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A Historical and Contextual Analysis of Soviet and Russian "Active Measures": How Russian Political Warfare Efforts in Foreign Presidential Elections Have Transformed in the Information Age

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A HISTORICAL AND CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF SOVIET AND RUSSIAN "ACTIVE MEASURES": HOW RUSSIAN POLITICAL WARFARE EFFORTS IN FOREIGN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS HAVE TRANSFORMED IN THE INFORMATION AGE

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to analyze the transformation of Russian active measures in targeted national elections since the Soviet era. Through a historical analysis of research on active measures and a contextual analysis of active measures campaigns themselves, this thesis finds that Russian active measures techniques have not drastically changed since the Soviet era. Instead, as a result of technology, Russian active measures have utilized platforms of social media to become more targeted, continuous, and convert. Therefore, Russian active measures campaigns have been better able to successfully target specific audiences, arguably making these campaigns more effective.

Introduction

In 1983 an article was printed in an Indian newspaper claiming AIDS would pose a grave danger to India after being created by the United States for a secret experiment. It listed facts about the disease, publicly known U.S. biological warfare programs, and statistics in an attempt to create some sense of truth. The information in this article spread to Africa and eventually caused chaos and confusion when it was reported on U.S. national news. This false narrative, or disinformation, came from the headquarters of the Soviet Union's main intelligence agency, the KGB. This method of instilling skepticism and fear in societies, developed and polished in the Soviet Union, is being transformed during the Putin regime to become more repetitive and targeted.[1]

According to Vasili Mitrokhin, a former Major in the KGB, active measures campaigns were aimed at "exerting useful influence on aspects of the political life of a target country which are of interest, its foreign policy, the solution of international problems, misleading the adversary, undermining and weakening his positions, the disruption of his hostile plans, and the achievement of other aims".[2] Active measures are a type of political warfare that include and are not limited to disinformation campaigns, propaganda, blackmail, and political and economic sabotage. Russia's use of information warfare is an attempt to weaken the West by undermining democratic processes. Active measures campaigns, originally used during the Soviet era, have

[1] Boghardt, Thomas. (2009). "Soviet Bloc Intelligence and Its AIDS Disinformation Campaign." *Studies in Intelligence* 53, no. 4: 1–24, 6.
[2] Mitrokhin, Vasili I. (2002). *KGB Lexicon: the Soviet Intelligence Officer's Handbook*. London: Frank Cass, 13.

transformed into sophisticated and seemingly unstoppable efforts to generate false narratives that further Russia's global and regional goals. On the surface, Russia's goal in using information warfare appears to be a means to create chaos and divisiveness within a region or country. However, Russia seeks to use this chaos to fulfill its long-term strategic goals of gaining superpower status, expanding its global influence, and fortifying Putin's position of power.[3]

Following the 2016 U.S. presidential election, the United States Intelligence Community Assessment stated that Moscow's provocations "demonstrated a significant escalation in directness, level of activity, and scope of effort".[4] I look at elections specifically because in principle, elections sustain civil society and give people the freedom to choose their leaders. Additionally, the domestic and foreign agendas of elected leaders can greatly impact the balance of the international system and influence the democratic progress of their country. How have Russian active measures in targeted national elections transformed since the Soviet Era? I hypothesize that better access to technology has led to an increase in information consumption allowing for Russian active measures to have a larger reach and potentially greater impact. As technology has improved, Russian active measures campaigns have been better able to successfully target specific audiences. The creation of social media has provided the world with unprecedented access to information. Through my research, I find that Russian active measures techniques have not drastically changed since the Soviet era. However, the platforms by which Russian active measures are conducted have changed as a result of technology. I argue that social

[3] Stricklin, Kasey. (2020). "Why Does Russia Use Disinformation?" Lawfare Blog. Accessed October 23, 2020. http://www.lawfareblog.com/why-does-russia-use-disinformation.
[4] Intelligence Community Assessment. (2017). "Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections." 1-25, 7.

media has greatly increased the world's connectivity allowing for Russian active measures to be more targeted, continuous, and covert.

After analyzing active measures campaigns from the Soviet and Putin era, I find that they are not simply propaganda and disinformation, but instead, a part of Soviet and Russian foreign policy that uses existing social and political issues to cause chaos and confusion in countries around the world. I find that while Soviet and Russian active measures techniques and objectives vary by case, the underlying goals remain the same. Russia does this through reflexive control in which it compels adversaries to act in a way that is advantageous to the Russian agenda. Russian actors do this by confusing and exhausting adversaries to control and create false narratives.[5] Russia seeks to undermine civil society and western values while also maintaining influence in regions where it has political interest.

Literature Review

Russian methods of political warfare in the Putin era have transformed to focus heavily on driving wedges within societies by utilizing social and political pressure points. In Megan Reiss's article "Disinformation in the Reagan Years and Lessons for Today," she compares Soviet active measures campaigns to Russian active measures, specifically in the form of disinformation, and suggests actions that can be taken to respond to Russian disinformation in

[5] Brian Whitmore, interview with John Sipher and Clint Watts, *The Power Vertical Podcast*, podcast audio, December 2,2020. https://www.powervertical.org/2020/12/04/the-looking-glass-war/.

the future. Reiss points out that a main difference between Soviet and current Russian active measures are the vessels used to put out false narratives. Campaigns once conducted solely by intelligence agencies are now being conducted by third parties, such as proxy sites and trolls, making false narratives more difficult to trace.[6]

Active measures campaigns began in the 1920s focusing primarily on conspiracies, but after World War II, transformed into professionalized efforts by the Kremlin to achieve foreign policy objectives. Thomas Rid explains in his book *Active Measures: the Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare* that all active measures campaigns have three commonalities. First, they are not spontaneous lies by the government, but instead the meticulous and thorough production of skewed and targeted information. Second, all active measures campaigns have some form of disinformation embedded within them. Lastly, active measures always have a goal--usually to weaken an institution that is deemed a threat by the Russian government.[7]

Social media has become an extremely useful medium for Russian active measures. Lieutenant Colonel Jarred Prier explains in his scholarly article "Social Media as Information Warfare" that social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook utilize an algorithm which analyzes words and phrases to form lists of topics based on popularity. This list not only allows large audiences to view and contribute to discussion surrounding the most popular topics of the time, but it also provides bots and trolls with the ability to create their own trends to disseminate

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[6] Reiss, Megan. "Disinformation in the Reagan Years and Lessons for Today." *R Street Institute*, (2019): 1-9, 3. Accessed March 19, 2021. http://www.jstor.org.umiss.idm.oclc.org/stable/resrep19125.

[7] Rid, Thomas. (2021). *ACTIVE MEASURES: the Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare*. S.l.: PICADOR.

their messages quicker. Prier explains that successful propaganda campaigns are not only concerned with presenting one message, but instead they try to create "heuristics" which is "a way the mind simplifies problem solving by relying on quickly accessible data." People tend to believe ideas they hear over and over again and social media contributes to the repetitiveness and normalization of propaganda. Prier predicts that Russia will likely continue to be the front-runner of active measures and that the unpreparedness of countries around the world to combat these efforts will take a toll on the credibility and transparency of democratic institutions.[8]

In chapter six of the book *The Russian Challenge* called "Russia's Toolkit" by Keir Giles, he explains how social media contributes to the multiplier effect which greatly expands the reach of Russian propaganda. Similar to Prier's conjectures in his academic article, Giles explains how Western media was unprepared for information warfare. Attempts by the media to debunk disinformation has contributed to the Kremlin's objective of creating alternative realities through active measures campaigns. Additionally, the principles of freedom and transparency emphasized in many Western societies unwittingly contributes to the amplification of Russian narratives. Giles's main fear is that Russian influence operations will trickle into the policy making process, especially among Western powers, such as NATO, where cooperation and unity is crucial. The main point of this chapter is to give caution to a potential "hybrid war" which would utilize information warfare capabilities, military forces, and other government mechanisms to influence policy and public perceptions around the world.[9]

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[8] Prier, Jarred. "Commanding the Trend: Social Media as Information Warfare." *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (2017): 50-85. Accessed March 22, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26271634.

[9] Giles, Keir. "Russia's Toolkit," in *The Russian Challenge*, 40-49. The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2015.

Methodology

The qualitative research design of this thesis focuses on two main types of sources. The first source is mass media itself. Mass media in the form of television, radio, and social media provides a platform where Russian intelligence officers and third-party actors can covertly launch disinformation and propaganda campaigns. I analyze Russian and Ukrainian government directives given to media outlets during the 2004 Ukrainian presidential election and social media content uploaded to Facebook and Instagram during the 2016 U.S. presidential election. My objective is to determine the importance of this content, why this content was released, and determine the actors responsible for disseminating the disinformation or propaganda. I coded pieces of disinformation and propaganda disseminated through mass media in order to determine how the Kremlin utilizes social and political issues within a community. From the coding, I am then able to contextualize how technology has shaped the tactics and objectives of Russian active measures. The coding also allows me to systematically organize Russian disinformation in order to determine the relevance of political and social themes regarding specific active measures campaigns. Additionally, I am able to determine how the Kremlin is directly or indirectly linked to each active measures campaign.

The second type of source is research and reports which seek to define and characterize active measures, effectively compartmentalizing the chaos and confusion produced by active measures campaigns. I perform a deep textual analysis of scholarly articles and reports on Soviet and Russian active measures to provide insight into the transformation of active measures through the summary and analysis of three Soviet case studies. This is important for a couple

reasons. First, it allows the reader to understand the techniques, tactics, objectives, and long-term goals of various Soviet active measures campaigns. Additionally, the case studies provide important contributions in understanding the history and transformation of Soviet active measures into the Putin era. This chapter provides a crucial contribution in setting up the final two chapters which focus on the content of Russian active measures, specifically during foreign presidential elections. It is important to note that the main primary sources for the first chapter are interviews with KGB officers and U.S. intelligence documents from the Soviet era. It is important to be aware that the perception of the Soviet Union from U.S. government agencies during this time were often starkly anti-communist. As a result, these documents portray democracy in a positive light, emphasizing the importance of economic freedom in sustaining American prosperity and power. However, these documents are still important in understanding not only how Soviet active measures have evolved, but also how public knowledge of active measures has grown.

Structure of Thesis

My thesis is broken up into two main parts. First, I conduct a historical analysis of Soviet active measures campaigns. I analyze active measures techniques used during three campaigns conducted in the late 1970s and early 1980s to determine how Soviet goals influenced the methods and objectives of active measures. I find that while Soviet active measures techniques and tactics varied by case, all three of these campaigns utilized existing fears and conspiracies to undermine civil society. For my historical analysis, I use information released by former KGB officers in the form of memoirs and interviews. This makes it possible to see if and/or how

methods have evolved during the Putin era. Former U.S. intelligence documents provide insight into techniques of active measures campaigns by the Soviet Union. However, it is important to be aware of anti-communist sentiments evident in U.S. government documents that influence the veracity of their claims.

The next section of my thesis is a contextual analysis of current active measures efforts in elections. I look for what ideas are being promoted and how active measures are being conducted. This points to an overarching question of why Russia chooses information warfare as a primary method to obtain their goals. With the advancement of technology, Russia can disseminate a large concentration of false narratives to a wide audience. Interviews with Russian internet "trolls" give insight into the current active measures techniques. The information these trolls give about the companies they worked for and their connection to Russia's Internet Research Agency (IRA), which is a well-known government disinformation agency, provides valuable insight into the relationship between private enterprises and the Russian government.[10] The last two chapters of my thesis will each focus on the elections taken place during the Putin era where there is clear evidence of Russian propaganda. The first case study will be the 2004 Ukrainian presidential election. The second case study is the 2016 U.S. presidential election. The reason for Russia's involvement in these elections is to undermine civil society and the interests of the West to even the global playing field for itself and its allies. However, a content analysis of the narratives broadcasted during these elections will provide an understanding of how disinformation has become more sophisticated in who and how it targets. The two elections I

[10] Soshnikov, Andrey and Andrey Zakharov. (2019, March 14). "Aktivny patriot: pervoe īnterv'iu s obviniaemym po delu fabriki trolleĭ." *BBC Russian Service.*

look at took place over a decade apart, and therefore, allow me to determine how Russian interference methods have evolved in the twenty-first century and the role technology played in these efforts.

Chapter 1: A Historical Analysis of Soviet "Active Measures" Campaigns

In 1979, Soviet agents conducted a disinformation campaign that blamed the United States for the seizure of the Grand Mosque of Mecca by Islamic extremists. A couple years later in 1981, the Soviet owned news agency TASS implied that the United States was behind the plane crash that ultimately killed Panamanian leader Omar Torrijos.[11] Propaganda and disinformation are components of a well-established Soviet technique called *aktivniyye meropriyatiya* or "active measures". In this chapter I analyze the Soviet AIDS campaign, the anti-TNF campaign, and active measures campaigns during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 to determine how the USSR conducted these operations, how these methods differed depending on the USSR's international and domestic goals, and who these campaigns targeted. I argue that while Soviet active measures are tailored to each campaign, the underlying characteristics and overall goals remain the same. These active measures campaigns exacerbated existing distrust toward public institutions and utilized political and cultural environments to target specific audiences in order to support Soviet agendas in specific regions around the world.

The History and Transformation of Soviet "Active Measures"

KGB defector Yuri Bezmenov stated in an interview in 1984 that the goal of disinformation in the United States is "to change the perception of reality of every American, to such an extent that, despite the abundance of information, no one can come to sensible conclusions in the interest of defending themselves, their families, their communities, and their

[11] United States Department of State. (1981). Soviet "Active Measures": Forgeries, Disinformation, Political Operations. Special Report no.88.

country".[12] The Soviets used the term "active measures" to describe a type of political warfare that included and was not limited to disinformation campaigns, black mail, efforts to control foreign media, forgeries, front organizations, and propaganda.[13] Soviet active measures were strategies of manipulation that sought to create an environment that favored Moscow's agenda in particular countries or regions of the world.[14] The overall goals of active measures have remained the same over the past century: to weaken other countries politically and socially to make Russia appear stronger and/or to maintain influence in regions where Russia has policy interests. However, the means and objectives of specific active measures campaigns have varied greatly. Russian active measures campaigns have sought to achieve their goals by attempting to weaken relationships between allied nations, undermine specific groups' trust in their nation's institutions, and create divisions among societies based on ideology, ethnicity, and race.[15] Disinformation as a modern tool of political warfare began in the 1920s, but it was not until after World War II did it become more tactical, professional, and well-funded. In the 1920s and 1930s, disinformation primarily focused on conspiracies and was not very organized. In the 1970s, active measures campaigns began to share more characteristics with the Russian influence operations conducted during the Putin era---it became organized chaos.[16]

Active measures were primarily produced and implemented by the Soviet security agency known as the KGB, specifically KGB's Service A unit. Service A conducted active measures and

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[12] The Long History of Russian Disinformation Targeting the U.S. (2018, November 21). Accessed February 03, 2021. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/the-long-history-of-russian-disinformation-targeting-the-u-s.
[13] United States Department of State. (1981). Soviet "Active Measures": Forgeries, Disinformation, Political Operations. Special Report no.88.
[14] Boghardt, Thomas. (2009). "Soviet Bloc Intelligence and Its AIDS Disinformation Campaign." Studies in Intelligence 53, no. 4: 1-24, 1.
[15] Rid, Thomas. (2021). *ACTIVE MEASURES: the Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare*. S.l.: PICADOR, 9.
[16] Idib, 7

assigned officers abroad to assist in the process.[17] Former KGB officer who now goes by the name "Larry Martin" stated in an interview that KGB officers were expected to come up with ideas for disinformation campaigns and were evaluated based on the quality and quantity of their proposals.[18] Each officer of the KGB Service A unit was tasked with spending at least 25 percent of his time creating and conducting disinformation campaign ideas.[19]

Many Western powers viewed active measures as mere falsehoods that the Soviets used to weaken their adversaries. However, many Soviets involved in producing disinformation believed that it exposed the evils of capitalism and emphasized various social issues in the West.[20] The process of creating, analyzing, and implementing Soviet active measures was lengthy and required a great deal of conceptualization. The first part of the active measures process was receiving orders from the KGB headquarters to begin the campaign. After the go-ahead, KGB officers did extensive research on the target, reading local news, books, and other sources that would be useful in developing ideas for active measures. Next, the headquarters would review the ideas for the disinformation campaign. The approval process would begin, and translators would become involved in the campaign. Then, the headquarters would release the story in foreign media, usually through newspapers and media in developing countries. Sometimes, Soviet media would pick up the story and further circulate it pointing to the non-Soviet original version as a way to deny any involvement.[21]

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[17] Boghardt, Thomas. (2009). "Soviet Bloc Intelligence and Its AIDS Disinformation Campaign." Studies in Intelligence 53, no. 4: 1-24, 1.
[18] Larry Martin, interviewed by The New York Times. (2018). *The New York Times Company.*
[19] Boghardt, Thomas. (2009). "Soviet Bloc Intelligence and Its AIDS Disinformation Campaign." Studies in Intelligence 53, no. 4: 1-24, 1.
[20] Idib, 2
[21] Idib, 3

Soviet Active Measures and the AIDS Epidemic

The Kremlin realized that the key to a successful disinformation campaign was to emphasize specific themes over a long period of time. For example, in the 1980s, the Soviets launched an active measures campaign that implicated the United States in creating the AIDS virus. Similar to other KGB active measures operations which utilized media outlets in developing countries, the Soviets released an article in the Indian newspaper *The Patriot* in 1983.[22]

Many times, it is hard to measure the success of active measures campaigns. However, in the case of the AIDS campaign, it is clear that it was successful, and its long-term effects may still be evident. There are a couple of characteristics that make this active measures campaign effective. First, the campaign used underlying public weariness toward governmental institutions. The American public in the 1970s was already weary of the government after it recently learned about U.S biological warfare research that occurred early in the Cold War. Therefore, the idea that the fairly unresearched AIDS virus could be a biological weapon was not too far out. Second, the campaign aligns with an already existing political and cultural environment. In the United States, racial tensions were at a high and rumors of AIDS being a biological weapon targeting people of African descent were widespread. The AIDS virus was sweeping through Africa which added to the credibility of this conspiracy. The virus also had a severe effect on the gay community, as it disproportionately affects gay men. The Reagan administration's unhurried response to the virus also prompted the gay community and its

[22] Anonymous (July 17). ""AIDS May Invade India," The Patriot". *New York Times* (online). Accessed April 12, 2021. https://static01.nyt.com/images/2017/12/13/us/politics/13dc-disinfo2/merlin_131179325_4a867223-3bdf-4e56-a5aa-7045df25b618-superJumbo.jpg?quality=90&auto=webp

supporters to be skeptical of the U.S. government.[23] Eventually, the active measures campaign was debunked with the help of the Active Measures Working Group (AMWG) which was created in 1981 to openly discuss and combat Soviet active measures campaigns. Despite an effort to combat disinformation, the seeds of doubt planted by Soviet active measures have had possible long-term implications. In 1997, 29 percent of Africans Americans believed that the statement "AIDS was deliberately created in a lab to infect black people" was true or possibly true.[24] It is impossible to measure the true effectiveness of active measures, but that is what adds to its credibility. Although the AIDS campaign was debunked, seeds of doubt were sown in the American public concerning the trustworthiness of the U.S. government. Soviet active measures were meticulous campaigns that required a great deal of manpower. During the Soviet era, the KGB honed-in on developing active measures tactics and this did not go unnoticed by the USSR's adversaries. In a 1981 report, the United States Department of State wrote a special report that warned of possible advancements of active measures in the imminent future that would be more sophisticated and difficult to discern.[25]

Soviet Active Measures Against NATO

In 1979, NATO decided to modernize its TNF (Theater Nuclear Forces) in response to Soviet military build-up during the Cold War. NATO's TNF modernization campaign included

[23] Qiu, Linda. (2017). "Fingerprints of Russian Disinformation: From Aids to Fake News." *The New York Times*. Accessed on January 16, 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/12/us/politics/russian-disinformation-aids-fake-news.html.
[24] Boghardt, Thomas. (2009). "Soviet Bloc Intelligence and Its AIDS Disinformation Campaign." Studies in Intelligence 53, no. 4: 1-24, 19.
[25] United States Department of State. (1981). Soviet "Active Measures": Forgeries, Disinformation, Political Operations. Special Report no.88.

the deployment of over 400 ground-launch cruise missiles and over 100 Pershing IIs in various European countries.[26] The Soviets saw this as not only a security threat to the USSR, but also as a prolongment of the American military commitment in Europe.[27] Soviet active measures against NATO's TNF modernization campaign were conducted using different political and economic influence operations to dissuade European countries from supporting NATO's TNF modernization campaign. Soviet ambassadors, stationed in various NATO member countries, attempted to coerce officials to express opposition against the TNF campaign by offering to manipulate Soviet oil and gas prices for their respective country. The Soviets used two main tactics in an attempt to prevent TNF modernization: a "campaign from above" and a "campaign from below". The goal of the Soviet anti-TNF campaign was to utilize existing public fears surrounding nuclear weapons, create confusion among policymakers, and preserve Soviet nuclear posture.[28] The "campaign from above" was an attempt by the Soviets to weaken the relationship between the United States and its European counterparts. The Kremlin did this by attempting to convince the European public that the Reagan administration's reckless and confrontational behavior was endangering European lives. The Soviet Union proposed new initiatives that aimed to convince the public that the Soviets wanted peace while the United States wanted to expand its power and influence in Europe.[29]

The Soviet "campaign from below" consisted of the utilization of existing public fear and speculation surrounding the NATO decision. Soviet active measures against NATO also

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[26] Garthoff, Raymond L. (1983). "The NATO Decision on Theater Nuclear Forces." *Political Science Quarterly* 98, no. 2: 197-214. Accessed February 15, 2021. doi:10.2307/2149415.
[27] Kessler, Glenn Andrew. "Questionable Infatuation: Toward a Solution of the TNF Issue." *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, 1983, 18–23, 19.
[28] Alexiev, Alexander R. (1985). "The Soviet Campaign Against INF: Strategy, Tactics, Means." *RAND Corporation*, 1–60, v.
[29] Idib

included the creation of front organizations, most which were founded by local communist parties among NATO member countries. All of these front organizations were managed by the International Department of the CPSU Central committee which worked in conjunction with the Foreign Intelligence Directorate of the KGB.[30] The Soviet Union attempted to use these organizations to broaden the scope of their campaign by gathering public support against NATO's TNF campaign. The Soviets used front organizations to involve other groups such as pacifists, anti-nuclear activists, and environmentalists in order to prevent the anti-TNF campaign from appearing to simply be a Warsaw Pact campaign against NATO. The role of these religious organizations and other groups helped the campaign reach audiences that held various political and social views. While the independent peace groups varied on political stances, they provided a united front regarding disarmament. For example, Great Britain's Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament worked with the group called the Association of Democratic Women in Denmark, which was the Danish branch of a larger communist front organization. Together these two organizations voiced objection to U.S President Ronald Reagan's "zero option" which stated the United States would not deploy more missiles in Europe as long as the Soviets disarmed theirs in Eastern Europe.[31] Additionally, at the international level, the World Peace Council located in Helsinki, the Christian Peace Conference in Prague, and the World Federation of Scientific Workers were all Soviet front organizations. At the national level, the German Communist Party (DKP), for example, was connected with many communist and noncommunist affiliates ready and willing to be involved in anti-TNF campaign efforts.[32]

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[30] Alexiev, Alexander R. (1985). "The Soviet Campaign Against INF: Strategy, Tactics, Means." *RAND Corporation*, 1–60, vi.
[31] G., Jeffrey. (1982). "Moscow and the Peace, Offensive." *The Heritage Foundation.* Accessed on March 18, 2021. https://www.heritage.org/europe/report/moscow-and-the-peace-offensive.
[32] Alexiev, Alexander R. (1985). "The Soviet Campaign Against INF: Strategy, Tactics, Means." *RAND Corporation*, 1–60, vii.

In the 1970s there was growing dissent amongst the public concerning the use and deployment of nuclear weapons. Most Soviet resources during this active measures campaign were allocated toward NATO countries that were most likely to vote against TNF modernization. This is not surprising since the Soviets preferred to use existing social and political schisms during active measures campaigns. During this specific campaign, the Soviets were very active in the Netherlands where many people were hesitant to support nuclear armament in Europe. The Communist Party of the Netherlands used a front organization to sponsor an international forum that was instrumental in convincing the Dutch parliament to vote against the NATO TNF modernization.[33] This Soviet active measures campaign began before NATO announced its decision to modernize its TNF. The campaign was extremely targeted and played an important, yet discreet role in fostering public dissent towards NATO. Despite NATO ultimately moving forward with the TNF campaign, several European countries experienced public unrest and weariness among government officials before the final vote. Brussels, for example, experienced anti-nuclear protests and intense parliamentary debates leading up to its final vote on the TNF modernization campaign. Additionally, Norway sought to reevaluate the final TNF decision after two years.[34] The Kremlin's use of exacerbating existing anti-American and anti-nuclear sentiments among the public is a prime example of a long-standing Soviet active measures tactic of undermining civil society in an attempt to produce an outcome desirable for the Soviet Union. Unlike the AIDS campaign where the Kremlin used conspiracies and blatant lies to convince people that the virus was created in an American lab, during the anti-TNF modernization

[33] United States Department of State. (1981). Soviet "Active Measures": Forgeries, Disinformation, Political Operations. Special Report no.88, 3.

[34] Readman, Kristina Spohr. "Conflict and Cooperation in Intra-Alliance Nuclear Politics: Western Europe, the United States, and the Genesis of NATO's Dual-Track Decision, 1977–1979." Journal of Cold War Studies 13, no. 2 (2011): 39-89, 85. Accessed March 23, 2021. doi:10.2307/26923532.

campaign, Soviet intelligence officers used the legitimate concerns of nuclear armament held by the public. In this case, the Kremlin manipulated factors in order to amplify public discord in an attempt to polarize communities within NATO member countries.

Soviet Active Measures in South Asia

Despite dissent from most of the international community, Soviet forces entered Afghanistan in December 1979 in an attempt to unite factions within the Afghan Communist Party. However, as an anti-communist insurgency mobilized, the Soviets found themselves in the middle of armed combat. The USSR used active measures techniques, mostly in the form of disinformation, to direct attention away from the USSR's presence in Afghanistan. In 1980, the KGB began political warfare operations in South Asia. The Soviet Union sought to secure its interests in Afghanistan by attempting to prevent outside powers from interfering in its efforts to support communism. KGB assets warned the Pakistani Embassy in Moscow that if Pakistani leader Zia-ul Haq gave into requests from the United States and China to allocate territory for a base for the Afghanistan armed struggle, then the USSR would exploit human rights movements within Pakistan as well as utilize existing public opposition toward the country's regime.[35] The Soviets created and disseminated hundreds of leaflets (which stated they were produced by a group of Pakistani military officers) criticizing Pakistani foreign and domestic policy. Additionally, the Soviets used disinformation in an attempt to arbitrarily link the United States to the possible development of Pakistan's own atomic weapons.

[35] "KGB Active Measures in Southwest Asia in 1980-82," April, 2004, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Contributed to CWIHP by Vasili Mitrokhin and first published in CWIHP Bulletin 14/15. Accessed February 15, 2021. http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110013.

Simultaneously, Soviet disinformation in India and Iran attempted to prove to the governments that Pakistan was preparing to use its military against both countries.[36] The USSR also attempted to weaken India relations with the West through disinformation that sought to convince India that NATO and the United States had plans to establish an "anti-Indian" alliance in which Pakistan played a major role.[37]

Similar to Soviet active measures during the anti-TNF modernization campaign, Soviet active measures in South Asia utilized existing concerns held by the public. Soviet active measures in this campaign primarily focused on exacerbating the tensions between Pakistan and India while more broadly attempting to weaken the region's relationship with the West. The Soviets' use of disinformation was an attempt to create unrest within Pakistan and in South Asia. The goal was to distract other influential powers from infringing on the Kremlin's larger goal of securing Afghanistan as a communist proxy.

Discussion

The effectiveness of Soviet active measures lies in the public's inability to discern the truth and the primary source relaying this false information. The Soviet active measures campaigns discussed in this chapter take place in different regions, utilize different techniques and tactics, and have varying agendas. However, the major Soviet goals and objectives remained the same. In all three case studies, Soviet active measures attempted to exacerbate existing intra-governmental or internal tensions to achieve different Soviet agendas. The AIDS campaign sought to weaken the United States by sowing seeds of doubt amongst the American public. The

[36] Idib, 4
[37] Idib, 7

campaign sought to divide the American public by exacerbating existing social tension while simultaneously pitting the public against the U.S. government. The anti- TNF campaign was an attempt to emphasize public dissent toward the modernization of nuclear forces amongst NATO member countries and create confusion among European policymakers. The campaign in South Asia was an attempt to promote and secure communism abroad while also attempting to weaken U.S. alliances abroad. However, in all three cases, the overall goal was the same: to weaken the West and civil society and/or maintain influence in regions where it has political or economic interests. Soviet active measures used methods of propaganda, disinformation, forgery, and blackmail in an attempt to ensure Soviet foreign policy goals. While these methods are still used during the Putin era, the growth of technology and access to media has greatly expanded Russia's reach and, subsequently, the effectiveness of active measures. Russia has been aware for decades that nations are stronger united, and by discrediting civil society, the Kremlin is rendering democracy ineffective.

Chapter 2: A Contextual Analysis of Russian "Active Measures" Campaign Efforts in the 2004 Ukrainian Presidential Election

Russian political technologist Gleb Pavlovsky said, "we live in a mythological era. We have gone back to the Ancient World where the distinction between myth and reality didn't exist".[38] In the early 2000s, technology assisted in the spread of mass information making it more difficult to discern truth from fiction. The 2004 Ukrainian presidential election marked the end of President Leonid Kuchma's two-term presidency which was tainted in political scandal and corruption.[39] Putin and his allies saw the election as a way to maintain diminishing influence among former Soviet Republics and prevent the rapid expansion of EU influence in Eastern Europe. It was no secret that Putin supported Viktor Yanukovych, whose platform emphasized cooperation with Russia. Putin not only publicly backed Yanukovych during the election, but also congratulated him on winning the election before votes were even counted.[40] Russian disinformation efforts in Ukraine focused on utilizing public and private Ukrainian and Russian media outlets to exacerbate ethnic conflict by often weakening the credibility and reputation of opposition leader, Viktor Yushchenko, and sometimes promoting the "status-quo" candidate, Viktor Yanukovych. These methods were not unlike the "active measures" techniques used by the Soviet Union which often sought to undermine or discredit Soviet opponents and political

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[38] Gleb Pavlovsky, quoted in Wilson, Andrew. (2014). Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West. New Haven: Yale University Press, 23.

[39] Kuzio, Taras. (2005). "Russian Policy Toward Ukraine during Elections." *Demokratizatsiya* 13 (4) (Fall): 491-517, 511. doi:http://dx.doi.org.umiss.idm.oclc.org/10.3200/DEMO.13.4.491-518.

[40] Jay, Adam. (2004, December 3). "Q&A: The Ukraine Election Crisis." *The Guardian*. Accessed November 5, 2020. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/dec/03/ukraine.qanda.

figures who did not align with Soviet agenda or ideology. Additionally, Soviet active measures campaigns preferred to use non-Soviet media outlets to broadcast falsehoods and this method has been and currently is part of Russia's disinformation efforts abroad.[41]

In this chapter, I demonstrate that the goals of Russia during this election align with those mentioned in Chapter 1: to undermine civil society, discredit democracy, and weaken the relationship between the public and government institutions by sowing seeds of doubt. I argue that Russia's active measures efforts were extremely similar to those conducted during the Soviet era. Similar to Soviet active measures methods, Russia used foreign media to support the presidential candidate that aligned with its interests by censoring free speech through the use of weekly government directives known as "temnyky", which can be translated to "little themes". It is likely that these directives were called "temnyky," a diminutive of the word "tema" (theme), to make the media feel less threatened by their true nature. During the 2004 Ukrainian presidential election, temnyky circulated from Ukrainian and Russian government actors to agents of the media. Temnyky were weekly directives given to media outlets that gave clear orders on what to broadcast, what not to broadcast, and how to broadcast a specific event or topic.[42] In this process, there were important intermediaries, Russian political technologists, who wrote and facilitated the distribution of temnyky between the state and media. In 2003, there were 791 television and radio stations registered in Ukraine in addition to 3,925 newspaper outlets.[43] If news sources

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[41] Cull, Nicholas, et al. (2017). *Soviet Subversion, Disinformation and Propaganda: How the West Fought Against It*. LSE Institute of Global Affairs.
[42] "Znakom′tes′: Viktor Medvedčuk, Tretij Prezident Ukrainy (Tehnologiâ Zahvata)." Ukrayinska Pravda, 2002. Accessed September 15, 2020. https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2002/03/25/4366609/.
[43] "Negotiating the News: Informal State Censorship of Ukrainian Television." *Human Rights Watch* 15, no. 2 (2003): 1–49, 10.

wanted to stay on the "right" side of politics (i.e. support Kuchma and Yanukovych) and maintain political access, then they would have to obey the directives.

Russia used a well-established Soviet technique of exacerbating existing cultural differences to achieve its goal, which in this case was to gain support for Yanukovych. Russia utilized cultural differences, primarily concentrating on the Ukrainians differing visions for the country's past and future, to further divide the public.[44] The main difference between traditional Soviet active measures techniques and the techniques seen during this election was the reach of television media outlets. Traditional Soviet active measures relied heavily on print media to conduct campaigns, but the rise of privately-owned media and the growth of web-based media in the early 2000s in Ukraine made news more accessible on a variety of platforms.[45]

When Vladimir Putin became President of the Russian Federation in 2000, he had the skills and knowledge to expand Russia's disinformation campaigns. Not only was Putin former head of the intelligence agency, the FSB, but he was also involved in foreign intelligence during the late 1970s conducting active measures campaigns against West Germany during the Cold War.[46] Disinformation during the Cold War and in the early 2000s was done overtly. While there was an effort to conceal these disinformation campaigns, the role of Moscow could be made fairly clear. Russia's favorability for one candidate over the other in the 2004 Ukrainian presidential election was obvious to much of the public who was aware of the active measures

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[44] Zon, Hans van. (2001). Ethnic conflict and conflict resolution in Ukraine, Perspectives on European Politics and Society, 2:2, 221-240, DOI: 10.1080/1570585018458760

[45] "Television." Media Ownership Monitor-Ukraine, 2017. Accessed March 24 2021. https://ukraine.mom-rsf.org/en/media/tv/.

[46] Rid, Thomas. (2021). *ACTIVE MEASURES: the Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare*. S.l.: PICADOR.

campaign by the Russian and Ukrainian governments which consisted of voter fraud, poisonings, and weekly directives given to media outlets.

Background

Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia has sought hegemony over Eastern European countries, specifically Ukraine. Ukraine's geopolitical location makes it a crucial state to both Russia and the West. When Leonid Kuchma was elected president in 1994, Ukraine saw a tightening of media freedom and the growing power of oligarchs in politics.[47] The "Kuchmagate scandal" in which President Kuchma was linked to the disappearance and murder of prominent Ukrainian journalist Georgy Gongadze in 2000 weakened Ukraine's relations with the West. Subsequently, Kuchma turned to improve relations with Russia.[48] In the 2004 Ukrainian presidential election, Viktor Yushchenko and Viktor Yanukovych, who both served as Kuchma's Prime Minister during his presidency, ran for president to determine whether Ukraine would favor closer ties with Russia or make strides to form better relations with the West, which would severely hurt Russia's influence in the region.[49]

The main perpetrators of disinformation during the 2004 Ukrainian presidential election are known as political technologists. The definition of political technologist in Russia depends on a person's political beliefs. To some, Russian political technologists are master manipulators

[47] Kuzio, Taras. (2005). "Russian Policy Toward Ukraine during Elections." *Demokratizatsiya* 13 (4) (Fall): 491-517, 491. doi:http://dx.doi.org.umiss.idm.oclc.org/10.3200/DEMO.13.4.491-518.
[48] Levin, Victoria. (2001). "Kuchmagate: Political Crisis in Ukraine?" Carnegie Middle East Center. Accessed October 16, 2020. carnegie-mec.org/2001/02/14/kuchmagate-political-crisis-in-ukraine-event-274.
[49] Woehrel, Steven. (2005). Ukraine's Orange Revolution and U.S. Policy. 1-14, 4.

who were created during the 1990s to create a façade of democracy and distract the public from the lack of energy wealth in the country.[50] To others, political technologists are simply consultants, political analysts, or policy experts. However, one thing is certain: political technologists are connected to the Kremlin either directly or indirectly. Their position is officially unassociated with the Russian government allowing Putin to deny Russian involvement when necessary. Interestingly, some of the most well-known political technologists were perceived to be Russian liberals in the 1990s. Gleb Pavlovsky was a dissident during the Soviet era, Marat Gelman was a gallery and art-collector, and Sergei Markov was a fellow for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Each of these political technologists seems to have varying interests but what unites them all is their position against mainstream politics of the Russian intelligentsia. They believe the only true liberal institution in Russia is the Kremlin.[51]

In this election, Russia very overtly supported candidate Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych for the presidency and this is extremely evident in Russian disinformation which was presented primarily in the form of temnyky. Russian political technologists Gleb Pavolvsky, Marat Gelman, and Igor Shuvalov were the main authors of this form of disinformation and worked closely with the Ukrainian oligarchic Social Democratic Party (SDPUo) and the Kuchma administration to censor media outlets. While neither major presidential candidate was a member of the SDPUo, the SDPUo fully backed Kuchma in 1999 after barely receiving four percent of

[50] Rid, Thomas. (2021). *ACTIVE MEASURES: the Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare*. S.l.: PICADOR.
[51] Krastev, Ivan. (2006). "New Threats to Freedom: Democracy's "Doubles"." *Journal of Democracy* 17, no. 2: 52-62, 55. doi:10.1353/jod.2006.0030.

votes in the 1998 parliamentary elections.[52] After this, it switched its ideology to support increased Russian cooperation and expressed anti-western sentiments hoping to gain more public support. Temnyky grew from close ties between Gleb Pavlovsky's Foundation for Effective Politics, which serves as a political advisory unit for presidential campaigns and elections more generally, and the SDPUo.[53] These political technologists were sent to Ukraine on orders of the Kremlin and overseen by former president Dmitrii Medvedev.[54] Russia's primary strategy in this election was one of "directed chaos". A Russian political technologist defined this as, "Apocalyptic scenarios for the possible future must not be presented as utopian but become a reality. Our task is to destabilize the situation in the regions, involving political games, but not the everyday economy, and drag Yushchenko into this game".[55]

Research Methodology

The contextual analysis portion of my research focuses primarily on disinformation in the form of temnyky which were released by the Social Democrats, members of the Ukrainian presidential administration, and Russian political technologists. The temnyky I looked at were compiled with the assistance of the Ukrainian newspaper, *Ukrayinska Pravda*, which was

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[52] Haran, Olexiy, and Vasyl Belmaga. (2010). "Left and Center - Left Parties in Ukraine." *International Policy Analysis*, 1–9, 3.
[53] Kuzio, Taras. (2005). Russian Policy toward Ukraine during Elections. *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-soviet Democratization*. 13. 491-517, 492. 10.3200/DEMO.13.4.491-518.
[54] Shulman, Stephan, and Stephan Bloom. (2012). "The Legitimacy of Foreign Intervention in Elections: The Ukrainian Response." *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 2: 445-71, 455. Accessed February 24, 2021. http://www.jstor.org.umiss.idm.oclc.org/stable/41485557.
[55] Kuzio, Taras. (2010). "State-Led Violence in Ukraine's 2004 Elections and Orange Revolution." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 43, no. 4: 383–95. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2010.10.008.

founded in 2000 by Georgiy Gongadze in an attempt to expand free speech in Ukraine, and archived by Kharkiv Human Rights Group.[56] These pieces of temnyky were given to Ukrainian media outlets between 1999 and October 31, 2004, which marked the first round of voting for the Ukrainian presidential election where both Yushchenko and Yanukovych failed to receive 51 percent of the votes. To fill the information gap between the first rounding of voting on October 31t and the last round on December 26, I use newspaper articles from Russian, Ukrainian, and American news sites to analyze whether Russian government rhetoric corresponds with the temnyky themes released before voting began.

The temnyky I analyzed were released between 2002 and 2004. I focused briefly on pieces of temnyky released during Kuchma's presidency in 2002 and 2003 because it helps understand the rhetoric of the Ukrainian government leading up to the election and it gives insight into the extent to which Russian technologists and Ukrainian officials had control over mass media. Additionally, Russian political technologists played a part in authoring disinformation pieces during the 2002 Campaign for the Verkhovna Rada, so we can acknowledge that the temnyky released during this time were a part of Russian disinformation efforts. Russian political technologists Gleb Pavlovsky, Marat Gelman, and Igor Shuvalov authored many of the temnyky and therefore, the majority of the directives are in Russian.[57] This adds to the plausibility that the temnyky written and produced during this election is a form of Russian disinformation. I chose to analyze temnyky that most clearly demonstrate the motives of

[56] Kìpìanì, Vahtang, Ganna Gricenko, and Sergìj Udalov. (2005). Vlada T′mi ì Temnikìv. V. Kiìianì. 1-135. Accessed September 21, 2020. http://library.khpg.org/files/docs/temniki.pdf
[57] Corwin, Julie A. (2008). "Russia Report: July 22, 2004." Accessed November 4, 2020. https://www.rferl.org/a/1344312.html.

the Ukrainian and Russian government. By this, I mean that the directives given to Ukrainian media align with Russian interests. They express a preference for Yanukovych over the opposition leader, Yushchenko, show Kuchma in a positive light, and ignore or condemn free speech and press, especially journalism ethics.

After analyzing each piece of temnyky individually, I created categories and subcategories based on themes apparent among the directives. The themes were divided into six main categories: Journalists/Media, Presidential Candidates, Elections, the Ukrainian Government, and the Ukrainian Public. After I determined the themes, I created more specific subcategories that demonstrate Russian and Ukrainian preference toward Kuchma, Yanukovych, and the military and an aversion toward Yushchenko, public demonstrations, and journalists and the media more generally.

The code numbers help determine not only what themes the Ukrainian and Russian government emphasized through weekly directives, but why and how? The majority of temnyky focused on the presidential candidates, primarily attempting to portray Yushchenko as an unfit leader with poor health and bad morals. This is not surprising as a common strategy of Russian active measures is to tear down one candidate in an attempt to discourage voting from the candidate's respective party. Additionally, the coding showed that the Ukrainian public was rarely mentioned, despite being the primary audience of temnyky. The Ukrainian government focused on indoctrinating citizens with propaganda about the two main candidates, not expecting a reaction to the extent of the Orange Revolution. Therefore, talk of demonstrations was easily squashed by the media and not a main priority of temnyky. Additionally, talk of elections and polls in Ukraine was very rarely mentioned, likely in an attempt to prevent the public from

questioning if the results were fair or not. However, when temnyky mentioned the media discussing polls results and the “dynamics" of each candidate, we can assume that the poll results and conversations about each candidate were skewed in favor of Yanukovych.

Findings

The main trend among Russian active measures efforts during elections is utilizing “chernyi piar” or “negative campaigning”. This means attempting to destroy a person or group’s reputation and credibility. “Chernyi piar” seeks to disseminate information that may or may not be true about a person in order to destroy his or her public image. This “negative campaigning” was a main tactic of Russian active measures during the 2004 Ukrainian presidential election. Instead of attempting to win the election for Yanukovych, the temnyky sought to portray Yushchenko as a weak, unhealthy, and unfit leader. In the weeks leading up to the first round of voting, the temnyky focused heavily on the poor health of Yushchenko. Directives released during the week of October 3, 2004 emphasized Yuschenko’s eating and drink habits, mentioning specific meals he ate and alleged alcohol preferences. These directives stated that Yushchenko’s poor health “is confirmed by the information of his medical cards, which documentarily refute Yuschenko’s claims that he does not have chronic diseases.”[58] Not only are these directives aimed at damaging Yushchenko’s character, but they also seek to sow seeds of doubt and ultimately distrust in the public towards Yushchenko. Another directive a week later

[58] Kìpìanì, Vahtang, Ganna Gricenko, and Sergìj Udalov. (2005). Vlada T′mi ì Temnikìv. V. Kiìianì. 1-135, 122. Accessed September 21, 2020. http://library.khpg.org/files/docs/temniki.pdf.

continued the discussion of Yushcenko's health stating that he was an alcoholic and that for nine months during 2002 he went to the hospital over 60 times.[59] The emphasis on Yushchenko's health is important because in December 2004 he was diagnosed with dioxin exposure. It is believed that he was poisoned in early September by allies of Yanukovych, but the severe side effects of dioxin took weeks to develop. These temnyky constantly seek to convince the public Yushchenko is not fit to be a leader. It would appear that the goal of this was to sow seeds of doubt over a long period of time, so that when something did happen to Yushchenko that would affect his health, the public would be further convinced of their suspicions initially planted by the temnyky years earlier. The gradual effects that dioxin had on Yushchenko started with a headache and abdominal pain and became more visible in December when his skin developed lumps and turned a shade of dark grey. It was not a coincidence that the temnyky during the months of September and October corresponded with Yuschenko's declining health. The orchestrators of the directives likely played a role in poisoning Yushchenko. When Yushchenko was asked in a BBC interview if he believed Putin was behind the poisoning, he stated "I have an answer, but I cannot voice it."[60] The poisoning of Yushchenko demonstrated that temnyky usually did not stand alone. Ukrainian and Russian officials often distorted reality to compliment their weekly directives. In this case, the poisoning of Yushchenko solidified the temnyky that consistently portrayed him as a weak and unhealthy leader. Not only do these directives seek to

[59] Kìpìanì, Vahtang, Ganna Gricenko, and Sergìj Udalov. (2005). Vlada T′mi ì Temnikìv. V. Kiìianì. 1-135, 124. Accessed September 21, 2020. http://library.khpg.org/files/docs/temniki.pdf.
[60] Viktor Yuschenko, interviewed by BBC. (2018). Viktor Yushchenko: Ukraine's ex-president on being poisoned. BBC.

discredit Yushchenko, but they also provide important insight into the relationship between the media and the government.

Temnyky almost always directed media outlets to ignore or omit topics of journalism and ethics from their broadcasting, especially concerning well-known Ukrainian journalist Georgiy Gongadze. Gongadze was a critic of Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma and frequently wrote about the corruption within the Ukrainian government. In 2000, he was abducted, beheaded, and his body was found in a forest near Kyiv. Soon after, tape recordings were released implicating Kuchma in orchestrating Gongadze's murder.[61] Temnyky released in 2002 near the anniversary of Gongadze's death directed the media to "disregard" the announcement that information was received concerning the whereabouts of Gongadze's head.[62] In 2004, the directives shifted to be more specific, ordering the media to ignore any talk surrounding the Kuchma tape scandal and to refrain from broadcasting comments from the opposition concerning Gongadze's death. Temnyky released near the anniversary of Gongadze's death stated that "analysts believe that if [Gongadze's death] is covered by the media, it will depoliticize this topic, exclude comments from opposition representatives, refuse to mention the 'cassette scandal', and refrain from showing massive opposition rallies timed for this day."[63] It is interesting that this commentary specifically begins by using the phrase "analyst believe" then follows with presumptions concerning how the media "will" relay this information. It appears that the government was

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[61] "Georgiy Gongadze Murder Tied to Late Ukrainian Minister." *BBC News*, 14 September 2010. Accessed February 4, 20201. www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-11297880.
[62] Human Rights Watch. "Negotiating the News: Informal State Censorship of Ukrainian Television ." Ukraine 15, no. 2 (2003): 35–45, 36. https://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/ukraine0303/Ukraine0303.pdf
[63] Kìpìanì, Vahtang, Ganna Gricenko, and Sergij Udalov. (2005). Vlada T′mi ì Temnikìv. V. Kìiìanì. 1-135, 120. Accessed September 21, 2020. http://library.khpg.org/files/docs/temniki.pdf.

attempting to provide some sense of objectivity and give a choice to the media despite there being an obvious and correct way to proceed with this information. It is not a surprise that talk surrounding Gongadze's death was reignited during the 2004 presidential election. In 2000, a decapitated corpse was found in the woods, but Ukrainian government authorities did not confirm it was Gongadze's body until March 2003. This revelation revived the international attention present when Gongadze first went missing. As a result, temnyky became more focused on silencing the anniversary of Gongadze's death near the election as Kuchma did not want more scandals or talk of corruption which might jeopardize public support for Yanukovych. Additionally, during Yushchenko's campaign, he pledged to launch an investigation into the murder of Gongadze which reignited support for independent journalists and anti-corruption efforts. [64]

Almost all conversation surrounding free speech and journalism, especially discussion of independent journalists, was shut down by temnyky directives. In April 2004, the Union of Journalistic Solidarity organized a dedication to the memory of Ukrainian journalists Alexander Krivenko and Taras Protsyuk. Identical to the temnyky disseminated about Gongadze, the directives told the media to "disregard" this memorial service.[65] The Ukrainian and Russian government already felt threatened by the influence of independent journalists, and this heightened around the election. The two governments were worried that journalists, especially

[64] Knappenberger, Brian. (2005). "Ukraine - A Murder in Kyiv. The Story." Public Broadcasting Service. Accessed January 21, 2021. https://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/ukraine404/thestory.html.
[65] Kìpìanì, Vahtang, Ganna Gricenko, and Sergìj Udalov. (2005). Vlada T′mi ì Temnikìv. V. Kiìianì. 1-135, 116. Accessed September 21, 2020. http://library.khpg.org/files/docs/temniki.pdf..

those outspoken and critical of the government, would cause the public to question the fairness and transparency of the election.

Temnyky played an important role as the main vessel for the dispersion of disinformation. However, Russian and Ukrainian political technologists utilized other methods as well. Political technologists used unfamiliar candidates' broadcasting time as a way to propagate anti-Yushchenko sentiments. Russian political technologists also paid extreme nationalists to say they supported Yushchenko and went as far as hiring the same group of people to commit acts of terror that were then blamed on Yushchenko.[66] Temnyky after the terrorist attacks around the Troyeshchyna market in Kyiv gave orders to media outlets to broadcast that Yushchenko supported and defended the terrorists who committed the act. These directives also explicitly laid out how the media should portray the events of this attack compelling them to "provide emotional statements from the sellers at the market about how they felt during the explosion."[67] The government likely hoped that these accusations about Yushschenko's defense of the terrorist in conjunction with the emotional accounts by people in the marketplace would further discredit Yushchenko's character and dissuade the public from supporting him. Russia's investment in the election became more evident between the first round of voting on October 31 and the runoff on November 21 which declared Yanukovych the winner. In early December, Putin dismissed the opposition's request for a repeat of the runoff and he condemned European attempts to mediate in the election.[68] During this time, Kremlin-backed political technologists, in conjunction with

[66] Wilson, Andrew. (2014). Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West. New Haven: Yale University Press, 44.
[67] Kìpìanì, Vahtang, Ganna Gricenko, and Sergìj Udalov. (2005). Vlada T′mi ì Temnikìv. V. Kiìianì. 1-135, 119. Accessed September 21, 2020. http://library.khpg.org/files/docs/temniki.pdf
[68] Myers, Steven Lee. (2004). "Putin Backs Ukrainian Leader, Dismissing Call for New Runoff." The New York Times.

Yanukovych and his allies, used temnyky as a political and social tool in an effort to sow seeds of doubt among the Ukrainian population toward Yushchenko.

The basic strategy in the disinformation efforts during the 2004 Ukrainian presidential election was to create an ethnic split amongst the Ukrainian population by portraying Yushchenko as a nationalist, fascist, and Russophobe. Yanukovych was already a popular figure among most of the eastern and southern Ukrainian population due to his promise to maintain close relations with Russia and make Russian an official language in Ukraine. Yushchenko, however, was seen as a nationalist who planned to close down Russian speaking schools and force the Ukrainian language on the Russian-speaking populations.[69] In this election, Russia's main goal was to keep Ukraine reliant on Russia. This was done by weakening Ukraine politically and socially.

One way this was executed was by sowing seeds of doubt in Yushchenko supporters. From Russia's perspective, the issue of gaining votes was not the main issue. The election was rigged from the beginning. Yanukovych was already the favored candidate in eastern and southern Ukraine, so gaining votes in these regions was not a priority. Russia and the Kuchma administration expected Yanukovych to win from the beginning so while securing votes was important, it was not the main goal. The strategy was to convince the Ukrainian population that Yanukovych was the sure winner in the election, so Yushchenko supporters would not bother going to the polls. Additionally, the goal was to manage possible uproar; so, when Yanukovych was announced as the new president, the public would not be surprised.

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[69] Paniotto, Volodymyr. (2005). Ukraine: Presidential Elections 2004 and the Orange Revolution. Kiev International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) Publications.

Another way Russia attempted to weaken Ukraine politically and socially was to maintain the notion that Ukraine was 'a younger brother' and that it needed the assistance of Russia to handle its foreign and domestic affairs. Russia's policy toward Ukraine has been based on three main themes. First, Russia seeks to preserve its linguistic and cultural bond between the two countries. Second, Russia actively attempts to maintain Ukraine's inefficient economic model that relies heavily on the importation of energy consumption—which primarily comes from Russia. Third, Russia seeks to build and maintain the idea that southeastern Ukraine is a source of conflict among various Ukrainian regions.[70]

The temnyky I analyzed led up to the first round of voting on October 31, but Russia's interference in the election did not end there. The Orange Revolution which began on November 22 after the runoff election a day prior was a direct result of obvious voter fraud and election falsifications.[71] Hundreds of thousands of Yushchenko supporters gathered in Kyiv's independence square to protest the results of the runoff which declared Yanukovych the winner. Russia saw the Orange Revolution as a threat to its sphere of influence in Ukraine and also saw the possible ramifications of the revolution as a direct threat to Russia's political system and the system of other former Soviet countries. Russian mass media attempted to portray the revolution

[70] Sukhankin, Sergey, and Alla Hurska. (2015). "Russian Informational and Propaganda Campaign against Ukraine Prior to the Euromaidan (2013-2014): Denying Sovereignty." Securitologia 21, no. 1: 35–59. https://doi.org/10.5604/18984509.1184216. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/208357266.pdf

[71] Paniotto, Volodymyr. (2005). Ukraine: Presidential Elections 2004 and the Orange Revolution. Kiev International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) Publications. (accessed October 11, 2020).

as an "anti-government revolt" or "ultra-nationalist coup" with underlying anti-Russian sentiments.[72]

The use of Ukrainian and Russian media outlets as primary vessels for disinformation during the 2004 election was flawed but also effective in some ways. It was effective in the sense that it furthered ethnic division within Ukraine by solidifying many Russian speaking Ukrainians' positive sentiments toward Russia. However, the overtness of the disinformation attempts created distrust among most Ukrainian citizens toward their government and Russia.

Discussion

Russia's disinformation campaign efforts in the 2004 Ukrainian presidential election were overt and obvious to many people around the world. It is not a coincidence that Russia's intervention in Ukraine and other countries increased when Putin rose to power.[73] His primary goal of restoring Russia's 'superpower' status meant gaining influence and securing Russia's interests domestically and internationally. In the case of Ukraine, Putin and the Russian elite felt that Russia was losing influence in former Soviet republics. Therefore, Ukraine became a foreign policy priority for Russia to maintain linguistic, economic, and military ties.[74] Russian active measures during the 2004 Ukrainian presidential election relied on many Soviet techniques, such

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[72] Sukhankin, Sergey, and Alla Hurska. (2015). "Russian Informational and Propaganda Campaign against Ukraine Prior to the Euromaidan (2013-2014): Denying Sovereignty." Securitologia 21, no. 1: 35–59. https://doi.org/10.5604/18984509.1184216. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/208357266.pdf

[73] Kuzio, Taras. (2005). "Russian Policy Toward Ukraine during Elections." *Demokratizatsiya* 13 (4) (Fall): 491-517. doi:http://dx.doi.org.umiss.idm.oclc.org/10.3200/DEMO.13.4.491-518.

[74] Kurth, Helmut, and Iris Kempe. (2005). "Presidential Election and Orange Revolution Implications for Ukraine's Transition," 1–152. Accessed November 20, 2020.. http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/ukraine/02938.pdf.

as disinformation and blatant propaganda through the use of foreign and domestic media sources. The primary perpetrators were well-trained political technologists who planned this targeted campaign for years. The process relied on access to a multitude of media outlets around Ukraine, which was achieved through Soviet active measures techniques such as political and economic blackmail and bribery. Ten years after the election, however, when Ukraine underwent another revolution and was in conflict with Russia in the Donbas region, Russian active measures looked much different. Russian cyber hacks installed viruses onto Ukrainian servers, deleted important files, and remotely changed votes.[75]

Russian disinformation efforts in foreign countries have been around since the Soviet era, but the growth of technology in the early 2000s and exponential use of social media greatly expanded Russia's reach. Social media has provided Russia with a large platform and wide audience. Allegations of Russian involvement in the 2020 U.S. presidential election and recent cyberattacks on private tech companies and the U.S. government coincide with Russia's long history of disinformation efforts, especially in elections.

[75] Polyakova, Alina, and Spencer P Boyer. (2018). "The Future of Political Warfare: Russia, the West, and the Coming Age of Global Digital Competition ." *Foreign Policy at Brookings*, 1–24.

Chapter 3: A Contextual Analysis of Russian "Active Measures" Campaign Efforts in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election

Former Foreign Intelligence Service officer Sergei Tretyakov discussed how Russian intelligence officers would often go to libraries, where it was cheaper and easier to access computers, in New York in the 1990s. They used the public servers to receive orders and also disseminate disinformation to various websites and news outlets. He said the goal "was to cause dissension and unrest inside the United States and anti-American feelings abroad".[76] With the creation of Facebook in 2004 and Twitter in 2005, social media began to take off. Research once done by sending intelligence officers to the target country to study the political and social environment could now be done remotely. This has allowed for active measures campaigns to be covert, targeted, and extremely dangerous.

In this chapter, I argue that Russian disinformation during the 2016 U.S. presidential election used similar methods to that of the 2004 Ukraine presidential election and that of Soviet times. Not unlike the Russian active measures techniques during the 2004 Ukrainian presidential election, Russia's active measures during the 2016 U.S. presidential election supported one candidate over the other, exacerbated ethnic and racial tension, and sought to undermine democracy by amplifying public distrust in government institutions. I argue that the biggest change to Russian active measures techniques over the past couple decades has been a result of technology. The role of the internet played an important part in conducting active measures campaigns during the 2016 election allowing for cheaper, fast, and more repetitive content which was able to reach larger audiences. Social media platforms have allowed Russia to expand its

[76] Rid, Thomas. (2021). *ACTIVE MEASURES: the Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare*. S.l.: PICADOR, 332-333.

reach and employ various actors, such as trolls, to participate in these active measures campaigns. The years of 2015 and 2016 were marked with intense and emotional conversation surrounding social issues such as racial discrimination, criminal justice, gun control, immigration, and abortion. Social media became a spotlight for presidential candidates to express their platforms to a wide audience. Bots and Russian trolls reinforced the polarization that was already occurring in the United States.[77]

In 2020, the European Commission announced that Russian disinformation campaigns are the European Union's largest threat. Russian disinformation campaigns date back to the Soviet era and have transformed over the last century to be extremely targeted and sophisticated. It is not a coincidence that Russian disinformation efforts are more prevalent during elections. Since Vladimir Putin rose to power in the early 2000s, he has centralized power by increasing his role as president and almost eliminating the role of oligarchs in politics entirely. Following the beginning of the Arab Spring in 2011, Putin saw social media as something that could threaten Russia's political stability, especially with the Russian presidential election approaching in 2012, and therefore, began to monitor and have greater control over popular social media platforms such as VKontakte and Telegram.[78] Whereas the Russian government uses media outlets to maintain stability in Russia, it uses social media and other platforms to destabilize and create chaos in countries abroad. During the 2016 U.S. presidential election, the primary social media platforms used by Russian trolls were Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

For the data analysis, I primarily focus on Facebook and Instagram posts released by the Kremlin-back Internet Research Agency (IRA) to determine the role of technology has

[77] Sanders, S. (2016, November 08)." Did social Media Ruin Election 2016?" NPR. Accessed February 08, 2021. https://www.npr.org/2016/11/08/500686320/did-social-media-ruin-election-2016

[78] Legucka, Agnieszka. (2020). "Russia's Long-Term Campaign of Disinformation in Europe." Carnegie Europe. Accessed March 1, 2021. https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/81322 .

contributed to the evolution of active measures campaigns. The IRA was also active on Twitter during the election, but the House Intelligence Committee has only released names of Twitter accounts, not specific content. Additionally, I use interviews with and about Russian "trolls", who played a large role perpetrating active measures campaign efforts in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. In this chapter I argue that technology has greatly expanded the reach of Russian active measures, allowing for more actors to carry out information operation efforts while simultaneously influencing a wider range of audiences.

Background

Many aspects of Russian disinformation have not differed greatly from the Soviet era, however, the anonymity of the internet has provided Russian active measures campaigns with unprecedented covertness and directness. Russian disinformation tends to focus on political and social topics that are considered polarizing to the groups of people within a population. The social issues that it focuses on do not have a clear agenda or ideological focus, but instead, seek to target a wide range of audiences to undermine the public's trust in its institutions and each other. In the 2016 U.S. presidential election, Russian trolls and intelligence agents used Facebook and Twitter to push out content that aligned with specific groups' beliefs. This method of disinformation is not only effective but also cheap. During this specific disinformation campaign effort, Russian accounts reached over 150 million users at a price of only $100,000.[79]

In order to understand the social and political environment surrounding the 2016 U.S. presidential election, it is important to understand sentiments toward Democratic candidate,

[79] Polyakova, Alina, and Spencer P Boyer. (2018). "The Future of Political Warfare: Russia, the West, and the Coming Age of Global Digital Competition ." Foreign Policy at Brookings, 1–24, 10.

Hillary Clinton, and Republican candidate, Donald Trump. Russian trolls used their reputations to further divide the American public's views on the candidates and the election more generally. The American public's satisfaction with two presidential nominees was at its lowest in over 20 years.[80] Trump's brash rhetoric and use of social media and years of conspiracy theories surrounding the Clinton family created a distrust of both candidates by the American public and the media. In 1986, Trump met with a Soviet ambassador to discuss building a hotel in Moscow, and the next year he visited Russia. After he returned to New York, he began pursuing more political ambitions. While it is hard to say definitively whether or not Trump's trip to Russia influenced his ambitions, we cannot deny that Trump's connection to the Kremlin made him an easy pawn for Russian active measures campaigns during the 2016 U.S. presidential election.[81]

Russian "Trolls"

Russian disinformation is chaotic, yet consistent. It often appears unorganized, yet it is effective. Russian disinformation campaigns are executed by many different actors, including intelligence officers, trolls, bots, proxies, and supporting actors, such as WikiLeaks.[82] In the first chapter, the main perpetrators of active measures campaigns were KGB officers. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, we see in the second chapter that the main actors involved in active measures are Russian political technologists. The line connecting perpetrators of active measures

[80] Smith, S. (2015, August 28). "24% of Americans now view both GOP and Democratic PARTY UNFAVORABLY." Pew Research Center. Accessed March 13, 2021. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/08/21/24-of-americans-now-view-both-gop-and-democratic-party-unfavorably/.
[81] Chait, Jonathan. (2021). "An Ex-KGB Agent Says Trump Was a Russian Asset Since 1987. Does It Matter?" *Intelligencer.* Accessed March 5, 2021. https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/ex-kgb-agent-trump-russian-asset-mueller-putin-kompromat-unger-book.html.
[82] Polyakova, Alina, and Spencer P Boyer. (2018). "The Future of Political Warfare: Russia, the West, and the Coming Age of Global Digital Competition ." Foreign Policy at Brookings, 1–24, 10.

directly to the Kremlin has become more blurred. The Kremlin's use of third-party actors has allowed it to deny any involvement in disinformation and has provided it with a multitude of vessels in which to conduct active measures campaigns. The main perpetrators of active measures campaigns during the 2016 U.S. presidential election were Kremlin-backed internet commentators, more commonly known as "Russian trolls".

In the last ten years, Russian trolls have utilized divisive political and social issues in disinformation campaigns. Of course, there are lone Russian trolls who are politically motivated to spread disinformation, however, the majority of trolls are employed by farms that pay a nice salary in exchange for writing targeted posts on social media platforms. Many of the actors involved in these campaigns are not aware of the true extent that their jobs play in undermining state sovereignty or they may choose to simply deny it. Alleged Russian troll, Sergey Polozov, who works as an IT manager at the Internet Research Agency (IRA), was accused of renting servers to cover up the IRA's disinformation efforts in the United States. The Internet Research Agency is a major Russian-government linked troll farm founded by Russian oligarch and close Putin ally, Yevgeny Prigozhin. In an interview with BBC, Polozov claims he created websites and that none of his work was in English. Despite these claims, he admits that he would be proud to have assisted his country in interfering in the U.S presidential election if he thought that indeed happened.[83] This is interesting because while monetary motivation seems to be the initial driving factor behind the work of trolls, the work they do is political in nature and may play a role in fostering patriotic sentiments.

In 2013, a couple of Russian men infiltrated a troll farm by interviewing for a job that consisted of writing on multiple internet platforms including social sites and blogs. According to

[83] Soshnikov, Andrey and Andrey Zakharov. (2019, March 14). "Aktivny patriot: pervoe īnterv'iu s obviniaemym po delu fabriki trolleĭ*." BBC Russian Service.*

a troll the men talked to, the goal was to increase site traffic through specific posts. The troll explains that artificial bots can be helpful in some instances, but technology has become more sophisticated and sometimes servers will block bots if they are recognized. Therefore, manpower is key to a successful campaign with each troll required to write and upload around 100 posts per day. The troll farm emphasizes that the job is flexible, with individuals creating their own schedule and also receiving weekly payments and free meals.[84] The majority of trolls that work in troll farms are monetarily motivated. In another instance where a man infiltrates a troll farm, he explains that the job description lacks a great deal of information about job specifics but instead hopes that the high salary will entice people willing to do any work for money. He soon discovers that most of the men who work at the troll farm came after long and unsuccessful job searches. The trolls are given simple instructions about what their posts should and should not include.[85]

The role of Russian trolls was highlighted by the media and intelligence agencies as the major force undermining the integrity of the 2016 presidential election. However, Russia's disinformation ecosystem is much more complicated than one entity running the show. Instead, multiple communication centers play a role in creating, validating, and reinforcing disinformation making it much more dangerous than it was during the Soviet era. Russian disinformation comes from many different sources, making it more difficult to trace. Additionally, the information being released by these various players is often contradictory. Russia does not have to harmonize disinformation because then it makes the truth harder to

[84] Garmazhapova, Aleksandra. (2013). "Gde Zhivut Trolli. I Kto Ikh Kormit." Novai͡a gazeta - Novayagazeta.ru, 2013.
[85] "Gorodskoĭ Tipazh: Bloger-Propagandist." Sobaka.ru, 2015. Accessed September 5, 2020. https://www.sobaka.ru/city/city/32942.

define.[86] In the case of the 2016 U.S. presidential election, the Kremlin-backed IRA used social media platforms to further indoctrinate the right, while attempting to splinter the left by undermining progressive accomplishments and holding the left accountable for racial injustices. This way, democrats would be discouraged to vote, and conservatives would be more motivated to vote in the election.

Research Methodology

In January 2017, the U.S. Intelligence Community released its yearly Intelligence Community Assessment (ICA) where it laid out Russia's interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Following the release of the ICA, the House Intelligence Committee Minority released the names of Twitter accounts and Facebook and Instagram posts linked to the Russian troll farm, the Internet Research Agency (IRA). The Committee has over 80,000 pieces of Facebook content produced by the IRA but has only released a representative sample. They plan to make all posts by the IRA public in the future.[87] It is important to note that while there are individual trolls who are individually motivated to participate in disinformation campaigns, the IRA is the largest troll farm whose motives can be monetarily and politically linked to the Kremlin.

The content I analyzed was released between 2015 and the election in November 2016. I created two excel sheets where I tracked the username associated with each post, the text of the

[86] United States Department of State. (2020). GEC Special Report: Pillars of Russia's Disinformation and Propaganda Ecosystem, 6.
[87] "Exposing Russia's Effort to Sow Discord Online: The Internet Research Agency and Advertisements." U.S. House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, 2018. Accessed January 29, 2021https://intelligence.house.gov/social-media-content/.

post, the landing page, target group, number of impressions and clicks the post acquired, the date the content was created, and the language of the post. After, I created a code index to track themes displayed in the content and the repetitiveness of each theme. This was helpful in determining how widespread political and social issues corresponded with different points in time between 2015 and 2016.

Russian trolls in 2015 and 2016 focused primarily on content targeting members and/or supporters of Blacks Lives Matter, the LGBTQ community, and right-wing groups. In 2015, the content focused heavily on the LGBTQ community, highlighting examples of discrimination toward its members. IRA posts tended to focus on existing prejudices against the LGBTQ community, instead of emphasizing its achievements, such as the legalization of gay marriage in June 2015. This also applies for Black Lives Matter. The content targeting the Black Lives Matter community were mainly instances of police brutality and racism, emphasizing the poor treatment of black people in the United States specifically. Sometimes, the content contained rally times and locations likely in an attempt to garner additional media attention to broaden the audiences. Additionally, the IRA focused on further indoctrinating right and alt-right groups. The content published targeting these groups tended to emphasize polarizing issues within the Republican party including Islamism, treatment of war veterans, the confederacy, Immigrants, democratic candidates, political correctness, Donald Trump, the American flag, Black Lives Matter, and the police. The content targeting each of the main audiences was meant to elicit strong emotional response. However, the content targeting primarily democratic audiences, such as the LGBT community and Black Lives Matter, tended to undermine achievements among these groups, whereas the content targeting conservative audiences was meant to unite the party under specific, and often extreme, ideologies.

Findings

It is important to acknowledge that while the discussion of polarizing issues in the news and on social media platforms impacted the social and political environment surrounding the 2016 U.S. election, there were other factors that contributed to the growing partisan divide. The rhetoric of both candidates, and in particular Republican candidate Donald Trump, added to partisan tension. Russia chose to support Trump because he made Russian active measures more successful. Trump's agenda aligned with that of Russia. Both undermine intelligence, peddle false narratives, and cause chaos domestically and internationally. The Kremlin believed that if it could assist in getting Trump elected, he would take over in furthering disinformation in the United States. Then, Russia could simply reiterate disinformation being produced in the United States.[88] In the 2016 election, the media and presidential candidates' discussion of race, police brutality, and LGBTQ rights was amplified by Russian disinformation efforts to further divide the American public.

On June 26, 2015, the United States Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage in all fifty states.[89] Unsurprisingly, posts by the IRA about LGBTQ rights were extremely prevalent during the summer of 2015. Although the LGBTQ community achieved its long-time goal of legalizing same-sex marriage, Russian disinformation sought to sow discord among its members, reminding them that discrimination toward their community was far from over. The content published on social media platforms tended to be crafted from actual events. For example, one

[88] Brian Whitmore, interview with John Sipher and Clint Watts, *The Power Vertical Podcast*, podcast audio, December 2,2020. https://www.powervertical.org/2020/12/04/the-looking-glass-war/.
[89] A brief history of civil rights in the United states: A timeline of the legalization of same-sex marriage in the US, 2021. Accessed February 08, 2021. https://guides.ll.georgetown.edu/c.php?g=592919&p=4182201

Facebook post by the IRA on July 10, 2015 stated “This man is a great example of human filth and lies!! Rape children!?! Really?! Are you nuts?! ... Louisiana Justice refused to obey Supreme Court, writes opinion implying gay people rape their children". This post came after Louisiana Supreme Court Justice Jefferson D. Hughes III stated, “The most troubling prospect of same sex marriage is the adoption by same sex partners of a young child of the same sex.”[90] The justice’s comment demonstrates discrimination toward same-sex couple and the LGBTQ community, and Russian trolls used the implied context of this quote to elicit an emotional response from the American public. Russian troll posts about the LGBTQ community tended to target supporters and advocates, not adversaries. The LGBTQ community made impressive strides in the time leading up to the election including legalizing gay marriage. The objective of the IRA regarding discussion around the LGBTQ community was to undermine democratic accomplishments in an attempt to render the democratic party ineffective. In another Facebook post archived by the U.S House Intelligence Committee, the IRA wrote “Please...STOP DISCRIMINATION AGAINST HOMOSEXUAL TEACHERS.” This post received over 2,100 impressions. An impression is the number of times the ad or post is on a user’s screen.[91] Another posted stated, "Homophobic nurse tries to discourage birth mom from allowing gay couple to adopt child".[92] The purpose of these posts was to elicit strong emotions from members and supporters of the LGBTQ community. The legalization of same-sex marriage in the United States was a major milestone for progressives around the world, and posts like the ones mentioned above insinuate that

[90] Mandell, S. (2015, July 08). “Louisiana Supreme Court Justice IMPLIES gay parents are pedophiles in hateful dissent.” Towleroad. Accessed February 06, 2021. https://www.towleroad.com/2015/07/louisiana-supreme-court-justice-accuses-gay-people-of-being-pedophiles-in-hateful-dissent/

[91] Facebook Business help center. (n.d.). Accessed February 07, 2021. https://www.facebook.com/business/help/675615482516035.

[92] “Exposing Russia's Effort to Sow Discord Online: The Internet Research Agency and Advertisements.” U.S. House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, 2018. Accessed January 29, 2021. https://intelligence.house.gov/social-media-content/.

discrimination will always counteract any progressive strides. One of the most effective characteristics of Russian disinformation is that it is repetitive. From late June to mid-July, posts about the LGBTQ community and the discrimination it faced were consistently written on the troll-made Facebook page, LGBT United. Sometimes the same content would be posted multiple times, but most of the time new headlines were used to attract more attention and reach a wider audience.

One of the United States' most valued principles is free speech, and Russia used this to its advantage in its disinformation campaign efforts. Political beliefs from the left and right were frequently posted on social media and broadcasted by the media which allowed Russian disinformation to remain covert. In 2014, the Black Lives Matter movement gained momentum after Michael Brown, an African American teenager, was shot and killed by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. IRA posts between 2015 and 2016 constantly commented on the treatment of African Americans by police officers and frequently included names and news headlines. On Facebook, sponsors have the ability to use ads to target specific cities, and this feature was used by Russian trolls. In some cases, IRA posts targeted specific cities with large African American populations such as New Orleans, Memphis, Atlanta, and Cleveland. Additionally, some posts specifically targeted cities where African Americans had been fatally shot by police officers, such as Ferguson, Missouri. The content frequently mentions southern states and cities were the history of racial injustice and inequality elicits an emotional response, the KKK, and the shootings of unarmed African Americans by cops.

The history of racism in the United States is one of the most prominent social issues. Russian trolls use racial injustice as a way to pit groups of people against each other and their country. One IRA post on the "Black Matters" Facebook page stated "Nothing really changes.

Everything remains the same. Being black is awesome, it's being black in America that sucks." This post in particular attempts to dismiss any strides toward racial justice made in the United States and seeks to convince the African American population that the injustices they face will always exist.

Interestingly, the "Black Matters" content with the most impressions and clicks were ads that simply stated "Join us because we care. Black Matters!" These ads targeted black populations in large metropolitan areas. It is likely these less polarizing posts were more effective at gaining likes and followers because it presented a social justice effort that many people felt compelled to support. However, once a person liked the page, he or she was subjected to polarizing content that was unavoidable. Similar to the object of the IRA concerning the LGBTQ, the IRA sought to render the democratic party ineffective. However, instead of undermining democratic accomplishments, the IRA used police brutality and obvious cases of racism in an attempt to garner distrust toward the democratic party, which is commonly associated with advancing rights for and treatment toward minorities.

Similar to how Russian trolls tried to appeal to the African American community by highlighting the issue of race, they also used fake accounts and sponsored ads to appeal to far-right audiences. One post from the alt-right IRA facebook page "Being Patriotic" in 2015 stated "NAACP wants removal of Confederate generals from Stone Mountain. The USA is out of balance now. We loose our history! The gays, lesbians and trans-sexuals have more rights now then other folks." This page in particular targeted right-wing nationalists by accentuating positive sentiments toward the confederacy and gun rights while simultaneously competing them against social issues, such as racism and LGBTQ rights.

IRA Instagram and Facebook pages also focused on specific social issues within right or left wing ideology. For example, instagram page @stop_refugees, created anti-immigration and anti-refugee content. Instagram page @stay4police which emphasized "Backing the Blue" was the antithesis of the troll page @blackunionus. Additionally, Instagram pages target extremists, especially those with right-wing beliefs. Instagram page @south_united, considered itself "Confederate page #1 on Instagram!" Instagram pages for patriotic Texans, members of the Tea Party, supporters of veterans, and Muslims were created by trolls to target wide ranges of audiences. Russian trolls used these pages to further indoctrinate audiences while also convincing them their enemies lie on the opposite side of the political spectrum.

Figure 1. IRA Instagram post utilizing well-known adult cartoon, Family Guy, to demonstrate aversion toward Clinton's slogan, "Ready for Hillary."

As the election drew closer, posts and ads about the presidential candidates became more prevalent and increasingly polarizing. These posts tended to portray Republican candidate Donald Trump in a positive and moral light and portrayed Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton in a negative light. A couple posts on Muslim pages professed support for Hillary Clinton, but the majority voiced strong negative opinions about the former Secretary

of State. A post by "Stop A.I" stated "It's wrong if you support Hillary Clinton, who said that problems within the Veterans Affairs Department have ‘'not been as widespread'...WE CANNOT TRUST HILLARY TO TAKE CARE OF OUR VETERANS!" Russian trolls used capitalization and punctuation to emphasize emotion and evoke similar responses from their target audiences. These posts did not only use words to elicit these responses, but also sometimes used explicit pictures and memes. In *Figure 1*[93], Russian trolls make a reference to the adult cartoon *Family Guy* in an attempt to attract an audience who extremely dislikes Hillary Clinton. Other posts closer to the election also pitted Clinton and Trump against each other, comparing Trump to Jesus and Clinton to the devil. In *Figure 2*[94], this Facebook post attempts to convince its audience that Trump is a more moral person than Clinton. This content posted on the "Army of Jesus" page depicted Jesus and Satan fighting for control. The content on this page sought to appeal to religious, right-winged audiences hence the use of religious references in the post. The post implies that Donald Trump has "godly moral principles" and voting for him will "help Jesus win."

Figure 2. IRA Facebook post which compares Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton to the devil and Republic Candidate Donald Trump to Jesus

[93] "Exposing Russia's Effort to Sow Discord Online: The Internet Research Agency and Advertisements." U.S. House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, 2018. Accessed January 29, 2021https://intelligence.house.gov/social-media-content/.
[94] Idib

Russian trolls used Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook to belittle social justice achievements, indoctrinate audiences based on pre-existing political beliefs, and support Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton. The IRA did this covertly and effectively by constantly uploading content to gain support from wide ranges of audiences. The IRA's methods were cheap, repetitive, and effective. They were effective in the sense that their content on Facebook alone reached over 126 million Americans.[95] However, the IRA was not the only way Russia implemented its disinformation campaigns. During this election, Russian media played an overt role in attempting to discredit Hillary Clinton. In August 2016, well-known Russian government run news outlet, RT, reported on multiple occasions that Clinton was a corrupt and unhealthy individual. Another Russian government owned news outlet, Sputnik, called Clinton the "Queen of War". Similar to "chernyi piar" tactics used during the 2004 Ukrainian presidential election, the Russian media tended to focus less on "pro-Trump" propaganda and instead emphasize "anti-Clinton" sentiments.[96]

Discussion

Russian active measures efforts during the 2016 U.S. presidential election were primarily conducted through the use of propaganda. On Facebook, the IRA purchased over 3,393 advertisements and created 470 Facebook pages. The IRA published over 80,000 posts on those pages. On Twitter, over 36,000 Russian bots tweeted about the 2016 U.S. presidential election

[95] Exposing Russia's effort to sow Discord online: The internet research agency and advertisements. (n.d.). Accessed February 08, 2021. https://intelligence.house.gov/social-media-content.
[96] Nimmo, B. (2016, August 17). "Understanding the role of Russian propaganda in the US Election." Accessed February 08, 2021. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/understanding-the-role-of-russian-propaganda-in-the-us-election/.

accumulating over 288 million impressions and over 130,000 tweets were released by the IRA.[97] Russian disinformation during the 2016 U.S. presidential election used similar methods to that of the 2004 Ukraine presidential election and that of Soviet times. It sought to undermine democratic institutions, favored one candidate over the other, and utilized social and political issues to divide groups of people. The biggest change to Russian active measures techniques over the past couple decades has been a result of technology. Social media platforms have allowed Russia to expand its reach and employ various actors, such as trolls, to participate in these active measures campaigns. Whereas the Soviet active measures were thorough, well-researched, and primarily isolated campaigns, Russian active measures have adopted a "quantity over quality" approach. Russian active measures use the media to multiply the effectiveness of their campaigns and reach more audiences. With the idea of "fake news" taking over journalist integrity in the United States, the American public is struggling to determine what is fact and what is fiction.

This form of political warfare will likely only become more sophisticated as technology continues to develop. Artificial Intelligence and the production of "deep fakes" or the "digital manipulation of sound, images, or video to impersonate someone or make it appear that a person did something" make Russian disinformation campaigns more dangerous.[98] Russian disinformation will continue to evolve, and in order to combat these campaigns, democracies around the world need to support transparency, fair elections, and civic liberties.

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[97] Exposing Russia's effort to sow Discord online: The internet research agency and advertisements. (n.d.). Accessed February 08, 2021. https://intelligence.house.gov/social-media-content.

[98] Polyakova, Alina, and Spencer P Boyer. (2018). "The Future of Political Warfare: Russia, the West, and the Coming Age of Global Digital Competition." *Foreign Policy at Brookings*, 1–24, 14.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I find that Russian active measures are a foreign policy tool that allows Russia to solidify its international interests in a covert and targeted manner. Since the time of the Soviet Union, Russian active measures have evolved to be more direct yet less consolidated, and therefore, more dangerous. These campaigns are faster, more repetitive, and continuous.[99] This would not have been possible without the growth of technology. Technology has given Russian active measures campaigns a cover, a larger audience, and new resources to effectively disseminate falsehoods. Russia is not simply using one media platform to conduct active measures campaigns. Instead, technology allows for the media multiplier effect which states that audiences are more susceptible to a message if they see it in more than one place.[100] The goal of active measures has remained the same since the fall of the Soviet Union: to weaken the West and its democratic institutions and/or maintain influence in regions where it has political or economic interests. As the world has become more connected, the Kremlin has been able to distance itself from these campaigns by utilizing third parties such as trolls and bots. The ecosystem of Russian active measures was once almost solely composed of intelligence officers, but the growth of technology has introduced a plethora of new and increasingly indiscernible actors.

However, government and non-government agencies are working to fight against disinformation campaigns. One of the most successful ways in which this is done is through

[99] Polyakova, Alina, and Spencer P Boyer. (2018). "The Future of Political Warfare: Russia, the West, and the Coming Age of Global Digital Competition ." *Foreign Policy at Brookings*, 1–24, 13.
[100] "Social Media's Impact on Media Multiplier Effect." Sydney Full Service Marketing Agency, 2014.

information sharing. When countries share the information, they have concerning disinformation campaigns, it helps others discern possible campaigns within and outside of their own borders. It is important that governments, NGOs, INGOs, and other organizations record instances of disinformation so that the public can be aware of how, where, and to whom disinformation is being disseminated. The EU has released a counter-disinformation campaign which includes a written memo called EUvsDisinfo that seeks to identify disinformation published on various platforms.[101] Russian influence operations are domestic issues just as much as they are foreign issues. Only about 50 percent of people in their 20s believe living in a democracy is important. In order to combat Russian active measures, we need to focus on creating a united message that demonstrates to the world that the United States is a strong and important player.[102] Russian active measures are growing as a result of technology, making it easier for perpetrators to conduct and harder for victims to discern. Russia has used active measures campaigns as a main policy objective to undermine the sovereignty of countries around the world for its own international and domestic agendas. It is likely that with the growth of technology, especially Artificial Intelligence, Russian active measures will only become more advanced and more dangerous to democracies around the world.

[101] United States Department of State. (2020). GEC Special Report: Pillars of Russia's Disinformation and Propaganda Ecosystem, 1-77, 33.
[102] Brian Whitmore, interview with John Sipher and Clint Watts, *The Power Vertical Podcast*, podcast audio, December 2,2020. https://www.powervertical.org/2020/12/04/the-looking-glass-war/.

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