to avoid some further blunders. There can be hardly any doubt that the dedicated Russian institutions/personnel is waiting for the opportunity.

In recent years, the West had the opportunity to learn more about the ways and means by which Russian strategic messaging operates. There were some peaks in the series of events when Russian messaging contributed to concerns. If we take them in sequence.

The first event was the 2007 crisis with Estonia. The Estonian authorities removed a monument of the unknown soldier outside of the city center of Tallinn. Demonstrations followed by approximately one per cent of the city's population. That was skillfully presented by Russia as a much larger demonstration than it actually was and was used as a prelude to the first large scale but in no way decapitating cyber-attack that Russia aimed against Estonia.[12]

A few years later, the so-called Lisa case followed, when a 13-year-old Russian girl who lived in Germany disappeared from home. Allegedly, he was abducted and raped. In spite of Germany's denial, and sharing the available information with Russia through diplomatic channels, the Russian propaganda machinery continued its work. At the peak foreign minister Lavrov spoke about "Our Lisa." That was taken badly by Germany as the information indicating that Lisa had not been abducted and raped was available to the Russian MFA.[13]

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[12] Mark Landler and John Markoff, "In Estonia, What May be the First War in Cyberspace," *The New York Times*, May 28, 2007, accessed July 18, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/28/business/worldbusiness/28iht-cyberwar.4.5901141.html.

[13] Stefan Meister, "The 'Lisa case': Germany as a Target of Russian Disinformation," *NATO Review*, www.nato.int/docu/review/2016/also-in-2016/lisa-case-germany-target-russian-disinformation/EN/index.htm.

Thirdly, when German forces were in charge of the temporary rotational deployment of a multinational unit of 800 strong multinational force in Lithuania, the news was spread that German soldiers raped a local woman. Again, it was apparently unfounded. However, it would have made possible to drive a wedge between the troops and the local population that must have been the intention.[14]

In the fourth case, in the spring of 2018, a former Russian – British double agent, Yuri Skripal and his daughter were poisoned in the town of Salisbury in the UK where they lived in exile. The West was of the view that the attempt was carried out by Russia. The Russian media raised doubts concerning the western version and presented a variety of facts that could weaken its persuasiveness, including the availability of the poison used in other states' arsenal, including the Czech Republic and Sweden. It was also argued, had it been the Russian state it would have done a perfect job, i.e. there would not have been any survivors.[15] Overall 31 different versions appeared in rapid pace as far as the source of the chemical. This resulted in a smokescreen that in the end it was difficult to have an idea what really happened. Russia also fought in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), taking a proactive stance, putting forward initiatives to provide Russian experts with access to the crime scene and the British laboratory where Novichok could have also been developed. The UK attempted to put the burden back on Russia by providing as much transparency to the case as it was possible including naming the Russian perpetrators and those others involved and requesting their extradition from Russia.[16] Even though a Russian security expert expressed the view that the Russian argument should not have changed so many times and should have rather stayed on message, it turned out that the Russian state did well for its own interest. In the end, except for the expert community, most people got tired with the case, lost track and interest in the matter – a success for Russian propaganda and public diplomacy.

What can we learn from the four cases presented briefly above? First, your own media space must be constantly monitored so that you could react in a timely manner if you are facing an attack. Secondly, various hostile activities are

[14] Teri Schultz, "Why the 'Fake Rape' Story against German NATO Forces Fell Flat in Lithuania," *Deutsche Welle*, February 23, 2017, accessed July 18, 2018, https://www.dw.com/en/why-the-fake-rape-story-against-german-nato-forces-fell-flat-in-lithuania/a-37694870.

[15] "It's Quite Obvious That If It Were a Military-grade Nerve Agent, People Would Have Died on the Spot." – stated Vladimir Putin on 18 March 2018. See "Otvety na voprosy zhurnalistov posle zaversheniya vyborov Presidenta (Response to the questions of journalists following the closing of the Presidential elections)," http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/57085.

[16] It is clear Russia in accordance with international law and its established practice will never extradite its own citizens for criminal procedure in another state. However, identifying suspects in person (names, photographs, etc.) makes the western message more credible and countering it more difficult, at least internationally.

often linked. Consequently, when hostile activities begin in one area or with the use of one channel there is every reason to pay attention to a potential spillover not much later. Third, it is indispensable to present your version in a timely manner in order to counter the communication of the strategic opponent. Forth, it is essential that you stay on facts and do not reciprocate the lies of the other party by counter-factual reaction. Fifth, it has been a recurrent issue lately to decide in the beginning of the case how far the party attributing a communication-backed attack to a state, e.g. to the Russian Federation, is ready to reveal its own sources. The opponent trying to raise doubts concerning your own version will act on the basis that you object to its version without providing adequate evidence. If you start an investigation to establish the facts, rest assured the other party will also start one and the conclusions that the latter investigation will draw will arrive at the opposite conclusion. Sixth, the entire exchange takes place in front of the public with the aim to convince it that you are acting in accordance with the truth, law, and you are representing high(er) morality. The public includes your national sphere of communication, that of your adversary and the so-called international community. Seventh, if communication is simplified to contrasting two rival versions of facts, the audience will remain divided and will remain with a fairly simple "either – or" question. That is why it is necessary to present your own version as part of a superior set of norms, principles and values in order to break out of the equation.

Bearing in mind the current divisions in the West, even though collective reaction to hostile strategic communication challenges is preferable to providing national responses in order to gain support of friends and allies. This has been applied in the so-called Skripal case where the British reaction was followed by massive demonstration of solidarity. The priority given to national reaction, with particular reference to its urgency, as the case in Lithuania mentioned above has demonstrated, shall not mean that international institutions cannot play a role. Their role may have to remain complementary and confined to those areas where they provide genuine comparative advantage. International organizations face a further problem – they often decide hesitantly in divisive matters and the Russian Federation often tries its best to prevent the establishment of unity in Western institutions.

Both NATO and the European Union have addressed the matter of strategic communication under the fast-changing conditions of the past few years. Their activity has reflected the potential of the institutions and the limits of the accord among the member states.

NATO first of all enhanced its capacity to collect and then analyze the information collected. On that basis, the Alliance has taken a proactive stance. It has established a Center of Excellence in Riga addressing the topic of strategic communication and, together with the EU, a similar center in Helsinki – the first such institution beyond NATO's territory. In Riga, the focus is on in-depth research of communication and also the development of methodology for the member-states. It has to be considered that the Alliance cannot allocate large resources

to this activity and hence member-states' commitment is essential to countering the Russian challenge. NATO has also become more active on the web. It has set the record straight by presenting Russia's views concerning the Alliance and its policies and contrasted them with facts and NATO's position. The fact that NATO's position has thus been presented in the form of rebuttal has attracted more attention of readers and the contrasted position makes it a better read. Its objective is partly to make Russian media understand that it cannot spread falsehoods as it is monitored by the "other side" and statements will not be left without reaction. NATO also asks such media to correct false stories. It is not the prime objective but also important to note that it has a "name and shame" element, i.e. a media that regularly presents counter-factual information and biased assessment can count with the attention of the Alliance's public diplomacy and can rest assured its activity is not left without reaction. In some cases, this requires coordinated action by NATO.

It was a memorable case when then Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, General Breedlove, achieved the declassification of satellite imaginary in order to have a solid foundation for making Russian military presence in Donbass clearly documented. NATO is guided in this activity by presenting its messages credibly and accurately, avoiding counter-propaganda and clearly contradicting Russia's communication.

The case of the EU is no less peculiar. First of all, the EU reacted belatedly to this emerging challenge, similarly to many other cases. This is due to the complex institutional framework and the massive need of excessive coordination among the member-states and the institutions. Stratcom East of the External Action Service has been established by "Conclusions of the Council."[17] Its three main objectives are:

1. communicating EU policy in the eastern partnership
2. strengthening the media environment, and
3. forecasting, addressing Russian "pro-Kremlin" disinformation with some emphasis on the crisis in and around Ukraine, as it is officially called.

Russian strategic communication presents a problem for the EU as it uses non-military means to achieve politico-military goals and is backed by massive resources. It suffices to mention that Russia invested 191 million Euro in Twitter, and is also active on Facebook. Russia also takes advantage of the more rapid dissemination of fake news – according to observations, fake news travels six times faster than truth on average.[18] Its aim is to disorient and influence politi-

[17] "European Council meeting (19 and 20 March 2015) – Conclusions," Brussels, March 20, 2015, EUCO 11/15, https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11-2015-INIT/en/pdf.

[18] See, for example, Robinson Meyer, "The Grim Conclusions of the Largest-Ever Study of Fake News: Falsehoods almost always beat out the truth on Twitter, penetrating further, faster, and deeper into the social network than accurate information," *The*

cians and societies. It also tries to create confusion with the intention that people would lose orientation as far as facts. It uses stereotypes that are repeated frequently in order to be taken for granted by the addressees. Recently, these have entailed elements like "the EU is an U.S. vassal," "human rights defenders are targeted in the West," "the economic situation in the Baltic states is worse than in Soviet times," etc. It is essential that the stereotypes would address matters the overwhelming majority of the population is not aware of in detail. Although the activity of the EU in this area may be insufficiently visible, it has a website Eu vs Disinfo (https://euvsdisinfo.eu) that publishes not only analyses but also maintains a database of more than 3'800 disinformation cases since September 2015. Maybe the activity of the EU is less visible than it would be desirable, and yet it helps partly to provide access to sources for those that want to understand how the spreading of disinformation works and also sends a message to the originators of those messages that they cannot get away with their false messages for long.

The EU, once it started focusing on a matter, will not give up on addressing it quickly or easily. There are many examples illustrating this. In the area of tackling disinformation this has been demonstrated when the Commission passed a strategy paper on the topic following the European Council's conclusions three years earlier.[19]

Conclusions

The Russian Federation has not diversified its power base extensively. The only area where the broadening of the ways and means of power is essential has been strategic communication. Russia focused its efforts to reach out to the world at large with emphasis on areas closer to Moscow, and particularly to countries and societies which may be targeted by such communication. It has taken advantage of its ability to project a unified message, the West's commitment to freedom of speech and the media, and also benefited from the asymmetry due to the openness of the Western media market and the nearly fully controlled Russian one.

Russia's primary objective is to increase its weight in the international system and demonstrate its indispensable importance. As this can only partially be achieved by demonstrating some of Russia's undeniable strengths it has to simultaneously meet two requirements: reconfirm its power through communication and with this generate support and find followers, particularly in states and societies where Russia' influence is historically well-established or where it can be established with reference to some myths and, secondly, weaken the influ-

Atlantic, March 8, 2018, www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2018/03/largest-study-ever-fake-news-mit-twitter/555104/.

[19] "Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach," Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Brussels, April 26, 2018, http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2018/EN/COM-2018-236-F1-EN-MAIN-PART-1.PDF.

ence of the West. The influence of the West is partly perceived to stem from its unity, including its institutions and those global ones where Western influence is regarded as too strong if not overwhelming by Russia, like the international financial institutions. Communication is part of the means put to use. However, this is by far not the full spectrum of Russian means of influence.

The media influence appears among the most visible new 'weapons' in the Russian arsenal. However, as most recent evidence shows, it is part of a spectrum where morally unacceptable, illicit and illegal means coexist. It suffices to mention the financing of certain political movements and parties (as the Soviet Union used to do with western Communist parties to no avail), interfering politically and technically into elections, providing patronage, entering into massively corrupt deals with foreign countries and their leaders, and thus contributing to regime stability of proxy regimes.

Russia's communication 'victory' is reflected in some weakening of Western unity and backtracking on values, including those foundational for democracy. Societies give priority to stability and strong leaders and take democracy for granted. However, no matter that Russia will do its best to portray these changes as its own achievements, this is only partially true. The faults of the West, its indecision, inadequate reaction to crises and bad leaders abusing power and placing priority on perpetuating themselves in office rather than addressing the most challenging matters are other contributing factors. As often is the case in international relations, the perception generated is essential. Demonstration of strength contributes to determine status and appears as self-fulfilling prophecy. A weak card played fairly well.

The West, similarly to many other situations, has remained hesitant, slow and divided in its reaction. Partly, as it faced a challenge where certain types of reaction would require reconsidering its foundational values, including an array of human rights, partly as appearing with a coordinated reaction, it is all the more difficult when the threat is not perceived as existential and hence the reaction could be delayed and indecisive. We could observe in the past years that the West has been gradually mounting its reaction in preservation of its superiority. It is still open to question whether the focus of the Western reaction will be on hostile strategic communication or other highly annoying activities, like influencing elections by political and technical means, and how the division of labor between national reaction and coordinated, international one will evolve.

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Research Article

The Importance of the Council of Europe's 24/7 Network of Contact Points on Foreign Terrorist Fighters

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Abstract: The article focusses on the Council of Europe 24/7 Network of Contact Points on Foreign Terrorist Fighters envisaged in article 7 of the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism adopted on 22 October 2015. The Protocol supplements the 2005 Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism and it entered into force on July 1, 2017. The Protocol addresses the imminent security threat originating from "foreign terrorist fighters" (FTFs) who are returning to their countries of origin or are trying to relocate in third countries as a result of Daesh's military defeat and collapse. Those 'returnees,' i.e, FTFs and their families, pose a tremendous challenge with no easy solution for law-enforcement agencies and societies across Europe, and combatting the menace requires full compliance with international law.

Keywords: Additional Protocol, Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism, exchange of information, foreign terrorist fighters, Council of Europe, UN Resolution 2178, 24/7 Network, Europol, European Counter Terrorism Center.

Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on Prevention of Terrorism

This article focusses on the Council of Europe 24/7 Network of Contact Points on Foreign Terrorist Fighters (hereinafter "the Network") envisaged in article 7 of the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism [1] (hereinafter "the Protocol") which was adopted on 22 October 2015 in Riga, Latvia. The Protocol supplements the 2005 Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism (hereafter "the 2005 Convention") and it entered into force on 1 July 2017. The Protocol addresses the imminent security threat originating from "foreign terrorist fighters" (hereinafter "FTFs") who are returning to their countries of origin or are trying to relocate in third countries as a result of Daesh's collapse (military defeat). Those 'returnees'—FTFs and their families—pose a tremendous challenge with no easy solution for law-enforcement agencies and societies across Europe, and combatting the menace requires full compliance with international law.

The Protocol follows thereby the UNSC Resolution 2178 (2014) that has set legal obligations with regard to the criminalization of preparatory acts of terrorism, the commission of terror attacks and the provision of or receiving terrorist training.[2] As a result of the adoption of the UNSR Resolution 2178 (2014), the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on Terrorism (CODEXTER-CDCT) called out for the creation of a committee which was tasked with the creation of the Additional Protocol to the 2005 Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism (Treaty No. 196). The final drafting was completed in 2015 after comprehensive deliberations and consultations with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The Additional Protocol criminalizes the following acts:

- Participating in the activities of an association or group for the purpose of committing or contributing to the commission of one or more terrorist offences (Article 2);
- Receiving training for terrorism (including obtaining knowledge or practical skills) in the making or use of explosives, firearms, weapons or hazardous substance, or in other specific methods or techniques, for the purpose of terrorism (Article 3);
- Travelling to a country other than the traveler's residence or nationality for the purpose of the commission of, contribution to or participation in

[1] "Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism," *Council of Europe Treaty Series* no. 217, adopted in Riga, October 22, 2015, accessed June 18, 2018, https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168047c5ea.

[2] "Threats to International Peace and Security Caused by Terrorist Acts," S/RES/2178 (2014), UN Security Council, September 24, 2014, http://unscr.com/files/2014/02178.pdf.

a terrorist offence, or the providing or receiving of training for terrorism (Article 4);

- Providing (in)direct financial support or collecting funds fully or partially enabling any person to travel abroad for the purpose of terrorism (Article 5);
- Organizing or otherwise assisting any person in travelling abroad for the purpose of terrorism (Article 6).

Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs)

There is a variety of definitions referring to the term "Foreign Terrorist Fighter," but it is generally accepted that the term applies to non-indigenous individuals who have chosen to leave their countries of origin and to engage in insurgent (military) combat activities in foreign conflict areas without the promise of financial reward.[3] Correspondingly, the Islamic FTFs have been defined as (un)paid combatants with no apparent connection to the conflict zone other than religious attraction.[4] Equally important is the fact that the number of FTFs involved in a given war-torn region, together with the capabilities and know-how they imbue the local insurgency with, can play a significant and even decisive role in a conflict zone (examples of this are the Mujahedeen ganging up with the Taliban during the Afghanistan conflict in the 1980s, or the FTFs in the Bosnian and Chechen conflicts in the 1990s). According to data provided by the UN Under-Secretary-General of the newly created UN Counter-Terrorism Office, Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, there are at least 5,600 FTFs originating from 33 countries who have already returned home.[5] Many of them have fallen off the radar of law-enforcement agencies and since they have been well-trained and equipped during the time they have spent in Daesh-controlled territories, many of them have the capability to wreak havoc with terrorist attacks in their home countries. Further radicalization and the readiness to recruit followers to serve the Daesh's cause are two aspects that should not be overlooked.

Although Daesh has been defeated, its ideology still lives on and might be exported worldwide via returning FTFs. Thus, the Council of Europe and UN

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[3] For a detailed discussion concerning the academic term "foreign terrorist fighter," refer to Sandra Kraehenmann, "Foreign Terrorist Fighters under International Law," *Academy Briefing* no. 7 (Geneva: Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, October 2014), 5-7, https://www.geneva-academy.ch/joomlatools-files/docman-files/Publications/Academy%20Briefings/Foreign%20Fighters_2015_WEB.pdf.

[4] Thomas Hegghammer, "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and Globalization of Jihad," *International Security* 35, no. 2 (Winter 2010-2011), 53.

[5] See also Richard Barrett, *Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees* (New York: The Soufan Center and the Global Strategy Network, October 2017), accessed June 19, 2018, http://thesoufancenter.org/research/beyond-caliphate.

member states are required to strengthen their cooperation and exchange of information, developing effective security checks on the borders, and synchronizing and upgrading their criminal justice system in compliance with the rule of law and human rights standards. Keeping in mind that the threat that FTFs pose still stands,[6] and in order to facilitate the exchange of information, it is of crucial importance for the European security that all Council of Europe member states and the EU[7] implement Article 7 of the Protocol,[8] which calls for the creation of a network of nationally designated focal points giving the 47 member states the opportunity to exchange police information "concerning persons travelling abroad for the purpose of terrorism," that is: related to persons suspected of plotting, supporting or committing a terrorist attack, or providing or receiving training for terrorism. Article 7 stipulates explicitly the exchange of police information in a timely and expedited manner and requires member states to appoint official points of contact who will communicate fast and exchange police information on FTF with their counterparts.

However, legal experts dealing with the Council of Europe 24/7 Network of Contact Points on FTFs expressed concerns over its functioning and referred to the deficits a prospective cooperation among the parties to the Protocol might reveal. As an example of miscommunication and tardy exchange of police information, it is worth noting here the case of the Berlin truck attacker Mr. Anis Amri, who killed 12 people and injured more than 60 in a Berlin Christmas market

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6 After losing almost all the ground made, Daesh's strategy for 2018 seems to point towards a regrouping of its members in Syria and Iraq, while maintaining its threat through low-level mass-casualty attacks and continuing to exhort its supporters to launch attacks in their home countries. For further information, see Matthew Henman, "Global Militant Attacks Caused Fewer Fatalities in 2017," *IHS Markit*, January 18, 2018, https://ihsmarkit.com/research-analysis/global-militant-attacks-caused-fewer-fatalities-in-2017.html.

7 The EU ratified the Protocol on 22 October 2015 and in a statement prior to the ratification Commissioner D. Avramopolus (Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship) commented on the text by highlighting the importance of the Protocol: "Today is an important step ahead in combatting a global security challenge with concrete, legal tools. Fighting terrorism is a top priority for the coming years, and today's signing will be instrumental to giving the European Union the right toolbox to do so."

8 Article 7 (Exchange of information) of the Protocol states:

1. Without prejudice to Article 3, paragraph 2, sub-paragraph a, of the Convention [on the Prevention of Terrorism] and in accordance with its domestic law and existing international obligations, each Party shall take such measures as may be necessary in order to strengthen the timely exchange between Parties of any available relevant information concerning persons travelling abroad for the purpose of terrorism, as defined in Article 4. For that purpose, each Party shall designate a point of contact available on a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week basis.
2. A Party may choose to designate an already existing point of contact under paragraph 1.
3. A Party's point of contact shall have the capacity to carry out communications with the point of contact of another Party on an expedited basis.

on 19 December 2016,[9] the investigation of which revealed a plethora of failures on the part of the German authorities and evinced a poor cooperation and exchange of relevant data concerning the suspect between police forces in Germany.[10]

Given these points and in order to mitigate the consequences of potential future blunders – the CODEXTER-CDCT has tested the efficiency of the Network with the aim to verify how the nationally nominated points of contact interact with each other and to what extent valuable information on FTF is shared and properly communicated. On closer consideration, the CODEXTER-CDCT aims to improve the exchange of FTF-related data by bridging over the distrust which has been prevalent over the last years among law-enforcement agencies and within the intelligence communities and that has hindered the rapid exchange of reliable information.

State of Play

On 18 May 2016, at a Ministerial Session in the Bulgarian capital of Sofia, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe "called for the expeditious designation of the 24/7 contact points to facilitate the timely exchange of information, as provided for by the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism (CETS No. 217), pending its entry into force."[11] The newly installed Network started its operational work on December 1, 2016 and encompasses 41 designated contact points, including one for the EU. The CODEXTER-CDCT held the first meeting of the nominated points of contact on October 17, 2016 at its headquarters in Strasbourg, offering the participants the possibility to further discuss key subjects concerning the Network such as its potential added value, technicalities related to securing a rapid and flawless exchange of information, protection of information sources, and confidentiality of the offered information. As a result of the first meeting, the CODEXTER-CDCT and the participating parties to the Protocol agreed on the crucial significance of the Network as a reliable information hub which enables the points of contact "to request, send and receive information vis-à-vis other Contact Points, and to

[9] "Berlin Christmas market attack: Inquiry accuses police of 'sloppiness' in Anis Amri case," *Deutsche Welle*, October 12, 2017, http://www.dw.com/en/berlin-christmas-market-attack-inquiry-accuses-police-of-sloppiness-in-anis-amri-case/a-40924403.

[10] As per the report written by Mr. Bruno Jost, a former German prosecutor appointed by Berlin's state parliamentary inquiry into the Berlin Christmas market attacker (a former German prosecutor appointed by Berlin´s state parliamentary inquiry) see "Abschlussbericht des Sonderbeauftragten des Senats für die Aufklärung des Handelns der Berliner Behörden im Fall AMRI," https://www.berlin.de/sen/inneres/presse/weitere-informationen/artikel.638875.php.

[11] List of Decisions of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on "Tackling violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism," 126th Session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Sofia, Bulgaria, May 18, 2016, https://rm.coe.int/1680650870.

channel such requests or information to other relevant national-level authorities without delay."[12]

A second meeting of the designated contact points took place on 21 March 2017 in Strasbourg, where CODEXTER-CDCT pundits along with national representatives of the Network's points of contact reviewed the Network's efficiency and accuracy based on gathered data and experience. Additionally, the meeting aimed at expunging shortcomings in the operative readiness of the contact points, improving the efficacy of the established communication channels, verifying the exactitude of the most frequently applied data, and validating the speediness of the Network. Extensive discussions on how to further improve the Network and how to identify and overcome unforeseen or unanticipated mishaps, along with detailed proposals and objectives for improvement, were debated in great detail. Furthermore, the Secretariat of the CODEXTER-CDCT briefed the designated points of contact on the final outcome of a 'ping test' carried out to examine and assess the Network's operative and functional status.

The 'Ping Test'

The 'Ping Test' consisted of sending out an e-mail to all contact points and requesting them to swiftly acknowledge receipt. In this light, the parties to the Protocol and the CODEXTER-CDCT concurred with the need to conduct more 'ping tests' in the future in order to assess the efficiency and promptness of the Network. In the framework of the 'ping test,' it has been vividly demonstrated that it is hugely important for all the participants to be easily reachable on a 24/7 basis when exchanging information via the Network. The participating states took note of the recommendations and conclusions extracted from the 'ping test' and agreed on enhancing the cooperation between the designated contact points themselves, on one hand, and between the Secretariat of the Council of Europe and the national contact points on the other.[13]

There is a third meeting of the designated contact points scheduled April 2018 where representatives of national contact points will share experiences and information with their counterparts and the Secretariat of the Council of Europe about how the Network is being run in the different countries and how the Network operates in the realm of national legislation. National contact points will be given the opportunity to share examples of best practice with their counterparts as well as to elaborate on strategies aiming to increase mutual trust when sharing sensitive information related to FTFs. In addition, feedback on the

[12] CODEXTER, "24/7 Network of Contact Points on Foreign Terrorist Fighters - Information provided by the Secretariat," CODEXTER (2017) 3, Strasbourg, France, May 4, 2017, https://rm.coe.int/168070f25a.

[13] CODEXTER, "24/7 Network of Contact Points on Foreign Terrorist Fighters – Information provided by the Secretariat – Update," CODEXTER (2017) 3rev, Strasbourg, France, November 3, 2017, https://rm.coe.int/updated-information-document-on-24-7-ftf-network/1680764662.

efficiency of the Network will further contribute to the improvement of the established communication channels (e-mail, phone).

47 is more than 28 (-1)

Given the constituency of the Council of Europe, a European international organization consisting of 47-member states—compared to the EU-28 minus 1—it is recommended for the participating states to take measures to:

- Exchange information on Foreign Terrorist Fighters by using the 24/7 Network in a reliable and rapid manner as timely shared information is key to identify FTFs and prevent them from crossing borders;
- Note that the Council of Europe consists of 47-member states, among others Turkey, Albania, FYROM, Russia, Azerbaijan, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, countries from which many FTFs teamed up with Daesh in the period 2014-2017 and whose returnees have already moved back to their home countries; [14]
- Further rely on existing tools for the exchange of information and intelligence on FTFs and ensure their interoperability, such as Europol's Focal Point Travelers database, Europol's Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA) and the European Information System (EIS), the second-generation Schengen Information System (SIS II), Prüm Connections, and the Interpol's Counter-terrorism Fusion Center and the I-24/7 Global Police Communication System;
- Share the Network's data with the Europol's European Counter Terrorism Center (ECTC) to identify and tackle FTFs, because international cooperation among counter terrorism authorities is crucial;
- Carry out 'ping tests' regularly and share the results with the contact points for further evaluation, thus making room for suggestions and ideas on how to constantly improve the Network's performance;
- Encourage the member states of the Council of Europe to increase the flow of information within the Network, to promptly respond to inquiries made by requesting states when information on FTFs is needed, and to optimize the information with partner states, keeping in mind that returning FTFs after Daesh's collapse will opt to either find new safe havens, e.g. in Libya, or return to their countries of origin and pose an imminent threat to internal security of the states concerned;

[14] For more precise information related to data and exact numbers, refer to the reports published by the Soufan Center: Richard Barrett, *Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees*; *Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq* (December 2015); and Richard Barrett, *Foreign Fighters in Syria* (June 2014).

- Promote the Council of Europe 24/7 Network of Contact Points on Foreign Terrorist Fighters as an efficient tool to combat FTFs and more effectively trace emerging trends and routes;
- Publish case studies related to the successful exchange of information on FTFs in real time demonstrating the functioning of the Network and highlighting the fact that a rapid and accurate communication among the involved participants can be deemed essential to target potential FTFs and prevent them from travelling across European borders for the purpose of terrorism;
- Ward off a potential misuse of the Network by some member states for solving domestic political problems, such as including innocent persons on the FTF list and designating them as FTFs only because they are regarded as regime opponents. It is worth mentioning here that the parties to the Protocol must respect human rights standards and obligations, including the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, especially when it comes to the criminalization of preparatory terrorist acts (as set forth in Article 8 of the Protocol).[15]
- Sign and ratify the Protocol, since to date it has been ratified by 10 member states of the Council of Europe, and another 28 member states and the EU have signed but not yet ratified the Protocol;
- Reinforce the cooperation among international bodies dealing with terrorism, such as the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Europol's European Counter Terrorism Center (ECTC), the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF), and the NATO Center of Excellence on Defense against Terrorism in Ankara (Albania will soon host a NATO Center of Excellence on Foreign Fighters).

[15] For additional information on conditions and safeguards of the Protocol, refer to its Explanatory Report, paragraphs 69-79, https://rm.coe.int/168047c5ec.

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Research Article

Armenia and the South Caucasus: A New Security Environment

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Abstract: This article seeks to examine through a realist international relations' lens the geopolitics and the security environment of the South Caucasus, and specifically the security challenges Armenia will face over the next five years. As the South Caucasus is cemented by collective security agreements and the stagnant conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, the regional dynamic shifts incrementally. Significant historical events, such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, the April 2016 Karabakh flare-up, and the completion of the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline provide the foundation for a forward leaning analysis. This article addresses three questions. First, considering the changing international order, what is the current security environment in the South Caucasus? Second, what are the geopolitical concerns in the South Caucasus? Third, what are the specific national security challenges for Armenia? It reveals that the South Caucasus security environment is energy focused, changes in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict are contingent upon energy geopolitics and Russia, and that Russia will continue to hinder Armenia's growth and independence, thus challenging Armenia's security, whilst at the same time providing for Armenia's security.

Keywords: Energy geopolitics, Russia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan, energy dependence, collective security.

Purpose, Scope and Key Assumptions

The purpose of this article is to examine the geopolitics and the security environment of the South Caucasus and, more specifically, the security challenges Armenia is expected to face over the next five years.

The South Caucasus geopolitics and Armenia's security challenges in mid-term are analyzed through a realist lens. It is appropriate to look five years ahead, because the South Caucasus geopolitical environment shifts incrementally. In addition, a significant governmental change has occurred in Armenia, and the international order is also changing.

This article will examine paradigm shifts, anticipated with the completion of the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP), and noteworthy events, such as the April 2016 Karabakh war. By referring to these moments of significance and drawing upon academic literature, we will establish a foundational background for analysis. This analysis utilizes public information and resources that, in combination, provide for a comprehensive and open framework. This article will not discuss economics beyond political-economic implications, internal security concerns of Armenia or any other state, the legitimacy of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh (or Artsakh), corruption, terrorism, or drug or human trafficking. In addition, this paper will not attempt to make predictions or policy prescriptions.

This article will attempt to answer three questions: First, considering the changing international order, what is the current security environment in the South Caucasus? Second, what are the geopolitical concerns in the South Caucasus? Third, what are the specific national security challenges for Armenia?

A number of assumptions have made at the start of the underlying study:

- It is highly probable that the South Caucasus security environment is energy focused;
- There is a roughly even chance that Azerbaijan will exhaust its oil resources in 24 years;
- Roughly even is also the chance that Armenia will be able to attain funding and construct a new nuclear facility within five years;
- Roughly even are the odds that the North-South Energy Corridor (NSEC) will be constructed and operational in the next five years;
- The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict status will almost certainly remain unchanged;
- It is likely that Azerbaijan will hold the regional geopolitical strategic advantage for the next five years;
- The chance that Turkish-Armenian rapprochement will occur in the next five years is remote;
- It is almost certain that Russia will continue to hinder Armenia's independence.

Conceptual Framework

The Caucasus has been a historically significant region of the world, connecting Central Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Russia together. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the independence of Commonwealth states and governmental stability became the foremost issue.[1] Following the establishment of legitimate regimes, the international and regional effort to cultivate and develop the natural resources of the region took place; and specifically of Caspian Sea oil and natural gas.[2] After 2001, the security environment changed to incorporate the U.S. War on Terror, and the Caucasus cooperation in the international coalition.[3] Without much adjustment since 2001, by 2018 the security environment has altered once more, as well as the international order.[4] Hence, a contemporary analysis of the environment must be examined. This issue is particularly timely due to the unprecedented change in government in Armenia.[5] I intend to take on this gap in the academic literature by reviewing the historical progression of the various security environments, contemporary concerns and challenges, thus providing a forward leaning analysis to address current issues.

Literature Review

In this review of the literature, the focus is on the evolution of the security environment, the security concerns in the Caucasus region, and the specific security issues in Armenia.

Garnik S. Asatryan in his work, "Armenia and Security Issues in the South Caucasus" gives a baseline of Armenian national security challenges and concerns in 2002.[6] He focuses on the instability and insecurity of the Caucasus through three lenses: strategic, ethno-political, and cultural, with the last two being most significant. Asatryan identifies several strategic challenges: global stakeholders jockeying for position in the Caucasus, paralyzed economic systems, dependence on international financial structures, struggles to meet requirements of Euro-

[1] Richard Giragosian, "Shifting Security in the South Caucasus," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 6, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 100-106, quote on p. 101, https://doi.org/10.11610/Connections.06.3.06.

[2] Giragosian, "Shifting Security in the South Caucasus."

[3] Giragosian, "Shifting Security in the South Caucasus."

[4] Rebecca Friedman Lissner and Mira Rapp-Hooper, "The Day after Trump: American Strategy for a New International Order," *The Washington Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 7-25, https://twq.elliott.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2121/f/downloads/TWQ_Spring2018_LissnerRappHooper_0.pdf.

[5] Alec Luhn, "Armenia Opposition Leader Nikol Pashinyan Elected PM by Parliament," *The Telegraph*, May 8, 2018, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/05/08/armenia-opposition-leader-nikol-pashinyan-elected-pm-parliament/.

[6] Garnik S. Asatryan, "Armenia and Security Issues in the South Caucasus," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 1, no. 3 (2002): 21-30, https://doi.org/10.11610/Connections.01.3.04.

pean institutions, emerging conflicts, and corruptible policy makers. Asatryan views the ethno-nationalist policies of Turkey and the autonomous Kurdish region as a threat to Caucasus stability, and to Armenia more specifically. He argues that if the Caucasus states can form a regional Caucasian identity, then regional unity can stabilize the Caucasus. In regards to Armenia, Asatryan discusses the various dynamics. First, the political leaders are a small group that has altered policies for their personal benefit, rather than in pursuit of the national interests. This may now be changing since Serzh Sarkisian has resigned and Nikol Pashinyan took office. Second is the continuous economic decline and political tension related to the Karabakh war. Third, unlike its neighboring states, Armenia has an ethnically homogenous population and does not suffer from the effects of major political separatist movements.[7]

In 2004, Hayk Kotanjian, an Armenian military diplomat and head of both the Institute for National Strategic Studies and the Armenian National Defense Research University, published "Armenian Security and U.S. Foreign Policy in the South Caucasus." In that article he argued that although Armenia and the Caucasus have been overlooked, the United States should reconsider its interest in Armenia. He explains that although Armenia is a signatory to the Collective Security Organization (CSO) of the Newly Independent States, Armenia has participated in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program since 1994. Kotanjian argues for Armenia's Western stance as a member of the European Council, and its membership in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). He argues that as a result of this unique balance between Russian and American collective security agreements, Armenia provides an important and strategic opportunity for dialogue between the United States and Russia.[8]

In the aforementioned article by Richard Giragosian, the author describes the history of the various security environments from the independence of the Caucasus states after 1991 to the post-2001 environment. Giragosian asserts that the Caucasus region during the 1990s was developed primarily for the harvesting of Caspian Sea energy reserves of oil and natural gas. After the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, the War on Terror was launched. The Caucasus states became key partners in this new War on Terror, as the United States and Russia, together, utilized the land, airspace, and overall cooperation of the Caucasus states to assist in Afghanistan. Giragosian observes in 2007 that Russian military posture has become increasingly anti-Western. By 2018, this trend has been strengthened and may affect Armenia's relationship with Europeans and the Americans. He also observes that Armenia is the only Caucasus state that remains committed to a strong alliance with Russia, and this remains true by this day. In addition, he observes the political and economic friendliness between Armenia and Iran as a 'bridge' from Moscow to Tehran. Russian and Iranian part-

[7] Asatryan, "Armenia and Security Issues in the South Caucasus."

[8] Hayk Kotanjian, "Armenian Security and U.S. Foreign Policy in the South Caucasus," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 3, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 15-32, https://doi.org/10.11610/Connections.03.2.03.

nership in Syria has only increased this political friendliness. Giragosian's most significant point is "Legitimacy is the key determinant of durable security and stability, while the strategic reality of the region is defined less by geopolitics, and more by local politics and economics."[9]

Thomas de Waal, a prominent scholar of the Caucasus region, authored the chapter "The South Caucasus in 2020" of the 2011 book *Russia in 2020: Scenarios for the Future.*[10] It provides an analysis on the security challenges facing the South Caucasus. De Waal focuses on the cultural aspect of the South Caucasus as a lens for his analysis. He states that the younger generations, even in Armenia, choose to acquire a more globalized cultural diet through national and international media, rather than from Russian media. In addition, all three Caucasus states are less dependent on Russia than they ever were, predicting that the trend will continue. De Waal argues that the Caucasian labor integration into Russia provides a healthy interdependence and economic benefit between the Caucasus and Russia. However, it drains the Caucasus of some of its most useful labor pool. De Waal then gives a country breakdown, asserting that Azerbaijan is set to have a major crisis by 2020, citing inequality and severe corruption from the oil and gas wealth. In 2018, Ilham Aliyev has been re-elected again, possibly increasing the chances for a crisis by 2020. His assessment of Armenia is that it is politically fragile and has the opportunity to expand relations westward if a rapprochement with Turkey can be achieved, and from a stronger relationship with the European Union.[11]

External Threats

The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict and Azerbaijan

In 1987, the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute escalated into violence between Armenia and Azerbaijan, while still being part of the Soviet Union.[12] Nagorno-Karabakh is a section of mountainous territory that was awarded to Azerbaijan from the Soviet Union. Nagorno-Karabakh holds historical and religious significance to Armenia, as it is a historical part of Armenia and has predominantly Armenian population. From 1987-1991 violent pogroms and military force was exercised on both sides[13]; from 1992-1994 full scale war erupted. Amid consid-

[9] Giragosian, "Shifting Security in the South Caucasus," 106.

[10] Thomas de Waal,"The South Caucasus in 2020," in *Russia in 2020: Scenarios for the Future*, ed. Maria Lipman and Nikolay Petrov (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 2011), 109-122.

[11] Maria Lipman and Nikolay Petrov, eds., *Russia in 2020: Scenarios for the Future* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 2011).

[12] Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, May 31, 2001), 62, 49.

[13] Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds*, 49-50.

erable international pressure and 20,000 deaths, the violence was stopped by a ceasefire agreement brokered by Russia in 1994.[14]

The 1994 ceasefire is the only tangible diplomatic achievement towards the resolution of this conflict; all other peace talks have failed.[15] In April of 2016, in what became known as the Four Day War, military violence between Azerbaijan and Armenia erupted,[16] killing at least 200 people.[17] In this war, Armenia lost some controlled territory[18] in a clear display of Azerbaijan's advancement in its military capability since 1994. Although the ceasefire agreement is regularly broken,[19,20] there has not been any large-scale violence since 1994, with the exception of April 2016.

The de facto government or "Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh"[21] uses joint Armenian and "Artsakh" military forces to defend the line of contact and the surrounding controlled territories. Armenia has reason to be concerned with the integrity of its defense of Nagorno-Karabakh, since Azerbaijan proved its increased military aptitude in the April 2016 War. In addition, Azerbaijani troops are trained by Turkish forces in both Azerbaijan proper and in the Nakhchivan exclave that borders Armenia, Iran, and Turkey.[22] While Azerbaijan has continued to purchase Russian arms,[23] it started buying arms, including air-to-surface missiles, from Turkey.[24] Regardless, Armenian and Karabakh forces should be

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14 Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds*, 73-74.

15 Ohannes Geukjian, *Negotiating Armenian-Azerbaijani Peace: Opportunities, Obstacles, Prospects* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2014).

16 "Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict," *Council on Foreign Relations*, October 2017, https://www.cfr.org/interactives/global-conflict-tracker#!/conflict/nagorno-karabakh-conflict.

17 "Nagorno-Karabakh's Gathering War Clouds," *Europe Report* no.°244 (Brussels: International Crisis Group, June 1, 2017), https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/244-nagorno-karabakhs-gathering-war-clouds.pdf.

18 "Nagorno-Karabakh's Gathering War Clouds," 2.

19 "Armenian Ceasefire Violation: Azerbaijan's Serviceman Killed," *Trend*, January 19, 2018, https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/karabakh/2849943.html.

20 "Nagorno-Karabakh Reports 250 Azerbaijani Ceasefire Violations," *Tert*, March 3, 2018, http://www.tert.am/en/news/2018/03/03/karabakh/2629054.

21 It should be noted that in 2016, the de facto government of Nagorno-Karabakh, or "The Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh," changed its name to the "Republic of Artsakh"; it is commonly referred to as "Artsakh" in Armenia.

22 Ilgar Gurbanov, "Interaction with Turkish Air Force Boosts Azerbaijan's Air-Combat Capability," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 14, no. 137 (The Jamestown Foundation, October 26, 2017), https://jamestown.org/program/interaction-turkish-air-forces-boosts-azerbaijans-air-combat-capability/.

23 Yulia Zhuchkova, "Armenia's Hands Are Tied Regarding Russian Arms Sales to Azerbaijan," *The Jamestown Foundation*, July 26, 2017, https://jamestown.org/armenias-hands-are-tied-regarding-russian-arms-sales-to-azerbaijan/.

24 "Azerbaijan Has Bought SOM Missile from Turkey," *Azeri Defence*, June 26, 2018, http://en.azeridefence.com/azerbaijan-has-bought-som-missile-from-turkey/.

able to retain their tactical ground superiority because of their elevated territorial advantage.

As Azerbaijan's oil reserves begin to dwindle over the next 24 years,[25] it will be challenging for the Aliyev regime to sufficiently diversify the economy in preparation for the presumed economic shock. If the economic crisis hits, the domestic political atmosphere will become tumultuous, unstable, and uncertain for the survival of the Aliyev regime. Thus, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is likely to be its foreign adventure to distract the public from domestic issues by providing a scapegoat to keep the regime alive.

Beyond the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Azerbaijan's increasing pipeline projects tilt the geopolitical balance in favor of Azerbaijan. First, by investing in multi-national energy projects, most notably with Georgia and Turkey, Azerbaijan exports its Caspian energy to Europe, making it a critical alternative source, instead of Europe's continuous reliance on Russia or Middle Eastern states.[26] Second, Azerbaijan profits from the sale of its energy. Third, by including Georgia and Turkey in these projects, it creates an inherent multi-beneficiary outcome, such as increased diplomatic relations, economic benefits (shared revenue and job creation), and less dependence on Russian energy. Fourth, besides TANAP, the main investor in all of Azerbaijan's energy projects is BP,[27] a UK-based petroleum corporation, thus enhancing British and western affinity for the energy-rich state.

With this Azerbaijani geopolitical advantage, Armenia incurs losses in three main ways. First, Armenia loses influence in Georgian-Armenian relations as Georgia will find Azerbaijan a much more profitable and beneficial partner. As Georgia aims to decrease its dependence on Russia, Azerbaijani pipeline projects provide employment, financial gain, and energy. Second, the three of Armenia's four neighbors all become richer from these energy partnerships, thus increasing the financial disparity between Armenia and its neighbors. Third, Azerbaijan makes substantial gains with European countries as a necessary alternative for energy, especially as Western and Russian relations continue to worsen,[28] thus giving more hard value to Azerbaijan over Armenia, regardless of Armenia's more European aligned governance and values. This could also undercut support or neutrality for Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

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[25] "BP Statistical Review of World Energy: 67th Edition," *BP*, June 2018, 12, 14, www.bp.com/content/dam/bp/en/corporate/pdf/energy-economics/statistical-review/bp-stats-review-2018-full-report.pdf.

[26] Armen Manvelyan, *Energy Security and Geopolitical Challenges in the Caucasus-Caspian Region* (Yerevan, Armenia: Yerevan State University, 2015), 194, 198.

[27] Manvelyan, *Energy Security and Geopolitical Challenges*, 193.

[28] Gardiner Harris, "U.S. To Issue New Sanctions on Russia Over Skripals' Poisoning," *The New York Times*, August 8, 2018, https://nyti.ms/2OUvbvo.

Turkey

While Turkish and Armenian relations have never been good,[29] the opportunity for rapprochement following Armenia's independence from the USSR was negated as Turkey backed Azerbaijan in the outbreak of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Although Turkey recognized Armenia as an independent state in 1991, it closed its border with Armenia in 1993 in support of Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh war.[30] Between 2008 and 2009, Turkey made attempts to normalize relations with Armenia, but the initiative collapsed as a consequence of strong pressure from Azerbaijan, who succeeded to make progress in normalizing Armenian-Turkish relations contingent upon its settlement proposals for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.[31] In the immediate future, the normalization of relations between Yerevan and Ankara does not seem possible. Armenians have increased mistrust for Turkey, while domestic support for rapprochement has declined.

Although Turkish-Armenian relations are not improving, it is highly unlikely that Turkish troops will cross the border and attack Armenia. First, Armenia is a signatory to the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), with Russia as its security guarantor. Second, the United States and other NATO members are certainly uninterested in being drawn into a petty regional conflict, resulting in a fight with Russia. Third, Armenia is no longer a high priority of Turkish foreign policy concerns. With the Syria conflict on Turkey's borders, internal unrest and divisions amongst the population, concerns with Greek relations over Mediterranean islands and Cyprus, as well as its souring relations with the United States, Turkey is not immediately concerned with rapprochement or attacking Armenia.

In 2010, Turkey and Azerbaijan signed a Strategic Partnership agreement,[32] further impeding the opportunity to establish diplomatic relations with Armenia. This military partnership with Azerbaijan has been enhanced in recent years by increasing the frequency and capacity of joint-military exercises in both mainland Azerbaijan and in the Nakhchivan exclave.[33] While Azerbaijan sees the strategic partnership as a counter balance to Russian-Armenian military partnership,

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[29] Fiona Hill, Kemal Kirişci, and Andrew Moffatt, "Armenia and Turkey: From Normalization to Reconciliation," *Brookings Institution*, February 24, 2015, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/armenia-and-turkey-from-normalization-to-reconciliation/.

[30] Audrey L. Altstadt and Rajan Menon, "Unfrozen Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh: Why Violence Persists," *Foreign Affairs*, April 12, 2016, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/armenia/2016-04-12/unfrozen-conflict-nagorno-karabakh.

[31] F. Stephen Larrabee and Alireza Nader, "Central Asia and the Caucasus," in *Turkish-Iranian Relations in a Changing Middle East* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013), 19-20, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR258.html.

[32] Zaur Shiriyev, Eka Tkeshelashvili, and Mitat Celikpala. "Institutionalizing a Trilateral Strategic Partnership: Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey," Policy Paper (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2016), 12, http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_43884-1522-1-30.pdf.

[33] Shiriyev, Tkeshelashvili, and Celikpala, "Institutionalizing a Trilateral Strategic Partnership," 14.

Turkey views it as a guarantee for the flow of energy resources from the Caspian Sea basin.[34]

As observed in history, the geographic position of Turkey was one of the most important geostrategic locations in the world, and it still is. Today, Turkey uses its geostrategic position to deliver energy from the Middle East and the Caucasus to Europe. As Turkey is not as rich as its neighbors in energy, it has positioned itself as the main facilitator in the transit of oil and natural gas,[35] with the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline for oil and the TANAP for natural gas being of key importance.

Energy Geopolitics is the New Security Environment

Energy geopolitics shapes the new security environment of the South Caucasus. Although the South Caucasus has always had an energy focus, the completion of the TANAP[36] on June 12, 2018 solidified the full transition to an energy dominant security environment.

Besides Russia, Azerbaijan is the most energy-rich state in the Caucasus.[37] As described above, Azerbaijan operates and benefits from its multi-national energy projects in a multifaceted manner, challenging the balance of power in the South Caucasus. Despite this, Russia is and will continue to be the most dominant energy and military player in the Caucasus. Russia has enormous reserves of oil and natural gas in comparison to its Caucasus counterpart. While Russia's official position in the Caucasus is neutrality amongst all the states, it implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) is most aligned with the Armenian position. Likewise, Armenia is most aligned with the position of Russia, and is the only country in the Caucasus to be in that position.[38]

Due to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Armenia has been excluded from Azerbaijani energy deals with Georgia and Turkey. Therefore, it was forced to seek opportunities to increase its own energy security.[39] This gave Russia the invitation to invest in Armenia, henceforth dominating and controlling its energy sector. Armenia's partnership with Russia not only allowed for Armenia's energy sector to become secure, but for Armenia to gain a surplus of energy that it could

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[34] Larrabee and Nader, "Central Asia and the Caucasus," 19.

[35] "BP Statistical Review of World Energy: 67th Edition," 22-23.

[36] "Reference Documents," TANAP Natural Gas Transmission Company, https://www.tanap.com/reference-documents/.

[37] "BP Statistical Review of World Energy: 67th Edition," 12, 26.

[38] Collective Security Treaty Organization, http://www.odkb.gov.ru/start/index_aengl.htm.

[39] Armen Manvelyan, "The Implications for Eurasian Economic Union and South Caucasus Energy Policy" (Yerevan: Institute of Oriental Studies, National Academy of Science, April 2018), available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324532430_armen_manvelyan_the_implications_for_eurasian_economic_union_south_caucasus_energy_policy.

resell on regional markets. Consequently, Armenia joined the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

While these Azerbaijani energy projects have played a stabilizing role in the regional security environment, they also made peace and stability dependent on international oil prices.[40] Hence, when global oil prices declined significantly after 2014,[41] the diminishing role of Azerbaijan in the region and the lifting of oil sanctions on Iran both contributed to regional instability. The result of such instability and increased confrontation was witnessed during the April 2016 Nagorno-Karabakh war. This shift between 2014 and 2016 allowed for an opening between Russia and Iran to develop the planned North-South Energy Corridor (NSEC) initiative that would include Armenia and Georgia as transit states for Russian and Iranian energy, resulting in a shift of the geopolitical balance of power.[42] Specifically, it would create a counterbalance—financially and diplomatically (Georgia)—to Azerbaijani-Turkish energy cooperation.

In addition to the effect of lowering global oil prices on Azerbaijan's regional positioning, Russia's fossil fuel reserves are much larger than those of Azerbaijan, resulting in a more sustainable situation. Russia's oil reserves are 106.2 billion barrels, and its natural gas reserves are 35 trillion cubic meters, in contrast to Azerbaijan's 7 billion barrels of oil and 1.3 trillion cubic meters of gas.[43] It should be clear that Azerbaijan's projects are dwarfed in comparison to Russia's global projects, but this is only a regional analysis.

Azerbaijan views its dependence on its oil and gas as one of its own critical internal threats.[44] At its current rate of production, and barring any significant further discoveries, Azerbaijan's oil resources will be exhausted in approximately 24 years.[45] While according to current estimates Azerbaijan's natural gas will last much longer, it is far less lucrative. This means that Azerbaijan will be forced to not only diversify its economy to brace for the economic hardship, but it will also need to find a method of securing its value to its regional and European partners in that same period of time. Azerbaijan is well aware of the importance of its regional strategic partnerships with Georgia and Turkey, as Aliyev has declared as his national security priority to maintain the "… trilateral strategic partnership and deepening cooperation between Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey."[46] Should Azerbaijan not supplement its oil for another commodity (resources or services), its national security and stability will be exposed to high risk.

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40 Manvelyan, "The Implications for Eurasian Economic Union," 21.

41 "Crude Oil Prices Down Sharply in Fourth Quarter of 2014," U.S. Energy Information Administration, January 6, 2015, https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=19451.

42 Manvelyan, "The Implications for Eurasian Economic Union," 22.

43 "BP Statistical Review of World Energy: 67th Edition," 12, 26.

44 Hayk Kocharyan. "Regional Security Dynamics: Azerbaijan," 76. In *Analytical Bulletin: Center for Civilization and Cultural Studies* (2017).

45 "BP Statistical Review of World Energy: 67th Edition," 12, 14.

46 Kocharyan, "Regional Security Dynamics: Azerbaijan," 86.

In the current state of the South Caucasus—a set of countries locked by security guarantees (with the exception of Georgia)—the balance of power can be meaningfully shifted only through energy geopolitics. In this respect, Armenia needs to build a new nuclear energy power plant. The current plant, built in the 1970s as part of the USSR, is outdated.[47] The EU deemed it unacceptable and insisted that it is decommissioned by 2016. Russia then restored critical components to extend the life of the plant by 10 years.[48] Thus, by 2026 Armenia must have a new and operational nuclear power plant, as it provides 40% of the electricity to Armenia. The only hindrance to its construction is the lack of funding. The project will require five billion USD for construction; currently, Russia is the only donor with an offer of 4.5 billion USD.[49]

A new power plant would not only provide Armenia with adequate generation capacity to provide for energy independence, but it will also allow it to sell its surplus to its neighbors, such as Georgia, Iran, and other CIS countries. It may be wise for the EU or France to contribute to the funding of this project, as it will hasten the creation of a safer nuclear operation, and it will allow for return on investment with the EU through economic, energy, and diplomatic gains. Also, this project provides an opportunity to bolster relations between Armenia and Georgia by offsetting the dependence on Russian energy.

An additional consideration is the Trump administration's decision to pull the United States out of the JCPOA (Joint-Comprehensive Plan of Action) with Iran.[50] In pulling out of the deal, the United States will be re-imposing strict sanctions on Iran[51] and businesses of allied countries that conduct business with Iran, leaving Iran desperate for a regional economic partner. Armenia is positioned to take advantage of this opportunity, specifically with a new nuclear facility. Considering these strategic energy moves, Armenia may have the opportunity for financial and diplomatic gains and to strategically rebalance power relationships.

Russia's Role

Russian-Armenian relations have a long history, most notably beginning after the treaty of Turkmenchay, signed between Persia (Iran) and Russia in 1828, wherein it was agreed that Russia would occupy the territory dedicated to the hosted

[47] Armen Manvelyan, "Energy Security in Armenia: Challenges and Opportunities," in *The South Caucasus 2018: Facts, Trends, Future Scenarios* (Tbilisi: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2013), 127-128, 137.

[48] "Nuclear Power in Armenia," World Nuclear Association, March 2018, www.world-nuclear.org/information-library/country-profiles/countries-a-f/armenia.aspx.

[49] "Nuclear Power in Armenia."

[50] Mark Landler, "Trump Abandons Iran Nuclear Deal He Long Scorned," *The New York Times*, May 8, 2018, https://nyti.ms/2KMeG2f.

[51] "Executive Order Reimposing Certain Sanctions with Respect to Iran," The White House, August 6, 2018, https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-reimposing-certain-sanctions-respect-iran/.

Armenian population.[52] From the perspective of many Armenians, the Russians saved the Armenians from the Turks following the Genocide by giving them security under the Soviet Union.[53] Besides a brief moment of independence in 1917, Armenia became a sovereign state in 1991 after about 70 years of Soviet rule.[54]

While Russia is Armenia's energy and military security guarantor, primary trade partner and ally, Russia helps as much as it hinders Armenia. First, due to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan, Armenia endures internal, regional, and international negative consequences as discussed previously. Although Russia is not involved in the conflict, it is the only power that can unilaterally end the conflict. However, without Russia and its security guarantees for Armenia the conflict cannot be solved either. Furthermore, it is not in Russia's interest to end the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict for a plurality of reasons – primarily because it allows Russia to maintain some control over the two former Soviet Republics through dependence (economic, military, and diplomatic) and, secondly, Russia has the opportunity for financial gain through arms sales to both Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Second, while Armenia strives to become energy independent, it is dependent on Russian state-owned companies that have nearly monopolized the energy sector of Armenia[55]; this includes the Metsamor nuclear facility, which is operated by a Russian subsidiary company.[56] In addition, Armenia's strides to become energy independent through alternative sources like hydroelectric, solar, wind, or the building of a new nuclear facility are all hindered by lack of funding.[57] Therefore, Russia provides funding to invest in these projects under the conditionality that Russian companies profit from them in return for the investment.[58] Thus, in practice, Armenia still cannot become energy independent.

Third, because Armenia is dependent on Russian oil and gas, it joined the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) in 2013 for further subsidized rates on its energy imports.[59] There is also speculation that, in light of the EU's interest in Armenia,

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[52] "The Treaty of Turkmenchay between Russia and Iran Signed," Russian Federation Presidential Library, February 22, 1828, https://www.prlib.ru/en/history/619048.

[53] Razmik Panossian, "Post-Soviet Armenia: Nationalism & Its (Dis)contents," in *After Independence: Making and Protecting the Nation in Postcolonial and Postcommunist* States, ed. Lowell W. Barrington (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), 226, https://www.press.umich.edu/pdf/0472098985-ch9.pdf.

[54] Panossian, "Post-Soviet Armenia," 225-226.

[55] Paul Stronski, "Armenia at Twenty-Five: A Rough Ride," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 6, 2017, https://carnegieendowment.org/2016/12/07/armenia-at-twenty-five-rough-ride-pub-66351.

[56] "Nuclear Power in Armenia."

[57] "Nuclear Power in Armenia."

[58] "Nuclear Power in Armenia."

[59] Pasquale De Micco. "When Choosing Means Losing: The Eastern Partners, the EU, and the Eurasian Economic Union," European Parliament, March 2015, 20, http://greater-europe.org/archives/5742.

Russia implicitly pressured Armenia to join the EEU in order to exercise greater control.[60] Regardless of Armenia's success in negotiating deals with both the EU and the EEU,[61] the EEU still restricts Armenia from other western trade deals that could assist in diversifying its partners.

Fourth, Armenia's economy is dependent on seasonal or permanent labor remittances from Russia. About 14% of Armenia's annual GDP is generated from these remittances,[62] giving Russia further leverage over Armenian politics and economy.

Fifth, Armenia suffers from Western sanctions placed on Russia. Due to worsening relations between Russia and the West, more sanctions on Russia have been levied following Russia's interference in the U.S. elections and the attempted assassination of Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Salisbury, UK. The impact on Armenia is direct, because the sanctions specifically target Russian oligarchs who control the companies that dominate Armenia's economy, such as Gazprom and Rosneft.[63,64]

Conclusion: Armenia's Options

Although Armenia is at a geopolitical disadvantage in the region, it has some options to consider. First, Armenia must strive to find a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; most preferably through the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. If a settlement can be reached between Azerbaijan and Armenia, many of the consequential issues Armenia faces will disappear as relations begin to repair and borders and trade open up.

Second, Armenia can diversify and enhance its energy sector. It can start by seeking international funding for development of alternative energy sources (wind, solar, hydro). This will offset the dependency on Russian energy and give Armenia a greater surplus to sell on regional markets. In addition, it is pertinent that Armenia finance and construct a new operational nuclear facility by 2026 to ensure the country has enough energy. If Armenia can acquire finances from various international investors instead of solely Russia, that will allow Armenia to further reduce its dependence and debt with Russia.

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[60] "Armenia Joins Eurasia Union," *Radio Azatutyun*, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, January 3, 2015, https://www.azatutyun.am/a/26774782.html.

[61] Emil Danielyan, "EU Reveals Landmark Deal With Armenia," *Radio Azatutyun*, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, October 16, 2017, www.azatutyun.am/a/28798353.html.

[62] "Personal Remittances, received (% of GDP)," The World Bank, 2018. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=AM.

[63] "Sectoral Identifications List," Office of Foreign Assets Control, U.S. Department of Treasury, July 25, 2018, 4 and 51, https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/SDN-List/Pages/ssi_list.aspx.

[64] "Enforcement Information for July 20, 2017," Office of Foreign Assets Control, U.S. Department of Treasury, July 20, 2017, 1, https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/CivPen/Documents/20170720_exxonmobil.pdf.

Third, considering the completion of the TANAP and the re-imposition of Iranian sanctions, development of the North-South Energy Corridor would be a wise option.

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Research Findings

Countering Radicalism in the North Caucasus

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Compiled and edited by Frederic Labarre

Abstract: This article is an abridged version of the proceedings of the PfP Consortium's Conflict Studies Working Group (CSWG) workshop which took place in Berlin, 7-9 November 2016. The workshop, entitled "Countering Radical Islamism in the North Caucasus" welcomed representatives of Germany, Poland, Romania, Russia, including of course the North Caucasus. It was organized by the PfP Consortium at the behest of Ivan A. Babin, director of the Center for Scientific and Social Innovation (Stavropol, Russia) and Baron Udo von Massenbach, president of the German-American Business Association. Carmen Rijnoveanu presided the conference.

The workshop's aim was to highlight the gravity of Islamic radicalization in the North Caucasus, and treat it as a symptom of wider geopolitical and social upheavals worldwide. In putting the accent on the scope of the challenge, our Russian guests were also stressing that the successful defeat of movements like DAESH requires East-West cooperation.

This cooperation should help open dialogue between the great powers in our Ukraine and Syria-fueled "Cold War." Urgency and cooperation are some of the themes that motivate each presentation in the workshop. This paper has collected presentations that were representative of its intent. They are presented here translated and edited, with the understanding that the opinions they represent are those of the authors only, and in no way reflect that of any government or organization. Each piece is identified by its proponent, and all the pieces are interspersed with short commentaries designed to bring unity to the whole document.

Keywords: Caucasus, terrorism, radicalism, Islamism, religion, civil society, mass media.

THE MASS MEDIA AS COUNTER-IDEOLOGY TOOL

Anton Chablin

According to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), there are approximately 31 000 fighters in the ISIS ranks in Iraq and Syria at the present moment. By comparison, Al Qaeda had 3 000 at its peak. On the side of regular national forces, this is nearly half of the U.S. Marine Corps' strength and a little less than half of the total Canadian armed forces (all elements combined).

Comparison with established armies is pertinent because ISIS aims at statehood, and had an economy. In effect, it is worth about 2 billion USD, and can count on 2-3 million USD daily in oil revenues, for it controls oil fields and small refineries, the product of which is sold through Turkey.[1] Such revenues allow it to attract foreign fighters by paying them anywhere from 1000 to 4500 USD a month. These are powerful numbers, difficult to beat by Russian and North Caucasus economies especially. It is not surprising that the second most important point of origin of foreign fighters is Russia.

Economic incentivization is an important enabler of radicalism, and one which gravely complicates the task of the police and intelligence services, since "profiling" thereby becomes unreliable. Thus, 26-year-old Shamil Abdulazizov, a religious neophyte without education or career prospects nevertheless underwent terrorism training Syria. Meanwhile, Marlud Kerimov, 21, was a promising medical student from a non-religious family whose members had important functions in local and state-level security apparatuses. A third case is Beslan Medaev, a North Caucasus University Law Faculty graduate with a promising career as an attorney. He and his wife trekked through Chechnya to get to Syria, where he became an invalid. Socio-economic conditions are therefore a powerful explanatory tool for the choices made by would-be radicals.

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[1] The idea that ISIS is actively seeking statehood is part of the ISIS mythology and recruitment appeal. Whether it needs statehood to survive is a matter of debate. However, there is evidence that there is correlation between the group's revenue and the control of territory. As a result, military effort has been pursuing a two-objective strategy of curtailing revenue generation (mainly oil and gas related) and territorial control by the group. Latest figures of monthly revenue for ISIS appear to be some 4 million USD, down from 45 million USD in 2015, according to some sources. For more insights, see Erika Solomon, Guy Chazan and Sam Jones, "ISIS Inc.: How Oil Fuels the Jihadi Terrorists," *Financial Times*, October 15, 2015, www.ft.com/content/b8234932-719b-11e5-ad6d-f4ed76f0900a, and Ahmet S. Yayla and Colin P. Clarke, "Turkey's Double ISIS Standard," *Foreign Policy*, https://foreignpolicy.com/ 2018/04/12/turkeys-double-isis-standard/, as well as Mara Revkin and Jacob Olidort, "Does ISIS Need Territory to Survive?" *New York Times Room for Debate*, October 26, 2016, www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/10/21/does-isis-need-territory-to-survive; and Bennett Seftel interviewing Patrick Johnston: "Oil, Extortion Still Paying Off for ISIS," *TheRANDBlog* (RAND Corporation, 27 October 2017), www.rand.org/blog/2017/10/oil-extortion-still-paying-off-for-isis.html. All sources consulted on September 28, 2018.

Another enabling factor is the influence prevalent and attractive—if not addictive—social media. Robert Herrigan, director of the United Kingdom's GCHQ, claims that social media has become the command and control network of terrorists. The space lacks here to explain the mechanisms of how social media affects behavior. However, it is nevertheless possible to presume that individuals can be receptive to positive messaging, and be led away from terrorist activities regardless of social conditions. Positive messaging, including public praise and recognition for those who have chosen NOT to join ISIS, is one method.

The Center for Scientific and Social Innovation supports and reports on activities that it and other non-governmental organizations carry out, highlighting the positive example of young people deaf to ISIS' siren call. In parallel, the Center assiduously informs its audience of the negative physical, legal and social consequences of yielding to self-radicalization.

However, local think thanks and even large government agencies do not have the means that ISIS can deploy. Therefore, defeating radical Islamism by ISIS' own devices will not be accomplished by stylish counter-propaganda alone. The challenge posed by radicalism requires concerted and combined efforts by many actors and countries. We argue here that the urgency is sufficiently great for geopolitical adversaries to join forces.

THE AIM OF COUNTERING RADICAL ISLAMISM AMONG THE YOUTH OF THE NORTH CAUCASUS

Ivan A. Babin

Analyses made by our "Center for Scientific and Social Innovation" in Stavropol show that the religious factor plays a role in activating the extremist behavior of young people. But it would be erroneous to consider that the phenomenon of "Islamic radicalism" is entirely determined by religious reasons. "Islamic radicalism" is aggravated by the fact that the usual expressions of protest over difficult material conditions and social injustice, along with manifestations of criminality, find a religious justification in youth consciousness. It is no accident that in the North Caucasus today there is intense attention devoted to the religious and ideological indoctrination of the younger generation by Islamist leaders.

Radical Islamic leaders, trying to legitimize and de-secularize social relations, tend to exaggerate the role of the religious factor in the protest actions of young people. Thus, they are trying to open new opportunities for strengthening the processes of radicalization of the youth of the North Caucasus. Three approaches help mitigate youth radicalization in the North Caucasus: 1) we must emphasize the aggressive and volatile nature of religious extremism, in particular of radical Islam; 2) it is important to take into account the peculiarities and complexities of the regions of the North Caucasus, and 3) we must understand how the internet and social networks increase self-radicalization of young people.

There are further factors to consider. To begin with, the external factors—political, ideological and socio-economic conditions of youth radicalization—

need to be considered. Alongside those are the "internal" factors, which are just as important, if not more. Particular attention must be paid to local history and culture, to the quality of interaction among communities on the one hand, and with the authorities on the other. Also, the role of diaspora youth leaders and of ethno-confessional associations cannot be ignored.

Second, the creation of formal, recognized and legitimate local institutions and systems whose task is to counteract and eliminate the influence of aggression and conflict is recommended and encouraged. The objective of such institutions should be to discredit extremist narrative, muffle publications, literature and material promoting social agitation, in hard copy or online (on the internet and in social media) bent on radical Islamist ideology. Its activities should be to study the nature of the conflict and the development of trends particular to the North Caucasus, and prepare the ground for effective dialogue to eliminate contradictions among communities.

Finally, in our opinion, methods of radicalism prevention among the youth of the North Caucasus must account for the specifics of the region, as well as cooperation with the clergy. The Russian Orthodox Church, Orthodox seminars, the Sufi community, and civil society organizations for the spiritual administration of Muslims of the North Caucasus must cooperate with one another.

Coaching for the prevention of religious extremism involves communication among various leaders of youth associations through the creation of innovative interaction formats (theater technology, film clubs, language groups, volunteerism in general, and others). Also, the maintenance and coordination of further religious and ideological extremism prevention activities among young people should be carried out on the basis of the Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the State Duma to counter Islamic radicalism. The development and introduction of an alternative to radical and extremist ideas and narratives, could take the form of the Mashuk 2016 and Dombai 2016 initiatives. These aim at stimulating patriotism, multiculturalism, education, physical and spiritual health.

The development of an internet—and social media-based information system—against self-radicalization would supplement the efforts described above. All these activities will enhance the ability of the youth of the North Caucasus to resist radical Islamism and resolve ethno-confessional conflicts and ensure peace in the region.

In conclusion, it is very important to emphasize the positive experience of Russia in counteracting Islamic radicalism, in particular in the North Caucasus. In the conditions of growth of the Islamist and jihadist movement under the banner of the Islamic State, which is a serious challenge to the Russian statehood, serious adjustments to the approaches to state-confessional relations and to religious policies are needed. In this regard, the primary task is to understand who can become the main ally in opposing Islamic radicalism, even if any new ally is always welcome.

The aim should be the formation of a common "Russian Islam" as a traditional version of a world religion, implemented in a specific socio-historical and na-

tional framework. This version is the best way to preserve one's faith while at the same time preserving loyalty to Russian power, statehood and culture. Within this framework "Russian Islam" implies that, ideologically, politically and organizationally, being in Russia does not interfere but helps preserve your religion, the faith of your ancestors, and not some "pure" Islam, introduced from outside and not related to the traditions of the peoples living in Russia.

Russia, it is well known, does things its own way. The notion of a "Russian Islam" needs no precise definition. It is sufficient here to understand the concept that the multi-confessional, multi-cultural and multi-national character of the Russian Federation will lead to a sui generis reconciliation. The presentation below argues that such reconciliation of culture and faiths within a strong and stable Russia should be the aim—the grand strategy—of counter-radicalization.

However, Russian democracy is also unique. Islamic radicalism challenges its development in special ways as well. For the proponents of Russian democratization, the growing threat is how radicals use any democratic openness (in Western regimes as well) and cultural equanimity to steer centers of faith against the state. This phenomenon is not new; it is called "entryism" and it is a threat to any democracy however defined and however developed.

ISLAMIC "ENTRYISM" IN RUSSIAN RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Yuri Vasilyev

Russia is a multi-confessional country. According to various estimates, there are from 20 to 30 million Muslims, including migrant workers from Central Asia, some 78 million Orthodox Christians, and hundreds of thousands of Catholics, Jews, Buddhists and representatives of other religions in Russia. The last decades witnessed the active politicization of religion among the population in Europe and Asia. More frequently, we hear of the politicization of Islam, Islamic fundamentalism, radical Islam, and of the ideology of Islamism. It is no secret that radical Islam, with its inherent ideology of extremism and terrorism, has become a threat to world security. Russia is not aloof from these problems and is fully aware of the global danger of radical Islam both inside the country and outside it (i.e. in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Central Asia).

Muslims today are the youngest confessional group in the world. The average age in the Muslim world is only 23 years, while the global average age of the believer is 28 years. By comparison, the age for Christians is 30 years and Buddhists 34 years. Perhaps that is why, because of the age and absence of charismatic religious figures, we nowhere hear the terms political Christianity, political Buddhism, political Judaism, etc., whereas political or radical Islam is spoken of as if it were a real phenomenon. However, we need to clearly understand that it is not necessary to fight with Islam on this basis. It is tempting to do so, because Muslim radicals and extremists use the phraseology of Islam, use the rhetoric of

Islamic preachers and cover themselves with Islamic slogans. However, in general, this is merely a pseudo-religious pathos, which pursues ideological and political goals. We reject this view here, because in the North Caucasus most Muslims profess a primordially traditional or moderate Islam. Muslims often call themselves radical Kharijites (who left Islam). The feelings of the believers are something sacred that we must orient towards society and the state.

Moderate Islam calls for simply living and working, not fighting or expressing political protest. That is why moderate Muslim politicians working in this tense situation lose popularity among certain segments of society, especially young people. Youth today have a sharpened sense of justice which is radical in words, feelings and actions. About 30 percent of young people in the North Caucasus profess a radical Islam and this cannot be ignored.

Moderate Islam allows us to form an interfaith peace, cooperation and harmony, akin to Orthodox Christianity. Traditional Christianity promotes peace and dialogue, and all its activities emphasize inter-confessional tolerance. During the last five years, the city of Stavropol hosted the World Russian People's Council—held by the Christian church, socio-political organizations, regional authorities with the active participation of all faiths—as an example of cooperation, peace and constructiveness.

I would like to note that Orthodox Christianity, having become institutionalized in the bosom of the Church proper, does not seek to create Christian religious organizations on a civil basis, or civil organizations on a religious basis, confining itself to enlightening activities among believers, mainly during religious holidays. In addition to these activities, the Church has been increasingly involved in social patriotic events, thereby strengthening the educational impact on youth and the adult population. The process of creation of civil society structures in Russia in the segment of religious organizations is quite impressive if one casts a glance at Table 1, below.

Religious organizations in general make a significant contribution to the formation of a civil society and carry out a number of important social functions: educational, vocational training, socialization of the younger generation, and the promotion of political secularism and religious tolerance.

The picture is slightly different with Islam. The spread of radical political Islam is progressing. The most alarming is the expansion of Islamist networks in various important types of social media targeting youth, officialdom, and the criminal world. Now a "Wahhabi International" is being formed, which carries out or is responsible for the overwhelming majority of terrorist attacks in the Russian Federation. A particularly disturbing signal of spiritual decrepitude is the phenomenon of new converts. Persons of Slavonic origin, ethnic Russians and Christians embrace Islam and very soon become radical leaders themselves. At present, there is an increase in the number of muftis who are not under the control of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims. This allows radical Islamists to register as independent organizations, take official positions and speak on behalf of all

Table 1. Table 1: Religious/Civil Society Organizations in the North Caucasus.
(*Source*: Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation)

Territory/Region	Total # of religious organizations	# of organizations that are Muslim
Chechen Republic	133	125
Dagestan	784	753
Ingushetia	19	16
Kabardino-Balkaria	192	136
Karachay-Cherkessia	172	123
North Ossetia	103	22
Stavropol	505	48

Muslims. They overpower official levels and substitute traditional Muslims in the cooperation with the state and civil society. Under the guise of a "moderate Islam" they require the authorities to support the rights of believers. In parallel, extremists penetrate the leadership of the mainstream traditional Muslim associations and change their priorities and attitudes towards radicalization.

Forecasts for the future development of radical Islam in Russia is not encouraging. The ultimate goal of the radicals is to totally control the Russian Islamic space (by 2030 in Russia there can be up to 50 percent of Muslims). At the same time, the actions of the radicals are coordinated. They have significant financial and informational support. In Dagestan, there exists one mosque per 1000 people, whereas in Orthodox regions of Russia there is one church for 10-15 thousand people. The number of mosques in the last 20 years in Russia has increased by 70 percent.

Only the united strength of all Muslim civil society forces in combination with the support of the Slavic Christian population can the development of the current scenario be stopped. If this does not happen in the coming years, then it will become increasingly difficult for Russia to remain a secular and democratic state in the end.

Radical Islamist organizations seek to take control of key institutions of civil society and use the already existing civil social network for their radical goals in the guise of "missionary," but in fact, socially destructive activities. Radicalism, especially Islamic, uses civil society as a base, although it is, in fact, its antithesis. Radicals seem to speak on behalf of and under the slogans of civil society, protecting the rights of believers. They develop as organizations that seek to use the social base of civil society to transform existing institutions ideologically and politically, softly ushering in a change in leadership, and invisible to outsiders, gradually change the course of the organization.

Civil society cultivates, by definition, a meticulously oppositional and critical view of the state's activities. This is what allows radicals from Islam to mimic and hide under socially constructive slogans, under religious and ethno-religious phraseology, showing wickedly sophisticated methods of influence. Under the guise of protecting the rights of believers or other socially positive activity, radicals gradually turn each mosque into an ideological center of radical Islam. They conduct openly subversive activities and, in a figurative sense, indoctrinate and persuade believers to perform acts of terrorism and martyrdom in the name of Allah.

Radical Islam in the North Caucasus purports to create a global religious nationalistic project for establishing a single Islamic state that corresponds to the spirit and letter of the original (early) Islam. Islamic radicalism in the North Caucasus has for the most part a pseudo-religious character, being one of the forms of realization of religious-nationalistic and separatist claims of various political-religious forces.

In the Northern Caucasus, the ways of building a civil society should be somewhat different than in its classical execution. The model of the effective functioning of civil society as an element of the organization of social life in the North Caucasus must account for the religious factor. In this context, it is very important to promote "moderate Islam," as well as a wide network of national public organizations. The concept of a "moderate Islam" assumes a balanced, constructive evolutionary approach to the development of the Muslim world.

In a state or regions where Islam is practiced, not everything should go against Islam. The North Caucasus has strong democratic traditions in the management of territories and ethnic communities (for example, the mountain *teips* of Dagestan and other titular ethnic groups). The mechanisms of democracy have worked for centuries not through the concept of individual rights, as in European states, but through the community, through *adat*, and to the adherence to the will of the majority and the elders. It is necessary to revive the institutions of traditional society in a modernized form and carefully incorporate its institutions into the structure of civil society, as an element of nationality, community wisdom and people's democracy. Only these democratic counterweights will help civil society to really resist radical Islam, clanism, corruption, and the destruction of the foundations of civil society.

Huge opportunities for the formation of civil attitudes of a socially-oriented value system of individuals and society are provided by educational institutions and, first of all, among secondary educational institutions and universities. In the process of education and upbringing of students and youth, ideological and moral guidelines, positive social attitudes and values necessary for a fully-functioning and tolerant society can be formed.

Educational institutions are powerful poles of influence on young people. That is why radical Islamic movements are actively seizing key positions in the system of Islamic education, discrediting traditional educational institutions and promoting the need for training Muslim clerics abroad, where they are trained,

in fact, only as emissaries of Salafism. In the 1990s, more than four thousand young citizens of the Russian Federation received an Islamic education abroad. Today in Russia, more than 2,000 imams have received a foreign religious education, more than 3,000 are on training and yet only 200 by the official permission of the Mufti.

Of course, much is being done in Russia to develop a Russian system of Islamic education in the North Caucasus (Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia), in Tatarstan (Kazan), and in Bashkortostan (Ufa). In secular educational institutions, educational disciplines and training courses have been introduced, the goal of which is fostering inter-religious tolerance and inter-ethnic harmony, the ability to communicate and live in a multicultural environment in mutual respect and friendship.

And there is a social base for such work. An empirical study of 140 schoolchildren and students in 2016 by random sampling showed the following picture when asked how they felt about people having a different religion. 73 percent were neutral in their attitude, 23 percent viewed this positively, and only 4 percent saw this negatively. When asked whether and under what circumstances they would support a radical religious group, 68 percent responded they would never support under any circumstance, 20 percent could not answer, while 5 percent believed that they would if such groups corresponded to their religious views. Four percent of respondents were divided between the opinions that such associations support the purity of religion or for a substantial monetary reward. Two percent, finally were divided between the support of radical religious groups in conditions of despair or under duress. Finally, to the question: How do you feel about people who are going to commit violence at the cost of their own lives (suicide bombers)? 87 had negative feelings, 9 percent were neutral, and 4 "other" percent believed that such people deserved death on their own.

As can be seen from the survey, although not very representative, the overwhelming majority of young people of different ethnic backgrounds do not support the guidelines of radical Islam and are determined to constructively consolidate, to cooperate regardless of faith and ethnicity. These conditions should be taken advantage of.

While evidence points to the overall rejection of Islamic radicalism in the North Caucasus, there is also an equally compelling body of evidence suggesting that, as a movement, it remains a latent risk to regional stability. In the piece that follows, the author argues that the structural bases that gave rise to DAESH are the result of nearly forty years of great power geopolitical competition.

Neglect is also a problem. Following the "Arab Spring," great powers have rapidly grown tired of the Middle East. This attitude is the culmination of several historical processes, among which the failure of Arab nationalism and Arab socialism. The ensuing emergence of DAESH can only be met by reconciling the forces of secular and clerical authorities of Islam and the regional Christian churches. In particular, legitimate religious processes and personalities should be

leveraged to authoritatively dissuade potential new adherents. These principles and methods should extend beyond the North Caucasus, and be a focus of dialogue between great powers.

It is pertinent to add here that religious extremism is not a problem of Islam alone. It is also a problem that afflicts the Christian civilization; witness Quran-burning churches in the Southern United States. Because of this, international and inter-confessional cooperation may be difficult to obtain. Worse, modern means of communication may drive sides further apart on this topic.

THE ROLE OF RELIGION AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN COUNTERING ISLAMIC RADICALISM

Mohammed Abdulvakhab Khesham

Islamic radicalism has become one of the trendier topics of media publications today. Unfortunately, in the pursuit of "sensationalism" many authors do not always take responsibility for such materials and exacerbate the problem.

It often happens that audiences removed from the experience of Islam form a distorted view of Muslims, promoting a so-called "demonization of the Islamic factor." European populations are frightened by Islam. The "enemy image" is then used by unscrupulous politicians as an information warfare tool in the hope of achieving their own selfish interests.

In turn, Muslims themselves are extremely sensitive to any speculation on religion. Muslim youth, not experienced with the motives of political intrigue, become "easy prey" to all kinds of morally irresponsible terrorist leaders. Thus, relations become deadlocked and do not contribute to the constructive solution of problems related to the international terrorist threat. Illustrative examples of the failure of this approach towards the "Islamic world" are the epithets "moderate opposition" and "Islamization" that are actively used in the media.

Just looking at the current intra-Syrian, intra-Semitic and other armed conflicts engendered by the "Arab spring," it becomes obvious that such qualifiers are senseless and illogical. After all, terrorists, regardless of their cause, a priori cannot be "moderate," as there cannot be "moderate" killers, rapists or criminals. It is also not logical to accuse Muslims of "Islamizing" Europe because of mass migration. This has been provoked by the West itself. Of course, migrants are not always the best representatives of the Arab civilization, which plays into the hands of propagandists of the "Islamic threat." At the same time, propaganda is silent about the fact that, had not there been external interference in the affairs of the Middle East, would-be migrants would have stayed peacefully in their homelands.

I reserve the right to say that the dialogue between Western and Eastern cultural civilizations is possible and even necessary. But artificially provoked, accelerated migration processes, burdened by the consequences of hostilities, can hardly contribute to such a dialogue and will only increase the potential for con-

flict. It is also worthwhile to dwell on the reasons for the surge of Islamic radicalism. As an economist, I consider this phenomenon in the context of the collapse of the ideological concept of building "Arab socialism," once dominant in the Middle East. Inspired by the Soviet socialist model, many Middle Eastern leaders (i.e. Nasser, Qaddafi, Assad, etc.) actively promoted the idea of consolidating Arab society on the basis of nationalization of the basic means of production and getting rid of colonial dependence. At one time it became a powerful impetus for the development of national economies of the countries of the Middle East. The industrial sector of the economy developed, large-scale projects were implemented in the field of transport infrastructure and energy.

Reacting to the "increasing Soviet influence," the West, in turn, actively supported traditional Arab monarchies. The aim of such a policy was to artificially restrict the orientation of the economic systems of these countries and constrain them to the role of "raw material" and commodities exporters. This allowed the West, and above all the US, to maintain a competitive advantage in other sectors of the global economy, and to better control the price of energy.

With the collapse of the USSR, the socialist concept lost its relevance, and the unsettled social and economic problems that had accumulated over the years have only aggravated the crisis in the national economies of these countries. In conditions of "ideological vacuum" there was a surge in the popularity of the "Islamic factor" as a new ideological concept consolidating the "Arab world" and feeding the anti-Israeli sentiment traditional in the Middle East. Unscrupulous Western politicians and terrorist leaders were well-suited to use this development to their advantage.

The "Arab Spring" movement attempts to change the consequences of the decolonization of the Arab countries, primarily by revising the results of the nationalization of the basic means of production in the energy sector and transport infrastructure. Radical Islamists, in turn, envision the unification of the Middle East on a religious basis in order to create a global terrorist enclave, abandoning the idea of the former national-state sovereignty of peoples. "DAESH" has been the result of these processes in the Middle East. There are no conditions for the successful economic development of regional states, where violence and the absolutely unique case of "state" and "international" terrorism is rampant on a transnational scale.

Civil society institutions and religious organizations have a role in combating this phenomenon, if certain ideological, political and economic aspects are considered.

1. The *ideological* aspect of such participation is the cooperation of all progressive forces of the world community and the development of common approaches to the definition of a negative attitude to "DAESH" and those political regimes that encourage international terrorism. This is a powerful tool, if we take into account the authority of spiritual leaders openly criticizing terrorism.

Islamic doctrine is rich in examples of the publication of "fatwas" which are generally binding Muslims religious regulations. They contain specific explana-

tions, prohibitions and rules of conduct, are extremely clear and simple in understanding. An effective way of issuing "fatwas" condemning "DAESH" would be through the leadership of the "World Council of Muslim Scientists," whose representatives are officially endowed with such powers and are able to take such an initiative in the interests of believers.

Equally effective would be the practice of coordinating the efforts of public institutions in organizing information and mass protest actions against unscrupulous politicians directly in countries whose regimes are involved in armed conflicts. Politicians cannot endlessly ignore criticism by their own electorate.

At the same time, I want to draw the attention to the need to take into account the peculiarities of the mentality of the Arabs. Here, propaganda of the "Western values of democracy" will not work, because such "freedom" in the Middle East, as in any conservative society, will be associated negatively with sexual promiscuity, depravity, that is, with "sin." In this sense, the West is not an authority for the Middle East. It is much more important for civilian institutions in Europe to exert pressure on their governments, so that these countries openly demonstrate to the "Arab world" their readiness for an equitable dialogue. A clear example of such a demonstration may be the interaction with Muslims in their own country. Such a positive experience exists in Russia, as demonstrated by my own experience. Russian Muftis actively participate in the social adaptation of Muslims, help the official authorities to effectively implement domestic policy. This, in turn, is confirmed by the restoration of the economy in the republics of the Northern Caucasus, where there used to be a problem of radicalization of Muslims.

2. The *political* aspects of the collaboration of civil society institutions and religious organizations in countering radicalism should encourage the adoption by governments of the permanent members of the UN Security Council of a new resolution on Syria, which would include the following clauses:

a) The Syrians themselves must determine the political settlement of the intra-Syrian armed conflict, as well as the future destiny of the people of Syria;

b) the support of terrorists under the pretext of their correlation with opposition forces is contrary to international law and is an illegal interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state; and

c) the use of military force on the territory of foreign states is permissible only if the majority of members of the UN Security Council recognize the international terrorist threat emanating from this region without dividing its sources into "moderate" or "excessive" opposition.

3. All progressive civil society forces should provide assistance for the social adaptation of Muslims in the countries of the Middle East. A key aspect of such assistance could be the development of recommendations on the employment of Muslims in the framework of international economic projects requiring a minimum involvement of foreign labor. The same organizations, acting in support of

such projects as "observers," could establish salaries in accordance with local standards of living. Using this "Islamic labor market" outside of the Middle East could be organized through the creation of an international labor agency with the accreditation of its branches in countries experiencing a shortage of labor. This would effectively avoid spontaneous and uncontrolled migration.

Finally, I want to emphasize again that the problem of radicalization of Muslims today is a problem for the world community, not only of the Muslims themselves. Only the world community can solve this problem.

While the previous contribution highlighted the modalities of international and inter-confessional cooperation, the contribution below alerts us to the risks posed by continued disagreements between great powers. Great power confrontation continues to play in the hands of smaller powers that are supporting radicalism. Furthermore, confrontation distracts attention from the common threat that radicalism represents, and deters them from taking their responsibility to effectively cooperate against DAESH. The risk is not DAESH per se. Rather, it is the ascendance and authority gained by terrorist sponsors at the moment when great powers are exhausting themselves.

POTENTIAL DIMENSIONS OF RUSSIAN-WESTERN COOPERATION IN FIGHTING RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM

Andrei Kazantsev

The main idea here is that Russian-Western counter-terrorist cooperation can take place in spite of current disagreements on Ukraine and Syria, Afghanistan and Central Asia. Also, some issues related to the Caucasus have their origin in the Middle East and, therefore, their solution will have positive impact on the Caucasus.

But first, let's describe the positions of the great powers concerning the Middle East. Everyone knows that Russia and the West share many contradictions in fighting terror, especially in the case of Syria. The position of the West boils down to four points; 1) Assad and his regime must disappear from the Syrian political scene; 2) Russia should not fight against the secular or moderate Islamic opposition; 3) Russia should not use disproportionate or indiscriminate force, especially in Aleppo, and 4) Russia is on the same side as some Shia terrorist organizations, such as Hezbollah.

Russia's official position on these critical points is as follows. First, regime stability in Syria is important because if Syria turns into a failed state as Libya or Afghanistan, that would mean a growth of terrorist threat to everyone. State failure in Syria is already happening. Also, from the Kremlin's point of view, the change of power in Syria should be legitimate and should not be based on the simple military overthrow of the Assad government, which still is legitimate in the eyes of Syria's interest groups, especially of religious minorities. Of course,

Syrian statehood is not synonymous to Assad's regime, but in practice the revolution in Syria against this regime has opened a Pandora's Box, an example that could be followed by lots of different ethnic and religious groups that would rock the Middle East for years, if not decades to come.

Second, it is very hard to differentiate between radical and moderate opposition taking into account that in reality there are hundreds of different field units that weekly change their affiliation in Syria. As a result, some of the military assistance provided by the West ends up in the possession of terrorist groups connected to Al-Qaeda, as Al-Nusra, for example.

Third, in modern guerilla wars it is technically very hard to use force proportionally and discriminately. The American experience in Afghanistan and Iraq demonstrates this very well. So, this is not political, but a purely technical problem, and the growth of cooperation between Russia and the West, especially in the intelligence field, can help to overcome this problem.

Irrespective of all of these, compromise between Russia and the West is still possible and it can include the following recommendations: 1) agreeing together to a common list of terrorist organizations in Syria; 2) intensifying cooperation in fighting these groups, especially ISIS and Al-Nusra; 3) preserving Syrian statehood and agreeing to promote political reform in Syria and the formation of democratic coalition government that would include all important groups, including the Kurds, Syrian Alawites and Christians.

On the positive side, both Russia and the West officially agree on the necessity to fight international terrorism in Afghanistan and Central Asia. So, this is an important channel of dialogue that can help support cooperation despite the situation of Ukrainian conflict.

I would propose the following dimensions of our cooperation with regards to Afghanistan:

1. Increasing assistance to the government of Afghanistan. The West, and especially Europe, now tends to neglect Afghanistan and this is a huge mistake. Many experts agree that if there is a complete withdrawal of American troops, the Afghan government will collapse. The negative trends in Afghanistan are clear now. There is widespread destabilization, especially in the previously stable Northern Afghanistan, where there is a transfer of terrorist groups from Northwest Pakistan, influx of money from the Middle East, a resurgence of Al-Qaeda, and penetration by ISIS.
2. Increasing Russian and Western security assistance to Central Asia. There is growing contagious instability, spreading due to destabilization of the Afghan North. Also, there are foreign fighters joining ISIS, such as for example Colonel Khalimov, the new ISIS "defense minister." The economic crisis brewing could stimulate terrorist activity even in stable countries like Kazakhstan. A potential new wave of migration to EU is possible, this time from Central Asia and Afghanistan, because of this. Russia does not have the practice of applying widely its political asylum

legislation, so only the migrants that can be economically absorbed can remain in Russia.

3. We should step up our dialogue on non-violent measures to prevent radicalization and recruitment to terrorist organizations. This is a huge problem today both for the EU and Russia. According to official assessments, Russia is now the second most frequent point of origin of foreign fighters in the Middle East after Tunisia and before Saudi Arabia. The two most dangerous terrorist organizations in the Post-Soviet space—the Caucasus Emirate and Islamic movement of Uzbekistan—have declared themselves the branches of ISIS.

Finally, we should organize more common Russian-Western discussions on counter-terrorist and counter-radicalization issues. This is practically important considering that the terrorist threat targets everyone, and taking into account that this can be the most important channel of strategic dialogue in the situation of the so-called new Cold war. Unfortunately, there are too few opportunities to meet and discuss such issues of common interest.

The CSWG workshop on Countering Islamic Radicalism in the North Caucasus was very successful insofar as it addressed several aspects of modern conflict.

At the strategic level, the CSWG brought together regional experts who seldom find a platform in the West, and we are happy to have provided that. Their perspective on geopolitical confrontation was novel, as was their argument for "civilizational" cooperation in the face of an ever-present threat of Islamic radicalism.

At the regional level, rarely do we have the privilege of being briefed by experts coming from that region. Experts have argued that the troubles of the North Caucasus are indicative of wider structural problems that find resonance worldwide. In effect, the North Caucasus is a microcosm of what may be affecting other regions and communities in the world.

At operational level, the workshop presented an excellent opportunity to check our collective bearings regarding the state of inter-confessional conflict, an aspect that the CSWG has touched only briefly in the development of its Counter-Insurgency Reference Curriculum (COIN) in 2015-2016.

COIN would never be needed if there were effective counter-radicalization methods. The fact that the PfP Consortium is only now dealing with this issue is testimony of the fact that it is a sensitive topic. By hosting this workshop, we hope to have laid the groundwork argued for in the pages that have preceded; that of more frequent and more diverse meetings at international, inter-confessional and inter-civilizational levels.

Cooperation is one of the themes celebrated in the preceding pages. The second theme is that there should be more concerted use of modern communication methods to defeat the DAESH narrative. Ultimately, this suggests that not only should our respective civil society and religious authorities reconcile their efforts,

but also that our respective socio-economic models should be beneficial for the greater number. Statistics on all sides of the civilizational divide show that this is not the case.

Finally, the risks inherent in great power strife cannot be overestimated. Lest there is a dialogue opened on the most pressing disagreements, we are likely to witness the ever-increasing prestige of adversaries that support Islamic radicals, and the entrenchment of nihilistic messaging against the established powers. We would therefore be well-advised to unite our forces.

Disclaimer

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Practitioners' Views

The Future of Terrorism: The Practitioners' View

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Abstract: In this essay, the author—an experienced intelligence officer and currently lead for the counter-terrorism program at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies—reviews the future developments of international terrorism in three main areas: motivations; tactics, weapons and technology, and targets.

Keywords: terrorism, counterterrorism, War or Terrorism.

The 9/11 Commission identified "lack of imagination" within the counter-terrorism community as a key reason for the failure to stop the attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in 2001. The failure to realize that airplanes themselves could be used as weapons contributed to the fact that the plot was not detected, and appropriate counter-measures were not taken. It is therefore important for counter-terrorism professionals to try to think from the terrorists' perspective and to consider possible ways they might adapt and innovate in the future.

The Program on Terrorism and Security Studies (PTSS) at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Garmisch-Partenkirchen brings together counter-terrorism professionals and practitioners from around the world for a month twice a year to study contemporary terrorism and the tools and strategies needed to combat it. The 68 participants from 48 countries who attended the PTSS in July 2018 were tasked to use their informed imagination and to think of plausible ways that terrorism might evolve within the next ten years. Participants were asked to provide their assessments in three main areas: motivations, tactics/ weapons/ technology and likely targets.

Motivations

The group concluded that Salafi-jihadist ideology will continue to play a major role in global terrorist motivations in the near term. A growing youth population with limited economic and social opportunities, exposed vicariously to excitement and adventure via modern social media, will be susceptible to those peddling real-life adventure and purpose through membership in a terrorist organization – as was done so successfully by ISIS in recent years. Growing economic inequality, combined with frustration caused by limited employment opportunities for growing youth populations was thus noted as a continued driver for jihadist terrorism, but also for a potential resurgence in left-wing politically motivated violence.

As sizable populations move across borders due to either violence, climate issues or lack of economic opportunity, the growth of radical, anti-immigrant and anti-integration factions established to 'defend' the host nations' identity against foreign cultures and religions is likely. Just as probable will be the formation of reciprocal 'self-defense' groups from within the immigrant community ready to use violence to achieve political power to protect their group against perceived marginalization. Existing terrorist organizations could just as well recruit from within the vulnerable and marginalized immigrant community by styling themselves as their defenders against a hostile or uncaring host nation's population.

Finally, a backlash against advanced technology applications which replace unskilled labor may also become a concern. Economic inequality and job losses caused by technology will most likely be a challenge which governments will find difficult to address, leading to grievances ripe for exploitation. In such a scenario, the prospect of 'technophobe' terrorism is not unrealistic.

Tactics, Weapons and Technology

The PTSS participants noted that guns and explosives were the most widespread type of weaponry in use today. There was little expectation that this would change dramatically over the next decade. Guns and bombs have proven effective and are relatively easy to obtain and employ. While a great deal of resources have been devoted by governments to address the threat to civil aviation, terrorists have made widespread use of ordinary cars and trucks to carry out attacks in numerous venues to include Nice, Barcelona, Berlin, London, Stockholm, and New York City. Due to the relative ease of carrying out these attacks and their recent successes, there is little reason to expect a drop in this particular tactic. Technological applications to expand the use of driverless cars and trucks present advantages for society, but also challenges requiring them to be safeguarded to prevent their use in remote attacks against civilian or governmental targets.

Terrorists have already started to use drones, at times in swarms, as observed within the past year both in Syria and Iraq. The proliferation of commercially-

available, ever more-capable drones and the expansion of their roles in the business and delivery sectors will inevitably result in more frequent use by terrorists. The use of drones in the attempted assassination of Venezuelan President Maduro on the 4th of August 2018 is an early example of the expanded threat that drones will play in the future. The inevitable continued commercial advances in drone miniaturization and programming will present challenges for security services already struggling to adapt to the rapid evolution in drone technology.

The potential use of a weapon of mass destruction (WMD), while perhaps still unlikely, remains a tactic with the potential for outsized impact and influence on a civilian population. Increased urbanization and ever-increasing population densities will multiply and spread a WMD's effect, whether it be chemical, biological or radiological in nature. Instantaneous and unfiltered social media-hosted communication within populations would provoke panic and potentially overwhelm official attempts to provide accurate and appropriate information regarding the true nature and extent of the threat to its citizens.

There already exists an understanding among counter terrorism practitioners that there is convergence of actions and activities between organized criminal organizations and terrorists. This is neither unforeseen, novel nor calamitous and in some cases, it can open opportunities for exploitation by security officials. Participants noted that this terror-crime linkage is likely to grow and deepen, complicating efforts by governmental agencies to address this networked threat.

The cyber realm is increasingly exploited by criminals and financial extortionists and it seems reasonable to expect terrorists, learning and adapting from their criminal brethren, to use this methodology to threaten governments to accede to their political demands. Indeed, cyber-skilled terrorists will increasingly exploit online vulnerabilities as governments and everyday consumers rely ever more on the internet. Looking to the future, the rapidly expanding 'Internet of Things,' which is used to run devices and applications central to daily life, is likely to be susceptible to disruption, manipulation and coercion. With cyber operations in mind, it is worth highlighting the fact that most current definitions or understandings of terrorism contain an element of violence or threat of violence. Perhaps this understanding needs to be expanded to include actions which threaten the safety and well-being of populations. Examples might be threats or actual attacks on water or electricity supplies, banking, or air traffic control networks that do not necessarily result in physical destruction.

Targets

The PTSS participants noted that public transportation networks, which are difficult to protect and expose large numbers of civilians to attack, are likely to remain targeted. While airlines and trains have been attacked in the past, ferries and cruise ships were specifically identified as transportation modes which appear to offer a number of advantages as targets from a terrorist perspective. Other soft targets like street festivals, sporting events and music venues will also remain attractive. Tourist locations that draw a large number of international

visitors are difficult to protect in a way that does not deter travelers. For terrorists, attacking such a target ensures widespread global reporting. The 2015 attacks at the Bardo Museum and Sousse beach in Tunisia killed citizens from fourteen nations throughout Europe, Asia, and South America. Such attacks of course also result in significant economic damage for the countries concerned.

The participants further noted the increasing likelihood of attacks by and on children. Indonesia witnessed attacks by families with children in May 2018 and children mounted attacks in Chechnya in August. As nations receive back their citizens who joined Al Qaeda and ISIS in Syria and Iraq they have struggled to determine and apply the proper approach and methodology to address children, the so-called "cubs of the caliphate." Terrorism attacks involving children, either as attackers or victims, bring forth strong emotion. No population within societies is more precious than children. Attacks against schools are generally high impact and low-risk. Schools are generally expected to be safe places for children. School attacks shatter this assumption, generate tremendous publicity and arouse intense emotions.

A government, under tremendous pressure from an emotional public, would need to take extreme and public measures to demonstrate its ability to protect the most vulnerable in society. Extreme, emotional response by government security forces would almost inevitably result in hasty, ill-prepared and counterproductive measures. Brutal school attacks, while generating widespread publicity and fear, run the risk of galvanizing public support against a terrorist group, as was the case in the 2014 Tehrik-I-Taliban school massacre in Peshawar, Pakistan.

If growing inequality and economic woes are increasingly relevant motivators for terrorism in the future, the headquarters and other physical and human assets of large multinational corporations will likely be attractive targets. Attacks could be carried out against infrastructure and personnel in less security-capable countries, yet still have a global impact because of the reach of the targeted corporation. Attacks against faceless multinationals, usually owned and run by foreigners, as a blow against the inequality suffered by the population, would be an attractive terrorist narrative to gain sympathy and support for its actions. Similarly, companies specializing in technology and automation are likely to present attractive targets for 'technophobes.' Governments would be hard pressed to justify spending scarce resources to defend wealthy corporations instead of their own citizens, meaning these multinationals would need to be largely dependent on themselves for warning, protection and deterrent measures, resulting in further privatization in the Counter Terrorism field.

* * *

The motivations, tactics and targets identified and discussed by the PTSS participants are not exhaustive by any means but provide an informal consensus by an experienced global team of counter terrorism practitioners. The possibilities

identified require no fantastic technological advances, they are adaptations of tools, devices and applications that are widely and inexpensively available to ordinary citizens today and in which terrorists have already shown an interest. Similarly, the likely future grievances the participants identified are already present on the front pages of newspapers around the world. Once a grievance and possible weapons are identified, ascertaining potential targets is certainly doable if analysts and practitioners allow themselves to examine the threat from the terrorists' perspective. Doing so will enable government leaders to make informed decisions regarding the allocation of finite resources in a way best suited to defend their citizens and their way of life.

About the author

James Howcroft serves as the Director of the Program on Terrorism and Security Studies at the George C. Marshall Center. Professor Howcroft retired as a Colonel after 30 years as an Intelligence Officer in the United States Marine Corps. He served in a wide range of Marine Corps tactical and operational intelligence billets, from Infantry Battalion up to the Marine Expeditionary Force level. His combat tours include duty with the 2nd Marine Division in Operation Desert Storm and tours of duty as the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence (G2) with both the 1st Marine Division and then the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force in Iraq.
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