EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

HIGH REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE UNION FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
SECURITY POLICY

Brussels, 5.12.2018
JOIN(2018) 36 final

JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Action Plan against Disinformation

1. INTRODUCTION

Freedom of expression is a core value of the European Union enshrined in the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights and in the constitutions of Member States. Our open democratic societies depend on the ability of citizens to access a variety of verifiable information so that they can form a view on different political issues. In this way, citizens can participate in an informed way in public debates and express their will through free and fair political processes. These democratic processes are increasingly challenged by deliberate, large-scale, and systematic spreading of disinformation.

Disinformation is understood as verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public, and may cause public harm[1]. Public harm includes threats to democratic processes as well as to public goods such as Union citizens' health, environment or security. Disinformation does not include inadvertent errors, satire and parody, or clearly identified partisan news and commentary. The actions contained in this Action Plan only target disinformation content that is legal under Union or national law. They are without prejudice to the laws of the Union or of any of the Member States that may be applicable, including rules on illegal content[2].

Following the Salisbury chemical attack and the related European Council conclusions[3], the Commission and the High Representative presented a Joint Communication on bolstering resilience against hybrid threats[4] that highlighted strategic communication as a priority field for further work. The European Council, then, invited the *"High Representative and the Commission to present, in cooperation with the Member States and in line with the March 2015 European Council conclusions, an action plan by December 2018 with specific proposals for a coordinated response to the challenge of disinformation, including appropriate mandates and sufficient resources for the relevant EEAS Strategic Communications teams"*[5].

This Action Plan answers the European Council's call for measures to *"protect the Union's democratic systems and combat disinformation, including in the context of the upcoming European elections"*[6]. It builds on existing Commission initiatives and the work of the East Strategic Communication Task Force of the European External Action Service. It sets out actions to be taken by the Commission and the High Representative, with the assistance of the European External Action Service, in cooperation with Member States and the European Parliament. This Plan includes input received from Member States, including via discussions at Council[7], in Permanent Representatives Committees I and II, the Political Security Committee, relevant Council working parties and meetings of strategic communication and political directors of Ministries of Foreign Affairs. It also takes into account the cooperation

---

1 Communication on tackling on-line disinformation, COM(2018) 236.

2 The Commission proposed targeted measures to address the spread of illegal content on-line, including the Recommendation on measures to effectively tackle illegal content online (C(2018) 1177). See also proposal for a Regulation on preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online COM(2018) 640 as well as the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive agreed on 6 November 2018.

3 European Council conclusions, 22 March 2018.

4 JOIN(2018) 16.

5 European Council conclusions, 28 June 2018.

6 European Council conclusions, 18 October 2018.

7 See policy debate on "Tackling the spread of disinformation online: Challenges for the media ecosystem" and Council conclusions of 27 November 2018.

with the Union's key partners, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Group of 7 (G7)[8].

The Communication on tackling online disinformation (the April Communication) emphasised the key role played by civil society and the private sector (notably social media platforms) in tackling the problem of disinformation. As a follow-up, online platforms and the advertising industry agreed on a Code of Practice in September 2018 to increase online transparency and protect citizens, especially with a view to the 2019 European Parliament elections, but also in a more long-term perspective. It is now essential that these actors deliver on the objectives the Commission set out in April and fully comply with the Code of Practice[9]. In addition, an independent network of fact-checkers is being developed to increase the ability to detect and expose disinformation, and sustained efforts are being made at Union and national level to support media literacy.

This Action Plan is accompanied by a progress report on the April Communication[10]. This report sets out the progress achieved on the various actions, notably regarding the Code of Practice, fostering a secure, trust-worthy and accountable on-line ecosystem, activities linked to awareness raising and media literacy as well as support to independent media and quality journalism.

The European Council first recognised the threat of online disinformation campaigns in 2015 when it asked the High Representative to address the disinformation campaigns by Russia. The East Strategic Communication Task Force has been set up to address and raise awareness of this issue. In addition, the Joint Communication on Countering Hybrid Threats[11] set up the Hybrid Fusion Cell within the European External Action Service to act as a single focus for the analysis of hybrid threats. It also led to the setting up of the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, which shares best practices and supports the activities of the Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in this field.

In view of the 2019 European Parliament elections and more than 50 presidential, national or local/regional elections being held in Member States by 2020, it is urgent to step up efforts to secure free and fair democratic processes. Threats affecting democracy in any Member State can harm the Union as a whole. Moreover, disinformation often targets European institutions and their representatives and aims at undermining the European project itself in general. On 12 September 2018, the Commission adopted measures[12] to secure free and fair European elections and recommended the use of sanctions where appropriate,

---

[8] In the Charlevoix Commitment on Defending Democracy from Foreign Threats, G7 Leaders committed to take concerted action to respond to foreign actors who seek to undermine our democratic societies and institutions, our electoral processes, our sovereignty and our security.

[9] See also Council conclusions of 27 November 2018.

[10] COM(2018) 794.

[11] While definitions of hybrid threats vary and need to remain flexible to respond to their evolving nature, the concept captures the mixture of coercive and subversive activity, conventional and unconventional methods (i.e. diplomatic, military, economic, technological), which can be used in a coordinated manner by state or non-state actors to achieve specific objectives while remaining below the threshold of formally declared warfare. There is usually an emphasis on exploiting the vulnerabilities of the target and on generating ambiguity to hinder decision-making processes. Massive disinformation campaigns, using social media to control the political narrative or to radicalise, recruit and direct proxy actors can be vehicles for hybrid threats. See JOIN(2016) 18.

[12] For a full overview of measures, see the Communication on Securing free and fair European elections, COM(2018) 637 final.

including for the illegal use of personal data to influence the outcome of the elections[13]. In addition, it is urgent that Member States take the steps needed to preserve the integrity of their electoral systems and infrastructure and test them ahead of the European elections.

Disinformation campaigns, in particular by third countries, are often part of hybrid warfare[14], involving cyber-attacks and hacking of networks[15]. Evidence shows that foreign state actors are increasingly deploying disinformation strategies to influence societal debates, create divisions and interfere in democratic decision-making. These strategies target not only Member States but also partner countries in the Eastern Neighbourhood as well as in the Southern Neighbourhood, Middle East and Africa.

Disinformation produced and/or spread by Russian sources has been reported in the context of several elections and referenda in the EU[16]. Disinformation campaigns related to the war in Syria[17], to the downing of the MH-17 aircraft in the East of Ukraine[18] and to the use of chemical weapons in Salisbury attack[19] have been well documented.

2. DISINFORMATION: UNDERSTANDING THE THREATS AND STRENGTHENING THE EUROPEAN RESPONSE

Disinformation is an evolving threat which requires continuous efforts to address the relevant actors, vectors, tools, methods, prioritised targets and impact. Some forms, especially state-driven disinformation, are analysed by the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell, in cooperation with the Strategic Communication Task Forces of the European External Action Service and with the support of Member States' services.

The actors behind disinformation may be internal, within Member States, or external, including state (or government sponsored) and non-state actors. According to reports[20], more than 30 countries are using disinformation and influencing activities in different forms, including in their own countries. The use of disinformation by actors within Member States is an increasing source of concern across the Union. Cases of disinformation driven by non-state actors have also been reported in the Union, for example related to vaccination[21]. As regards

---

[13] These sanctions are in addition to the ones provided by the General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation 2016/679).

[14] Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats: a European Union response, JOIN(2016) 18 final.

[15] These cyberattacks may include targeted intrusions to collect sensitive information as a precursor to leaks or tainted leaks, take-over of social media accounts, social media accounts driven by bots, and disruption of information technology systems of, for instance, broadcasting companies or electoral commissions.

[16] See for example the report by the Policy Planning Staff and the Institute for Strategic Research of France: https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/information_manipulation_rvb_cle838736.pdf.

[17] Joint statement by 17 member countries of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on chemical attacks in Douma, Syria: https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/manipulation-of-information/article/syria-chemical-attacks-in-douma-7-april-joint-statement-by-france-and-16-other.

[18] On the disinformation campaign on MH-17, see the East Strategic Communication Task Force: https://euvsdisinfo.eu/mh17-time-is-running-out-for-disinformation/ and https://euvsdisinfo.eu/flight-mh-17-three-years-on-getting-the-truth-out-of-eastern-ukraine/ as well as the statement from the Joint Investigation Team: https://www.om.nl/onderwerpen/mh17-crash/@104053/reaction-jit-to/.

[19] https://euvsdisinfo.eu/timeline-how-russia-built-two-major-disinformation-campaigns/
On the Russian cyber operation targeting the OPCW in the Hague, see: https://www.government.nl/latest/news/2018/10/04/netherlands-defence-intelligence-and-security-service-disrupts-russian-cyber-operation-targeting-opcw.

[20] See https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/freedom-net-2017.

[21] See COM(2018) 245 and COM(2018) 244.

external actors, the evidence is strong in the case of the Russian Federation. However, other third countries also deploy disinformation strategies, quickly learning from the methods of the Russian Federation.

According to the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell, disinformation by the Russian Federation[22] poses the greatest threat to the EU. It is systematic, well-resourced, and on a different scale to other countries. In terms of coordination, levels of targeting and strategic implications, Russia's disinformation constitutes part of a wider hybrid threat that uses a number of tools, levers, and also non-state actors.

Constant targeted disinformation campaigns against the Union, its institutions and policies are likely to increase in the run up to the 2019 European Parliament elections. **This calls for urgent and immediate action to protect the Union, its institutions and its citizens against disinformation.**

Social media have become important means of spreading disinformation, including in some cases, like Cambridge Analytica, to target the delivery of disinformation content to specific users, who are identified by the unauthorised access and use of personal data, with the ultimate goal of influencing the election results. Recent evidence shows that private messaging services are increasingly used to spread disinformation[23]. Techniques include video manipulation (deep-fakes) and falsification of official documents; the use of internet automated software (bots) to spread and amplify divisive content and debates on social media; troll attacks on social media profiles and information theft. At the same time, more traditional methods such as television, newspapers, websites and chain emails continue to play an important role in many regions. The tools and techniques used are changing fast - the **response needs to evolve just as rapidly.**

In addition to taking action within Member states and Union-wide, the Union has a significant interest in working with partners in three priority regions – the Union's Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood and in the Western Balkans. Exposing disinformation in countries neighbouring the Union is complementary to tackling the problem within the Union.

The European External Action Service has set up specific strategic communication task forces consisting of experts with relevant language and knowledge skills, to address the issue and develop response strategies. They are working closely with Commission services to ensure a coordinated and consistent communication approach in the regions.

Based on the Action Plan on Strategic Communication, adopted on 22 June 2015, the mandate of the East Strategic Communication Task Force comprises three strands of action: (i) Effective communication and promotion of Union policies towards the Eastern Neighbourhood; (ii) Strengthening the overall media environment in the Eastern Neighbourhood and in Member States, including support for media freedom and strengthening independent media and (iii) Improved Union capacity to forecast, address and respond to disinformation activities by the Russian Federation. In response to the Council conclusions in December 2015 and June 2017, the European External Action Service set up

[22] Russian military doctrine explicitly recognises information warfare as one of its domains: https://www.rusemb.org.uk/press/2029.

[23] According to Oxford University, direct messaging platforms have hosted disinformation campaigns in at least 10 countries this year.

two additional task forces: the Western Balkans Task Force[24] for the corresponding region and the Task Force South[25] for the countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa and the Gulf region.

Since it was established, the East Strategic Communication Task Force has effectively communicated on the policies of the Union in the Union's Eastern neighbourhood mainly through a campaigns-led approach. In addition, the East Strategic Communication Task Force has catalogued, analysed and put the spotlight on over 4,500 examples of disinformation by the Russian Federation, uncovering numerous disinformation narratives, raising awareness of and exposing the tools, techniques and intentions of disinformation campaigns. Its focus is on the Eastern Partnership countries and on Russian domestic and international media and its approach is to expose, on the basis of the evidence collected, the trends, narratives, methods and channels used and raise awareness of them.

The mandate of the East Strategic Communication Task Force should therefore be maintained and the mandate of the other two Strategic Communications Task Forces (Western Balkan and South) should be reviewed in the light of the growing scale and importance of disinformation activities in those regions and the need to raise awareness of the adverse impact of disinformation.

3. ACTIONS FOR A COORDINATED UNION RESPONSE TO DISINFORMATION

Addressing disinformation requires political determination and unified action, mobilising all parts of governments (including counter-hybrid, cybersecurity, intelligence and strategic communication communities, data protection, electoral, law enforcement and media authorities). This should be done in close cooperation with like-minded partners across the globe. It requires close cooperation between Union institutions, Member States, civil society and the private sector, especially online platforms.

The coordinated response to disinformation presented in this Action Plan is based on four pillars:

(i) improving the capabilities of Union institutions to detect, analyse and expose disinformation;
(ii) strengthening coordinated and joint responses to disinformation;
(iii) mobilising private sector to tackle disinformation;
(iv) raising awareness and improving societal resilience.

PILLAR 1: IMPROVING THE CAPABILITIES OF UNION INSTITUTIONS TO DETECT, ANALYSE AND EXPOSE DISINFORMATION

To address effectively the threat of disinformation, it is necessary to reinforce the Strategic Communication Task Forces of the European External Action Service, the Union Delegations and the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell by providing them with additional specialised staff, such as experts in data mining and analysis to process the relevant data. It is also important to contract additional media monitoring services to cover a wider range of sources and languages and additional research and studies on the reach and impact of

[24] The Council conclusions on Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process of 15 December 2015.
[25] The Council conclusions on Counter-Terrorism adopted on 19 June 2017.

disinformation. In addition, there is a need to invest in analytical tools such as dedicated software to mine, organise and aggregate vast amounts of digital data.

The reinforcement of the strategic communication teams of the European External Action Service will be done in two steps.

In the short term, the budget for strategic communication is expected to more than double[26] in 2019 and this will be accompanied by a reinforcement of at least 11 positions ahead of the European elections. In the medium term[27], additional positions of permanent officials will be requested in the strategic communication teams and the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell in the headquarters, as well as new posts in delegations in the neighbourhood, to reach a total increase of 50-55 staff members over the next two years.

Further synergies will take place between the Commission's services and the European External Action Service, for example on sharing tools or designing communication campaigns.

Threat analyses and intelligence assessments are the basis for the work on disinformation. The expertise of the Intelligence and Situation Centre should be fully utilised to analyse the evolving nature of disinformation campaigns.

The Strategic Communication Task Forces will work closely with the relevant Union delegations and the Commission to tackle disinformation. In particular, they will cooperate with the internal Network against Disinformation of the Commission, set up following the April Communication[28].

Member States should complement and support the actions of the Union institutions by increasing their national capabilities and by supporting the necessary increases in resources for the Union institutions.

Action 1: With a view to the 2019 European Parliament elections in particular, but also with a longer-term perspective, the High Representative, in cooperation with the Member States, will strengthen the Strategic Communication Task Forces and Union Delegations through additional staff and new tools which are necessary to detect, analyse and expose disinformation activities. Member States should, where appropriate, also upgrade their national capacity in this area, and support the necessary increase in resources for the Strategic Communication Task Forces and Union delegations.

Action 2: The High Representative will review the mandates of the Strategic Communications Task Forces for Western Balkans and South to enable them to address disinformation effectively in these regions.

PILLAR 2: STRENGTHENING COORDINATED AND JOINT RESPONSES TO DISINFORMATION

[26] Current discussions on the 2019 budget foresee an increase from EUR 1.9 million in 2018 to 5 million in 2019.

[27] Through amendments of the 2019 budget and/or the proposal for the 2020 budget.

[28] This network includes the representatives of Directorates-General of the Commission and its Representations. The Commission has also recently set up a working group with the European External Action Service and the European Parliament on tackling disinformation ahead of the European elections.

The first hours after disinformation is released are critical for detecting, analysing and responding to it. Consequently, **a Rapid Alert System will be set up to provide alerts on disinformation campaigns in real-time** through a dedicated technological infrastructure. This will facilitate sharing of data and assessment, to enable common situational awareness, coordinated attribution and response and ensure time and resource efficiency.

In view of the creation of the Rapid Alert System, **each Member States should designate, in line with its institutional setup, a contact point, ideally positioned within strategic communications departments**. This contact point would share the alerts and ensure coordination with all other relevant national authorities as well as with the Commission and the European External Action Service. This is without prejudice to existing competences of national authorities under Union and/or national law or under other parts of this Action Plan. Where disinformation concerns elections or the functioning of democratic institutions in the Member States, national contact points should closely cooperate with the national election networks[29]. In this case, the outcome of the work of the Rapid Alert System should be shared with the European cooperation election network[30], in particular to exchange information on threats relevant to elections and support the possible application of sanctions. Online platforms should cooperate with the contact points underpinning the Rapid Alert System, in particular during election periods, to provide relevant and timely information.

The Rapid Alert System should be closely linked to existing 24/7 capabilities such as the Emergency Response Coordination Centre[31] and the Situation Room of the European External Action Service[32]. The EU Hybrid Fusion Cell of the Intelligence and Situation Centre as well as the relevant Council Working Parties could also be used as channels for sharing information. The Commission and the High Representative will ensure regular exchange of information and best practices with key partners, including within the G7 and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Prompt reaction via fact-based and effective communication is essential to counter and deter disinformation, including in cases of disinformation concerning Union matters and policies. This is important to foster an open, democratic debate free from manipulation, including in the context of the forthcoming European elections. Union institutions[33] and Member States need to improve their ability to react and communicate effectively. The Commission has already increased its funding for better communication activities, implemented through its regional communication programmes, including in the Union's neighbourhood, and Union Delegations. Union institutions are all active in communicating about European action and policies in the Union, in particular Commission Representations

---

[29] See Recommendation C(2018) 5949 on election cooperation networks, online transparency, protection against cybersecurity incidents and fighting disinformation campaigns in the context of elections to the European Parliament. These networks will bring together national election authorities, audio-visual media regulators, cybersecurity and data protection authorities as well as relevant expert groups, for example on media literacy. They constitute, together with the Union institutions, the European election network. The European election network will be convened for the first time in January 2019.

[30] Set up pursuant to the Recommendation issued on 12 September 2018.

[31] The Emergency Response Coordination Centre is set up under Article 7 of Decision 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

[32] The Situation Room is a permanent stand-by body of the European External Action Service that provides worldwide monitoring and current situation awareness. It is part of EU Intelligence and Situation Centre and acts as a situation information hub for all relevant stakeholders from the European institutions.

[33] In the Commission, Members of the College of Commissioners, the Spokesperson's Service and Commission Representations would maintain their key role of stepping in to ensure rebuttals whenever there are errors in media reports.

and European Parliament liaison offices in the Member States play a key role to provide locally-tailored messaging, including specific tools to counter myths and disseminate facts[34].

Cooperation between Member States and Union institutions should be further strengthened, especially as regards information-sharing, common learning, awareness-raising, pro-active messaging and research. More intelligence sharing between Member States and Union institutions is needed to improve situational awareness and their respective response capacities. Pro-active and objective communication on Union values and policies is particularly effective when carried out directly by Member States. To this end, the Commission and the High Representative call on Member States to intensify their communication efforts and to defend the Union and its institutions against disinformation campaigns.

Action 3: By March 2019, the Commission and the High Representative, in cooperation with Member States, will establish a Rapid Alert System for addressing disinformation campaigns, working closely with existing networks, the European Parliament as well as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and G7's Rapid Response Mechanism.

Action 4: With a view to the upcoming European elections, the Commission, in cooperation with the European Parliament, will step up its communication efforts on Union values and policies. Member States should significantly strengthen their own communication efforts on Union values and policies.

Action 5: The Commission and the High Representative, in cooperation with Member States, will strengthen strategic communications in the Union's neighbourhood.

PILLAR 3: MOBILISING PRIVATE SECTOR TO TACKLE DISINFORMATION

Online platforms, advertisers and the advertising industry have a crucial role to play in tackling the disinformation problem, as its scale is directly related to the platforms' ability to amplify, target and spread disinformation messages of malicious actors. Given their past failures to act appropriately to tackle this problem, the Commission urged them in April 2018 to step up their efforts. Against this background, the Code of Practice on Disinformation was published on 26 September 2018[35]. The main online platforms which signed the Code of Practice committed to specific actions to be carried out before the 2019 European Parliament elections.

The Commission calls upon all signatories of the Code of Practice to implement the actions and procedures identified in the Code swiftly and effectively on an EU-wide basis, focusing on actions that are urgent and relevant for ensuring the integrity of 2019 European elections. In particular, large online platforms should immediately (i) ensure scrutiny of ad

[34] Several Commission Representations have developed locally adapted tools to debunk disinformation, like Les Décodeurs de l'Europe in France, UE Vero Falso in Italy, Euromyty.sk in Slovakia and EU myth-busting cartoon competition in Austria and cartoon series in Romania.

[35] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/code-practice-disinformation. On 16 October, the Code's initial signatories provided their formal subscriptions to the Code, identifying the commitments each signatory will adhere to and a table listing relevant company best practices as well as milestones for the overall implementation of the Code in the EU. The initial signatories include the main online platforms (Facebook, Google, Youtube, Twitter), providers of software (Mozilla), advertisers as well as a number of trade associations representing online platforms and the advertising industry. The Code of Practice should create a more transparent, trustworthy and accountable online ecosystem and protect users from disinformation.

placement and transparency of political advertising, based on effective due diligence checks of the identity of the sponsors, (ii) close down fake accounts active on their services and (iii) identify automated bots and label them accordingly. Online platforms should also cooperate with the national audio-visual regulators and with independent fact-checkers and researchers to detect and flag disinformation campaigns in particular during election periods and to make fact-checked content more visible and widespread.

The Commission will, with the help of the European Regulators Group for Audio-visual Media Services (ERGA)[36], monitor the implementation of the commitments by the signatories of the Code of Practice and will regularly inform on whether and to what extent individual platforms are meeting these commitments. To allow effective and comprehensive monitoring, the platforms should by the end of this year provide the Commission with up-to-date and complete information on the actions they have taken to comply with these commitments. The Commission will publish this information in January 2019. The platforms should also provide complete information, including by replying to Commission's specific requests, on how they are implementing the commitments on a regular basis starting in January 2019 in order to enable a targeted monitoring of the compliance with the Code ahead of the European Parliament elections. This information will also be published.

In addition, the Code of Practice envisages that the signatories will provide a full report after twelve months. These reports should include complete data and information to enable a thorough assessment by the Commission. On this basis, the **Commission, assisted by independent expertise and with the help of the ERGA, will assess the overall effectiveness of the Code of Practice**. The Commission may also seek the assistance of the European audio-visual observatory.

The Commission notes that the overall effectiveness of the Code depends upon the widest possible participation of online platforms and the online advertising sector. It therefore calls upon additional relevant stakeholders to adhere to the Code.

Action 6: The Commission will ensure a close and continuous monitoring of the implementation of the Code of Practice. Where needed and in particular in view of the European elections, the Commission will push for rapid and effective compliance. The Commission will carry out a comprehensive assessment at the conclusion of the Code's initial 12-month period of application. Should the implementation and the impact of the Code of Practice prove unsatisfactory, the Commission may propose further actions, including actions of a regulatory nature.

PILLAR 4: RAISING AWARENESS AND IMPROVING SOCIETAL RESILIENCE

Greater public awareness is essential for improving societal resilience against the threat that disinformation poses. The starting point is a better understanding of the sources of disinformation and of the intentions, tools and objectives behind disinformation, but also of our own vulnerability. A sound scientific methodology could help identify key vulnerabilities

[36] The European Regulators Group for Audio-visual Media Services comprises all the relevant regulators of all the Member States. It provides technical advice to the Commission in a number of fields related to the application of the Directive, facilitates cooperation among the national regulatory authorities and/or bodies, and between the national regulatory authorities and/or bodies and the Commission. The revised Audio-visual Media Service Directive further strengthened the role of this Group in particular in relation also to video sharing platforms.

across Member States[37]. It is essential to understand how and why citizens, and sometimes entire communities, are drawn to disinformation narratives and define a comprehensive answer to this phenomenon.

Building resilience also includes specialised trainings, public conferences and debates as well as other forms of common learning for the media. It also involves empowering all sectors of society and, in particular, improving citizens' media literacy to understand how to spot and fend off disinformation.

A comprehensive response to disinformation requires active participation by civil society. **The Communication and the Recommendation[38], that are part of the set of measures on securing free and fair European elections (the Elections Package) called on Member States to engage with media, online platforms, information technology providers and others,** in awareness raising activities to increase the transparency of elections and build trust in the electoral processes. Member States' active engagement and follow-up in this context is needed in the run-up to the European elections.

Independent fact-checkers and researchers play a key role in furthering the understanding of the structures that sustain disinformation and the mechanisms that shape how it is disseminated online. Moreover, through their activities, they raise awareness of various types of disinformation threats and can contribute to mitigating their negative impact. It is necessary to strengthen their capacity to identify and expose disinformation threats and facilitate cross-border cooperation. Building on the actions outlined in the April Communication, it is necessary to scale up national multidisciplinary teams of independent fact-checkers and academic researchers with specific knowledge about local information environments. This requires the support and the cooperation of Member States in order to facilitate the functioning of the European network of fact checkers, in full respect of the independence of the fact-checking and research activities. Under the Connecting Europe Facility programme[39], the Commission will finance a digital platform which will network together the independent national multidisciplinary teams.

To increase public awareness and resilience, the Commission will further step up its commitment and current activities in relation to media literacy to empower Union citizens to better identify and deal with disinformation[40]. Member States should rapidly implement the provision of the revised Audio-visual Media Service Directive requiring them to promote and develop media literacy skills[41].

The Commission has proposed funding for the development of new tools to better understand and combat online disinformation in its proposal for Horizon Europe programme[42]. The

---

[37] This could be further explored as part of the work of the Media Pluralism Monitor, a project co-funded by the European Union and carried out by the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom in Florence.

[38] See Commission Recommendation on election cooperation networks, online transparency, protection against cybersecurity incidents and fighting disinformation campaigns in the context of elections to the European Parliament, C(2018) 5949.

[39] Regulation (EU) No 1316/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing the Connecting Europe Facility, amending Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 and repealing Regulations (EC) No 680/2007 and (EC) No 67/2010.

[40] Such activities will include a Union online media literacy library and learning centre as well as other media literacy tools.

[41] Article 33a of the revised Audiovisual Media Service Directive.

[42] COM(2018) 435.

Commission will also support, where appropriate, information campaigns to raise users' awareness of the most recent technologies (e.g. deep fakes).

The work of independent media is essential for the functioning of a democratic society. The Commission[43] will therefore continue to support independent media and investigative journalists, as they contribute to the exposure of disinformation. In addition, the Commission will continue to carry out specific programmes related to media support, including with financial support, and professionalisation in its neighbourhood[44].

Action 7: With a view especially to the 2019 European elections, but also to the longer term, the Commission and the High Representative, in cooperation with the Member States, will organise targeted campaigns for the public and trainings for media and public opinion shapers in the Union and its neighbourhood to raise awareness of the negative effects of disinformation. Efforts to support the work of independent media and quality journalism as well as the research into disinformation will be continued in order to provide a comprehensive response to this phenomenon.

Action 8: Member States, in cooperation with the Commission, should support the creation of teams of multi-disciplinary independent fact-checkers and researchers with specific knowledge of local information environments to detect and expose disinformation campaigns across different social networks and digital media.

Action 9: As part of the Media Literacy Week in March 2019, in cooperation with the Member States, the Commission will support cross-border cooperation amongst media literacy practitioners as well as the launch of practical tools for the promotion of media literacy for the public. Member States should also rapidly implement the provisions of the Audio-visual Media Services Directive, which deal with media literacy.

Action 10: In view of the upcoming 2019 European elections, Member States should ensure effective follow-up of the Elections Package, notably the Recommendation. The Commission will closely monitor how the Package is implemented and where appropriate, provide relevant support and advice.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Disinformation is a major challenge for European democracies and societies, and the Union needs to address it while being true to European values and freedoms. Disinformation undermines the trust of citizens in democracy and democratic institutions. Disinformation also contributes to the polarisation of public views and interferes in the democratic decision-making processes. It can also be used to undermine the European project. This can have

[43] The Creative Europe programme, if adopted, will help reinforce Europe's news media sector, diversity and pluralism of journalistic content, as well as a critical approach to media content through media literacy, COM (2018) 438.

[44] The Commission funds the project "openmediahub" to: (i) provide journalists in the neighbourhood with the necessary skills for independent and objective reporting; (ii) improve the skills of the editorial staff and (iii) reinforce the network of media professionals and journalists in the neighbourhood. As regards the Western Balkans, the Commission is providing financial support for the setting up of a network of journalistic associations, the building of trust in media, and the reinforcing of judiciary systems to defend freedom of expression. In this area the Commission also supports public service media, new independent media outlets, and the improvement of quality and professionalism in journalism.

considerable adverse effects on society across the Union, in particular in the run up to the 2019 European Parliament elections.

Strong commitment and swift actions are necessary to preserve the democratic process and the trust of citizens in public institutions at both national and Union level. The present Action Plan sets out key actions to tackle disinformation in a coordinated approach of the Union institutions and the Member States. It also highlights measures to be taken as a matter of priority by different actors ahead of the 2019 European Parliament elections. Member States should step up their solidarity and defend the Union against hybrid attacks, including attacks using disinformation.

At the same time, and in the long-term, the objective is for the Union and its neighbourhood to become more resilient against disinformation. This requires continuous and sustained efforts to support education and media literacy, journalism, fact-checkers, researchers, and the civil society as a whole.

The Commission and the High Representative therefore:

- recall that joint action is required by all relevant institutional actors as well as by the private sector, in particular online platforms, and civil society as a whole to tackle effectively all the different aspects of the disinformation threat;

- call on the European Council to endorse the present Action Plan;

- call on Member States to cooperate in carrying out the actions set out in this Action Plan;

- as a matter of priority, call on all relevant actors to implement those actions which are urgent and relevant in the run up to the upcoming European elections in May 2019.

Journal of Communication ISSN 0021-9916

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

"Anything that Causes Chaos": The Organizational Behavior of Russia Today (RT)

Mona Elswah & Philip N. Howard

Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford, Oxford OX1 3JS, United Kingdom

RT (formerly, Russia Today) is one of the most important organizations in the global political economy of disinformation. It is the most richly funded, well-staffed, formal organization in the world producing, disseminating, and marketing news in the service of the Kremlin. It is an agency accused of many things, but little is known about all the creative work involved in financing, governing, training, and motivating RT's activities. To understand more about the production of political news and information by RT, we investigate its organizational behavior through in-depth interviews of current and former staff. Our data show that RT is an opportunist channel that is used as an instrument of state defense policy to meddle in the politics of other states. The channel has been established in the shadows of the Soviet media system and its organizational behavior is characterized by Soviet-style controls.

Keywords: Russia Today, Propaganda, Disinformation, Public Diplomacy, International Broadcasting, Information Warfare

doi: 10.1093/joc/jqaa027

Although standing only a few feet from the Russian President Vladimir Putin during a press conference in 2017, the French President Emmanuel Macron described RT (formerly, Russia Today) and Sputnik as "organs of influence, of propaganda and of lying propaganda" (Rose & Dyomkin, 2017). Macron's statement is not the only official criticism the channel has received. The channel has been sanctioned several times by the U.K.'s Office of Communication for breaching the broadcasting code and is currently registered as an "agent of a foreign government" in the United States (Jackson, 2015; Pisnia, 2017; Stubbs & Gibson, 2017; Waterson, 2019). However, no one can deny this channel's voice, especially online. RT has one of the highest YouTube viewership rates for a television channel, with almost 3

Corresponding author: Philip N. Howard; e-mail: philip.howard@oii.ox.ac.uk

billion views at the time of writing (compared with 1.8 billion views for Al Jazeera English).

RT is known for being the home for controversial voices; it has hosted WikiLeaks's Julian Assange, the Holocaust denier Ryan Dawson, InfoWars's Alex Jones, the leftist George Galloway, and the Brexit leader Nigel Farage (Pomerantsev, 2015; Yablokov, 2015). At the same time, RT hosts industry heavyweights like Larry King, Chris Hedges, and Ed Schultz, whose contributions serve to boost the channel's legitimacy (Richter, 2017). With such controversial speakers and prominent news personalities, RT has had an undeniable impact on the business of journalism and the profile of state-backed news outlets. Yet, we still know very little about how this organization works.

In RT's first year in 2005, the Kremlin assigned only U.S.$30 million to run the channel, which made it difficult for RT to compete with international media giants like the Qatari-funded Al Jazeera (Ioffe, 2010). The channel started with only 500 employees, including 200 Russian and international journalists, at its headquarters in Moscow (Alpert, 2014). Things have changed since then, and by 2011 the Russian state had allocated a bigger budget of over U.S.$300 million to operate RT and employed more than 1,000 people in 22 bureaus around the world (Alpert, 2014; Rutland & Kazantsev, 2016). In 2013, Putin signed a decree banning any budget cuts for state-run news media, including RT, and the Kremlin upped its 2015–2017 budget for the channel to U.S.$400 million (Alpert, 2014). RT does not rely on ads to run, instead the channel spends money on its own promotion. In a recent investigation by the Intelligence Community Assessment (ICA), it was reported that the Kremlin spends U.S.$190 million a year on the distribution of the channel in hotels and via satellite and cable broadcasting all over the world (ICA, 2017).

Despite this, RT remains undertheorized in academic scholarship. Prior research on RT has focused on how it is part of information warfare (Pomerantsev, 2015; Xie & Boyd-Barrett, 2015); how it peddles conspiracies (Yablokov, 2015); and how effective and how persuasive its strategies are (Borchers, 2011; Miazhevich, 2018). However, at the time of writing, the organizational behavior of RT has not yet been explored. Hutchings et al. (2015) argue that this scholarly absence reflects the fact that RT is perceived as a government mouthpiece and a maligned news outlet that is not worthy of study. To add to that, we believe that this absence is also influenced by various obstacles to gaining access to RT's backrooms.

Here, we focus on the organizational behavior of RT rather than the content it presents. Organizational behavior is an applied behavioral science that investigates the impact individuals, groups, and structure have on behavior within a certain organization (Robbins & Judge, 2014). In this article, we advance the theory about the organizational behavior within the newsroom and news production. We add to the existing literature that has productively helped explain why some sources of political news and information produce the content that they do (e.g., Boczkowski, 2005; Powers & Vera Zambrano, 2016; Usher, 2013). From the theoretical lens of organizational behavior, we wanted to explore RT's organizational structure that forms the

foundation of the process of content control, socialization of the journalists, and the adaptability of the channel and its journalists. To do so, we sought to interview former and current RT journalists. Based on a year and a half of interviews with RT journalists, we are able to provide empirical and analytical answers to show the activities practiced at RT which constitute the channel's organizational behavior through which journalists are recruited, socialized, and controlled.

As a case study, RT offers a theoretical basis for understanding an underexplored part of the information warfare between Russia and the West. By examining RT, this article seeks to answer the following questions. First, how are content production, dissemination, and marketing organized by RT? Second, what are the mechanisms of social, political, and organizational control exercised over its staff? Finally, what are the defining features of this type of media organization?

The findings of this article show that RT was an ambitious public diplomacy project that was initially established to present a positive image of Russia to the world. However, the dynamics of the channel's news production changed considerably during the Russia–Georgia conflict in 2008. Since then, RT has worked to encourage doubts about the West, its media, agenda, and values, epitomized in its slogan "Question More." In order to succeed in this mission, the channel's organizational behavior adopted various controls to socialize journalists and to control the content while maintaining a space to adapt to sudden political events over the years. In this research, we provide a deeper analysis of the development of RT over the last decade. Although it could be argued that the current Russian media system is different from the Soviet model in important ways, RT has been established in the shadows of the Soviet media system and its organizational behavior is characterized by Soviet-style controls. RT promotes the Kremlin's anti-West ideology, professional journalistic skills are not prioritized, editors are appointed by the government, and the channel is not driven by revenues.

The Soviet Union's legacy media ecosystem

In order to understand the present state of the Russian media, we must look back to the Soviet era. Lenin described the press as "not only collective propagandist and collective agitator, but collective organizer" (Gruliow, 1956). Media outlets in the Soviet thinking are mouthpieces and instruments to convey the Communist Party's messages and to make citizens follow the state directives. The Soviet Union had an unprecedented and distinguished media model that was labeled "the Soviet-Communist Model" by Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm (1956). Under this Soviet model, the news was produced to reflect a Sovietized version of reality (Oates, 2007). In Siebert et al.'s (1956) book *Four Theories of the Press*, the authors point out that the Soviet media was required to support the Marxist–Leninist–Stalinist ideology. Under the Soviet model, media was not profit-driven and the rewards were not identified in terms of revenues but by creating influential propaganda.

Moreover, the Soviet media was integrated into the Party's control systems. The Party exercised its control on media using three main measures. First, it hired loyalists in all key appointments so they can take orders and follow them precisely, like "soldiers." Editors lacked professional training and experience; they were trained in politics and Marxist theory more than journalism (Siebert et al., 1956). Second, the Party used to issue a large number of directives and instructions to editors. For news writing, the Party's Department of Propaganda and Agitation issued "handouts" to Soviet editors assigning which stories to be included in media outlets. Third, the Party reviewed and criticized all media outputs constantly. This form of review intended to retain media under constant scrutiny (Siebert et al., 1956).

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia began to develop some features of a nascent democratic media system under the rule of former President Boris Yeltsin before Vladimir Putin came to power in March 2000 (Becker, 2004; Oates, 2007). Putin's policies suggested that the media should support his efforts to bring order back to Russia and to stand for Russian interests (Becker, 2004). One of his first moves was taking ownership of media outlets away from the oligarchs and bringing their channels under state control (Ioffe, 2010). From 1999 to 2011, Putin's deputy head of the presidential administration, Vladislav Surkov, held weekly meetings with the heads of Russian television channels to instruct them in what to report (Ioffe, 2010; Pomerantsev, 2015).

Researchers have debated extensively about how the current Russian media system stands in relation to the Soviet era. Although the modern Russian media model has adopted unique features, it shares some elements with the Soviet model. One of these elements is self-censorship. Self-censored journalists tend to adopt the regime's norms and change their reporting style in anticipation of pressures from the state (Cheung, 2000). During the Soviet era, direct censorship was rarely needed and journalists were aware of how to formulate the stories to fit the Communist Party line (Oates, 2007). After the fall of the Soviet Union, self-censorship remained embedded in the Russian media system (Becker, 2004; Oates, 2007). This post-Soviet self-censorship could be explained not only in terms of the fears of journalists losing their jobs but also their wish to avoid physical harm in a country that has always scored poorly in media freedom indexes and known for its atmosphere of violence against journalists (Freedom House, 2019; Oates, 2007; Reporters Without Borders, 2020).

Communication scholars, however, have emphasized that Putin's system is not a complete return to the Soviet model (Becker, 2004; Lipman, 2014). There are several typologies that researchers proposed over the years to describe the substantive changes in the post-Soviet media. Oates (2007) argues that because of Putin's onslaught on media outlets, the current media system in Russia should be called a "neo-Soviet model." Oates (2007) explains that this model relies on a range of defining mechanisms, from the introduction of commercial media to an increasing violence against journalists—features that were not as prevalent during the Soviet era. In a similar vein to Oates's model, Becker (2004) argues that the current Russian

media system is "neo-authoritarian," in which media outlets have limited autonomy and where private ownership is, to some extent, tolerated.

Tolz and Teper (2018), by contrast, believe that labeling the current system in Russia "neo-authoritarian" or "neo-Soviet" does not adequately capture the major changes in the strategy Putin applied to media during his third presidential term. They suggest calling this system "agitainment" to describe the increased control exercised over media while adopting global media formats. Other post-Soviet media typologies were inspired by the work of Hallin and Mancini (2004) in North America and Western Europe media systems. It was argued that Hallin and Mancini's polarized pluralist model is the closest to describe the post-Soviet media for sharing similar features (Vartanova, 2011). These features include the strong ties between the political elites and journalists, and the existence of a state-private media market. Yet, Vartanova (2011) believes that the current Russian model is different from Hallin and Mancini's (2004) models, proposing the "statist commercialized model" to describe the contemporary Russian media which rely on unique characteristics such as the strong relationship between the state and media in addition to the growing commercialization of media.

Although the aforementioned typologies have different names, they indicate that contemporary Russian media has adopted new strategies that were not common during the Soviet era. Although this study does not examine the local media system in Russia or the Soviet media, RT originates within and from this system. This study examines the current media system followed within RT and the ways in which its organizational behavior ensures that the content is in line with its foreign policies. In the next sections, we illustrate how we collected our data, then provide an insider look at the influence of various political crises on the evolution and expansion of the channel. Later we take a deep dive into RT's organizational behavior in terms of content control and journalists' socialization.

Methods

To understand the inner workings of news organizations, researchers make use of a combination of newsroom ethnography and in-depth interviews (e.g., AşIk, 2019; Boczkowski, 2005; Hassan & Elmasry, 2019; Maziad, 2018; Usher, 2013). However, methodological challenges in accessing newsrooms are common in societies under authoritarian rule (Figenschou, 2010). Also, conducting newsroom ethnography in closed regimes might bring some unwanted risks to the researchers and might identify the study participants. In similar cases, interviews are the main method researchers rely on to examine the newsroom practices (e.g., Umejei, 2018; Wright, Scott, & Bunce, 2020). In this study, we interviewed former and current RT journalists who had worked for at least 3 months at the channel.

Following ethics approval, we started the interviewing process in January 2018 and conducted the last interview in March 2019. Depending largely on snowballing, we were able to interview 23 journalists who consented to participate in this study.

In order to cover all the various channels RT operates, we interviewed participants from different bureaus, primarily at RT International, based in Moscow, RT America, RT UK, and RT Arabic. In addition, we were able to include journalists who witnessed the establishment of the channel and the first year of its production, the Georgia and Ukraine conflicts, the Brexit, the Syrian war, the 2016 U.S. elections, and other international events such as the Salisbury poisoning in the United Kingdom. This variety has enabled us to gain an understanding of the transformation of the organizational practices at RT since it was launched in 2005 to the time of writing. The participants worked in both the news production and the website and social media sections of the channel.

When we started the interviewing process, we discovered that RT management had imposed nondisclosure agreements (NDAs) on their journalists to prohibit them from speaking to researchers and media. The NDAs, which were enforced in 2014, are legally binding internationally and could be used to prosecute and fine journalists if they were to violate their contracts, even after they had left the channel. In order to counter this restriction, we anonymized our interviews and eliminated any information that could refer to their gender, nationality, or job titles. We avoided using quotes and details that could lead to revealing their identities. In addition, we removed information about whether the participant is currently working or not working at RT. Although we interviewed journalists from different bureaus, we have removed links between interviewees and their specific bureaus in this article. The response rate of this study was almost 10%; we reached out to more than 240 journalists and were able to interview 23. Among these interviewees, 21 respondents had left the channel by the time of the interview and only 2 of our respondents were still working at RT at the time of writing. This could be explained by the fact that journalists who had left the channel were at less risk from speaking with us than journalists still working at the channel.

The interviews took place in London and Washington, DC. The majority of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, but we also conducted ten interviews using VoIP. The interviews lasted for an average of an hour and ranged from half an hour to almost 3 hours and were conducted in English. Our sample is gender-balanced and includes subjects who were of the United Kingdom, the United States, Russian, and various European Union citizenships. In our initial contact with the respondents, we provided them with information about the study and informed consent protocols. Nonetheless, in several instances, respondents canceled their interview with us a few hours before we were due to meet them because they were afraid that their identities would be exposed. In presenting the findings of interview-based research, it is a common practice to present some descriptive characteristics about the human subjects involved in the associated outputs, but to help protect the identities of respondents, we have avoided doing so on this occasion.

We started each interview by asking the respondents to describe their roles at the channel. Each respondent was asked a set of questions with certain variations, and demographic questions to finish. The questions were about their experience at

RT, the sources they relied on to gather news and to write their stories, the political crises that shaped their RT experience, and the gatekeeping process at the channel. The respondents were informed that they had the right to decline offering answers to questions that they were not comfortable with providing. We wrote detailed field notes that included conceptualization remarks during each interview. To inductively analyze the data, we developed detailed reflective memos following each interview. The memos allowed us to elaborate on the themes that emerged and to identify the analytical and theoretical dimensions that emerged during the interviews.

Results

From soft power projection to aggressive intervention

During the early years of Putin's presidency, the Kremlin's reputation received a steady flow of international criticism regarding Putin's policies. In this context, the Kremlin announced in 2005 that it was launching a nonprofit 24-hour English-language international channel that could explain Russia's policies (Ioffe, 2010). Our interviewees provided insights into the early days of the channel. In 2005, the Russian government secured funding for a major English-language television channel known as Russia Today, which would broadcast from Moscow. The channel occupied one of the floors of the RIA Novosti building, Russia's main news agency at that time. There was a need for native English speakers to help in establishing and launching the channel. The majority of our respondents confirmed that a team of British editors was selected at this point to join a team in Moscow to help run the channel. Another batch of young, British journalists only recently graduated from journalism schools were recruited to help write the programs and to keep the channel running. The then 25-year-old Margarita Simonyan was appointed as the editor-in-chief of the channel.

At this point, our participants suggested that the management of Russia Today was uncertain about the purpose of the channel, how long it would last, and where the channel was heading. However, the content was clearly focused on Russian culture and positive Russian news. Participant9 stated:

> In the beginning, when RT was founded, it was founded to give a positive image of Russia. The broadcast was all about culture, and much more of what is great about Russia, not what is bad about you [the West]. That strategy happened later. (Participant9, 2018)

The goal of the channel shifted when the Russia–Georgia conflict took place in 2008. Our respondents who witnessed this shift said that this conflict led the Russian government to realize that it could weaponize the channel to serve its political interests. First, the channel rebranded and changed its name from Russia Today to RT, hoping that its audience would overlook its Russian origins. Second, this

conflict marked the first time that RT produced disinformation. One of our participants described the coverage around Georgia as:

> [t]he one that showed its [RT] true colors to the world when it spread complete lies about genocide, and this is when it was clear to everyone watching that it is a propaganda vehicle. (Participant1, 2018)

Following that, RT has become less and less about Russia. When Participant9, who had extensive knowledge about Russian media before working for RT, was accepted for the job at one of RT's foreign bureaus, the bureau chief told them:

> I want to make it clear; we are not doing anything about Russia. Your Russian experience is not really helpful. (Participant9, 2018)

Across our interviews, our respondents agreed that the goals of the channel since 2008 have been and still are as follows. First, to push the idea that Western countries have as many problems as Russia. Second, to encourage conspiracy theories about media institutions in the West in order to discredit and delegitimize them. This is clearly adherent to the channel's "Questions More" slogan. Third, to create controversy and to make people criticize the channel, because it suggests that the channel is important, an approach that would particularly help RT managers get more funding from the government.

These goals were not communicated to our participants directly, but they learned them through their experiences over the years using trial-and-error. For instance, Participant13 noted:

> They [journalists] are told to redo the story. It is like the electric tens; you get shocked the first time because you are doing something and you are told to redo it because you have done it poorly, or it was not what you were asked to do. So, you redo it and formulate it. (Participant13, 2018)

In order to achieve the above goals, RT has occasionally manipulated its content. We certainly cannot say that everything that RT produces is a complete lie but there are many situations when this channel has produced misleading content intentionally, Participant14 explained:

> Would they twist stories, or make facts, or reshape things, or twist a narrative? Absolutely. It's less than about changing the story, just omitting facts. You take out key things and it will change the perspective that people will gain from the story and therefore it is misinformation. Other times they would report these unverified. (Participant14, 2018)

Things soon took a turn toward a more politicized editorial policy when the Ukraine–Russia conflict began in 2014. The Russian government had weaponized RT at this point to defend the Russian position and to demonize Ukraine. According to Participant16, this was the point at which RT management canceled

all the nonpolitical shows. Participant13 referred to how RT portrayed the insurgency in Donetsk and Luhansk as:

> [s]upport for what is referred to as the self-defense units, the self-declared regions of Donetsk and Luhansk against the fascist Ukraine. That was pretty standard. A lot of stories, portraying Ukrainians as fascists, in the true sense of the word. Of course, there are fascists and very far-right groups in Ukraine, but their presence was blown out of proportion to portray Ukraine in a certain light and to portray Donetsk and Luhansk, which were supported by Russia, as having to defend themselves against a right-wing Ukraine. (Participant13, 2018)

The situation deteriorated when the Malaysia Airlines MH17 plane crashed in July 2014. The plane was attacked by a missile fired at the plane, leading to the crash in Eastern Ukraine near the Russian border and killing all 298 passengers on board (Hoon, 2017). In the aftermath, no one claimed responsibility, but the international community argued that the missile was fired by Moscow-backed Ukrainian insurgents. Across the interviews, MH17 was described as a particular crisis for the channel and that RT was unprepared for it. Following the incident, RT produced multiple explanations for the shooting down of MH17.

One of the first stories that came out of RT emphasized that the Ukrainian side might be involved. One of our respondents said that they published a story claiming that Putin's plane was the main target rather than MH17. At this time several RT journalists quit their jobs on air, such as Liz Wahl and Sara Firth. The departure of the RT America correspondent Liz Wahl came as a particular surprise to the management when she rebuked the coverage of Ukraine and resigned live on television (Carroll, 2014). Following Wahl's steps, the London-based reporter Sara Firth resigned due to RT's coverage of the MH17 incident (Plunkett, 2014).

In 2016, reports were circulated in relation to the Russian meddling in the U.K. referendum and the U.S. presidential elections. Some of our participants saw that RT has strategically emphasized Brexit messages by enabling more exposure to members of the Leave campaign. Participant20 was confused about the channel's line towards the Brexit:

> I asked my editor, what is RT's line for this [Brexit], and he said: Anything that causes chaos is RT's line. (Participant20, 2019)

In regard to the 2016 U.S. elections, our participants who worked during this period emphasized that they used to attack Hilary Clinton repeatedly. However, none of them talked about any specific instructions to support Trump, in particular, in the run-up to the elections. One of the participants explained that RT seemed pro-Trump only because it criticized Hilary Clinton but, in reality, the channel would have supported any candidate running against her, Participant15 said:

> During the run-up to the election, I remember bashing Clinton, criticizing Clinton all the time because RT themselves did not believe that Trump would win. Everyone thought that Clinton would win so they just criticized her as much as possible. (Participant15, 2018)

RT-election meddling has been investigated by the U.S. Department of Justice and in an unprecedented move in 2017; the U.S. government registered RT as a "foreign entity" and classified its journalists as foreign agents. Our respondents said that this was a "politically driven act." This act led more journalists to quit their jobs at RT America, fearing that they would be classified as agents of the Russian government. RT is currently not available through cable in most states in the United States.

In the next sections, we will discuss more closely the organizational behavior of RT and the practices of journalists' socialization and content control.

The socialization of RT journalists

The socialization of journalists is the first mechanism used in news organizations to promote its policy (Breed, 1955). In general, socializing journalists into a specific news culture is an integral process that includes learning about boundaries, distinctions, ideological values, norms, insider communicative behavior, language use, and a variety of discursive skills (Cotter, 2010). RT's organizational socialization process depends on several practices. These socialization practices of the channel have unified its organizational behavior across its various bureaus and languages worldwide.

Socialization at RT depends largely on earning the loyalty of their journalists. In any organization, the behavior of an employee could be influenced by either (a) integrating the attitudes, habits, and state of mind into the employees which should lead them to reach decisions in favor of the organization; or (b) forcibly imposing decisions on the employees (Simon, 1997). RT's organizational behavior employed the former style than the latter. To do so, RT management tends to select journalists who have little to no experience in journalism. This pattern of nonprioritizing journalistic skills is very similar to the one followed in the Soviet era (Siebert et al., 1956). Our participants, who themselves had no journalistic experience before joining RT, argued that this strategy was adopted to avoid any pushbacks from the journalists in relation to the content or the agenda and to be able to mold the newly hired journalists and shape their minds. This strategy is employed in all RT offices, including RT America and RT UK. Participant8, who had no experience when they joined one of RT bureaus, stated:

> I would say that in all, RT hire inexperienced producers who they can mold in producing what kind of news they want and those who are less likely to put up a fight against certain editorial decisions. (Participant8, 2018)

British journalists dominated RT in 2005. There was an agreement among the study participants who witnessed the early days of RT in Moscow that RT

management was keen on selecting British journalists. Participant21, who held a senior position at RT, explained that RT could not hire Americans then because of the Russia–United States relationship. The British journalists were chosen mainly for their English-language skills.

Those young, British, inexperienced journalists were treated like stars. Our participants stated that they were pampered with money, makeup artists, and private cars when they joined RT at its early days. When Participant4 joined RT, they had no experience and had just finished their bachelor's degree in journalism. Participant4 said that they were given an extremely generous amount of screen time and a salary that was higher than the salary they get after working for years in other media outlets. The glamorous treatment of these journalists fostered loyalty and discouraged them from leaving the channel. However, the participants said that in most cases, journalists who work for RT do not agree with its messages. Participant13 said that RT journalists knew that they were not telling the truth. However, working at RT guarantees that they receive a high salary while living in Moscow. Participant15 elaborated:

> I started working there because it was the easiest way to join journalism, not being a journalism graduate myself and not having any kind of training in journalism. It is the good place for new grads because it is very easy there because the main prerequisite for the job is the language. (Participant15, 2018)

In addition to monetary-based loyalty, it was argued in the interviews that RT management instilled in foreign journalists working at RT UK and RT America an image that Russia is a victim of Western politics. RT UK and RT America journalists are not specialists in Russian culture or politics and, in most cases, have never visited Moscow. This was another strategy that was followed to help socialize non-Russian journalists. Participant9 noticed that:

> [p]eople, who they hired then, were mostly young graduates who did not know anything about Russia ... They didn't know Russian at all – it was completely stupid. (Participant9, 2018)

They are repeatedly told that Russia is misrepresented in Western media and that *Russophobia* is on the rise. Participant23 believes that this is done in order to enforce loyalty among foreign journalists.

To better socialize the foreign journalists and to protect the channel from whistle-blowers, NDAs were added to the contracts of non-Russian journalists from 2014. Participants stated that in the early days of RT, there were clauses in the employment contract to prevent journalists from speaking out but that these were not legally binding outside Russia. NDAs were imposed in 2014 following the MH17 incident to prevent journalists from discussing their work experiences at RT. The NDA made this legally binding outside Russia and journalists could be sued if they were to violate the terms of the agreement. Participant23 noted:

> They tried to make everyone sign [a] nondisclosure agreement. That was around Ukraine. It was for non-Russians. A lot of the foreign staff decided to leave at this point. They [RT] did not want anyone to say bad things about the company. After Liz Wahl and Sara Firth [left RT], they did not want any more people doing this. There was something in the contract before but that was not enforceable abroad. That's why they did that. They wanted something legally binding in the foreign journalists' home countries. (Participant23, 2019)

Socializing Russian journalists was not as necessary. Russian journalists at RT have a particularly strong sense of nationalism. They often suggest that they are serving their country by working for this channel. Participant6 stated that workers at RT would reaffirm the argument that Russia is mistreated and that they want to empower Russia through RT. They said:

> [I]f you were Russian, this is a great message to be sending: Russia is a powerful country [but] there is also this disparity. This is what they believe in, and Margarita, and most of them. They see Russia as being beleaguered and mistreated and they want to empower Russia on the international stage. (Participant6, 2018)

Language socialization is also an important part of the journalistic identity (Cotter, 2010). In that sense, each news organization produces a style guide in order to maintain a house style and use standard news language (Cameron, 1996; Ebner, 2016). Becoming familiar with the roles of the style guide and enforcing them are part of the organizational socialization of journalists (Cameron, 1996). RT is no exception; it has a style guide to provide guidance to its journalists and to unify its output. Based on our interviews, the style guide only includes instructions on the terms journalists should use to refer to regimes, countries, and political groups. For example, Participant22 said that:

> Obviously within RT, the style guide would speak about the Syrian government or Assad government as opposed to the Syrian regime. At the BBC, you would talk about the Syrian opposition or Syrian rebels while it is really common at RT to speak about terrorists or militants. (Participant22, 2019)

Although the style guide existed, our respondents indicated that they rarely used it for editorial checks. Two participants were not even aware of whether RT has a style guide, which might imply that although the style guide exists, it is not strictly enforced. During the research, we were able to obtain a copy of the guide that is being handed to newly hired journalists to help them understand the production process. This document does not provide any political editorial directives but, rather, provides a professional guide for journalists who are just starting their career at RT. Participant23, however, believes that journalists were being told about the editorial policies of the channel through informal talks with the editors, rather than through

a formal, written style guide. The journalistic socialization at RT is mostly pursued during casual day-to-day directives.

Adapting and adopting journalistic norms and values

RT is a "learning organization" that has revolutionized itself over the years. A learning organization continuously transforms itself in order to meet its strategic goals (Pedler, Boydell, & Burgoyne, 1989). One of these goals is to *Russionize* the channel. Our respondents who witnessed the launch of RT in Moscow argued that hiring British journalists was part of a long-term plan to replace them with Russian journalists later. Those young and inexperienced British journalists who joined RT in 2005 in Moscow were responsible for training young Russian journalists who would later replace them. Participant4 said:

> They were getting us to train up their kind of up-and-coming Russians. They were learning journalism from us and the idea was to whittle down the number of foreigners and very largely to be run by Russians. (Participant4, 2018)

Participant21 told us that Russian journalists were being trained at RT to lose their Russian accent and to speak fluent English while presenting on camera. The Russianization plan has partially fulfilled its goals. When we interviewed Participant15 in 2018, they believed that non-Russians represented 30% of RT's headquarters in Moscow.

RT is not only a learning organization in terms of its human resources but also in terms of its rapid adaptation to new narratives in response to political events. Our respondents reported several examples of when RT tailored new narratives to sudden changes in Russia's foreign affairs. Participant16 and Participant17 cited changes in RT's narratives about Turkey. RT has usually portrayed Turkey in a less critical way. In 2015, when Turkish warplanes hit a Russian military aircraft while flying over Syrian territory, RT changed its narrative and started to present Turkey as an enemy. At that time, RT started disseminating stories on how members of ISIS and jihadists were being smuggled across the Turkish border and how Turkey was causing an immigration crisis in Europe. Nine months after this incident, Erdogan and Putin reached an agreement, and therefore RT stopped portraying Turkey negatively.

The refugee crisis is another example of RT altering the angles of stories due to political changes. Participant22 recalled that RT was open to and supportive of the refugees seeking asylum in the West. However, with the Syrian crisis taking over, RT managers thought that stigmatizing the refugees would be a good opportunity to destabilize Western politics. According to Participant22, some of these stories were false but remained popular:

> Some of the stories were proven to be false at RT but RT would give them a lot of airtime. I think there were stories about rapes and stuff like that in

> Germany that is caused by refugees . . . So, you see this shift from "freedom and balance" to "migrant crisis" that is destabilizing Europe. (Participant22, 2019)

Similar alterations took place during the coverage of the 2011 Arab Spring. Participant10 gave an example of how RT needed to change its editorial policy frequently to stay in step with the Kremlin's line. RT was supportive of the Arab Spring in 2011; however, after the Russian Foreign Ministry evaluated the situation and decided that the Arab Spring was harmful to their foreign policy, RT changed its coverage to be anti-Arab Spring. Although it is not uncommon for narratives to change on other channels, it is particularly common practice at RT and part of its organizational behavior.

Politically, it is difficult to state whether RT is a left-leaning or right-leaning news organization. The majority of the respondents insisted that RT does not have a political identity but rather that it changes its stance to be in line with its broader goals. One of the respondents mentioned that RT was far left when it was established, promoting "unreported" groups, environment-related issues like anti-fracking, and interviewing the leaders of the Occupy Wall Street movement. Later, it started to support far-right ideas and highlight right-wing leaders. As such it is far more likely that RT is an opportunist organization that adopts ideas that are intended to weaken the power of the West. This supports Yablokov's (2015) argument that RT has simultaneously adopted left- and right-wing ideas in order to attract different audiences and to expand its influence.

Gatekeeping and self-censorship in authoritarian news

Kurt Lewin (1947) proposed the term "Gatekeeper" to describe a person who makes the decisions between "in" and "out" in an organization. Later, the term was picked up by White (1950) who applied it to news organizations to conclude that news is determined by the gatekeeper's own set of experiences, attitudes, and goals. Shoemaker and Vos in their well-cited book *Gatekeeping Theory* (2009) argue that media messages pass through a series of gates that influences and changes the messages. Within the context of the organizational structure of RT, there are several "gates" to reframe news. The most important gatekeeper is the Russian government.

The Russian government is involved in RT in different ways. Participant12 described RT as "a wing of the government information team" whereas Participant13 said that RT is a PR organization for the Russian government. The government control on RT includes hiring managers, imposing story angles, and, in some instances, disapproving of stories. Participant3 said that RT has close ties with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and confirms some news stories with the Ministry. Participant16 pointed out that RT journalists were trained to adopt the Russian government's position toward events.

During the Soviet era, the appointment of editors was on the basis of their political reliability and knowledge of Marxism rather than their professional competence, in a process which was supervised by the Communist Party (Siebert et al., 1956). Similar to this, one of our participants said that the government appoints an advisory team to supervise the hiring of journalists at RT in Moscow. In addition, all of our respondents have confirmed that the top managers and senior editors at all RT bureaus are Russians. Participants from RT UK and RT America confirmed that their offices were run by Russian managers and senior editors. Participant18 noticed that:

> The higher up the ranks, the more Russians it goes. So, senior producers were Russian and all the bosses. Down the line, they will be less Russian and more British, or Australians. (Participant18, 2019)

Participant2 stated that "nothing we did was our own idea." The gatekeeping process at RT is similar to the one that was followed during the Soviet era during which the Communist Party used to select which stories to cover on a daily basis (Siebert et al., 1956). At RT, all the stories are either assigned by the channel's editors or approved by Russian seniors. At the RT newsroom in Moscow, there are several news teams and each team is supervised by two editors: a Russian editor who is responsible for the political editing of the stories and a foreign editor who ensures that the writing is at a professional level. The story selection process at RT starts with what our respondents referred to as "the morning meeting" where senior editors, in most cases Russians, meet in order to select the stories RT will cover for the day (Figure 1).

Following the morning meeting, news is assigned by the editors to the journalists. The assignments vary according to the topic. When it came to assigning politically sensitive stories, foreign journalists are usually avoided for such tasks. Participant13 stated:

> I am a foreigner, so they would not give me the sensitive stories. The sensitive stories were done by people who understand the line that needs to be taken. (Participant13, 2018)

For instance, during the Georgia conflict in 2008, Participant1 said that they sent Russian journalists rather than British journalists to cover this conflict.

This aforementioned assignment strategy is followed at RT International in Moscow. Participants who worked in foreign bureaus did not have an agreement on whether the stories are directly assigned to them or that they were able to pitch their own stories. Participant8 who worked at one of RT's foreign bureaus said that the stories are sent from the Moscow headquarters on a daily basis to the bureau where they work, stating:

> What we get was a short word document that has a list of the stories that a senior Russian manager felt that we should cover. This is what we used to

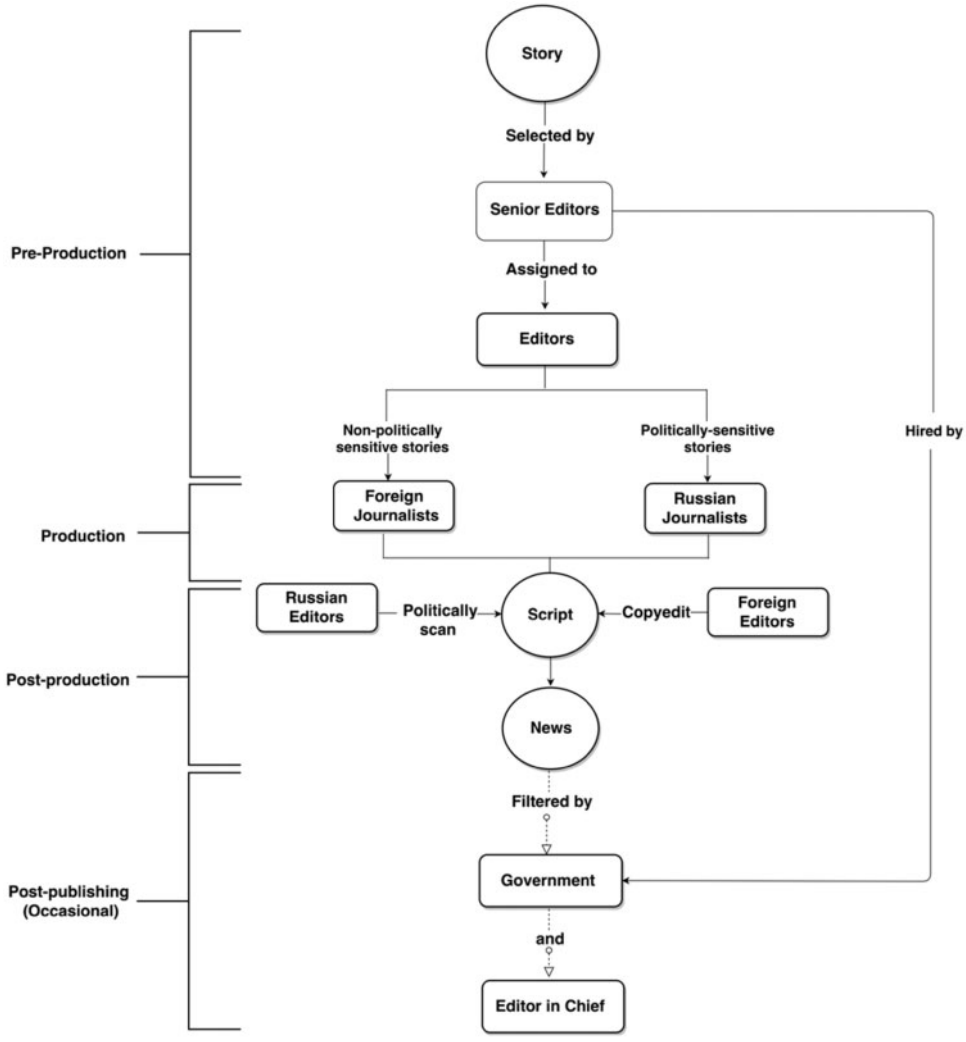


Figure 1 News Production Workflow within RT

Source: Based on our interviews with RT journalists collected from January 2018 to March 2019.

Note: A circle represents story development, boxes represent the decision-makers and the gatekeepers at the channel, and thin arrows represent the sequence in which the story follows. Dotted lines refer to a possible intervention from the government or the editor-in-chief to take a story off-air.

> dictate our news agenda . . . this list was only sent to the news editor and it was not sent to producers. I don't think they wanted it to be widely shared. (Participant8, 2018)

However, a few other respondents, who worked for the foreign bureaus, said that they used to propose stories that are then approved only if they fitted the anti-West narrative of RT. Participant17 said:

> The individual journalists who work for RT . . . they pitch the story. Whoever is in charge is more than happy to confirm if that story makes the US and the UK look bad. (Participant17, 2018)

After journalists write a script, they need to get it approved by their editor. Most of our respondents who were based in the Moscow office said that the Russian editor would approve the script and the British editor would check the script to ensure it was professionally styled:

> You have the UK editor who is usually a senior person who worked for Sky or BBC, to make sure that the quality is as good as BBC or CNN, then you had the Russian editor by his side to make sure it ticks all the boxes. The UK [editor] would look at my script and may amend it or something, and then it goes to the Russian editor and this is where it got screened. (Participant2, 2018)

One of the respondents said that in the foreign bureaus, scripts are sent to the Moscow office for approval. However, they believe that this process is necessary to ensure the reliability of scripts and to avoid unintended mistakes. However, Participant6 said that none of the reports produced for RT UK, for example, needed to be approved by the headquarters. They argued that the Moscow office's approval was not needed because the head of the news program is Russian and that this person had worked for RT in Moscow for a long time. However, they added that reports made for RT international must be approved by the Moscow office.

After a script is approved, the story is produced and broadcasted. However, there were a few incidents when the government and the Editor-in-Chief Margarita Simonyan played a last-minute top-down gatekeeping role by taking down stories after they had been broadcasted. For example, Participant3 said that when RT Arabic managed to interview the Libyan president Muammar Al Gaddafi when he was hiding from the opposition in 2011, RT broadcasted the interview and then officials ordered that no further broadcasts should be aired until the political position of Russia was confirmed.

Self-censorship is one of the main defining features of the Soviet media and the current Russian media system (Becker, 2004; Oates, 2007). As such, RT is no different; journalists at RT have turned into gatekeepers. Most of our participants stated that they self-censor while pitching stories or writing scripts. Participant6 provided a summary of this phenomenon by stating that:

> Everyone is doing self-censorship. Even when you are pitching stories you will say to yourself, they are never going to go with that, so I am not going to bother to pitch it. (Participant6, 2018)

This self-censorship sometimes replaces the structured process of gatekeeping at RT. In some instances, the Moscow office does not interfere with the foreign bureaus' production process. Participant18, who worked in a foreign bureau, stated that:

> I had a very little control from Moscow. I ran 10 stories a day with no direction and it was up to me. However, I knew what the Russians wanted so I was self-censoring. (Participant18, 2019)

Unlike the current Russian media system that relies on direct punishment in the sort of harassment or violence (Oates, 2007), firing journalists who do not abide by RT policies were found to be uncommon. Our participants discussed incidents when they refused to cover certain stories but their future at RT was not affected. In some situations, mild sanctions were employed, but not the termination of contracts. For example, when one of the participants refused to produce stories that they perceived as extreme and against their political opinions, the management took away the team they had been supervising as a warning. Alternatively, the emphasis is upon loyalty to the channel, such that it has a significant bearing on career progression. Journalists who are considered particularly loyal to RT occupy senior positions. In other words, self-censorship in RT is not driven by fear of punishment but rather fear of losing the incentives the channel offer to those who follow its line.

Conclusion

Although it might be tempting to compare RT's organizational behavior with other media outlets, this study focuses only on RT. Our case study exposes and explains the internal processes of an important instrument of Russia's information warfare infrastructure. RT's organizational behavior may share some practices with other news organizations. However, our findings reveal particular features to RT's organizational behavior: (a) the gatekeeping processes that begin with assigning the politically-sensitive topics to Russian journalists and ends with an occasional top-down intervention from the state; (b) the socialization process of journalists that depends on establishing loyalty in the newsroom through monetary incentives and job promotions; (c) not having a specific political leaning; our data show that RT was a far-left organization in the early days and later changed to adopt far-right ideas.; (d) focusing on non-Russia-related content instead of representing Russia positively.

To fulfill its mission, RT management has drawn heavily from the types of practices of Soviet media controls that Siebert et al. (1956) identified in their work on the Soviet era (Table 1). Journalists at RT continue to be subject to Soviet-style

Table 1 A Comparison Between the Soviet and RT Media Models

	Soviet Media Model	Modern RT Media Model
Purpose	To contribute to the success of the Soviet socialist system	To defend the Russian state by emphasizing the negative side of the West
Ideology	Soviet ideology	Anti-West ideology
Control	Hiring loyalists at key positions, assigning stories, and constant review and criticism of the press	Hiring loyalists at key positions, assigning stories, and offering monetary incentives to staff
Ownership	Public	State
Hiring Journalists	Supervised by the Party	Supervised by the Russian state
Profit	Non-profit driven	Non-profit driven
Redlines	Criticism of the Soviet ideology	Criticism of the Russian government
Journalistic Skills	Not prioritized	Not prioritized
Self-Censorship	High	High

Source: Based on the work of Siebert et al. (1956) and our analysis of interviews with RT journalists collected from January 2018 to March 2019.

socialization and self-censoring, through an awareness of the messages that Russian senior editors want to put forward for broadcast. RT's social controls do not focus upon coercion and fear, like the current media system in Russia, but rather on the benefits associated with working for RT. Non-Russian journalists often joined and stayed with RT for career progression, suggesting that other institutions would refuse to hire them if they were to leave the channel.

By contrast, Russian journalists are more likely to articulate a sense of pride in serving their country by working for RT. It, therefore, makes sense that interviewees would speak of RTs management intending to replace foreign journalists with Russian journalists. In addition to Russianizing the institution, other controls were also imposed. The news assignment strategy maintained an anti-West agenda in the channel and unified the critical representation of Western governments across all RT languages.

RT is a component of the Russian state's defense policy. Its critical representation of the West is regarded as a counterpunch to the West's anti-Russian narratives and political positions. The idea that Western media lies is one of the main elements of RT's agenda and significantly shapes the ideological foundation of the channel (Kofman & Rojansky, 2015; Yablokov, 2015). This is what Rawnsley (2015) describes as "oppositional soft power," arguing that Russia uses RT to improve its image by undermining the narratives projected by the West. In that sense, if there is a story in the U.S. media criticizing the Russian government, RT will respond by

criticizing the United States. Whenever Russia is accused of a human rights violation, RT broadcasts stories that suggest that there are comparable cases in the United States.

There is a rising homegrown dissatisfaction with liberal Western democracies (Foa & Mounk, 2016, 2017). It is, however, methodologically and empirically difficult to assess RT's role in destabilizing consolidated Western democracies (Richter, 2017; Yablokov, 2015). What we know from examining RT's organizational behavior is that it indeed promotes an anti-West narrative through their daily news agendas. What we can ask is who actually do watch RT? Our participants stated that they were writing and broadcasting to audiences with pre-existing anti-Western and antiestablishment beliefs. The channel gives this type of audience a voice, news to amplify, and a source that reinforces their beliefs and political agendas. However, our participants doubted that RT has the power to change the public opinion in a broader sense.

Giving the perception that RT could possibly break democracies enables it more power and eventually makes it eligible for more state funding. RT alone cannot break Western democracies; it is a single apparatus among many others that are used to meddle in Western politics. The success of the Russian information warfare depends largely on the network of different sources, including media outlets, social media bots, trolls, and cyberattacks (Richter, 2017). RT, however, is more likely to be held accountable because, unlike other covert strategies, for being a public-facing broadcaster that must adhere to follow Communication Acts and media regulations where it operates.

This article advances the scholarship of news organizational behavior, information warfare, and international broadcasting. We provide a framework to examine state-backed media operations by understanding their historical and domestic contexts. RT's organizational behavior would not have been the same without the historical influence of the Soviet media system. By studying RT, we realized how important it is to contextualize state-backed media within the broader media ecosystem that shaped their evolution. Although some outlets—especially those backed by nondemocratic states—might share some elements and promote similar narratives, the controls they inherit are shaped by unique domestic sociopolitical factors that evolve and change their editorial structure.

Acknowledgments

The authors acknowledge and appreciate the participants who were generous with their time and were able to share their experiences with us. The authors gratefully acknowledge the support of the European Research Council, "Computational Propaganda: Investigating the Impact of Algorithms and Bots on Political Discourse in Europe," Proposal 648311, 2015–2020, P.N.H., Principal Investigator. We are also grateful for the support of Luminate Group, Civitates, and the Hewlett Foundation. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funders.

References

Alpert, L. I. (2014). Kremlin Speak: Inside Putin's Propaganda Factory [Kindle Version]. Retrieved from https://www.amazon.com/Kremlin-Speak-Inside-Propaganda-Factory-ebook/dp/B00PSASZS6

AşIk, O. (2019). Politics, power, and performativity in the newsroom: An ethnography of television journalism in Turkey. *Media, Culture & Society*, *41*(5), 587–603. doi:10.1177/0163443718799400

Becker, J. (2004). Lessons from Russia: A neo-authoritarian media system. *European Journal of Communication*, *19*(2), 139–163. doi:10.1177/0267323104042908

Boczkowski, P. J. (2005). *Digitizing the News: Innovation in Online Newspapers*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Borchers, N. S. (2011). Do you really think Russia should pay up for that? *Javnost - The Public*, *18*(4), 89–106. doi:10.1080/13183222.2011.11009069

Breed, W. (1955). Social control in the newsroom: A functional analysis. *Social Forces*, *33*(4), 326–335. doi:10.2307/2573002

Cameron, D. (1996). Style policy and style politics: A neglected aspect of the language of the news. *Media, Culture & Society*, *18*(2), 315–333. doi:10.1177/016344396018002008

Carroll, R. (2014, March 6). Russia Today news anchor Liz Wahl resigns live on air over Ukraine crisis. *The Guardian*. Retrieved fromhttps://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/06/russia-today-anchor-liz-wahl-resigns-on-air-ukraine.

Cheung, A. S. Y. (2000). Self-censorship through the eyes of Hong Kong journalists. *Free Speech Yearbook*, *38*(1), 1–18. doi:10.1080/08997225.2000.10556251

Cotter, C. (2010). *News Talk: Investigating the Language of Journalism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Ebner, C. (2016). Language guardian BBC? Investigating the BBC's language advice in its 2003. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *37*(3), 308–320. doi:10.1080/01434632.2015.1068789

Figenschou, T. U. (2010). Young, female, Western researcher vs. senior, male, Al Jazeera officials: Critical reflections on accessing and interviewing media elites in authoritarian societies. *Media, Culture & Society*, 32 (6), 961–978.doi:10.1177/0163443710379667

Foa, R. S., & Mounk, Y. (2016). The danger of deconsolidation: The democratic disconnect. *Journal of Democracy*, *27*(3), 5–17.

Foa, R. S., & Mounk, Y. (2017). The signs of Deconsolidation. *Journal of Democracy*, *28*(1), 5–16.

Freedom House. (2019). *Media Freedom: A Downward Spiral*. Retrieved fromhttps://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-and-media/2019/media-freedom-downward-spiral

Gruliow, L. (1956). The Soviet press: Propagandist, agitator, organizer. *Journal of International Affairs*, *10*(2), 153–169.

Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing Media Systems Three Models Media and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hassan, M. M., & Elmasry, M. H. (2019). Convergence between platforms in the newsroom: An applied study of Al-Jazeera Mubasher. *Journalism Practice*, *13*(4), 476–492. doi:10.1080/17512786.2018.1507681

Hoon, M. D. (2017). Navigating the legal horizon: Lawyering the MH17 disaster. *Utrecht Journal of International and European Law*, *33*(84), 90–119. doi:10.5334/ujiel.368.

Hutchings, S., Gillespie, M., Yablokov, I., Lvov, I., & Voss, A. (2015). Staging the Sochi Winter Olympics 2014 on Russia Today and BBC World News: From soft power to geo-political crisis. *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies*, *12*(1), 630–659.

ICA. (2017). *"Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections": The Analytic Process and Cyber Incident Attribution*. Intelligence Community Assessment. Retrieved from https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ICA_2017_01.pdf.

Ioffe, J. (2010). What is Russia Today? *Columbia Journalism Review*. Retrieved fromhttps://www.cjr.org/feature/what_is_russia_today.php

Jackson, J. (2015, September 21). RT sanctioned by Ofcom over series of misleading and biased articles. *The Guardian*. Retrieved fromhttps://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/sep/21/rt-sanctioned-over-series-of-misleading-articles-by-media-watchdog

Kofman, M., & Rojansky, M. (2015). *A Closer Look at Russia's "Hybrid War"* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

Lewin, K. (1947). Frontiers in group dynamics: Concept, method and reality in social science; social equilibria and social change. *Human Relations*, *1*(1), 5–41. doi:10.1177/001872674700100103

Lipman, M. (2014). Russia's nongovernmental media under assault. *Demokratizatsiya*, *22*(2), 179–190.

Maziad, M. (2018). Qatar in Egypt: The politics of Al Jazeera. *Journalism*. Retrieved from https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2262/doi/full/10.1177/1464884918812221

Miazhevich, G. (2018). Nation branding in the post-broadcast era: The case of RT. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, *21*(5), 575–593. doi:10.1177/1367549417751228

Oates, S. (2007). The neo-Soviet model of the media. *Europe-Asia Studies*, *59*(8), 1279–1297. JSTOR.

Pedler, M., Boydell, T., & Burgoyne, J. (1989). The learning company. *Studies in Continuing Education*, *11*(2), 91–101. doi:10.1080/0158037890110201

Pisnia, N. (2017, November 15). Why has RT registered as a foreign agent with the US? *BBC News*. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-41991683

Plunkett, J. (2014, July 18). Russia Today reporter resigns in protest at MH17 coverage. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/media/2014/jul/18/mh17-russia-today-reporter-resigns-sara-firth-kremlin-malaysia

Pomerantsev, P. (2015). Authoritarianism goes global (II): The Kremlin's information war. *Journal of Democracy*, *26*(4), 40–50. doi:10.1353/jod.2015.0074

Powers, M., & Vera Zambrano, S. (2016). Explaining the formation of online news startups in France and the United States: A field analysis. *Journal of Communication*, *66*(5), 857–877. doi:10.1111/jcom.12253

Rawnsley, G. D. (2015). To know us is to love us: Public diplomacy and international broadcasting in contemporary Russia and China. *Politics*, *35*(3–4), 273–286. doi:10.1111/1467-9256.12104

Reporters Without Borders. (2020). *2020 World Press Freedom Index*. Reporters Without Borders. Retrieved from https://rsf.org/en/ranking

Richter, M. L. (2017). *What We Know about RT (Russia Today)*. European Values. Retrieved from https://www.europeanvalues.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/What-We-Know-about-RT-Russia-Today-1.pdf

Robbins, S. P., & Judge, T. A. (2014). *Essentials of Organizational Behavior* (12th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Rose, M., & Dyomkin, D. (2017, May 29). Macron denounces "lying propaganda" of Russian media as he meets Putin. *The Independent*. Retrieved from http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/vladimir-putin-emmanuel-macron-election-hacking-lying-propaganda-meeting-a7762336.html

Rutland, P., & Kazantsev, A. (2016). The limits of Russia's 'soft power'. *Journal of Political Power*, *9*(3), 395–413. doi:10.1080/2158379X.2016.1232287

Shoemaker, P. J., & Vos, T. P. (2009). *Gatekeeping theory*. New York: Routledge.

Siebert, F. S, Peterson, T., & Schramm, W. (1956). *Four theories of the press: The authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, and soviet communist concepts of what the press should be and do*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Simon, H. A. (1997). *Administrative behavior: A study of decision-making processes in administrative organisations* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Free Press.

Stubbs, J., & Gibson, G. (2017, November 13). Russia's RT America registers as "foreign agent" in U.S. *Reuters*. Retrieved from https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-russia-usa-media-restrictions-rt-idUKKBN1DD29M

Tolz, V., & Teper, Y. (2018). Broadcasting agitainment: A new media strategy of Putin's third presidency. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, *34*(4), 213–227. doi:10.1080/1060586X.2018.1459023

Umejei, E. (2018). Chinese media in Africa: Between promise and reality. *African Journalism Studies*, *39*(2), 104–120. doi:10.1080/23743670.2018.1473275

Usher, N. (2013). Al Jazeera English Online: Understanding Web metrics and news production when a quantified audience is not a commodified audience. *Digital Journalism*, *1*(3), 335–351. doi:10.1080/21670811.2013.801690

Vartanova, E. (2011). The Russian media model in the context of post-Soviet dynamics. In D. Hallin & P. Mancini (Eds.), *Comparing media systems beyond the western world*. New York: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139005098.008.

Waterson, J. (2019, July 26). RT fined £200,000 for breaching impartiality rules. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/media/2019/jul/26/rt-fined-breaching-impartiality-rules-ofcom

White, D. M. (1950). The "Gate Keeper" a case study in the selection of news. *Journalism Quarterly*, *27*(4), 383–390.

Wright, K., Scott, M., & Bunce, M. (2020). Soft power, hard news: how journalists at state-funded transnational media legitimize their work. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 1–25. doi:10.1177/1940161220922832.

Xie, S., & Boyd-Barrett, O. (2015). External-National TV news networks' way to America: Is the United States losing the global "information war"?. *International Journal of Communication*, *9*, 66–83.

Yablokov, I. (2015). Conspiracy theories as a Russian public diplomacy tool: The case of Russia Today (RT). *Politics*, *35*(3), 301–315. doi:10.1111/1467-9256.12097

Anton Holoborodko

Know as “little green men,” Russian soldiers stand watch over Pervalne military base in Crimea. (March 2014)

Assessing and Addressing Russian Revanchism

BY JOHN HERBST

The West has been slow to recognize the dangers posed by Russian President Vladimir Putin's revisionist policies. At the Wales Summit in September of 2014, NATO identified the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) as a "grave threat" to its members. While expressing great concern about and condemning Russia's aggressive policy in Ukraine—and noting the various steps taken to deal with the challenges of that policy—the Alliance declined to characterize Russia as even a threat. Indeed, although the Summit statement spoke of the need to provide "assurances" to Allies in Eastern Europe, it did not speak of deterring the Kremlin.

This same reluctance was evident nearly a year later, in the summer of 2015, when General Joseph Dunford testified before Congress as President Barack Obama's nominee to be the next Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. General Dunford identified Russia as an existential threat. Later that day, however, Josh Earnest, the Presidential press spokesman, said that Dunford's observation "reflects his own view and doesn't necessarily reflect the view—or the consensus—of the President's national security team."[1] The next day Secretary of State John Kerry also stepped in and made clear that he does not view Russia as an existential threat.[2]

Clarity of vision and thought is essential for successful policymaking. Safeguarding European security requires a well-grounded understanding of the capabilities, intentions, and activities of the continent's most powerful military actor.

Moscow's Military Capability and Revisionist Objectives

Russia is one of the world's two great nuclear powers, and its military capabilities are well understood. According to Global Firepower, which evaluates military power around the world, Russia's conventional forces are the second most powerful in the world, after those of the United States. Moscow maintains over 750,000 troops, 15,000 tanks, 750 fighter/interceptors, 1,300 fixed wing attack aircraft, and 350 naval ships.[3] These figures mean that Moscow has the capacity to pose a

John Herbst is the Director of the Atlantic Council's Dinu Patriciu Eurasia Center. He is a retired U.S. Ambassador who served in both Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

significant threat to Europe and to American interests. This has been duly noted by military leaders. Admiral Mark Ferguson, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe, notes that the "remilitarization of Russian security policy is evident by the construction of an arc of steel from the Arctic to the Mediterranean."[4] He continued, "Starting in their new Arctic bases, to Leningrad in the Baltic and Crimea in the Black Sea, Russia has introduced advanced air defense, cruise missile systems and new platforms."[5] General Phillip Breedlove, the former Supreme Allied Commander for Europe, observed in October 2015 that "our force structure in Europe now is not adequate to the larger Russian task that we see."[6]

Its growing military capacity gives the Kremlin the means to act against U.S. and NATO interests in Europe. But what of its intentions, its policy objectives? Are there reasons for the Kremlin to do so? The Kremlin has not been hiding its national security priorities. Putin has stated on numerous occasions his dissatisfaction with the status quo in Europe and Eurasia established at the end of the Cold War. He has insisted that there must be new rules for the international order, or there will be no rules at all.[7]

The post-Cold War order that Putin finds objectionable has the following characteristics:

- Countries that were subservient to Moscow in the Warsaw Pact pursued independent internal and foreign policies;
- The Soviet Union was dissolved and all of the USSR's constituent republics became independent states. It is important to note that this decision was taken exclusively by the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. The West played no part in it, and then President George H.W. Bush even advised against it;
- It was understood that disputes in Europe would be resolved only by negotiations and other peaceful means;
- The tensions and geopolitical competition that characterized 20th century Europe and made it history's bloodiest were a thing of the past;
- To reduce political tensions and to promote prosperity, European integration would continue, including the countries of the former Soviet bloc; and
- Russia and the West were to become partners, with the West seeking closer relations and sponsoring Moscow's memberships in international organizations such as the G8 and the IMF.

Putin, senior Russian officials, and commentators have made their views of the post-Cold War order clear. In numerous statements they have:

- Called for a Russian sphere of influence in the former Soviet space;[8]
- Called Georgia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan failed or artificial states;[9] and
- Asserted Moscow's right, and even duty, to protect not just ethnic Russians, but Russian speakers wherever they happen to reside;[10] (Russian speakers make up about 25 percent of the populations of Kazakhstan Estonia, and Latvia. There are also significant Russian populations throughout the countries that used to be part of the Soviet Union).[11]

Moscow's Policy Instruments

Were Moscow's attack on the post-Cold War order purely rhetorical, it would be problematic, but manageable. Unfortunately, this assault has been comprehensive. It involves Russia's information apparatus, intelligence

services, criminal networks, business community, and military.

The heavily subsidized Russian media has been conducting a virulent anti-Western, and particularly anti-American, campaign for years. Coupled with the increasing control of "independent" elections, Putin's media have fanned xenophobia and intolerance throughout Russia. This campaign has been part of Putin's efforts to reduce the chance that the Russian people are attracted to democratic ideas, and to mobilize the Russian people to support his aggression in neighboring countries.

Russian intelligence services and connected criminal networks play an important part in Putin's efforts to undermine the post-Cold War order. First, we should note that the very organization of Moscow's intelligence agencies provide a clue about its intentions. After the collapse of the USSR, the Soviet intelligence service (KGB) was split in half. The Federal Security Service (FSB) was given responsibility for domestic security, while the External Intelligence Service (SVR) was to focus on foreign intelligence. The fact that the independent states of the former Soviet Union are the responsibility of the FSB tells us what Moscow thinks of their independence. A main responsibility of the FSB—and of the Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU), Russian foreign military intelligence—is to penetrate the security organs of the neighboring states to ensure that they promote Russian interests as defined by the Kremlin. This includes, as we have seen in Ukraine, making sure that its military, police, and intelligence will not mobilize against a Russian-led insurrection or even invasion.

Corruption, a major feature of Putin's Russia, is also an important tool for the Kremlin in promoting its influence in the Near Abroad. The Kremlin understands that corrupt foreign officials are more pliant. Cooperation between Russian intelligence services and criminal organizations figure here. For instance, a massive scandal in Russia and Ukraine has been the siphoning off of substantial resources from the gas sector into private hands. Shadow companies such as Eural Trans Gas and RosUkrenergo were created to manage this, and it was Semion Mogilevich, a major Russian crime boss, who first devised this strategy.[12]

As he consolidated his power in Moscow, Putin ensured that Russian companies were subject to Kremlin control to promote objectives abroad. The heart of the Russian economy is its gas and oil production. Putin has used these assets to promote his foreign policy in a number of ways. For example, he has built gas pipelines to Western Europe around Ukraine and even ally Belarus so that he can use natural gas trade as a weapon against these countries while maintaining access to his wealthy customers in the West. He has also hired senior European officials to work as front men for his companies. The most egregious example of this is former German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, the Chairman of the Board of NordStream, an international consortium of five companies established in 2005 for the planning, construction, and operation of two natural gas pipelines through the Baltic Sea.

Gazprom, Russia's major gas company, has established business practices regarding the transportation of Central Asian gas through its pipelines. It also regulated the delivery of gas to European customers in a way that violates European Union (EU) energy policy and maximizes Russian leverage in dealing with individual countries. For instance, Gazprom practices have made it harder for

European countries to supply gas to Ukraine when the Kremlin wants to punish Kyiv by cutting off the supply of gas. Lucrative arrangements with select companies in some EU countries have also built constituencies that support Kremlin foreign policies.[13]

The Kremlin has also assiduously courted extremist parties in Europe in order to weaken not only democratic practices and support for the European Union's sanctions policies, but also NATO's shift of military resources to its member states in the east. Russian support includes financing of Marine Le Pen's National Front party in France and the Jobbik—Movement for a Better Hungary—party in Hungary.[14]

Additionally, the Kremlin has built up its cyber capacity. There is evidence suggesting that they have deployed it at least twice to demonstrate their unhappiness with the policies of neighbors. In the spring of 2007, after Estonia had taken down a monument which honored the Soviet Union for "liberating" the country from the Nazis, and following demonstrations by local ethnic Russians against the decision, the country faced a massive cyber-attack that many attributed to Moscow.[15] In the winter of 2015-16, a massive cyber-attack shut down the electricity supply in major areas of eastern Ukraine. This followed the shutdown of the electricity supply from mainland Ukraine to Crimea.[16]

Finally, and as discussed previously, Putin has modernized and rebuilt the Russian military and has not hesitated to use it in pursuit of his revisionist objectives in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. U.S. policymakers need to take a stand against revisionism, and Ukraine would be a great place to start

The Origins of Kremlin Revisionism and Its Application

The origins of the war in Ukraine began in the minds of Putin and the Russian security elite who find the post-Cold War order unacceptable. While the broad extent of today's crisis is Putin's responsibility, its roots go back to the imperial thinking in Russian security circles since the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

In the Russian imperial view, all the territories once ruled by Russia or the Soviet Union should remain subject to the rule or at least the special influence of Moscow. While typically associated with the Russian "power ministries"—the Ministries of Defense and Interior, the FSB, the SVR, and the GRU—even Russian liberals are tempted by this thinking. For example, Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin objected to Ukraine's 1991 referendum, in which 91 percent of the population—including 54 percent in Crimea—voted for independence from the Soviet Union (and Russia). It is worth noting too that when the results of the Ukrainian referendum became clear, these two relatively liberal Russian politicians began to assert Moscow's right to protect Russians in Ukraine—the same "principle" that Putin has been using to justify his recent aggression.[17]

From the very first days of the post-Soviet world, Moscow's security services developed the "frozen conflict" tactic to limit the sovereignty of its neighbors. They supported Armenian separatists in the Azerbaijan region of Nagorno-Karabakh in order to exert pressure on Azeris, South Ossetians, and Ajarians; the Abkhaz in Georgia to pressure Tbilisi; and the Slavs in Transnistria in order to keep Chisinau, the Moldovan capital, in check. For those who mistakenly blame current tensions with Moscow on NATO enlargement, it is

worth noting that Moscow had its frozen conflicts policy in place before talk of the first expansion of NATO.

Russian activity in the Near Abroad in the 1990's was just a prelude to Putin's policies in the area. After the Rose Revolution in Georgia in the fall of 2003, which drove President Eduard Shevardnadze from power, the Kremlin instituted a trade embargo and undertook various military provocations. In late July 2008, Russia's South Ossetian proxies began to shell Georgian positions. A sharp Georgian response gave Moscow the pretext to send in troops in August, which promptly defeated the Georgians.

Led by French President Nicolas Sarkozy, Western mediators established a diplomatic process that led to a ceasefire. The United States sent humanitarian assistance to Georgia and, as a caution to Moscow not to send its troops further into Georgia beyond South Ossetia, delivered it via the U.S. military. Moscow did not take the war beyond South Ossetia.

The West imposed no serious penalties on Moscow for its aggression. The White House froze the civilian nuclear act with Russia, and EU members debated as to whether any action should be taken. Finally, the EU decided to suspend talks on a partnership and cooperation agreement.[18] Not long afterwards, President Sarkozy agreed to sell Moscow the Mistral aircraft carrier in part as a reward for its ostensible observance of the ceasefire that he had negotiated. Less than a year after the war, President Obama launched his reset with Moscow. The Georgian war was seen in Moscow as a great victory. Putin had given a bloody nose to Georgia's pro-Western government and suffered only minor and temporary inconvenience in Russia's relations with the West.

Ukraine was the next target of Kremlin revisionism. It is worth recalling that the "Ukraine crisis" began when Putin decided in 2013 that it would be unacceptable for Ukraine to sign a trade agreement with the EU. This prospect had not disturbed him in the past.[19]

Most Ukrainians, including then President Viktor Yanukovych, who was often described as pro-Kremlin (a simplification), wanted the EU deal. Partly due to Kremlin pressure—Moscow had been banning Ukrainian exports—Yanukovych backed away from the trade deal in late November 2013. The next day, there were tens of thousands of demonstrators on the streets of Kyiv protesting this decision. When Yanukovych tried to clear the streets with strong-arm policing, he provoked demonstrations of hundreds of thousands protesting his corrupt and increasingly authoritarian rule. Putin's offers of lower gas prices and a loan of $15 billion did not satisfy the demonstrators.[20] For two months, Yanukovych alternated between police methods and inadequate concessions to persuade the protestors to go home. He failed. Sergei Glaziyev, Putin's principal adviser on Ukraine, publicly urged Yanukovych to use force to deal with the protesters.[21]

Finally, in late February 2014, Yanukovych either permitted or ordered the use of sniper fire to terrorize the protesters into leaving the streets. A hundred people died as a result.[22] But the demonstrators did not leave the streets; they were enraged. Yanukovych's political support collapsed, and he fled the country for Russia a few days later.

In response, the Kremlin launched its invasion of Crimea with "little green men," who looked like and were equipped like

Russian soldiers, but without the insignias and flags of the Russian military. The United States and Europe imposed some mild economic sanctions on Russia in response, while also making every effort in private diplomacy and public statements to offer Putin an "off ramp" from the crisis.[23] That the West had such a tender regard for Putin's dignity was not unnoticed in the Kremlin, and certainly made Putin's decision to launch his hybrid war in the Donbass easier. The Sarkozy model of responding weakly to Kremlin aggression was still in place.

Since launching his decreasingly covert war in Ukraine's east, Putin has escalated his intervention several times. It began in April 2015 with Russian leadership, arms, and money. When Ukraine launched its counteroffensive under newly elected President Petro Poroshenko in June 2015, the Kremlin sent in increasingly sophisticated weapons (such as the missile system that shot down the Malaysian airliner in July 2015), more fighters (including the Vostok Battalion of Chechens), and, finally, the regular Russian army itself in August. Only the use of regular Russian forces stopped the Ukrainian counteroffensive. Throughout this period, the West was slow and weak in confronting the Kremlin. For instance, the G7 leaders had warned Putin in early June that if he did not cease his intervention in Ukraine by the end of the month, Russia would face sectoral sanctions.[24] Yet by the end of June, despite the introduction of major Russian weapons systems into Ukraine, there was no more talk of sectoral sanctions. Only the July shooting-down of the Malaysian passenger jet, along with the invasion by Russian troops, persuaded the Europeans to put those sanctions in place.

VO Svoboda

Damaged building in Kurakhove, Ukraine, 10 miles west of the frontlines in Donbass, November 26, 2014

After regular Russian forces defeated the Ukrainian army in early September 2015, Germany and France helped negotiate the Minsk I ceasefire, which Russia repeatedly violated by introducing more equipment and military supplies into Ukraine and taking an additional 500 square kilometers of Ukrainian territory.[25] This escalated aggression, however, did not lead to any additional sanctions last year.

Despite the Russian offensive that greeted the 2016 New Year, EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini was floating the idea of easing sanctions. As the violence increased, Mogherini dropped the subject. But in February, Germany and France helped negotiate a new ceasefire, Minsk II, with terms far worse for Ukraine.[26] Putin certainly enjoyed this process. Again, the Sarkozy pattern was unbroken. For violating Minsk I, Putin received a much more favorable ceasefire, which he promptly violated by seizing the strategic town of Debaltseve. And why not? While Western leaders huff and puff at each new Kremlin aggression, they hope out loud that this is the last one. And occasionally they levy additional sanctions on Russia.

What the West Should Expect Next From the Kremlin

Nowhere has Putin stated clearly what he needs to stop his war against Ukraine. Western leaders have fallen all over themselves offering solutions publicly and privately to assuage the Russian strongman, but to no avail. There is a simple reason for this: Putin's ideal objective in Ukraine is to establish a compliant regime in Kyiv—something that he cannot achieve because a large majority of Ukrainian citizens despise him for his aggression against their country. His minimum objective is to destabilize Ukraine so that it cannot effectively reform itself and orient its policy toward Europe.

Putin has not stated these formally because they are not objectives that he can admit in polite society. But destabilizing Ukraine means that he cannot sit still in the territories that he has already conquered with his proxies. He has to continually stir the pot by military action and/or terrorism and subversion. A good example of terrorism is the bombs that were set off in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city, that killed demonstrators at the November 2015 rally honoring those killed by snipers on Kyiv's Maidan Square.

Despite not stating them directly, Putin is not hiding his ambitions. While we do not know precisely when or where he may move next, we do know the candidates. The Kremlin has proclaimed its right to a sphere of influence throughout the post-Soviet space, as well as its right to protect ethnic Russians and Russian-speakers wherever they reside. This would include Kazakhstan, where the Russian-speaking Slavic community comprises 25 percent of its population, as well as Estonia and Latvia, with similarly sized Russian-speaking communities. Furthermore, the sphere of influence includes not only the entire post-Soviet space, but also countries that, while not part of the Soviet Union, were members of the Warsaw Pact.

In August 2014, Putin called Kazakhstan an artificial country created by the genius of President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Putin noted that Russians in Kazakhstan face no ill treatment under President Nazarbayev, but speculated that problems could arise once he passes from the scene. Kazakhstan's Slavs are located along the border with Russia, in areas that contain a good percentage of the country's oil

resources. Just as the West's weak reaction to Moscow's war against Georgia emboldened Putin to strike in Ukraine, so too will a Western-tolerated Kremlin victory in Ukraine endanger the former states of the Soviet Union. Is that an acceptable outcome for Western statesmen?

The danger goes beyond the grey zone whose states do not enjoy membership in the EU and NATO. While never recognized by the United States, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were incorporated into the Soviet Union; two of those states—Estonia and Latvia—have large Slavic communities. A number of serious thinkers and statesmen say that Putin's reach will not extend to the Baltic States because they are members of NATO and thus have Article 5 protection under the NATO Charter. That is, of course, a critical deterrent, but is Putin willing to test this?

Putin has wondered publicly, as have other senior Russian officials, why NATO is still in existence. After all, they opine, it was created to stop the Soviet Union, which dissolved 25 years ago. It is no secret that the Kremlin would like to weaken the alliance (and the EU). And Putin has been playing games in the Baltics designed to do that and to challenge the applicability of Article 5 there. The list is not small. In addition to the 2007 cyber-attack on Estonia, the Kremlin kidnapped an Estonian counter-intelligence official from Estonian territory on September 5, 2014, the day the NATO summit ended and only two days after President Obama's visit to Tallinn. A few weeks later, Russia seized a Lithuanian ship from international waters in the Baltic Sea.

A New Danger to Europe in an Interconnected World

While Europe has been slowly coming to grips with the dangers of Kremlin aggression in the east, it has also faced a serious challenge from the south: instability in the Middle East and North Africa that produces massive migrant flows into Europe. Until the fall of 2015, these two challenges were seen as distinct, and largely unrelated. Putin's September 2015 intervention in Syria has changed that understanding.

Moscow's operation in Syria was designed principally to save the Assad regime, its longtime ally in the Middle East, from falling to various opposition forces, the strongest elements of which were the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other extremist Sunni groups. Only over time did it become clear that this intervention also gave the Kremlin a lever for putting pressure on Europe.

The Kremlin's operation in Syria has been limited largely to air power with some special forces on the ground. While claiming to be focused on the "terrorists"—whom the West identifies with ISIL and the other extremist Sunni groups—the Russians have devoted the vast majority of their attacks to the weaker, moderate opposition forces fighting the regime. Even against this weaker foe, Moscow initially enjoyed only limited success. By the end of 2015, Kremlin airpower in support of Syrian land forces (supplemented by Hezbollah and some Iranian Revolutionary Guards) had barely retaken any territory from any opposition groups. It had, however, stopped the loss of additional territory by the Assad regime.[27]

Only in January 2016, supporting Syrian forces on the road to Aleppo, Syria's largest

city, did the Kremlin operation begin to produce substantial territorial gains. By bombing the towns leading to Aleppo, and then the ancient city itself, Russian airpower inflicted enormous civilian casualties. This was the strategy that Moscow employed successfully to win the second Chechen War in the late 1990s. In leveling Grozny, Chechnya's capital, and other population centers, Moscow finally achieved victory, but only after killing tens of thousands of civilians and turning 25 percent of Chechnya's population into internally displaced persons (IDPs).[28]

By inflicting great casualties on fighters and civilians alike, Moscow's bombing campaign has permitted the advance of Assad's forces. At the same time, this bombing produced another massive wave of refugee flows into Turkey, exacerbating the already serious refugee crisis in Europe that is dominating the political landscape there. This crisis is increasing divisions in the EU between countries that have opposed accepting the refugees (for example, Hungary) and those insisting that all member states must do their share (for example, Germany). It is also empowering hard right parties in Europe that are neither committed to the goal of an integrated EU, nor concerned about Kremlin aggression in Eastern Europe. Finally, it calls into question a signature EU achievement—the Schengen Agreement, which led to the creation of Europe's borderless Schengen Area—as the European nations work out different and, even opposing, responses to the crisis.

The Kremlin's surprise announcement in early March that it had achieved its objectives in Syria and would thus gradually reduce its forces was followed by a renewed emphasis on negotiations between the Assad regime and the moderate and significantly weakened opposition. At the same time, Russian forces remain in the area and continue military operations.

What the United States and the West Must Do

First, Western leaders need to understand the nature of Putin's threat. Buttressed by the world's second most formidable military as well as a large economy, he is intent on upsetting the post-Cold War order. This currently represents the principal threat to global order.

If Western leaders understood that Putin's ambitions extended to the entire post-Soviet space, including perhaps their Baltic NATO allies, they would recognize the West's vital stake in stopping Putin's aggression in Ukraine. They do not want Putin's grasping hand extending to additional countries, particularly Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania, which NATO has an Article 5 obligation to defend. It is very much in their interest to make Putin's life so uncomfortable in Ukraine that he thinks twice about additional aggression.

In addition, Putin's war in Syria has opened a new front in Europe. The West must act promptly and decisively to stop the refugee flows before they destabilize Europe. Here responsibility lies primarily with Washington. With Russia in the game, only the United States has the military power to change the Syrian battlefield in ways that would alleviate the refugee crisis. The possibilities of diplomacy are shaped largely by the relative strength of the contending parties on the ground. The Russian intervention has succeeded in enhancing Assad's military position, which in turn has strengthened his position in Geneva peace talks.

Syria

The Kremlin's announcement in early March 2016 that it had accomplished its mission in Syria and was withdrawing some its forces has not changed the situation on the ground substantially. Significant Russian assets remain and the Russian bombing campaign continues, albeit at a lesser rate. Although a ceasefire has been established, it is not stringently observed and it does not include ISIL and other extremist groups.

In March, the West took important new steps to deal with the migration crisis. The EU's negotiations with Turkey appear to have persuaded Ankara to establish, with EU assistance, better facilities for the refugees which should reduce the flow to Europe.

Yet even with additional aid, Turkey might still find it convenient to permit a good number of refugees to leave the country for the EU. With this in mind, the West could consider taking advantage of the decrease in Russian air operations to establish a no-fly zone and civilian safe haven in northern Syria. Such measures would require American air power and tens of thousands of troops. Potential troop contributors might include France, Turkey, and some Arab states. Yet, even with the reduced Russian air activity, the risk of military confrontation between the two nuclear superpowers raised by pursuing such a course would be substantial.

A second possibility would be to use American military power to balance the battlefield. Moscow's principal aim in Syria is to shore up the Assad regime. It has chosen to do this by massive air attacks on moderate opposition forces—allies of the West—and the civilians among whom they live. The United States could offset this advantage by using its military to destroy Syrian military hardware and to target advancing Syrian, Iranian, and Hezbollah forces, and their supply lines. American forces could use precision missile strikes to achieve most of these objectives, thereby reducing the danger of a direct American-Russian confrontation.

With Russia's veto-power in the UN Security Council, it is doubtful that the United States and Europe could get UN approval for the operation. The EU, however, could give a Europe-wide imprimatur to the operation, while the Arab League could provide a Middle Eastern one. Such an operation would thwart the Russian mission and, crucially, have international legitimacy. It would also give Moscow reason to reconsider its campaign and to agree to a superpower ceasefire in Syria. This would permit the establishment of a civilian safe haven in the country and perhaps open the door to U.S.-Russia-EU cooperation on a diplomatic track to end Syria's civil war. The current diplomatic effort, with Moscow in the lead, flows from Russia's military operation and is aimed at creating a choice between the Assad regime and Islamic extremists. The United States and its European allies have no interest in such a choice.

Ukraine

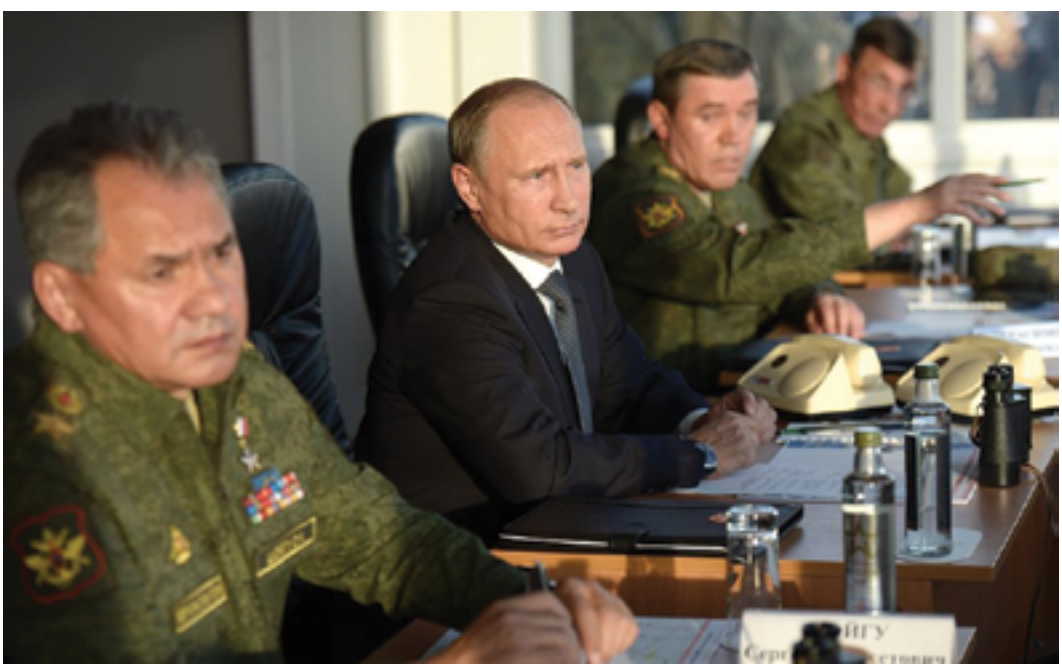
In Ukraine, the West's short-term objectives should be to prevent further Russian aggression, allowing President Poroshenko to reform and develop in peace the Ukrainian lands under his control. The middle-term goal should be to secure both the withdrawal of all Kremlin forces and equipment from the Donbass and the return of Ukrainian sovereignty to the occupied territories, thereby restoring Kyiv's control over its border. It would be preferable if this were accomplished

through the Minsk diplomatic process, but that process is stalled.

To increase the odds that Putin does not move beyond the current ceasefire line, and to persuade him to end the aggression in the Donbass, the West must address his vulnerabilities. He has at least two. First, his implicit deal with the Russian people is that he delivers prosperity and, in return, they leave him alone to run the country. By any standard, Putin has not kept his part of the bargain. The Russian economy is under serious pressure today because of the sectoral sanctions levied in the summer of 2014 by the United States and the EU, coupled with the sharp fall of hydrocarbon prices since the summer of 2015. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) calculated that Russian GDP fell by 3-3.5 percent in 2015 and wages dropped by 9.5 percent; it predicts that the Russian economy will fall another 1 percent in 2016. In private, senior Russian economic officials have said that the drop in 2015 was in fact 4 percent of GDP and 10 percent in wages; they expect the same in 2016.[29]

Sanctions have been renewed several times—on a six month basis—since the summer of 2014. It is essential that they remain in place until Ukraine regains full control of its eastern territories. Russian officials have publicly acknowledged that sanctions have cost the Russian economy 1–1.5 percent of GDP.[30] It would also be helpful if the United States and the EU agreed on new sectoral sanctions to impose if the Kremlin seizes additional territory in Ukraine, for instance the besieged city of Mariupol.

It is important to note that the Obama administration has done a good job; it understands that the key to success is to ensure that both the United States and the EU sanction Russia. Though there may be reluctance in corners of the EU, Washington has worked hard,



Russian Presidential Press and Information Office

Russian President Vladimir Putin and some of his top military brass, including Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu (left)

and largely with success, to impose sanctions in tandem with Europe.

Putin's second vulnerability concerns the use of his army in Ukraine. While his media have conducted an extensive smear campaign against Ukraine and its leadership, they have not been able to persuade the Russian people that Russian troops should be used there. Since the summer of 2015, numerous polls by Moscow's Levada Center have shown that a large majority of the Russian people oppose using troops in Ukraine.[31] Because of this, Putin has denied the presence of Russian troops there, despite strong evidence to the contrary.[32] For example, thousands of regular Russian troops were used in August and September of 2014 to stop Ukraine's counter-offensive.[33] In January 2015, Western intelligence estimates reported that there are anywhere between 250 to 1,000 Russian officers in Ukraine,[34] while Ukrainian intelligence claimed that there are as many as 9,000 or 10,000 Russian troops.[35] Even Putin finally acknowledged in December 2015 that there was "some" Russian military in the Donbass.[36]

Whatever the number of Russian soldiers in Ukraine, casualties are a vulnerability for Putin. He is burying his dead in secret, increasing casualties make this more difficult to do. All this means that the United States should provide significant military aid to Ukraine: $1 billion a year for three years. This should include secure communications equipment, drones, armored vehicles, long range counter-battery radar, and anti-armor systems, like Javelins. By doing so, the United States would assist in deterring further Russian aggression and allow for the stabilization of the rest of the country. Further, providing such equipment would also reduce Ukrainian casualties (over 75 percent of which are the result of missile fire) and increase Russian casualties.[37]

Countering Revisionism Beyond Ukraine

The United States must act in two different geopolitical areas beyond Ukraine to deal with Moscow's revanchist tendencies. Most importantly, the U.S. must act decisively to strengthen NATO and deterrence in the new members of the Alliance, especially the Baltic States. NATO's presence in the Baltics must be sufficient to serve as a tripwire, making clear to the Kremlin that it will defend these countries. During the Cold War, 200,000 U.S. troops served as a trip wire in Germany. Today, NATO needs at least one battalion (400-800 troops) in each Baltic state to serve the same purpose. We also need sufficient military hardware in the Baltic States and forward deployed troops in Poland and elsewhere to reinforce this point.

After a slow start in 2014, the United States and NATO have taken substantial steps toward establishing this deterrence posture. In June 2015, U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter announced during a European tour that the United States would preposition tanks, artillery, and other military equipment in Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, and the Baltic States.[38] Early in 2016, the Pentagon announced that it would quadruple spending on the European Reassurance Initiative to $3.4 billion.[39] These resources should be used to ensure that there are at least two properly equipped battalions in the Baltic States.

Even with these measures, however, NATO must take three additional steps. First, it must finally approve a contingency plan for "hybrid war" in the Baltic States. Secondly, it should cover both national and Alliance responsibilities in case of the appearance of

Kremlin provocateurs among the Slavic population of Estonia or Latvia. This plan should also include contingencies for small provocations, such as the kidnapping of the Estonian intelligence official, as well as a plan for dealing with cyber-attacks such as the one experienced by Estonia in 2007. Finally, NATO should conduct a formal review of the NATO-Russia Founding Act, which was premised on the outdated notion of Russia as a partner of the West.

The second area that requires a new policy is the grey zone in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia where Moscow claims a sphere of influence. Do Western policymakers believe that Moscow has a right to order things in this area as it chooses, regardless of preferences of the other states? If not, the United States, NATO, and the EU need to consider measures that will strengthen these countries. Some are relatively simple. Countries interested in a stronger U.S. and/or NATO security connection, for instance, would certainly welcome more American or NATO military visits. For Georgia, that might mean increased port visits by a more active NATO in the Black Sea. In Central Asia, it could mean more CENTCOM visits to Uzbekistan. The United States might also enhance cooperation with all interested Central Asian states to offset the potential destabilizing impact of its withdrawal from Afghanistan. While this may seem counterintuitive, this last initiative need not exclude the Kremlin. Indeed, NATO and the EU can also help strengthen some nations on Russia's periphery by projects that include the Kremlin. This would also demonstrate that NATO and EU policies are designed not just to discourage Kremlin aggression, but also to resuscitate cooperation on matters of mutual interest.

Policy in the grey zone should also focus on state weaknesses that Moscow exploits to ensure its control. As discussed above, the Kremlin uses its intelligence services to recruit agents in the power ministries of the post-Soviet states. It also uses its firms to acquire key sectors of these countries' economies and to buy political influence. With interested countries, the United States and NATO should offer programs to help vet the security services and militaries to make clear that they both are under the full control of the political leaders in these states. At the same time, the United States and the EU should expand programs to uncover corruption in the financial and other sectors of these countries' economies.

Conclusion

Two years after Russia began to tear Ukraine apart, and seven years after it did the same in Georgia, the West is finally waking up to the danger of Kremlin revanchism. The process has been slow, but it is moving in the right direction. It has been slow, partly because the White House has fixated on avoiding imprudent interventions and to this day has dismissed Kremlin aggression as a regional problem. It has also been slow because many in Western Europe are still unwilling to accept the unpleasant reality that there is a major security problem to their east. This is evident among those politicians calling for the EU to lift sanctions on Moscow.

Still, the West is getting close to where it needs to be to deter aggression against members of NATO. It does, however, need a clearer and firmer policy to strengthen the countries of the grey zone to Moscow's west and the EU's east. This is particularly true for Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, countries that would

like to develop democratic, open societies closely associated with the West.

Leaving them to the ministrations of the FSB is consistent with neither Western values nor interests. Nor is it consistent with the interests of the Russian people, who have need of a humane and prosperous society, not revisionism and tension with the West. The West can combine strong policies to deter Kremlin aggression with an open hand to further cooperation once Moscow decides that revisionism is a losing proposition. PRISM

Notes

[1] Josh Earnest, "Press Briefing by Press Secretary Josh Earnest," *The White House*, July 9, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/07/09/press-briefing-press-secretary-josh-earnest-792015>.

[2] Newsmax, "State Department: Kerry Doesn't View Russia as Existential Threat," *Newsmax*, July 10, 2015, <http://www.newsmax.com/Newsfront/John-Kerry-Foreign-Relations-Vladimir-Putin/2015/07/10/id/654484/>.

[3] Global Fire Power, "Russia Military Strength," *Global Firepower*, <http://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=Russia>.

[4] Christoper Cavas, "US: Russia Building 'Arc Of Steel' From Arctic To Med," *Defense One*, Oct 6, 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/naval/2015/10/06/russia-military-naval-power-ship-building-submarine-warships-baltic-mediterranean-black-sea-arctic-syria-estonia-latvia-lithuania-crimea-ukraine/73480280/>.

[5] Christoper Cavas, "US: Russia Building 'Arc Of Steel' From Arctic To Med," *Defense One*, Oct 6, 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/naval/2015/10/06/russia-military-naval-power-ship-building-submarine-warships-baltic-mediterranean-black-sea-arctic-syria-estonia-latvia-lithuania-crimea-ukraine/73480280/>.

[6] Paul McLeary, "Meet the New Fulda Gap," *Foreign Policy*, September 29, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/09/29/fulda-gap-nato-russia-putin-us-army/>; Aaron Mehta, "Gen. Breedlove: Intelligence Community Changing How It Handles Russia," *Defense News*, October 30, 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/budget/2015/10/30/intel-community-russia-breedlove/74867614/>.

[7] See, for example, Vladimir Putin, "Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club," P*resident of Russia*, October 24, 2014, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46860>.

[8] Fiona Hill, "This Is What Putin Really Wants," *The National Interest*, February 24, 2015, <http://www.nationalinterest.org/feature/what-putin-really-wants-12311>.

[9] "Putin Hints at Splitting Up Ukraine," *The Moscow Times*, April 8, 2008, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/putin-hints-at-splitting-up-ukraine/361701.html>; Farangis Najibullah, "Putin Downplays Kazakh Independence, Sparks Angry Reaction," *Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty*, September 3, 2014, <http://www.rferl.org/content/kazakhstan-putin-history-reaction-nation/26565141.html>.

[10] Vladimir Putin, "Transcript: Putin Says Russia Will Protect the Rights of Russians Abroad," *Washington Post*, March 18, 2014, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/transcript-putin-says-russia-will-protect-the-rights-of-russians-abroad/2014/03/18/432a1e60-ae99-11e3-a49e-76adc9210f19_story.html>.

[11] "New rules or a game without rules" was the theme of the October 2014 Valdai meeting. Mr. Putin made this clear in his own remarks in this forum: Russia Today, "Putin at Valdai – World Order: New Rules or a Game without Rules (FULL VIDEO)," *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9F9pQcqPdKo>.

[12] Roman Olearchyk, "Eural Trans Gas opens up," *Kyiv Post*, July 17, 2003, <http://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/business/eural-trans-gas-opens-up-17054.html>; Roman Kupchinsky, "Ukraine: Criminal Cases Filed Over Gas Schemes," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, July 5, 2005, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1059689.html>.

[13] See: Julie Dempsey, "Europe's Energy Companies Go Back to Business With Russia", *Natural Gas Europe*, September 9, 2015, <http://www.naturalgaseurope.com/europe-energy-companies-go-back-to-business-with-russia-25347>.

[14] Alina Polyakova, "Strange Bedfellows: Putin and Europe's Far Right," *World Affairs*, September/October 2014, <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/strange-bedfellows-putin-and-europe%E2%80%99s-far-right>.

[15] The Economist "Estonia and Russia: A Cyber-Riot," *The Economist*, May 10, 2007, <http://www.economist.com/node/9163598>; Scheherazade Rehman, "Estonia's Lessons in Cyberwarfare," *U.S. News & World Report*, January 14, 2013, <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/world-report/2013/01/14/estonia-shows-how-to-build-a-defense-against-cyber-warfare>.

[16] Jarno Limnéll, "Putin is Waging a Relentless Cyberwar against Ukraine," *Newsweek*, January 11, 2016, <http://www.newsweek.com/putin-cyberwar-ukraine-russia-414040>.

[17] Serhii Plokhy, *The Last Empire: The Final Days of the Soviet Union* (New York: Basic Books, 2014): 269 and 272-4.

[18] Barbara Oegg and Kimberly A. Elliott, "Russia and the Effectiveness of Economic Sanctions between

Big Players," *VOX*, October 8, 2008, <http://www.voxeu.org/article/futility-using-economic-sanctions-against-russia>.

[19] For many years, the Kremlin had strongly opposed NATO membership for Ukraine, but it had not taken a position against EU membership for the country. And of course, the prospective trade agreement was a good deal short of membership. Only in 2013 did the Kremlin start to express concern about the trade deal, which had been under negotiation for several years.

[20] BBC Europe, "Russia offers Ukraine major economic assistance," *BBC News*, December 17, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-25411118>.

[21] John Herbst, "Putin is Forging a New Ukraine—Just Not the One He Wants," *The National Interest*, March 14, 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/putin-forging-new-ukraine%E2%80%94just-not-the-one-he-wants-10049?page=2>.

[22] Jamie Dettmer, "New Evidence: Russian Spies Backed Kiev's Killers," *The Daily Beast*, April 3, 2014, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/04/03/ukraine-fingers-russian-advisors-and-ex-president-yanukovych-in-february-massacre.html>.

[23] For example, US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland had a surprise meeting with Russian presidential adviser Vladislav Surkov on January 15, 2016 in which they discussed Ukraine. Also, Europe has been more frequent in its calls for Ukraine to fulfill its obligations under the Minsk agreement, perhaps signaling a willingness to compromise. Geopolitical Diary, "In Ukraine, an Opportunity for Progress Between Russia and the West," *Stratfor*, January 19, 2016, <https://www.stratfor.com/geopolitical-diary/ukraine-opportunity-progress-between-russia-and-west>.

[24] Carol E. Lee, "G-7 Heads Warn Moscow Before Facing Putin," *Wall Street Journal*, June 5, 2014, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-iran-nuclear-issues-on-g-7-agenda-1401962803>.

[25] "Militants aided by Russia seized 500 square kilometers of Ukraine since Minsk Agreement," *Euromaidan Press*, January 20, 2015, <http://euromaidanpress.com/2015/01/20/militants-aided-by-russia-seized-500-square-kilometers-of-ukraine-since-minsk-agreement/#arvlbdata>; Nathan Francis, "Russia Sending More Troops, Heavy Weapons into Ukraine as Conflict Intensifies," *Inquisitr*, November 2, 2014, <http://www.inquisitr.com/1580820/russia-sending-more-troops-heavy-weapons-into-ukraine-as-conflict-intensifies/>.

[26] For example, it would give the local authorities the unique right to control the local police and to create and control a militia.

[27] Columb Strack, "Syrian government territorial gains just 0.4% since Russian military intervention," *HIS Jane's 360*, November 19, 2015, <http://www.janes.com/article/56134/syrian-government-territorial-gains-just-0-4-since-russian-military-intervention>.

[28] Mary Holland, "Chechnya's Internally Displaced and the Role of Russia's Non-Governmental Organizations," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 17, no. 3 (2004), <https://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/content/17/3/334.abstract>.

[29] International Monetary Fund, "World Economic Outlook Update," *IMF*, January 2016, <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2016/update/01>; Private Discussions in Europe, February 8-11, 2016.

[30] Interfax, "Western sanctions cost Russia 1.5% of GDP—Alexei Kudrin," *Russia Beyond the Headlines*, November 21, 2015, <http://rbth.com/business/2015/11/21/western-sanctions-cost-rusia-15-of-gdp-alexei-kudrin_542921>.

[31] Levada Center, "In case of renewed militarized action, should Russian army be deployed in Ukraine?" *Russia Votes*, November 14-17 2014, <http://www.russiavotes.org/security/ukraine.php#713>.

[32] Karoun Demirjian, "Putin denies Russian troops are in Ukraine, decrees certain deaths secret," *Washington Post*, May 28, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/putin-denies-russian-troops-are-in-ukraine-decrees-certain-deaths-secret/2015/05/28/9bb15092-0543-11e5-93f4-f24d4af7f97d_story.html>.

[33] Pavel Felgenhauer, "Autumn Pause Follows Donbas August Fighting," *The Jamestown Foundation*, <http://www.jamestown.org/regions/europe/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=44325&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=667&cHash=604db41436221f4a39624f24a3ca9ca9#.Vv7aevkrKUk>.

[34] Ivo Daalder, Michele Flournoy, John Herbst, Jan Lodal, Steven Pifer, James Stavridis, Strove Talbott, and Charles Wald, *Preserving Ukraine's Independence, Resisting Russian Aggression: What the United States and NATO Must Do* (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, February 2015).

[35] BBC Europe, "Russia has 9,000 troops in Ukraine—President Poroshenko," *BBC News*, January

21, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30913027>.

[36] "Putin Acknowledges Russian Military Officers in Ukrainian Mainland," *Concorde Capital*, December 18, 2015, <http://concorde.ua/en/research/daily/putin-acknowledges-russian-military-officers-in-ukrainian-14874/>.

[37] Opponents of this idea argue that this would not deter the Kremlin because the Kremlin has escalation advantage and Ukraine is more important to Russia than the United States. It may be true that Ukraine is more important to Moscow than Washington, but it is not more important to Moscow than to Kyiv. And Kyiv and the Ukrainian people will continue to fight the aggressors. Why do we want to disadvantage the victims of aggression by denying them arms?

Some opponents of providing weapons argue that Kremlin military strength means that it can defeat any weapons system we provide. And if that happens, it would be geopolitical defeat for the United States. This is simply false. We can pursue a policy of weapons supply without taking responsibility for securing Moscow's defeat. We can provide weapons while making clear that we have no intention of using American troops. This was the successful rationale behind the Reagan Doctrine, which challenged Soviet overreach in Third World conflicts around the globe by providing weapons.

The last point is this. If we understand that Putin's aim of revising the post-Cold War order may mean aggression in countries beyond Ukraine, it is very much in our interest to make his experience in Ukraine as painful as possible. That will make him more vulnerable at home and will leave him with fewer resources for mischief elsewhere.

[38] Phil Steward and David Mardiste, "U.S. to pre-position tanks, artillery in Baltics, eastern Europe," *Reuters*, June 23, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-europe-defense-idUSKBN0P315620150623>.

[39] Phil Stewart and David Mardiste, "U.S. to Pre-Position Tanks, Artillery in Baltics, Eastern Europe," *Reuters*, June 23, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-europe-defense-idU.S.KBN0P315620150623>; Andrew Rettman, "U.S. to Quadruple Military Spending in Europe," *EU Observer*, February 2, 2016, <https://euobserver.com/foreign/132101>.

Photos

Page 164. Photo by Anton Holoborodko. 2014. Little green men armed with AK-74Ms blockading Perevalne military base 25 kilometres south of Simferopol, 9 March 2014. From <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_green_men_(Ukrainian_crisis)#/media/File:2014-03-09_-_Perevalne_military_base_-_0203.JPG>. Licensed under Creative Commons 3.0 Unported license < http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>. Photo unaltered.

Page 170. Photo by VO Svoboda's photos. 2014. Damaged building in Kurakhove, Donetsk region. From <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Damaged_building_in_Kurakhove,_Donetsk_region.jpg> licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/deed.en>. Photo unaltered.

Page 175. Photo by Russian Presidential Press and Information Office. 2015. Vladimir Putin at the site Donguzskij (2015-09-19). From < https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Putin_at_the_site_Donguzskij_(2015-09-19)_13.jpg> licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license. < https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.en>. Photo unaltered.