

PUTIN'S GRAND STRATEGY: RUSSIA'S CAMPAIGN OF CONTROLLED
INSTABILITY IN UKRAINE AND BEYOND

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ABSTRACT:

This thesis addresses the great lengths to which Vladimir Putin and the Russian Federation have gone to foster “controlled instability” in the former Soviet Union. It is said that those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it, and with Western policy makers who appear unwilling to act on intelligence regarding Russian actions as well as incontrovertible evidence of Putin’s aggressive strategy, this Western failure to learn has contributed significantly to a repeat of various Russian behaviors during past conflicts. Russian actions pose a clear and present danger to the stability of the global community. Because many of the current events are not yet published in texts or are classified, the author has had to depend heavily upon open-source references from the internet to provide key events as they chronologically happened, particularly when analyzing the crisis in Ukraine. In writing the thesis, my observations have been validated by Russia’s recent incursion into Syria to fortify the Russian leadership’s interests as a result of the continued inaction of Western policy makers. As a result, we will see significant additional instances of controlled instability from Russia in the future.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

RUSSIA AND UKRAINE: A SHARED BUT DIFFICULT HISTORY

In any attempt to assess current Russian behavior toward Ukraine, we must understand the history and symptoms of the patient. Russians have had certain tendencies in the past that arguably could have been anticipated and utilized by Ukraine and Western leaders to calculate what to do next in Ukraine. While it is important to treat each individual strategic case as unique, history has shown us a multitude of cases in which certain patterns have repeated themselves in the realm of Russian strategy and geopolitics. The more thoroughly policy makers and strategists understand the history, rationalities, and reasoning behind a crisis, the more likely they will be to counter the adversary's efforts and thus succeed in achieving their policy objectives. When dealing with a country like Russia, thinking a few moves ahead is vital to any strategic posture that has an opportunity to succeed. To summarize the whole of Russian and Ukrainian history in great detail would detract from the primary topic at hand, so this paper will address only the most important historical events of relevance to the present crisis.

The Third Rome

We must first address the “brotherly relationship” shared between Ukraine and Russia. Russia and Ukraine have been intimately involved historically long before the borders of both countries were drawn as they are at present. Like other areas of Europe, there were no nation-states before the modern period (roughly 1500 A.D.), and loyalty was focused around bands and tribes that quarreled with each other and occasionally allied themselves against Viking, Turk, and Arab invaders. The first Slavic nation-state emerged in 882 and was known as Kievan Rus, a historical event celebrated by both Ukraine and Russia.

This Slavic state covered a swath of territory that encompassed a sizable portion of modern Ukraine and European Russia and included present St. Petersburg, Moscow, and most importantly Kiev, which was the capital and was declared by Prince Oleg to be “The Mother of All Rus.”¹ Because of this, the city of Kiev will always hold an element of prestige even in the hearts and minds of not just Ukrainians, but Russians as well. It was to be a short-lived period however, and upon the death of Yaroslav the Wise there was internal strife primarily related to who was the rightful successor to the throne.² Combined with turmoil created in the region by the Fourth Crusade, this caused the empire to crumble even further. The conclusive demise of the Kievan Rus Empire was the result of Mongol invasions from the east. This period was critical in Russian psychology by developing the mindset that Ukraine’s fate should be tied to Russia’s for cultural and historical reasons, and also for the purposes of security from invasion, but it was also exactly the point at which some Ukrainians say their relationship with Russia ended. The Kievan Rus Empire is thus a focal point in the current crisis regarding questions of history and thus political legitimacy and sovereignty.

Russia and Moscow emerged separately from Kiev, which was becoming less prestigious and influential as time wore on. Moscow was beginning to emerge as a trading hub in 1283. By the 14th century, a prominent regional duke named Ivan III (historically remembered as Ivan the Great) was able to establish the foundations of the Russian state through carefully calculated alliances and invasions of neighboring territories. Ivan III

¹ “Prominent Russians: Oleg Veshchy”, *Russia Today*. Accessed October 24, 2015. <http://russiapedia.rt.com/prominent-russians/the-ryurikovich-dynasty/oleg-veshchy-the-prophet/>.

² Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 34.

modelled his absolute rule to that of Western Europe, establishing a feudal system of lords and peasants. Mutual experiences in establishing identity were also shared at this time, with arguably the most important being the conversion to Christianity and its evolution toward Russian Orthodoxy. Russian Orthodoxy would be vital to the philosophy and decision-making process of Russia's rulers up until the establishment of the Soviet Union. Moscow became the center of Russian Orthodoxy during this tumultuous period, and a prophet-monk named Filofei wrote a letter to Ivan the Great stating that he had a vision that Moscow would be the city that would be the "Third Rome." This prophecy would be a rallying point for multiple eras of Russian rulers to the present day.³ Following the Ottoman Turk capture of Constantinople in 1453, Ivan III proclaimed that "two Romes have fallen, but one still stands, and a fourth there shall not be."⁴ The driving notion for all of these leaders was that Russia was destined for greatness. Ivan the Great used this as a rallying cry to push back the crumbling Tartar Golden Horde and conquer much of its land given the threat it posed to Russia. By the end of Ivan the Great's life, he established absolute power over most of his territory and began what would become the tsarist lineage and the foundations of a true Russian state. While the establishment of a state is of obvious importance, just as important was the establishment of the ideal of Moscow being a "Third Rome", which plays a critical role in determining current Russian diplomatic and strategic behavior to this day.⁵

It was not until the period of Romanov expansion that the fates of Russia and Ukraine would be shared once again on a significant level. Prior to the Russian National Assembly electing the Romanovs as the new line of Tsars, there was a long dark period where the

³ Ibid, p. 41.

⁴ Ibid, p. 41.

⁵ Ibid, p. 41.

Russians faced constant invasions from Poland, Lithuania, and Sweden, which were considerably larger in territory, population, and influence than their modern borders suggest. It was a time dedicated to self-preservation and taking advantage of any opportunities for enhanced security. Once Poland and Lithuania became engaged in a war with Sweden, the tsars capitalized on this respite of invasion to focus on consolidation of what they had as well as taking advantage of any new treaties for security.⁶

It is also important to discuss the historical role that Crimea plays in the current crisis. The central issue is that historically the Crimean peninsula was not primarily an ancestral homeland to either the Russian or Ukrainian ethnicities. The Tartars were the initial inhabitants of this peninsula. Crimea is a location of strategic importance that has been fought over for centuries and has changed hands multiple times over the past millennia. It was once a Khanate of the Golden Horde, a protectorate of the Ottoman Empire, and was under Russian influence until 1783, when Catherine the Great annexed the peninsula during a period when the Ottoman Empire was experiencing internal strife and was less able to exert control over areas far away from their capital.⁷

Given its ideal location as a naval port, the town of Sevastopol was established as a strategic defensive position in Crimea to consolidate Russian influence in the region. This city became ingrained in the Russian national ethos. In October of 1853, the Crimea War started as the result of Russian expansionism under the guise of protecting Christians from persecution of Ottoman Muslims, and the French and British soon stepped in to prevent

⁶ “The Noble Republic, 1572-1795” *Global Security*, Accessed October 24, 2015.
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/pl-history-noble-republic.htm>.

⁷ Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 65.

further Russian encroachment on territory controlled by the Ottoman Empire. The most famous battles of the war took place in Sevastopol. Facing impossible odds during the Crimean War, the Russians lost the city. The siege lasted over a year. This effort was the Russian equivalent to the Alamo in the United States in the sense that the Russians stood their ground and fought to the end even in an impossible situation, and it is historically relevant because it gave the Russians a concrete sense that Crimea belonged to them.⁸

World War I and Revolution: Military and Intelligence Lessons

Like the Crimean War, World War I also had significant effects on Ukrainian-Russian relations and on Russia as a whole. A nation's military and intelligence practices are shaped by its historical experiences. This is especially true of Russia, which among all other nations involved in either World War I or World War II suffered the most in terms of loss of life and destruction or expenditure of material. The military was set up to fail because of an economy that was still feudal and not as industrialized as the majority of its European peers. The Russian army could not put enough guns and ammunition into the hands of their military, let alone harness new communication technology that their German rivals had so masterfully learned. This was clear during the Battle of Tannenberg, where a combination of German SIGINT prowess and equal Russian ineptitude led to a comprehensive and incapacitating defeat of the Russian military. Tannenberg was the first battle in history where the interception of enemy traffic played a decisive role in the outcome.⁹

⁸ "Crimean War (1853-1856)" *Global Security*, Accessed October 24, 2015. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/crimean-war.htm>.

⁹ Gregory Elder. "Intelligence in War: It Can Be Decisive." *Central Intelligence Agency*, last modified June 26, 2008. https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/vol50no2/html_files/Intelligence_War_2.htm.

Russian General Yuri Danilov spoke of “unpardonable negligence in the Russian radio service. Imperfect communication service had been the chief reason for the catastrophic outcome of the battle.”¹⁰ Inadequate training on a new technology crucial to modern warfare proved costly. It was a humiliating lesson that forced changes in intelligence and OPSEC, and it was a lesson well-learned by the Bolshevik Red Army. There would be intelligence successes and failures from the beginning of the Soviet Union until its demise, but it was the battle of Tannenberg that was the first and perhaps the biggest agent of change in Tsarist and then Soviet military and intelligence thinking.¹¹

There were pivotal moments during this era that would bring Russians and Ukrainians closer together in their united suffering, but there were also events that set the stage for accusations and conflict. A massive wave of internal strife was taking Russia by storm in the form of Communist revolutionaries, and the war was proceeding very poorly for the Russians. The economy in Russia was floundering and on the verge of collapse, and a shortage of food brought on by German territorial conquests and the requirement to feed the Russian army first created resentment toward the ruling class. It was the perfect storm for the Communist movement to set up foundations amongst the bitter and angry masses. The tsarist regime had presided over the loss of millions of lives and immense amounts of capital, and the Russian people hit a breaking point once they perceived that their toil and sacrifice were only benefiting the elite. Factions were drawn, and sides were being chosen for yet

¹⁰ Wilhelm F. Flicke, “The Early Development of Communications Intelligence.” *Central Intelligence Agency*, last modified August 03, 2011. https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol3no1/html/v03i1a09p_0001.htm.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

another long, drawn-out conflict that would affect the core of identity in both Russia and Ukraine.

The most important players during the Russian Revolution were the Bolsheviks (“Reds”) and the Loyalists (“Whites”). The Bolsheviks wanted to end their involvement in World War I, which was immensely unpopular with the Russian people. The ideas and concepts of the Bolsheviks became very popular among the fighting soldiers on the front lines and their families at home, especially Lenin’s simple but powerful call for “Peace, Land, and Bread”. The already low morale of the Russian military was reduced to tatters as a result of Bolshevik infiltration, which, according to historians, the Germans aided and abetted in order to speed their victory on the Eastern Front). Many internal skirmishes in Petrograd, most notably the October Revolution and the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II, continued the spiral toward a civil war. Russia could no longer participate in World War I due to the more pressing internal crisis between the gathering Red and White armies. The Russians signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany on March 3, 1918, formally ending their involvement in World War I. The treaty established new borders and new countries, which in turn caused an increased sense of separatism and nationalism in these new countries, including Ukraine.¹²

Ukraine’s Struggle For and With Brief Independence

On November 20th, 1917, the Rada declared Ukraine to be an autonomous region of the Russian Empire followed a few months later by full independence on January 22, 1918.¹³

¹² “Russian Revolution” Global Security, Accessed October 24, 2015.
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/russia.htm>.

¹³ Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 68.

It would be the first time that Ukraine would be recognized as a state in the Westphalian sense. Not all Ukrainians were in favor of such a move, nor were the Bolsheviks in Russia in any mood to cede any influence in Ukraine. The Bolsheviks felt it necessary to intervene quickly against the newly established Central Rada to quell any separatist attempts in Ukraine, and would take action on the perceived threat in due time. This series of historical events is worth mentioning because it was the first time in hundreds of years the Ukrainians had decided to push away from their Russian big brother, hoping to follow their own destiny.¹⁴

The Rada's forces were considerably outnumbered and were not well prepared for armed conflict with the Bolsheviks. Kiev's defenses were comprised mostly of university students. Once Bolsheviks from Russia arrived as reinforcements, the situation looked increasingly dire for the city's defenders. The Rada forces in Kiev were defeated on February 9 by the combined Soviet Ukrainian and Russian forces, but as fate would have it, the representatives of the Rada were able to sign the previously discussed Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on the exact same day. This was extremely fortuitous and significant because if we recall the earlier discussion, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed by Russia signaling the end of their involvement in World War I. This also meant that the alliance of nations to which Russia surrendered was able to draw up terms of peace favorable to Germany, Bulgaria, the Austrian-Hungary Empire, and the Ottoman Empire, and this involved the fate of Ukraine as well. A blanket security arrangement was provided with a combined force of 450,000 German, Austrian, and Hungarian troops to keep any Bolshevik influence at bay. Unfortunately for the Tsentralna Rada, there was an additional consequence of signing the

¹⁴ Ibid p.68.

Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, and that meant the dissolution of the Tsentralna Rada through a coup d'état executed under the watchful eye of the approving Central Powers.¹⁵

It became evident after the period of bitter civil conflict between 1917 and 1922 that Ukraine's fate would lie with Russia once again, and despite occasional instances of insurgency and uprising, the momentum of rebellion in Ukraine ended. Ukraine had only a fleeting moment of independence from 1918-1922, and even during that time it knew nothing but turmoil and instability. Ukraine joined the Soviet Union on December 29, 1922 and its fate was once again tied to Russia's.¹⁶ The Ukrainians would know nothing but suffering during Stalin's tenure as the man in charge of the Soviet Union. The emerging Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which would be a beacon of communism and pan-Slavism for the world, was greatly feared by Western Europeans and the United States. The Soviet Union's first leader, Vladimir Lenin, died two years after seeing his dream come to fruition. After some dramatic jostling for power behind the scenes, the iron-fisted Josef Stalin emerged as General Secretary of the Communist Party.

Soviet Development and the Torment Of Ukraine

One of the biggest reasons the Reds were able to beat the Whites was propaganda, information warfare, and intelligence. Bolshevik officers were generally of poor quality, and they were for the most part disorganized on the field of battle. However, the Whites continued to shoot themselves in the foot because of the poor way in which they treated their

¹⁵ Ishaan Tharoor and Gene Thorpe, "Maps: How Ukraine became Ukraine", *The Washington Post*, March 09, 2015. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/03/09/maps-how-ukraine-became-ukraine/>.

¹⁶ Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 75.

soldiers. It created friction amongst the ranks and played into the class struggle that the Reds were preaching.¹⁷

Once Communism took hold and the Soviet Union was firmly established as a geopolitical entity, the next political objective was to expand communism beyond the USSR. While there were fifteen Soviet republics, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (the modern Russian Federation) was unquestionably the centerpiece of the organization. Russians of this new political ideal felt it was Russia's burden in to spread communism throughout the world to defeat capitalism. Energetic and passionate communists came from Spain, Germany, Italy, China, and other countries to do their part in, and the Soviets welcomed them into the fold to train them to operate abroad. Lenin, Stalin, and Leon Trotsky recognized the need for intelligence during the revolution, and the Cheka (political intelligence) and GRU (military intelligence) continued to operate after the revolution. According to Marcel Van Herpen, "the Chekists are characterized by almost unlimited commitment, similar to that of monks in religious orders. However, their loyalty is not to a heavenly God, but to the earthly hierarchy of their organization and to what they consider to be their country's interests."¹⁸ Following their successful revolution, the Bolsheviks stood up an agitation and propaganda department (AGITPROP) to wage an information warfare campaign against the Russian people. Van Herpen continues: "The Bolsheviks were firm believers in the communist cause, and they thought that all means, including censorship, lies, deception of others, and production of fake realities were permissible to force their ideas on

¹⁷ John Simkin, "The White Army", *Spartacus Educational*, August, 11, 2014. <http://spartacus-educational.com/RUSwhite.htm>.

¹⁸ Marcel Van Herpen, *Putin's Propaganda Machine: Soft Power and Russian Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, 2015), p.116.

the population.”¹⁹ Under the threat of purges, the Cheka (which would later become the NKVD political police that hunted for enemies of the revolution) and GRU were constantly at each other’s throats. Intelligence analysts with incorrect assessments were executed, and a major purge of the GRU took place in November of 1920. According to Suvorov, “on Lenin’s orders, hundreds of intelligence officers who had failed to evaluate intelligence correctly were shot.”²⁰ Many foreign zealots filled the void from all over the world and were excellent agents because they were already accustomed to the cultures in which they were operating and did not need years of training for cultural assimilation. The Soviets were also experts at forging documents and passports.²¹

Stalin was a key figure during the revolution, and saw it as absolutely necessary to start modernizing the Soviet Union’s industry, agriculture, and military to prepare for another attack by Germany. This was done out of a combination of hoping to spread their communist ideal as well as for the Russians’ own protection and prosperity as a nation. Stalin carried out this effort with an extremely brutal no-nonsense attitude through the first of several Five Year Plans from 1928 to 1932 to transform a largely technologically backward state into a world power in a short period of time. Everything produced within the country was owned by the state and distributed to its people equally, at least in theory, and the collective farm was one of the premier examples of how things were done in the Soviet Union. The farms were required to meet a government-mandated production quota each year, and if that production baseline was not met it likely meant prison in the vast gulag network that was built in Siberia. Forty percent of all political prisoners in the Soviet gulag system came from

¹⁹ Ibid p.2-3.

²⁰ Viktor Suvorov, *Inside Soviet Military Intelligence* (London, UK: Macmillan Pub Co, 1984), p. 15.

²¹ Ibid p.18.

Ukraine. The Ukrainians received disproportionately harsh sentences for their “crimes” compared to other Soviets. Ukrainian political prisoners averaged twelve-year sentences in the gulags compared to Baltic, Armenian, or Georgian political prisoners who received three to four on average for similar infractions.²² Stalin also became extremely paranoid of a potential “fifth column”, which had been a hallmark of Russian rulers regarding internal opposition working to bring down the government. Soviet citizens were arrested on a massive scale for political crimes against the Soviet Union. Millions of these political prisoners died in the gulags or were executed outright. The courts were mere rubber stamps, and all it took was a neighbor or someone with a grudge to prompt an accusation of political crimes that often brought a conviction.

The party established a political security apparatus that bordered on obsession at best and insanity at worst, and an infamous political entity known as the NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) was charged with identifying any enemies of the state. If a citizen was found guilty in one of the rubber-stamp courts for some trivial “crime,” the result would more often than not be imprisonment in Siberia. It is widely estimated that between 25 and 30 million people died in the gulag apparatus. There was virtually no accountability, and it was common for innocent people to be thrown in prison.²³

During the period of rapid Soviet industrialization, the Ukrainian people suffered terribly at the hands of Stalin, who many believe had a personal score to settle with the Ukrainian people after causing such a nuisance for the Red Army for so many years. Stalin was generally an equal-opportunity ruler when it came to inflicting suffering on his people,

²² Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2015), p. 124.

²³ Palash Ghosh, “How Many People Did Joseph Stalin Kill?” *International Business Times*, March 05, 2013.

but Ukraine bore the brunt of Stalin's wrath. In his most paranoid moments (and there were many), Stalin wanted to deport all Ukrainians from Ukraine, but Khrushchev and other party members cautioned him that they could not do that "because there were too many of them and there was no place in which to deport them. Otherwise he would have deported them too."²⁴ Over 100,000 Ukrainians were sent to political prison camps. The Soviets then sought to stifle any remaining Ukrainian nationalistic feelings, first by restricting the teaching of the Ukrainian language and culture in schools. Russian would be implemented as the official language throughout the Soviet Union, which upset many Ukrainians. Their second action was to end the reluctance among many Ukrainians to comply with the collective farm practice, which they felt redistributed an unfair share of the fruits of their hard work. Ukraine was an agricultural breadbasket, and some Ukrainians were beginning to feel undervalued and unrewarded. This would have disastrous effects for Ukraine in the coming years.²⁵

In fact, the coming decade witnessed one of the most shocking episodes in Soviet and Ukrainian history. In the transition from privatized property to collectivization, a worst-case scenario reared its head in the form of a famine which, while it affected the greater Soviet Union, unquestionably brought the greatest amount of suffering to the people of Ukraine. This famine was known as the Holodomor, which means to "kill by starvation." The land was being cultivated to the point that the soil was losing its nutrients that are essential for plant growth. Farmers became suspicious as early as 1930 when the soil was replicating the consistency of dust found in the United States during the Dust Bowl. Crop yields suffered as

²⁴ Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 83.

²⁵ *Ibid* p.83.

a result, and the output of 1931 was an alarming foreshadowing of things to come for farmers across Ukraine. By 1932, the famine struck in full force and continued in 1933. Stalin, who still harbored resentment toward Ukrainians for their counterrevolutionary rebellion against the USSR, made sure that food distribution would not be favorable to them. He had his vengeance as some ten million Ukrainians starved to death. While there is some debate that the Holodomor fits the criteria of genocide (particularly among historians with Soviet-leaning sympathies), most historians now assess that it indeed fits all of the qualifiers with incontrovertible evidence that Stalin specifically targeted the Ukrainian people during the famine. The scale of death of the Holodomor is actually greater than the equally deplorable Holocaust, which is much more prevalent in history books. Ukrainians hold such strong contempt for what happened that they enacted a law in 2008 to make Holodomor-denial a crime.²⁶

Stalin's paranoia would expand even further to his political, military, and intelligence officials. The NKVD carried out massive internal purges from 1937-1939. Many political and military functionaries accused one another of various crimes to gain Stalin's favor, creating what in military slang are called "circular firing squads," in which they only ended up hurting and incriminating themselves. Stalin would come to rue the day that he eliminated so many intelligence analysts and military professionals. Tens of thousands were eliminated from these crucial positions, which created a brain drain and negated priceless experience and years of hard work in building up the Red Army. Two years following the purge, when hostilities began with Finland, the Red Army's four million men needed four

²⁶ Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 78.

months to break a superb Finnish army of 28,000, which used a highly effective mix of conventional and guerrilla tactics. Soviet historians blamed the lack of intelligence as a primary reason for their defeat.²⁷

While building the strength of the Soviet Union, Stalin desperately wanted to avoid further conflict, at least until the Red Army was ready, but when the opportunity came for expansion of the Soviet Union's current territory and peace with Hitler, Stalin jumped at the chance. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, signed in August 1939, partitioned Eastern Europe between Germany and the Soviet Union. They met in the middle in Poland. To Stalin, there seemed to be no downside because it appeared to bring better relations with Germany. Stalin disdained Hitler and the Nazis nearly as much as the Germans reciprocated that hatred, but Stalin also recognized the strategic value of peace and the expansion of the Soviet empire. The GRU did not share Stalin's judgement when signing the pact, and for that the GRU head and cabinet were executed.²⁸

The Great Patriotic War

In the buildup to World War II, the Soviet Union made another notable intelligence blunder in failing to anticipate Germany's intentions leading up to Operation Barbarossa. This was primarily Stalin's fault. He refused to accept alternative assessments from his intelligence community and thus ignored the advice provided to him by the GRU, which gave clear indications that Germany was planning an invasion. Stalin reacted to these alternative assessments by purging the entire GRU and dismantling its intelligence apparatus just when Russia needed it most. Extremely valuable human intellectual capital and

²⁷ "1937-1941 - Military Purges" *Global Security*, Accessed October 24, 2015.
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/russia/stalin-military-purges.htm>.

²⁸ Viktor Suvorov, *Inside Soviet Military Intelligence* (London, UK: Macmillan Pub Co, 1984), p. 20.

manpower were lost as a result of Stalin's paranoia. The Soviet Union thus had to rebuild its intelligence community nearly from scratch during wartime, which was an incredible feat given the internal and external obstacles that it faced.²⁹

World War II, when the Soviet Union fought desperately to defeat Axis forces, magnified Russian perceptions of brotherhood with Ukraine. Both the Russians and Ukrainians suffered more than their fair share during what they call the Great Patriotic War. The Nazi blitzkrieg charged through the entire Ukraine with speed and efficiency, and hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian citizens were either killed or captured by German and Romanian forces. The Red Army instituted a "scorched earth" policy, and while they retreated they burned crops and barns and slaughtered livestock so the Nazis could not use them. With the Holodomor fresh in the minds of Ukrainians, the "scorched earth" policy was another instance of deprivation of food that would linger in their memories. The loss of Odessa and Kiev were massive defeats for Soviet Forces, who could not seem to stop the Fascist tide. Both of these Ukrainian cities were recognized as Hero cities of the Soviet Union after the war ended, reinforcing foundations of the brotherhood Ukraine and Russia shared. The Crimean Peninsula came under fire again as a strategic point for the Soviet Union during World War II when German forces attacked Sevastopol on October 30, 1941. The Black Sea port withstood another long siege but finally fell to the Nazis in June of 1942 after more than eight months under a naval blockade that included relentless bombardment

²⁹ David E. Murphy. "What Stalin Knew: The Enigma of Barbarossa." *Central Intelligence Agency*, last modified June 26, 2008. https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/vol50no1/9_BK_What_Stalin_Knew.htm.

by the German navy and Luftwaffe. Sevastopol's Russian lineage become even further engrained as it was designated a Hero City of the Soviet Union as well.³⁰

In February 1945, as the Allies and the Red Army closed in on the Reich, the Yalta Conference brought together Stalin, President Franklin Roosevelt, and Prime Minister Winston Churchill. After nearly a week of painstaking negotiations, borders and conditions were drawn up to prepare for the aftermath of the Great Patriotic War (known by the Western Powers as World War II). The Soviet Union also entered the United Nations and was granted veto power on the U.N. Security Council. Stalin insisted that the Red Army be allowed to take Berlin based on the millions of lives the Soviets had lost. Churchill and Roosevelt agreed. The fact that Yalta is located in the Crimea further enhanced the prestige of the Crimean Peninsula in the hearts of Russians and Ukrainians. On May 2, 1945, Berlin fell to the Red Army. On May 8, 1945, the Allied Powers received the unconditional surrender of Germany. Not to be outdone, the Soviet Union said that the Americans and British had no authority to sign that treaty because it was the Soviets who defeated the Germans. The Germans surrendered to the Soviets formally on May 9, 1945, and this is the day that the Soviet Union celebrates the end of the Great Patriotic War. In reference to the Red Army fighters, Anthony Beevor states, "Their collective sacrifice, both forced and willing at the same time, represented a terrifyingly impressive achievement."³¹ The Russians viewed Ukraine as the "little brother", and in their mind they helped their little brother out of a tight spot: something for which the Ukrainians should be grateful.

³⁰ "The Siege Of Sevastopol: Why The Crimean Campaign Means So Much To Moscow" *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, Last Modified May 07, 2014.

³¹ Anthony Beevor, *Stalingrad* (London, UK: Penguin Books, 1999), p. 224.

Despite the brotherhood during the Great Patriotic War, festering wounds lingered. The historical complications and complexities that took place before the war drew the lines of war in a more skewed fashion than the Soviet official history of the war would have us believe. A sizable demographic of Ukrainians threw their lot in with the invading Nazis. Russia's particular fixation on Ukrainian association with the Nazis during this timeframe is of utmost importance, and we will discuss further in subsequent chapters how Russian talking heads link this association between Ukrainians and Nazi sympathizers to the current conflict. First, however, we will focus strictly on the historical conflict that allows the Russian policy makers and media to construct this obtuse narrative.

With the Holodomor still fresh in the minds of Ukrainians, many saw the Nazis as liberators. These feelings became stronger when the Red Army executed many Ukrainian political prisoners during the retreat from the initial Nazi invasion. Also, many who still secretly practiced Orthodox Christianity believed they had a divine call to fight the Soviet antichrist, and that the Nazis would make communists pay for their sins. Priests and nuns greeted the Nazis with crosses thanking them. There was also deep disdain toward the Jewish people, and many Ukrainians worked as prison guards for the Jewish extermination camps.³²

Some Ukrainians simply joined the Nazis out of sheer hatred for the Soviet Union and its harsh brand of government. One of these dissidents was the extremely controversial Stepan Bandera, who was hoping to revive Ukrainian independence and often led campaigns into southeastern Poland to take back Ukrainian territory that had been taken away centuries

³² Svetlana Fedas, "Heroes or traitors? Ukraine deeply divided over WWII legacy" *Fox News*, last modified August 01, 2013. <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/08/01/heroes-or-traitors-ukraine-deeply-divided-over-wwii-legacy/>.

earlier. This was done initially with Nazi backing, and Bandera's militant separatist organization, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, declared Ukrainian independence soon after the Germans moved through Poland. Once the Nazis had no further use for Bandera and his insurgency, they imprisoned him until 1944, judging Bandera and his organization to be more of a liability than an asset.³³

One Man's Terrorist Is Another Man's Freedom Fighter

When the tide turned against Germany and its allies, the Nazis released Bandera and his troops to fight with them. A Ukrainian insurgent army called the UPA (Ukrainian People's Army) was formed and was particularly politically active in what is now Western Ukraine in areas like Lviv and the Carpathian mountains where 200,000 men were willing to fight for this cause. One of the side effects of this fervent nationalism was a campaign of ethnic cleansing of Poles. Between 60,000 and 100,000 were killed. The UPA was arguably just as paranoid against betrayal and traitors as the Soviets were, and those they accused were punished in such vile ways as having their eyes poked out or even being hacked to death by an axe. When the gruesome tactics began to backfire, the UPA quickly ended them, realizing that they were losing the favorable opinion of their own populace. The Soviets suffered a very high casualty rate against Bandera's Ukrainian insurgency force in the Carpathians, including many of the Soviet Union's best NKVD battalions. Even after World War II ended, the UPA insurgency remained strong in Western Ukraine. Becoming frustrated with the guerrilla tactics, the NKVD began a concentrated campaign of espionage that eventually worked its way into the highest levels of the UPA. According to declassified Soviet

³³ Svetlana Fedas, "Heroes or traitors? Ukraine deeply divided over WWII legacy" Fox News, last modified August 01, 2013. <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/08/01/heroes-or-traitors-ukraine-deeply-divided-over-wwii-legacy/>.

documents, KGB and NKVD members, posing as UPA partisans, committed massacres to turn the populace against the actual UPA.³⁴ This clever change of tactics broke the UPA's back, and collective farming became a common practice again by 1947. Bandera himself fled into Western Germany in exile, where he was assassinated in 1959 by KGB operatives. He remains a divisive figure in history books—a rallying point for Ukraine nationalists, particularly in Lviv and the Carpathian mountains, but thoroughly despised by the Russians to this day.³⁵

It is also important to know that the number of Ukrainians who fought for the Red Army during the Great Patriotic War still vastly outnumbers those who served with the Nazis and Bandera's UPA. Some of the Red Army's most brilliant generals were also Ukrainian including Commissar of Defense Semyon Timoshenko and Andrei Yeremenko, who was a stalwart commander during Stalingrad and who, following the Great Patriotic War, was assigned to combat Bandera's UPA. Yeremenko put it best when he said, "Russian and Ukrainian friendship is sealed in blood shed in the common cause on the field of battle."³⁶ This example once again shows how foolish it is to shoehorn such a vast swath of territory and people into a predetermined narrative that fits one's arguments like the Russian Federation does today in regards to Ukraine, yet they continue to preach it as the truth.

Following World War II, it became abundantly clear that Ukraine's fate would be with the Soviet Union for some time. For the first time in the twentieth century, Ukraine was under an umbrella of stability fostered by the perceived brotherhood developed during the

³⁴ Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2015), p. 127.

³⁵ Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 86.

³⁶ Anthony Beevor, *Stalingrad* (London, UK: Penguin Books, 1999), p. 184.

war (and with the other battlefield bonds over the course of half of a century that certainly struck a resounding note). However, Ukraine suffered as much at the hands of Stalin as of Hitler, a fact not lost on ethnic Ukrainians. According to Taras Kuzio, “during the years both Stalin and Hitler were in power, more people were killed in Ukraine than anywhere else in the “bloodlands” of eastern Europe. Ukrainians died by the millions in the greatest artificial famine in the history of the world.”³⁷ Following the death of Josef Stalin, a passing celebrated by Russians and Ukrainians alike, Soviet leadership under Nikita Khrushchev sought to strengthen the foundations of Russo-Ukrainian brotherhood. Some partially credit Khrushchev’s wife, who herself was Ukrainian, and he absolutely adored her. It was now time for the Soviet Union to consolidate their alliance, to foster the spread of the communist ideal, and to combat their former capitalist adversaries diplomatically and through military buildup. There was a shortage of manpower in Ukraine following World War II to work industry in the Donbas. One estimate for population decline shows that Ukraine lost half of its male population and a quarter of its female population. Russians were brought in to rebuild the towns destroyed by the Nazis and found jobs in the Donbass region working on collective farms and in the coal mines³⁸. Political prisoners in the gulags of the Donbas region were released and their sentences forgiven, and many simply settled in the region rather than move back. Many of these political prisoners, who were likely not violent before their incarceration, became intimately involved with prison codes and the vory-v-zakone (thieves in law), organized criminal elements, and established underground black markets and racketeering schemes in Donetsk and Luhansk. It is that prison culture that made the

³⁷ Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2015), p. 222.

³⁸ Ibid p.411.

Donbas a hotbed for corruption even in the Soviet Union, and it is crucial for understanding the political-criminal nexus there today.³⁹

The Cold War

In 1954, this integration was furthered, and the notion of brotherhood even more deeply romanticized when Khrushchev formally granted Crimea to Ukraine as a gift despite the population residing there being overwhelmingly Russian given that the Tartars had been forcibly removed under Stalin's regime⁴⁰. This was symbolically done on the 300th anniversary of signing of the Treaty of Pereyaslav, which had unified Ukraine with Russia.⁴¹ Nobody in the Communist Party objected to giving Crimea to Ukraine. Crimea's Black Sea Fleet became more strategically important to the Soviet naval forces and experienced a sizable influx of Soviet Union servicemen. Hand in hand, the two most powerful entities in the USSR, Russia and Ukraine, developed into a fearsome superpower.

This period from 1945 to 1991 revolved around the Soviet Union's role in the world as a superpower pitted against its adversary, the United States of America. It was a protracted conflict of fundamental differences in ideological beliefs and government and economic processes known as the Cold War. It was a "cold war" because both the Soviet Union and the United States engaged each other through proxy wars like Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Central America, Iran, Angola, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Cuba, among other locations. The Intelligence agencies of each respective nation, the United States' CIA, and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' KGB and GRU, engaged in the most complex game of cat and mouse between two adversaries in the modern era to gain advantage over each other,

³⁹ Ibid p.411.

⁴⁰ Ibid p.266.

⁴¹ Ibid p.210.

and each side experienced accomplishment of mission objectives and humiliating defeats. It was the KGB's job to protect against foreign intelligence (First Directorate); suppress internal strife and conduct counterespionage (Second Directorate); protect VIPs and carry out censorship and disinformation (Fifth Directorate), and suppress dissent.⁴² The GRU focused primarily on missions abroad. According to Suvorov, many KGB and GRU members actually hated communism, especially after being assigned to Western locations as "illegals" (agents posing as citizens in adversary countries) and experiencing the many perquisites of free societies and capitalism. A few were turned, including Oleg Penkovsky, who many credit with providing vital information to the United States when making decisions during the Cuban Missile Crisis. However, most stayed loyal to the Soviet Union.

The KGB and reformed GRU were formidable than their predecessors primarily because after Stalin's reign and the purges that took place under paranoia, leaders recognized the necessity of objective and unbiased analysis. In spite of this, if party leadership was bent on a particular slant in a given assessment, senior intelligence officials would not dare break ranks with that judgement. Both organizations were rivals as well, as the USSR intentionally kept two intelligence entities as checks-and-balances to make sure one did not become too powerful. Advances in technology were vast and encouraged the evolution of intelligence analysts and operatives. Intelligence played critical roles for both the CIA and KGB in the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Vietnam War, the multitudes of Israeli-Arab conflicts, and the Iran-Contra scandal. For the Soviets, their greatest disaster after the Berlin Airlift and the Cuban Missile Crisis was the ill-advised engagement in Afghanistan, where they only got involved after the communist government was on the verge of collapse. The CIA turned the tide

⁴² Ibid p.169.

largely by arming the Afghan Mujahedeen (“holy warriors” resisting the Soviets) with Stinger missiles via a third party. These turned the tide against the Soviet Hip and Hind helicopters that were the beating back the Mujahedeen. These missiles, combined with the tactical ingenuity of the local resistance, condemned the Soviet Union to defeat.⁴³

With this defeat, the first domino fell in what would become a rapid decay of the communist superpower. Gorbachev’s establishment of the reform practices of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (reform) only sped up the internal decay of a broken system. The communist economy remained stagnant and the people were tired of food lines with lack of variety or quantity. The military had just endured a humiliating defeat. Soviet citizens could now see on television the difference between their system and that of the capitalists of Europe and North America. Dissent was emerging in the smaller Soviet republics. The collapse of the Soviet Union was inevitable.

⁴³ Michael M. Phillips, “Launching the Missile that Made History” *Wall Street Journal*, last modified October 01, 2011. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204138204576598851109446780>.

UKRAINE AND RUSSIAN HISTORY AFTER THE SOVIET UNION

For many politicians in the pro-Russia hemisphere, the collapse of the Soviet Union was a humiliating disaster. The Russians, being the primary pallbearers for an ethnic group within the Soviet Union, felt as if they had lost vast swaths of their empire. After the Russians shook off the period of focusing on what they viewed as their loss of strategic depth and what they viewed as the concurrent threat to their survival, the psychological trauma set in at a cultural and political level. Russian citizens began pointing the finger of blame at people they felt were responsible for the dissolution of the USSR. People saw the final president, Mikhail Gorbachev, as a traitor and the orchestrator of the USSR's collapse, and thought his successor Boris Yeltsin to be a politically weak, corrupt alcoholic who exacerbated Russia's decline. The trauma was too deep even to worry about any prospects of diplomatic and political humiliation by the United States and its Western allies. The new Russian Federation needed to secure its very existence and prevent any further fracturing from Tartarstan, the Russian Far East, Siberia, Karelia, and other regions.⁴⁴ In the minds of Russians, the stakes could not be any higher.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union transpired a quicker rate than even formerly adversarial governments would have preferred. The collapse of one of the only two superpowers in the world left a power vacuum in which former Soviet states became their own countries. Diplomats and politicians worked overtime to make sure that events in the vast swath of territory formerly comprising the USSR did not spiral out of control. Communism was a failed philosophy at least from an economic and social perspective. We

⁴⁴ Ben Judah, *Fragile Empire: How Russia Fell In and Out of Love with Vladimir Putin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), p.48.

can see that there were sincere steps by the Soviet Union to bridge racial and ethnic divisions for the benefit of communism, which in Soviet doctrine they viewed as a natural and necessary step. But like many utopian objectives in communism, it is impossible to erase history. The philosophical and ideological battle that consumed much of the twentieth century had come to an end. With all variables taken into account regarding what could have been, the dissolution of the USSR was remarkably stable not just for Russia and Ukraine, but other former Soviet countries that went on to form the Commonwealth of Independent States while declaring their independence. Former Soviet states held ballot referendums to break with the USSR and then formed new governments. Following this dissolution, 23.5 million ethnic Russians were left outside the borders of the Russian Federation.⁴⁵ This would become an issue that shapes Russian grand strategy to this day. For the first time in decades, the Russian and Ukrainian governments would be operating as separate entities. Ukraine declared its independence on August 24, 1991 with a vote in the Rada of 364 in favor, one against, and three absent.⁴⁶ Full sovereignty was assured with the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union a few months later on December 26, 1991. Yeltsin made a last-minute effort to form a union with Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan, but it came to nothing.⁴⁷ Ukrainian president Leonid Kravchuk even made sure that the CIS was a “commonwealth” and not a “Union of Independent States” because he did not want the word “union” in any agreement.⁴⁸ The dream of an independent Ukraine had finally come to pass. Ukraine would go through some difficult growing pains, as was to be expected. It was a country that had many of the

⁴⁵ James Sherr, *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad*, (London, UK: Chatham House, 2013), p. 23.

⁴⁶ Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 108.

⁴⁷ Ibid p.111.

⁴⁸ Ibid p.113.

same problems that emerging capitalist democracies had during this periods of transformation, including widespread corruption and economic volatility. Nonetheless, Ukraine would have the greatest degree of sovereignty in its history. All Ukrainian Oblasts, even the Donbass, voted over fifty percent in favor of independence.⁴⁹ The Ukrainians were finally free and independent as a nation, and their future was not tied to Russia's—or so they thought.

Ukraine: Independence After The Soviet Union

There were also territories in Ukraine with sizable populations of ethnic Russians who felt more loyalty to Russia than Ukraine, most notably Crimea and the industrial Donbas region. Crimea and Donbas were always more conservative in their politics, and much less vocal than Lviv or Kiev for independence, and their economy was highly dependent on Russia in the defense and raw-materials sectors. Protests began in the Donbas in 1993 and 1994 as coal workers went on strike and then grew into a push for more autonomy and even a mild-tempered separatist push. They were successful in achieving an important objective of making Russian a second official language of Ukraine. If there were two territories that would have the capacity to cause a sovereign Ukraine trouble, it would be Crimea and the Donbas region.

The Kremlin made a concerted effort to ensure Party of Regions candidate Viktor Yanukovich would become president of Ukraine, and financed his campaign for six months leading up to the election. The media blitz against his rival, Viktor Yushenko, was unrelenting. Yanukovich was used to dirty politics and corruption behind the scenes, and served two prison terms during his younger years in the Soviet Union. Eastern Ukrainians

⁴⁹ Ibid p.112.

would say “Yanukovich is a bandit, but he is our bandit.”⁵⁰ Yushchenko was vilified on pro-Russian news networks financed by Ukrainian oligarchs and the Russian government. Even more sinister is the fact that Yushchenko was poisoned in the run-up to elections, which left his face permanently disfigured. On Election Day, some of the polling booths were found to have pens with disappearing ink.⁵¹ University students were threatened with eviction if they voted for a candidate other than Yanukovich. Russia and the Party of Regions threw everything at running a dirty campaign to win the election. Kremlin technologists plugged for Yanukovich, and propaganda images of “Novorossiia” appeared in Donetsk as early as the 2004 elections.⁵² They also said that the push to recognize Soviet atrocities like the Holodomor and expanding Ukrainian language increased the threat of a fascist state, and that the CIA was funding Yushchenko. Many Party of Regions voters, the pro-Russian-leaning political bloc of Yanukovich, remembered the Soviet Union fondly and believed Yushchenko was trying to institute dangerous cultural and historical revisionism. The heroes and villains of East and West Ukraine were quite different. In Lviv and the West, there were statues of Bandera in town squares. In the eastern portion of the country, they were statues of Lenin. No city in Ukraine had statues celebrating both. In all, Putin and the Kremlin spent several hundred million dollars for the Yanukovich campaign.⁵³

Despite this, Ukraine continued its westward trajectory during the Orange Revolution, a massive series of rallies starting on November 22, 2004 staged by the people distraught

⁵⁰ Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2015), p. 411.

⁵¹ Maria Danilova, “Ukraine votes: disappearing ink, a clone candidate, other tricks emerge”, *The Christian Science Monitor*, last modified October 28, 2012. <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Latest-News-Wires/2012/1028/Ukraine-votes-disappearing-ink-a-clone-candidate-other-tricks-emerge>.

⁵² Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2015), p. 259.

⁵³ Gideon Rose. *Crisis In Ukraine* (New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations, 2014) p. 17.

with the levels of corruption in their government and demanding change. Yulia Tymoshenko, one of the most vocal and prominent voices wanting to bring about change and reform against graft and corruption, emerged as a prominent heroine of the Orange Revolution. People gathered in every major city in Western Ukraine by using social media and the power of mass mobility organized by the internet. Tymoshenko and Yushchenko would become bitter political rivals following the protests, but for now they were on the same side. They also claimed that they won the election in 2004 between them Russia-friendly Viktor Yanukovich, leveraging the belief among many Ukrainians that Yanukovich's victory was the result of stuffing of ballot boxes and engaging in other electoral fraud. Yushchenko found an unlikely ally in the Ukrainian intelligence service (SBU), which charged Yanukovich with election fraud. The SBU was also crucial in making sure strong-arm counter-protest law-enforcement tactics were not used on the protestors. Seven pounds of plastic explosives belonging to Russian criminal elements were also found by the SBU following Election Day. The Ukrainian Supreme Court ordered new elections because of these inconsistencies, international observers were brought in, and Yushchenko was the convincing victor in a fair election. Ukrainian politicians and administrators under Yushchenko worked feverishly toward their goal of joining the European Union, and all of the perceived incentives that it would bring. Ukraine was tilting precariously away from Russian influence.

Unfortunately for Yushchenko, the economy stagnated, and when election time came in 2010, Yanukovich emerged as the victor with a vote along ethnically partisan lines. Yanukovich portrayed himself as a moderate this time, which played to his favor. When looking at the electoral map of 2010, one can easily identify historical patterns previously

discussed that made Yanukovich's victory possible. Ethnic Russians came out in force, and Yanukovich would proceed to take his country back on a path toward Russian influence. One of the most significant moves Yanukovich implemented was the lease extension on the Black Sea Fleet's rights to the ports of Crimea, which many in the central and Western Ukrainian political blocs bitterly opposed. In return for the lease extension, Yanukovich was able to get very favorable terms for Ukraine for Russian fuel, upon which Ukraine is heavily dependent. Yanukovich continued to consolidate his power and imprisoned political dissidents, including the popular Orange Revolution heroine Yulia Tymoshenko. Tymoshenko's sentence of seven years (she served five) caused firm international condemnation and a nationalist outcry. Laws benefiting ethnic Russians were pushed, particularly letting cities that voted more with a ten percent "yes" vote choose Russian as the official language of an oblast. This angered Ukrainian nationalists to the core. The Rada also voted for a nonaligned military status, which snuffed out any hopes of joining NATO in the near future. It became abundantly clear that with Yanukovich in power the Russians had a valuable ally who was easy to manipulate.

Diplomatically, for both Russia and Ukraine, some dangerous loose ends needed to be addressed. Of primary concern to the international community were bases with heavy munitions and weapons of mass destruction in bases throughout the former USSR and especially Ukraine. To the international community this displacement of nuclear weapons was of the highest level of concern. At the point of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Ukraine had five thousand nuclear weapons, making it for a brief time the country with the third most nuclear missiles in the world. The Russian Federation, United States, and United Kingdom worked diplomatically to secure these weapons and drew up the Budapest

Memorandums in order to assure the security of and non-aggression against Ukraine. The two most binding security pacts were the second and third memoranda, in which all participants guaranteed the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Ukrainian state so long as the nuclear weapons stored there would be removed in their entirety and relinquished to the Russian Federation.⁵⁴ The Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America reaffirmed their obligation to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine, and that none of their nuclear weapons would ever be used against Ukraine except in self-defense or otherwise in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Second, the parties reaffirmed their commitment to Ukraine to refrain from economic coercion against Ukraine that would tend to undermine its sovereignty and thus to secure advantages of any kind. Russia attempted to declare Crimea's transfer null and void in 1992, but their own internal strife was a much higher priority than retaining any former territories lost before or during the Soviet Union's breakup.⁵⁵ Negotiations made the Crimean Peninsula an autonomous territory of Ukraine, and the strategic peninsula's fate was safe for now.

The Budapest Memorandums were arguably the most important elements of the code of conduct between the United States, the Russian Federation, and the United Kingdom that assured the security of Ukraine. No one wanted to risk the possibility of Ukraine's nuclear weapons falling into the hands of rogue elements, so the agreement created a collective sigh of relief for all parties involved. There was also the business of what to do about the Black

⁵⁴ Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014) p.196.

⁵⁵ Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 120.

Sea Fleet on the Crimean peninsula, which was not on Russian territory. An arrangement was made in 1997 called the Partition Treaty on the Status and Conditions of the Black Sea Fleet. Negotiations established a joint base for the Russian and Ukrainian naval forces at Sevastopol. The Russian Federation was authorized to utilize the facilities with a rent of \$98 million a year. A status of forces agreement was also put into place authorizing a maximum of 25,000 Russian soldiers at one time. The lease would terminate in 2017, and Yushchenko told the Russians that the lease would not be renewed. In a drastic change of course once elected in 2010, one of the first things Yanukovich did was pass legislation in 2010 known as the Kharkiv Accords extending the lease until 2042, which was so volatile there were riots in parliament during its passing. In return, Ukraine would receive gas discounts of \$100 per 100 cubic meters, which was significant because Ukraine receives 80 percent of its energy from Russia.⁵⁶ Crimea would remain a touchy subject. To the Ukrainian people in the Western and central areas of the country it was becoming more and more apparent that Yanukovich was nothing more than a Kremlin stooge.

Wider Impacts of the Soviet Collapse

Even beyond the Ukraine problem, Russian Federation leaders remained devastated by the collapse of the Soviet Union. To many Russian nationalists, the dissolution of the Soviet Union felt as if they had lost appendages. Warsaw Pact nations quickly applied for NATO membership and integration with the European Union, and the most painful for the Russian nationalists was the Western integration of the Baltic countries of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia into NATO. As important as the former Soviet states were geopolitically, the Russian Federation itself was the priority for recovery. Everything that generations of

⁵⁶ Andrew Jenkins, *Crisis In Crimea: A Historical Lead Up To The Conflict Between Russia And Ukraine* (Self-published via CreateSpace, 2014), p.46-47.

Russians had been told about how to live and how their government worked was turned upside down. The ruble collapsed, and pensions disappeared overnight. Stability was much more of a priority than national prestige and any perceived humiliation that might have been suffered. The first priority was to establish a government that could effectively project power and would make sure that the Russian Federation would not decay any further. That first test would come with when the volatile Caucasus territory of Chechnya declared independence from Russia on September 6, 1991.

The massive military structure of the Soviet Union was decimated in number and quality of troops. The military of the Russian Federation had much better equipment than the Chechen separatists but was a demoralized and a poorly trained force. Many of the soldiers were conscripts and were afraid of being deployed to fight such a formidable foe. The Chechen militants themselves were very well trained in guerrilla tactics and knowledge of the mountainous terrain, and many Jihadis who had previously fought in Afghanistan made the trek to Chechnya to fight the Russians yet again. Both the Russians and the Chechens have also been culturally predisposed to dispense with Geneva Conventions niceties. Cluster munitions were widely used and pounded the Chechen capital of Grozny to rubble, and approximately 100,000 Chechens were killed by the relentless bombing campaign, which was the most deadly in Europe since World War II.⁵⁷

There were multiple instances of war crimes, with the obvious use of cluster munitions and the fact that Russians regularly refused humanitarian corridors for those wishing to leave the zones of conflict. Chechen fighters often took hostages and tortured

⁵⁷ Marcel Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars: The Rise of Russia's New Imperialism*, (London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), p. 164.

their own kin who they thought were collaborators. The Chechens also used child soldiers in battle. Both sides are reported to have used human shields in tactical engagements. Perhaps the most notorious crime of all was the mass murder of 103 civilians in the Chechen town of Samashki by Russian forces, with many more tortured or beaten. The war was a grizzly affair that lasted from December 1994 to September of 1996, and the brutality was widely reported by the Russian media. The official number of Russian soldiers killed in the fighting is 5,362.⁵⁸ The Committee of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia estimates it much higher with a figure of approximately 14,000.⁵⁹ Given how notorious the Russian military is about misreporting their war dead and wounded, the latter number is probably more accurate. International observers had known of war crimes, but European nations were silent for fear of angering the Russians. Nonetheless, the Kasav-Yurt Accord, signed on August 31, 1996, was a humiliation for the Russian army in what is widely considered to be a defeat in a war fought at best to a stalemate. The bad blood between the two sides remained because of the scale of atrocities on both sides. President Boris Yeltsin was in open panic following the Chechen war for his re-election hopes. At first he intended to delay elections, and asked Washington to "hold your nose and support us."⁶⁰ The war was wildly unpopular in Russia and a primary factor in Yeltsin's plummeting approval rating. Without electoral fraud on a massive scale Yeltsin would have never been elected to a second term. Washington believed

⁵⁸ "The First Chechnya War, 1995-1996" *Global Security*, Accessed October 24, 2015. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/chechnya1.htm>.

⁵⁹ Betty A. Reardon, Asha Hans, *The Gender Imperative: Human Security vs State Security* (London, UK: Routledge Publishing, 2010), p. 264.

⁶⁰ David Remnick, "Watching the Eclipse", *The New Yorker*, last updated August 11, 2014. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/08/11/watching-eclipse>.

a victory for Zvyganov's Communist Party would have been morally worse than a rigged ballot, so they reluctantly agreed to recognize the elections.⁶¹

The intelligence community in Russia also suffered a crisis in identity following the collapse. The KGB felt angst, betrayal, and a lack of purpose following the collapse. The biggest blow to their pride was the feeling that they had failed their mission, but the impetus remained to stand up and reorganize their new intelligence community. All the geopolitical gains they felt they had fought so hard for had evaporated so rapidly. The KGB split into three separate entities: the FSB (Federalnaya sluzhba bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii), in charge of internal affairs; the SVR (Sluzhba vneshney Razvedki), in charge of overseas assignments; and the GRU (Glavnoye Razvedyvatelnoye), which would be the military intelligence unit operating primarily in locations in immediate proximity to the Russian Federation.⁶² With the economic collapse, many former KGB operatives sold classified materials to the highest bidder not just for personal gain but in some cases simply to feed their families. However, not all KGB operatives were so unfortunate. The KGB was entrusted with the few privatized entities that existed in the Soviet Union and thus whatever capital was put into these highly secret accounts. These state-run businesses of the Soviet Union were primarily in fossil fuels, which were a critical node for state funding. The Central Bank of the Soviet Union gave the KGB these powers because they felt they were the only trustworthy entity for these foreign accounts. KGB agents were some of the few in the communist regime who had the knowhow to transfer these lucrative state businesses into their private accounts, which were fed into overseas bank accounts. It is no coincidence that

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Michael Lowenthal, *Intelligence: From Secrets To Policy, 4th Edition*, (Washington, D.C: CQ Press, 2007) p.325-326.

many of these former KGB members are now part of the Russian Federation's oligarchic community. Many of these former KGB officers affectionately refer to one another as Chekists, in reference to the Cheka (the forerunner of the KGB), which was so feared during the early days of the Soviet Union. Lowenthal illustrates how strong this bond is by saying "there is no such thing as a former Chekist."⁶³ They have watched out for each other from the collapse of the Soviet Union to now, and it appears that they will continue to depend heavily upon one another.

The Wild 90s

In the "wild 90s", it was difficult to tell where the Russian mob ended and where local government began, as they developed a mutual dependency. Organized crime elements, like the Tambov and Malyshev families, tended to prefer operating in the shadows. The Chekists did not care because they knew they were untouchable. They quickly rose to power in Russia's most influential cities. It was not possible to operate a business in either Moscow or St. Petersburg without giving "favors" to these intelligence operatives-turned local government politicians with their mafia connections. Many of these businesses were Chekist financial havens, and some of the most notorious are Gazprom, Bank Rossiya, Norilsk Nickel, and Baltik Eskort, all of which are still in operation today. Some of these people, who have skimmed profits from infrastructure and construction ventures; vanity projects; and public-to-private government transitions are still influential and in power. Despite taking part in their country's economic and administrative collapse, these oligarchs and "siloviki" (military and intelligence elite from the former KGB) disdain the Wild 90's yet have no remorse for stealing state funds on a grand scale from their own countrymen,

⁶³ Michael Lowenthal, *Intelligence: From Secrets To Policy*, 4th Edition, (Washington, D.C: CQ Press, 2007) p. 327.

keeping the economy in shackles, and preventing optimal economic growth in part by failing to rein in corruption. Yeltsin enlisted American help to track down the money but was largely unsuccessful.⁶⁴

It was also a period when Western intelligence agencies could pick apart the Russian intelligence community carcass and learn KGB methods that it had tried to keep secret for decades. The British were particularly active in this game. Russians were especially bitter about the Baltic nations, which were all too willing to work against Russian interests. Informants were lining up to offer their services so they could be paid and provide for their families, and the remnants of the KGB could not take any effective countermeasures. What Western powers likely cultivated from the former KGB is classified but no doubt has been instrumental for intelligence analysts who want better to understand the way things worked in the Soviet Union, and what the current Russian Federation's intelligence playbook will look like in the future.

When Boris Yeltsin as the first post-Soviet president of the new Russian Federation came to power, the initial struggle of the Russian Federation focused on self-preservation. The fundamental change from a communist to a capitalist system went through inevitable growing pains. Immediate concerns included dealing with volatile and unpredictable swings in the ruble and how to sustain the people. Organized criminal elements infiltrated practically all basic elements of everyday survival, and black markets with racketeer enforcers were commonplace. Everyone from former politicians to regular citizens was caught up in the uptick in violence that was known as the "wild nineties". Those in positions

⁶⁴ Karen Dawisha, "The Putin Principle: How It Came to Rule Russia". *World Affairs Journal*. Last updated May 31, 2015. <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/putin-principle-how-it-came-rule-russia>.

of advantage, such as KGB officers, became millionaires overnight, aided by corrupt political offices.

Yeltsin and his immediate allies capitalized on this. He was so unpopular in Russia that if not for corruption and electoral fraud, he would have never stayed in power for two terms. By most accounts, Russia was in a tailspin, and Yeltsin's credibility was so poor that it became imperative for him to prepare for a replacement as soon as summer of 1999. For Yeltsin, it was just as important to find a strong figurehead that would return Russia to greatness as it would be to find someone trustworthy enough to give Yeltsin his word that he, his family, and his allies would not be brought up on corruption charges once handing over power. Yeltsin stated "I have decided to name the person, in my opinion, who is able to consolidate society and, drawing support from the broadest political forces, to ensure continuation of reforms for Russia. He will be able to unite himself with those who are to renew Great Russia into the twenty first century. He is the secretary of the Security Council and Director of the FSB of Russia; Vladimir Putin."⁶⁵

Chechnya II: Crowning Putin

The preparation for a transition of power took place six months prior to the turn of the millennium. Yeltsin had already picked his man; a former KGB Lieutenant Colonel with a pedestrian career. He rose quietly through the ranks starting in St. Petersburg and then as director of the FSB in Moscow. Yeltsin saw in Putin a professionalism, discipline, and toughness required to carry Russia forward. Few outsiders knew much about Putin, but he seemed to be a breath of fresh air from Yeltsin's lack of strength. Putin believed that a

⁶⁵ "Putin: Yeltsin's Madness or Silent Coup?" *STRATFOR Global Security*, last updated August 23, 1999. <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/putin-yeltsins-madness-or-silent-coup>.

strong hand was (and is) the best thing to save Russians from any return to the Wild 90's instability or any further international humiliation. The first immediate obstacle to this smooth transfer of power was a significant one; the re-emergence of Chechnya as a hot spot in 1999 after a series of purported terrorist attacks that caught Russia completely off-guard.

The war started when Chechen turmoil spilled over into neighboring Dagestan, and several Russian servicemen were killed in the exchange. This was a known hotspot for hostilities, and these events were only slightly above the ordinary level of violence. Soon after the Dagestan engagement, without any warning, Russia experienced a sequence of apartment bombings that caught the nation completely off-guard. Hundreds of Russians lost their lives in the cities of Moscow, Buynaksk, and Volgodonsk. Apparently out of sheer luck, suspicious activity was reported outside of an apartment in the town of Ryazan a few weeks later and reported to local authorities immediately. This was perceived to be an attack not just on Yeltsin, but on Putin as well. It also brought into question the strength of Yeltsin and Putin and whether they were willing to lay siege to Chechnya again. Putin vowed to "Follow terrorists everywhere. We will corner the bandits in the toilet and wipe them out."⁶⁶ The bluntness of the terminology was appreciated by pundits and the public alike but they were anxious to see actions rather than words. Vladimir Putin was experiencing his first critical test in the national spotlight, and he knew he had to succeed.

The second Chechen War started Sept 22, 1999, and Russia designated it a terrorist operation (which Ukraine would snidely use to describe Russian separatist activity over a decade later). With the Second Chechen War, which ended in a clear Russian victory

⁶⁶ Mike Yordy, "Troubleshooting Chechnya", *U.S. Represented*. Last updated March 13, 2015. <http://www.usrepresented.com/2015/03/13/troubleshooting-chechnya-chapter-ii/>.

because of clever wheeling and dealing with Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov for much greater autonomy and a massive financial windfall, Putin passed an important test with the Russian people. Putin was not the bumbling, shaky, elder, drunk weakling that Yeltsin was. Looking back at the engagement, Putin argued that “My evaluation of the situation in August when the bandits attacked Dagestan was that if we did not stop it immediately, Russia as a state in its current form was finished. We were threatened by the Yugoslavization of Russia.”⁶⁷ This may seem dramatic, but Russian politicians were deathly afraid of the disintegration of their country, and they believed only strong leadership could prevent it from happening. Putin enjoyed a high popularity rating. Buoyed by the sharp rise in energy prices, he was able to do what Yeltsin had not. He won enormous popular support by paying salaries and pensions, eliminating budget deficits, and creating a growing urban middle class. It was hardly a secret that Putin had created his own oligarchy with his old Leningrad pals and colleagues from the security forces now running, and robbing, the state’s vast energy enterprises. It did not matter. Capitalism was treating Russia very well, and Moscow became the most expensive city in the world. The catalyst for the rapid transformation and quick wealth accumulation was the result of investment in fossil fuels that energy-hungry Europe needed. Hydrocarbons accounted for two-thirds of Russian exports⁶⁸. With oil, natural gas, and petroleum at sky-high prices, the Kremlin reaped the benefits. With the Arctic Ocean and East Siberian oilfields having the potential capacity of fossil fuel reserves greater than the Persian Gulf, it appeared to be smooth sailing and a path to rebuild Russia to its former glory. The Kremlin was able to pay off its debt to creditors and establish a

⁶⁷ Ben Judah, *Fragile Empire: How Russia Fell In and Out of Love with Vladimir Putin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), p.50.

⁶⁸ Edward Lucas, *The New Cold War: Putin's Russia and the Threat to the West* (London, UK: St. Martin's Press, 2014), p. 144.

strategic reserve of approximately \$450 billion for emergencies. Russians were able to travel abroad, get foreign cars and flat-screen televisions, and sign off on home mortgages. For the most part, Russians were (and still are) aware of and upset by the corruption, but they have always felt that the stability provided is worth it, and that it is not worth upsetting that order for fear of returning to the Wild 90's.

Despite heavy losses in the Second Chechen War, Putin's reputation as a no-nonsense leader who would do whatever was necessary to protect his country grew in stature. Putin made it seem that the Kremlin had the upper hand against the Chechen militants while reminding Russians constantly to be on their guard for terrorists within Russia. Militarily, Russia became relatively more prepared, and Putin enlisted the aid of contract soldiers who were better paid, more motivated, and better experienced. The most notorious of these security outfits, Alpha Firm, was composed of former Spetsnaz operators, and the Kremlin could have denied war atrocities because Putin believed Alpha Firm did not fall under the tenets of international law.

The Russian people paid a heavy price for this continued engagement with Chechnya. According to Ben Judah, "Between 2001 and 2007, Russia lost 1,170 lives to terrorist attacks, making it the third most terrorist-prone country in the world after Afghanistan and Iraq."⁶⁹ There were two events in particular that were damaging to the Russian people and government during this bloody campaign. One was at Dubrovka Theatre in Moscow on October 20, 2002, where approximately one thousand people were taken hostage by fifty Chechen militants in a three-day standoff. Russian FSB and Spetsnaz

⁶⁹ Ben Judah, *Fragile Empire: How Russia Fell In and Out of Love with Vladimir Putin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), p.83.

operatives raided the theatre after pumping it full of sleeping gas, and 140 people were killed in the rescue attempt. The second was the most nightmarish scenario that any country could face, and it took place in the village of Beslan at a school in 2004. Chechen, Dagestani, and other Caucasus Islamic militants took teachers and students hostage with heavy assault weapons and wore suicide vests as an indication that there would be no way out for anyone. They also rigged the gymnasium, where a majority of the hostages were being held, with explosives. Hundreds of children were killed, and the numbers were much higher than the indicated 384 casualties given by state media (some believe more than 500 and perhaps 700). The raid was an unmitigated disaster in planning and execution by Spetsnaz, FSB operatives, and local law enforcement. It was an impossible scenario to begin with, but the fact that flamethrowers were used to kill the hostage takers shows the incomprehensible ineptitude that increased the casualty count. While the death toll was significant from a military and civilian standpoint, it paled in comparison to that of the Chechens, 200,000 of whom were killed in both wars—28 percent of the original Chechen population.⁷⁰ Van Herpen argues that the Russian wars were acts of genocide, and with the figures now available it is difficult to argue against his conclusion.

However, things were not what they seemed in the apartment bombings throughout Russia that precipitated the war. Due to sheer luck and astute awareness of local law enforcement observing suspicious activity outside an apartment early in the morning in Ryazan, a third attack was prevented. They could never have guessed the identities of those they had just apprehended: an FSB team in Ryazan planting bombs in apartments, and as

⁷⁰ Marcel Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars: The Rise of Russia's New Imperialism*, (London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), p. 199.

inconceivable as it sounds, there is overwhelming evidence to support it. The FSB team immediately produced their credentials in an attempt to get out of trouble, but they were still detained. First, on the FSB team's vehicle, a license plate from Moscow was covered by a license plate from the Ryazan oblast. The explosive material discovered at Ryazan was hexogen, and forensics traced the material to a military base outside of Perm. The same explosive material that detonated at the previous apartment bombing sites was located here, and was hidden in bags labelled "sugar". Only the Russian military had access to hexogen⁷¹. There was also a detonator timed to go off at 5:30 a.m., just like the other apartment bombings, which were detonated in the early morning for maximum casualties.⁷² Perhaps the most important question was, if it was just an exercise, why would the exercise use the real materials designed to make a bomb?

The FSB operatives made calls prior to being apprehended and were told to split up on their way back to Moscow. The call originated from the headquarters of the FSB. The story began to unravel, and the Russian government said it was an exercise to test the readiness of local law enforcement. A FSB defector, Major General Oleg Kalvgin, called the guise of an exercise "utter nonsense". Another damning piece of evidence was the Duma speaker announcing the Ryazan explosion three days before it actually happened, not realizing that he read the wrong legislative briefing until after he read it.⁷³ The FSB agents were returned to FSB headquarters in Moscow, and their whereabouts have been unknown since their activities in Ryazan. This overwhelming and compelling evidence goes well beyond the realm of conspiracy theory and moves into factual rational discourse. With so

⁷¹ Karen Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Inc., 2015), p.212.

⁷² Ibid p.212.

⁷³ Ibid p.212.

many revered Kremlinologist authors in agreement, most notably Lucas, Judah, Dawisha, and Van Herpen, there are simply too many researchers and authors with well-established credentials to be putting their reputations on the line. More and more people are stepping forward, asserting that these acts were in fact murders carried out under the highest orders of the FSB, and it is highly plausible that Putin himself authorized them.⁷⁴

Even more sinister are the strong accusations by Van Herpen and Dawisha that organization for the war was a foregone conclusion agreed on between Chechen commander Shamil Basayev and Alexander Volishin, who was Assistant to the Chief of the Russian Presidential Administration. Both men met at a French Riviera villa owned by a Saudi arms dealer. The meeting was facilitated by GRU middleman Anton Surikov, who Basayev could trust because he had worked with him before.⁷⁵ Both sides agreed that it would be a “Potemkin War” (a superficial war where internal relations would be fine between the two parties) and that it would be a “small war, a border conflict, and a big performance with fireworks.”⁷⁶ This leads one to believe these accusations are valid and that war was a predetermined arrangement by the highest ranks of the Kremlin, and even Putin himself. Thousands of Chechens and Russians died for nothing more than political gain and the solidification of Putin’s stature as the lead man in the Kremlin.

Centralization Of Powers: The Gradual Destruction of Russian Civil Liberties

This timeframe in Russia also saw media experience the beginnings of a major and continuing clampdown under Putin. Prior to the Putin presidency, Russia enjoyed a

⁷⁴ Ibid p.212-213.

⁷⁵ Marcel Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars: The Rise of Russia's New Imperialism*, (London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), p. 175.

⁷⁶ Karen Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Inc., 2015), p.200.

remarkably unfettered free press. That all changed with Putin's no-nonsense approach to opposition voices, which he believed would cause trouble. Plenty of politicians argued it to have been a necessary result of the times, particularly when the nation needed support and not opposition voices during a crisis that Putin and other politicians believed had wider implications for the sovereignty of the nation. The media was showing the Chechen war in all of its ferocity from both sides, and the vilifying of Russian military and intelligence personnel was a particularly personal matter for Putin, who quickly twisted the arms of television, radio, and newspaper employees to be more patriotic in their reporting. Slander of Putin also became serious business. Putin's campaign reminded media outlets that, "the press service of the election headquarters will continue to closely watch all facts or lies in respect of the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, and reserves the right to use all available means in its arsenal for an asymmetrical response to provocations."⁷⁷ When channels like ORN and NTV did not bend to Putin's will, they were taken over by the state. The men who owned the networks fled into exile. Some reporters and journalists, like Andrei Babitsky, died in suspicious circumstances. Sergey Yushchenko, a Liberal Russia party member before the Duma became a rubber stamp, investigated allegations of war crimes and government involvement in the apartment bombings, and was gunned down outside his house. Journalist Yelena Tregubova was targeted by a bombing and narrowly escaped the detonation. Yuri Shchekochikhin, the editor-in-chief of *Novaya Gazeta*, was showing symptoms of poisoning and it took two weeks for him to die. His autopsy was made secret by the Russian

⁷⁷ Karen Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Inc., 2015), p.259.

government. These would be the first of many deaths likely perpetrated by the Kremlin. No criminal proceedings were opened in any of these instances.⁷⁸

Vladimir Putin also fundamentally altered the functionality of the Duma and local government within the Russian Federation. The Duma, a legislative body that was considered a free-for-all where real debate and discourse took place, lost its teeth over time and became nothing more than a rubber stamp for Putin's United Russia Party. The Kremlin created United Russia as an appendage, not the other way around. The party had zero bureaucratic control over the Kremlin or Putin's inner circles⁷⁹. People who wished to get on election ballots could only do so through the good graces of Vladimir Putin and a careful equation of money and loyalty. Regions like Tartarstan, which were promised "as much sovereignty as they could swallow" by Yeltsin, saw their power to vote for locally elected officials disintegrate.⁸⁰ It became abundantly clear that "sovereign democracy" was the new order under Putin's Russia. In contrast, "Vladimir Putin made his priority the re-establishment of a strong state. He disempowered disloyal regional governors, crushed the oligarchs who did not heed his insistence that they stay out of local politics, and obliterated the leadership of separatist uprisings in Chechnya. He took complete control of television channels and neutered any opposition political parties."⁸¹

⁷⁸ Julian O'Harollan, "Russia's Poisoning Without A Poison". *BBC News*. Last updated February 7, 2007. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/file_on_4/6324241.stm .

⁷⁹ Ben Judah, *Fragile Empire: How Russia Fell In and Out of Love with Vladimir Putin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), p.96.

⁸⁰ Maxim Edwards, Ildar Gabidullin, "Remembering referendums: Tatarstan and Crimea" *Al Jazeera News*. Last updated April 20, 2014. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/04/remembering-referendums-tatarst-201441791739224343.html>.

⁸¹ David Remnick, "Watching The Eclipse", *The New Yorker*. Last updated August 11, 2014. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/08/11/watching-eclipse>.

Putin Pushes Back in Estonia and Georgia

Toward the middle of last decade, the Kremlin had re-amassed the power required to claim once again that former Soviet states could not have a destiny of their own without Russia. This came to a head in Estonia in 2007. Since the collapse of the iron curtain, the Baltic States became capitalist success stories with vibrant and prosperous economies, and Russians are bitter about their success. The independence of these countries particularly stings Putin. Edward Lucas states that, “Estonia is where Russia’s geopolitical ambitions, economic muscle, and historical amnesia overlap.”⁸² Early in the spring of 2007, Estonia decided to remove a Soviet monument dedicated to the Red Army called the Monument to the Liberators of Tallinn. Riots and looting followed on a night known in Tallinn as the Bronze Night. Russia bussed in hooligans and troublemakers to protest the monument removal, and loudspeaker protests took place outside the Estonian Embassy in Moscow. They portrayed the Estonians as Nazi sympathizers when it was in fact the Red Army that had invaded Estonia in 1940, and the Tsar’s army before that. The Russians continue to view these invasions as liberation by Soviet Forces. On April 27, 2007, the situation escalated with a complex cyber-attack originating from Russian IP addresses.⁸³ The Russian youth movement Nashi claimed responsibility for the attacks in response to the removal of the statue. However, hacking and cybersecurity experts believe that the complexity, scope, and power of the attack was beyond them and could have only come from the Russian Defense Ministry.⁸⁴ The cyber-attack was the chosen method of infrastructure incapacitation because

⁸² Edward Lucas, *The New Cold War: Putin's Russia and the Threat to the West* (London, UK: St. Martin’s Press, 2014), p. 148.

⁸³ Marcel Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars: The Rise of Russia's New Imperialism*, (London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), p. 130.

⁸⁴ *Ibid* p.130.

there are no formal treaties regarding physical or other damage done as a result, and deniability would have forced a firm response from NATO members who were likely still trying to develop a coherent response.

The veering of the Former Soviet Republics, including Ukraine, to the West did not end with the Baltics, and Georgia would be the next country to make a move. After the pro-Western Rose Revolution, Mikheil Saakashvili rose to power in Tbilisi. Saakashvili is an American-educated economist who chose to use Estonia and the Baltics as his model for economic transformation. He was very successful in this endeavor, and is credited with transforming a nation that was considered a corrupt backwater into a booming economy with national identity. He also pushed very vigorously for European Union and NATO membership. A successful state that was showing a Western ideological slant now stood on the Kremlin's doorstep in the Caucasus. The Kremlin saw it as a threat to its geopolitical interests and worked to overthrow Saakashvili's government. The first salvo occurred when four GRU operatives (who were Russian military officers) were arrested with orders to stage political unrest.⁸⁵ Russia recalled its ambassador, doubled oil prices, and imposed economic restrictions on Georgian goods. The Kremlin's calculation was that Georgia was too dependent on Russia's economy to be self-sufficient. Saakashvili outflanked them again, as an economist who knew how to diversify his economy and break into the European market with his goods, and the economy became one of the quickest growing in the world. The Georgians also signed quick agreements that would grant Caspian oil with Georgia as an access point, something not lost on the Russians.

⁸⁵ "Georgia In 'Spy' Row With Russia", *Al Jazeera News*. Last updated September 28, 2006. <http://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2006/09/200849134532540790.html> .

There are various indicators that the subsequent Russian invasion of Georgia was planned from the outset. A telephone call was intercepted on August 7th from a Russian soldier who called home to say his whole unit, the 58th Army, was there and getting ready for a Georgia invasion. South Ossetian women and children were evacuated on a “holiday” in the days prior to the opening of hostilities. There were also Russian journalists who packed hotels in South Ossetia in the nights leading up to the invasion. The EU is officially on record saying Georgia fired the first shot of the conflict but neglected to provide the bigger story that Russian regular military forces and Russian heavy equipment were already across the border violating Georgian territorial integrity. Eighty thousand Russian soldiers were in Rostov participating in drills the week before as well, which is in immediate proximity to the Georgian border.⁸⁶ South Ossetians began popping shots off across the border, and Georgian forces retaliated. Georgian National Security Council Chairman Alexander Lomaia said that “Russian provocation and troop movements to re-enforce their position in South Ossetia had placed them in what was called a zugzwang; the chess move where you are compelled to move.”⁸⁷ Saakashvili attempted to contact Medvedev immediately after learning Russian troops were in South Ossetia. The war lasted from August 7 to August 12. Despite some mobility errors and breaches of OPSEC the mission was successful for Russia and a resounding defeat for Georgia. The FSB had a shadow government already in place for South Ossetia to take over following Russia’s victory. “Russia’s version of events was much different, and according to their narrative, Georgian troops moved into South Ossetia and killed two thousand civilians. Russian peacekeepers were also killed. To stop the possibility

⁸⁶ “2008 Georgia Russia Conflict Fast Facts” *CNN*. Last Updated April 12, 2015. <http://www.cnn.com/2014/03/13/world/europe/2008-georgia-russia-conflict/>.

⁸⁷ Ben Judah, *Fragile Empire: How Russia Fell In and Out of Love with Vladimir Putin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), p.163.

of genocide, Russian peacekeepers moved in for a humanitarian intervention.”⁸⁸ Russia also used the same cyber-attack methods against Georgia that they used against Estonia and completely incapacitated their communications network to the point that the Georgian military needed to use cellular phones for direction. These phone calls were easily collected by the GRU. Ukraine was also accused of sending weapons to Georgia during the brief war despite no evidence being put forth to support the claim. Ukraine showed further disapproval by demanding that Russia declare all naval movements and troop numbers when at Sevastopol. Russia again scoffed at this request. The Kremlin also calculated correctly that outside action from NATO, the EU, or United States would be not more than a condemnation of Russian action. Lucas says that, “Russia knew with a high degree of certainty that America would not go to war to defend a friendly country that was under attack. It also knew that the European Union was in no state to act as a decisive, well informed mediator.”⁸⁹

Abkhazia and South Ossetia are now breakaway territories that are gradually moving toward Russian influence and likely outright annexation. Russia has been providing Russian passports for citizens of the breakaway regions, further validating the narrative of protecting Russians abroad. The Kremlin has not shown much commitment in improvement of infrastructure as of yet. Job markets are non-existent in the enclaves and unemployment is sky high. Yet the people look fondly upon the Russians as liberators; a clear indication that shared ethnic and national experiences often trump questions of economic prosperity. They are nonetheless completely dependent on Russia economically. Both South Ossetia and

⁸⁸ Marcel Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars: The Rise of Russia's New Imperialism*, (London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), p. 205.

⁸⁹ Edward Lucas, *Deception: The Untold Story of East-West Espionage Today* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), p. 188.

Abkhazia have a burgeoning black market and are magnets for corruption. Abkhazia is sought after by Russian oligarchs as a place to buy Russian beachfront property should annexation happen, and plenty of real estate moguls are jumping the gun assessing that it will happen in the near future. The breakaway regions are all but unrecognized by the international community. The only three nations other than Russia that recognize their sovereignty are Venezuela, Nicaragua, and the tiny island nation of Nauru. Finally, for all of the accusations by Russia of ethnic cleansing by the Georgian government, it was the South Ossetians who were killing ethnic Georgians. Many Russian critics accuse the Kremlin of “creeping annexation”, with the prospect of gradually bringing these territories into the greater Russian territory.

Creeping toward Authoritarianism: Putin’s Third Term

The democratic process in Putin’s Russia has become a mockery. Voting observers are strong-armed away from polling stations, and busses full of people drive from one ballot box to the next voting for Putin. Those who did not vote for Putin were threatened with losing jobs, eviction, and physical force. United Russia-backed poll station observers had been caught burning boxes of votes in areas that would likely vote against Putin. It is also highly ironic that the Caucasus region would represent the highest turnout for United Russia, even surpassing the voters in Moscow. It is preposterous that over ninety percent of votes in Chechnya and Dagestan would go to Vladimir Putin after the mass-killings of Chechens during the last 25 years. Karen Dawisha participated as a ballot observer herself in the Caucasus region. She states that her box was only half full, and it miraculously became full

thirty minutes later.⁹⁰ Initially, voters were apathetic to a third Putin presidential term, but they quietly assembled in protest prior to his third term of office. Apathy turned to anger, and in December 2011, 100,000 protestors of all political, religious, and ethnic origins took to the streets in Moscow alone with their various banners all protesting the obviously rigged election. Protests also took place across the nation in Murmansk, Novosibirsk, the Caucasus, and other cities and towns across the Russian Federation due to the obviously skewed election results. State-sponsored counter-protests were staged by undocumented migrants, who appeared less-than-enthusiastic to be there, but given a higher wage than they earned in their usual professions. It shows the extent to which the Kremlin goes to underscore and control their narrative.⁹¹

Since Putin's third term in office, following massive protests throughout Moscow chanting "Russia without Putin," Putin has taken a much more anti-Western streak than ever before. He sincerely saw the protests as a continued Western version of weaponized "color revolutions," and a personal insult to him. Putin, like many post-imperial Russian leaders before him in Soviet times, is constantly on guard for the "fifth column," which is supposedly an "enemy within" comprised of Russian dissenters. Even with all that happened in Chechnya, Estonia, and Georgia, Putin became more boisterous and more defensive about Russia's sovereignty and influence over its near abroad, demanding that Russian moves here be uncontested. This was especially blunt when Putin hosted president Obama following Dmitriy Medvedev's "election" to office. In the exchange, United States Ambassador to

⁹⁰ Karen Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Inc., 2015), p.249.

⁹¹ Julia Ioffe, "Protest and Pretend In Moscow" *The New Yorker*. Last updated February 04, 2012. <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/protest-and-pretend-in-moscow>.

Russia, Michael McFaul, recalls a seething Putin “demanding that the United States cede to him the former Soviet Socialist Republics, Ukraine above all, as Russian sphere of influence.”⁹² Post-2012, Putin lashed out at the West for betraying promises and for showing double standards in diplomacy with Iraq, concluding that Russia would not behave as a vassal of America.

The harassment has continued at home and abroad as well. Russia continues to conduct massive war games of an invasion of the Baltic States, and even a mock nuclear strike on Warsaw. Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia are under the constant bombardment of informational warfare from Moscow, and Lithuanian president Grybavskaitė sums up the Russian campaign well when he states “they are influencing our media, some politicians, they are buying people in our media, placing articles, open criminality, all done together.”⁹³ Referendums are funded to make Russian an official language, and Russian television stations portray the Baltic states as weak and failing while engaging in any other means of propaganda that would further Russia’s strategic objectives. They bend media in ways that would assure prison and a beating in Russia. An Estonian intelligence agent was also kidnapped by Russian agents and charged with spying. The FSB said it found “A Taurus handgun with ammunition, 5,000 Euros in cash, special equipment for concealed audio recording and documents that bear evidence of an intelligence mission were seized from the intruder.”⁹⁴ Russian troops continue to do parachute drops within a few hundred meters of

⁹² David Remnick, “Watching the Eclipse”, *The New Yorker*, last updated August 11, 2014. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/08/11/watching-eclipse>.

⁹³ Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014) p.179.

⁹⁴ Andrew Higgins, “Tensions Surge in Estonia Amid a Russian Replay of Cold War Tactics”, *The New York Times*. Last updated October 05, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/06/world/europe/estonia-russia-cold-war-eston-kohver-border.html?_r=0.

the Baltic border and making other provocations. The Baltic nations have been the most vocal proponents of a NATO presence in Eastern Europe for obvious reasons related to Russian belligerence. Along with Poland, the Baltic nations are the only ones who spend the NATO recommended two percent of GDP on defense spending when virtually all other nations besides the United States have declined below this level.⁹⁵ The Baltic States do not want their Russian “liberators” back.

The early Putin administration’s diplomatic efforts with the West were very even-keeled in terms of positive and negative response, and this depended on the narrative that the Kremlin wished to dictate. For example, the September 11th terrorist attacks created the perfect opportunity to join the cause of the United States in rooting out terrorism. Putin said he would be a staunch ally of the United States to root out terrorism, not hesitating to point to the fact that Russia knew terrorism all too well because of Chechen Islamists. It also gave him the opportunity to justify the clamp down on liberties so the security and sovereignty of the state could be defended at all costs. Even when ISAF/NATO allies requested using bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, Putin took the “long view” and believed it would be beneficial to grant access to these airfields, with the hopeful view that some leniency would be given on a later date (and not taking into account that Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are sovereign nations!). Putin hoped in particular that the United States and its Western allies would turn a blind eye to Russia’s actions in Chechnya. When it became obvious these favors were not beneficial to the Kremlin’s interest, Putin pressed Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to end the leases of the bases as soon as possible. Uzbekistan did not need much

⁹⁵ Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014) p.195.

convincing following the West's response to the massacre at Andijan (a political protest on May 13, 2005 in the volatile Fergana valley where Uzbek military and government forces fired on and killed up to 1,500 protestors⁹⁶), but Kyrgyzstan would remain a vital logistics and mobility hub until the end of "surge ops" of Operation Enduring Freedom, when ISAF/NATO members drastically drew down troop presence at the end of 2014.

Sochi: All Eyes On Russia

It is important also to take note that Russia's international prestige is extremely important to Putin. Putin and the rest of the Kremlin want to portray the image that Russia has returned as a great power, and they accomplished that by hosting the Winter Olympics in 2014 and making a successful bid to host the World Cup, which is the most popular sporting event in the world, in 2018. The symbolism attached to the Winter Olympics and Putin's personal reputation were so important that all the stops were pulled out to ensure a safe event. Putin promised a safe and successful Winter Olympic games in a region of questionable strategic security in the resort town of Sochi, which is also in immediate proximity to hot spots like Chechnya and Abkhazia. The Olympics provided an ideal time for Islamic militants to humiliate Russia. Dagestani militants proudly boasted that "Black Widows" (female suicide bombers) had penetrated the towns where the festivities would be held, and politicians at home and abroad feared for the worst.⁹⁷ The terrorist threat was very real, as two Black Widows had already detonated explosives in Volgograd in the buildup to the Olympics, killing 34 people. In a video directed at Putin and the Kremlin, Islamic

⁹⁶ Sarah Kendzior, "Uzbekistan's Forgotten Massacre", *The New York Times*. Last Updated May 12, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/13/opinion/uzbekistans-forgotten-massacre.html>.

⁹⁷ Corey Flintoff, "Russians Fear A Sochi Legacy Of 'Black Widows,' Not Gold Medals", *National Public Radio*. Last updated January 24, 2014. <http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2014/01/24/265433423/russians-fear-a-sochi-legacy-of-black-widows-not-gold-medals>.

militants promised, “If you hold these Olympics, we will give you a present for the innocent Muslim blood being spilled all around the world: in Afghanistan, in Somalia, in Syria. For the tourists who come, there will be a present too.”⁹⁸ The stakes could not be any higher, and governments sent travel advisories saying that the Olympics presented a threat to the safety of ticket holders. Looking from an adversarial point of view, the opportunity was too good to pass up.

Putin made a personal promise that the games would be safe and successful, and he put the entire might of his intelligence and military apparatus in place to make sure everything went smoothly. A “steel ring” was established around Sochi, and the FSB was entrusted with data collection of the principalities of Sochi, Adler, Krasnaya Polyana, and Rosa Khutor. The FSB had unfettered access to phones, computers, and any other “cloud” data that could be collected on in the area to ensure security. Athletes and tourists who purchased tickets needed to produce biometric data that could be scanned by security personnel at various checkpoints. In spite of a tense environment, the Olympics went off without any attacks. Putin and the Kremlin collectively sighed with relief after this success, but their eyes were turning toward the political spiral in Ukraine. This became the new priority, and Russia switched gears to respond to a situation that was growing out of their control.

With all of the turmoil occurring in Russia during the Wild 90’s, concerns with maintaining a strong hold over their near-abroad spheres of influence was a luxury that Russia could not afford. However, maintaining some level of power over the former Soviet

⁹⁸ Lynn Berry, “Islamic Militant Group Says There Will Be A 'Present' For Tourists At The Sochi Olympics”, *Business insider Magazine*. Last updated January 19, 2014. <http://www.businessinsider.com/islamic-militant-group-sochi-threats-2014-1>.

states would become a priority as soon as the Kremlin could gain its feet under following the resolution of its own internal problems. No former appendage was more important than Ukraine, which had always been viewed by Russians as their little brother who could not have a fate or path deviating from their own. That fraternal brotherhood was not lost with the transition from Yeltsin to Putin. In fact, it only grew. Putin said, “We have common traditions, common mentality, common history, and common culture. We are one people.”⁹⁹ Putin found the Orange Revolution completely repulsive and did everything he could to ensure Yanukovich’s success. For the most part, Yanukovich behaved exactly as Putin hoped he would. He signed lucrative gas deals with the Kremlin and ensured the strategic ports of Crimea would belong to Russia well into the future. However, Putin could not be certain that Yanukovich would say no to the signing of an agreement making Ukraine a candidate for entry into the European Union. The economic implications would have been especially significant if Ukraine decided to participate in the European Union, and Vladimir Putin knew this.

Putin attempted a carrot-and-stick approach to remind Ukraine that Russia was still the big brother in the relationship. The first attempt of positive re-enforcement was relaxing customs regulations against Ukraine in August. He also offered discounted energy costs. That would not be enough, and the ultimatum with the EU was set in motion. On November 28, 2013, the time had come to sign the European Union association agreement in Vilnius, Lithuania. Knowing that economic reforms required by the EU would effectively eliminate his kickback corruption scheme, Yanukovich declined the offer, and instead chose to take a

⁹⁹ Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2015), p. 431.

last-minute offer of discounted gas and a \$15 billion loan from Putin instead. It was a decision that would alter the course of Ukrainian history.

CHAPTER II: ELEMENTS OF CONTROLLED INSTABILITY

KEY PLAYERS AND ORGANIZATIONS

We cannot discuss the Kremlin's grand strategy without extensively covering the man that has been the orchestrator and implementer of every major decision behind the Kremlin's walls over the past fifteen years: President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin. Putin was named by Yeltsin personally to be his successor in 1999 and formally took power at the turn of the millennium. Yeltsin saw a man who would be able to return Russia's status in the world and secure stability and purpose for the Russian Federation. Putin's rise to power is the result of being at the right place at the right time and taking advantage of opportunities of upward mobility when situations presented themselves. He was not expected to become president: it happened spontaneously. Nor is he a man who cares much for politics, as he hates confrontation with any person or any organization that questions his vision for Russia. He is acutely sensitive to outside criticism and finds it insulting to his character. Putin became the embodiment of a revitalized Russia and returned the stability that Russians craved. He is everything that Yeltsin was not: young, athletic, adventurous, energetic, and most importantly, a man who stands up for the convictions and beliefs of the Russian people as a majority of them view these. According to one influential figure that will be discussed in greater detail in this chapter, "He is everything we could ever dream of: a self-disciplined, sober, young, serious leader who takes care of his country."¹⁰⁰

Vladimir Putin In Depth

Much like Stalin, Putin is both a power player and a figurehead idolized and mythologized by the media. He goes on archaeological excavations in the Black Sea,

¹⁰⁰ Alexander Dugin, *Putin vs Putin: Vladimir Putin Viewed from the Right* (London, UK: Arktos Media Limited, 2014), p.96.

underwater submersibles in Lake Baikal, has a seventh-degree black belt in judo, and rides shirtless on a horse in the Caucasus. He encourages strength of the family and the Russian Orthodox Church, and rarely drinks. He has products from vodka to baked beans bearing his name. He is a Russian action hero, and most Russians think he shares their values and aspirations. However, as Anna Arutunyan states, “A leader is only as corrupt as the system that produces him.”¹⁰¹ Coming from Yeltsin’s wild 90’s presidency and the matrimony of government and organized crime, it may be surprising to see Putin as chief at the Kremlin, but it should come as no surprise to see someone of his profile filling that position. Nor should it be surprising when he decided to cling to power for the fifteen years following, and that he is likely to try to do so for the next decade as well. Putin wants a legacy that reads with the names of strong rulers of Russia, whether Tsars or Communists, and as a man who knows his country’s history well. Putin has claimed, “Give me 20 years and you will not recognize Russia.”¹⁰² That quote, first made famous by Tsar Nicholas II, is not lost on many in the international community or his own domestic opponents.

Putin’s leadership model follows that of former KGB strongman and brief Soviet Union Chairman Yuri Andropov, who convinced the rest of the Communist Party that the Soviet Union needed to get involved in Afghanistan (using KGB intelligence and operatives initially to orchestrate Russian interests there). Edward Lucas says, “Like Andropov, Mr. Putin believes that ruthless discipline is the key to economic recovery. Like him, he places great value on the use of secret police. Both collect information and to intimidate opponents and backstabbers. Like him, he believes the west is both weak and hypocritical and can

¹⁰¹ Anna Arutunyan, *The Putin Mystique*, (Petaluma, CA: Olive Branch Publishing, 2014), p.285.

¹⁰² Fiona Hill, *Mr. Putin: Operative of the Kremlin*, (Washington D.C: Brookings Institute Press, 2015) p.76.

easily be faced down with a mixture of threats and selective arm twisting.”¹⁰³ Finally, like Andropov, Putin has no problems using his military or intelligence organizations to strengthen Russia’s interests abroad. Putin is a KGB man to the core, and that is one of the biggest reasons that intelligence experts and policy makers should not take him lightly. He joined the KGB in 1975 and was placed in Dresden where he rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. In Dresden, Putin’s career as a privileged operative under a feared superpower was crushed by what he viewed as poor leadership by Soviet policy-makers as they oversaw the collapse of the USSR. He is especially bitter that he was helpless during the protests that brought down the iron curtain, hoping for orders to act that never came. It was at that time that Putin vowed he would never be that indecisive. It hurt him dearly to see all that he worked for and loved destroyed by revolutionaries, and he grew to hate revolutionary activity with an equally rabid passion.¹⁰⁴ One of the more famous quotes during his rule is calling the collapse of the Soviet Union “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century,” which raised plenty of eyebrows.¹⁰⁵ He deviates significantly from Yeltsin and Gorbachev, who saw the importance of dissent and its necessity in the nation’s dialogue and political process. Putin sees it as nothing more than a burden that obstructs his vision for the Russian Federation. There can be no doubt that Putin’s KGB background helped him in human relations and negotiations. He researches the tendencies of people and what makes them tick and coaxes the diplomatic process along with a combination of trust and fear. It is the kind of thing a spy does, and it was a KGB specialty.

¹⁰³ Edward Lucas, *The New Cold War: Putin's Russia and the Threat to the West* (London, UK: St. Martin’s Press, 2014), p. 20-21.

¹⁰⁴ Karen Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Inc., 2015), p.249.

¹⁰⁵ Roger Cohen. “Putin’s Crimea Crime”, *The New York Times*. Last Updated March 03, 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/04/opinion/putins-crimean-crime.html>.

Putin respects intelligence as much as he fears it. Much like Stalin, Putin distrusts everyone and feels someone is out to get him. He fears foreign influence and blames any instability (be it the collapse of the Soviet Union, Arab Spring, or “colored revolutions”) as Western plots, and that the West is targeting the Kremlin for regime change. To Putin, Russia is now the center of an anti-Western, socially conservative axis and thus a bulwark against the menacing United States. Putin was not always anti-American. At first he wanted Russian acceptance in the world community and a stable economy. Soon after entering office in 2000, Putin stated “it is hard to visualize NATO as my enemy. I cannot imagine my own country in isolation from Europe and what we often call the civilized world.”¹⁰⁶ He has since developed a strong anti-Western agenda, particularly after the massive protests in Moscow following “re-election” to his third political term. Putin also portrays himself to the masses as the only thing standing between Russia and its own internal collapse, with Caucasian militants, Siberian separatists, and Neo-Nazis as constant threats that if not held in check by Putin, will bring down their whole way of life as they know it. He is a man who does not wish to be interfered with, as he wants to see his grand strategic objectives through to completion without obstruction. He is also a strong believer in “a high and mighty state that takes precedence over national as well as individual rights.”¹⁰⁷ Putin subscribes to the concept of “sovereign democracy”, which means Russia itself and its leadership can determine whether its system fulfills its own criteria¹⁰⁸. It can skirt the rules when required to fit the narrative and is a definite defensive posture that cannot be undone. He has to

¹⁰⁶ David Remnick, “Watching the Eclipse”, *The New Yorker*, last updated August 11, 2014. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/08/11/watching-eclipse>.

¹⁰⁷ Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014) p.186.

¹⁰⁸ Marcel Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars: The Rise of Russia's New Imperialism*, (London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), p. 57.

convince two audiences of his strength: the international community and his domestic base. Most of all, Putin wants to portray Russia as a recovered and great power, and events like the Sochi Olympics and the 2018 World Cup reinforce that.

Putin wants Russia to be on good relations with Europe, but preaches that Russia's exceptionalism means that it cannot be compared to nations like Estonia, Latvia, or even Poland. He demands that they accept Russian culture and traditions as unique along with Russia's (in other words, Putin's) preferred method of governance. He considers only Germany as a diplomatic, economic, and military equal. Despite constant demands regarding Russian exceptionalism, Putin especially despises American exceptionalism and perceives that Americans treat Russia like a defeated nation after the Soviet dissolution, and he sees that as the greatest insult of all to himself and his country. He wishes to be on an even playing field with the United States despite not giving other nations in the diplomatic community the same leniency that he demands the United States give to Russia. Putin views it as better to be alone and isolated for the sake of his own power structure than to be on good relations with Europe and the United States. He does not fear political isolation; he embraces it.

Political dissidents who have fallen out of favor with Putin, like his former banker Sergei Pugachev, have provided valuable insights that allow a slight peek behind the curtain to see how Putin's mind works. Pugachev was in Putin's inner circle for ten years and knows him very well. Pugachev says "everything in his (Putin's) consciousness flows from the Soviet Union. He surrounds himself with like-minded people who he didn't know very well

and who had served with the KGB. They began enriching themselves.”¹⁰⁹ Pugachev also said that Putin initially only wanted to serve one term and walk away with his “winnings,” but his inner circle convinced him to stay on another term. Since then, Pugachev has believed that Putin changed his mind and will retain power as long as he lives. The most striking revelation is Pugachev’s claim that Putin is the richest man in the world with a net worth of at least \$200 billion that he has accumulated during his time in power.¹¹⁰ This coincides with Forbes Magazine naming Putin the most powerful man in the world in 2013. Pugachev fears for his life and has been put on the Interpol most-wanted list by Putin. Despite living in London, he is in constant fear of a Litivenko-type killing.

The Kleptocracy

To consolidate his power, Vladimir Putin has brought his friends and previous work associates that he deems to be reliable and loyal into a fraternal oligarchy called the siloviki (security elites). The siloviki consists of ex-KGB members and local government muscle from St. Petersburg that facilitated corruption and Putin’s consolidation of wealth and power in a gradual rise to the Kremlin itself. According to one military expert, “there are a growing number of people dependent on the defense-industrial complex, and they are Putin’s core constituency. With their families, they number about ten million people, strategically placed, and that’s a really important factor. Taking care of them is probably more important than the stated goals of rearmament and modernizing of the military, which are probably largely

¹⁰⁹ Elena Holodny, “The former 'Kremlin banker' describes how Putin's mind works”, *Business Insider Magazine*. Last updated, July 29, 2015. <http://www.businessinsider.com/ex-kremlin-banker-says-putin-isnt-evil-2015-7>.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

unattainable anyway. This definitely plays a role in skewing Russian politics.”¹¹¹ Many of these men were given vast sums of wealth via contracts granted by Putin’s connections and net worth. These men give loyalty to Putin, and Putin returns it. They are mutually beneficial to each other as a security apparatus to assure their personal wealth and power. The vast sums of oil wealth have made men like Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev (and former president who promptly gave power back to Putin after his only term), Kremlin Security Supervisor Nikolai Petrushev and Kremlin spokesman Dmitri Peskov immensely powerful. They were all previously involved in Putin’s power circle at the lower echelons. Many have held or currently hold positions with the KGB, FSB, GRU, or some other military or security apparatus within the Russian Federation. By 1994 a large portion of the four hundred retired KGB generals held positions in banks and joint ventures.¹¹² When they speak to the press, they are practically extensions of Putin himself and all share the same line of thinking as their boss. Regarding the siloviki and oligarchs, Dawisha states that “Putin operates a protection racket dependent on a code of behavior that punishes disloyalty while allowing access to economic predation on a world historic scale for the inner core of his elite.”¹¹³

Another important fraternal foundation in the Kremlin power structure belongs to the oligarchs, who were a carryover from the Yeltsin administration following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, but have been consolidated and supported further by Putin. Taking

¹¹¹ Fred Weir, “Oligarchs out, 'siloviki' in? Why Russia's foreign policy is hardening”, *Christian Science Monitor*. Last updated February 02, 2015. <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2015/0202/Oligarchs-out-siloviki-in-Why-Russia-s-foreign-policy-is-hardening>.

¹¹² James Sherr, *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad*, (London, UK: Chatham House, 2013), p. 47.

¹¹³ Karen Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Inc., 2015), p.36.

advantage of the privatization of state-run enterprise, predatory capitalists who knew exactly how to participate in the transition, moved troves of state treasure to offshore accounts, robbing the government, and in turn the people, of hundreds of billions of dollars. This rubbed salt in the wounds of a demoralized Russian public that often went without jobs, stable income, or a stable ruble during the Wild 90's. Some of these men are amongst the richest people in the world and include Far East oblast governor-turned-football club owner Roman Ambromovich; the Rothstein brothers (who knew Putin as judo partners and established an early bond) who were awarded lucrative contracts for the Sochi Olympics and most recently the bridge across the Kerch Strait to Crimea; and Matthias Warnig, a STASI (East German Intelligence) careerist who worked with Putin in Dresden and is now the chairman of Transneft. Most utilize Bank Rossiya for their domestic fortunes given that it was established as a safe haven for this fraternity to utilize without fear of repercussions, but it has been less reliable since the recent sanctions on Russia, which appear to have caused an increase of capital flight since the Ukraine crisis. The oligarchs are generally free to keep their vast treasure so long as they do not become politically active, but Putin has not hesitated to swing his axe when threatened with the perceived overreach of potential rivals. The highest profile example being Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the owner of former oil giant Yukos. The oligarchs, worth millions and sometimes billions of dollars, are happy to keep their mouths shut and live extravagant lives in millionaire enclaves like Rublevka. Those who have become wanted men by the Kremlin have made their way to London (rich Russian dissidents refer to it as "Londongrad"), and the British capital has been all too happy to take them and their vast troves of wealth into the country. Capital flight has become a serious problem recently in Russia, but the Kremlin seems content in letting these troublemakers go

their way. However, they often use the FSB as an avenue of bribery, reminding them to “think of their sick mothers back home” and their family members still in Russia can be drummed up on false charges as well with the possibility of prison (a ploy often used during the Cold War by the KGB to psychologically distress those who defected from the Soviet Union). Because of this web, it is easy to see that the line between siloviki and oligarch can be a blurred one, and they are often one and the same. But to be sure, very few of either group can claim to have made an honest buck during the emergence of the Russian Federation, instead making their fortunes on the back of a lot of good honest people. When discussing the oligarchs, Sherr makes the following significant observation: “Emboldened by their own political masters and endowed with resources, the representatives of Russian business can be formidable competitors and irresistible partners. Russia’s exponents and representatives attract as well as intimidate.”¹¹⁴

Putin’s Rasputin

If there is an intellectual cornerstone around which Putin and the Kremlin develop their *raison d’etre*, it would be Aleksander Dugin, professor of sociology and international relations at Moscow State University who previously served as Chairman of the Geopolitical Section of the Duma’s Advisory Council on National Security in 1999.¹¹⁵ His work is read in Russia’s military academy, which indoctrinates their future military leaders into his influential frame of thought.¹¹⁶ He is also a revolutionary, and an unapologetic one at that, demanding violent action to produce positive strategic change for Russia. To facilitate this

¹¹⁴ James Sherr, *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad*, (London, UK: Chatham House, 2013), p. 5.

¹¹⁵ James D. Heiser, *"The American Empire Should Be Destroyed": Alexander Dugin and the Perils of Immanentized Eschatology*, (Malone, TX: Repristination Press, 2014), p. 66.

¹¹⁶ David Remnick, “Watching the Eclipse”, *The New Yorker*, last updated August 11, 2014. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/08/11/watching-eclipse>.

change, he encourages his supporters that “the new world order will not come about by means of aging old gentlemen meeting in seminars. You must take a knife, put on a mask, go out of the house in the evening and kill at least one yank.”¹¹⁷ No doubt Putin has his own ideas on how to conduct foreign policy and how to rule Russia, but he is augmented by a formidable intellectual mind that adds more venom and audacity to an already aggressive grand-strategic posture. Dugin does recognize that in terms of ethics, Putin is a realist and the best agent to forward his agenda. For this reason, Putin and Dugin are mutually beneficial to one another. Dugin may end up disappointed in the end that Putin acts on real events in the world and will likely not do anything as radical in scale as Dugin wishes.

Kremlinologists often refer to Dugin, the son of a Soviet GRU officer, as “Putin’s Brain” or “Putin’s Rasputin” because so many of Putin’s speeches and political actions parallel Dugin’s advice to the letter. On everything from foreign policy to Russian Orthodoxy, Dugin’s ideas and philosophies are obviously drawn upon when justifying any of the Kremlin’s political action. He is a radical right intellectual who in 1980 was a member of the underground fascist movement called the Black SS Order and ran for president in 1993 with the National-Bolshevik Party.¹¹⁸ Due to his firebrand lectures, he has been banned from entering Ukraine since 2009. Dugin is also one of the individuals listed on the United States sanctions list following actions in Ukraine. Two works written by Dugin reveal a radical fringe right-wing frame of conservatism that the Kremlin has learned to adore with time: The Fourth Political Theory and Eurasianism: An Introduction to Neo-Eurasianism.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ James D. Heiser, *"The American Empire Should Be Destroyed": Alexander Dugin and the Perils of Immanentized Eschatology*, (Malone, TX: Repristination Press, 2014), p. 36.

Dugin believes that Russia has a sacred calling and destiny to be a bulwark against the West. According to Dugin, there are three political theories that dominated the twentieth century; communism, fascism, and liberalism. Dugin preaches that liberalism emerged as the victor, thus modern man in liberalism sees the “individual” as the hallmark standard of governance, but in a postmodern globalized world, the individual loses his identity in the morass of capitalism.¹¹⁹ Only liberalism has prevailed, but he adamantly believes that liberalism is now failing. Dugin laments this defeat, as he argues that tradition was overthrown at the dawn of modernity, and that religion and family have lost their importance in modern society, which has led to decadence and deterioration of the moral fabric, and that the fourth political theory must uphold traditional values and beliefs to be successful. The liberal, in contrast, values freedom from tradition. Dugin blames progressive politics for the rise of the oligarchs and in the process absolves the Kremlin and Putin of blame for rampant corruption, which is a completely absurd notion but entirely in keeping with Dugin’s worldview and also a convenient position as Putin’s supporter. The return to theology is “essential” to the fourth political theory.¹²⁰ Dugin also shows considerable disgust at “human rights” and “tolerance” because it focuses on the individual, allowing dogmatic atheism and materialism to reign supreme as a result. Dugin sees Russia as the natural leader of this “fourth political theory” movement because he views it as a bastion of traditionalism and anti-liberalism. Dugin hopes that “the future world should be noetic in some way, characterized by multiplicity. Diversity should be taken as its richness and treasure and not

¹¹⁹ Alexander Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*, (London, UK: Arktos Media Limited, 2012), p.15-16.

¹²⁰ *Ibid* p.27.

as a reason for inevitable conflict: many civilizations, many poles, many centers, many sets of values on one planet and the whole of humanity.”¹²¹

Conversely, the United States is the bastion of liberalism that must be defeated. Dugin predicts the collapse of the United States and with it liberalism. The end result, for Dugin, is a revolution to overthrow the current government systems in place to foster this new era and prevent another “American Century.” He also emphasizes that Russia cannot do this alone and must enlist China, India, and like-minded right-wingers in Europe like the English Defense League or the French National Front. To him, the intellectual rot in Europe is significant, but he has allies there. He encourages European conservatives that “if the European New Right chooses us Russians, it means it chooses the barbaric element and therefore must choose our methods of action.”¹²² Dugin states that, “Only a global crusade against the United States, the west, globalization, and their political-ideological expression, liberalism, is capable of being an adequate response.”¹²³ Even more bluntly, Dugin states, “the American empire should be destroyed, and at one point it will be.”¹²⁴ Otherwise, according to Dugin, a future of individualism, liberal democracy, capitalism, and consumerism will reign supreme, which will be a catastrophe for humanity. It is an active call for a quasi-religious apocalypse and mystic destiny that we have not seen in the greater political discourse of the international community since Nazism.

Because of liberalism’s inherent weakness, Dugin argues the necessity of a fourth political theory—one that will be postmodern and born through dissent. He also argues that

¹²¹ Ibid p.197.

¹²² James D. Heiser, *"The American Empire Should Be Destroyed": Alexander Dugin and the Perils of Immanentized Eschatology*, (Malone, TX: Repristination Press, 2014), p. 104.

¹²³ Alexander Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*, (London, UK: Arktos Media Limited, 2012), p.155

¹²⁴ Ibid p.193.

the fourth political theory would benefit from defeated ideas like communism and fascism, which he argues have useful elements that could co-exist with this new movement, and elements of liberalism that can be used to bring about its own defeat. According to Dugin, “the fourth political theory will be a crusade against postmodernity, post-industrial society, liberal thought realized in practice, and globalization as well as technological and logistical bases.”¹²⁵ Most importantly for Dugin and his followers, “liberalism must be defeated and destroyed, and the individual must be thrown off his pedestal.”¹²⁶ Following this train of thought, liberalism should be just as vilified as either fascism or communism. Conservatives will head this new revolution and this idea. The crux of his book is that it does not say exactly what this fourth political theory would be, but rather offers ideas that would help to facilitate a process that he feels is necessary, and that Russia will lead it. It is no wonder that Putin and other Kremlin policy makers are infatuated with Dugin’s thought process given that it speaks to everything they believe.

Dugin is a strong supporter of Eurasianism as an alternative to Western liberal democracy. He also believes that Eurasianists should be ruled by the best representatives of society such as the aristocracy and warrior classes and that if Russian elites do not rule, the Western elites in Europe will do so with all of their progressive, liberal, anti-Eurasian ideals. Dugin preaches that the Westphalian state model is outdated and will be done away with as a result of the as-yet undefined fourth political theory. Instead, what will remain are “large spaces” where common peoples to decide their own fate as their traditionalism and cultural

¹²⁵ Ibid p.21.

¹²⁶ Ibid p.52.

nuances dictate.¹²⁷ In Dugin's own words, "the Eurasian idea is a revolutionary concept on a global scale that is called upon to act as a new platform for mutual understanding and cooperation for a large conglomerate of different powers: states, nations, cultures, and religions that reject the Atlantic version of globalization."¹²⁸ Examples of such large spaces would be Chinese, Indian, Slavic, and Russian nation-states. Eurasianism also preaches the end of the United States' era of hegemony and the beginning of a multipolar world. Dugin argues that if Putin and the Kremlin do not act now, the United States will "strip Moscow of control over the CIS states and begin the disintegration of the Russian Federation itself."¹²⁹

Much like the fourth political theory, Russia will be and must be the nucleus of the multipolar movement. It is the duty of smaller Slavic nations to align themselves under this area of influence, and Dugin especially sees Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan as part of this "Russian Space," which is also no coincidence given that Putin is so infatuated with bringing all of them under his Eurasian Customs Union, and also part of why critics are so scared of this prospect of making a potential mini-Soviet Union. (The Eurasian Customs Union was a concept Dugin was pressing especially hard for and that Putin has been rigorously pursuing as a valuable strategic objective of the Kremlin). Dugin's teachings also encourage Putin's idea that Russia should be treated as an equal on the world stage, and this utopian multipolar world that Dugin envisions is exactly the sort of platform that Putin wants on the international stage. The personal appreciation is reciprocated. As Dugin says, "The

¹²⁷ Alexander Dugin, *Eurasian Mission: An Introduction to Neo-Eurasianism*, (London, UK: Arktos Media Limited, 2014), p.61.

¹²⁸ Ibid p.44.

¹²⁹ Alexander Dugin, *Putin vs Putin: Vladimir Putin Viewed from the Right* (London, UK: Arktos Media Limited, 2014), p.96.

continuity of Putin's course is the continuity of common sense and the preservation of Russia as a nation."¹³⁰

Dugin also preaches of the philosophy of Weltanschauung (German for "world view"), which combines tradition, modernity, and even elements of post-modernism. This philosophy has traditional communitarian bonds as a priority. Dugin emphasizes that "there are four pillars of Eurasianism: differentialism, tradition, the rights of nations, and social fairness. Ethnicities as the primary value and subjects of history."¹³¹ In contrast, "democracy is a chaotic agitation of rebellious masses."¹³² He believes that democracy and liberty are not in the Russian social construct, and that a "stable, monarchic trend, reflecting the fact that a powerful authoritarian figure is in high demand."¹³³ He viewed Yeltsin and Gorbachev as liberal democrats who devastated to the country's prestige and way of life, and describes them both as a "national catastrophe and absurdity bordering on insanity."¹³⁴

America is a unique case to Dugin because for some reason to him the American experience is invalid due to its being the bulwark of liberalism and lacking any deep or "credible" history, and his recommendation is "the only way America can save itself is to turn to God."¹³⁵ In line with the fourth political theory, it should come as no surprise when Dugin preaches that society will be destroyed if the West is allowed to continue to dominate and foster globalization on its terms. Dugin believes that Putin should be seen and treated as

¹³⁰ Ibid p.111.

¹³¹ Alexander Dugin, *Eurasian Mission: An Introduction to Neo-Eurasianism*, (London, UK: Arktos Media Limited, 2014), p. 129.

¹³² Alexander Dugin, *Putin vs Putin: Vladimir Putin Viewed from the Right* (London, UK: Arktos Media Limited, 2014), p.79.

¹³³ Ibid p.83.

¹³⁴ Ibid p.97.

¹³⁵ Alexander Dugin, *Eurasian Mission: An Introduction to Neo-Eurasianism*, (London, UK: Arktos Media Limited, 2014), p. 73.

a father figure to the Russian people, as “a state is subconsciously perceived as a big family, and its head as the father. In a family structure, the father possesses a stable authoritarian status, which means the rest of the family is submissive and complicit in enhancing the father’s authority instead of undermining it.”¹³⁶ The traditionalism discussed earlier confirms this belief system of respect and unquestioning obedience to authority that can allow Russia to be the successful proponent of the fourth political theory and Eurasianism that Dugin wants so desperately to take hold.

Like Putin, Dugin sees any attempt by Western nations to establish relations in Russia’s “near abroad” as a direct threat to Russia’s sovereignty. When asked about how Russia views the West’s development of friendly relations with former Soviet republics, particularly Ukraine and Georgia, Dugin replies: “.....as a declaration of war. As a declaration of psychological, geopolitical, economic, and open war.”¹³⁷ Ironically, in turn, we have seen Russia actively facilitate all but the last. Even more foreboding, in an interview prior to the crisis in Ukraine, Dugin was asked what the Russian response would be if Ukraine joined NATO. He said, “I think the reaction would be support of an uprising in eastern parts and Crimea, and I could not exclude the entrance of armed force there.”¹³⁸ Most controversial of all, he has repeatedly called for the killing of Ukrainians, saying things like “idiots should be purged from Ukraine. A genocide of cretins is the obvious solution. I do not believe that these are Ukrainians. It’s just some bastardized race that emerged from

¹³⁶ Alexander Dugin, *Putin vs Putin: Vladimir Putin Viewed from the Right* (London, UK: Arktos Media Limited, 2014), p.83.

¹³⁷ James D. Heiser, *"The American Empire Should Be Destroyed": Alexander Dugin and the Perils of Immanentized Eschatology*, (Malone, TX: Repristination Press, 2014), p. 105.

¹³⁸ *Ibid* p.106.

sewer manholes.”¹³⁹ The most controversial of all, “as long as the scum is in Kiev, Russian people cannot exist peacefully. Either Kiev should be destroyed and built anew or people should come to their senses. Kill! Kill! Kill! There should be no talk anymore!”¹⁴⁰ The Kremlin PR arm had to censor him after the outburst. Putin is likely nowhere near as maniacal as Dugin, but there is no question he pulls a fair share of ideas from this influential if unbalanced man.

Given Dugin’s belief in traditionalism and theocratic beliefs, it should come as no surprise that the Russian Orthodox Church plays an important role in keeping the country’s “moral compass” rigidly aligned with the Kremlin’s ideology. Dugin preaches the church’s merits, emphasizing that, “it is important to understand that Orthodoxy is not just a religion. It is also a political doctrine and a political theology.”¹⁴¹ Unlike the leaders in the Soviet era, Putin and his Kremlin cronies have completely embraced the Russian Orthodox Church as a useful tool of government, and the church, led by former KGB man Patriarch Kirill I (who operated under the name Mikhailov), is all too willing to oblige. The Russian Orthodox Church preaches heavily about “Russkiy Mir” (Russian World), Slavic Unity, and brotherhood. This falls in line with what Dugin is saying, and he thinks so highly of Russian Orthodoxy that he says “I think the people and the president share responsibility before God for everything that happens in the country.”¹⁴² Like many other periods of history, the church plays a pivotal role in pacifying the population and encourages them to not be sinners.

¹³⁹ Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2015), p. 104

¹⁴⁰ Andrey Tolstoy, Edmund McCaffray, “Mind Games: Alexander Dugin and Russia’s War of Ideas”, *World Affairs Journal*. Last Updated March 31, 2015. <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/mind-games-alexander-dugin-and-russia%E2%80%99s-war-ideas>.

¹⁴¹ Alexander Dugin, *Putin vs Putin: Vladimir Putin Viewed from the Right* (London, UK: Arktos Media Limited, 2014), p.67.

¹⁴² *Ibid* p.64.

Like all other Christian denominations, the Russian Orthodox Church especially emphasizes that God loves the poor masses, and their piety will be rewarded. If they live a path of tranquility and peace, they will surely go to eternal paradise for their struggles. The church plays up nationalism and is especially fond of Russia's military personnel, and holy men will travel to the front lines to bless soldiers before they go into combat as they did earlier in Chechnya and Georgia. It is a tool that brings people together and prepares them for hard times when necessary. Dugin re-enforces this when he says, "the Russian people are an absolute for me, an inherent value and an end in itself. These people are deeply suffused with the light of the Orthodox culture and have been chosen by divine providence for a special mission."¹⁴³ The church is also anti-Western and sees the Western way of life as a corrupt world that encourages sin and debauchery and is particularly pro-homosexual. The church calls for Russians to embrace a greater calling and pushes the Third Rome concept of Moscow to which Putin subscribes heavily, and ultimately sees Putin as a man sent from God to facilitate Russia's emergence as the new leader of a great reborn empire. Dugin especially dwells on the Third Rome concept, bluntly saying, "I think the best course would be to eradicate the state and replace it with a holy Empire."¹⁴⁴ Putin surrounds himself with the presence of the Russian Orthodox Church at major events, hoping to give the impression that he and the rest of Russia are virtuous and righteous, and God is ultimately on their side.

The Puppet Master

The next key player in Putin's inner circle is the cunning political technologist and Kremlin grey cardinal, Vladislav Surkov. Anna Arutunyan describes Surkov as "Vladimir Putin's ideologist and no mere official. In a power structure where Putin's ministers and

¹⁴³ Ibid p.61.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid p.63.

aides were delegated the task of allotting assets to the right vassals, the realm of political fiefdoms was overseen by that strange dark bird, a master manipulator, and a one-man PR machine credited with standing behind every major and minor mystification in modern Russia.”¹⁴⁵ Many of the Kremlin’s ideas may come from Dugin, but Surkov puts them into action. The goal of a political technologist is to reinvent narrative, and as such reinvent society. Surkov has four primary roles: encouraging splits in opposition parties, creating and establishing virtual political products, manipulating the media, and mobilizing state-administered resources¹⁴⁶.

Since Putin came to power, Surkov has been immersed in the Russian political process serving as the Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration, Deputy Prime Minister, and Assistant to the President on Foreign Affairs. He has also held executive posts with Yukos, Alfa Bank, and Russia Channel 1 Television. Surkov takes great pride in all of this and boasts openly, “I am the author, one of the authors, of the new Russian system.”¹⁴⁷ Any popular movement, patriotic movement, or opposition movement that establishes itself in Moscow is controlled and manipulated by the Kremlin soon after legitimacy. Surkov, a Chechen who idolizes deceased American rap icon, Tupac Shakur, and orchestrates Russian society as if it was his own reality television show, has played a key role in organizing “astroturf” (alluding to a “grassroots” movement that is artificial) pro-Russian movements in Ukraine, Georgia, the Baltics, and even his own people in Chechnya. He also makes sure that any alternative political parties are either infiltrated so as to become nothing more than

¹⁴⁵ Anna Arutunyan, *The Putin Mystique*, (Petaluma, CA: Olive Branch Publishing, 2014), p.183.

¹⁴⁶ Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2015), p. 169.

¹⁴⁷ Peter Pomerantsev, “The Hidden Author of Putinism: How Vladislav Surkov invented the new Russia”, *The Atlantic*. Last updated November 07, 2014. <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/11/hidden-author-putinism-russia-vladislav-surkov/382489/>.

figurehead or “synthetic” opposition parties that are just another appendage of United Russia, or are delegitimized to the point of absurdity like the current Russian Communist Party.

Surkov wanted more than just one political party to sell the multi-party idea, as single-party rule would bring up bad memories of the Communist Party during the Soviet Union. Parties like Just Russia, Liberal-Democratic Party, Unity Party, Patriots of Russia, and the Right Cause Party are all shams and under strict guidance from Surkov himself. Critics, and even Surkov himself, call this form of political manipulation “managed democracy.” Any voting is done under his watchful eye to ensure ballots are stuffed and manipulated to favor United Russia. Surkov also projects the image of Putin to the Russian people. He tells the media what to show, and that is the strong and macho side of Vladimir Putin. Photo ops of visiting orphanages, ensuring houses are rebuilt from forest fires, or a public dressing down of a factory supervisor is done to show compassion for the common Russian people. All of this is carefully done to project a strong man and leader of inner and outer strength.

Surkov is the man who created the Nashi youth movement, which encourages adolescents around Russia to be politically active under a Kremlin-crafted narrative. He has also encouraged pop culture movements like bringing back the Cossacks and enlisting a Russian biker gang called the Night Riders to expand Russian nationalism and patriotism. The Cossacks have been encouraged to move into trouble spots like the Caucasus to impress an honor code by which traditional Cossacks used to abide. The Night Riders are a clever nationalist tool of provocation, and that was most recently on display when they tried to ride the same route as the Red Army to Berlin in 2014. Their efforts were stopped at the border in Poland. He also attempted to create a Russian Silicon Valley in Moscow, but it was one of his notable failures. Economics seems to be a weak point of his despite knowing its

importance. Following being named in sanctions by the United States for his role in the annexation of Crimea, Surkov's response was "I see the decision by the administration in Washington as an acknowledgement of my service to Russia. It is a big honor for me."¹⁴⁸

The Next Mikhail Tukachevsky: The Mastermind Of Hybrid Warfare

Russia's military efforts under Putin are commanded by the man who literally wrote the book on modern Russian hybrid warfare; Colonel-General Valery Gerasimov and author of the "Gerasimov Doctrine," which he proudly boasts is longer than Tolstoy's epic War And Peace. Perhaps the most important paragraph in the whole doctrine is the following:

The very rules of war have changed. The role of nonmilitary means of achieving political and strategic goals has grown, and, in many cases, they have exceeded the power of force of weapons in their effectiveness. The focus of applied methods of conflict has altered in the direction of the broad use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian, and other nonmilitary measures — applied in coordination with the protest potential of the population. All this is supplemented by military means of a concealed character, including carrying out actions of informational conflict and the actions of special-operations forces. The open use of forces — often under the guise of peacekeeping and crisis regulation — is resorted to only at a certain stage, primarily for the achievement of final success in the conflict.¹⁴⁹

This is a lengthy reference, but every word is vital to understanding the mastermind of Russian hybrid warfare and the methods that he applies when coordinating the Kremlin's hybrid warfare efforts. These efforts are fostered by what he calls an "indirect action" strategy that has been lauded by the Russian Security Council, and he surrounds himself with like-minded generals to facilitate his ambitious new strategy. Indirect action focuses on using the DIME method of national strategic power, or using diplomatic, informational,

¹⁴⁸ Peter Pomerantsev, "The Hidden Author of Putinism: How Vladislav Surkov invented the new Russia", *The Atlantic*. Last updated November 07, 2014. <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/11/hidden-author-putinism-russia-vladislav-surkov/382489/>.

¹⁴⁹ Robert Coalson, "Top Russian General Lays Bare Putin's Plan for Ukraine", *Huffington Post*. Last updated September 02, 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-coalson/valery-gerasimov-putin-ukraine_b_5748480.html.

military, and economic measures to defeat an adversary and his will to fight. Gerasimov's ideas have been praised because the strategy is low cost with high reward, and escalation or de-escalation are easily managed by commanders. Indirect action also works as a very effective counterpunch to a superior adversary, like the United States. It is designed and coordinated to work efficiently with the government to advance national-security interests. Gerasimov's ideas have been executed to near-perfection, validating him as perhaps the most influential mind on twenty-first-century warfare. Gerasimov is also responsible for standing up the KSO in 2013, which is the Russian equivalent to US SOCOM.¹⁵⁰ It is where the most elite Spetsnaz and intelligence operatives train in their methods of warfare and reconnaissance. Gerasimov has also encouraged working with various intelligence agencies and military branches of flag officers and intelligence officials not only for operational experience in learning how other branches of defense do things, but also due to historical Russian paranoia of posturing for a coup.¹⁵¹ He is exactly the sort of general that NATO should be fearful of. He is giving his latest "lecture" to Europe and the United States in Donbass.

The Intelligence Community Reborn

Any discussion about Russia's grand-strategic efforts must include their imposing intelligence apparatus that has been robust and evolutionary in both its defensive and offensive postures ever since the October Revolution. Organizational structures and lettered agencies have come and gone since the end of the Cold War, but that evolution has held steady since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Currently, the Russian intelligence community has three "Main Intelligence Directorates" designed to fulfill unique tasks

¹⁵⁰ Mark Galeotti, *Spetsnaz: Russia's Special Forces*, (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2015), p. 43.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid* p.55.

catering to their skill sets; the SVR, FSB, and GRU. The SVR (Sluzhba Vneshney Razvedki) serves primarily as an espionage entity that participates in “far abroad” operations. An example of SVR handiwork would be the poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko in the United Kingdom with polonium. A less successful example would be Anna Chapman and her team, which was embarrassingly uncovered by the FBI in New York. While it cannot be ruled out completely, it is not likely that the SVR served much of a role in the annexation process. The FSB (Federalnaya sluzhba bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii) is the functional equivalent of the FBI in the United States and focuses on counterespionage, keeping the Russian Federation safe, quieting dissent at home, prosecuting “foreign agent” organizations, and tax fraud, and conducting a myriad of other tasks of interest primarily at the domestic level.

The GRU (Glavnoye Razvedyvatel'noye Upravleniye) is the bulldog of the Russian intelligence community and has no equivalent in the West. It capitalizes on the loose command structure and instability that its commanders and operatives work to create. The talents and mission of the GRU fit the task of “controlled instability” like a glove. It is the “bridge” intelligence agency between Russian military intelligence and the lettered civilian intelligence agencies of the Russian Federation, fostering the seamless fluidity of the whole intelligence process so that both the military and intelligence communities of the Kremlin are on the same page and are able to execute their mission with optimal efficiency and effectiveness. As far as accountability is concerned, the GRU answers only to the Russian Defense Ministry and Putin himself. The GRU also gives intelligence summaries (INTSUMs) to senior policymakers and military officers—the key policy “customers” in the

relationship. Areas of primary intelligence responsibility include Spetsnaz operations as well as IMINT, ELINT, and SIGINT exploitation.

The GRU is an intelligence organization that was born in blood during the October Revolution, purged from existence twice by Josef Stalin and then revived by him at a record pace following the German Invasion, Operation Barbarossa, on June 22, 1941, and has seen nine of the thirteen men leading it executed. The GRU has been involved in training fighters since the Cold War-era and was intimately involved as a counterpunch to Western actions during the Cold War in countries such as Cuba, Namibia, Vietnam, Syria, and Egypt. That footprint has retreated from the “far abroad” and been consolidated in the “near abroad” realm out of economic and strategic necessity in the wake of the Soviet Union’s collapse. Its primary purpose is to foster instability and establish Russian interests where they are deployed. The GRU is active in Russia’s “near abroad”, most recently in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Chechnya, and Dagestan officially, and the Baltics and Ukraine were certainly part of the list even before the current situation in Ukraine. For all of the military ineffectiveness that Russia showed in the Georgia campaign, its SIGINT utilization was highly effective and the communications jamming facilitated by the GRU forced the Georgian military to use cellular phones whose transmissions were easily intercepted. The GRU was responsible for utilizing Spetsnaz, mercenaries, the Chechen Vostok Brigade, paratroopers, and their own civilian assets to achieve the necessary tactical and operational objectives asked of them.

The Tip of the Spear

The Spetsnaz is the elite fighting force of the Russian Federation and one of the most extensively trained military units in the world. Galeotti emphasizes that “Spetsnaz are the heart of the new Russian way of war that emphasizes speed, surprise, and deception over

continual military force, and their skills ensure that they will maintain their special status in the future.”¹⁵² These operatives are sent on operations with the mindset that they do not exist, giving them plausible deniability regarding their part in creating the instability and mayhem ordered by the Kremlin. They are the tactical spearhead in the fighting force and can be inserted into a battlespace using many different methods of infiltration, including miniature submarines, parachutes, and posing as civilian tourists. They are also expert hand-to-hand fighters trained in sambo, a fighting style that was used as early as the 1920’s by the Red Army.¹⁵³

These feared intelligence and special operations warriors are trained in survival, reconnaissance, urban tactics, foreign languages, interrogation, camouflage, concealment, assassination of high-value individuals, elimination of key targets like strategic missiles, and so forth. Their utility and resourcefulness have steadily increased. In training, they are subjected to brutal psychological measures to keep them alert and able to act for when the day comes that they may experience what they are preparing for in the field. Their instructors constantly keep them in a training state of fear designed to turn the fight-or-flight instinct into a fight-or-fight instinct. It is this psychological transformation of instinct that their instructors insist will one day allow them to complete their missions and save their lives.

The candidates are subjected to land navigation during the Siberian winter, cross-country skiing for miles in the Caucasus mountains, crawling under barbed wire filled with pools of animal blood and entrails, or even put in a city by their trainers who give local

¹⁵² Ibid p. 4.

¹⁵³ Ibid p. 61.

police descriptions of them and say they are drug dealers. They must then get outside the city by any means they can without being apprehended. Once they graduate, they are given the red beret coveted by all members of the Russian military. It is not uncommon to see a Spetsnaz candidate die in training from exhaustion, exposure to the Russian winter, jumping out of an airplane, or during harsh interrogation exercises where they are trained not to talk and some of the trainers just take it too far. Any of the aforementioned casualties are written off as training accidents and are acceptable casualties in shaping the Spetsnaz community.

In conventional warfare, they are agents of chaos inserted behind enemy lines with the objective of creating and exploiting weak points in the enemy's defenses for the conventional military to concentrate their attack on, thereby having the capacity to be key players at any level of war. In terms of unconventional-warfare techniques, they are trained in guerrilla warfare and anti-terrorism tactics as well. The importance of "red teaming" is indoctrinated into their way of thinking so they think like their adversary would in hopes of anticipating future events that could prove crucial in a mission or battlespace. To illustrate the importance of Spetsnaz to the Russian intelligence community, and the GRU in particular, Soviet defector Viktor Suvorov states that, "the majority of GRU officers have been at some time very closely familiar with the Spetsnaz, or are themselves Spetsnaz officers, or have worked in the intelligence directorate of a district or group of forces."¹⁵⁴ The SVR (Zaslou Brigade) and FSB (Alpha Brigade) also have their own Spetsnaz units as well. They are jacks-of-all-trades trained to be the best of the best, and there can be no doubt that these men were the first "boots on the ground" in Crimea.

¹⁵⁴ Viktor Suvorov. *Inside Soviet Military Intelligence* (London, UK: Macmillan Pub Co, 1984), p. 137.

For the Spetsnaz operative, the mission comes first. Operations security (OPSEC) is of sacred importance, and any divulging of secrets is considered high treason and punishable by death. They will kill anyone who endangers the mission, including their own operatives if they become injured to the point where they impede the operation. Suvorov says the most common instance for this is broken legs during parachute drops. If a civilian detects a Spetsnaz operative during the unfolding of a mission in a hot battlespace, that person is silenced permanently. It does not matter if it is a man, woman, or child, that person who observed them has to die if it risks the mission. Anything written in the Geneva Conventions about humanitarian methods is irrelevant to them because strategic objectives take priority over political chivalry at the international level. Their rules of engagement are hindered only if their superiors dictate otherwise, and up until recently, the idea of winning “hearts and minds” was a completely foreign concept to them as a fighting force.

When a battlespace becomes an operational environment for a mission, the Spetsnaz will also orchestrate their military version of controlled instability, which Suvorov calls the “predatory period.”¹⁵⁵ Anything from influencing media and blackmailing politicians, or facilitating riots in symbolic locations like city centers, constitute what the Spetsnaz call “grey terror” because they are covert activities that allow for deniability but give the operatives an advantage of confusion and intimidation to carry out their mission. Once operations move from covert to overt military action, Spetsnaz orchestrate the “red terror” phase and the elimination of adversary targets. There is a third colored phase of terror called “pink terror” where there is still peace, but Spetsnaz have already begun targeted physical

¹⁵⁵ Viktor Suvorov. *Spetsnaz: The Inside Story of the Soviet Special Forces*, (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988), p.176.

destruction including train derailment, spreading biological agents, poisoning water supplies, blowing up dams, and starting forest fires.¹⁵⁶ Pink terror is a very risky and aggressive set of actions taken only by the best Spetsnaz operatives, but when executed efficiently they facilitate exactly what military commanders and Kremlin policy makers want when bargaining for an upper hand at a negotiation table. The less Russia is punished for using pink terror, the more they will use it. Pink terror is what is most obviously being used by the Russians against Ukraine on a large scale, and has been since Russian forces moved into Crimea and the Donbass region.

Like Spetsnaz, Russian intelligence has been a very formidable adversary in the post-Soviet world. Following the emergence of Islamic Fundamentalism, China, and other world challenges, the intelligence communities of the United States and Europe have taken their eyes off Russia more than at any time in the past century. This has not gone without criticism by Western scholars and strategists who have warned about adopting such a lax stance towards a Kremlin that has remained at least covertly aggressive ever since Putin came to power. Edward Lucas reminds us that, “Russia uses its intelligence agencies as a broad and malevolent force to penetrate our society and skew our decision making. We do little to protect ourselves.”¹⁵⁷ Russian intelligence has been all too willing to take advantage of this weakness, and it explains why Western intelligence agencies and policy makers have been so consistently on the back foot in the 21st century. Crimea was the pinnacle of the combination of Russian intelligence opportunistic aggression and the Western policy-intelligence blend of apathy and obliviousness, to the nature and extent of the threat.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid p.178.

¹⁵⁷ Edward Lucas, *The New Cold War: Putin's Russia and the Threat to the West* (London, UK: St. Martin's Press, 2014), p. 311-312.

Preparation and execution from beginning to end bear the signature of Gerasimov's touch, especially given the circumstances of how the Crimea peninsula was taken. There was something truly unique about the role of the GRU and Spetsnaz in Crimea. The chaos and confusion that it embraces were there, but there were no gunshots or explosions. Crimea needed to be treated differently than Chechnya and Georgia. In the minds of Russian intelligence and military leaders, these people were Russian citizens who needed to be liberated. These were not enemies but compatriots, and that mindset needed a tactical adjustment that the GRU has traditionally not utilized: winning "hearts and minds" as well as keeping order and peace. Soldiers constantly assured the locals that they were not there to hurt them, but to help them and keep them safe. They took extra care to comfort and assure the people that they were friendly, which no doubt was extensively trained as well because it is so far out of the element of the traditional GRU and Spetsnaz roles of killing and maximum damage. They adapted impressively. There was not a single military related fatality during the initial annexation of Crimea on the Russian side, and only one Ukrainian military officer was killed in the annexation.¹⁵⁸ Tartar and Ukrainian dissidents have disappeared without being heard from again, but that is an integral part of the GRU's, Spetsnaz's, and FSB's operations as well. These "disappeared" people do not tally as either formal military or civilian casualties to the Russians in a conventional warfare environment, and they accept the disappearance of dissidents as acceptable collateral since they practice "disappearing" in their own country as well. In most cases, these "disappeared" dissidents are found deceased with signs of torture.

¹⁵⁸ Marc Bennetts, "A Year After Annexation by Russia, Crimea Remains Bitterly Divided" *Newsweek Magazine*. Last updated, March 18, 2015. <http://www.newsweek.com/2015/03/27/crimea-one-year-314834.html>.

Vladimir Putin has been the man shaping Russia's grand strategy since the turn of the millennium. He has some very imposing tools that he has been utilizing to foster instability against "near abroad" countries that have tried to move too far out of the reach of the Russian Federation's sphere of influence. If Vladimir Putin does play chess, as the saying goes, he has some very powerful and useful pieces at his disposal. He knows how to sacrifice pawns like Khodorkovsky and Litvinenko, but should he begin to lose his knights, bishops, and rooks, he knows he will have much more difficulty moving his pieces around as effectively as possible. He maintains a potent center of gravity using very resourceful men in key personnel positions, and utilizes his intelligence, military, siloviki, and oligarchs all as conduits within a well-oiled and interconnected system. All of these men and organizations know that within their corrupt system of kleptocracy, they depend on one another, and very few will dare to rattle the cage to bring down what they have built on the backs of the Russian people.

THE EUROMAIDEN

This chapter focuses on the most important clash of Western and Russian grand strategies since the end of the Cold War, and why Russian leaders are putting so much of their reputation on the line with the international community. The Euromaiden protests and armed conflict that happened immediately after were the culmination of history, distant and recent, as well as current geopolitical players. Everything has come to the fore with these events in terms of age-old Russian obsession with the security of the motherland. The Euromaiden crisis was really just a delay in long overdue and much larger geopolitical upheaval within the former Soviet Union. This chapter focuses on the actual events on the ground, and each one of them is significant in trying to understand the mindset that lies behind Putin's decision-making process. While there is basic analysis in this chapter out of necessity, the analysis behind the events that have recently occurred (and some that are still unfolding) will be discussed in later chapters. In the discussion up to this point, we can bring together key insights from previous chapters in order to get a better picture of the events that have taken place since on the ground, and make assessments regarding their meaning and what is likely to transpire next in Putin's high-stakes game.

At the end of November 2013, thousands of Ukrainian citizens began filling the main square of Kiev—the Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square). The primary cause was President Yanukovich's refusal of the European Union Cooperation agreement for the last-ditch deal with Putin, but it was also a combination of other issues primarily stemming from the rampant corruption of the Ukrainian government and a rise in nationalism to separate further from Russian influence. This mass gathering of protesters was even bigger than the one associated with the Orange Revolution and was coined the Euromaiden by social media

and soon the news media. Without the help of social media, the Euromaiden would have been impossible. Much like the Arab Spring, social media was crucial for information and coordination. Loudspeakers played the popular song “Release the Cobblestones” by the Kremlin-reviled Russian punk rock band Pussy Riot, which made Putin furious. Police brutality exacerbated an already delicate situation, and attempts to subdue the protestors coercively were unsuccessful in breaking their will.

By January, it became obvious that the protestors were there to stay despite Yanukovich’s rubber-stamp Rada passing a law to make protesting illegal. Yanukovich also offered to reel in his presidential powers and form a unity government with mediation from the European Union. He would also restore the 2004 constitution and promised early elections. The protestors at this point wanted nothing less than Yanukovich’s resignation. The protests increased in February, and the Yanukovich government hired titushki (hooligans) to cause enough unrest to allow even more extensive use of police force. The titushki was responsible for people being roughed up or even kidnapped. On February 18, 2014, twenty protestors and six titushki were killed in confrontations on the streets. The boiling point was reached on February 20 when snipers opened fire on protestors, killing at least seventeen and as many as twenty.¹⁵⁹

Putin was furious that Yanukovich was not even tougher with the protestors and that he lost control of not just Kiev, but Ukraine itself. It was widely rumored that he planned to expand the sniper killings of protestors and institute a massive crackdown right before he was toppled. The former Ukrainian president retreated to Russia from Kharkiv via helicopter,

¹⁵⁹ “Special police shot Kiev protestors, inquiry says”, *BBC News*. Last Updated April 03, 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26868119>.

thinking of his own safety. The president did not leave empty-handed, emptying the Ukrainian treasury of \$32 billion USD before his departure¹⁶⁰. Yanukovich was formally impeached by the Rada February 22, and Orange Revolution heroine Yulia Tymoshenko was released from prison (she participated in a hunger strike in solidarity with the Euromaiden protesters). By the time the Euromaiden protests subsided, about one hundred people were killed (dubbed the Heavenly Hundred by protestors and the Rada).

While protests continued in Kiev, counter-protests were being orchestrated in one of the country's most strategically critical locations: the Crimea. The protests emerged on a notable scale on February 23, the day after Yanukovich fled to Russia. Many of the protesters were angry seniors who still had a strong patriotic attachment to the Soviet Union and Russia. Many members of the Ukrainian elite Berkut special operations force fled to Crimea and were greeted as heroes in one of the few places they could receive a warm welcome.¹⁶¹

Without warning, well-trained and well-armed soldiers without symbols or insignia began swarming the peninsula, targeting critical nodes such as airports, legislative administration buildings, and ports. Unknown elements arrived at the Simferopol and Sevastopol airports early on the morning on February 27. It quickly became obvious that these unidentified well-trained and disciplined soldiers were no mere ragtag citizen militia,

¹⁶⁰ Kostyantyn Chernichkin. "Prosecutor General: Yanukovych took \$32 billion to Russia, financing separatism in Ukraine", *Kyiv Post*. Last Updated April 29, 2014. <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/prosecutor-general-yanukovych-took-32-billion-to-russia-financing-separatism-in-ukraine-345544.html>.

¹⁶¹ Tom Balmforth, "Reviled In Kyiv, Heroes In The East, Berkut Veterans Lick Their Wounds", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*. Last updated March 13, 2014. <http://www.rferl.org/content/ukraine-police-berkut-forces-crimea/25295633.html>.

but likely Spetsnaz and GRU operatives. The peninsula was being overrun by these “little green men” of unknown origin. Armor was brought in from a base near Moscow.¹⁶²

Once Crimea was secured, self-defense forces and militias were formally established, but they were so ragtag and pathetic-looking that it was blatantly obvious that these were not the well-trained men who took the peninsula. They were nonetheless backed by the “men in green” to give their nonthreatening demeanor some teeth. They were older citizens who could barely stand, organized criminals in tracksuits, but the exceptions were the Berkut who wanted revenge for what happened to them in Kiev. On March 6, a hastily formed Crimean parliament requested an immediate referendum for independence within ten days.¹⁶³

The referendum to join Ukraine March 16 did not even have a “no” option, but rather a “yes: join Russia now” or “yes: join Russia later” option. In what was already a predetermined conclusion, 96.7 percent of the people in Crimea voted to join the Russian Federation. This number is not credible when looking at the Crimean ethnic Tartar demographic alone, which has been staunchly anti-Russian since the Stalin deportations. The last thing the Tartars would want is to link back up with Russia. Despite hot air from world leaders condemning the act, Crimea was formally annexed on March 18, 2014. Furthermore, the OSCE Parliamentary assembly concluded that the referendum was conducted in an environment that could not be considered remotely free or fair. The referendums in Crimea were conducted amid a climate of fear, violence, and lawlessness.¹⁶⁴ Thomas Grant

¹⁶² Nick Patton Walsch, Laura Smith-Spark, “Obama, Ukraine's PM warn Russia as Crimea heads for vote”, *CNN*. Last Updated March 13, 2014. <http://www.cnn.com/2014/03/12/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/>.

¹⁶³ David M. Herzenhorn, “Crimea Vote Deepens Crisis and Draws Denunciations”, *New York Times*. Last Updated March 06, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/07/world/europe/ukraine.html?_r=0.

¹⁶⁴ Thomas D. Grant, *Aggression against Ukraine: Territory, Responsibility, and International Law*, (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), p. 29.

emphasizes that “a war zone is not the place to have a vote to decide the constitutional fate of a country.”¹⁶⁵ Therefore, the “right to self-determination” is also a fallacy.

The annexation of Crimea by Russia was an intelligence and military masterpiece. Crimea, a peninsula with few access points from the mainland, makes the territory easy to defend from the Ukrainian mainland. The environment was absolutely ideal for Spetsnaz operatives, whose tactics focus on rear assault of enemy lines. With Ukraine’s navy in tatters, there is no hope of a counteroffensive to regain the peninsula. Russia suffered no casualties during the conflict, and the Ukrainian forces were quickly surrounded at their bases. The Ukrainian military had twenty thousand troops on the peninsula, but stood by waiting for orders that never came. They were either absorbed into the Russian army with their current ranks or were allowed to go to Ukraine demoralized and humiliated. Russia cleverly used the Status of Forces agreement tied to the Black Sea Fleet deal to bring as many troops onto the peninsula as the agreement allowed: 25,000. Putin has constantly stuck to his narrative that the events in Crimea were spontaneous despite military units from the Black Sea Fleet, the East Chechen Battalion, the 31st Guards brigade, the 22nd Guards Brigade, GRU and other military units ultimately totaling 35,000 that took part in the conquest. More Russian equipment arrived from the Kerch Strait crossing daily, making the Russian forces that much stronger.¹⁶⁶

The annexation was devastating to the Ukrainian Navy, which called the port of Sevastopol home and shared the cherished warm-water port with Russia. With the

¹⁶⁵ Ibid p.29.

¹⁶⁶ Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014) p.111.

annexation, Russia commandeered two thirds of the Ukrainian ships.¹⁶⁷ Out of the 8,000 sailors who served in the Ukrainian naval forces in Crimea, only 2,000 chose to remain with Ukraine. The rest of the sailors switched allegiance to the Russian Navy. Odessa has become the new home of the Ukrainian fleet, and the sailors there are determined to make sure a Crimea situation does not unfold there since it is the country's only remaining significant port connected to the Black Sea that can take in naval vessels. The other port, Mariupol, borders the Sea of Azov and can thus easily be blockaded by Russian ships. Many of the ships that remain are old Soviet holdovers, and one officer laments that, "the only way to get these pieces of junk moving is to get some paddles and start rowing."¹⁶⁸

The ethnic group most unhappy to see the return of the Russians was the Crimean Tartars. The Tartars preferred Ukrainian rule and many have moved to Lviv to find refuge from the conflict. The Tartars are vengeful because they had only returned to the peninsula from the Stalinist deportations in the 1980's. Now Tartar media is being crushed, political and social gatherings are prohibited, and the Tartars themselves are being forced off of their land again. Two important Tartar leaders, Mustafa Dzenilev and Refat Churabov, have been banned from re-entering Crimea for five years because they were designated as political undesirables by the Russian Federation.¹⁶⁹ The Tartars were also prohibited from assembling in memorial of the deportations on their anniversary in May 2014. In September 2014, there was a raid on the Tartar self-governing council. Books, hard drives, and memory sticks were confiscated because they were "extremist literature" according to the new Russian

¹⁶⁷ Olga Shylenko, "Ukraine navy left high and dry after Crimea losses". *Yahoo News*. Last updated May 14, 2014. <http://news.yahoo.com/ukraine-navy-left-high-dry-crimea-losses-053535632.html>.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Tom Parfitt, "Despair and euphoria in Crimea six months after Russian annexation", *The Telegraph*. Last updated October 06, 2014. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/11143864/Despair-and-euphoria-in-Crimea-six-months-after-Russian-annexation.html>.

authorities. One council member said in protest, “first, they prevent us from freely marking our genocide; our Holocaust. Second, they exclude our leaders. Third, they attack us with these gun-toting search teams and shut down the Mejlis (Tartar council). This is nothing less than a campaign of terror.”¹⁷⁰ To date, seventeen Tartars are missing and only one of their bodies has been identified. Putin has tasked the FSB with the Tartar clampdown. The new pro-Russian prime minister of Crimea, Sergey Aksyonov, emphasized that, “all activities aimed at non-recognition of Crimea’s joining to Russia and non-recognition of the leadership of the country will face prosecution under the law and we will take a very tough stance with this.”¹⁷¹ Many Tartars know that they will not be able to return for a long time, if ever, and they are deeply saddened by losing their homeland a second time.¹⁷²

The United Nations was quick to condemn the annexation, and on March 27 overwhelmingly voted on a referendum stating that the Crimea vote was invalid not only because it did not meet the most fundamental standards of electoral voting, but also because it was part of Ukraine and did not have the right to administer the vote. The United States and European Union were quick to condemn the annexation, and sanctions were prepared in response. These initially focused only on targeted individuals within the Kremlin, but moved to a much broader economic focus when the situation became more serious and Russia became more belligerent with its rhetoric and actions, which soon were not just isolated to the Crimean peninsula.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Scott Neuman, “U.N. General Assembly: 'No Validity' For Crimea Referendum”, *National Public Radio*. Last updated March 27, 2014. <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/03/27/295333291/u-n-general-assembly-no-validity-for-crimea-referendum>.

Soon after the annexation of Crimea, the same sort of unrest that led to the annexation began taking place right across the border in the eastern Ukrainian region known as the Donbass. Russia began a massive military buildup across the border near Rostov with 30,000 troops, which is significantly more than would participate in any exercise. Sizable deployments also occurred in the border cities of Belgorod and Kursk. Armored vehicle, air transport, missile launchers, and other heavy weapons arrived from across the country's armories. The sheer numbers were adequate to take not just Donetsk and Luhansk, but Kharkiv, Odessa, and territory bordering Transnistria (the eastern pro-Russian enclave of Moldova). The numbers of Russian troops as well as Putin's intentions alarmed Ukrainian and Western leaders. The Duma even gave Putin war powers to invade Ukraine. Putin would symbolically rescind these powers voluntarily to portray that he was trying to de-escalate the volatile situation. The invasion-sized force eventually decreased as well, but the forces that remained in Rostov following the initial buildup were more than adequate to launch operations into Ukraine. The military buildup became a valuable chess piece for the Kremlin to show that it is still a powerful force in any near-abroad affairs.¹⁷⁴

Protests soon began in the pro-Yanukovich (and pro-Russian) oblasts of Donetsk and Luhansk in eastern Ukraine. A sizable demographic sincerely deplored the way Kiev and Western Ukraine had been acting. Separatists seized legislative and administrative buildings throughout both cities. Miners and pensioners were waving Russian and Soviet flags in the central squares, and Russian provocateurs were bussed in from across the border to exacerbate the unstable situation. Much like Crimea, many of the protestors were over fifty

¹⁷⁴ Steven Lee Myers, Alison Smale. "Russian Troops Mass at Border With Ukraine", *New York Times*. Last updated March 13, 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/14/world/europe/ukraine.html>.

and longed to rejoin Russia and see the return of the Soviet Union. Protest organizers, led by Denis Pushilin, proclaimed that there would be a vote to join Russia on May 11, 2014.¹⁷⁵

Despite the many provocateurs bussed in from Russia, it would be inaccurate to say that there are not very large number of ethnic Russian locals who are willing to fight for their freedom or for annexation to the Russian Federation. Interviews with the separatists tend to underscore similar motives for their actions but some are more ambitious than others. One commander, Alexander Matyushin in Donetsk, says, “We are fighting for the liberation of all Russian lands and we are ready to march all the way to the Danube. We must restore the historic injustice which befell the Russian people in the twentieth century. We need to take land which is ours by right and bring it back into the fold of Holy Russia.”¹⁷⁶ For some, this is not a short-term conflict, and they want to keep pushing west.

The vote proceeded without a shred of electoral integrity. Five days before the referendum, the SBU intercepted a message from Russian National Unity Party Member Aleksandr Barkashov saying to “write something down like ninety nine percent. Well, not ninety nine percent. Eighty-nine percent voted for the DPR and that is it.”¹⁷⁷ The Donetsk People’s Republic was created with a purported 89 percent of the oblast’s vote (the exact number recommended by Barkashov), while the Luhansk’s People’s Republic was created with 96 percent of the vote. Donetsk and Luhansk appealed to the Kremlin as places for

¹⁷⁵ Simon Deyner, Anna Nemtsova. “Eastern Ukrainians vote for self-rule in referendum opposed by West”, *The Washington Post*. Last updated May 11, 2014. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/ukraines-rebels-say-they-are-seeking-a-mandate-not-independence-in-referendum/2014/05/11/ac02688a-d8dc-11e3-aae8-c2d44bd79778_story.html.

¹⁷⁶ Dina Newman. “Ukraine rebels dream of New Russia”, *BBC News*. Last updated, October 23, 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29721466>.

¹⁷⁷ Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2015), p. 108.

“frozen conflict” because they had just the right blend of ethnic Russians to make it a plausible talking point that their popular movement was grassroots in nature and legitimate in its aims. It was an absolutely ideal environment for the GRU to create unrest and take root. Donetsk and Luhansk have the highest concentration of ethnic Russians outside of Crimea, but despite this a CNN Poll found out that in eastern Ukraine, only 37 percent of them preferred annexation by Russia while 49 percent preferred to stay within Ukraine.¹⁷⁸ Together, the People’s Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk referred to their collective territory as the Federated Republic of Novorossiia (New Russia). Conflict between the Ukrainian government and the separatists was inevitable, and the first skirmish began May 1 in the town of Slovyansk in the Donetsk Oblast. Following this, Ukraine’s acting president, Olexander Turchynov, declared military mobilization to quell the uprising in the Donbass region.¹⁷⁹

On May 25th, following the election of Petro Poroshenko to the Ukrainian presidency, the order was given to orchestrate an anti-terrorist operation in Donbass (the terrorist designation for the separatists is given to this day). Poroshenko promised the conflict would be quick and the rebels would be defeated. One of the most important strategic targets was quickly deemed to be the Donetsk International Airport. Forty separatists were killed in the opening shelling of the Donetsk airport¹⁸⁰. On June 12, the first Russian tanks were observed crossing the Ukrainian border, indicating their introduction into the eastern Ukrainian

¹⁷⁸ Richard Allen Greene. “Ukraine favors Europe over Russia, new CNN poll finds”, *CNN*. Last updated May 14, 2014. <http://www.cnn.com/2014/05/12/world/europe/ukraine-cnn-poll/>.

¹⁷⁹ Neil MacFarquhar, Andrew Higgins. “Russia to Start Drills, Warning Ukraine Over Mobilization”, *New York Times*. Last updated April 24, 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/25/world/europe/ukraine-crisis.html>.

¹⁸⁰ Andrew Jenkins, *Crisis In Crimea: A Historical Lead Up To The Conflict Between Russia And Ukraine* (Self-published via CreateSpace, 2014), p.64.

battlespace. On June 19, a Ukrainian transport plane carrying 49 soldiers was shot down by an advanced air-defense system believed to be a BUK missile launcher.¹⁸¹

As in any war-torn area, a humanitarian crisis emerged as people left the cities and towns controlled by the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republic in droves. Russia schemed a way to force Ukraine to act on the conflict one way or another, and they decided on the use of a humanitarian convoy to Donbass as their means for doing so. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called for humanitarian assistance to prevent "catastrophe" in the Donbass. The Kremlin ploy was extremely clever because it forced Ukraine to take a course of action one way or the other. They would either let the convoy pass without incident and look weak, or they would resist passage of the convoy by force, giving Russia the perfect pretext to invade while making the Ukrainian government appear inhumane to eastern Ukrainians by not allowing them to receive the aid. It echoes the strategic method used by Russia against Georgia in 2008. Likely recognizing this, Ukraine reluctantly let the convoy pass. On August 22, the convoy passed through a separatist-controlled checkpoint that Russia was specifically told not to use, and it set the precedent that Russia could deliver more of these convoys to Donetsk and Luhansk regardless of their contents.¹⁸²

The conflict was going poorly for the separatists at the onset of hostilities, and the Kremlin felt the need to put their finger on the scale to even things out by bringing in advanced weaponry across two borders controlled by Luhansk. One of the more advanced systems brought in to negate the threat of Ukrainian aircraft was the BUK missile system (SA-11 Gadfly), which is an advanced air-defense system operated by Russia. On July 17,

¹⁸¹ Ibid p.64.

¹⁸² Greg Botelho, Lindsay Isaac. "Russian convoy rolls into Ukraine: 'Humanitarian' aid or 'direct invasion'?", *CNN*. Last updated August 28, 2014. <http://www.cnn.com/2014/08/22/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/>.

Malaysian airlines passenger jet MH17 was shot down over eastern Ukraine carrying 298 passengers en route to Malaysia. The Dutch-led investigation concluded October 23, 2015, and showed that there is overwhelming evidence that it was a BUK air defense system that brought down flight MH17, but stopped short of blaming Russia directly. Multiple leads from journalists, forensic experts, and eyewitness accounts simply confirm the other evidence. A phone conversation between Girkin and the GRU at 4:40 states “we have just shot down a plane.”¹⁸³ It was initially boasted on DPR and LPR websites that “we have just shot down an AN-26 near Torez. It scattered somewhere around the Progress Mine. We warned them not to fly into our sky.”¹⁸⁴ Ukraine communications teams intercepted a key message from the separatist operators relating to MH17: “Our friends from high above are very much interested in the fate of the black boxes. I mean people from Moscow. They must be under our control. All that you find must not come into someone else’s hands.”¹⁸⁵ With plenty of evidence already available of Russian and separatist responsibility, the European Union and United States established much more severe and overarching economic sanctions targeting Russia’s banking and oil companies, most notably Russian oil giant Rosneft. Russia took the retaliatory measure of placing sanctions on Western food supplies, which had a major impact on the European agricultural economy and cost nations like Poland, the Netherlands, and France millions of dollars because Russia has been a massive market for

¹⁸³ Mariano Castillo. “Alleged phone call: ‘We have just shot down a plane’”, *CNN*. Last updated July 18, 2014. <http://www.cnn.com/2014/07/18/world/europe/ukraine-mh17-intercepted-audio/>.

¹⁸⁴ Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014) p.181.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid* p .141.

them.¹⁸⁶ The Kremlin and the separatists have denied any involvement to this day and have constantly tried to deflect the blame for their actions.

Initial investigations and eyewitness accounts counter the Kremlin narrative with compelling evidence. An interim report published in September found that based on the data from the aircraft's black box recorders, photographic and radar evidence, and satellite imagery, the Boeing was brought down by high-energy objects in its vicinity, consistent with an attack from the air or the ground.¹⁸⁷ A rebel fighter named Igor, who only gives his first name for security reasons, said that the battery's mission was to discourage SU-25 ground attack jets from attacking separatist targets in the area. A BUK missile had been launched against the Ukrainian jets half an hour before Malaysian Airlines flight 17 came down, forcing the pilots of the SU-25s to pull out¹⁸⁸. A farmer named Valentina Kovalenko was digging up potatoes in her field and described what she saw. "It took off, at first we thought a plane was crashing, but it was a rocket, then saw smoke from what I thought came from the Progress Mine in Torez" (a town nearly ten kilometers northeast of her position).¹⁸⁹ Olga Krasilnikova also said she saw a rocket sometime between 4 and 5 p.m. local time. She says "I saw it flying, it flew right over me, from the side, I saw smoke in the sky then I heard an explosion and I saw huge clouds of smoke."¹⁹⁰ This story correlates with actual events, as the aircraft was downed at 4:20 p.m. Perhaps the most compelling eyewitness account comes

¹⁸⁶ Stepan Kravchenko, Henry Meyer, "Putin Hits Tipping Point as Ukraine Tightens Rebel Noose", *Bloomberg Magazine*. Last updated August 07, 2014. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-08-06/putin-hits-tipping-point-as-ukraine-tightens-rebel-noose>.

¹⁸⁷ Chervonyi Zhovten, "Exclusive: From 'Red October' village, new evidence on downing of Malaysian plane over Ukraine", *Reuters*. Last updated March 12, 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/12/us-ukraine-crisis-airliner-idUSKBN0M81XF20150312>.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

from Pyotr Krasilnikova, who says “My mother and I were in the yard as it happened. There was such a bang that we sat down in the yard, our legs gave way beneath us. Then we got curious and went to the other side of the house to take a look. The rocket was here, it wiggled around, then some kind of rocket stage separated and then somewhere towards Lutuhyne and Torez I saw the plane fall apart in the air.”¹⁹¹ This also correlates, because BUK missiles often zig-zag in the air before radar lock is established and steers the missile to its target.

A Dutch BBC journalist, Jeroen Akkermans, used his journalist cover to his advantage and gathered evidence at the crash site that was small enough to conceal and not look suspicious. Akkermans states, “I visited the site several times, and after months of seeing evidence lying at the scene undisturbed, I decided to take some small fragments with me. At least three of them were later linked to a surface-to-air missile by forensics analysts and experts.”¹⁹² These same forensic experts ruled out any possibility of air-to-air munitions and thus any possibility of an aircraft shooting it down. British defense analysts linked the damaged hour glass-shaped fragment that Akkermans had to a 9N314 warhead, which arms at least one type of BUK missile system. German missile expert Robert Schmucker analyzed it as well and said, “looking at the damage, the velocity, the height of the fragments, it all adds up to a BUK missile, to me it is pure mathematics.”¹⁹³ The evidence collected by Akkermans is some of the most compelling to date, and his information and evidence were given to the Dutch team overseeing the investigation.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Jeroen Akkermans, “MH17 crash: My revealing fragments from east Ukraine”, *BBC News*. Last updated April 16, 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32283378>.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

The initial performance of the Ukrainian military surprised many experts both in the west and Russia, as it beat back the separatists convincingly from Slovyansk and the strategically important port city of Mariupol. Things were going so well for Poroshenko and the Ukrainian military that there were discussions about a diplomatic roadmap to end the conflict. Troops even captured a northern neighborhood in Luhansk. The front lines were soon the cities of Donetsk and Luhansk themselves, but the Ukrainian army stalled their offensive with the mindset of trying to encircle the cities. From the onset of hostilities in the east, the Ukraine government identified the fight against the separatists as a terrorist operation. Donetsk and Luhansk begged Russia for military support knowing they would fall without it.

When it became obvious that the Donetsk and Luhansk separatist movements would fail without immediate intervention, Russia became more directly involved. The movement was heavily Russian-influenced from the onset of hostilities, and one of the most influential players was retired GRU operative Igor Girkin, whose *nomme de guerre* was “Strelkov”, a famous Russian general. Girkin is a retired FSB operative who proudly claims he was the one who started the conflict in Ukraine, and was a vital organizational leader for the separatist militia in the onset of the fighting.¹⁹⁴ In July, Girkin was wounded and retreated from the warzone saying that he was going on vacation. He never came back from his vacation. He was eventually succeeded by Alexander Zakharchenko to give the movement a Ukrainian face in contrast to the former FSB colonel Girkin. Zakharchenko was originally

¹⁹⁴ Christopher Miller, “Ukraine's top intelligence agency deeply infiltrated by Russian spies”, *Mashable News*. Last updated December 30, 2014. <http://mashable.com/2014/12/30/russian-vs-ukrainian-spies/#IDIZrLMjjZqI>.

part of the pro-Russia “Oplot” militia, becoming the prime minister and proving himself on the battlefield, where he had already been shot twice.¹⁹⁵

The pro-separatist improvement on the battlefield was noted in late August, and Ukrainian forces all of a sudden were receiving fire from artillery with firepower and range much superior to their own. Tactical equality became a tactical advantage for the separatists very quickly, and it became increasingly clear that the advanced weapons and well-trained troops could only have come from Russia. On August 24, the separatists paraded Ukrainian POWs through central Donetsk and onlookers pelted the prisoners with beer bottles, eggs, and tomatoes.¹⁹⁶ Two days later, ten Russian paratroopers captured by the Ukrainian forces near the town of Dzerkalniy in Luhansk claimed that they were lost. They were wearing the same white arm-bands that the “little green men” were wearing in Crimea.¹⁹⁷ Russia has constantly maintained that Russian troops have never participated in the ongoing fighting in Ukraine, but very few have taken this seriously.

On August 27, Russian armor crossed the border at a resort town of 40,000 near the Sea of Azov called Novoazovsk, which had previously experienced no separatist activity. The few Ukrainian military members stationed there were quickly overwhelmed by Russian forces. According to Sergeant Alexsei Panko, “They crossed the border, took up positions,

¹⁹⁵ Anton Zverev, Sergei Karpukhin, “East Ukraine local replaces Russian at head of rebellion”, *Reuters*. Last updated August 07, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/07/us-ukraine-crisis-leaders-announcement-idUSKBN0G721C20140807>.

¹⁹⁶ Andrew E. Kramer, Michael Gordon. “Ukraine Reports Russian Invasion on a New Front”, *New York Times*. Last updated August 27, 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/28/world/europe/ukraine-russia-novoazovsk-crimea.html>.

¹⁹⁷ Maria Tsvetkova. “Men in green raise suspicions of east Ukrainian villagers”, *Reuters*. Last updated August 26, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/26/us-ukraine-crisis-fighters-idUSKBN0GQ1X520140826>.

and started shooting. This is now a war with Russia.”¹⁹⁸ The day before, a farmer in the village of Kolosky said he counted 38 armored personnel carriers, two fueling trucks, and numerous transport vehicles filled with men crossing the border. It was a brilliant move because it stretched the Ukrainian lines thinner to cover what would have been an unimpeded corridor to Mariupol. It also provided relief to Donetsk and Luhansk separatist fighters and the Russian military units with them. The war was proceeding catastrophically badly for the Ukrainian military, which was being beaten back on all fronts. This would not have been possible without considerable Russian involvement. Military analyst Paul Floyd believes that without this continued support the rebels could not have lasted for more than a month or two.¹⁹⁹ U.S. State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said, “Russian incursions into Ukraine indicate a Russian-directed counteroffensive is underway.”²⁰⁰ The Kremlin dug in its feet, determined that the Donbass separatist movement would not fail on Putin’s watch.

When the Russians tipped the scales in the separatists’ favor by providing armor and manpower, it became in Ukraine’s interest to settle the conflict diplomatically, and after negotiations the Minsk I Accords were signed on September 16. They were intended to end hostilities in the Donbass and establish a line-of-contact from which heavy weapons would be pulled back. A prisoner exchange was one of the higher-profile successes of the accords. One of the key elements of the accords was the introduction of observers from the

¹⁹⁸ Michael B. Kelley, Brett LoGiurato. “Ukraine Sergeant: This is now a War with Russia”, *Business Insider Magazine*. Last updated August 27, 2015. <http://www.businessinsider.com/ukrainian-sargent-this-is-now-a-war-with-russia-2014-8>.

¹⁹⁹ Stepan Kravchenko, Henry Meyer, “Putin Hits Tipping Point as Ukraine Tightens Rebel Noose”, *Bloomberg Magazine*. Last updated August 07, 2014. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-08-06/putin-hits-tipping-point-as-ukraine-tightens-rebel-noose>.

²⁰⁰ Alison Quin. “Report: New Russian offensive likely, and separatists would have advantage”, *Kyiv Post*. Last updated April 01, 2015. <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/kyiv-post-plus/report-new-russian-offensive-likely-and-separatists-would-have-advantage-385076.html>.

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), who would supposedly report any violations to the ceasefire. There would be 250 OSCE observers on the line of conflict.²⁰¹ The OSCE was eventually shown to have no teeth. Its teams were constantly turned away from “restricted areas” by the separatists (especially along the Russia-Ukraine border) in blatant violation of the Minsk I Accords. Because the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics are separate entities, it gives the Kremlin deniability and they can say that they do not have influence over the separatists’ actions. This is another example of how Putin and Russia skirt international standards when they see fit.²⁰²

This extends to the treatment of Ukrainian captives. In regards to torture, Amnesty International has found instances of both sides torturing their prisoners (the Aydar Battalion is the most notable culprit of torture by pro-Ukrainian forces), but only on DPR and LPR territory is such egregious activity practiced on the civilian population if they are showing any signs of dissent. For instance, early in the conflict, the mayor of Horlivka tore down the DPR flag and disappeared soon after. His body was found in a river.²⁰³ On August 25, a woman in Donetsk accused of being a spy was forced to hold a sign at the city’s main street that read, “She kills our children.”²⁰⁴ Human Rights Watch has noted that civilians have been subject to torture, hard labor, or degrading treatment by the rebels.²⁰⁵ There are

²⁰¹ Frederick Dahl, Louise Ireland. “Russia blocks monitoring of more Ukraine border checkpoints: U.S.”, *Reuters*. Last updated October 22, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/22/us-ukraine-crisis-osce-idUSKCN0IB23X20141022>.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014) p.135.

²⁰⁴ Andrew E. Kramer, Michael Gordon. “Ukraine Reports Russian Invasion on a New Front”, *New York Times*. Last updated August 27, 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/28/world/europe/ukraine-russia-novoazovsk-crimea.html>.

²⁰⁵ Eyeder Peralta, “Ukrainian Prime Minister Says Government Will Seek NATO Membership”, *National Public Radio*. Last updated August 29, 2014. <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/08/29/344202662/ukrainian-prime-minister-says-government-will-seek-nato-membership>.

countless other instances of people disappearing if they are even suspected of activity against the separatists.

Some of the fiercest fighting between the Ukrainians and the separatists took place at the Donetsk International Airport. The airport was built for the European soccer championship that was co-hosted between Poland and Ukraine. It cost \$900 million and was a state of the art facility built for the occasion. It is now in ruins. The symbolism of the airport remained high for months, and the Russian military sent everyone from mercenaries to paratroopers and even Spetsnaz to dislodge the Ukrainians who for months held out against the constant artillery barrages and assaults. The Ukrainians defending the airport were affectionately nicknamed cyborgs because they fought with so much ferocity and showed no fear. One account from intercepted Russian documents gives Russian troop casualties as 382 dead and over 500 wounded.²⁰⁶ Despite a sustained effort, the Ukrainians lost the airport on January 15, 2015 to the separatist forces.²⁰⁷

The Russians and separatists were using the Minsk I Accords merely as a rearming and regrouping opportunity. Soon after taking the airport, separatists seized a 500 square-kilometer swath of Ukrainian territory between Novoazovsk and Donetsk on January 20. Novoazovsk and Donetsk were now connected by land. Four days later, separatists shelled Mariupol and 30 civilians were killed with 102 wounded.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ Oksana Grytsenko. "Severe fights go on near Donetsk airport, more Russian troops reportedly enter Ukraine", *Kyiv Post*. Last updated January 19, 2015. <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/kyiv-post-plus/severe-fights-go-on-near-donetsk-airport-more-russian-troops-reportedly-enter-ukraine-377783.html>.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ivan Verstyuk. "Shelling in Mariupol: 30 people killed, 102 wounded", *Kyiv Post*. Last updated January 24, 2015. <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/shelling-in-mariupol-10-civilians-killed-46-wounded-378287.html>.

On February 12, the Minsk II Accords were signed after long and sustained negotiation between Ukraine and Russia with France and Germany serving as primary mediators. Angela Merkel and Francois Hollande see this diplomatic effort as the last chance to prevent a long and sustained “frozen conflict.” Among the most important agreements reached were that Donetsk and Luhansk would both be given special economic status that would make them immune from any economic agreements reached between the European Union and Kiev. There would also be amnesty of separatists in the territories, and the preference of the Russian language for the two oblasts. Finally, Debaltseve would not be part of the ceasefire, a concession strong-armed by Russia so the separatist forces could gain the strategically important town before the ceasefire went into effect.

The most intense engagement prior to the establishment of the Minsk II ceasefire was the capture of the strategic town of Debaltseve, which linked Donetsk and Luhansk via highway and rail. Russian troops and armor crossed the border in droves in order quickly to capture the town and suffered high casualties during the engagement because, according to Russian forces there, the local separatists would not take part in the fighting because they believed it was too dangerous. According to the OSCE, during the four days following the signing of Minsk II, the DPR and LPR forces broke the ceasefire 250 times in other areas along the Minsk II line of conflict even if Debaltseve is not included.²⁰⁹ Losing Debaltseve was a major morale blow for the Ukrainian military and a major victory for the separatists and their Russian counterparts.

²⁰⁹ “Ukraine rebels have broken truce 250 times: US”, *Yahoo News*. Last updated, February 19, 2015. <http://news.yahoo.com/ukraine-rebels-broken-truce-250-times-us-224802917.html>.

On May 10, Sergeant Alexander Alexandrov and Captain Yevgeny Yerofeyev, two members of Russia's 3rd Non-Divisional Brigade, were wounded and captured by Ukrainian forces in the Luhansk oblast and were brought to a hospital in Kiev for treatment. Both have admitted that they are servicemen of the Russian military, and had been operating in Ukraine since March 6. Both fighters are from Togliatti, a town near the Volga River.²¹⁰ The Ukrainian forces that captured them said there were fourteen Russians and that they killed all but two of them, losing one of their own in the process. Since Russia says these men are not from their military forces, Ukrainian lawmakers have said they will be tried as terrorists with a minimum fifteen-year prison sentence.²¹¹ This was brilliant on Ukraine's part because it put Russian leadership in a bind. Military spokesman Andriy Lysenko proudly boasted "the leadership of the Russian Federation will have difficulty saying these two guys just got lost," alluding to the dismissal of involvement by the ten Russian soldiers apprehended earlier.²¹² Despite the admission and detailed accounts from both Alexandrov and Yerofeyev, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov still towed the line that there are no Russian military members in Ukraine.

This conflict has created a catastrophic refugee situation. The Russian "supply trucks," even if fully loaded with humanitarian aid, would have never been enough to feed those trapped in the conflict. Nemtsov estimates that approximately 800,000 Ukrainians have been displaced.²¹³ At least 400,000 have fled to Russia. Some have been sent to larger

²¹⁰ Dmitriy Zaks, "Ukraine vows to show off captured Russian soldiers", *Yahoo News*. Last updated May 18, 2015. <http://news.yahoo.com/ukraine-vows-show-off-captured-russian-soldiers-111125695.html>.

²¹¹ Richard Balmforth, Pavel Polityuk, "Ukraine says it will prosecute captured Russian soldiers for terrorist acts", *Reuters*. Last updated May 18, 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/18/us-ukraine-crisis-military-idUSKBN0030TE20150518>.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Boris Nemtsov. *Putin. War*. (Moscow, Russia: Free Russia Foundation, 2015), p. 59.

regular cities of Russia like Perm, Khabarovsk, and Vladivostok, but some have been sent to dying backwaters like Murmansk, Yakutsk, and Magadan far from any civilization. Source documents seem to indicate that they still prefer that isolation and logistical difficulty to being in a war zone, which should not be surprising. Locals are upset the refugees are given the precious jobs and opportunities that are hard to get in these towns. Some also looked to Western Ukraine to escape the conflict in Kiev and Lviv. The refugees quickly found the locals very kind, providing them food, basic living supplies, and temporary housing in hotels. These were not the “fascists” about which the separatist leaders warned them. It is as much as they can afford to give, as they are under tight constraints due to the falling value of the Hryvnia (Ukrainian currency).²¹⁴

For those who remain, there is not much love for the DPR or LPR pseudo-states. There are no sincere efforts from the DPR or LPR governments to create jobs or social or government institutions within the territories. Luhansk in particular had no electricity or running water for 17 days in August. An estimated 104,000 are without water, electricity, or gas in the Donetsk Oblast.²¹⁵ Both Ukraine and Russia feared an outbreak of disease, and residents were standing in line for food. Banking and infrastructure do not work, and businesses have failed at an alarming rate. Kiev stopped providing state funds for the rebellious regions in November. There are no jobs, food is scarce, people do not feel protected, and there are constant complaints that the foreign Russian fighters harass and steal from the citizens. The food crisis has also been used as a recruiting tool for those who

²¹⁴ Krystof Chamonikolas, Daryna Krasnolutska. “Ukraine Tightens Capital Controls as Hryvnia Drop Fuels Risk”, *Bloomberg Magazine*. Last updated February 23, 2015. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-02-23/ukraine-bonds-fall-for-7th-day-to-record-after-kharkiv-bombing> .

²¹⁵ “Ukraine crisis: Donetsk without water after shelling”, *BBC News*. Last updated November 19, 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-30116126>.

remain to join the separatist fighters so that they can feed their families. Despite the militant clampdown on the area, protests have been staged showing disdain for their new officials and government. The most high profile incident occurred in the separatist-held town of Sverdlovsk in the Luhansk Oblast on November 17, 2014. The protesters demanded the Russians leave the city, and clashes ensued between the local separatists and Cossacks from Russia.²¹⁶ The slogan “Sverdlovsk is Ukraine” was spray-painted on the Executive Committee building. Protestors also poured blue and yellow paint on the military recruitment office and chanted, “Get out of the city! Get Lost!” The Cossacks tried to intervene, but the local militia blocked them. A rally of women took place the day before in the town of Chervonopartyzansk.²¹⁷

The Kremlin has thus far been hesitant to attempt any annexation of east Ukraine, not from a punitive diplomatic standpoint, but because their already fragile economy would not be able to undertake the rehabilitation effort to restore the war-torn infrastructure of the Donbass, an area known as a rust-belt that has been a money pit since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Crimean infrastructure alone will already cost millions of dollars (Russia plans on investing \$12 billion in the region over the next five years), and for a nation that is already under considerable economic stress, adding the Donbas to this would be an unwise fiscal overreach. However, it is the absolutely ideal environment to prop up pseudo-states for a frozen conflict that creates an economic drain on the Ukraine. It also makes the Ukrainians look politically weak and unable effectively to govern their own country.

²¹⁶ Anna Dolgov, “Report Says 64 Pensioners in Eastern Ukraine Starved to Death”, *The Moscow Times*. Last updated November 24, 2014. <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/report-says-64-pensioners-in-eastern-ukraine-starved-to-death/511352.html>.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

This does not mean that Russia is not already paying a high price to support this movement. In fact, numbers derived from Boris Nemtsov's research have shown that the Kremlin is paying dearly to foster the unrest.²¹⁸ Nonetheless, Putin still finds the price to be worth it because even the high cost is worth not seeing a successful Ukraine at Russia's doorstep. It is in Putin's interests to see Ukraine falter, and maybe even fail. It gives him a perfect example to demonstrate to ethnic Russians, who adulate him, that these "color" revolutions are a destructive influence. It is important for Putin to keep up the tempo in the Donbass because it thrusts Donetsk and Luhansk to the forefront of the Ukrainian government's main problems and makes it difficult to engage with the country's many pressing economic issues. It is important from a secondary standpoint because it makes the annexation of Crimea look more and more like a foregone conclusion. Finally, if Putin is able to keep his grasp on Donetsk and Luhansk, it assures Russia's say in Ukrainian affairs in any of their political or diplomatic decision making process, not to mention continuing economic leverage with natural gas and other commodities. The role of the Russian military is now one of training in an attempt to leave less of a footprint on the conflict. It is training separatists on towed artillery, multiple rocket-launch (MRL) systems, and other complicated systems like the BUK missile launcher.²¹⁹

Kharkiv and Odessa have been on a precarious edge and the tension could be cut with a knife, but multiple attempts to organize astroturf movements to create "People's Republics" in these oblasts have thus far been unsuccessful. Pro-Russian protesters have already staged

²¹⁸ Boris Nemtsov. *Putin. War.* (Moscow, Russia: Free Russia Foundation, 2015), p. 60-63.

²¹⁹ Nataliya Vasilyeva. "Russia's role in Ukraine seen shifting to training rebels", *Washington Post*. Last updated April 03, 2015. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/apr/3/russias-role-in-ukraine-seen-shifting-to-training-/?page=all>.

protests in these cities. In Odessa, an anti-Jewish pamphlet was circulated calling for their registration on March 23, 2014. Paradoxically, it was designed to feed the Russian argument of Nazism in Ukraine, but it was found to be a ruse organized by a Russian Neo-Nazi, Anton Rayevsky.²²⁰ He was deported and banned from entering Ukraine after the pamphlet distribution. The most violent of these follow-on separatist efforts took place on May 5 in Odessa, when pro-separatists took over a trade union building. Both sides began fighting, which spiraled out of control, and the trade union building caught fire with 42 pro-Russian protestors inside. Investigators have not identified the individuals responsible, and they probably will not be able to and cynically enough might not want to anyway given the current highly adversarial climate. The Kremlin has used it as a focal point of Ukrainian inaction and has protested the event extensively. A plot to foster a “People’s Republic” in Odessa was also foiled on October 14, 2014.²²¹ In 2015 alone there have been ten bombings in Odessa and the surrounding area, and thirty of the suspected saboteurs were arrested by Ukrainian law enforcement with the help of Ukrainian intelligence. The Ukraine Crisis Media Center has said the bombings have had a considerable psychological effect that achieve a sense of hopelessness and undermine faith in elected officials and their ability to bring stability and security far from the front lines.²²²

Bloody protests have been frequent in Kharkiv following the Euromaiden protests. Kharkiv is a dangerous and volatile area because it is only twenty kilometers from the border

²²⁰ “Ukraine crisis: Donetsk anti-Semitic leaflets stir old fears”. *BBC News*. Last updated April 18, 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27088183>.

²²¹ “Ukraine Says It Uncovered Plot to Create People's Republic in Odessa”, *The Moscow Times*. Last updated October 28, 2014. <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/ukraine-says-it-uncovered-plot-to-create-people-s-republic-in-odessa/510177.html>.

²²² Nolan Peterson, “Odessa Holds Its Breath for an Invasion”, *Newsweek Magazine*. Last updated April 24, 2015. <http://www.newsweek.com/odessa-holds-its-breath-invasion-324794>.

with Russia, and busloads of Russians were brought across the border to participate in the multiple pro-Russian protests in March and April 2014. On March 15, 2014, pro-Russian protestors broke into a Ukrainian library and burned any books they could find written in Ukrainian. A Muscovite daredevil scaled a government building, took down the Ukrainian flag, and hoisted the Russian red, white, and blue flag in its place. (A Ukrainian protestor would return the favor in kind in Moscow atop a Soviet hotel. Sizeable protests and counter-protests met frequently with confrontation and sometimes fatalities. On September 29, 2014, a statue of Lenin was toppled in the city square by masked men. There was hardly any public protest afterwards, but a pro-Russian group called the Kharkiv Partisans issued a statement that if any more Soviet memorials were taken down, five Ukrainian citizens would be killed.²²³ The city experienced multiple bombings between October and December of 2014, including a hospital, a Ukrainian National Guard Base, and a rock bar that was known to host pro-Ukrainian meetings. The most recent bombing, on February 22, killed three people and wounded fifteen.²²⁴

Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine's fourth largest city, initially had pro-Russian protests as well, but had been quelled much quicker due to a no-nonsense oligarch mayor, Ivan Ivanovych Kulichenko who owns Privat Bank and has paid for his own militia (two thousand active, twenty thousand in reserve). Lucrative bounties were also put out for the capture of any individuals proven to take part in pro-separatist activity, even as high as \$500,000 for a

²²³ Nolan Peterson, "Death Threats for Destroying Soviet Symbols", *Newsweek Magazine*. Last updated April 16, 2015. <http://www.newsweek.com/death-threats-destroying-soviet-symbols-322772>.

²²⁴ Linda Kinstler, "A Ukrainian City Holds Its Breath", *Foreign Policy Magazine*. Last updated February 20, 2015. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/02/20/the-ukrainian-separatists-next-target-kharkiv-ukraine-donbass-russia-war>.

lead organizer.²²⁵ Dnipropetrovsk still poses a unique situation because the mayor was forced to resign by Poroshenko after falling out with the president. While there are fears the militia could cause political trouble with Kiev, it is still affectionately known as “Lviv of the East” by other Ukrainians, and its citizens have been active in putting down any pro-Russian trouble in the city. Civilians have also have taken it upon themselves to undertake basic training on the outskirts of the city, and the militia has been willing to help. They recognize that not everyone can take part in the fighting because they have jobs and families, but also know that if fighting comes to their doorstep, they will at least have basic fighting capacity and be able to follow orders. The fighting is only 150 miles away, so they know it is a good idea to be ready despite the current calm in the city.

Kiev has not been immune from the conflict either, and bomb threats have been issued in the metros and polling stations to create chaos and disorder. The calls were traced and originated in Luhansk. It is a simple method to sow fear, but effective. The Ukrainian capital city was remarkably calm following the protests, which went against the Kremlin narrative that it was a lawless city with anarchy in the aftermath of the Euromaiden. The Ukrainian intelligence service, the SBU, has also been instrumental in keeping the capital safe from harm from complex attacks that were stopped before they could take place.

Initially, however, the SBU was also left devastated with hard drives destroyed, their headquarters ransacked by obvious professionals, and senior leaders turning up in Moscow after the Euromaiden riots. They had to start from scratch with new recruits with little experience, but have done remarkably well given the circumstances and have prevented

²²⁵ Eline Gordts. “Ukrainian Billionaire Puts Bounty On Head Of Russian Saboteurs”, *Huffington Post*. Last updated June 17, 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/04/17/ukraine-bounty-saboteurs_n_5167762.html.

attacks and broken up insurgency cells in Kiev, Kharkiv, and Odessa since hostilities began. Perhaps the most important was the arrest of Oleg Bahtiyarov on March 31st. Bahtiyarov's task was to enlist two hundred provocateurs who would use Molotov cocktails, bats, and sliding ladders to storm the Rada for \$500 each to disrupt and discredit the government. He belonged to the Eurasian Youth Union of Russia, and was a student of Dugin's at Moscow State University.²²⁶ A second high-profile attempt at destabilization of the capital occurred on October 22, 2014. The Russian NGO (non-governmental organization) Hromadska Initiativa (Public Initiative) was to carry out an attack on high-ranking officials and critical infrastructure. The nicknames used were Victor, The Architect, and The Student. According to the SBU, all were recruited by Russian intelligence and given arms including assault rifles, RPGs, and a portable air defense system. The same figures were seen scuffling with police the week before²²⁷. The most recent SBU haul took place on Victory Day, May 9, 2015. One hundred twenty members of "Alfa", the SBU's most elite unit, stormed nineteen properties across Ukraine and arrested twenty individuals found with weapons caches and intending to play the role of Ukrainian nationalists who would attack elderly Soviet veterans and post footage of it on the internet to enrage ethnic Russians and cause further unrest.²²⁸

The conflict has been devastating to the Ukrainian military, and president Poroshenko has conceded that the conflict no longer can be won militarily as two-thirds of their armor has been destroyed in combat. The military had performed reasonably well given its level of

²²⁶ James D. Heiser, *"The American Empire Should Be Destroyed": Alexander Dugin and the Perils of Immanentized Eschatology*, (Malone, TX: Repristination Press, 2014), p. 9-10.

²²⁷ Damien Sharkov, "Ukrainian Intelligence Seize Arms Cache as They Uncover 'Russian' Plot to Attack Kiev", *Newsweek Magazine*. Last updated October 22, 2014. <http://europe.newsweek.com/ukrainian-intelligence-seize-arms-cache-they-uncover-russian-plot-attack-kiev-279031>.

²²⁸ Maxim Tucker, "Ukraine claims to foil Kremlin plot for new breakaway state", *Newsweek Magazine*. Last updated May 12, 2015. <http://europe.newsweek.com/ukraine-claims-foil-kremlin-plot-new-breakaway-state-327171>.

training, manpower, and weaponry, which were all sub-par. Ukrainian troops have complained that the people in command give indecisive and vague orders. The push to the rebel-held east went well until military leadership wanted to wait to move into the cities, which was obviously a fateful decision. They were afraid of the close-quarters combat of an urban environment and knew they would have sustained high casualties if they moved in. The Rada has recognized the need to overhaul defense spending, and has increased it to five percent of their total budget, but with the state of the military and the challenge they are facing, it was a move that should have occurred prior to Crimea's annexation.²²⁹ At the end of 2014 the Rada also overwhelmingly voted to repeal Ukraine's non-bloc status so they could move to join a military alliance like NATO.²³⁰ In the same legislation, the Rada signed legislation that would ban Ukraine from becoming a member of the Eurasian Customs Union. NATO Secretary General Rogh Rasmussen said that Ukraine will be a member of NATO if it so wishes and fulfills the necessary criteria. Rasmussen stated "we adhere to the principle that each country has the right to decide its foreign and security policy for itself without interference from the outside."²³¹ Rasmussen also states that Georgia and Ukraine can join NATO despite the fact that some territory in their respective countries is not under their control. Eastern European countries have been open to this prospect, but countries like France, Germany, and Italy are much more skeptical of allowing Georgia and Ukraine into

²²⁹ Amanda Taub. "Pro-Kiev militias are fighting Putin, but has Ukraine created a monster it can't control?" *Vox World*. Last updated February 20, 2015. <http://www.vox.com/2015/2/20/8072643/ukraine-volunteer-battalion-danger>.

²³⁰ Richard Blamforth. "Ukraine seeks NATO membership in response to Russia joining war", *Reuters*. Last updated August 29, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/29/us-ukraine-crisis-nato-idUSKBN0GT1BT20140829>.

²³¹ Katya Gorchinskaya, "Ukraine moves to shed its non-aligned status in hopes of becoming a NATO member", *Kyiv Post*. Last updated August 29, 2014. <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/ukraine-moves-to-shed-its-non-aligned-status-in-a-hope-to-become-a-nato-member-362631.html>.

the alliance. Ukrainian and Western military officials are not optimistic about any near-term chances of Ukraine joining NATO.

The Ukrainian military has found militias absolutely critical to their manpower despite their controversial and unabashed far right-wing ideals. There are estimates that there are as many as thirty militias operating with the Ukrainian military.²³² Oligarch mercenaries, soccer hooligans, and political idealists are the primary participants in these militias, but there are foreigners as well. Some of the militias even have representation in the Rada, such as the Minister of Internal Affairs, Arsen Avakov. The fact that militias like the Azov Brigade, Aydar Battalion, and Pravi Sektor use SS insignia proudly is possibly the biggest propaganda piece that Russia has to work with for their narrative.

In spring 2015, the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom offered to deploy trainers to Western Ukraine to offer advice and training to the Ukrainian military in a training exercise known as Operation Fearless Guardian.²³³ Ukrainian officers taking part in the training said that many of the tactics and methods being shown to them by U.S. trainers were tactics that were not effective in the war that they are fighting. They had a valid point. Ukrainian troops had very little use for the IED training they had received, but they thought the concealment methods used in hiding from UAVs was very useful to them. Many of the U.S. paratrooper instructors were seasoned veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan and are fluent in the asymmetrical warfare that they had experienced. In Donbass, there are both conventional

²³² Amanda Taub. "Pro-Kiev militias are fighting Putin, but has Ukraine created a monster it can't control?" Vox World. Last updated February 20, 2015. <http://www.vox.com/2015/2/20/8072643/ukraine-volunteer-battalion-danger>.

²³³ Nolan Peterson. "U.S. Troops Prepare Ukraine Soldiers for Russian Onslaught" *Newsweek Magazine*. Last updated May 14, 2015. <http://www.newsweek.com/us-troops-prepare-ukraine-soldiers-russian-onslaught-331906>.

and unconventional operations underway; it is a true hybrid war. The Americans are used to air superiority and firepower, something the Ukrainian officers were very quick to point out was not an advantage they have. While it is practiced in the American military, there are very few American trainers who had first-hand experience engaging tanks on the battlefield with infantry. Very few, if any, were attuned to the dusty Cold War playbooks that needed to be brought back out. In contrast, the Ukrainians subscribe to Soviet military doctrine and are used to waiting for orders from the higher levels of the chain of command. They are not used to lieutenants and captains making key decisions on the battlefield, but the U.S. paratroopers were encouraging them to do this. Despite these issues, both the U.S. trainers and Ukrainian trainees felt they learned something from each other and it was a good experience for both sides. The United States commander made it very clear that they would be nowhere near the front lines, despite any Russian rhetoric that was being drummed up saying otherwise.

The nationalist militias have nonetheless been effective fighting forces and have been equally efficient in recruitment. The Azov Brigade's Facebook page appeals to recruits that "you will find nothing here but trouble, war, adventure and perhaps even death, but you will definitely have some memories and lifelong friends."²³⁴ Most of the recruits have come from Norway, Sweden, and Finland, but some have also come from France and Spain. The Azov Brigade states they have twelve fighters currently on the battlefield with twenty-four more they hope to bring to Kiev and send to the front lines. One of the Swedish recruits is an expert in urban warfare, another is a sniper from Sweden who has a five-thousand Euro bounty on his head by pro-Russian separatists. He joined because of the Berkut snipers in

²³⁴ Christopher Allen. "Meet the European Fighters Who Have Gone to War in Ukraine", *Vice News*. Last updated August 24, 2015. <http://www.vice.com/read/european-british-fighters-in-ukraine-920>.

the Kiev protests, and wanted to fight against those snipers and protect others from sharing the same fate as earlier sniper victims. Interestingly enough, there are estimated to be 100 ethnic Russians fighting in Ukraine with pro-Kiev militias.²³⁵ One of these Russians who interviewed with the Kyiv Post, who does not give his name out of concern for his family's safety, used to work for the FSB. He says that, "Every Russian is indoctrinated starting from the cradle with the ideas of Moscow as the Third Rome and war against the whole world."²³⁶ He also jokes that his former friends who are fighting for the separatists told him that Kiev is "controlled by fascists and Jews." There are also about 100 Georgians fighting with the militias.²³⁷ On April 23 2015, the Rada ratified a law to make it easier for these foreign fighters to gain citizenship to Ukraine.

There are strong worries that the militias may grow too strong and powerful to control, and that if events play out the wrong way, they could turn their weapons on Kiev. Poroshenko has already threatened to disband Aydar Battalion, but after they showed up at the Rada he rescinded the threat. The militias grow in power and legitimacy every day. The fact that foreigners are fighting on both sides goes against both of the Minsk Accords, but the level of Russian involvement in the separatist opposition exponentially exceeds any foreign involvement on the Ukrainian side.

Ukraine is experiencing economic warfare just as they are a military war, and natural gas has been the lever Russia uses. Ukraine imports 80 percent of its petrol and natural gas

²³⁵ Oleg Sukhov. "Foreigners Who Fight And Die For Ukraine: Russians join Ukrainians to battle Kremlin in Donbas", *Kyiv Post*. Last updated April 24, 2015. <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/kyiv-post-plus/foreigners-who-fight-and-die-for-ukraine-russians-join-ukrainians-to-battle-kremlin-in-donbas-386999.html>.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Alison Quinn. "Foreigners Who Fight And Die For Ukraine: Even those killed get no recognition", *Kyiv Post*. Last updated April 24, 2015. <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/kyiv-post-plus/foreigners-who-fight-and-die-for-ukraine-even-those-killed-get-no-recognition-387000.html>.

from the Russian Federation, and it is crucial to keeping Ukraine's population warm during the long, harsh winters. It is not just Ukraine that is dependent on Russian fossil fuels, but the European continent as a whole. The Kremlin has threatened to use fossil fuels as a weapon in the economic struggle, and has stated that if Ukraine does not pay its gas bill that Russia will not just shut off gas to Ukraine, but to mainland Europe as well. In a world that has such high dependency on fossil fuels, this is a very strong weapon to use.

The Ukraine leadership has been appealing for loans from world powers because of their dire financial situation. Poroshenko has repeatedly appealed to various organizations and governments, and has been able to get a \$15 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund thanks to the honest steps of anti-corruption legislation that have been passed by the Rada. The United States has assisted with a loan of \$1 billion, and the European Union has provided \$1.4 billion. For all the aid provided, it still might not be enough to prevent the nation from going into default, which is what Russia has wanted all along since the Euromaiden. Poroshenko has also appealed for military aid, telling the U.S. Congress that, "warm blankets and clothes won't stop the Russian Army."²³⁸ Even if hostilities were to end right now, according to Nemtsov's research, the current estimate to rebuild the Donbass would stand at approximately \$225 million.²³⁹

So far the conflict has killed over 8,000 people officially, and scores more Russian military members and mercenaries unofficially. The Minsk II Accords have been broken multiple times, and it appears that the agreement will dissolve like its predecessor did, and

²³⁸ Brian Bonner. "Poroshenko uses his time wisely in front of US Congress", *Kyiv Post*. Last updated September 18, 2014. <http://www.kyivpost.com/opinion/op-ed/poroshenko-uses-his-time-wisely-in-front-of-us-congress-365141.html>.

²³⁹ Boris Nemtsov. *Putin. War*. (Moscow, Russia: Free Russia Foundation, 2015), p. 62.

under the same circumstances. While there have been ceasefire infringements noted on both sides by the OSCE, the scales are largely tipped by the separatists, who use provocative sniper fire and mortar fire from civilian centers to provoke the Ukrainian forces.²⁴⁰ It gives Russia and the local separatist forces time to regroup, rearm, and harass the Ukrainian army. Over 100 Ukrainian military members have died since the Minsk II Accords. Mariupol residents constantly live in fear that they will be the separatists' next target, and the only town between them and the Russian-led separatist forces is Shyrokyne, where Ukraine has established a line of defense for what they fear is an upcoming engagement. Russian armor is being moved across the border at its highest rate since the start of the conflict, and civilians are being moved from hospitals in Donetsk and Horlivka with tents being erected near them. Alexander Zakharchenko has made his intentions clear: "Kramatorsk, Mariupol, and Slovyansk; they'll be ours."²⁴¹ It remains to be seen if this is just "maskirovka" or a true threat that will be carried through. One thing is certain: The separatists will not be able to carry this off without a sizeable Russian contingent alongside them. Could this be preparation for an actual attack, or is this next ploy a ruse to put more diplomatic pressure on Poroshenko?

²⁴⁰ Matyslav Chernov. "Ukraine separatists claim victory in battle for airport", *Boston Globe*. Last updated January 16, 2015. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/news/world/2015/01/16/ukraine-separatists-claim-victory-battle-for-airport/40CSNHdHDX2am1DVnUltWO/story.html>.

²⁴¹ Daryna Krasnolutska, Volodymyr Verbyany, Kateryna Choursina. "Ukraine Rebels Vow to Retake Cities as Vote Nears", *Bloomberg Magazine*. Last updated October 23, 2014. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-10-23/pro-russian-rebels-vow-to-retake-ukrainian-cities>.

MASKIROVKA: RUSSIAN INTELLIGENCE AND MILITARY DOCTRINE

The reader may have noticed in the previous chapter that there was no deep examination of “why” Putin and his administration are behaving the way they were. Many of those details will be looked at with more specificity in this chapter. These include key decision-making processes and the triggers that made Putin act the way that he did in Ukraine. During the Cold War, the communists harnessed the human condition, and propaganda was its most powerful force of manipulation. The Kremlin has since perfected this manipulation of the information battlespace. It is in the strategic military and intelligence philosophy of maskirovka (which translates in Russian to “something masked”) that we see the Russian Federation’s masterstrokes of deception in full practice, and the Kremlin has dedicated millions of dollars to a diplomatic, military, media, and intelligence apparatus that has been so effective against Western diplomatic efforts to contain it. Equally important is how the Ukrainian conflict is portrayed to the Russian people themselves. The Kremlin knows that controlling the information battlespace enhances prospects of success, while losing it exacerbates the possibility of failure. This complex brand of disinformation and deception is one of the most crucial elements of the Putin regime’s approach and implementation, and it has been an indispensable element in his objective of keeping his adversaries guessing and his own people anywhere from docile to highly supportive. Churchill once said, “In wartime, truth is so precious she should always be accompanied by a bodyguard of lies.” The Kremlin could not agree more, even if one body of lies often masks another simply to keep adversaries off balance.

Maskirovka: The Doctrine

Maskirovka is defined in Russian military doctrine as a form of support or combat operations, its purpose being to conceal the activities and disposition of friendly troops, and to deceive the enemy with regards to grouping and intentions of such troops.²⁴² Generally, maskirovka conveys only a short-term advantage, and it is heavily reliant on surprise.

According to the same Russian military doctrine, “Surprise makes it possible to inflict heavy losses upon the enemy in short periods of time, to paralyze his will, and deprive him of the opportunity of organizing resistance.”²⁴³ There are five key methods to maskirovka: surprise, kamufliazh (camouflage), demonstrativnye manevry (maneuvers intended to deceive), skrytie (concealment), imitatsia (the use of decoys and military dummies), and dezinformatsia (disinformation; a knowing attempt to deceive). Concealment focuses on shrouding movement of military force by utilizing camouflage and concealment, or moving in the forests or hours of darkness. Simulation focuses on using decoys or other physical means of masking forces. Demonstration is the utilization of troop movement to give a false representation of intent, such as concentrating troops in an area that is not to be attacked. Disinformation, perhaps the most favored component of maskirovka used by the Russian Federation, uses false press reports or broadcasts or bending information that forces the adversary to question what is true and what is not. According to Krueger, “Soviet commanders will continually seek to achieve new elements of surprise,”²⁴⁴ and the generals of the Russian Federation will be no different. Gerasimov is beyond question the Kremlin’s

²⁴² Daniel W. Krueger, *Maskirovka: What's in it for Us?* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military Studies Command and General Staff College, 1987), p. 3.

²⁴³ Gregory Butts, *Russian Deception Operations: Another Tool for the Kit Bag* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military Studies Command and General Staff College, 1999) p. 21.

²⁴⁴ Daniel W. Krueger, *Maskirovka: What's in it for Us?* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military Studies Command and General Staff College, 1987), p. 17.

most influential general in the post-Soviet military of the Russian Federation, and his doctrine of hybrid warfare is completely dependent on maskirovka; for him and the new generation of military leaders in Russia, it would be unthinkable to plan militarily without it. However, in the Donbass, it has shown resiliency toward long-term military and intelligence efforts as well. Maskirovka can be stretched out over a long period of time when the intent is to create a frozen conflict, as has been created in Ukraine.

The Soviets took their maskirovka efforts very seriously. General Sverdlov states that maskirovka “conceals what is, and shows that which is not.”²⁴⁵ Very strict methods for turning vehicle engines on and off, going into radio silence, utilizing terrain for masking forces, and extreme detail when using camouflage and netting are all elements of this doctrine. Soviet soldiers were expected to make concealment efforts without orders to do so but were encouraged to work with the chain of command to avoid confusion. For example, Krueger describes such an example from World War II, stating that, “officers were posted every three to five kilometers and non-commissioned officers every one to two kilometers for the purpose of insuring traffic regulation and camouflage discipline during covert movements.”²⁴⁶ Following the intelligence and operational disasters in the opening stages of World War II emphasized in earlier chapters, it is obvious why the Soviets took maskirovka efforts so seriously. During the turn of events in Stalingrad, the Red Army’s maskirovka doctrine really came of age, and deception and misinformation became basic fundamentals of all tactical, operational, and strategic planning in the march to Berlin. Soviet aircraft would fly over Red Army positions to make sure camouflage and spacing were satisfactory.

²⁴⁵ Ibid p. 28.

²⁴⁶ Ibid p. 19.

Markers were dropped from the sky over visible forces so adjustments could be made. When the Red Army advanced through Ukraine, soldiers built an entire decoy village to confuse German forces on numbers and disposition. The most critical information was often hand-held correspondence of which only one copy would be made. When the tide was turning in World War II between the Nazis and the Red Army, sometimes only the Soviet high command had information regarding which units would be used for deception or real battle. Soviet troops and field commanders would not know until the day of operations. This was also the case when Russian troops landed in Crimea in 2014, which will be discussed in greater detail later. Operations security was taken very seriously by the military throughout the existence of the Soviet Union up to the point of its demise, and that trend has followed through to the current military establishment of the Russian Federation.

Maskirovka is not just important to military efforts in Russia, but to the intelligence community as well. Lettered intelligence agencies like the NKVD and KGB were involved in all aspects of Soviet life. Intelligence organizations made sure that carefully orchestrated and nearly clinical efforts were taken to control the narrative of politics inside the country, and propaganda efforts were used on their own citizens perhaps more extensively than their adversaries. In a nation like the Soviet Union, control of information and control of the people themselves is crucial for maintaining strength and stability. The NKVD was augmented with the military to make sure that a “fifth column” did not emerge that could threaten the communist party. It created the tension that was discussed in earlier chapters, and was done with the dual purpose of making sure that no one intelligence community would gain too much influence, but also to keep them in check through competitive friction. That equilibrium continues to this day, and there is no love lost in rival communities like the

SVR, GRU, or FSB in terms of influence. Putin and his current administration have seen the value in that competition to make sure that any potential internal adversaries do not unseat them. The propaganda machine and flow of disinformation under Putin are arguably just as great as any time during the Soviet Union, and the intelligence community plays a key role in making sure the Russian Federation's own citizens are pacified through a carefully orchestrated flow of media and harsh clamping down on dissidents. For the Kremlin, utilization of maskirovka on its own citizens is just as important of utilization of these methods abroad to maintain the siloviki's (Putin's fraternal security apparatus) grip of power. As such, it is important to remember that maskirovka is not just discussed in military terminology as a hard power tool, but also as a soft-power asset in diplomacy, media, and propaganda. The same principles apply to these domains as they would to military terminology and are used with the same ruthless and cunning mindset designed to throw the adversary off balance and to win in the informational battlespace and, by extension and as necessary, in the arena of armed conflict.

Controlling Television

For Putin and his Kremlin associates, the most important target in the media disinformation campaign is the Russian people themselves. What matters most in an authoritarian dictatorship like Putin's is control of security services and propaganda to show what the "truth" is according to the Kremlin. The state-run media sets up the West as a piñata to deflect any potential backlash from Putin's authoritarianism. Ninety percent of Russians get most of what they know about the world through state-run television.²⁴⁷

Russian sociologist Lilia Shevtsova states, "The regime is deliberately trying to keep the

²⁴⁷ Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 226.

minds of the public in a schizophrenic state, obstructing the formation of a civic culture and legal mentality. If the demand for a special state path and an iron hand strengthens in Russia, it will not be because of the inability of Russians to live in a democratic and free society, but because they have been deliberately disoriented and trapped by fears, phobias, and insecurities provoked by the ruling elite.”²⁴⁸ Since dismantling most news sources critical of the regime, all that remains are the Russia Today, ITAR-TASS, and Rossiya-1 state-run channels that rule the airwaves constantly battering the public with Kremlin propaganda on a scale that rivals the actions of the Soviet Union itself. The objective of the new state-run propaganda is not to persuade, but to captivate; it disrupts Western narratives and supplants them with conspiracy theories.²⁴⁹ Any regional event that appeals to emotions and conflict be it Donbass, Crimea, the Baltics, or any other location is sensationalized and turned into a struggle of good (Russia) and evil (NATO and the United States in particular), and this is especially effective when ethnic Russians are portrayed as being persecuted or in imminent danger of “fascists” or “imperialists.” Ukraine is now the main focus of Kremlin propaganda, and the “illegitimate fascist government that was facilitated by the CIA” is what takes up a majority of the air-time (while completely omitting any hints of Russian involvement there). Fringe Ukrainian organizations like the Pravi Sektor, which had only

²⁴⁸ Marcel Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars: The Rise of Russia's New Imperialism*, (London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), p. 53.

²⁴⁹ Peter Pomerantsev, “Russia and the Menace of Unreality: How Vladimir Putin is revolutionizing information warfare” *The Atlantic*. Last updated September 09, 2014. <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/09/russia-putin-revolutionizing-information-warfare/379880/>.

two percent of the votes in the elections of the current Rada, are a bullseye that Russian state media is all too eager to hit repeatedly.²⁵⁰

Any discourse is very carefully organized by these networks to tow the Kremlin narrative. Otherwise, it is omitted from the news completely. This leaves the consumers of state-run news confused, paranoid, and unsure of the truth, which is exactly what the Kremlin wants. Putin needs only to make a few arrests and amplify the message of total control on television, and over the course of his time in charge he has been able to do just that. The purpose of these state run media organizations is two-fold. First, they encourage Russian nationalism and appeal to ideals that should make them proud to be Russian, like the Russian Orthodox Church and the strength of their military forces, and remind Russians that they are still a power in the world to be respected and reckoned with. Second, it is to control any anger and discontent and channel it into a way that is advantageous to the Kremlin itself. Finding equilibrium in this combination is exactly what the Kremlin is looking for.

Russia Today is a media organization that demands special examination, as it is the primary offensive media weapon that the Kremlin uses to spread its point of view across the world, where Rossiya-1, ITAR-TASS, and others are focused on spoon-feeding the Russian populace their slanted news. RT has a jaw-dropping budget of nearly \$350 million dollars and has news outlets in the United States, Europe, South America, and Asia that portray an obvious Russian slant, constantly deriding Western governments and their vilification of

²⁵⁰ Leonid Bershidsky, “Ukrainians Are More European Than the French”, *Bloomberg Magazine*. Last updated May 26, 2014. <http://www.bloombergview.com/articles/2014-05-26/ukrainians-are-more-european-than-the-french>.

Russia.²⁵¹ Since the Euromaiden kicked off, the network has been in overdrive with an all-out offensive vilifying Ukraine and the West while doing all it can to show the virtues and good intentions of Russia. American outlets like Fox News and MSNBC are guilty of similar forms of journalistic sensationalism, but they pale in comparison to anything that RT churns out. Political firebrands like Alexander Dugin are brought in as correspondents to reinforce talking points with anger and self-affirmation. There is no partisanship or division of point of view at RT—only a single-minded ideological and political sense of purpose.

RT deserves special mention because it is the Kremlin’s offensive mouthpiece outside of Russia. Margarina Simonyan is in charge of RT’s foreign media propaganda machine and has been its editor in chief since 2005. The American voice for RT is Stephen Cohen, a scholar of Russian studies who received his degree from Princeton. He has always been an admirer of the Soviet Union and is RT’s favorite “agent of influence”. Sergei Kurginyan is another RT anchor and Soviet admirer who has organized pro-Putin rallies and has been caught on video consulting and strategizing with LPR and DPR separatists. For some of RT’s foreign correspondents, the obvious disinformation campaign has been too much. Anchor Liz Wahl resigned on-air in November 2014 due to the distortion of events in Crimea and Donbass, and Sara Firth did the same, calling it “most shockingly obvious disinformation” when discussing coverage of the Russian downing of MH17.²⁵²

There are a dozen key correspondents who are continuously recirculated on state-run media and are recognized by Russians everywhere. The foremost firebrand Rossiya-1

²⁵¹ Marcel Van Herpen, *Putin's Propaganda Machine: Soft Power and Russian Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, 2015), p.71.

²⁵² Umberto Bacchi, Ludovica Iaccino. “Malaysia Airlines MH17 Crash 18 July: As it Happened”, *International Business Times*. Last updated July 18, 2014. <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/malaysia-airlines-mh17-plane-shot-down-ukraine-live-coverage-1457175>.

correspondent is Dmitri Kiselyov, who shows the world through a Russian viewpoint on his show “News of the Week”. His dubious claim to fame was his assertion that Russia should turn the United States into radioactive dust and that Ukraine is not a real country.²⁵³

Kiselyov said “when I saw the horror in Ukraine, and I returned to Russia I realized we need to produce values.”²⁵⁴ As a master of theatrical sarcasm and apocalyptic rhetoric, Kiselyov far eclipses Bill O’Reilly or Chris Hayes, and as a theoretician of conspiracy he utterly shames Glenn Beck and Lawrence O’Donnell.²⁵⁵ Kiselyov idolizes Putin and states that “Putin is comparable among his predecessors in the twentieth century only to Stalin,” saying this is a positive trait! Kiselyov, like many other Russians, says Stalin did what was necessary during the times in which he lived. Another frightening and fascinating figure is Dmitry Tsorionov; another Russian Orthodox fundamentalist who thinks Putin’s power is sacred, and that God has given Putin this authority. On air, he gave a lecture revolving around the question “is Vladimir Putin God by nature or only by grace? Can one worship Vladimir Vladimirovich as God on earth²⁵⁶?” It seems as though many Russians already do so.

In instances when journalists or activists become too much of a burden to the Kremlin, they have been imprisoned or even killed. Journalists like Anna Politkovskaya and Galina Starovoitova, who were covering the conflict in Chechnya, were both killed in extremely suspicious circumstances as they worked to expose possible Russian war crimes during the conflict. Antiwar journalist Dmitry Monakhov was arrested in Red Square and

²⁵³ Oleg Sukhov. “Propaganda Army Speaks Fluent Kremlin” *Kyiv Post*. Last updated September 14, 2014. <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/putins-propagandists-not-known-for-ethics-364352.html>.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

sent to a psychiatric evaluation facility. Alexander Litvinenko, a former FSB operative who accused Putin of ordering the assassination of Politovskaya, was assassinated by a FSB operative in London with a lethal dose of polonium-210.²⁵⁷ (The same FSB operative now holds a seat in the Duma and therefore has diplomatic immunity.) There are also strong accusations from Ukraine that Russian FSB operatives attempted to kill former Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko in a similar fashion, using a high concentration of Tetrachlorodibenzodioxin (TCDD) that left his face permanently bloated and disfigured.²⁵⁸ Perhaps the most high profile of these assassinations in recent years was the assassination of dissident Boris Nemtsov, who was one of the most influential opposition figures in Russia. He was killed on the night of February 27, 2015, across from Red Square.²⁵⁹ Nemtsov was working on Putin. War., a damning 65-page article that showed that Russia was intimately involved in destabilizing Ukraine and that it is costing their country hundreds of billions of rubles. It has been published posthumously and is perhaps the most valuable single reference for this thesis. According to Nemtsov's work, Russia has spent \$1.04 billion in the war in Ukraine, and \$8.5 billion in total on near-abroad actions (before February when he was gunned down). According to Nemtsov, there were 37,000 separatists supported by 10,000

²⁵⁷ "Alexander Litvinenko: Profile of murdered Russian spy", *BBC News*. Last updated July 26, 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-19647226>.

²⁵⁸ "Yushchenko poisoned by most harmful toxin: Tests confirm Ukraine candidate suffering from effects of TCDD", *NBC News*. Last updated December 17, 2004. http://www.nbcnews.com/id/6697752/ns/world_news/t/yushchenko-poisoned-most-harmful-dioxin/#.Vjaob7erSM8.

²⁵⁹ Andrew E. Kramer. "Boris Nemtsov, Putin Foe, Is Shot Dead in Shadow of Kremlin", *New York Times*. Last updated February 27, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/28/world/europe/boris-nemtsov-russian-opposition-leader-is-shot-dead.html?_r=0.

Russian militants at the beginning of 2015 during some of the fiercest fighting in Donbass to date. He also claims that 70 soldiers were killed in the Debaltseve invasion alone.²⁶⁰

The Kremlin's use of misleading and sometimes blatantly false news reports put the impetus on Western nations to prove the Kremlin's misinformation wrong. Otherwise, Putin and his inner circle are simply validated in what they push to and through the media. Even if a given story is proven wrong, however, the Russians have moved onto the next big exaggerated story or one that shows Europe or the United States doing something far worse in comparison. Van Herpen warns that, "when faced with unequivocal evidence, Russia continues to deny the facts."²⁶¹ It is not just lies that the Kremlin utilizes, but convenient truths as well to forward their political and strategic agendas, especially if it comes at the expense of the United States or Europe. Recent historical blunders by the United States and Europe have been taken advantage of by the Kremlin, who are quick to chide any double standards when talking about human- rights issues in Russia or diplomatic efforts with regimes like Assad's Syria or the Ayatollah Khamenei's in Iran. To be fair, Western-led overthrows of the Taliban, Saddam Hussein, Moamar Gaddafi, and other strongmen like them have been nothing short of grand-strategic fiascoes in terms of manipulating the information environment, so it is easy to make the West and particularly the United States look irresponsible as a superpower for invading other countries and encouraging revolutions. This has played perfectly into the Kremlin's hands.

²⁶⁰ Boris Nemtsov. *Putin. War.* (Moscow, Russia: Free Russia Foundation, 2015), p. 61.

²⁶¹ Marcel Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars: The Rise of Russia's New Imperialism*, (London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), p. 231.

Appealing To History and Culture

The nationalist script has been by far the most important in making sure that there is no threat of internal disorder. Russian leaders try to bolster national pride by delivering the narrative that economic hardship is an unavoidable price for defending national interests. Van Herpen emphasizes that “nationalism is a well-known safety valve for oppressed populations”²⁶² and one upon which Putin has been more and more reliant to keep the country proud and patriotic. It appeals to the Russian people to fight through the sanctions levied by the West, and exclaims that the nation is tough and has been through much worse. There is no harm in being proud of one’s country and one’s heritage, but any citizen should be mindful of whether that patriotism is actually distracting attention from serious domestic issues. For the casual Russian citizen surrounded by state-run media, it is much harder to determine what constitutes healthy pride and what constitutes constructive and justified criticism in one’s country and leadership. This is especially true of Putin’s Russia, where protest in general is regarded as unpatriotic and instantly brings accusations of being part of a “Fifth Column”. Edward Lucas reinforces this view stating that “the crudest reason is that it is an easy way to stay in control. Portraying Russia as a fortress besieged by malevolent hypocrites is a handy way of explaining to the population why its sacrifice of freedom is necessary.”²⁶³

Maskirovka on the Internet

The internet is also a valuable tool of maskirovka against the Russian people. It provides a shroud of what information is shared and what is not, making it a bulwark of

²⁶² Marcel Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars: The Rise of Russia's New Imperialism*, (London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), p. 253.

²⁶³ Edward Lucas, *The New Cold War: Putin's Russia and the Threat to the West* (London, UK: St. Martin’s Press, 2014), p. 167.

Russia's internal disinformation campaign. Putin has a strong hatred for the internet and sincerely believes that it is a CIA weapon. As such, the FSB is charged with sanitizing the internet and blocking sites that the Kremlin deems dangerous to the state by fostering "extremist activity". More recently, the duma passed a law that forces any bloggers with over three thousand followers to register with the state to operate. Otherwise they constitute an "unsanctioned form of protest". Russia is also threatening to block Twitter, Goggle, and Facebook as they are unable to censor data on these sites because they are not based in Russia.²⁶⁴ Putin and the Kremlin want to be able to take the internet offline in case of a cyberattack or protests, and it is very likely only a matter of time before the internet in Russia is completely censored by the Kremlin as part of this crackdown. Until that happens, the Russian Federation has stood up a powerful data mining collection tool that is reminiscent of the NSA's PRISM program revealed by Edward Snowden. The data mining that Snowden disclosed also gives the Kremlin an excuse to put webpages under the "protection" of Russian servers (webpages ending in .ru) to make sure that they are safe from CIA decryption.²⁶⁵

Putin seized the opportunity to use Snowden as a pawn to say that Russia does not collect data, phone records, or emails from its citizens. That could not be any further from the truth. This does not necessarily justify data collection by Western governments, but Russia's data collection is just as extensive and probably far more evasive than that of any Western government. This is accomplished using a stored data base called SORM, or

²⁶⁴ Arjun Karphal, "Russia threatens block on Google, Twitter, Facebook", *CNBC News*. Last updated May 22, 2015. <http://www.cnbc.com/2015/05/22/russia-threatens-block-on-google-twitter-facebook.html>.

²⁶⁵ Andrei Soldatov, Irina Borogan. "Russia's Surveillance State", *World Policy Institute*. Last updated October 01, 2014. <http://www.worldpolicy.org/journal/fall2013/Russia-surveillance>.

System of Operative Investigative Measures.²⁶⁶ SORM collects on all forms of electronic data. It can be queried with word searches and monitors all “open data”, such as social media. With open data provided by SORM, FSB intelligence analysts based in Lubyanka can determine patterns of interest and relations with family and friends. What is not disclosed to the public is that SORM also collects on “closed systems” as well. SORM is designated into three specific realms: SORM-1 analyzes phone calls, SORM-2 collects on the internet, and SORM-3 collects on all other electronic information. Private information of opposition leaders like Nemtsov published by state newspapers could only be collected using SORM. When the “iron ring” was being set up around Sochi to provide security for the Olympic Games, SORM was heavily relied upon to find out identities of participants, ticket holders, and anyone else in the city. The extent of collection was so extensive that the U.S. government strongly recommended bringing a disposable phone or replacing sim cards upon arrival and, at a bare minimum, leaving laptop computers at home while avoiding at all cost entering personal information into any network or system.²⁶⁷

One of the most peculiar tools devised in the Kremlin maskirovka campaign has been the Kremlin internet “troll”. In internet terminology, a troll is someone who posts on a blog with the sole intention of stoking the passions of the readers of the article, often posting information that is as shocking as it is controversial. For Putin and the Kremlin, trolling is a serious high-stakes business, and funding for these trolls is expected to increase by \$250 million annually in the Russian state budget.²⁶⁸ Trolls are designed to be equalizers of

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Paul R. Gregory. “Putin's New Weapon In The Ukraine Propaganda War: Internet Trolls”, *Forbes Magazine*. Last updated December 09, 2014.

support in blogosphere dialogue, and they function to support Russia's "brand", which currently is wildly unpopular internationally according to one of the Kremlin's internal strategy documents.²⁶⁹ The Kremlin has created an internet army of trolls that post provocative posts on an industrial scale, taking over discussions and rational discourse in the process. The trolls are tasked with a quota of posts per day on heavy-traffic news sites and blogospheres like Yahoo, Huffington Post, BBC, CNN, Kyiv Post, and the Moscow Times. They post in these groups to take over what is otherwise rational political discourse amongst users. Multiple trolls swarm blogs and take over all discussion by defending the Kremlin's moves and vilifying the Western powers and Ukraine. They intentionally discredit the Euromaiden and the fledgling Ukrainian government by using degrading buzzwords and key phrases like calling the protestors "fascists" and the new Kiev government a "junta" that came to power in an unconstitutional coup. They repeat this line over and over again hoping that if they repeat it enough the reader will begin to accept it as truth. Even if the troll is caught in a lie, he/she will always fall back on moral equivalence, arguing that for every bad thing Russia has done, the United States and Europe have done much worse. They also question where we get our news sources, arguing that Fox News, MSNBC, and CNN are all biased and that we need to watch more credible news like RT to get the truth. They claim in broken English that they are former Marines, Oxford lawyers, Stanford medical students, or just Americans who disagree with our policy against Russia. Others will just call discussants homosexuals, Nazis, Jews, or something else intended to be derogatory. As such, a troll

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/paulroderickgregory/2014/12/09/putins-new-weapon-in-the-ukraine-propaganda-war-internet-trolls/>.

²⁶⁹ Max Seddon. "Documents Show How Russia's Troll Army Hit America", *Buzz Feed News*. Last updated June 02, 2014. <http://www.buzzfeed.com/maxseddon/documents-show-how-russias-troll-army-hit-america#.tsqodQpBVA>.

cannot lose an argument; they are taught that as well. For each response a troll receives, he/she receives a pay bonus for each comment in a thread that originates from their initial post. Reading the comments brings forth emotional sensations from amusement to anger to bewilderment. One anonymous troll says, “We are trying to change reality. Reality has indeed begun to change as a result of the appearance of our information in public.”²⁷⁰

There are former trolls who have given interviews on the inner workings of what goes on inside their offices and how they take part in their “operations”. Marat Bukhard was interviewed by Radio Free Europe, and he admits he is pro-Western, does not believe what he writes, and only does it for the money.²⁷¹ He says that despite a few veteran trolls who sincerely believe what they type, most of the trolls are just younger people looking to make ends meet and are forced to hide their viewpoints lest they be fired. Bukhard only does it because the job pays very well by Russian standards, and is tax-free and paid in cash in an attempt to hide the trolls’ footprints. Bukhard says his daily quota is 135 comments a day during a twelve hours shift. He operates using six Facebook accounts under false names. The turnover is very high because of burnout from stress and the hours involved. The teams comprise three people who complement and augment each other to make their numbers look even larger and show that they have some support base that represents their point of view. He also says that there are “troll factories” all over Russia, and they begin work in Vladivostok and end in Kaliningrad so the number of time zones covered is maximized,

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Dmitry Volchek, Daisy Sindelar. “One Professional Russian Troll Tells All”, *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*. Last updated March 25, 2015. <http://www.rferl.org/content/how-to-guide-russian-trolling-trolls/26919999.html>.

giving them a twenty-four hour blueprint that is especially valuable for reaching an American audience.²⁷²

Because of this work's subject matter and timelines, the internet has been a very valuable tool that is necessary to provide up-to-date information on the conflict itself, and I have also participated at times in the discussions with the trolls. Understanding this unique informational battlefield, and precise connections to the underlying reasons that the Kremlin puts so much emphasis on waging such a high-scale offensive on Western media outlets is a challenging task. With the exception of fringe conspiracy theorists, there simply are not many Americans, British, or Ukrainian posters taking the Russia Today narrative seriously or many who believe what the Russian trolls post on the comments sections of news sites. Looking at posting history, it does not seem that they are peeling off any educated American or European posters into being coerced into the trolls' line of argument, namely, that the Western media is biased against Russia and engaged in a conspiracy of some sort. With the exception of giving Western news agencies the impression of a sizable demographic being offended by a supposedly anti-Russian slant, there does not appear to be any larger or coherent strategic purpose or effort, and one has to question why the Kremlin is putting such a concerted effort into paying for this harassing disinformation campaign. Perhaps the Russian leadership is trying to sway domestic audiences by discrediting any news outlet that is not Russian state media.

Putinjugind

An additional tool for molding what Putin considers to be model citizens takes place at the childhood and young adult level with the Nashi. The Nashi organization is the

²⁷² Ibid.

brainchild of Viktor Surkhov, and was a nationalist movement focused on Russia's youth devised to be a counter to the liberal and West-looking Orange Revolution by promoting Russian conservative values and an alternative to Western liberalism. These children, teens, and young adults are indoctrinated early to be ardent Kremlin supporters, and membership enhances their prospects for getting into a preferred school, university, academy, or a desirable job. The Nashi are "morally Russian", religiously devout to Russian Orthodoxy, encourage buying Russian-made products, maintain Russian cultural values, and most importantly are pro-Putin and pro-United Russia. Critics quip that they are "Putinjugend", which is a snide reference to comparing the Nashi to Nazi Germany's Hitler Youth. The first recruits were soccer hooligans who supported the country's large soccer teams like Zenit St. Petersburg, Spartak Moscow, Dynamo Moscow, and others, and who have a far-right nationalist slant that is anti-immigrant and believe Russian culture is under threat from Muslims, homosexuals, and other minorities. The nashi are made up of a demographic that is used to causing trouble and looking for fights, and have been trucked throughout Russia's near-abroad to defend Russian interests to countries like Georgia, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, and most recently Ukraine. In 2007, when Estonia removed the Bronze Soldier memorial of the Soviet Red Army, the Nashi were there to protest its removal. Following the Euromaiden protests, Nashi were bussed across the border to the Ukrainian cities of Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk, and even as far into Ukrainian territory as Dnipropetrovsk to protest the Euromaiden and give the look of a grassroots protest movement similar to the Euromaiden.²⁷³

²⁷³ Andrew Roth. "From Russia, 'Tourists' Stir the Protests", *New York Times*. Last updated March 03, 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/04/world/europe/russias-hand-can-be-seen-in-the-protests.html>.

The Nashi are designed to be a physical spark so propaganda teams can take over and catch instances of ethnic Russians being abused and persecuted in other countries by local police forces that are stuck in a zero-sum game of either letting the hooligans trash the city neighborhoods in which they are protesting, or clamp down on them and give Russia red meat to throw into its well-versed propaganda machine. Anything that can exacerbate the situation further is encouraged. During the 2007 Estonia protests, a very vulnerable demographic was brought to the cause as well; the Mishki, which are younger Nashi 7-15 years old. They would sing “I love Russia, I love Putin, Together we will win.”²⁷⁴ It galvanizes the state-run media outlets in Russia like TASS and RT, and is processed in ways that can pull at the emotions of Russian citizens themselves and make them feel like they are victims of persecution. It also validates former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev’s doctrine of defending ethnic Russians wherever they are. With the events in Ukraine, we can see just how far Putin and the Kremlin are willing to push that doctrine.

The Kremlin is also very active in deploying Nashi elements in Russia itself when they want to send a message to a group or individual. They are granted protest privileges immediately while normal Russian citizens would need to give local authorities such a request months in advance to do something similar, and even then they would have to confine their activities to a very specific place with a specific number of participants. In many instances, the police help the Nashi mobilize and are already prepared for their presence. If they want to put pressure on individuals who work in Western embassies, they will swarm them and shout at them relentlessly that they are undesirables and not welcome in

²⁷⁴ Marcel Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars: The Rise of Russia's New Imperialism*, (London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), p. 131.

Russia. One of the Nashi's greatest success stories was bringing down one of Russia's most prominent dissenting media voices: Kommersant. Kommersant ran a scathing article on the Nashi, and in response the Nashi mobilized at metro stations and began handing out toilet paper with the Kommersant logo with the phone number of the editor attached. The Nashi press secretary ordered its operatives to "block their (Kommersant's) work, psychologically and physically pester them. Revenge is essential."²⁷⁵

Putin has also insisted that school textbooks emphasize heavily on the positive history of Russia rather than the negative. To accomplish this, Putin established the Commission to Prevent Falsification of History in 2009.²⁷⁶ These sanitized textbooks tend to absolve Russia of any prior atrocities. For instance, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was necessary for peace, Stalin's purges were required for industrialization and modernization, and the 22,000 Polish officers shot in the Katyn Forest were Nazi sympathizers. For every bad thing Russia has done, there is a historical example of something worse than someone else did to absolve them. They also marginalize the participation of Western nations fighting the Nazis and blame them for not helping the Soviet Union more or coming to their aid sooner, which resulted in many more millions of lives lost. It is a curriculum that sets up perfect candidates to get plugged into the Nashi program.

The Masquerade of Democracy

When discussing maskirovka being utilized domestically, it is important to discuss the political masquerade that has taken place in the Russian Federation ever since Putin came to power. The political structure in Russia itself is a carefully orchestrated example of

²⁷⁵ Ibid p. 131.

²⁷⁶ James Sherr, *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad*, (London, UK: Chatham House, 2013), p. 84.

maskirovka. Putin's United Russia has gotten away with turning the Duma into a rubber-stamp institution with no teeth. United Russian officials buy their way onto ballots and must pass tests of loyalty before being named to the party ballot. That official will benefit from the aid of seeing ballots stuffed in his or her favor to gain a seat at the local government level or the Duma. Any sincere opposition parties that rise from the grassroots are quickly identified by Surkov and his political operatives and dealt with in one of three ways: They are either quashed from existence, are undermined to look like a fringe lunatic element, or adopted as an official "opposition party" that loses its root purpose and becomes nothing more than United Russia with minimal slanted political differences that mean nothing in the grand scheme of keeping Putin and the Kremlin firmly in control of the country's political discourse. On Election Day, ballot boxes are stuffed and voters are bussed to different ballot boxes around the city to inflate numbers even further to add to the democratic sham that the Kremlin pushes on its people. Pomerantsev states that, "the brilliance of this new type of authoritarianism is that instead of simply oppressing opposition, as had been the case of twentieth century strains, it climbed inside ideologies and movements, exploiting them and rendering them absurd. The Kremlin idea is to own all forms of political discourse, to not let any independent movements develop outside its walls."²⁷⁷ This is of course done through Vladislav Surkov. Finally, there is nothing a few titushki or Nashi cannot do to quiet the opposition with a baton or even a gun-shot. The domestic dissent is repressed one way or another. These tools of fear and manipulation on the domestic front keep the citizens of the Russian Federation in a combined state of apathy and fear. In summing up these measures, Van Herpen states, "The regime needs enemies of the people to absorb aggression that is

²⁷⁷ Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia* (New York, NY: Public Affairs Publishing, 2015), p. 79.

building up in a society where there exists no independent judiciary, where political freedoms have become a farce, political parties are created by the Kremlin, elections are stolen, and journalists and human rights activists are regularly murdered.”²⁷⁸

Maskirovka Against the EU

Not only is the Kremlin utilizing maskirovka for defensive purposes, but it also maneuvers offensively to sway European governments by giving far-right political parties sizable donations to gain influence in Western Europe. The Kremlin seeks to create fractures in political and diplomatic bulwarks, and hammers at them relentlessly once they are identified. The effort has often been successful, and Russia has given legitimacy to fringe parties in Europe that previously had small levels of influence. Many of them are extremely anti-Semitic and anti-immigrant and hold traditional values in high regard. They will resort to violent means to get their political points across. In Hungary, the Jobbik Party has grown from a fringe element to the country’s third-largest political party. Hungary’s President Viktor Orban is also believed to have received lucrative donations from the Kremlin in his rise to power and has been one of Russia’s strongest supporters in Europe. In the United Kingdom, the UK Independence Party doubled its Parliament representation in the most recent elections. France’s National Front Party, headed by firebrand Marine Le Pen has also done extraordinarily well in French elections with the help of a nice pay bumper of forty million Euros from the Kremlin. Many French political strategists have been particularly frightened by the National Front’s quick rise to influence, especially with how many French citizens have become jaded with many of the more traditional political parties who they view as unable to get anything done. Germany’s National Democratic Party, Italy’s Lega Nord,

²⁷⁸ Marcel Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars: The Rise of Russia's New Imperialism*, (London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), p. 53.

Austria's Freedom Party, Greece's Golden Dawn, and Bulgaria's Attack Party have also received lucrative payments from the Kremlin to promote Russian interests in Europe in hopes of chipping away at the unity of the European Union and NATO. The Kremlin has also funded secessionist movements in Scotland, Catalonia, the Basque region, and even Texas. It is a very effective ploy of divide-and-conquer, and the neutral observer can already see nations like Germany, Italy, Greece, Cyprus, and France faltering in their commitment to sanctions partially due to the internal democratic processes of these countries that have seen politicians bought and paid for by the Kremlin.²⁷⁹ European society does have sincere concerns about social issues like uncontrolled immigration, radical Islam, economic stagnation, crippling debt of some member nations, and the marginalizing of their culture, but the Kremlin has been all too happy to throw additional wood into the fire below the cauldron of Europe to make the stew that is European politics even more volatile than it would be without Russian influence.

This serves to not only fulfill Russia's diplomatic strategies, but its social strategies as well in being a bastion of pure Russian Orthodox society that stands up for decency and conservatism. Progressive Europe is easily vilified, and the Russian media highlights everything from cross-dressing Conchita Wurst winning the Eurovision awards to The United States legalizing gay marriage as representative of the weakening and ultimate downfall of Europe. When punk bands like Pussy Riot dance on the stairs of the Church of Christ the Savior in Moscow, it paints an easy crosshair on the "deviants" of society, like homosexuals and political dissidents, while making the case that Russia is in need of social

²⁷⁹ Richard Corbett, "In the Kremlin's pocket: Who backs Putin, and why", *The Economist*. Last updated February 14, 2015. <http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21643222-who-backs-putin-and-why-kremlins-pocket>.

discipline, and that only Putin can maintain that discipline. This appeals to far-right groups in Europe who are equally disgusted by European progressivism and want to roll back what they see as years of the weakening and decline of society. Putin can be that symbol of traditionalism and conservatism that they crave, and he is all too willing to give them that persona. Russia is now the flagship of European conservatism, and this makes disaffected Europeans ripe for manipulation and being what Lenin would call “useful idiots” in a bigger grand-strategic game.

Other Forms of Domestic Maskirovka

The Kremlin has not hesitated using maskirovka against Western diplomats either, making former United States Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul such a target. The night following his introduction at the Kremlin, McFaul was attacked viciously on Channel One by conservative correspondent Mikhail Leontiev. Like any effective propagandist, Leontiev had artfully woven the true and the half-preposterous into a fabric of lurid colors. He blasted McFaul as an expert on democracy promotion who knew nothing about Russia and worked for American-backed NGOs who were backed by American intelligence and “internet Führer Alexei Navalny.”²⁸⁰ Leontiev also concluded that McFaul was there to finish the revolution with the help of the fifth column. This lambasting worked perfectly because McFaul was vilified not just in Russia, but his employers in the U.S. and in other diplomatic loops perceived that he was wrecking Russian-American relations.

Talking points like ISIS and Islamic terrorism are constructive for clamping down on Caucasian and Central Asian minorities and stoking xenophobia, Anti-Semitism, and Pan-

²⁸⁰ David Remnick, “Watching the Eclipse”, The New Yorker, last updated August 11, 2014. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/08/11/watching-eclipse>.

Slavism. Putin and his allies use the American war on terror when they see it fitting their script but are happy to point out the Iraq and Afghanistan wars when it threatens their interests in a place like Syria. Media anchors will foam at the mouth saying that Russian jobs are being taken away by Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Kazakhs, but do not mention that Slavic Russians would never take the jobs shoveling the streets or rooftops. Their favorite posture of deflection is all-consuming anti-Americanism. Bobo Lo says “in adopting anti-Americanism as a tool to claw back lost authority, Putin has acted in tradition of previous rulers, such as Nicholas II, Lenin, and Stalin who exploited the idea of a Russia besieged by enemies abroad and traitors within.”²⁸¹ They’ll also conjure the constant specter of Caucasian terrorism that could hit at any moment. Anything that can be used as a distraction to look away from problems at home is fair game.

One of the more peculiar and infamous pieces of legislation ratified by the Duma and authorized by president Putin is that any NGOs that receive foreign aid from adversarial nations are forced to register as “foreign agents”. Putin sincerely believes these NGOs to be forms of soft power and thus established this countermeasure to negate their effectiveness. This stigma is applied to all organizations the Kremlin accuses of acting against the interests of the Russian Federation, from adoption agencies to those that promote democracy and human rights. The most hostile of these designations, reserved for particularly troublesome organizations, is “aggressor state.”²⁸² This legislation banished CNN from Russia at the end of 2014. Like most Russian legislation, the definition of what constitutes a foreign agent or

²⁸¹ Bobo Lo. *Russia and the New World Disorder* (Washington D.C: Brookings Institute, 2015), p.25.

²⁸² Melissa Hooper, Thomas Callahan. “Russia's Legislators Make New Turn in Recent Isolationist Trend”, *Huffington Post*. Last updated September 08, 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/melissa-hooper/russias-legislators-make-_b_5770176.html.

an aggressor state is vague so legislation can be applied whenever it is politically convenient. This was the case when Putin was looking for a scapegoat to blame for the protests in Moscow when he was re-elected to power for a third term following Medvedev's brief presidency. He blamed the organization responsible for a Georgian politician's rally, which had itself received funding from Hillary Clinton using a NGO. It sounds completely absurd, but it tugs at the nationalist strings of the Russian people that the Kremlin so heavily depends on for support, and it fosters paranoia and distrust amongst people and NGOs alike.

MASKIROVKA IN UKRAINE: CRIMEA AND THE DONBAS

There can be no doubt that the Kremlin was completely responsible for all actions taken in Crimea during the Euromaiden crisis. Strategically, the situation was spiraling to an unacceptable crisis in what the Kremlin considers to be its “near abroad”, which consists of all of the former republics of the Soviet Union. Of all of the former Soviet republics, there is none that holds the high priority and historical significance to Russia that Ukraine does (at least in the minds of the Russians themselves). The Kremlin went to work immediately to take what advantage they could of the crisis in Ukraine, and while the world watched the winter Olympics in Sochi, Putin gave the order early on the morning of February 27, 2014 to take the necessary steps to secure and occupy the Crimean peninsula.²⁸³ If the leadership in the Kremlin was going to lose its ability to influence Ukraine, Putin and his crew were at least going to take Crimea as a consolation prize.

Maskirovka in Crimea

Early on the morning of February 27, unidentified men began taking control of critical nodes in Crimea, starting with the Black Sea Fleet home port, Sevastopol, then the Sevastopol and Simferopol airports. Administration buildings were stormed by angry “locals” and commandeered to form an impromptu government organization. Ukrainian naval vessels were commandeered, and Ukrainian military facilities were surrounded while Ukrainian military commanders waited for orders from higher in their chain for direction that never came. Russian troops and intelligence operatives encouraged the local populace to participate given that there were many people in Crimea who were not only against what was happening in Kiev, but also potentially in favor of rejoining Russia. The “militants of

²⁸³ Amanda Macias, “The US mission to NATO just called out Putin's Crimea narrative”, *Business Insider*. Last updated March 19, 2015. <http://www.businessinsider.com/nato-just-called-out-putins-crimea-narrative-2015-3>.

unknown origin” (in actuality Russian troops) seemed to come from nowhere overnight, and journalists identified them as “little green men” because no one knew where they came from. They wore no insignia and displayed no formal indicators of country of origin, but wore the type of camouflage uniforms that the regular Russian military wore and tied white rope around their arms, obviously meant to indicate to each operative that they were authentic members of the operating team. The little green men were obviously not the ragtag bunch of local militia that Russian media was making them out to be. The men in the airport videos and news feeds moved with tactical fluidity that was designed for urban warfare and taking buildings one by one, marking corners and posting up in ideally situated positions; skills and insights that would have taken weeks at a bare minimum to learn efficiently. The way that these unknown operatives carried their weapons and their muzzle security were other notable marks of professionals. The equipment utilized was uniform and the latest in Russian technology, including tactical radios, the VSS Vintorez assault rifle that puts priority on silence over accuracy, and Ratnik camouflage that only recently became available to the Russian military.²⁸⁴ Most symbolically of all, the little green men carried with them a calling card that is used extensively by only one special-forces group in the world; the 92SF Cold Steel Shovel that functions as an additional appendage of the Russian Spetsnaz operatives.

GRU: The Favorite Intelligence Tool of Controlled Instability

There is one intelligence organization in the Russian intelligence community that bears the unquestionable signature of direct involvement and participation in the annexation of Crimea: the GRU. It deserves special discussion in the Ukrainian conflict because the GRU has been the Russian intelligence organization at the forefront of the maskirovka

²⁸⁴ Michael Weiss. “The Russians Are Coming”, *Foreign Policy*. Last updated March 29, 2014. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/03/29/the-russians-are-coming/>.

campaign from the annexation of Crimea, to the current crisis playing out in Donbass, and now in the attempts at destabilization in Odessa and Kharkiv. The GRU is the bulldog of the Russian intelligence community and has no comparable equal in the United States or the West. The GRU was responsible for utilizing Spetsnaz, mercenaries, the Chechen Vostok Brigade, paratroopers, and their own civilian assets to achieve the necessary tactical and operational objectives asked of them. Its primary purpose is to foster instability and establish Russian interests where they are deployed. The GRU is active in Russia's "near abroad", and Crimea is already their backyard. It is as close to a domestic operating environment as one can get. The talents and mission of the GRU fit the task of "controlled instability" like a glove. The agency is a crossover between Russian military intelligence and the lettered civilian intelligence agencies of the Russian Federation. As such, it fosters something approaching a seamless fluidity of the whole intelligence process so that both the military and intelligence communities are on the same page and able to execute their mission with optimal efficiency and effectiveness. Ironically, prior to the crises in Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk, the GRU was quickly falling out of favor in the upper levels of Kremlin leadership and was perilously close to losing its status as a Main Intelligence Directorate. Russian leadership was highly critical of its performance in Chechnya, and seriously pondered its relevance to the Russian intelligence community.

Crimea was the breath of life that the GRU needed to regain its bearing and morale. It was the ideal operating environment. GRU operatives could meld seamlessly with a sizable and sympathetic Russian-speaking population and move with much less effort than they would even in a place like Chechnya. It would be easy to foster an environment of unrest by simply recruiting a few guys at a bar who would be excited at the prospect of

starting a rebellion and moving the Crimea back into Russia. Multiply this by pro-Russian Crimeans at every bar and hot spot in Sevastopol and Simferopol, and one quickly arrives at the numbers required to recruit and field an imposing protesting force. There were already plenty of anti-Kiev attitudes on the peninsula in the first place even if it was not nearly as one-sided as Kremlin propagandists would have media consumers believe, and it just needed the GRU to tip the first domino forward for the rest of the developments to fall into place. Critical nodes of the city were identified for tactical purposes that would have operational implications and allow the large numbers of Russian troops deploying into the Crimea to have maximum freedom of movement and action. The Russians were also mindful of the fact that the peninsula has two chokepoints with mainland Ukraine that can be easily defended from any mainland force, and that only a small force would have been necessary to fortify those ingress/egress routes. Without the GRU, the annexation of Crimea would have been an exponentially more daunting task for Putin and the Kremlin.

Gerasimov's Handiwork

There was something truly unique about the role of the GRU and Spetsnaz in Crimea. They spread their customary chaos and confusion, but there were no gunshots or explosions. Crimea needed to be treated differently than Chechnya and Georgia. In the minds of Russian intelligence and military leaders, these people were Russian citizens who needed to be liberated. These were not enemies that they would be engaging with in Crimea, but compatriots, and that mindset needed a tactical adjustment that the GRU has traditionally not utilized: winning "hearts and minds" as well as keeping order and peace. Soldiers constantly assured the locals that they were not there to hurt them, but to help them and keep them safe. They took extra care to comfort and assure the people that they were friendly, which no

doubt was extensively trained as well because it is so far out of the element of the traditional GRU and Spetsnaz roles of killing adversaries and causing extensive damage.²⁸⁵

Gerasimov was largely responsible for getting his officers and enlisted personnel mentally prepared for the daunting task, and this was crucial for Russia's success at the operational level of warfare. In the weeks of the buildup, Russian officers made watching the events taking place in Ukraine mandatory evening viewing for their enlisted personnel. The media portrayed the Crimeans and eastern Ukrainians as victims of strife caused by the Euromaiden riots. Bearing the signature of Russian OPSEC dating back to World War II, all but the most senior officers involved in the operation were completely oblivious of the details until their deployment and mission execution.²⁸⁶ In fact, many of the operatives who were charged with securing Sevastopol had no idea where they were being deployed; just that they were being deployed. In total, up to 30,000 Russian troops were mobilized and inserted onto the peninsula either in Sevastopol on the Western side or across the Kerch Strait on the eastern side. It was just enough cover to get away with the Status of Forces Agreement that was agreed with Ukraine that stated Russia could station as many as 25,000 soldiers on the peninsula.²⁸⁷ It takes an impressive mobility effort and a seamless set of operational-level orders to follow to put that sort of deployment together successfully, let alone as quietly as did the Russians. It shows just how seriously the Russians take their OPSEC guidelines and procedures. They knew exactly where to go, who to "disappear", and what critical nodes to target for maximum effect.

²⁸⁵ Taras Berezovets, "Putin's Purge of Crimean Dissidents Continues Apace", *Newsweek Magazine*. Last updated July 23, 2015. <http://www.newsweek.com/putins-purge-crimean-dissidents-continues-apace-356628>.

²⁸⁶ Dmitriy Pashinsky, "I serve the Russian Federation! Soldiers deployed during the annexation of Crimea speak", *Meduza Media*. Last updated March 16, 2015. <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2015/03/16/i-serve-the-russian-federation>.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

From any standpoint, the annexation of Crimea was a resounding success. To quote NATO four-star General Philip M. Breedlove, the invasion of Crimea was a military and intelligence masterpiece.²⁸⁸ Everything from the diplomatic, military, and intelligence operations was the epitome of the doctrine of maskirovka and the effective implementation of all intelligence and operational concepts. It was not just the Ukrainians who were left confused and disoriented by the annexation, but NATO was as well. An entire army of thousands was able to conceal its intentions, skirt a status-of-forces agreement, and target critical nodes on the peninsula without losing a single soldier or cause a single loss of life among the adversary or civilian populace (there have been targeted disappearances of political dissidents by the FSB, but no shots in open conflict). Every policy-maker and commander in the Western hemisphere knew that they were caught unprepared for the Crimean operation, but they were equally unprepared regarding how to mount an effective response to protect Ukrainian sovereignty or to condemn Russia.²⁸⁹

The Decorated Little Green Men

Russia unequivocally denies that it used its troops to annex the Crimean peninsula, but the evidence of involvement of Russian military and intelligence forces is overwhelming. In fact, Russian leaders awarded decorations to the military and intelligence personnel who took part in the annexation. Oleg Teryushin, a Russian paratrooper interviewed about being awarded a decoration “for returning Crimea,” says it will be a nice story that he can tell his kids one day, but it will be of little use for getting him into the university that he wants. He says that his commanders kept silent until the last moment. His commanders told him told

²⁸⁸ Adrian Croft, “West should consider all tools, including arms, for Ukraine: NATO general”, *Reuters*. Last updated March 22, 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/22/ukraine-crisis-nato-idUSL6N0WO07N20150322>.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

him and his comrades to remove all symbols and insignia from their uniforms. They were given green balaclavas and dark sunglasses to conceal their identities, and white ribbons to tie on their sleeves to indicate they were all on the same side. The white ribbons would be switched each day to different arms and legs to ensure authentication. Oleg also says that his unit was thoroughly drilled to tell Crimeans that they were there to help them and not to harm them. Oleg also says the journalists were aggressive, and they were trained and prepared for that too. He believes he was one of the first to land in Crimea when he arrived in Sevastopol on February 24. He left on April 12 and received his citation in May. Oleg says commanders made their troops watch the Ukrainian riots each evening to fuel disgust and boost patriotism. Alexei Karuna, a sailor in the Russian Navy, also agreed to give his account of Russia's participation in the annexation. He estimates that there were 15,000 Russian military members stationed at the Black Sea Fleet port of Sevastopol. There were another 20,000 reinforcements and special-forces troops already dispersed in the peninsula (which exceeded the agreed status-of-forces agreement numbers by 10,000). After Alexei received his citation, his commander joked that he would call him again when the time came to reclaim the rest of the Soviet Union. The 11th and 83rd assault brigades as well as the 38th communications regiment received decorations for their involvement in Crimea.²⁹⁰

If At First It Succeeds, Do It Again

Even more stunning was the Kremlin using the exact same ploy in the Donbass region with an equally unimpressive response from NATO and Western diplomats. It was clear that the Ukrainian military was going to war, and it was not a mere separatist rebellion against

²⁹⁰ Dmitriy Pashinsky, "I serve the Russian Federation! Soldiers deployed during the annexation of Crimea speak", Meduza Media. Last updated March 16, 2015. <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2015/03/16/i-serve-the-russian-federation>.

which they were pitted. Trained members of Russia's military like the GRU, Spetsnaz, paratroopers, mercenaries, Cossacks, and various other skilled groups that had comprised the force structure of the "little green men" in the Crimea began a slow creep across the border around 20-22 August 2014. Russia was already using the GRU to foster instability in other regions of Ukraine, and was successful in implementing an "astroturf" independence movement in Ukraine's easternmost provinces of Luhansk and Donetsk. Putin and his diplomatic team added fuel to the fire by bringing a dangerous historical identifier into play, describing the areas of upheaval as Novorossiia (New Russia). This was done intentionally to provide a pretext that there is historical justification for Russian intervention in this swath of south and eastern Ukraine that includes Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Odessa, and stretches all the way to the border of Transdnistria on the eastern Moldovan border. By constantly bringing up Novorossiia on the international stage, Putin again created the pretext that Russia lost something with deep historical roots in the USSR and Tsarist Russia before that, and that the Kremlin is merely correcting that historical injustice by attempting to bring the area back under Russian control and protect the ethnic Russians residing there. If the whole of Novorossiia were ever taken, it would be more than half of Ukraine's current international boundaries and make the country completely landlocked. Russian media has been showing maps of Novorossiia, and has given the separatists a flag and a cause for which to fight. Novorossiia has been a valuable recruiting tool that appeals to the Russian public, produces volunteers to go to the front, and makes separatist leaders optimistic that their goal of joining the Russian Federation will eventually be achieved.²⁹¹

²⁹¹ Adrian A. Basora, Aleksandr Fisher. "Putin's Greater Novorossiia: The Dismemberment of Ukraine", *Foreign Policy Research Institute*. Last updated May 01, 2014. <http://www.fpri.org/articles/2014/05/putins->

It is easy to look at the strategic implications for Crimea when the Kremlin opened up this additional battlefield. When looking strategically at what the conflict in eastern Ukraine means for the Crimea, the opening of hostilities in Donetsk and Luhansk also serves a purpose in legitimizing Russian control of Crimea. It puts the impetus of a crisis that is happening “here and now” not just on the new Ukrainian government, but the EU and United States as well. Using “little green men” tactics in Donbass and creating a frozen conflict inherently puts Crimea on the backburner and gives more credibility to the annexation’s legitimacy. If the Kremlin permanently posts tens of thousands of troops on the eastern Ukrainian border as a constant threat, it keeps the international community on edge. In fact, the Crimea has quickly become an afterthought as Western leaders fruitlessly try to defuse the situation in the Donbass region.

Using troop movements to mask intentions and confuse the enemy is a clinical example of maskirovka, and one that the Russians have mastered in keeping Ukraine and NATO guessing throughout the conflict. While manipulating the conflict inside of Ukraine, the Kremlin has constantly raised the specter of drawing a wider conflict by bringing in hundreds of troops for drills and posting them on the eastern side of the border as well as Belgorod, which is less than 50 miles from the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv. Ukraine and NATO analysts put the numbers at approximately 40,000 troops, and the number of BTGs (battalion tactical groups) stretched along the border since the opening of hostilities in Crimea has been between ten and thirteen.²⁹² In mid-March 2014, troops were brought in to

greater-novorossiia-dismemberment-ukraine.

²⁹² Laura Smith-Spark, Barbara Starr. “What do we know about Russia's troop buildup on Ukraine's border?” *CNN*. Last updated April 02, 2015. <http://www.cnn.com/2014/03/28/world/europe/russia-ukraine-troop-buildup/>.

participate in armored convoy tactics, live-fire artillery exercises, and unconventional warfare exercises in numbers much higher than what would constitute routine exercises in the area. This was done to send a message to Ukraine that the Kremlin will constantly have a gun to its neighbor's head and to provide a firm stance with a Ukrainian government that they see as illegitimate and that they want to fail. Russian diplomats like Sergei Lavrov constantly preached that there was nothing to worry about, insisting that anyone who sounded alarms was just trying to stoke fear. The drills have been constant, and the guise of drills has also made the transfer of weapons and armor to the DPR and LPR separatists much easier in the process.

With Ukraine, the stakes are exceptionally high for Putin, and as a result he continues to throw the full weight of his disinformation campaign behind it. This is recognized by Ukrainian Interior Minister Argen Avakov, who warned “the information war that they are waging against us is more dangerous than a bullet”.²⁹³ When discussing Ukraine, it is crucial for the Kremlin to portray its “positive” leadership role and at the same time vilify the newly-elected Ukrainian government and the West using instances in history that pull the Russian people's nationalist strings. In terms of modern history, there is no more important rallying point than World War II and how the Red Army defeated the Nazis at the cost of over twenty million Russians killed. To do this, the media brings out the “nuclear option” in using terminology reserved only for the most hated villains in modern Russian history, and does not hesitate comparing the Ukrainians who took part in the Euromaiden protests as Nazis and Nazi sympathizers who are threatening ethnic Russians and their way of life.

²⁹³ Matt Robinson, Alessandra Prentice. “Rebels appeal to join Russia after east Ukraine vote”, *Reuters*. Last updated May 12, 2014. <http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/05/12/uk-ukraine-crisis-idINKBN0DS1DA20140512>.

The level of fabrication being used to describe the Ukrainian villains holds no bounds. One of the most controversial uses of disinformation and stoking hatred by a news organization was the interview of a woman in Slovyansk who told of a three-year-old boy being crucified by the Ukrainian military. The woman, who gives her first name as Galina, states to the Russian media outlet, “one man nailed him while two others held him. All of this happened before his mother’s eyes. Then they took the mother. The mother saw how the child bled. The child cried and screamed; people fainted. When the child was dead after having agonized for half an hour, they took the mother, tied her unconscious to a tank, and drove three times around the square. Each circuit of the square was one kilometer.”²⁹⁴ This was completely fabricated, but Russians did not bat an eye when they heard it. The media also portray the “humanitarian” convoys as a heroic gesture that shows the Russian Federation’s willingness to move quickly and not wait on United Nations or European Union red tape to help those in need. When television, radio, and news announcers constantly push these stories on consumers, it becomes easier to control them and tell them who to vent their anger on whether Ukrainians, or the EU, or some other party. Even when a story is completely fabricated, maskirovka puts the impetus of disproving the information on Westerners and Ukrainians. It is even more difficult for them to expose the Russian public itself to the lies they are being told on a daily basis by their government and media.

²⁹⁴ Marcel Van Herpen, *Putin's Propaganda Machine: Soft Power and Russian Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, 2015), p. 4.

MASKIROVKA FLAWS

For all of the successes that the Russian intelligence and military have had, there were still faults in their execution. The first obvious hint that locals and Ukrainian journalists picked up on immediately were regional dialects that were not Ukrainian. Much like someone in England can differentiate an English regional dialect from Newcastle in the northeast, Liverpool in the northwest, or Plymouth in the southwest, a Russian speaker can instantly identify a regional dialect from Moscow, St. Petersburg, or Siberia and unmistakably pinpoint where that person is originally from. There is not much that the operatives could have done to mask that. The other two OPSEC breaches were preventable. The advent of social media has been a thorn in the side of commanders preaching OPSEC since its creation. The ISAF and NATO forces in Iraq and Afghanistan had countless breaches of OPSEC involving the posting and geotagging their exact locations on social media sites like Facebook. The Russian military was no different in this regard, and on the highly popular Russian social networking site Vkontakte, operatives posted where they were during this time and the geotagging data is unmistakable. To put the issue beyond dispute, some of the little green men just went out and admitted on camera to journalists that they were from Russia. To the native speaker, the difference between the little green men and the locals was obvious. Realistically, these were probably anticipated as information-related collateral damage prior to the conflict. However much commanders may preach OPSEC, it would be unrealistic to expect so many soldiers to keep their mouths quiet in such a large-scale operation no matter how much training they had. Despite these lapses in OPSEC, the commanders and policy makers involved likely weighed these possibilities in the buildup. In the end, they anticipated and in fact had an overwhelmingly successful mission.

MH17

The maskirovka narrative that Russia has been pushing in Ukraine has been relentless, but the shroud of disinformation that is cast on this effort has weaknesses and vulnerabilities of its own, and it is extremely important that Western nations call out the disinformation when they can. In all of the narratives put forth by Kremlin spokesmen and state-run media, there have been holes in the stories that should be exploited. One of the most important took place when MH17 was shot down, and the previous chapter discussed in detail the eyewitness accounts of the use of the BUK missile system. The shooting down of the aircraft was a disaster for the image of Russia's role in the conflict, and Russian leaders kicked their maskirovka campaign into overdrive to attempt to deflect blame in responsibility for shooting down the passenger jet. Russian-state media claimed to have received unprecedented eyewitness account that proved the aircraft was downed by a Ukrainian SU-25 Frogfoot whose pilot thought he was targeting Putin's private jet. This would require being able to see a fighter-jet-sized aircraft operating at fifteen thousand feet above sea level at the same altitude where MH17 was flying. That is not a call that could be made by anyone from a view on the ground, and it is clearly a fabricated account.²⁹⁵

The most damnable evidence has been presented by British imagery analyst Elliot Huggins, who has no formal military training in the career field but is self-taught and has a very thorough understanding of methods taught in the field like point mensuration and utilization of reference imagery. Imagery analysis is a clinical intelligence tool that can be used to prove or disprove activity in an area at a given time. Some of the images that the

²⁹⁵ Glenn Kates. "British Aviation Expert Says Russian MH17 Claims Highly Unlikely", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*. Last updated July 22, 2014. <http://www.rferl.org/content/malaysian-probability-russia-claims-aircraft-su25/25466500.html>.

Kremlin used in their defense were taken weeks prior to the crash.²⁹⁶ Huggins explains that commercial imagery from the date imaged on the crash that there were puddles around the crash site. In the Russian images, there were no puddles or freshly disturbed earth from vehicle tracks. Huggins also concluded that those images were likely taken around June, because other commercial imagery taken in June showed no puddles or freshly disturbed earth from vehicle tracks in the area imaged.²⁹⁷ Compounding these signatures, the “Malaysian Airlines” emblem was on the wrong area of the aircraft and the wrong type of Boeing was used. There were so many holes in the narrative, but a disappointing lack of pushback from both the United States and Europe to disprove it, saying the responsible thing to do would be to wait for the Dutch-led investigation to produce conclusive findings.

Even if the imagery analysis is not thorough enough, the metadata footprint itself puts the fabrication beyond doubt. Simply by looking at commercial reference imagery, and the date and time that a satellite photo is taken, the Russian photos that were presented as evidence were doctored with Adobe Photoshop, and it is very easy to see this because the metadata that was used in the original commercial imagery was digitally altered.²⁹⁸ The metadata are unmistakable fingerprints written in binary code, and any image can be traced to these fingerprints. It is very easy to tell from that binary code alone when an image has been altered or not simply by looking at the pattern of “1” and “0” left by the saved image itself. The Kremlin used this doctored imagery a mere four days after the crash had taken place. This digital blueprint is perhaps the most compelling piece of evidence for anyone

²⁹⁶ Christopher Miller, “Satellite images show clearly that Russia faked its MH17 report”, *Mashable News*. Last updated May 31, 2015. <http://mashable.com/2015/05/31/russia-fake-mh17-report/#J1J7vaOwjEqR>.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

wishing to disprove Russian's fabrication. Where Russia boasts of MH17 imagery authenticity, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov laughed off the NATO provided imagery as "just images from computer games."²⁹⁹

Connecting the Russian military to the use of the BUK missile system is even easier based on the fact that there is no way a common Donbass separatist could have learned how to use a system as complex as a BUK, nor was the BUK in the Ukrainian arsenal in the first place. Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk explains by saying "drunken guerillas cannot manage this system. They need to work in cooperation with another radar that we don't have in Ukrainian territory. It strains credulity to think that it could be used by separatists without at least some measure of Russian support and technical assistance."³⁰⁰ The BUK launcher itself would have taken weeks of training to be able to operate effectively because of the complexity of the weapons system. The BUK launcher is a key component to the Dutch investigation, and that research is currently ongoing, but ballistic forensic experts from several countries have already ruled out the possibility of an air-to-air missile or even its potential to be confused with a surface-to-air missile. These insights augment the overwhelming evidence that is already available through open-source means.

Additional imagery products provide ample evidence of Russian involvement in eastern Ukraine. Tanks seen in Rostov, Russia and Novoazovsk, Ukraine that have the exact same camouflage blots were photographed at each location. No Russian camouflage is ever

²⁹⁹ Maksymilian Czusperski, Elliot Higgins. *Hiding In Plain Sight.: Putin's War In Ukraine*, (Washington D.C: Atlantic Council, 2015), p.12.

³⁰⁰ Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2015), p. 445.

the same pattern.³⁰¹ On July 17, a video was posted on You Tube of MRLs (multiple rocket launchers) firing from a point of origin that appears to be Gukovo, Russia, based on buildings of similar height, color, and dimensions in COTS (commercial off-the-shelf) imagery. Ground scarring from artillery was identified at that exact location days later.³⁰² Eyewitness accounts from Russian civilians from Gukovo further validated this event. From high-altitude imagery, T-72B3s, Kamaz-43629 Dozers, SA-22s, and ZB26 Grad Launchers that have never been exported have been identified conclusively in Donbass. Russian artillery has also been shelling across the Ukrainian border, and the Atlantic Council has provided very detailed imagery that illustrates the direct tie between impact craters in Ukraine and the points of friction left by heavy artillery on the Russian side of the border. The crater impact points themselves provide rudimentary direction and distance information, and the ground scarring caused by the firing of artillery on the Russian side shows the artillery pieces were pointed at eastern Ukraine.³⁰³

“There Are No Russian Military Personnel in Ukraine”

There is no bigger hole in the Kremlin narrative than the assertion that there are no Russian soldiers in Ukraine. The Ukrainian government has been working very hard to continuously publicize the extent of Russian involvement in their country. According to Viktor Muzhenko, the Ukrainian Army Chief of Staff, the Russian army’s 15th mechanized infantry brigade, 8th mechanical infantry brigade, 331st airborne regiment, and 98th airborne

³⁰¹ Maksymilian Czusuperski, Elliot Higgins. *Hiding In Plain Sight.: Putin’s War In Ukraine*, (Washington D.C: Atlantic Council, 2015), p. 8.

³⁰² Ibid p. 19.

³⁰³ Ibid p. 19.

regiment are currently operating in Ukraine.³⁰⁴ Muzhenko also says, “We have the details of Russian units, where they are deployed, their numbers, and their weapons”.³⁰⁵ There have been countless instances from brave journalists and the Mothers of Soldiers Committee of servicemen wounded and killed in eastern Ukraine evidenced by graves, families making memorial posts of their dead sons on Vkontakte, and official letters from the Russian Defense ministry of a suspiciously high number of Russian soldiers dying in live-fire training accidents in Rostov. When Russian military members get sent to Rostov for “training exercises”, they know exactly what it means, and not all of them come home. Russian conscripts, who are constantly bullied and hazed by career military members, are called traitors and cowards and threatened with prison by commanders if they do not “volunteer” for the campaign in eastern Ukraine. As flimsy as Russian military law is, conscripts are not allowed to serve abroad according to Russian law, so they are forced to sign military contracts to authorize their movement across the border. Even more hypocritical, Russian military members are not allowed to take leave to fight in an armed conflict without their commander, the FSB, and even the Defense minister signing that authorization.³⁰⁶ Ironically, this is exactly the narrative the Kremlin is forwarding to its public; namely, that it is following all of these laws and procedures when in fact it is violating every one of them. Furthermore, DPR president Zakharchenko says “We have Russian soldiers here who would rather spend their holidays not on the beach but fighting for freedom with their brothers.”³⁰⁷

³⁰⁴ “Kyiv lists Russian military units allegedly in Ukraine”, *Kyiv Post*. Last updated April 18, 2015. <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine-abroad/agence-france-presse-kyiv-lists-russian-military-units-allegedly-in-ukraine-386546.html>.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁶ Boris Nemtsov. *Putin. War*. (Moscow, Russia: Free Russia Foundation, 2015), p. 18.

³⁰⁷ Damien Sharkov, “Ukraine Leader Accuses Moscow as 15,000 Russian Soldiers Join Separatists”, *Newsweek Magazine*. Last updated August 28, 2014. <http://europe.newsweek.com/poroshenko-accuses-russia-bringing-troops-ukraine-15000-russian-soldiers-join-267169>.

When their contracts are fulfilled, they often find upon return that they must serve another three years in the Russian military, a fact unbeknownst to most of the conscripts. There have been pictures taken by OSCE observers of trucks labelled “Cargo 200” (the marking of vehicles carrying deceased bodies) crossing to and from the Russian border from the conflict zone, and in June there were reports of mobile crematories being brought to the Donbass for the purpose of destroying evidence of any dead Russian soldiers, intelligence operatives, or mercenaries.³⁰⁸ There are also organizations in the Russian Federation that have been active in enlisting contractors and mercenaries in the fight for eastern Ukraine.

Many of these men are former Spetsnaz and paratroopers and their experience in the fight is extremely valuable, while others are volunteers with no military background. Recruiting organizations for the conflict accept virtually everyone. One recruiter is Vladimir Yefimov, a retired Spetsnaz officer and head of the Sverdlovsk Oblask Fund for Special Forces Veterans, organizes army veterans and volunteers to fight for Russia in Ukraine.³⁰⁹ Yefimov says that some of the men who volunteer go for adventure, and some are idealists who want to stop the brutality of the “Ukrainian fascists” and help people who are unable to defend themselves. He says even addicts would come to his office in hopes of recruitment and that the rush of war may be able to scare them clean (heroin usage is very heavy in Yekaterinburg). Yefimov proudly boasts that he has sent 250 men to the front since the war started, and that salaries start from \$1,000 to \$4,000 per month depending on prior rank and the skill sets each man can provide. Men with no military experience start at \$1,500 per

³⁰⁸ Douglas Earnst, “Russia uses mobile crematoriums to hide dead troops in Ukraine: U.S. lawmakers say”, *Washington Times*. Last updated on May26, 2015.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/may/26/russia-using-mobile-crematoriums-hide-dead-soldier/>.

³⁰⁹ James Rupert, “How Russians Are Sent to Fight in Ukraine”, *Newsweek Magazine*. Last updated January 06, 2015. <http://www.newsweek.com/how-russians-are-sent-fight-ukraine-296937>.

month, former enlisted at \$2,600 per month and officers at \$4,000. Yefimov would not say where the funds for his operation came from. Men with prior military experience go to Donetsk and the others head to Luhansk and get paid less. He says that the first men were sent in the humanitarian convoys discussed in the previous chapter, and that they sign contracts to provide “humanitarian assistance” to the Donbass, which he chuckles about as he says it.³¹⁰ His final warning is that if they are killed in action they will not likely be returned to Russia. Rather, it will be disposed of on-site and their families may never hear what happened to them.

The DPR and LPR Leadership has been another source of embarrassing contradictions for Russia’s narrative. DPR leadership has towed the usual line, saying that a Nazi junta was responsible for the Euromaiden riots, then saying the upper echelons of the Rada are now run by Jews, which is considered a demeaning slander in many Slavic countries in Eastern Europe. Of course, the argument that the Rada is a Nazi junta run by Jews makes no ideological sense whatsoever and is by definition impossible. Moreover, the most key participants in the DPR and LPR during their time of formation were Russian: Arseniy Pavlov who leads the Spartan Battalion, Sergey Petrovsky who has worked in Russian intelligence, Igor “Strelkov” who was a former FSB colonel, Igor Besler, Alexandr Zhuchovsky, Aleksey Milchakov, Leonid Simonin, and Pavel Karpov have all been affiliated with the Kremlin at one time or another.³¹¹

Supplying weaponry has been equally creative through methods of maskirovka. The humanitarian convoys have already been mentioned as methods of supply to the DPR and

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Boris Nemtsov. *Putin. War.* (Moscow, Russia: Free Russia Foundation, 2015), p. 52.

LPR. Major General Gordon Davis called the first convoy “a wonderful example of maskirovka.” The Russian Orthodox Church has also sent coffins filled with weapons to the front³¹². When a checkpoint guard in Krasny Luch was asked if anyone has been supplying them, he said “Yes, our brothers are supplying us. You know who.”³¹³ Another fighter proudly proclaimed, “I’m not going to hide it. Russians were here; they went in and they left quickly.”³¹⁴

“Let Me Repeat: There Are No Russian Military Personnel In Ukraine”

There are multitudes of detailed examples of Russian soldiers being buried with military honors following involvement in Ukraine. Burials occur early in the morning and services are rapid in order to avoid causing a scene that might alert the opposition. The godmother of Pavel Zhilin, a paratrooper of the 331st airborne regiment, was given a deceased body that was not Pavel’s. Inside the coffin was a headless body with a shoe size three sizes smaller than Pavel’s.³¹⁵ In another instance, activists Ruslan Leviev and Vadim Korovin from Moscow identified fresh graves from Anton Savelyev in the Tambov Oblast from the 16th special operations brigade. A video was taken with freshly disturbed dirt, a photo of Anton in military uniform, and flowers with a wreath that read “to the defender of the Fatherland, from the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation”. They took videos of what they saw because they said, “we want to show society that the defense ministry is literally abandoning its own troops and disavowing them like this. We are showing society

³¹² Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2015), p. 110,

³¹³ John-Thor Dahlburg, “Russia’s role in Ukraine seen as shifting from sending troops to training rebels”, *Fox News*. Last updated April 03, 2015. <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2015/04/03/russia-role-in-ukraine-seen-as-shifting-from-sending-troops-to-training-rebels/>.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

³¹⁵ Maria Tsvetkova. “A burial, but no closure for Russian soldier’s family”, *Reuters*. Last updated May 10, 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/10/us-ukraine-crisis-family-idUSKBN0NV06S20150510>.

the consequences of war. This is our response to the Russian propaganda that there are no Russian troops in Ukraine.”³¹⁶ On May 4 2015, Timur Mamayusopov of Tartarstan and Ivan Karapolov of the Kurgonsk oblast were reported killed in Ukraine. Ukraine journalists back this up saying there was an engagement on May 4 with eight Russian soldiers in the group. Six of the Russian soldiers were killed and the other two retreated. The deceased carried Kizlyar combat knives, favorites of the GRU. Timur’s mother posted pictures of her son on social media saying “Timur, we will never forget you.”³¹⁷ An additional instance comes from an interview of a wounded soldier who took part in the invasion of Debaltseve. Opposition Russian newspaper *Novaya Gazeta* (one of the few opposition newspapers remaining in operation) interviewed 20-year-old Russian serviceman Dorzhi Batomunkuyev, who was severely burned after his tank was destroyed. Dorzhi Batomunkuyev is 20 years old. A conscript drafted into the army on November 25, 2013, he entered into a three-year contract in June 2014.³¹⁸ Batomunkuyev is an ethnic Buryat whose unit came from Ulan-Ude in Russia’s Far East and a member of the 5th separate Guards Tank Brigade. On January 23 2015, Batomunkuyev posted on his V Kontakte account that he would be “out of touch”. He says he began training in Rostov, crossed the border on February 8, 2015, and sustained his severe wounds fighting for Debaltseve on February 19, 2015. He gave his interview with *Novaya Gazeta* on February 28. While resting in his hospital bed, he tells *Novaya Gazeta* that “there were lots of troop trains every day from various cities.”³¹⁹ Finally there is the simple fact that there would be very few, if any, Buryats living in Ukraine. Everything about

³¹⁶ Alison Quinn. “Moscow activists report finding fresh graves of Russian soldiers”, *Kyiv Post*. Last updated May 20, 2015. <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/kyiv-post-plus/moscow-activists-say-they-found-fresh-graves-of-russian-soldiers-389037.html>.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Elena Kostyuchenko, “We were fully aware of what we brought ourselves to and what could happen” *Novaya Gazeta*. Last updated March 13, 2015. <http://en.novayagazeta.ru/politics/67620.html>.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

Batomunkuyov's account seems authentic, and the man paid a very serious price for performing service that his own country denies. There are dozens of accounts similar to these all over open-source media, and it becomes more and more difficult to deny them.

Dorzhi's account is validated by a mercenary who identifies himself as "Yakut," who is a former Russian paratrooper. He says "It's not local militia anymore. It is mostly Russians who take part. It is the professionals that are here now. The locals are mainly miners and farmers who have no combat experience. The guys coming in, they are the experienced people who have been through more than one war."³²⁰

A final account was given by the BBC who interviewed Dmitry Sapozhnikov, a former Spetsnaz member who was a "volunteer" for the front. Sapozhnikov was badly wounded during the engagement and gave the interview from his hospital bed. He says, "all large scale operations are led by Russian officers and Russian generals. They develop plans together with our commanders and we fulfill the orders". He also lauds the Buryat tank unit that reinforced them in Debaltseve, saying "thanks to their help we managed to take Debaltseve. I don't think we would have been able to do it without them."³²¹

Much like their predecessors, these journalists and activists have taken their lives into their own hands reporting this information. Even beyond the assassination of Nemtsov, activists and journalists have been beaten, threatened, and coerced by Russian authorities for reporting this information. Lev Shosberg, a Russian deputy from Pskov, was amongst the

³²⁰ Anton Zverov, "Former Russian paratroopers say lead combat in rebel-held east Ukraine", *Reuters*. Last updated September 15, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/15/us-ukraine-crisis-luhansk-idUSKBN0HA1HS20140915>.

³²¹ "How Ukraine rebels rely on Russians", *BBC News*. Last updated on March 31, 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32114522>.

first to report on Russian soldiers being killed in Ukraine. He was severely beaten as a result. In September of 2014, a BBC news team of journalists travelled to Astrakhan in an attempt to report on Russian military burials, where their cameraman was beaten up. The camera he was carrying was smashed and memory cards erased by three aggressors. All of the recording items on their persons were “sanitized” when brought to the local police station. OSCE members witnessed the attack and condemned it.³²²

Social media has also been a decisive tool in proving the participation of the Russian military in the conflict. For all the OPSEC practiced and preached by the Russians in Ukraine, there have been critical errors that make their involvement an indisputable fact. Russian soldiers have constantly posted social media content on Vkontakte, which is the Russian equivalent of Facebook. Much like Facebook, Vkontakte geotags their coordinates, leaving a fingerprint of their exact location at the time of the posting, and some even brag about where they are going and what they are doing. Families and friends in their virtual social circle are very valuable in augmenting information about where their sons are being sent and what has happened to them. Mothers and wives will post eulogies of their deceased sons or husbands saying what time the funeral will be held, and where. The FSB makes every effort to remove the posts as quickly as they happen. Generally, the Russian government removes these posts quickly, but screenshots were and still are saved as

³²² “BBC team under attack in southern Russia”, *BBC News*. Last updated September 18, 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29249642>.

evidence by people like Boris Nemtsov and organizations like the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia who have wanted prove that the Kremlin and Putin are lying.³²³

The Committee of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia holds a special place in Russian military society as being a connection between the military and families of soldiers, and was a respected bond even during the Soviet Union's war in Afghanistan. The fact that the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia was able to operate openly in such a closed-media state like the Soviet Union shows the amount of respect this organization has been given. The organization has been active in both Chechnya wars, and is active right now in protesting the return of their sons' and husbands' bodies under ambiguous circumstances. Ella Polyakova is the head of the organization, and says she had been informed of 100 soldiers being flown into a military medical hospital in St. Petersburg.³²⁴ Polyakova also estimates that there are 10,000 Russian soldiers in Donbass, and accuses Putin and the Russian High Command of not letting them know why their sons are dying. Chairwoman Valentina Melnikova, who has been involved with the organization since the "river of the dead" took place during the Soviet Union's involvement in Afghanistan, knows all too well what the sealed zinc coffins that are being sent back indicate, and she is furious with her government. She never thought she would see the day her government would have the audacity to do such a thing ever again. Melnikova has also heard that the conscripts are forced to sign contracts,

³²³ Catherine A. Fitzpatrick, "Finding Putin's Dead Soldiers in Ukraine", *The Daily Beast*. Last updated September 16, 2015. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/09/16/finding-putin-s-dead-soldiers-in-ukraine.html>.

³²⁴ Halya Coynash, "If Russia is not at war, then who is in those freshly-dug graves?", *Kyiv Post*. Last updated April 27, 2014. <http://www.kyivpost.com/opinion/op-ed/halya-coynash-if-russia-is-not-at-war-then-who-is-in-those-freshly-dug-graves-362260.html>.

and on the off chance that they do not, their commander signs their documents for them.³²⁵

Despite doing nothing different in their role from either the wars in Afghanistan or Chechnya, Putin and the Kremlin have deemed the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia to pose enough of an obstruction to their narrative to assign them the stigmatizing "foreign agent" moniker on August 30, 2014.³²⁶

Families of Russian military members who are killed in action are given generous monetary benefits. For the Ukrainian conflict, the important caveat that they must abide by to keep their benefits is simply and bluntly to keep their mouths shut about how it happened. Families of the deceased cannot talk to journalists or continue to inquire about circumstances in which they were killed. Otherwise, they risk losing their benefits. The stipend that families of deceased Russian soldiers receive is a very large sum by Russian standards: about \$90,000.³²⁷ The incentive is high to keep quiet and not discuss the circumstances of the death of loved ones with media. Pavel Zhilin's family (who knew their son's body was not the headless one with the wrong shoe size) refused compensation because they wanted their child and not someone else's.³²⁸

The ethnic and cultural diversity of many of the soldiers who have participated in the annexation of Crimea and are currently in the Donbass are a dead giveaway as well. Russia is a nation made up of 185 different ethnicities and races. While the Slavic people may be

³²⁵ Anna Nemtsova, "Russia Lies About Invading Ukraine as It Invades Ukraine", *The Daily Beast*. Last updated August 28, 2014. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/08/28/russian-moms-denounce-putin-s-not-so-secret-ukraine-invasion.html>.

³²⁶ Maria Antonova. "The Russian Mothers Waiting for News of Their Missing Soldier Sons", *Newsweek Magazine*. Last updated September 02, 2014. <http://www.newsweek.com/2014/09/12/russian-mothers-waiting-news-their-missing-sons-267909.html>.

³²⁷ Maria Tsvetkova. "A burial, but no closure for Russian soldier's family", *Reuters*. Last updated May 10, 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/10/us-ukraine-crisis-family-idUSKBN0NV06S20150510>.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

the most predominantly recognized when someone thinks of Russia, there are many Asiatic peoples as well, especially in central and eastern Russia. However, there are very few Asiatic people in Ukraine. Very few Buryat, Chechen, Uzbek, or Kazakh citizens live there. Many of the “separatists” fighting the Ukrainian military have a very distinct Central Asian complexion. For instance, the Russian-led offensive at Debaltseve was primarily led by a Buryat tank unit. It was incredibly suspicious that so many Central Asians showed up and claimed to be citizens of Ukraine.

Caught In the Act

The most important evidence to date of Russian involvement in Ukraine was the capture of Spetsnaz GRU operatives Sergeant Alexander Alexandrov and Captain Yevgeny Erofejev early in June 2015.³²⁹ Both were too injured to move when found by Ukrainian forces, and the Ukrainian military account said other Russian troops tried to kill them with mortar fire to prevent them from being taken alive. Alexandrov’s wife appeared on Russian news and said that her husband had been out of the military for a year despite his assertions otherwise. He said he had signed a contract with the Russian military that was still valid. Alexandrov is especially angry that his wife was used to lie on his behalf: “They said I was no longer a Russian serviceman. It is a bit hurtful, especially when they do it through your family, through your wife. That crosses a line.”³³⁰ He says his wife always answered his phone calls, but that since his capture, she is no longer in contact with him. Both soldiers want to go back but think it would be unsafe for themselves and their families. A third Russian was captured in Donbas on July 26 2015, a major in the Russian military named

³²⁹ Maria Tsvetkova, “Special Report: Russian fighters, caught in Ukraine, cast adrift by Moscow”, *Reuters*. Last updated May 29, 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/29/us-ukraine-crisis-captured-specialreport-idUSKBN0OE0YE20150529>.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

Vladimir Starkov, who said he was attempting to supply DPR and LPR separatists with ammunition. Starkov stated to the SBU that he is merely a clerical officer and not a combat officer. Starkov implored that, “I’m not a terrorist. I didn’t come here to kill anyone. Before my detention, I didn’t put up any resistance because I knew that officially, we weren’t enemies.”³³¹ He has publically appealed to Putin for help with his release. Moscow has since disowned him and the other two men and apparently will leave them to their fate in Ukraine, which will likely be terrorist charges consisting of lengthy prison terms.

All of these instances have become public knowledge thanks to opposition journalists and organizations like the Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers of Russia, and even Russian captured soldiers. Despite this, the Kremlin still denies categorically its involvement in Ukraine. Putin has even signed legislation that has made the death of Russian soldiers during peacetime a state secret.³³² Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has since said this move was made to “protect Russian interests” and insisted that the press direct any questions about the military to the Ministry of Defense. Cracks are developing in the Kremlin storyline. There are only so many holes that can be plugged before the Russian people are eventually exposed to what their government has been doing.

The United States and Europe now know how badly they are being beaten in the information environment. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has made it clear that we are in an information war and that we are losing. Mrs. Clinton states, “We are paying a big price for dismantling international communication networks after the end of the Cold

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Catherine E. Shoichet, “Putin makes Russia's peacetime military deaths a state secret”, *CNN*. Last updated May 28, 2015. <http://www.cnn.com/2015/05/28/europe/russia-putin-peacetime-military-deaths-state-secret/>.

War.”³³³ United States Secretary of State John Kerry emphasizes that “Russia has engaged in a rather remarkable period of the most overt and extensive propaganda exercise that I have seen since the height of the Cold War.”³³⁴ NATO General Breedlove reinforces this saying that Russia is waging “the most amazing information warfare blitzkrieg we have ever seen in the history of information warfare.”³³⁵ Breedlove states that “this is what we need, as a Western group of nations, or as an alliance to engage this informational warfare. The way to attack the false narrative is to drag the false narrative to light and expose it”³³⁶. The United States and Europe have a long way to go in this regard. Russia Today’s annual operating budget alone runs at two hundred forty one million USD. The Ukraine government has responded by banning all Russian-state channels.³³⁷ This is a simple and effective way to make sure that on the front lines the Ukrainian government can stem the flow of disinformation. On August 29th 2015, Ukrainian President Poroshenko posted on the Ukrainian government website a comprehensive directory from their own intelligence collection and analysis. It included order-of-battle (ORBAT) specifics as well as troop numbers, units, and commanders at the front. According to their impressively detailed intelligence report, forty percent of the separatist troops are locals. The rest are Russian

³³³ Marcel Van Herpen, *Putin's Propaganda Machine: Soft Power and Russian Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, 2015), p.6.

³³⁴ Deb Riechman, “Kerry: Russia has lied about its activities in Ukraine”, *Military Times*. Last updated February 24, 2015. <http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/capitol-hill/2015/02/24/kerry-russia-has-lied-about-its-activities-in-ukraine/23948643/>.

³³⁵ Peter Pomerantsev, “Russia and the Menace of Unreality: How Vladimir Putin is revolutionizing information warfare”, *The Atlantic*. Last updated September 09, 2014. <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/09/russia-putin-revolutionizing-information-warfare/379880/>.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Max Seddon, “Documents Show How Russia’s Troll Army Hit America”, *Buzz Feed News*. Last updated June 02, 2014. <http://www.buzzfeed.com/maxseddon/documents-show-how-russias-troll-army-hit-america#.jwaO4GAq5V>.

military and contractors to make up enough of a deterrent for Ukraine to not consider another offensive.³³⁸

The mountain of evidence needs to be highlighted and showcased as many times as the Russians deny it for the sake of getting at least equal footing with them in the information campaign. This is reinforced by Leonid Bershidsky, a Bloomberg columnist and Russian dissident who claims “if it looks like Kremlin shit, smells like Kremlin shit, and tastes like Kremlin shit, then it is Kremlin shit.”³³⁹ The Kremlin’s credibility is increasingly undone when more and more people from the Russian public see that their soldiers are dying in large numbers in Ukraine even as their leaders deny it. There is also the common decency of pushing back on the blatant fabrication of information regarding the downing of MH17 for the dignity of the families who lost loved ones killed by a Russian-operated BUK missile system. Finally, Western media must do a better job of dispelling the Kremlin narrative that Ukraine is now run by a “fascist junta”. These are very specific instances in which the United States and Europe have done a woefully inadequate job in addressing Russian fabrication of important events. If the West wants any chance to find a critical node to exploit in the Russian maskirovka campaign, it would be here. It puts into question the integrity of their government from top to bottom including the media, their military leaders, the duma, the Kremlin, and Putin himself.

³³⁸ John L. Schindler, “Ukraine just published detailed intelligence of Russian troop movements and equipment”, *Business insider*. Last updated August 29, 2015. http://www.businessinsider.com/ukraine-just-published-detailed-intelligence-of-russian-troop-movements-and-equipment-2015-8?pundits_only=0&get_all_comments=1&no_reply_filter=1#comment-55e1f939ecad04b754d276c3.

³³⁹ Max Seddon, “Documents Show How Russia’s Troll Army Hit America”, Buzz Feed News. Last updated June 02, 2014. <http://www.buzzfeed.com/maxseddon/documents-show-how-russias-troll-army-hit-america#.jwaO4GAq5V>.

It would be inconceivable for a former KGB operative to not utilize maskirovka in his decision-making process. It is clear that Putin is a student of a philosophy that is as crucial to Russian strategy and policy making as it was during the Cold War. This makes the job of assessing and predicting an adversary like Putin all the more complicated for the intelligence analyst. Putin is a master manipulator and strategist who uses deception and misinformation against Western leaders as arguably his most potent weapon, and world leaders are finding it a daunting task to counter the intelligence-operative-turned-world-leader in an effective manner. We cannot predict such a complex leader's every move, but if policymakers and intelligence specialists look at Russia's history, its complicated relationship with Ukraine, the political minds with whom Putin has surrounded himself, and recent behavior toward other former Soviet states they can develop a satisfactory assessment (and reasonable alternate assessments) of what his intentions in Ukraine and beyond truly are.

CHAPTER III: ASSESSMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS

WHAT IT ALL MEANS: PUTTING EVERYTHING TOGETHER

In this final chapter, we will arrive at key assessments and conclusions that emerge based on an understanding of Russia's history; the profile of the key players involved; their methods of deception (*maskirovka*); and the climactic events of the Euromaiden, annexation of Crimea, and the unfolding situation in Donetsk and Luhansk. Since Putin's third presidential term, Russia has come out of its cordial posture of humility into a campaign of outright confrontation defending its strategic interests. This sort of behavior should come as no surprise to anyone. Russia has always been a difficult country to deal with for policy makers dating back to the First World War and the founding of the Soviet Union. In 1947, George Kennan spoke of Russian diplomats, saying, "basically, the antagonism remains, and from it flows many of the phenomena which we find disturbing in the Kremlin's conduct of foreign policy: the secretiveness, the lack of frankness, the duplicity, the wary suspiciousness, and the basic unfriendliness of purpose."³⁴⁰ From a grand strategic view, it is important to evaluate the Kremlin's centers of gravity and how firm their foundations are. This can be evaluated through the use of the DIME methodology, which focuses on the diplomatic, informational, military, and economic aspects of a nation's grand strategy. Bobo Lo states that, "according to the Kremlin, true power comes from the ruthless deployment of political, economic, and strategic assets."³⁴¹

Diplomacy

The first place to examine the strength of the Kremlin's effectiveness in implementing their grand strategy is the diplomatic realm. James Sherr believes that the

³⁴⁰ Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (Washington D.C: Brookings Institute, 2015), p. 165.

³⁴¹ *Ibid* p. 41.

Kremlin's equation of soft power is a combination of soft coercion and hard diplomacy. In any diplomatic engagement, the Kremlin is always looking to gain and hold an advantage at some level, or to obtain some sort of favor in return for its cooperation, and the Russian leadership has been very effective in this respect. Competitive relations are primary, and anything cooperative is secondary. Putin searches for weak points he can exploit. He is also a zero-sum diplomat with a zero-sum mind. Putin has made it very clear that while he is in charge, Russia will no longer retreat or stand down. This viewpoint is not just shared by Putin, but by Russian diplomats past and present. The prevalent Russian belief about granting concessions is that it is the result of a position of weakness. The Russian center of strategic culture is akin to the ultra-realist interpretations of Thomas Hobbes.³⁴² To Putin, the world is an alien and hostile place, which encourages the besieged fortress mentality. The strong must prosper, and the weak will be beaten. He only sees triumph or humiliation. No in-between. No compromise. Internally, Putin must feel heroic. A heroic self-assertion turns into victimization. The more that "inferiority" and "victimization" can be overcome, the greater is the hero. What emerges is a narcissistic leader, and any time his authority is questioned, it represents a personal attack. Finally, military power guarantees respect around the globe. As discussed earlier, Putin and the Kremlin demand an equal diplomatic platform with the United States. They demand to be treated like a world power and respected as a world power. It is not lost on Putin when President Obama never misses the chance to refer

³⁴² Ibid p. 40.

to Russia as a “regional power”, and the belittling rhetoric that is a not-so-subtle jab at Putin’s machismo.³⁴³

The Kremlin sincerely believes in the danger of “external threats” and Lenin’s “besieged fortress syndrome.”³⁴⁴ This national psychology comes from the Mongol, Napoleonic, and Nazi invasions along with many others. Foreign invaders have killed millions of Russians, and one could easily sympathize with their fear that it might happen again. Russia has been the target of invasion throughout its history, and if we were to look at the country as an individual, the behavior traits are the result of stimuli from negative reinforcement over a sustained period of time. Putin is hypersensitive about national and personal inferiority and losing the Cold War to the United States. The perceived treatment of Russia by the United States and Europe following the collapse of the Soviet Union, when Russian fortunes were at their nadir, only increases his anger. Moscow believes that the West robbed Russia of influence when the country was at its weakest, especially in the Baltics. Russian leaders dislike Western interventionism and encroachment on their “special interests”, especially in post-Soviet states. Russians hate American exceptionalism but also display their own brand of exceptionalism toward other nations as well, particularly nations they deem to be inferior. It is a double standard that the Kremlin is not reminded of often enough.

Part of its defense mechanism against “besieged fortress syndrome” would also be to pose itself as a great power and “man.” Any questioning of Russia’s (or Putin’s) strength is

³⁴³ Steve Holland, Jeff Mason. “Obama, in dig at Putin, calls Russia 'regional power’”, *Reuters*. Last updated March 25, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/25/us-ukraine-crisis-russia-weakness-idUSBREA2O19J20140325>.

³⁴⁴ Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (Washington D.C: Brookings Institute, 2015), p. 14.

thus an outright attack on its status in the world, and at the level of the leadership, on their manhood. As such, Russia perceives that the best way to protect itself is to have a buffer zone of friends in their “near abroad”. These near abroad nations must be friendly to Russia and act only with the good graces of the Kremlin. According to Sherr, Russia “sees neighbors that are corrupt and ill-governed as worthy partners as long as they acknowledge its pre-eminence.”³⁴⁵ The near abroad is also an extension of territory Russia has felt it lost unfairly. For Ukraine in particular, given Putin’s time there with the KGB, Putin felt insulted as a man and it was a major blow to his self-esteem, so to look like a strong man, he felt that he needed to act. This pressure to project manhood is not lost on other world leaders. German Chancellor Angela Merkel gave her own damning account of Putin’s behavior in Ukraine when she said, “I understand why he has to do this. He has to prove he’s a man. He’s afraid of his own weakness. Russia has nothing; no successful economy or politics. All they have is this.”³⁴⁶ Despite this psychological diagnosis, the phobia ingrained in the Kremlin’s grand strategic psyche does not excuse it from taking out its paranoid aggression on family, friends, or a little brother like Ukraine whose geopolitical torment is arguably greater than that of Russia itself.

Putin is likely also falling in to a psychological trap that many absolute rulers arrive at after a prolonged period of time in power. The old saying that “power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely” applies perfectly to Putin. He could be convincing himself of his own power and his own destiny. Putin now believes that he can say or do

³⁴⁵ James Sherr, *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad*, (London, UK: Chatham House, 2013), p. 97.

³⁴⁶ George Packer. “The Quiet German”, *The New Yorker*. Last updated December 01, 2014. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/12/01/quiet-german>.

whatever he wants without consequence and move to even more egregious violations. According to one analyst, “Putin has become more self-confident and less inhibited, making riskier choices, and has reduced capabilities of complex social reasoning and moral judgement.”³⁴⁷ The same analyst believes Putin could be psychotic and may be losing touch with reality. In this sense, he is like a child who does not like being scolded or told what to do. Because of this aura of being all-powerful, diplomats note that Putin often speaks for long periods of time and out of turn, which reinforces that possibility. He is also not affected by the opinions of others, where he showed signs that he did earlier in his reign. He is “self-reinforcing”. Recent Russian deployments to and combat actions in Syria appear to support this idea of increasing self-confidence.

Putin himself may also feel at least some degree of guilt knowing that his corrupt system of government is inherently immoral because it takes advantage of poor Russians who live in such poverty, especially due to sanctions. Sherr agrees with this when he says “Putin must know that his anxiety comes from the fact that his political scheme is immoral, whether conscious or unconsciously. To preserve this legitimacy, it must ensure that no alternatives take root on its doorstep.”³⁴⁸ However, there are multiple indicators that Putin is not interested in the Russian people at more than a superficial level. He simply wants to remain in power, and he is aware that he has to at least show a superficial level of compassion to maintain that power. He sends his military and contractors to the battlefields of Eastern Ukraine to die and refuses to acknowledge their existence when their mangled bodies are brought back in Cargo-200 transporters. He makes his friends some of the richest

³⁴⁷ Peter T. Coleman, “Mad With Power?” *Huffington Post*. Last updated October 29, 2014.

³⁴⁸ James Sherr, *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad*, (London, UK: Chatham House, 2013), p. 98.

people in the world when giving generous contracts for infrastructure projects that they keep themselves. He imprisons people who disagree with him on charges that are often completely false. He will even have political dissidents executed right next to Red Square. If he is a true Orthodox Christian, this double standard may eat at him at a psychological level as well. Nonetheless, he also knows that even if he releases the reins on his system even a little, Yanukovich is a living reminder of what could happen (and given the Russian history of revolutions, that is a best-case scenario).

It is also important to understand the Kremlin's diplomatic viewpoints, which shape its grand strategy and seek an ideal outcome for itself. Putin views the United States and its Western allies as nations in decline due to liberal excess and cultural deviation. He would point to examples of nations in or close to default such as Greece, Italy, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, and Ukraine as the first indicators that the EU is crumbling (neglecting the fact that Russia's own economy is much more unstable). Russian leaders would also point to the ballooning national deficit of the United States, which is approaching \$19 trillion and shows no signs of letting up. The Kremlin would also point to weak US and EU response to and performance in Iraq and Afghanistan to validate their thought process that the West is timid and in decline. Putin and the Kremlin respect the United States, but only to a degree. They view the West as both a resource and a threat.³⁴⁹ They hope that if they repeat this Dugin-induced narrative enough times, more nations will buy into it. To Putin and his allies, it will be only a matter of time before Russia passes the declining nations of the West in international influence. Putin and the Kremlin believe the future of the world economy lies through BRICS, an economic union of developing nations including Brazil, Russia, India,

³⁴⁹ Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (Washington D.C: Brookings Institute, 2015), p. 198.

China, and South Africa. BRICS also encourages the philosophy of multipolarity, but despite the Kremlin's best efforts here, few other BRICS members have bought into this mindset.

A sore subject that affects Russian strategic culture to the core is why so many of the former Soviet republics are so unwilling to keep good relations with them in the absence of Russian coercive measures. It sincerely bewilders them that Orthodox Christian and even Slavic countries like Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, and the Baltics do not want to maintain closer ties. They have a mental projection that insists that the future of those countries is with Russia. It would be preposterous, in their worldview, to suggest anything else.

The Kremlin also extends its influence through the United Nations, in which it uses a coveted veto privilege to negate any vote in the U.N. Security Council. They have used this veto on many occasions to work against Western interests, such as their veto of the symbolic vote to condemn Serbia for its involvement in genocide. Russia has appealed to international law for condemnation of the invasion of Iraq and the bombing of Syria, but when the same body condemns it for its actions in Crimea, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Chechnya, the United Nations somehow becomes an agent for the West to meddle in its affairs. Putin constantly evokes history to replace the norms that apply to international law. Lo says that, "Moscow's frequent resort to international law is motivated by a mixture of self-interest, moral relativism, and basic instinct. At the most existential level, it reflects opposition to the idea that grassroots democracy movements may be considered legitimate sources of regime change."³⁵⁰ Russia is truly in it for its own benefit, and no one else's, yet wants to remind

³⁵⁰ Ibid p.95.

many other countries and their leadership that they cannot accomplish what they want without Russia's approval. Most importantly, after Iraq, Russia has re-affirmed its own doctrine that it will use a pre-emptive strike if it benefits Russian national interests. According to Lo, "Russia must be indispensable in world affairs, and its greatness must be recognized."³⁵¹ This recognition of greatness and its irreplaceable role in the world must remain, and Russia must fulfill its "burden" to the international community. Putin and his lieutenants want to be intimately involved yet Russian diplomats often act snidely, treating occasions like the G-20, APEC, and the six-party Korean peace talks as unwelcome burdens. According to Sherr, "Russia demands the right to be included yet also a right to stand apart as unique."³⁵² It is all part of the grand diplomatic spectacle. It is Neo-Hobbesian and self-fulfilling gratification and self-assurance at its finest.

The final piece of the Kremlin's diplomatic agenda lies in ensuring that the system of "sovereign democracy" is viable for their own government and their near abroad "privileged area of interests". According to Sherr, "the equation between democracy and chaos, elaborately fostered by Vladimir Putin, is not without resonance in other new post-Soviet democracies burdened by predatory capitalism and incompetent public authorities whose overriding preoccupation is private gain."³⁵³ This applies to all member states of the former Soviet Union but is especially true in Ukraine where Putin has worked hard to spread this idea. Losing Ukraine to a color revolution was devastating to him, and like the Russians did with Georgia in the past, they are putting a concentrated effort into upending the notion that

³⁵¹ Ibid p.50.

³⁵² James Sherr, *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad* (London, UK: Chatham House, 2013), p. 93.

³⁵³ Ibid p. 4.

Western democracy can succeed in their backyard. The ultimate objective is to make sure it does not happen in the Russian Federation. Following the protests ushering in Putin's third term, he explicitly set a standard when he said "we must do all that is necessary so nothing similar happens in Russia."³⁵⁴ Lo says that "there are some countries, like Ukraine, which Russia believes have a duty to closely coordinate their policies with Russia."³⁵⁵ It would also be a direct threat to Russian national security should Ukraine prove successful in its turn toward the West. To Putin, the success of the Baltic States is bad enough. According to Lo, "The Putin elite fears that the democratic contagion of the Arab Spring and Ukraine could, if unchecked, spread to Russia and other places of post-Soviet space."³⁵⁶ When discussing the priority level of Soviet states, Lo categorizes the priority level of importance into three separate levels. Level three (the lowest importance) belongs to Moldova, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia. Zone two belongs to Georgia, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. The highest-priority (level one) nations to the Kremlin are Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus.³⁵⁷ The priority level correlates with the level of interest Russia has in a given state from the standpoint of its own national security and national greatness. For example, Moldova could jump to a priority one state should it do something that threatens Russia's national security and perceptions of national greatness. Georgia already has had that indignity heaped on it. Russia sees all of these nations as quasi-states. However, it does not necessarily want to conquer the Commonwealth of Independent States, but rather exercise de facto control over them. Ukraine is the most important because of the historical and cultural

³⁵⁴ Darya Korsunskaya, "Putin says Russia must prevent color revolution", *Reuters*. Last updated November 20, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/20/us-russia-putin-security-idUSKCN0J41J620141120>.

³⁵⁵ Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (Washington D.C: Brookings Institute, 2015), p. 128.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid* p. 102.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid* p. 106.

connections as well as the country's deep historical ties to Russia, large population and natural resource base, and strategic location as a buffer to an invasion of Russia from the west. According to Lo, "Ukraine occupies a central place in Russian concepts of identity, culture, and history. For Putin, and arguably most Russians, the notion of an independent and separate Ukraine has no meaning."³⁵⁸

The geopolitical stakes for Russia's involvement inside Ukraine, and its actions there, made the Western response predictable. At a diplomatic level, they likely "red teamed" potential Western responses, and likely judged that soured relations and sectoral sanctions were worth not losing influence over Ukraine while also gaining Crimea through annexation. The Kremlin likely reached the conclusion that Ukraine is not a high enough foreign-policy priority to risk a destabilizing broader conflict, and their assessment was obviously correct. However, to the Kremlin, making sure that Ukraine remains a vassal state is one of the most important pillars of Russian strategic interest. According to Ivan Krastev, "from their (Russian) perspective, the Ukrainian revolution is all that is wrong with today's Europe."³⁵⁹

The Kremlin will continue to use a blend of active and passive measures to forward their diplomatic agenda. They took advantage of the war fatigue of the United States and Europe and their short attention spans to emerge diplomatic victors. Lo describes Russia's current diplomatic strategy toward Ukraine as "an odd maligning of mystical vision, historical geopolitical anxieties, feelings of strategic entitlement, gut instincts, and tactical

³⁵⁸ Ibid p. 107.

³⁵⁹ Ivan Krastev, "Russian Revisionism: Putin's Plan For Overturning the European Order", *Foreign Affairs*. Last updated March 03, 2014. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-03-03/russian-revisionism>.

dexterity.”³⁶⁰ No doubt, it can be summed up as all of those things, and it shows just how important it is for Russia to have strong influence over Ukraine. It is important for the Kremlin to portray the current Ukrainian government as incompetent and unable to lead without Russia, and also to maintain the drummed up narrative that Fascists and Nazis took charge to create the unpalatable situation in Ukraine. It is as important for the international audience as it is their domestic audience to keep them pacified about the catastrophic alternative vision and path that their “little brother” has chosen. They will also use all the soft coercion tools in their dirty bag of tricks to make sure that “controlled instability” continues, including bribery, blackmail, and other forms of political penetration.

The current loosely-knit ceasefire that both Ukraine and Russia are abiding by are the Minsk II Accords, which neither side believes the other will implement in good faith, though the DPR and LPR like to propagandize their success in the conflict. According to one DPR newspaper, “following our victory, we have achieved diplomatic victory In Minsk: we have become de facto independent.”³⁶¹ Continuing praise of Putin and their not so subtle pleas to join Russia, the paper’s narrative continues, saying, “a man like Putin is born only once in a thousand years. The day will come when he will also be our president.”³⁶² A high-confidence assessment should be given that Russia will use this relative gradual lull in conflict to further shape the terms of the ceasefire in ways that suit the Kremlin. According to Sherr, “Russian derzhavniki (ideologists of great power) distrust any form of consent that

³⁶⁰ Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (Washington D.C: Brookings Institute, 2015), p. 108.

³⁶¹ Christian Neff. “A Visit to Europe’s Absurd New Border”, *International Herald Tribune*. Last updated March 13, 2015. <http://www.iht.com/2015/03/13/the-isolation-of-donetsk-a-visit-to-europes-absurd-new-border/>.

³⁶² Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 211.

is not underpinned by hard guarantees.”³⁶³ Putin does not see Poroshenko as facilitating the process, but the Russians would not fulfill their parts of the ceasefire either. Ukrainian soldiers returning home in coffins have been commonplace since the ceasefire was signed in Minsk.

The viewpoints and actions of the United States are of strategic importance to any nation in the international community. According to Sherr, for Russia, “the United States remains the basis of threat assessment and the ultimate standard against which its own power and influence are measured.”³⁶⁴ Putin relishes these tests and constantly puts his diplomatic, military, and intelligence teams to the task to keep them up to this standard; a standard to which United States policy makers may well not hold themselves. From the United States standpoint, the “Russian reset” has been nothing short of an abysmal disappointment and a comprehensive failure in foreign-policy efforts regarding Russia. Putin can be appeased through niceties, but this only motivates him further and thus exacerbates situations such as what happened in Donbas and Crimea. He only understands the strength of a leader who follows words with actions. While no public comments have been made, body language experts have field days with the awkward interactions between President Obama and President Putin. It has become abundantly clear over the past seven years that they are not fans of one another. It would also seem that the Russian president has very little respect for President Obama, though his predecessor President George W. Bush was not much more successful in coaxing Russia out of its aggressive posture.

³⁶³ James Sherr, *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad*, (London, UK: Chatham House, 2013), p. 2.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid* p. 67.

Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia are the Russians' current "red lines," and according to retired Soviet General Evgeny Buzhinsky, who served with the Soviet General Staff from 1982-2009, "when Kremlin draws a red line, they mean it."³⁶⁵ According to Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, "The United States and its allies have crossed all possible lines in their drive to bring Kiev into their orbit. That could not have failed to trigger our reaction."³⁶⁶ If Western diplomats and policy makers are unwilling to say what they mean, or to do what they say, Russia will kick up dust over their red lines and move across them as was previously observed with Syria when Syrian President Bashar Al Assad used chemical weapons against his own people. Because of the weak Western response to Syria, the Russians know how to cross an American red line: very slowly. Equally important, they are able to assess with a high degree of accuracy when the current US administration will fail to uphold its own "red lines." According to Max Fischer, "Russia knows to cross the red lines just a little bit at a time, inching across it over weeks and months, rather than crossing all at once. Then Western nations will get red line fatigue and lose interest by the time they cross."³⁶⁷ Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov achieved a victory there that has had repercussions to this day on multiple domains, no doubt achieving a comprehensive diplomatic victory over the United States. If Russian leadership and diplomats are given this level of opportunity and freedom of action to forward their agenda, they will. If the United States and Europe wish to counter Russia, Lo advises that our leaders remind the Kremlin that "in today's new world of

³⁶⁵ Max Fischer, "How World War III became possible", *Vox News*. Last updated June 29, 2015. <http://www.vox.com/2015/6/29/8845913/russia-war>.

³⁶⁶ Gabriela Baczyńska, "Russia says U.S. forced it to act on Ukraine", *Reuters*. Last updated April 16, 2015. <http://in.reuters.com/article/2015/04/16/ukraine-crisis-russia-idINKBN0N70WS20150416>.

³⁶⁷ Max Fischer, "Let's be clear about this: Russia is invading Ukraine right now", *Vox News*. Last updated August 27, 2014. <http://www.vox.com/2014/8/27/6069415/lets-be-clear-about-this-russia-is-invading-ukraine-right-now>.

disorder, a divine right of great power is no longer tenable. Simply demanding respect and talking up indispensability do not come close to demonstrating relevance.”³⁶⁸

Western powers are most guilty of not peering into the Kremlin’s strategic culture to develop a cohesive diplomatic strategy. Sherr describes strategic culture as “the sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behavior that members of the national foreign policy community have acquired through instruction or imitation or share with each other.”³⁶⁹ It emerges in response to particular conditions, a historical experience, and lessons drawn from it. Russia’s leaders have made it clear that they regard this historical experience as a source of legitimacy and inspiration for their state. Simplifying this description, Russians have historically behaved a defined way in diplomatic history, and our leadership should have been able to anticipate what they will do. They have seen it before in Georgia, and the fact that Western powers were so oblivious to the signs is a serious offense, even more so if they actually knew of the events yet continued to do nothing about them. Russia’s behavior is not set in stone, but it is a unique country with unique experiences that have shaped its leadership’s behavior toward Ukraine. Russian diplomats are well versed in understanding the strategic cultures of those they meet with at the diplomatic table. Lo says that, “when Russian policy makers engage their Western counterparts, they resort to a well-rehearsed repertoire of behaviors, negotiating tactics and policy positions.”³⁷⁰ They are well prepared for ours, but events make it clear that the

³⁶⁸ Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (Washington D.C: Brookings Institute, 2015), p. 72.

³⁶⁹ James Sherr, *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad*, (London, UK: Chatham House, 2013), p. 17.

³⁷⁰ Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (Washington D.C: Brookings Institute, 2015), p. 107.

Americans and Europeans are not as prepared as they could and should be. Policy efforts forged and carried forward in a contextual vacuum are almost always unsuccessful.

The Kremlin utilizes strategic culture to its advantage. It is something of an art form. Part of Putin's diplomatic game is to show up other world leaders. Upon learning that German Chancellor Angela Merkel had a fear of large dogs, at their next meeting Putin brought a large dog with him. Merkel was obviously shaken as photographs of the meeting indicate. On another occasion, Putin wanted to use an opportunity during a Victory Day ceremony to say that the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact made sense from a Russian standpoint, and that Poland was a victim of its own policy when it tried to pursue improved relations with European countries. On May 10, 2014 Putin stated that, "the pact made sense from a standpoint of security of the Soviet Union. It so happened that after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and its partition, Poland itself became a victim of the policy it tried to pursue in Europe."³⁷¹ It should also be noted that United States and European leadership boycotted the 2014 Victory Day anniversary festivities, which made Putin furious. Another notable example occurred against Michael McFaul, the United States Ambassador to Russia, who was put under a concentrated level of coercive harassment during his time in Moscow. He was vilified and harassed in the media as soon as he took the post. The Nashi would chant in front of the U.S. embassy in Moscow, calling him a pedophile, and would follow him and show up at his children's soccer games. In one diplomatic meeting with Putin and Secretary of State John Kerry, Putin accused McFaul point blank that he was working with the opposition to overthrow him. McFaul said, "Putin didn't want to go into details. He stared

³⁷¹ "Merkel listens as Putin defends USSR's pact with Nazi Germany", *Kyiv Post*. Last updated may 10, 2015. <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/kyiv-post-plus/merkel-listens-as-putin-defends-ussrs-pact-with-nazi-germany-388241.html?flavour=mobile>.

right at me with that kind of we will prevail look.”³⁷² Putin snarled at him and demanded that the United States cede influence over the former Soviet States to Russia. Former Secretary of State and Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton says of Putin, “He is not an easy man, but I do not think there is any substitute other than constant engagement.”³⁷³ If current U.S. election polls are any indications, she could be having many conversations with Vladimir Putin in the near future.

Just because the United States has not come up with a coherent strategy for dealing with Russia in Ukraine, it has not come without the forewarning of vocal dissidents who believe the Americans could have done much more to help Ukraine. In the run-up to the 2012 presidential election, when Republican candidate Mitt Romney was asked who the biggest threat to American national security was, he unhesitatingly said Russia. It was an answer scoffed at by President Obama and many mainstream media outlets in the United States, but Mitt Romney was right in this regard, although he probably takes no pleasure in it. American general officers have also lined up, saying that Russia is indeed the greatest strategic threat to the United States, and it is a train of thought that is gaining traction in our diplomatic and military policy-making community.

Information

The informational campaign has already been discussed extensively in the previous chapter. Russia’s utilization of maskirovka abroad and at home is a masterpiece, especially given that Western nations seem less than willing to engage Russian rhetoric bluntly on the

³⁷² David Remnick, “Watching the Eclipse”, *The New Yorker*, last updated August 11, 2014. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/08/11/watching-eclipse>.

³⁷³ Amanda Becker, “Hillary Clinton: no substitute for 'constant engagement' with Putin”, *Reuters*. Last updated July 04, 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/04/us-usa-russia-clinton-idUSKCN0PE0RT20150704>.

international stage. According to Khodorkovsky, “The Kremlin uses hostile rhetoric towards the west as an intentional tool to keep people in fear so they can stay in power.”³⁷⁴ This gravitates back toward the discussion of the utilization of soft power, which the Kremlin employs to gain influence over other nations’ governments, funding of synthetic political parties at home and sympathetic political parties abroad, and propaganda through a carefully orchestrated narrative that makes the Russian Federation take the role of an agent of good in the world against a hypocritical and hegemonic West. When internal issues and threats begin to mount, the Kremlin tries to replace them with external ones. This is a buffer to maintain the current regime’s grasp of power by, in part, distracting the Russian people with various external crises.

To Russia, human rights and democracy have the sinister narrative of regime change and instability, and they view the “color revolution” to be the West’s favorite tool of instability, so their home front is the most important place to make sure they are winning the informational campaign. The Kremlin has begun a gradual clamping down on civil rights and freedom of speech while all eyes are on Ukraine. According to Marvin Kalb, “Putin and his closest allies live in a state of constant fear that one day sooner rather than later, the people will rise against the regime, and in a spasm of violence, overthrow it.”³⁷⁵ They also believe that it is the intention of Western powers to dissolve Russia even further so it splinters into smaller countries. This is ridiculous if only because it would be a nightmare for Western nations to keep track of all of Russia’s nuclear weapons, much less be certain that

³⁷⁴ Tony Wesolowsky, “Kasparov Says Putin Playing Poker, Not Chess”, *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*. Last updated June 17, 2015. <http://www.rferl.org/content/kasparov-says-putin-playing-poker-not-chess/27077315.html>.

³⁷⁵ Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 196.

they are under positive control, and having a land mass of that size destabilized is something no Western diplomat wants to see. According to Dugin, “it is extremely important for the west to break up Russia and turn it into a fragmented zone, an intention expressly stated by Brzezinski. The battle for Russia is in full force.”³⁷⁶ Moscow views itself as the bastion of the multipolar views expressed by Eurasianism and seeks to ensure that there is a strong alternative view to any narrative provided by the United States. The Kremlin would say that their way of thinking is no way inferior or less valid than that of the United States and the European Union. They will use any means at their disposal to be an alternative and, whenever necessary, an obstructive voice and presence as a counterbalance. The Russian leadership believes that such a course of action is good not just for Russia, but also for the international community.

When confronting Russian propaganda about distorting the facts of events playing out on the ground in Ukraine, the West has done an extremely poor job in providing a counterpunch to outright lies that should be easily disproven. Europe and the United States complain about the distortions and call the Russian narrative a lie, but they have not pushed nearly hard enough. They did not put the passion into their pushback that Russia did. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has even called them to task for it. Lavrov implores his peers, “I say every time; if you allege this so confidently, present the facts. But nobody can present the facts, or doesn’t want to. So before demanding from us that we stop doing something, please present proof that we are doing it.”³⁷⁷ It is unfortunate that when Russian

³⁷⁶ Alexander Dugin, *Putin vs Putin: Vladimir Putin Viewed from the Right* (London, UK: Arktos Media Limited, 2014), p.212-213.

³⁷⁷ Maksymilian Czusupski, Elliot Higgins. *Hiding In Plain Sight.: Putin’s War In Ukraine*, (Washington D.C: Atlantic Council, 2015), p. 7.

diplomats dangle red meat in front of NATO, the EU, or the United States to call a bluff, they decline to pursue that opportunity to discredit Russia.

Military

Putin recognizes the need for his nation to have a strong, robust military that can justify his rhetoric and provide a strong deterrent to perceived threats such as NATO. According to Kalb, “modern warfare depends heavily on tanks and websites, and Russia has spent heavily on building and developing both.”³⁷⁸ Putin constantly talks up the strength and might of the Russian military, and does not hesitate to use them as a backdrop for political speeches (not much different than the United States in that sense). Putin needs to make sure that if things go sour domestically, his military has his back. This is part of the reason why Putin’s “Russia 2020” military modernization project is going full speed ahead without the drastic cuts across the board that social programs have experienced. Project 2020 upgrades will cost \$1 trillion.³⁷⁹ This will include new ships for the Black Sea Fleet, state-of-the-art weaponry for its Spetsnaz units, PAK-DA fifth generation stealth fighters, and T-14 Armata tanks, which some experts believe are the best in the world. This will go ahead despite sanctions, paying for operations in Ukraine, inflation, and the World Cup eating at the budget. At current spending rates, even Russian financial experts see this as infeasible, but there is no doubt Putin will pull out all the stops to make it happen.

The Kremlin knows it cannot match the military might of the United States outside of the nuclear-weapons arena, so their military has developed “hybrid warfare” that is designed

³⁷⁸ Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 230.

³⁷⁹ Ariel Cohen. “A U.S. Response to Russia’s Military Modernization”, *The Heritage Foundation*. Last updated May 29, 2014. <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2014/05/a-us-response-to-russias-military-modernization>.

to push the patience of the international community just enough so that it does not trigger a military response, but works to get the results they want. By the time their adversaries attempt to devise countermeasures and what they deem to be an appropriate response, Russian forces are already well on their way to accomplishing their strategic objective. According to Sherr, “it is a model of warfare designed to slip under NATO’s threshold of perception and reaction.”³⁸⁰ They do this through assassinations, orchestrating riots, and arming separatists who are willing to do the fighting for them. It is also a friendly strategic method from a financial standpoint because it does not use a full military effort, which would require a major logistics effort and mobility on a much grander scale than when using hybrid warfare. While there have been costs to maintaining the conflict in eastern Ukraine, they have not been nearly as great as they could have been if the force was of the size and logistical strength required to wage a major conventional war. Hybrid warfare also gives the Kremlin deniability as far as having any direct involvement and gives their diplomats an extraordinary degree of elasticity that is valuable to them in forums like the United Nations. Due to Gerasimov’s methods being so successful in Crimea and the Donbas, they will likely be employed in the future if any other former Soviet republics attempt to move further from Moscow’s orbit.

The biggest pitfall of the Russian military lies in its dilapidated navy. This can be symbolized with one ship; the Soviet-era Admiral Kuznetsov aircraft carrier, which is barely seaworthy. While some would argue over the strategic relevance that aircraft carriers provide in twenty-first-century warfare, the symbolism itself of the nation’s one aircraft

³⁸⁰ Mike Collier, Mary Sibierski. “NATO allies come to grips with Russia's hybrid warfare”, *Yahoo News*. Last updated March 18, 2015. <http://news.yahoo.com/nato-allies-come-grips-russias-hybrid-warfare-182821895.html>.

carrier breaking down constantly and needing a tug boat to rescue it speaks volumes about the state of the nation's navy. Much of the navy is dependent on infrastructure and parts made specifically in Ukraine, which has ceased to provide these parts following the Russian invasion. Russia dreams of building the largest aircraft carrier in the world, which would weigh over 100,000 tons and stretch 330 meters in length. The problem is that Russia needed help from France to develop these two Mistral-class vessels because they could not build them in their own shipyards. Consequently, France has held these two ships indefinitely due to the current sanctions on Russia for its actions in Ukraine. While its submarines maintain a strong strategic nuclear threat at all times, its fleet still needs a massive upgrade to be considered a seaworthy blue water force.³⁸¹

Russia is also one of the largest military arms dealers in the world and has already signed many purchase deals for aircraft, tanks, ships, air defense systems, and other armaments with clients like Iran, China, India, Venezuela, and others. Some of these purchases have been delayed indefinitely because many of the parts required for their weapon systems are built in Ukrainian cities like Kharkiv, Odessa, and Dnipropetrovsk. Prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, thirty percent of Soviet military industry was based in Ukrainian cities.³⁸² Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin says that Ukrainian components were used in the production of 186 types of Russian military equipment.³⁸³ Ukraine has since ceased their production line of these products, and Russia has begun to move these elements of their defense industry inside their own borders.

³⁸¹ David Axe, "Russia's Navy is Falling Apart", *The Week*. Last updated August 25, 2015. <http://theweek.com/articles/572496/russias-navy-falling-apart>.

³⁸² Pavel Aksenov, "Ukraine crisis: Why a lack of parts has hamstrung Russia's military", *BBC News*. Last updated August 08, 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33822821>.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

Meanwhile, however, this means no engines for MI-26 attack helicopters, no turbines for Russian frigates, no rocket propulsion systems to put Russian satellites in orbit, and complete halts in productions in transport planes like the AN-26, to name but a few serious impacts. It will be a significant blow to the Russian military and Russian military sales. It will take time before they are able to build necessary parts for critical components of their armor and air power, and their customers abroad will grow impatient that their orders will not be completed on time because it affects their military readiness as well.³⁸⁴

Despite these problems with armaments sales, the Russian Federation maintains a continuing strategic advantage by employing its very effective intelligence community to gain influence within all aspects of the DIME and the grand-strategic advantage such an accomplishment generally conveys. The SVR, FSB, and GRU are pieces to a puzzle that aids Russian policy makers to help them shape their grand strategic doctrine. There is strength in having one person in power; namely, that intelligence officials will not have to worry about adapting their doctrine every four or eight years, and it benefits them to work to a goal that everyone understands. It gathers many like-minded people who are passionate about working toward the same goal. However, there are two downsides that should be clear to anyone who works in the intelligence business—stovepiping and group-think. It encourages a practice of telling policy makers exactly what they want to hear regardless of the intelligence available to them. Any analysts who deviate from popular assessments are accused of fearmongering, and that could be damaging to an intelligence analyst's career. This has been prevalent in the United States in the past fifteen years, so one can only imagine an analyst giving an alternate assessment in an authoritarian climate like Russia's.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

Economy

There is a glaring weakness in Russia's grand strategic center of gravity that remains as true today as it did during the collapse of the Soviet Union: the economy. Sherr mentions that, "Russia has shown willingness to sacrifice short-term commercial considerations for long term geo-economic or geopolitical benefits".³⁸⁵ If there is a part of the DIME that Western policy makers should engage, it is the economy. It has been the one area of policy in which Western leaders have found any tangible success. Ever since the European Union, United States, Canada, Japan, Australia, and other allies passed comprehensive personal and corporate sanctions because of Russian involvement in Ukraine, the Kremlin has desperately been looking for ways to adapt and overcome. Russia has depended too much on fossil fuel economics to keep its economy up and much of their budget has been based on the assumption that oil prices would stay around \$120 per barrel. Following the annexation of Crimea, a concerted sectoral sanctions effort combined with the oil shale boom in the United States has seen oil prices plummeting to close to \$40 per barrel.³⁸⁶

The effects have been devastating to the Russian economy, whose ruble was approximately 30 to the dollar prior to sanctions and the collapse of the price of oil. Oil production, which is currently 10.5 million barrels a day, finances approximately 45 percent of the Russian state budget.³⁸⁷ As of October 2015, the ruble is approximately 65 to the

³⁸⁵ James Sherr, *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad*, (London, UK: Chatham House, 2013), p. 84.

³⁸⁶ Nicole Friedman, "U.S. Oil Prices Hit Fresh Six-Year Low, Dipping Below \$40 a Barrel", *Wall Street Journal*. Last updated August 21, 2015. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/oil-prices-fall-in-asia-after-weak-chinese-manufacturing-data-1440132261>.

³⁸⁷ Steve Levine, "The West is prepared to threaten Russia's oil future", *Quartz News*. Last updated September 10, 2014. <http://qz.com/263313/the-west-is-prepared-to-threaten-russias-oil-future/>.

dollar, and has dipped as low as 80 to the dollar.³⁸⁸ It is currently one of the most volatile currencies in the world. The economy has shown nothing resembling growth, stability, or diversity since the sectoral sanctions were put in place. The collapse of oil prices and the sanctions show that Russia is anything but a stable market economy, and it is paying the price for not diversifying its economy in areas like technology and infrastructure when the economy was doing well. The sectoral sanctions have proved thus far that Russia cannot produce enough capital to be food-independent or create a manufacturing or technological base. Though previously discussed, the current corruption practices doomed any attempts of diversifying as Kremlin officials would be sure to skim profits from any successful business.

The Kremlin has historically used oil pipelines as economic weapons against Europe. Lo calls this “resource diplomacy.”³⁸⁹ Any time Russia wants something from Europe or is not happy with current business or diplomatic practice there, it squeezes the oil pipes to show its disdain. Russia’s Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin told Moldovan diplomats after they signed a European Association Agreement, “energy supplies are important in the run up to winter. I hope you don’t freeze.”³⁹⁰ This is especially true of their near abroad neighbors whose economies are still highly dependent on them, and more often than not it produced the behavioral results that the Kremlin was looking for. The immediate response was to look eastward toward energy-thirsty China. China and Russia had been gridlocked in oil pipeline negotiations regarding a pipeline intended to traverse through Siberia and Far East Russia to China once an acceptable fee for both parties was agreed on. Searching for a market outlet

³⁸⁸ Vladimir Kuznetov, “Ruble Drops First Time in Three Days on Syria Strikes, Lower Oil”, *Bloomberg Magazine*. Last updated October 01, 2015. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-10-01/ruble-drops-1st-time-in-3-days-as-syria-strikes-offsets-crude>.

³⁸⁹ Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (Washington D.C: Brookings Institute, 2015), p. 87.

³⁹⁰ Timothy Heritage. “Moldova celebrates David-and-Goliath triumph”, *Reuters*. Last updated June 27, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/06/27/ukraine-crisis-moldova-idUSL6NOP83JZ20140627>.

for the future that would ensure they would not have to depend on European consumers for their fossil fuel, Putin jumped at the chance to access a new market. Both parties agreed on a contract worth \$400 billion for thirty years. Russia has begun the construction of the ESPO pipeline (Eastern Siberia Pacific Oil) to China, and both parties hope that it will begin pumping oil to China by the end of the decade. The construction of the pipeline was initially projected to be \$11.2 billion, but it has presently ballooned to \$65 billion. It was trumpeted as a victory for Putin, but since the deal was agreed upon based on a set value for the Ruble, which has since plummeted, it looks like China got away with highway robbery at the expense of a desperate Russia. Presently, Russian energy consultants project that it will be forty years before a profit is gained from the ESPO pipeline project with China.³⁹¹

The fracking revolution in the United States and Saudi Arabia's major increase in production to try to slow it by collapsing the price of oil were two of the biggest movers in causing fossil fuel prices to plummet at a time when Russia needed the income most. American dependence on petroleum imports has been greatly diminished because of new fossil fuel extraction technology for oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG), which struck big in west Texas and North Dakota. For Russia, even more frightening is an oil shale bed beneath Poland, Romania, and Ukraine that has the capacity to produce an even higher yield than anything in the United States and would provide Eastern Europe with desperately needed fossil fuel reserves that would encourage less reliance on Russia to keep them warm in the cold winters.³⁹² Discrediting oil-shale extraction among Europeans is something Kremlin

³⁹¹ James Sherr, *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad*, (London, UK: Chatham House, 2013), p. 108.

³⁹² Ladka Bauerova, "Russia Was Right: Shale in Europe Has Proved a Dud", *Bloomberg Magazine*. Last updated May 11, 2015. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-05-11/russia-was-right-shale-in-europe-has-proved-a-dud>.

propagandists work on overtime to make sure the environmentalists have their day and prevent such an advantage from ever taking place. Luckily for Russia, thus far a much more environment-conscious Europe has been up in arms about utilizing fracking technology to extract the oil because of the anticipated environmental impact. Oil companies must put forth a five-year plan including a comprehensive environmental impact study before they can drill. Russia works the propaganda angle by providing generous funds to environmental groups lobbying Polish and Romanian legislative bodies. According to Sherr, “some Gazprom insiders boast about their attempts to manipulate environmental movements and sabotage EU energy policy.”³⁹³ Russia has no concern about the environment; only the geopolitical angle that would keep Europe energy-dependent on the Kremlin.

The sectoral sanctions have also hurt Russia’s potential to harvest its own oil shale beds. Western Siberian oilfields are losing their harvesting yield, and some fields in east Siberia will be far more difficult to harvest optimally without the technology and expertise provided by companies like Shell, Exxon Mobil, British Petroleum, and others. Shale extraction in these pristine wildernesses would be an environmentalist nightmare for the region (or so environmentalists and the Russian government—the most unlikely of allies—would want us to believe), but harvesting precious resources has not stopped the Russian government from making a mess of the environment before. The double standard by which Russia has been so willing to use fracking technology while pushing an offensive about environmentalism and the harmful effects of fracking in Poland, Romania, and Ukraine should be telling about Russia’s true geopolitical intentions.

³⁹³ James Sherr, *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad*, (London, UK: Chatham House, 2013), p. 104.

Russian leaders have also been proactive in making sure that they have an energy market monopoly in Europe by ensuring that nations in their “sphere of privileged interests” do not interfere. This includes the oil-rich nations in the south Caucasus Mountains and those bordering the Caspian Sea. The proposed Trans-Caspian pipeline, which would stretch under the Caspian Sea from Turkmenistan to Baku, bypassing Russia, could be a lucrative source of oil to Europe. No doubt, Russia has opened up its soft-power playbook to make sure that it is discouraged.³⁹⁴

The Kremlin has also taken other economic defensive measures that go beyond “resource diplomacy.” Russian gas giant Rosneft has asked for a \$41.6 billion loan from the Duma to weather the sanctions, and the Duma awarded it to them.³⁹⁵ It was taken from the National Sovereign Reserve Fund. Capital controls have been discussed to protect the ruble against further volatility, but Russian leaders currently have decided it best to let the ruble float with international markets. The ruble has somewhat stabilized, though losing significant value to the dollar since sanctions went into effect. The Russian central bank has attempted to stabilize the ruble by buying large numbers of precious metals to fortify the currency’s stability, and now Russia currently possesses the third-largest gold reserve in the world.³⁹⁶ It has also bought up a sizeable trove of foreign currency because Russia secretly has little faith in its own currency. This does not change the fact that despite being illegal, Russian rent is still paid for largely in U.S. Dollars, which is the preferred medium of

³⁹⁴ Qishloq Ovozi. “The Trans-Caspian Pipeline: Technically Possible, Politically Difficult”, *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*. Last updated May 24, 2015. <http://www.rferl.org/content/turkmenistan-natural-gas-europe-pipeline-tcp/27033746.html>.

³⁹⁵ Jason Bush, Katya Golubkova. “Russia's Rosneft asks state for \$40 billion to weather sanctions”, *Reuters*. Last updated August 14, 2014. <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/08/14/uk-ukraine-crisis-sanctions-rosneft-idUKKBN0GE0J820140814>.

³⁹⁶ Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (Washington D.C: Brookings Institute, 2015), p. 224.

exchange for business transactions in Russia. No matter how much Russia tries to break free of the dollar, its dependence on it is humiliatingly obvious. For all the talk of Putin trying to create an alternative world currency to move away from the dollar, it has been a futile endeavor that the Kremlin wishes would go away. The Russian Central Bank has also attempted to prop up the value of the ruble using money from the nation's Sovereign Reserve Fund, appropriating \$88 billion to fortify the ruble, but this has had no effect whatsoever. Before the sectoral sanctions and oil price collapse started, the Russian Federation Sovereign Reserve Fund, which was stood up for emergencies using funds for the country's pensions, had an initial value of \$490 billion, but not even Russian financial experts can sugar-coat the strong possibility that if the current market stands and Russia continues government spending at the current rate, the funds could run out by the end of 2016.³⁹⁷

At current spending rates, Russia is spending itself into penury. Despite advice from finance ministers, Putin has hiked pay for the military, police, and retirees. State workers like teachers and government officials have had to go on forced vacations and sometimes go months without being paid. Putin will now have to pay for Crimea, the Donbas incursion, and the intervention in Syria. He has spent money sorely needed for infrastructure on vanity projects like the Sochi Winter Olympics and the 2018 World Cup. In that timeframe, credit agencies have downgraded Russian bonds to junk status. If Russians want to turn their economy around, they must make a fundamental transformation of self-reliance and self-production of goods that rival Western quality, which they have not come close to doing. They also must provide an environment for small businesses to succeed by ending the current

³⁹⁷ Sue Chang, "Weak oil prices deplete Russia's sovereign-wealth fund", *Market Watch*. Last updated October 27, 2015. <http://www.marketwatch.com/story/weak-oil-prices-deplete-russias-sovereign-wealth-fund-2015-10-27>.

mountains of red tape, inspections, and the obligatory kickbacks to local officials. Currently, starting up a small business in Russia is more trouble than it is worth. Tax laws are drawn up so loosely that if the government wants to drum up charges of tax evasion, it will. People do not want to go to jail for not paying the right official the right bribe amount in order to operate their business.

Regular Russian citizens have suffered significantly from the sanctions. It is not just luxury items that they have grown accustomed to that they have to do without. Often, fruits and meats are too expensive for them to afford. Residents of Moscow and St. Petersburg struggle, but they at least have some degree of diversified economies to adapt in order to deal with the economic circumstances. Sanctions have hit villages and towns especially hard in cases where they have one or two factories upon which the whole town depends. The products produced at these factories are generally of poor quality and not economically sustainable because it costs more to pay workers than the profit value of what they produce. Many youth cannot find work in places like this, and join the military as the only hope for a job, while their families worry about them getting sent to Rostov where “field training fatalities” are all too common these days. Despite these hardships, the populace remains remarkably passive because when the efficiency of the economy decreases, the propaganda increases.

The government has tried innovative methods to stimulate their nation’s economy, to no avail. During his brief presidency, Medvedev attempted to build a technological innovation center called Skolkovo in a suburb of Moscow that was supposed to rival Silicon

Valley.³⁹⁸ Instead, it has become a Potemkin village and a waste of billions of dollars. Putin has pleaded with Russian oligarchs abroad to come home with their incomes, and has passed legislation that if they are abroad and afraid to come home because of tax evasion that those who return would come back with a clean slate.³⁹⁹ However, this rally has not had much of a return because Putin has had a track record of bending Russia's judicial system in favor of the Kremlin on multiple occasions. An economic transformation will likely not take place under Putin or any other leader with his style of leadership because he knows he will upset his siloviki and oligarchic power base when the system of kickbacks comes to an end. Putin will not end the kickback system that his fraternal allies exploit for their own financial gain. The Russian Federation always ranks badly in corruption and graft statistical indexes (113th, between Nigeria and the Comoros Islands) and ranks 87th in measures of a free society.⁴⁰⁰ As such, the economy will remain a point of weakness for Russian grand strategy, and it is a critical node that Western countries know how to exploit.

If the desire and willpower were strong enough to respond with a firm hand, the United States and European powers could potentially have brought the Russian economy to collapse in a year by removing the Russian Federation from the international banking transaction system called SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications). SWIFT is the bloodstream of the world financial network, and a vast

³⁹⁸ Bill Robinson, "Why Russia's Skolkovo Innovation Center is Off Strategy", *Huffington Post*. Last updated April 07, 2015. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/billrobinson/why-russias-skolkovo-inno_b_7013110.html.

³⁹⁹ Rob Garver, "Putin Again Begs the Oligarchs to Bring Their Money Home", *Fiscal Times*. Last updated March 20, 2015. <http://www.thefiscaltimes.com/2015/03/20/Putin-Again-Begs-Oligarchs-Bring-Their-Money-Home>.

⁴⁰⁰ Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 198.

majority of the world's international business transactions flow through SWIFT.⁴⁰¹ Without being connected to SWIFT, Russia would not be able to pay for imports or receive payments for oil or gas. It would also not be able to pay off debt. It would effectively create the same financial environment in which Iran currently operates. The entire process would have been an unmitigated disaster that would have forced the Kremlin to the negotiation table. The fact that the West did not respond so strongly after an outright invasion of a European country is embarrassing.

DIME in Ukraine

Ukraine has faced the full force of the Kremlin's DIME grand-strategic approach. According to Kalb, "Ukraine is a witch's cauldron out of which has recently arisen deep concerns about Russian insecurities and Western misjudgments."⁴⁰² Putin has made his bed with Ukraine. He cannot withdraw from Crimea or Donbas without looking like a backtracking coward. He wants to continue portraying the brotherly relationship that Kiev and Moscow have. He believes Novorossiia was stolen from Russia on historical grounds by Lenin, who drew up quick borders of Ukraine that included Kharkiv, Kherson, Dnipropetrovsk, Odessa, Mariupol, Luhansk, Donetsk, and other cities and towns of south and east Ukraine.⁴⁰³ Putin recently said "I have said many times already, we are one people. Kiev is the mother of Russian cities. Ancient Rus is our common source, and we cannot live without each other."⁴⁰⁴ He knows he has to stand by the decisions he made here whether he wants to or not, so the fact that he has already made his move means that he has to continue

⁴⁰¹ Brett LoGiurato. "The UK Has A Plan To Cut Off Russian Businesses From The Rest Of The World", *Business Insider*. Last updated August 29, 2014. <http://www.businessinsider.com/russian-sanctions-swift-banking-ban-ukraine-putin-2014-8>.

⁴⁰² Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 215.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid* p. 145-146.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid* p. 26.

this high-stakes game of chess. Putin and his men in the Kremlin are going to be patient with Ukraine and use maskirovka and other soft power methods to ensure that the current Ukrainian government seized through popular dissent is unsuccessful. They will be in this for the long haul, and the Donbas will be a key focus. The Russians need Ukraine to fail because they cannot have their little brother being a successful Western-style democracy on their doorstep. They want them to remain submissive to Russia and to continue living within the corrupt Russian political, juridical, and economic system. We know that the Kremlin still secretly harbors the dream of a Eurasian Customs Union. The creation of Donbas as a frozen conflict was carefully picked because it has just the right amount of political Russian sympathizers and a history of organized criminal activity that made it a gamble, but one that paid off. Russia now has its own “Transnistria” on the eastern Ukrainian border, which is a sliver of territory that can be used to exert pressure on Ukraine at any time it desires. A campaign of deniability of Russian involvement is an alibi that they can use to wiggle themselves out by lying to the international community.

If we examine the prospect of the conflict becoming hot again, there are a few things that Russia could do. One appealing option for Russia would be to move to the city of Kharkiv, which is a mere 25 miles from the Russian border and has already seen episodes of unrest. Odessa could see weapons smuggled from Transnistria (which has one of the largest stockpiles of weapons in the world) into the city with the help of Russian intelligence operatives to cause more controlled instability. The separatists also see the Schastya power

station north of Luhansk as a vital objective to provide power to the city.⁴⁰⁵ The most likely Ukrainian city that is ripe for more conflict is the port of Mariupol, whose residents live in fear every day that the conflict could move onto their doorstep the moment Putin “gives the signal.” This city lies a mere 20 miles from the current line of contact.

Western diplomats have made Mariupol their new red line. The “Mariupol Test”, which was discussed in the New York Times March 15, 2015, is the straight-forward concept that if Russian-led separatist forces move into Mariupol, it would be a trigger for much more drastic economic measures. The most severe of these would be removing the Russian Federation from the SWIFT, which most policy makers and diplomats consider to be the economic nuclear option against Moscow. It would also make Western nations more inclined to arm the Ukrainian military with lethal military aid. If Russia moves forward to Mariupol, it will likely be an indicator of something much bigger⁴⁰⁶.

However, such a move would also mean the Russian military and any separatists involved would have to maintain control of more territory. When tensions were at their highest in Ukraine and the Kremlin was moving massive numbers of troops and heavy weapons to the Ukrainian border, Putin told European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso that he could take Kiev in two weeks.⁴⁰⁷ STRATFOR gives two alternate assessments that Russia could push for in an invasion. The first would be an attempt to create a land bridge to Crimea. Russia would push to the Dnipro River as fast as possible to

⁴⁰⁵ “SBU: Captured Russian special ops troops had mission to ready armed takeover of Schastya”, *Kyiv Post*. Last updated May 21, 2015. <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/kyiv-post-plus/sbu-captured-russian-special-ops-troops-had-mission-to-ready-armed-takeover-of-schastya-389122.html>.

⁴⁰⁶ Hans Binnendjik, John E. Herbst. “Putin and the Mariupol Test”, *New York Times*. Last Updated March 15, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/16/opinion/putin-and-the-mariupol-test.html?_r=0.

⁴⁰⁷ Andrew Roth. “Putin Tells European Official That He Could Take Kiev in Two Weeks”, *New York Times*. Last updated September 02, 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/03/world/europe/ukraine-crisis.html>.

secure the peninsula's water supply. The Dnipro River would also function as a defensive fighting position. The Russian line would be stretched 250 miles and would require new defensive lines and fortifications. STRATFOR estimates the force necessary to complete the task could be 36,000 Russian regular troops and would be a six-day task, but they also have to worry about the population of two million that they have invaded. Insurgency would be likely, and they would need a residual force of 42,000 as counterinsurgency operations personnel.⁴⁰⁸

The second STRATFOR scenario assumes Russia wants to take all of Novorossiia and push through Odessa and to Transnistria. Polish intelligence assesses this would be economically appealing because the oblasts of Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporozhye, and Odessa would be profitable annexations. Donbas alone would not but would be necessary for bringing in the rest of Novorossiia once again under Russian sway. Russian forces would need to be at least double that of the land bridge force, and at least 40,000 troops would be required to control larger cities like Mariupol, Dnipropetrovsk, and Odessa. They also estimate it would take 23-28 days with approximately 80-120,000 Russian troops. Crossing the large Dnipro River would be logistically difficult but would cut off Ukraine completely from the Black Sea. The Russians would need a residual force of 240,000 to control a population of six million Ukrainians in a region covering 87,800 square miles. Russia's current military strength of 280,000 would be stretched to its limit. Such a massive mobility effort would raise NATO alarms instantly, and the Russians would have to contend with the

⁴⁰⁸ "Gaming a Russian Offensive", *STRATFOR*. Last updated March 09, 2015. <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/gaming-russian-offensive>.

possibility of a NATO military response. This does not even cover the incredible fiscal and military expenditures that would be required to undertake the task.⁴⁰⁹

The Ukrainian military and its militias would likely revert to a guerrilla style of insurgency warfare (which they arguably should have been doing sooner). The Azov Battalion has confirmed they would resort to such tactics if the Russian-led separatists move further into Ukraine's territory.⁴¹⁰ The Ukrainians would be less willing to wear uniforms and would try and blend in with the population and move behind enemy lines. A campaign of assassinations against high-value targets like Russian officers or pro-separatist political figures would commence. Armored personnel carriers and tanks would become easier targets. In this scenario, the Ukrainians know that time is on their side and they could bleed Russia dry financially at an even quicker pace than they are now. Russian casualties would increase, and the amount of dead could no longer be kept a classified state secret. Czech Republic president Milos Zeman does not believe there will be any invasions for the same reason other military and intelligence experts give. Zeman states "I don't think it would be possible to invade Eastern Ukraine simply because it has been destroyed by civil war and Moscow would have to feed tens of millions of hungry mouths, and for that, their economic capacity is insufficient."⁴¹¹ It is an even worse idea given polls that have asked Russians if

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Anthony Failona. "Leaders talk peace, some Ukrainians contemplate guerrilla war", *Washington Post*. Last updated September 12, 2014. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/as-leaders-talk-peace-some-ukrainians-contemplate-guerrilla-war/2014/09/12/4e36884e-aa74-40d6-8c61-8b6fe3ffd638_story.html.

⁴¹¹ Karel Janicek, "Czech president: Russian attack on Baltics would be suicidal", *Military Times*. Last updated April 21, 2015. <http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/2015/04/21/czech-president-russian-attack-on-baltics-would-be-suicidal/26134857/>.

they would support sending the military openly into Ukraine. Only five percent said they would.⁴¹²

Putin's ultimate objective in Ukraine is not to invade, but to foster the conditions for a frozen conflict. Putin told media at a press conference "you want the Ukrainian central authorities to annihilate everyone there, all of their political foes and opponents? Is that what you want? We certainly don't and we will not let that happen."⁴¹³ If Putin wanted to move further into Ukraine, he would have done it by now. He is completely aware that he will be stretched to pay for Crimea and his mercenary force in Donbas let alone that of all of Novorossiia or the whole of Ukraine. The Syrian adventure is also weighing on Russia. However, they will maintain a residual presence near Rostov for the foreseeable future and will not relinquish their influence in Donbas. According to Kuzio, "Russian plans are to establish a unified DPR-LPR force consisting of seven infantry brigades, one artillery brigade, one tank brigade, and one special-forces battalion."⁴¹⁴ This way there can be a quick reaction force (QRF) that can apply pressure to Ukraine at a moment's notice should the Kremlin deem it to be necessary. They would also like to use Russian "peacekeepers," which would be a de-facto occupying force much like Transnistria. The Kremlin insists that Ukraine should be on the hook for rebuilding the Donbas, which has for all intents and purposes collapsed socially and economically. They have no effective government, no jobs for the people, and no support structures in place. Current estimates are that it will cost \$2

⁴¹² Jacob Poushter. "Key findings from our poll on the Russia-Ukraine conflict", *Pew Research Center*. Last updated June 10, 2015. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/06/10/key-findings-from-our-poll-on-the-russia-ukraine-conflict/>.

⁴¹³ Carol J. Williams. "Putin vows to protect Ukraine separatists from defeat", *Los Angeles Times*. Last updated November 17, 2014. <http://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-ukraine-russia-separatists-putin-20141117-story.html>.

⁴¹⁴ Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2015), p. 113.

billion to rebuild infrastructure in Donetsk, Luhansk, and other towns within the Donbas that are currently occupied by the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics.⁴¹⁵

But does Ukraine even want the breakaway territories back? The answer might be surprising. Anti-Donbas sentiment has been growing in Ukraine. The Ukrainian people are tired of war, and a sizable demographic has come to the conclusion that if the residents of the Donbas want to be independent of Ukraine, or part of Russia, they should let them. On May 15, 2014, a poll showed that 61.8 percent of Ukraine would give up the occupied territories for peace.⁴¹⁶ From the same poll, only 22.9 supported the continuation of military operations until the occupied territories are liberated.⁴¹⁷ The Rada has cut off all pensions and subsidies to the DPR and LPR. Politicians are more willing to call the bluff of the breakaway republics and say that they should prove that they can govern effectively. There is no confidence that they can. For Ukraine, it could end up being a smart move if they decide to abandon their occupied territories, as they have been an economic black hole since the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The ideal endgame for the Kremlin is to portray Ukraine as a dysfunctional failure that was the result of the Euromaiden riots and perhaps bring them into the fold of the Eurasian Customs Union. The Eurasian Customs Union is a dream Putin still clings to for an economic bulwark to the European Union where in theory Russian-made products would be purchased within this sphere of influence. Economically Russia fears superior quality and

⁴¹⁵ Richard Balmforth, "Ukraine threatens to retake territory from defiant rebels", *Reuters*. Last updated July 09, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/09/ukraine-crisis-idUSL6N0PK3US20140709>.

⁴¹⁶ Alexander J. Motyl, "Ukraine's Orange Blues: Anti-Donbas Sentiment Growing in Ukraine", *World Affairs*. Last updated August 21, 2015. <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/blog/alexander-j-motyl/anti-donbas-sentiment-growing-ukraine>.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*

better value goods from Europe that would push its own manufactured products out of the Ukrainian market and then making their way into Russian markets. The Eurasian Economic Union should be nothing more than a distant dream at this point, but who knows how valuable Dugin has made Ukraine seem to be to Putin, and what means political technologist Vladislav Surkov will use to make that ideal endgame happen. However, at present this is the endgame that Russians will continue to work for until they get an alternative choice that forces concessions. The Kremlin sincerely believes that it can achieve that goal.

Russian leaders will not make it easy for Ukraine now that it has chosen to take a pro-Western path, and they will make the people of Ukraine suffer in any way they can. Currently, Russia is getting away with anything they can despite warnings from Europe and the United States to not interfere with the Ukrainian democratic process. The easiest way that they can accomplish this is through resource diplomacy. By 2019, Russia will stop gas delivery through Ukrainian pipes and divert that oil to a Turkish pipeline currently under construction when the current Gazprom contract expires.⁴¹⁸ Ukraine will have to work diligently to develop their oil shale infrastructure or find other sources of energy to keep their population warm during the cold winters. Due to the diplomatic, informational, military, and economic harassment from the Kremlin, Ukraine will likely have to depend heavily on Europe in the coming decade not just for energy but for economic support in general. In totality Ukraine's GDP fell five percent from 2014 to 2015.⁴¹⁹ Merkel has recognized this urgency, and has called on allies to help pay down Ukraine's gas debt. Europe will have to

⁴¹⁸ "Russia to stop gas delivery via Ukraine by 2019, push ahead with Turkish Stream", *Russia Today*. Last updated April 13, 2015. <https://www.rt.com/business/249273-gazprom-ukraine-gas-transit/>.

⁴¹⁹ Daryna Krasnolutska. "Ukrainian GDP Plunges 5.1% Amid Deadly Conflict in Nation's East", *Bloomberg Magazine*. Last updated October 30th, 2014. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-10-30/ukrainian-gdp-plunges-5-1-amid-deadly-conflict-in-nation-s-east>.

be involved for the long haul because Ukraine will be desperately clinging to them for help as long as Russia tries to beat them into submission using all of the tools they have at their disposal.

Ukraine is also working diligently to make sure that its border will be better fortified against any potential future incursions. The most recent move passed through the Rada was building a “great wall of Ukraine”, which is exactly what it sounds like—a wall that extends along the Ukrainian and Russian border. This wall will have watchtowers, trenches, barbed wire, a “no man’s land”, tank detachments, sophisticated surveillance equipment, and an actual steel wall that stretches along the 1,200 miles of border shared with Russia.⁴²⁰ It will not just be defensive, but also stop illegal immigration, smuggling, and help with visa-free credentials to move Ukraine forward into the European Union. Construction for this project began early September 2015 near Kharkiv, and it is projected to cost \$100 million.⁴²¹ The mayor of Dnipropetrovsk has offered \$10 million of his own money for the wall, and says it will help with employment and get people back to work.⁴²²

Ukraine needs to succeed not just from a practical standpoint for its citizens, but from a security standpoint. There are now thousands of Ukrainians who have fought and who have had friends die fighting against Russian-led separatist forces in Donbas. If these militia and military members feel that their president and their government in the Rada do not work for them, the guns could be pointed back at the Maiden. A militia of Dnipro-1 commander, Vitaliy Feschenko, said that a coup is possible if they do not see improvement in the next

⁴²⁰ Olena Goncharova. “Ukraine hopes to wall off Russia”, *Kyiv Post*. Last updated November 04, 2014. <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/ukraine-hopes-to-wall-off-russia-370710.html>.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Ibid.

year and a half. According to him, “the people going to war will not accept any sliding back.”⁴²³

DIME in Crimea

Putin made the decision to annex Crimea while the world was watching skiing, ice skating, and bobsledding in Russia’s illustrious Sochi Winter Olympic Games, when the eyes of the world were fixated on Russia just as Putin wanted. In annexing Crimea, the Kremlin recovered land that was not just strategically important, but culturally sacred to them. Soon after annexation, Putin referred to Crimea as being as dear to Russia as the Temple Mount is for the Jewish people in Israel or the Muslims in Palestine⁴²⁴ (a loaded term given how much blood and violence has been shed by various peoples over the Temple Mount). Despite the narrative the Kremlin portrayed of protecting ethnic Russians, there was no turmoil there prior to the Euromaiden. There has been much more friction in the Russian Caucasus since the Soviet Union’s breakup than there has been at any point in the Crimean peninsula. According to Grant, “the Ethnic Russians in Crimea were never at any point in a position where they had to fear for their lives. Not one incident of such violence was recorded even during the Euromaiden protests.”⁴²⁵ Crimea was a sticking point for Russian leaders since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, but they were in no position to act diplomatically, let alone militarily to give a response that would have been deemed appropriate to them. Grant emphasizes that, “Russia has made it clear that it will exert its power to expand its territorial

⁴²³ Sebastian Smith. “Ukraine soldiers to government: we’re coming for you next”, *Yahoo News*. Last updated October 31, 2014. <http://news.yahoo.com/ukraine-soldiers-government-were-coming-next-155843129.html>.

⁴²⁴ Ishaan Tharoor, “Why Putin says Crimea is Russia’s Temple Mount”, *Washington Post*. Last updated December 04, 2014. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/12/04/why-putin-says-crimea-is-russias-temple-mount/>.

⁴²⁵ Thomas D. Grant, *Aggression against Ukraine: Territory, Responsibility, and International Law*, (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), p. 48.

sphere beyond its recognized border.”⁴²⁶ To Russia, the annexation of the peninsula righted a historical wrong. Cities like Simferopol and Sevastopol have always been Russian since the times of Catherine the Great. But the strategic implications alone were incentive for Russia to grab Crimea. The Duma even passed legislation rescinding Khrushchev’s declaration to give Crimea to Ukraine after the annexation had already happened.⁴²⁷

Crimea is important strategically for a number of reasons. First, it projects power into the Black Sea in a way that Russia would not have without it. The Kremlin also wanted to ensure they had total control over their navy’s only warm-water port that remains ice-free year round without having to tell Ukrainian port authorities of their troop numbers or paying a rental fee as required by the Kharkiv Accords. The peninsula also gives an air defense capacity that will cover a radius of forty percent of the Black Sea.⁴²⁸ It also gave Russia territorial rights to an area of the Black Sea that potentially holds billions of dollars in oil once drilling is authorized by Russia⁴²⁹ (that is if Russia gets sanctions lifted so they can hire companies with deep-water drilling technology). It gave further validation to the Russian masses and legitimacy to a strong leader who most Russians think knows what he is doing. It also gave the Russian military and intelligence structure an opportunity to show that is back in force as an international player. It basically tore apart the Budapest Memorandums and

⁴²⁶ Ibid p.166.

⁴²⁷ Michael Bohm, “Putin's Own Historical Injustice”, *The Moscow Times*. Last updated March 21, 2014. <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/putin-s-own-historical-injustice/496553.html>.

⁴²⁸ Maria Antonova, “Ukraine says rebels attack near Mariupol, NATO deploys Baltic troops”, *Business Insider Magazine*. Last updated March 09, 2015. <http://www.businessinsider.com/afp-ukraine-says-rebels-attack-near-mariupol-nato-deploys-baltic-troops-2015-3>.

⁴²⁹ William J. Broad, “In Taking Crimea, Putin Gains a Sea of Fuel Reserves”, *New York Times*. Last updated May 17, 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/18/world/europe/in-taking-crimea-putin-gains-a-sea-of-fuel-reserves.html>.

any trust that was attached to them on behalf of Russia, reinforcing the notion that the Kremlin only applies international law when it fits Russian grand strategic interests.

But it is not a completely rosy picture for the Kremlin. There have been significant problems that Russia will have to adapt to, including inevitable expenditures that come with updating the dilapidated infrastructure that is currently in place. Russia also has to integrate the peninsula's two million people, including many older pensioners, into the Russian government. There is also the fact that not all of the Crimean peninsula's populace was happy with the annexation, most notably the Tartars. Despite the Russian narrative that ethnic Russians had been persecuted on Crimea, the OSCE did not observe one instance of ethnic hostility toward the Russians living there. They did, however, take note of multiple accounts of Tartar harassment. The Tartars are still very dissatisfied with the political clampdowns following the annexation, and while some have made their disdain known recently by setting up roadblocks at the north end of the peninsula, others have simply moved to the Ukrainian mainland to avoid living under Russian rule again (many to Lviv). The ones who have remained have been forced onto un-arable land and live in shantytowns because the new Russian authorities have confiscated the arable and highly desirable coastal real estate⁴³⁰. Russian Cossacks have been used to harass them off of their land. Russia has also removed Tartar and Ukrainian radio. One brash member of Crimea's parliament attempted to justify the Tartar genocide during Stalin's deportations saying "in order to save the Tartar people, they were deported from Crimea. Why? The presence of these criminals would

⁴³⁰ Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2015), p. 271.

inevitably have led to civil war.”⁴³¹ It is becoming obvious to the Kremlin that this issue is not one that is going away any time soon, and will not do so unless the Tartars are no longer marginalized or persecuted by the new Russian government in charge. For all intents and purposes, the Tartars follow a moderate view of Islam. They have also showed an incredible amount of restraint to the persecution that is directed at them. That could easily change to Islamic fundamentalism and Tartar nationalism if this sort of humiliation continues.

There has also been rampant corruption on the peninsula since it came under Russian rule, and the degree is high even by Russian standards. Many of the men who took power during the annexation as part of the shadow government-turned puppet government were heavily involved in organized criminal activity on the peninsula, and the FSB is having a hard time reeling in these officials. Hooded gunmen have evicted families and businesses from property on a regular basis for not paying “security fees” to racketeers, as was common in Russia during the wild 90’s. There is also a lack of accountability by the local government. Following the invasion, Putin and the Duma set aside \$18 billion to improve Crimean infrastructure and other construction projects to improve the standard of living for their new citizens (infrastructure money that was initially destined to Siberia and the Russian Far East, a fact not lost on them). Kremlin auditors reported in June, 2015 that two-thirds of the money Moscow sent to Crimea has not been accounted for.⁴³² Crimean Governor Sergey Aksyanov reacted angrily to these accusations, despite having fingerprints all over the criminal underground that existed in Crimea under Ukraine, and still remains today. Putin

⁴³¹ Ibid p. 275-275.

⁴³² Carol Matlack, “Crimea Is Now Putin's Problem Child”, *Bloomberg Magazine*. Last updated July 23, 2015. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-07-24/crimea-is-now-putin-s-problem-child>.

initially did not care about who was in these posts, he just wanted pro-Russian bodies in government positions, but now he realizes that they are out of control.⁴³³

There are also other logistical and infrastructure issues to take into account as part of the challenge of bringing Crimea into the Russian Federation. Because of sanctions, credit and debit cards cannot be used. The Crimean tourism industry that the peninsula depends upon, which was growing in popularity, has been pulverized. Crimea is also water and energy dependent from the Ukrainian mainland, and the Ukrainian government could shut off that supply at any time. Road construction has not even begun because of the funds that have not been accounted for. Finally, the peninsula can only be accessed by a ferry system from across the Sea of Azov in Kerch, which is a long and time-consuming wait to cross. The only other access is through Ukraine, which has blocked road and train access from the traditional land route that existed before the annexation. The solution has been to authorize spending for a bridge that will cross the Kerch Strait and allow vehicle and train access to the peninsula.⁴³⁴ Funding for the bridge passed through the Duma quickly because Putin wanted to give the contract to his siloviki judo partners, the Rothstein brothers, who were named in individual sanctions of Russians and it was a quick way to get them money after having their accounts frozen by the West.⁴³⁵

Additional Distractions and Open-Ended Problems

Putin will continue to take advantage of opportunities that will take the world's and Russians' eyes off of Ukraine and make them forget about it. The most recent opportunity

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Christopher Harress, "Moscow To Build Bridge From Russian Mainland To Crimea Across The Kerch Strait", *International Business Times*. Last updated June 30, 2015. <http://www.ibtimes.com/moscow-build-bridge-russian-mainland-crimea-across-kerch-strait-1990907>.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

came about when Kremlin leadership deemed that if they did not move in to help Syrian President Bashar Al Assad right now, he would fall. On September 29, 2015, they began an air campaign to strike Syrian rebels backed by the CIA as a primary threat, and ISIS militants further afield as secondary objectives.⁴³⁶ Russian “volunteers” have moved in with heavy armor and equipment as well as sophisticated air defense systems.⁴³⁷ Russian pilots are also demanding that Syrian airspace be kept clear while they complete their missions. Russia has also reached out to North Korea to improve relations, and while in previous decades Russian leaders have sincerely worked to keep North Korean belligerence under control, they could now use North Korea as an agent of mischief to show their disdain toward Western sanctions and treatment of the Kremlin. In the meantime, Russian separatists patiently wait for the order to make further moves and could do so when Ukraine and the West least expect it. They want war and the incorporation of the Donbas region into Russia.

In spite of all of this outreach and showing how important Russia is to the international community, Russia struggles for friendship. Russians will only be international players for a common good if it benefits them. According to Lo, “few countries see the Russians as serious contributors to the international good.”⁴³⁸ This polling of unfavorable views extends even to Russia’s celebrated BRICS community, as citizens of India, Brazil, and South Africa have a majority negative view of Russia.⁴³⁹ European countries do not see

⁴³⁶ Andrew Roth, Brian Murphy. “Russia begins airstrikes in Syria; U.S. warns of new concerns in conflict”, *Washington Post*. Last updated September 30, 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/russias-legislature-authorizes-putin-to-use-military-force-in-syria/2015/09/30/f069f752-6749-11e5-9ef3-fde182507eac_story.html.

⁴³⁷ Andrew E. Kramer, Ceylan Yeginsu. “Kremlin Says Russian ‘Volunteer’ Forces Will Fight in Syria”, *New York Times*. Last updated October 5, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/06/world/europe/nato-russia-warplane-turkey.html>.

⁴³⁸ Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (Washington D.C: Brookings Institute, 2015), p. 72.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid* p.214-215.

it as European. Asian countries do not see it as Asian. Turkey might be the only close comparison, and even their strong relationship is being strained by the recent Russian actions in Syria in late September, with Turkish airspace violations by Mig-29s and cruise missiles skirting the Turkish border en route to their intended targets.⁴⁴⁰

In turn, Europe and the United States desperately want Ukraine to succeed despite more being done through words than actions. On August 27, 2015, Ukraine received aid from the International Monetary Fund, EU, private investors (most notably George Soros), and United States totaling nearly \$50 billion.⁴⁴¹ The United States and Europe know there is no more effective weapon against Russia than seeing a successful Ukraine, which is by no means a foregone conclusion. In fact, there are many obstacles caused by internal corruption, which the Rada is trying to clean up on its own. In order to hit IMF “triggers”, that is, the circumstances that will allow Ukraine access to these desperately needed funds, the Rada must pass legislation that ends corrupt practices. It also has to make hard decisions in order to meet the criteria laid out by the Minsk II Accords, and on August 31, 2015 passed a controversial bill through the Rada that created conditions for decentralization of powers and gave more power to regional and local governments.⁴⁴² President Poroshenko has continued his tough acts of defiance, making sure to maintain the moral high ground over his Russian counterparts, which has been a thankless task for the level of support given to him by Europe in particular. Poroshenko did make a surprising move on December 23, 2014

⁴⁴⁰ “Turkish jets 'harassed by MIG-29' on Syrian border”, *Yahoo News*. Last updated October 06, 2015. <http://news.yahoo.com/mig-29-harassed-turkish-jets-syrian-border-monday-004933267.html>.

⁴⁴¹ Anders Aslund, “Things Are Looking Up for Ukraine: Debt Deal Reached”, *Atlantic Council*. Last updated August 27, 2015. <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/things-are-looking-up-for-ukraine-debt-deal-reached>.

⁴⁴² Victoria Butenko. “Violence outside Ukrainian parliament after vote”, *CNN*. Last updated August 31, 2015. <http://www.cnn.com/2015/08/31/europe/ukraine-protests-clashes/>.

when he and the Rada rescinded Ukraine's nonaligned status and made their intentions known of joining NATO; an unwelcome surprise for some NATO members. Poroshenko spoke in front of the Rada and said "today it is clear that the nonalignment status Ukraine proclaimed earlier in 2010 could not guarantee our security and territorial integrity. The position led to serious losses. That is why we have decided to return to the course of NATO integration."⁴⁴³ Currently, Ukraine is hoping for NATO and EU status by 2020, which many consider an optimistic outlook at best, especially regarding NATO membership.⁴⁴⁴ Nations like France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and others are worried about upsetting Russia and believe their primary objective should be stemming the massive flux of migrants crossing over from North Africa and Turkey. Eastern European nations with a shared history are much more sympathetic to the plight of Ukrainians. After the past few years of turmoil in Ukraine, they say, no one can blame Ukraine for its recently stated intentions and strategic objectives.

Western nations should also be doing more to strengthen the Ukrainian military and intelligence communities. If Poroshenko and other Ukrainian policy makers have a well-versed and well-functioning intelligence community, they will be in a much better position to combat the Russians and what they are trying to do in Ukraine. They have already produced some impressive results that were discussed in previous chapters, so that is a cause with much more potential upside than the American expenditure of \$500 million on four or five

⁴⁴³ Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 195.

⁴⁴⁴ Richard Balmforth, "Ukraine president sets 2020 as EU target date, defends peace plan" *Reuters*. Last updated September 26, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/26/us-ukraine-crisis-president-idUSKCN0HK0OL20140926>.

Syrian rebels; a fee taunted by Putin as a total waste of money⁴⁴⁵ (and in the opinion of many diplomatic and political pundits, he is exactly right).

Both Western nations and Russia should also be painfully aware that after being invaded, Ukraine could conceivably build its own nuclear deterrent. They have the infrastructure, technology, and know-how to build up rapidly, and it would not be without good reason. Ukraine could perceive a combination of a Russian threat and lack of Western military support that make it necessary for them to ensure their own security, and developing a nuclear arsenal becomes a great equalizer against the Kremlin. While nations would likely discourage it, no one could make a firm argument against it if they decided to go that route.

Despite all of the pressure that Russia will inevitably cause in the coming years, Ukraine has the capacity to be a strong economy and a magnet for European companies looking to expand into the country. Ukraine has an educated population of 45 million people comprising a cheap labor force that would relish the chance to see an increase in pay that could be provided by companies from the European Union. They have also brought in bright economic minds to help implement reform, perhaps most notably Mikheil Saakashviki, who is now the mayor of Odessa, much to Putin's disgust.⁴⁴⁶ Ukraine also has vast tracts of arable land suitable for agriculture. The most difficult transition will be in the South and East of Ukraine, whose industry has depended heavily on Russian consumers for its products. It will not be an easy transition, and the culture of corruption and graft within their own country will need to be successful if Ukraine is to be successful in meeting the criteria to

⁴⁴⁵ Jake Rudnitsky, Stepan Kravchenko. "Putin Says Russia's Campaign in Syria More Effective Than U.S.", *Bloomberg Magazine*. Last updated October 11, 2015. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-10-11/putin-says-russia-s-campaign-in-syria-more-effective-than-u-s->.

⁴⁴⁶ Roman Olearchy, "Former Georgia president shakes up Odessa", *Fiscal Times*. Last updated July 08, 2015. <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/3cd4fe44-2496-11e5-bd83-71cb60e8f08c.html#axzz3qOCS6imE>.

move into the European Union. It will be a long struggle and something that will not be accomplished overnight. It will take a long and concerted effort if Ukraine is to be successful, but the Ukrainians have shown that they have the willpower to fight and make it happen.

With its actions in Ukraine, Russia has set a dangerous precedence for the twenty-first century. First, the annexation of Crimea and Donbas gives validation to separatist fervor in the Urals, Siberia, Chechnya, Tartarstan, Karelia, Kaliningrad, and the Russian Far East. While the protestors in Moscow would say, “Stop feeding the Caucasus!” those away from Moscow chant “Stop feeding Moscow!” It is true that Moscow takes much more from territories like Siberia than the Kremlin gives back, and there is considerable resentment because of this. An example of this can be made with the resource-rich Siberian community of Tomsk, which sends 130 billion rubles to Moscow, yet receives only 10.3 billion back in assistance.⁴⁴⁷ The residents of the Russian Baltic enclave of Kaliningrad grow envious of the prosperity of Poland and Lithuania along their borders. Despite Russian propaganda, many ethnic Russians in the Baltics are actually quite happy with their situation. They have shown their disgust at the ballot box, and even Putin’s puppet political party, United Russia, polls extremely poorly there. German flags have been put up ambiguously as forms of quiet resistance in the territory once belonging to Germany.⁴⁴⁸

These regions do not feel that they are part of Russia, whose leaders are indifferent to their plight while their industries are shuttered and infrastructure grows more dilapidated.

⁴⁴⁷ Elizabeth Peet, “The Separatist Threat to Putin’s Mother Russia From the East”, *Newsweek Magazine*. Last updated July 26, 2015. <http://www.newsweek.com/separatist-threat-putins-mother-russia-east-356840>.

⁴⁴⁸ Halya Coynash, “Kaliningrad FSB finds ‘deep offence’ in a German flag”, *Kyiv Post*. Last updated June 24, 2014. <http://www.kyivpost.com/opinion/op-ed/halya-coynash-kaliningrad-fsb-finds-deep-offence-in-a-german-flag-353096.html>.

Adding further insult to injury, infrastructure development of Siberia and the Far East has lost funding as a direct result of the annexation of Crimea. This internal separatist threat came to a head on August 17, 2014, when a Novosibirsk separatist march supporting Siberian independence was banned. Polling indicated that only 27 percent of Novosibirsk voted for United Russia in the 2012 election.⁴⁴⁹ The Russian government prohibited the march because it called for “unrest, extremist activities, and participation in an illegal public event”. The mayor of Novosibirsk re-enforced this prohibition “in order to ensure the inviolability of the constitutional order, territorial integrity, and sovereignty of the Russian Federation.”⁴⁵⁰ The organizer, Artyum Luskotov, stated he organized the rally because “it uses the rhetoric of our own government and their propaganda use. They decided to tell us how great it is when some republic moves for self-determination. Okay, well let’s apply this to other regions. Can Siberia allow itself this same rhetoric? It turns out it cannot.”⁴⁵¹ An opposition journalist covering the attempted movement spoke much the same. Olesya Gerasimenko stated “most Russians in the regions would not support secession, but would back greater economic autonomy, including measures forcing resource extraction companies to pay taxes in the regions where they operate rather than Moscow. If we support the Ukrainian peoples’ right to federalization, why don’t we support the Russian peoples’ right to federalization?”⁴⁵²

It was an incident that was not reported by Russian state media. Similar clampdowns were placed on Karelia around the same timeframe. In response to the attempted separatist

⁴⁴⁹ Vladislav Shayman. “Novosibirsk Race Seen as Win for Opposition”, *The Moscow Times*. Last updated April 07, 2014. <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/novosibirsk-race-seen-as-win-for-opposition/497697.html>.

⁴⁵⁰ Alec Luhn. “Russia bans Siberia independence march”, *The Guardian*. Last updated August 05, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/05/russia-bans-siberia-independence-march-extremism-law>.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

rallies, the Duma passed a law in December of 2014 that made spreading separatist views punishable by up to five years in jail. What makes their separatist movements any less valid than those in Crimea or Donbas? The answer is simple: They are separatist movements against Russian interest. The double standard is not lost on the Kremlin, but they just do not appear to care.⁴⁵³

Russia's annexation of Crimea gives other belligerent powers justification to do the same. China has been quickly fortifying their presence in the strategic Spratly Islands, despite the fact that the islands also have disputed claims status from Vietnam and the Philippines. It would be highly ironic if China used the same justification to move into territory that made up "outer Manchuria" during the Qing Dynasty that includes much of the Russian Far East stretching west to the shores of Lake Baikal. Chinese migrants are already moving into the sparsely populated, resource-rich area north of the Amur River and finding work in Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, and Irkutsk. There could come a day when Chinese leaders act in the interests of Chinese citizens in Russia and reclaims territory that was historically theirs. It is a two-way street that appears lost on Russian leadership. History should not be used to justify territorial annexations in a post-World War II world. Russia could learn that the hard way in the coming decades as non-Russians do the same thing to it.

What does this mean for other CIS states with significant Russian minorities? Van Herpen believes the ultimate grand strategic objective of the Kremlin is the gradual absorption over time of the Eurasian countries back into Russia.⁴⁵⁴ The Kremlin is aware that the strongman leaders of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan could die any day. Russia could

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Marcel Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars: The Rise of Russia's New Imperialism*, (London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), p. 82.

move in under both the guise of protecting ethnic Russians and say they are ensuring that Islamic extremism does not spread if either country has a volatile transition of power (neither has shown much interest in implementing a secure and safe transition of power). President Putin has already cleverly quipped that Kazakhstan was never a nation before the Soviet Union drew borders for it. This has alerted Kazakhstan's leadership to prepare contingency plans. One Kazakh official states "Crimea was our 911, it is an event that caused a lot of rethinking around the region."⁴⁵⁵ In response, Kazakhstan ran war games January 16, 2015 to practice against a "little green men" scenario in Northern Kazakhstan.⁴⁵⁶ Kazakhstan Prime Minister Nazarbayev also reminded Putin that Kazakhstan has the right to withdraw from the Eurasian Customs Union at any time. The double standard is that many politicians in Russia want to rid their country of the undocumented Central Asian immigrants who they say steal jobs from ethnic Russians. Russians have patience when looking to rebuild their empire, and their intention will likely be to be cut up Ukraine and other countries of the former CIS piece by piece under the guise of protecting ethnic Russians wherever they live. Crimea was done with one swoop, Abkhazia and South Ossetia and its 300,000 citizens are currently on track to join Russia through "creeping annexation," and the Donbas could be next.⁴⁵⁷

Russia With or Without Putin

In Russian history books, Putin will likely be remembered as a kinder version of Stalin who did what was necessary for Mother Russia to prosper (unlike Western history

⁴⁵⁵ Mike Eckel. "Ukraine War, Putin's Comments Stir Worry in Kazakhstan", *Voice of America News*. Last updated September 07, 2014. <http://www.voanews.com/content/russia-kazakhstan-ukraine-fears/2440051.html>.

⁴⁵⁶ "Kazakhstan's war games simulate response to 'separatists'", *Yahoo News*. Last updated January 16, 2015. <http://news.yahoo.com/kazakhstan-war-games-simulate-response-separatists-135934658.html>.

⁴⁵⁷ Adrian Croft, "Georgia says Russia bent on 'creeping annexation' of breakaway regions", *Reuters*. Last updated February 26, 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/02/26/us-georgia-russia-idUSKBN0LU2M020150226>.

books, which will likely portray 2014 in particular as a return to the Cold War, or perhaps a new Cold War). He will have returned Russia to greatness from the humiliation suffered in the Wild 90's and rebuilding the military to a fearsome fighting force. He also will be remembered for standing up to the bullying Western powers, and that he did not give an inch when it came to Russian sovereignty of its own borders and its "near abroad". The Commission to Prevent Falsification of History will ensure that his name is not tarnished in history, just like any other historical event of significance to Russian history. Sherr reminds us that, "nations refashion their history to suit their strategic needs and this shows how importantly history matters."⁴⁵⁸ In fact, some future Russian ruler or politician could look back and say that the deposition of Yanukovich from Ukraine was the biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the twenty first century.

It is not likely that Russian political opposition will have a chance to be a force in the immediate future. Putin's comprehensive campaign of shutting down opposition political groups and individuals is accomplished through many methods discussed in the previous chapter. They can be imprisoned like Khodorkovsky, or shot in cold blood on the street like Nemtsov. They can also be targeted through faulty lawsuits under vague and flimsy terms of Russian law. They are often accused of tax fraud, funding "political extremism," or stealing public funds. Often, they flee to London knowing the risk of imprisonment or even death. Some like Pugachev are put on Interpol wanted lists by the Kremlin, and live in constant fear of assassination. This is a painful form of maskirovka itself, as it strains those abroad psychologically by pressuring them to return home to face Russian "justice". It is a miracle

⁴⁵⁸ James Sherr, *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad*, (London, UK: Chatham House, 2013), p. 6.

that they are able to orchestrate protests on the scale that they do at times, but these efforts do not matter if they do not bring about real changes in the Russian leadership's behavior. If there is any change in the power succession, it will not likely be done through voting, but a predetermined pick by Putin himself or his successor.

Putin likes to show that he is the only one keeping Russia unified and from being pulled apart by internal and external actors, and that a spiraling collapse of the Russian Federation is inevitable if he is forced out of office. For this reason, it is also worth questioning what Russia will look like following Putin. While there have been rumors that Putin could step down after this term ending in 2018, there are no indications that he would not see out a fourth term running to 2024 either. What sort of leader will emerge from a line of succession? Russia without Putin would look, act, and function much like it does now. There is not much that will shift from the current political or social construct of the Russian people or the system that is in place. For those hoping for a more moderate leader, they would likely be sorely mistaken. Given the Russian peoples' cultural fabric that has been woven since Kievan Rus and the times of Ivan III, the Russian people will only accept a strong authoritarian leader. Currently, it does not seem like a true democracy is something that they find appealing. Putin's successor will thus already be in a high position in the Kremlin and share Putin's grand-strategic view for Russia's future. Putin's successor could come from the following: siloviki members like Defense Minister Shoigu; Chief of Staff Sergei Ivanov; additional terms of office for Prime Minister Dmitriy Medvedev; or a left-field choice like Chechen strongman Ramzan Kadyrov. They would likely veer slightly to the right or to the left of Putin's current political belief system, but as has already been seen with Medvedev, they will be protective and even aggressive toward any infringement on their

sovereignty or spheres of influence. According to Gleb Pavlovsky, “it is impossible to say when this system will fail, but when it fails, it will fall in one day, and the one to replace it will be a copy of this one.”⁴⁵⁹

Would it be any different if someone outside the current Kremlin circle took power? Even if an opposition leader like Alexei Navalny emerged as the leader of the country, and he brought the hammer down on rackets and corruption upon which the foundations of his campaign are founded, his foreign policy tone would likely mirror Putin’s and perhaps be even more radical. Navalny agrees with the annexation of Crimea, agrees in protecting Russia’s near abroad, and has far-right political affiliation with groups who protest the influence that Caucasians and Central Asians are gaining in their own country. Navalny even says of Ukraine, “integration with Russia is a natural process because Ukraine is weaker and because we are one and the same people.”⁴⁶⁰ There are no indications that friendlier relations with the West would emerge with someone else holding the Russian presidency, even an opposition leader who was much further to the left than those currently in charge in the Kremlin. Russians, it appears, will continue to act like Russians regardless of their political leanings.

Keeping Russians Happy: It Is Not So Simple

The state of the Russian people themselves deserves discussion because it shapes what the Kremlin is currently trying to do. According to Putin, “Russians have a unique and

⁴⁵⁹ Julia Ioffe, “Vladimir Putin might fall. We should consider what happens next”, *Kyiv Post*. Last updated August 07, 2014. <http://www.kyivpost.com/opinion/op-ed/julia-ioffe-vladimir-putin-might-fall-we-should-consider-what-happens-next-359699.html>.

⁴⁶⁰ James Sherr, *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad*, (London, UK: Chatham House, 2013), p. 6.

very powerful genetic code, which prepares them for self-sacrifice.”⁴⁶¹ Putin keeps his power by making sure his people are pacified and happy, but he also plays to the deep-seated motif of sacrifice for the Motherland. He realizes the strategic necessity of integrating domestic policies towards desired foreign policy goals. If he is to be successful in foreign policy, it all starts with how is perceived inside his own borders. The approval rating of Russia’s government among foreigners is shockingly low, but Russians do not care. Putin is hovering at sky-high domestic approval ratings. Most Russians approve of the way Putin is handling Ukraine. Much of the thanks goes to maskirovka efforts of the state-run media. Even a people manipulated through state-run media must be inclined toward a particular position and then swayed further in that direction with a combination of propaganda and truth. When the Kremlin combines this “fog of war” disseminated by the media with friction of fear from the supposed hostile intent of Western powers, it keeps the Russian masses content. If Putin does not maintain this fog and friction amongst the Russian people, he knows his control of the country will slip away. If Putin is deposed, it will come from a combination of the ruling elites and popular unrest, not through the ballot box. Historically, Russians have been profoundly patient with their leaders, but when their patience runs out, it gets bloody. Putin surely knows this, and this is why he has put a premium on information warfare, using maskirovka on his own people on a grand scale, and crushing dissent quickly wherever it rises.

In order for Putin to maintain control of Russia and keep it pacified, he needs to know the construct of people who make up his country. Russia is a very ethnically, religiously, and

⁴⁶¹ Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 149.

economically diverse country, and there are many people that need to be catered to in order to keep a healthy authoritarian environment. There has been some friction among the populace in vital areas as far as their interests go. First, Russia is experiencing a devastating brain drain. Those who earn a reputable education through their more prestigious universities like Moscow State University and St. Petersburg State University are the first to search for work outside their own country. The integrity of other institutions is suspect because it has become commonplace for more affluent Russians to purchase their degrees and pay people to complete necessary bodies of works such as theses or dissertations. This hurts them economically because bright, educated people are the ones who start businesses, produce technological innovations, and bring a diversified economy to the state, not to mention other Russians questioning one another's credentials regarding a degree that might have been bought. Imagine having medical or dental work from someone who bought a degree from Far Eastern Federal University.

Second, the economic sectoral sanctions are forcing Russians to go without commodities that they have grown accustomed to since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Kremlin will appeal to Russian nationalism and that they are a tough people who has done without before, but the younger Russian generation knows nothing of this struggle. There is a sizable demographic that is accustomed to French cheeses, Australian steak, fine wines, I-Phones, and annual trips to Turkey. This sort of forced struggle is new to them, and while patriotic duty will inevitably have some appeal to the population, it will only take the Kremlin so far. The Russian government even had the audacity to destroy hundreds of tons of food that violated Russia's counter-sanctions, and for hundreds of thousands of older Russian citizens who lived through World War II and had to live off of as little as 125 grams

of bread a day, the insult was not lost on them. Senior citizens signed petitions condemning the act and demanding that their government stop the destruction.⁴⁶²

Third is the small but most influential demographic; the nouveau riche and oligarchs who have vast sums of wealth that provide taxable income to the Kremlin. They send their children to private schools in Europe and have vacation flats in London, Rome, and Paris. However, capital flight has been a significant loss from oligarchs who do not want to stick around and watch their fortunes dwindle as a result of Russian foreign policy. According to Russia's finance minister, Russia has estimated that capital flight in 2015 will be \$110 billion.⁴⁶³ That is a financial gut-punch for any nation. Combining it with the devaluation of the ruble, it has become something that has the capacity to be dangerous to the Kremlin itself.

The final group is the marginalized yet significant Caucasian and Central Asian population that calls Russia home. They work and live there, yet are cast as outsiders in many instances. This will become an uncomfortable situation in the next ten to twenty years. By 2040, Russia will be a Muslim-majority nation given current birth and death rate trends. Simple demographic numbers dictate this.⁴⁶⁴ The birth rate of ethnic Russians is apocalyptically low, and Russian males have one of the shortest lifespans in the world due to alcoholism and increasing narcotics abuse. In contrast, Caucasian and Central Asian people have longer lifespans and healthy families with lots of children. It is not uncommon to see a Chechen family with a ten-child household, as it is important in Caucasian and Central Asian

⁴⁶² Yevgenia Nazarets, Aleksandr Gostev. "Crazy, Stupid, Mean': Russia Slammed For Destroying Food Rather Than Feeding Poor", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*. Last updated August 06, 2015. <http://www.rferl.org/content/moscow-russia-food-imports-destroyed-poor/27174600.html>.

⁴⁶³ Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (Washington D.C: Brookings Institute, 2015), p. 198.

⁴⁶⁴ Mark Adomanis, "Is Russia Turning Muslim?", *Forbes Magazine*. Last updated October 23, 2013. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/markadomanis/2013/10/23/is-russia-turning-muslim/>.

culture to have large families. The Russian military is also filling more of its ranks with Central Asians with the promise Russian citizenship once they serve five-year contracts.⁴⁶⁵ If in the coming years minarets rise from mosques inside the Kremlin walls, the concerns of Ukraine will be of little import to a Muslim-majority country. If Chechnya becomes a hot conflict again, in the next ten to twenty years it will have a different identity. Many Russians in the military will have a hard time fighting against their Muslim brothers when the demographic swing comes into full force. Rather, the concerns of the Caucasus and Central Asian countries could come to a head in some unexpected ways. It will be these growing minority groups that will look to right historical wrongs and engage in correcting historical humiliations that they experienced at the hands of ethnic Russians.

These Russian minorities at some level are disgusted with the priority of pan-Slavism on display in Ukraine, and it completely discredits the historical experience of the Tartar, the Buryat, the Chechen, the Dagestani, and others. No doubt, there will be some volatile friction within Russia during these inevitable years of transformation, and it would not be surprising to see ethnic Russians take a violent stand when they feel demographically overwhelmed. Combine this with Kremlin involvement in Syria, which changed from covert support to overt support on September 29, 2015, and this sizable Muslim base could begin rallying to the cause of the Islamic State and consider taking action in the Russian homeland. It has the capacity to be an explosive situation, and a high-confidence assessment should be given when weighing these outcomes. Should anything happen to Ramzan Kadyrov, the situation in the Caucasus will explode. It is an Achilles Heel of the Kremlin, because racism

⁴⁶⁵ “Putin Decree Enables Foreigners To Serve In Russian Military”, *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*. Last updated January 06, 2015. <http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-foreigners-serving-in-military/26779601.html>.

in Russia has experienced a significant uptick since the dissolution of the Soviet Union (in part because it was finally politically and socially acceptable for it to come to the surface).

How To Solve The Ukraine Crisis: What Was Done Wrong And How To Do It Right

The Ukrainian crisis must be resolved diplomatically. It is obvious that a military response is in no one's best interest, and an economic escape valve is in Russia's best interests. This requires some hard truths for both sides to accept in order to move forward. First, Crimea is Russian and there will be no turning back from that now. Russia has a defensive position that would force an unacceptable number of casualties for any offensive engagement by Ukraine or some other party like NATO. Once Russia moves tactical nuclear missiles onto the peninsula, it is game over. It can bring the United Kingdom within striking distance of its tactical nuclear missiles, and makes ballistic missile treaties obsolete the moment that it happens. It would be wise to assume that this is already a foregone conclusion. That is something no one, not even the United States, can do anything about.

The author's proposal is twofold: first, that the United States and its allies must lift economic sanctions on Russia and recognize Russian sovereignty over the Crimean peninsula. The separatist fighters and the political figures of the Donetsk and Luhansk Republics must be given immunity from prosecution, as difficult as that is to stomach. In return, the Russians must promise to completely disarm the separatist movement in Donbas and accept Ukraine's decision to economic relations under the umbrella of the European Union. Second, Russia must also give something by explicitly rewriting ballistic missile treaties so that it would be prohibited from placing tactical nuclear weapons on the peninsula. UN troops from a third-party nation must maintain observation of the ceasefire and provide a

peacekeeping presence while Donetsk and Luhansk are rebuilt, preferably from a nation like China or India. Oil prices must also be the same as they were agreed on during the Yanukovich presidency, which was \$235 per thousand cubic meters.⁴⁶⁶ Finally, an appropriate annual fee must be paid to Ukraine for the loss of Crimea in the sum of \$15 billion and should be tied to market inflation. This gives Putin an escape valve and a chance to look victorious in front of the Russian people with an endgame he and they can live with. Pugachev shows the importance of this, saying “every compromise he sees is a personal victory.”⁴⁶⁷ All parties can wind down and we can get back to working on normalized relations. This will take time and sacrifices that both sides find hard to swallow, but at the diplomatic table, it takes tough decisions and concessions from both sides to get things done.

We must conclude that the United States and the EU have done a woefully inadequate job of protecting Ukraine from a belligerent foe who has put a concerted effort into making Ukraine fail, and this author shares Kuzio’s point of view that President Obama’s Ukraine policy has been an unmitigated disaster without any strategic direction. Nor has the administration provided a strong enough counter-response to deter future action. President Obama has been torched on his foreign policy by both sides of the aisle in Congress for not having a cohesive strategy for defending Ukraine from Russian hard and soft power. Democratic Senator Robert Menendez says, “we have to give the Ukrainians a fighting chance to defend themselves. We should be providing the Ukrainians with the types of

⁴⁶⁶ Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2015), p. 317.

⁴⁶⁷ Luke Harding, “Sergei Pugachev: 'Putin's banker' now lives in fear of man he put into power”, *The Guardian*. Last updated July 28, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/28/sergei-pugachev-putins-banker-interview-lives-in-fear>.

defensive weapons that will impose a cost on Putin for further aggression.”⁴⁶⁸ A bipartisan letter written by Senators Carl Levin (D) and John McCain (R) has requested that we provide Ukraine with lethal weapons. The letter says “they (the Ukrainians) are not asking us to fight their battles, they are asking for the capability to fight for themselves.”⁴⁶⁹ House Armed Forces Committee Chairman Mac Thornberry says, “we are trying everything we can possibly think of to get it done legislatively to force it to happen. How do we force the president to provide weapons to a country if he does not want to?”⁴⁷⁰ Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jimmy Carter’s former National Security Advisor is also critical by saying, “we have signaled a willingness to accommodate. I am not sure that at this stage, we have succeeded in convincing the Russians that we are prepared to deter the kind of steps they are adapting.”⁴⁷¹ General Joseph Dunford does not mince words when he says, “Russia now poses the greatest threat to our national security and its behavior is nothing short of alarming.”⁴⁷² He also believes it is perfectly reasonable to supply Ukraine with lethal weapons. General Breedlove agrees that we currently need to be doing more to combat the threat. When discussing current Kremlin activity, he states, “What we see is diplomatic, informational, military, and economic tools being used against Ukraine. We in the west should consider using all of our tools to reply. Could it be destabilizing? Yes, but inaction

⁴⁶⁸ David Stout. “U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Chair Says It’s Time to Arm Ukraine”, *Time Magazine*. Last updated September 01, 2014. <http://time.com/3244132/senate-foreign-relations-chair-russia-ukraine-robert-menendez-adam-smith/>.

⁴⁶⁹ Carl Levin, James Inhofe, “Give Ukraine the weapons it needs for self-defense”, *Washington Post*. Last updated October 19, 2014. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/carl-levin-james-inhofe-give-ukraine-the-weapons-it-needs-to-defend-itself/2014/10/16/06da647a-4fe2-11e4-babe-e91da079cb8a_story.html.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² Phil Stewart, David Alexander. “Russia is top U.S. national security threat: Gen. Dunford”, *Reuters*. Last updated July 09, 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/09/us-usa-defense-generaldunsmore-idUSKCN0PJ28S20150709>.

could also be destabilizing.”⁴⁷³ These are but a few critics of our current commander-in-chief who understand the gravity of our failure to act. One could only imagine how frustrated our military commanders and senior intelligence analysts must feel in this situation. If Putin wanted to threaten Obama overtly, all he would need to do would be to threaten a small NATO nation in the Baltics, use some Nashi to cause trouble, and move some battalions toward the border, and that nation would likely invoke Article Five of NATO. What would President Obama do then? It is something that the United States should be concerned with.

Our actions in previous diplomatic theaters have set the tone for Ukraine. Russia has continued to move slowly across our red lines in Ukraine ever since the mockery of our red lines were put on display in response to Assad using chemical weapons against his own people in Syria. Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk says “let me put this bluntly: this is a war. The well-known diplomatic language of red lines is sometimes embarrassing because it seems as if we are geopolitically colorblind. Russia has crossed ten red lines.”⁴⁷⁴ A major reason the administration did such a poor job in our assessment of Russian intentions and actions is that it fundamentally underestimated Russian will and capability. According to Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, “We have underestimated, for a long time, the magnitude of the humiliation that Russians felt with the collapse of the Soviet Union because it also involved the collapse of the Russian Empire.”⁴⁷⁵ So there were obviously policy makers along the chain who were aware of the Russian capacity to be

⁴⁷³ Carl Levin, James Inhofe, “Give Ukraine the weapons it needs for self-defense”, *Washington Post*. Last updated October 19, 2014. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/carl-levin-james-inhofe-give-ukraine-the-weapons-it-needs-to-defend-itself/2014/10/16/06da647a-4fe2-11e4-babe-e91da079cb8a_story.html.

⁴⁷⁴ Max Fischer, “Let's be clear about this: Russia is invading Ukraine right now”, *Vox News*. Last updated August 27, 2014. <http://www.vox.com/2014/8/27/6069415/lets-be-clear-about-this-russia-is-invading-ukraine-right-now>.

⁴⁷⁵ Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 217.

belligerent and act as aggressors, but these warnings were not heeded at the highest levels of the chain of command.

The United States has had a strategic fixation on Al Qaeda and ISIS for the last fourteen years. This train of thought is understandable given that it was started by a massive attack by a non-state terrorist actor on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, and has continued from there. We have adjusted our military and intelligence networks accordingly to combat this terrorist threat, and we have transformed our military, which was caught flat-footed in part because of a Cold War playbook. These terrorist networks are a tactical danger to our national security. However, it was sorely misguided to take our eyes off of the strategic threats posed by belligerent nations, most importantly Russia. Stephen J. Blank of the American Foreign Policy Council agrees with this, stating “this is the biggest security threat in the world, much greater than ISIS frankly.”⁴⁷⁶ His point of view and others like his are being vindicated with recent Russian action in Syria.

Our responses should have been backed by actions from the onset of the crises in the Crimea and Ukraine. According to Thomas Grant, “all forceful annexations in the UN era, such as the first Gulf War, were dealt with harshly and appropriately by the international community to ensure that integrity stood on the sovereignty of nations. Crimea has been a whimper and encouragement for Russia. The aggression against Ukraine is a potential turning point; that international law therefore must respond to as strongly as possible to reject

⁴⁷⁶ Christopher Harress, “Russian 'Invasion' Breaks Budapest Memorandum, May Prompt NATO Action”, *International Business Times*. Last updated August 28, 2014. <http://www.ibtimes.com/russian-invasion-breaks-budapest-memorandum-may-prompt-nato-action-1672790>.

or isolate its effects.”⁴⁷⁷ The implications of inaction reach far beyond Ukraine. What other nations will impose “areas of privileged interests” and what areas of the world will they be in? Inaction by our policy makers validates China in the Spratly Islands and even ISIS has gained legitimacy in the eyes of a sizable demographic of observers and political participants given its ability to build a state, defeat all of its adversaries to date, and ride out American special-operations and air strikes with no decrease in its capabilities. It sets a dangerous precedence that other belligerent nations or nonpolitical entities will attempt to take advantage of for their own purposes.

The United States should have led the charge immediately to put SWIFT sanctions on Russia to remove them from digital connection to the international bank exchange the week they invaded Crimea with their little green men. It would have been a backbreaker for the Russian financial sector that showed we meant business from the beginning. We should be using our combined diplomatic, informational, military, and economic muscle to make Russia’s experience in Ukraine a nightmare. We should have given Ukraine anti-tank weapons like javelins the moment Russian armor crossed the Ukrainian border. Russian dissident and former chess world champion Gary Kasparov agrees, saying, “Ukraine should be provided with anti-tank missiles and other defensive arms at very least.”⁴⁷⁸ We should have given them night vision goggles, surplus tactical vehicles from OIF and OEF, bulletproof vests, and anything else they could have used to turn the tide against Russian forces there. These are forces we do not have to worry about becoming radicalized or

⁴⁷⁷ Thomas D. Grant, *Aggression against Ukraine: Territory, Responsibility, and International Law*, (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), p. 6-7.

⁴⁷⁸ Tony Wesolowsky, “Kasparov Says Putin Playing Poker, Not Chess”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty. Last updated June 17, 2015. <http://www.rferl.org/content/kasparov-says-putin-playing-poker-not-chess/27077315.html>.

turning against us. The vast majority even of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in Ukraine want nothing to do with their territory being brought under Russian influence. One Ukrainian commander notes, “half of the Azov Battalion speaks Russian, but they’d all die and kill for Ukraine!”⁴⁷⁹

The Ukrainians want nothing more than their own freedom and right to self-determination. They are fighting hard with scant resources and inadequate defense spending and rely on donations from their own citizens to continue the fight against the separatists. The Ukrainians have the willpower, and if we gave them the means, they could have sent more Russians back in a volume of coffins that could not have been hidden from public view. If we responded this way in the first place, Russian red-teaming exercises (which they do very well) would have likely deemed it to have been a predictable counterpunch on our behalf and, by extension, not worth the cost and risks associated with their aggressive actions. If we made the situation so unbearable on the ground for the Russian military, and combined it with a diplomatic coaxing to give him an easy way out, this war that currently appears set to last for decades as a frozen conflict could have been on its way to ending. It would have given Putin and the Kremlin their own dose of hard coercion and soft diplomacy.

The United States dropped the ball but is not the only party that shoulders blame. According to U.S. billionaire George Soros, who has been passionately working to ease the plight of Ukraine, “it is high time that members of the European Union wake up and behave

⁴⁷⁹ Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2015), p. 445.

as countries indirectly at war.”⁴⁸⁰ It is Europe that should get the brunt of this blame for not responding to a crisis in their backyard with even marginally adequate force. It is a community of nations that has shown no backbone whatsoever in the crisis and is more interested in trimming defense budgets and begging the United States for help than stepping up and taking care of business on their own while hiding under the guise that postmodern Europe is uninterested in confrontation, but commerce. United States and other NATO countries’ spending has been very lopsided since the turn of the century.⁴⁸¹ Currently, the European Union has sanctioned 151 individuals and 37 companies.⁴⁸² They have also removed Russia from the G-8 organization. British policy makers have been proactive and proposed making banking records of senior Russian politicians public, which the British currently have classified as a state secret. (Karen Dawisha’s book: Putin’s Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia? gives a detailed account of this issue.) German Chancellor Angela Merkel has also done a comprehensive job on the diplomatic side of the house, and she seems to have a clear idea of what the big picture is. Merkel states “it is not only about Ukraine. It is about Georgia. It is about Moldova. If it continues like this, one has to wonder about Serbia and other countries in the Western Balkans. Who would have thought that twenty-five years after the fall of the Berlin wall, after the end of the Cold War and the end of the world’s separation into two blocks, something like this could happen in the middle of Europe? Old ways of

⁴⁸⁰ Daryna Krasnolutska, Volodymyr Verbyany. “Ukraine Rebels Vow to Retake Cities as Vote Nears”, *Bloomberg Magazine*. Last updated October 23, 2014. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-10-23/pro-russian-rebels-vow-to-retake-ukrainian-cities>.

⁴⁸¹ David Alexander, “Ukraine crisis highlights NATO defense spending problem: Hagel”, *Reuters*. Last updated May 02, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/02/us-usa-nato-hagel-idUSBREA410T420140502>.

⁴⁸² Matthew Holehouse, “UK official: We could always publish the financial secrets of the Putin's inner circle”, *Business Insider*. Last updated March 10, 2015. <http://www.businessinsider.com/uk-official-we-could-always-publish-the-financial-secrets-of-the-putins-inner-circle-2015-3>.

thinking of spheres of influence which spurn international law must not be accepted.”⁴⁸³ So for European countries, it is not a problem of not recognizing the threat, or even failure to act. It is an issue of failure to act with enough force to deter Putin and the Kremlin, and it could result in a collapsed Ukrainian state if Europe fails to act with more fire and passion, in close coordination with a more assertive United States, to a Ukraine that is begging for aid.

Unfortunately, there are few indications that these sanctions or other punitive measures have altered the Kremlin’s grand-strategic posture in any notable way. The only countries that have any interest in actively helping Ukraine are those with a sense of history that are also worried that they might be next: Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. According to NATO estimates, the latter three could be invaded by Russia in four to seven hours even with the new NATO rapid reaction force, which would be nothing more than a mere tripwire.⁴⁸⁴ They are currently the only nations in NATO meeting the recommended two percent of GDP spending on defense, while other nations of NATO have been making significant cuts in defense. Poland in particular plans to spend \$42 billion over the next decade on modernizing its military force.⁴⁸⁵ Each Baltic nation has respectively spent \$1.2 billion apiece. Lithuania recently passed a law instituting conscription, and civilian militias have been drilling in Latvia and Estonia on a more regular basis.⁴⁸⁶ This urgency amongst the Baltic States is warranted because it has the demographic capacity to provide another

⁴⁸³ “Merkel’s tough words for Putin”, *Chicago Tribune*. Last updated November 19, 2014.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/editorials/ct-merkel-putin-ukraine-edit-20141119-story.html>.

⁴⁸⁴ Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 235.

⁴⁸⁵ Damien Sharkov, “Poland Prepares for ‘Hybrid War’ Amidst Russian Threat”, *Newsweek Magazine*. Last updated March 24, 2015. <http://europe.newsweek.com/poland-prepares-hybrid-war-amidst-russian-threat-316469>.

⁴⁸⁶ Sean Mirski, “Russia’s Misstep: How Putin’s Ukraine Adventure Backfired”, *The National Interest*. Last updated March 11, 2015. <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/russias-misstep-how-putins-ukraine-adventure-backfired-12394>.

hybrid warfare insurgency. More than one million ethnic Russians live in the Baltics, and Russia will likely use them to their advantage when looking to create controlled instability there. Recently on the air of pro-Kremlin media station RuBaltic, a Russian foreign ministry official said, “We are carrying out a line so that Russian compatriots regardless of where they live are guaranteed all rights and freedoms and have the same opportunity to preserve the culture and traditions of their historical motherland.”⁴⁸⁷ It is thus easy to see the rationale for an increase in defensive measures in all three Baltic nations.

We should be working with our NATO allies, and especially our Eastern European ones, to establish a significant base on Poland’s eastern border as a strong deterrent to Kremlin belligerence (a NATO base in the Baltics would be dangerously inviting another hybrid warfare attempt by Russia, which has already threatened to use destabilizing actions if such a base is attempted). It is a base that Poland is very much in support of, which is more than can be said of many of the United States’ current bases abroad. Increasing a naval presence in Constanta, Romania as a presence to counter Russia in the Black Sea would also be strategically wise. NATO and the United States should also begin seriously entertaining the missile defense shield. The 5,000-man NATO rapid response force authorized by General Jens Stoltenberg is a start, but a much more sincere effort should be made than what European policy makers have put forth. While Ukraine and Georgia have attempted to move toward EU and NATO membership, European nations have scoffed at the idea out of the fear of angering Russia. We are already seeing breaking in the lines in Europe as far as continuing the sanctions against Russia goes, with France leading the charge to end them.

⁴⁸⁷ Max Fischer, “Russia is starting to use the same line on Baltic countries that it used to invade Ukraine”, *Vox News*. Last updated October 01, 2014. <http://www.vox.com/2014/10/1/6880329/russia-baltic-threats-ukraine-estonia>.

This feeds right into what Putin and his men in the Kremlin are trying to establish: a divide-and-conquer campaign that keeps all parties on edge and encourages internal squabbling. As previously mentioned he has little respect for Europe and sees it as being in decline. According to Merkel, “Putin believes that we are decadent, we are gay, and we are women with beards.”⁴⁸⁸ According to Rajan Menon, “The expansion of NATO, and subsequently the EU, has long been seen by the Russian foreign policy establishment as an attempt by United States and European allies to marginalize Russia and diminish its role in Europe and other global affairs, and to weaken its economic and political influence.”⁴⁸⁹ This is why the Kremlin is so intent to divide the EU and NATO. Europe should not need a yearly reminder that Russia was directly responsible for shooting down a civilian aircraft filled with European tourists, nor should it need to be reminded that a sovereign European country was invaded in the twenty first century on their watch with minimal repercussions for the aggressor. The Russian campaign, utilizing fog and friction in Europe, will likely bring European sanctions resilience crashing down at the end of 2015. Russia will have gotten exactly what it wanted and weathered a storm it predicted all too easily would come to an end.

With all of this in mind, the United States and the EU must hit the Kremlin where it hurts: in the eyes of the international community. So long as this belligerence takes place in nations like Ukraine, it is our obligation to put the Russians under heavy diplomatic pressure. What better way to hurt their pride than deprive them of a moment where the eyes of the

⁴⁸⁸ Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 213.

⁴⁸⁹ Rajan Menon, *Conflict in Ukraine: The Unwinding of the Post-Cold War Order* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), p. 71.

world are on them? Senators like John McCain have already proposed such an idea.⁴⁹⁰ The symbolism of depriving Moscow of the World Cup in 2018 would be devastating to Putin and his ego, and would teach him a very firm lesson that the international community will not tolerate bad behavior. The United States, albeit unintentionally, has done just that by launching a corruption probe into soccer's governing FIFA body where the first charges were filed in May 2015. The rumors of corruption involved in the Qatar and Russia bids have been loud, and the Department of State under Attorney General Loretta Lynch is investigating FIFA members, including President Sepp Blatter, for taking bribes in exchange for votes for the rights to host the World Cup.⁴⁹¹

Many of the grand stadiums designed to host the event have already begun construction and are on their way to completion, and the same sort of corruption and graft that took place during Sochi are suspected of taking place at these venues as well. Putin fears his World Cup is in grave danger as a result, and he has been very vocal about the involvement of the United States in its prosecution of FIFA officials. Some soccer conferences like UEFA (European governing soccer body) have called for a boycott on the Russia games. If they can get CONCACAF (North American soccer body) and COMENBOL (South American soccer body) to join in the boycott, there will effectively be no World Cup. No one would take a world cup seriously without Brazil, Germany, England, Italy, Argentina, and so many other nations not participating in the games. It would be a

⁴⁹⁰ Kevin Baxter, "U.S. senators ask FIFA to move 2018 World Cup out of Russia", *Los Angeles Times*. Last updated April 01, 2015. <http://www.latimes.com/sports/sportsnow/la-sp-sn-us-senators-russia-world-cup-20150401-story.html>.

⁴⁹¹ Marissa Payne, "Early Lead: Is Sepp Blatter next? U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch expects more FIFA indictments", *Washington Post*. Last updated September 14, 2015. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/early-lead/wp/2015/09/14/is-sepp-blatter-next-u-s-attorney-general-loretta-lynch-expects-more-fifa-indictments/>.

sham and a mockery in its own right. If Russia loses the international stage of the World Cup, it would hurt Putin just as much as, if not more than, the sectoral sanctions already have. This investigation is still in progress, and Lynch has already said bluntly “this is not the final chapter in our investigation.”⁴⁹² There have been no indictments of Russian officials yet, but plea bargaining from some key officials will likely see that change in the near future as this investigation unfolds.

We have already paid the price for dithering, and Russia has become emboldened to continue its campaign of controlled instability in Syria. Russia has bullied U.S. and allied aircraft out of Syrian airspace and established de-facto restricted operation zones (ROZs) around the Western population of Syria because they know we will not respond. Who knows where the next zone of conflict will open up where Russia and the United States share mutual interests. Will it be Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, the Baltic States, or closer to the United States in a place like Venezuela or Nicaragua? Russia now has the courage to continue their bullying behavior, but will we be able to remember that it all started when little green men raided an airport in Sevastopol, and our policy makers and intelligence community did nothing to respond?

There are probably few NATO generals who sincerely believe that their governments would go to war with Russia to protect the Baltic member states at this juncture. But the old Cold War operations plans and other playbooks will have to be dusted off and updated. A strategic plan must be developed as a contingency should Russia attempt Gerasimov’s model of hybrid warfare again in a NATO country. There will need to be a military response, and

⁴⁹² Ibid.

policy makers will need to have the courage and resolve to follow through with their Article 5 obligations to NATO. These policy makers must also trust their military and intelligence community to act and not hamper either of them with partisan slants and forwarding agendas like we saw leading up to the Iraq War and which we are seeing now in Syria. One shudders to think what would be the American response to something as serious as the Cuban Missile Crisis, because the stakes are gradually increasing to where American resolve may be firmly tested on such a scale again in the near future. Now that our current strategic culture has a blueprint of backing down, there is a significant chance that Putin and the Kremlin will not flinch this time, as they have not flinched in any past conflicts.

The parallels between United Russia and Nazi Germany are remarkable. We generally exaggerate Hitler comparisons because it is the historical worst-case scenario that we use when we want to illustrate something terrible, but it is a rare exception that the parallel comparisons are legitimate here. With Putin and the Kremlin, there is a government that feels its nation was humiliated and taken advantage of. From this humiliation, Russia must build a Third Rome much like Germany was building their Third Reich. There is a timid Europe that does not want conflict and is too “enlightened” and “sophisticated” to let things spiral out of control to war. Using the infamous quote of former British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, in Ukraine we have, “a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing.” For modern European politicians, civilized nations solve problems diplomatically and that is the only way forward for them. For a more modern example, Merkel states “we are in the twenty first century. We do not solve conflicts

militarily.”⁴⁹³ The Crimean peninsula was annexed like Sudetenland to protect the interests of ethnic Russians. Kazakhstan President Nazarbaev recognizes the parallels, stating “any talk of protection of Russians living in Kazakhstan reminds one of the times of Hitler who also started off with the question of protecting Sudetenland Germans.”⁴⁹⁴ The military modernization agenda has been pushed forward at all costs at the expense of all other economic priorities. There has been a comprehensive campaign of propaganda and misinformation at home and abroad. Russians are vengeful and still angry that eastern European nations view the Red Army as an invading army that pillaged, raped, and murdered its way to Berlin rather than acting like liberators. There has been rabid racism by ethnic Russians toward Caucasians and Central Asians who are targeted and beaten in the streets. Russians have decided that they are the chosen people who will be the bastion of Eurasianism and “racial purity” in the battle with Muslim and other “impure” peoples. Putin responds to criticism by pointing the finger at Ferguson, Missouri and Baltimore, Maryland as instances of a hypocritical United States that should not point the finger at Russia despite a shockingly higher rate of violence towards minorities in Russia than in the United States. Finally, Putin is willing to take bold risks. The fact that a nation with this sort of behavior can in turn call Ukraine a Fascist Nazi Junta because of a few Pravi Sektor or Azov Brigade militia members is preposterous.

Imperialist nations by default try to justify their actions. For example, the Spanish justified themselves in conquering the Americas by spreading Christianity. They profess

⁴⁹³ Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 13.

⁴⁹⁴ Marcel Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars: The Rise Of Russia's New Imperialism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, 2015), p. 231.

they stopped barbaric practices like cannibalism and encouraged modernization to move to Western civilization. Social Darwinism became a more blunt justification, and these pretenses of Russia were just like England, Spain, and France when Russia subjugated the Eskimos, Central Asians, Caucasians, Buryats, and others in expanding their empire. Their histories have been marginalized as conquered peoples by ethnic Russian historians. Russia is ethnically one of the most diverse nations in the world, but historically it is dominated by the Slavs ever since they drove out the Golden Horde. Ethnic Russians felt it was their burden to spread civilization and ideas like communism because only a great nation like theirs could allow smaller nations around them to succeed. This ethos of greatness is what drives Russia to expand its influence by any means necessary.

Russia is unique, however, in the sense that it is psychologically paranoid of invasion, and through history, that could almost be forgiven with how many invaders made their way through Russia. They need that buffer zone of what they perceive to be inferior nations and inferior peoples to feel better about their sovereignty and for protection from any future invaders. Yulia Tymoshenko says, “Russian leaders deserve understanding of their anguished struggle to overcome generations of Soviet misrule. They are not, however, being handed the sphere of influence that Tsars and commissars have coveted for 300 years.”⁴⁹⁵

Russia is unique, for good reasons and bad, but if there is one nation that has justification for an anxiety disorder from external tormentors, it is Ukraine. Their big brother has been nothing but a big bully for much of their existence, and they also shared in the horrors of multiple invasions from east and west. In short, Ukrainians have had the worst of both worlds.

⁴⁹⁵ Gideon Rose, *Crisis In Ukraine*, (New York, NY: Council of Foreign Relations, 2014) p.34.

Our current trajectory of engaging Russia is not in our national interests. So long as the price it must pay for continuing its policy is acceptable to the Kremlin (and it currently is), Putin will continue harassing Ukraine. Though Putin has accomplished his goal of establishing a frozen conflict on the eastern border of Ukraine, his strategic gamble may be in danger because he has completely undone any brotherly love that the Ukrainians or Russians might have built up over centuries in the span of a few years. Before his death, Boris Nemtsov wrote, “Putin will go down in history as the president who made Ukraine and Russia foes.”⁴⁹⁶ A poll indicated in 2011 that 80 percent of Ukrainians had a favorable view of Russia.⁴⁹⁷ Currently, that number is down to 35 percent. Without Crimea as a voting bloc, Ukraine will likely never again have a pro-Russian president or Rada. There is no possibility that Ukraine will be on friendly terms again with Russia unless the latter occupies it with outright force, and Putin is smart enough to not do that. Ukrainians have really found their patriotic identity while the conflict with Russia has played out. Without Putin, Ukrainian nationalism would likely have never achieved the heights that it has reached today. While Crimea is important strategically, Donbas is just as important because so long as Putin holds that sliver of land, he will have a say in the fate of Ukraine, and that is a dangerous precedent not just for Ukraine, but for Europe as well. Controlled instability will continue in the region and will go through intervals of hot and frozen conflicts whenever Putin feels he needs to put pressure on Poroshenko. For Putin, this is probably the best-case scenario for his grand-strategic plan. He will continue to creep across red lines very slowly to wear down

⁴⁹⁶ Anna Dolgov “Nemtsov Report Details Human and Financial Costs of War in Ukraine”, *The Moscow Times*. Last updated May 12, 2015. <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/nemtsov-report-details-human-and-financial-costs-of-war-in-ukraine/520571.html>.

⁴⁹⁷ Marjorie Connolly, “Public Opinion Against Russia Hardens After Ukraine Intervention, Poll Finds”, *New York Times*. Last updated July 09, 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/10/world/europe/public-opinion-against-russia-hardens-after-ukraine-intervention-poll-finds.html>.

the patience of the United States and Europe. He will grab his little brother by the neck and bully him into submission, and call it tough love. Kremlin dissident Brzezinski is quoted as saying, “Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire.”⁴⁹⁸ Putin will not let go of his dream of a Eurasian empire, and he will hang on to Ukraine as long and as hard as he can.

Putin does this not just for interests in maintaining control of his near abroad, but at home as well. He will hang on to power at any cost. Putin is prepared to fight his own people and spill blood to maintain control, and there would be many more casualties if Euromaiden-style protests took place in Moscow. According to Khodorkovsky, “if Putin is shown that there is no possibility of retaining power besides war, then war is possible.”⁴⁹⁹ This is an unpredictability that Western policy makers and intelligence analysts should not lose sight of, especially for a man who feels like his back is against the wall. Putin has warned, “if you push a spring all the way to its limit, it will snap back hard.”⁵⁰⁰ Putin’s Russia is a variation of Soviet and Tsarist Russia; a Russia that is constantly attempting to be the third Rome and at the same time pushing away the fifth column. He cherry-picks through history as he sees fit. According to Kalb, “Putin picks his way through history to find support for his policy, or confirmation of his beliefs, while discarding history that does not conform with his world view.”⁵⁰¹ In spite of this double standard, Kremlin will continue to portray Russian existence as under siege by meddling Western powers and pounding the drums of nationalistic fervor appealing to them to be strong during times of troubles because

⁴⁹⁸ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “The Premature Partnership”, *Foreign Affairs*. Last updated April 01, 1994. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/1994-03-01/premature-partnership>.

⁴⁹⁹ Damien Sharkov, “Khodorkovsky: Putin Will Step Down in 2019”, *Newsweek Magazine*. Last updated July 23, 2015. <http://europe.newsweek.com/khodorkovsky-putin-will-step-down-2019-330720>.

⁵⁰⁰ Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 25.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid* p. 235.

it suits his grand strategic objective. In the mean time, most Russians will continue to love Putin and rulers like him as loving father-like authoritarian figures. In the meantime, the Kremlin will do its best to prop up the weak “E” element within the DIME equation and ride out the economic storm that nearly undid them not too long ago. Tsarist and Soviet Russia met their demise by spending themselves into oblivion, and Putin’s Russia could do the same. In conclusion, Sherr sums up what Russia has been, is now, and always will be: “It will never be socialist or capitalist; democratic or totalitarian. It will be Russian.”⁵⁰²

⁵⁰² James Sherr, *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad*, (London, UK: Chatham House, 2013), p. 42.

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BIOGRAPHY

I was born in Orange, California to Lynne and Scott Koeller. I am the eldest of my siblings, which include my brother Ryan and sister Kristen. I attended high school in Quincy, California, a small mountain town in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and graduated in 2001. The following two years, I earned my associates degree in liberal arts at Feather River College in 2003. I transferred to CSU Chico to pursue my degree in history with the intention of becoming a teacher. I achieved my goal in earning my Bachelor of Arts in history in 2005, but halfway through my teaching credential program it was becoming abundantly clear that the job market was poor, and combined with the realization during student teaching that this was not what I wanted to do the rest of my life, I decided to enlist in the United States Air Force in 2006 as an imagery analyst, where I first developed my passion for geography and the intelligence field. I fulfilled a six-year service contract that included a deployment to Kandahar, Afghanistan, and then looked for relevant career opportunities outside of the Air Force. I found a contracting position that fit me at Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas, where I am presently working. I heard of the ISSA degree offered by Angelo State from co-workers. I decided to enroll and was accepted into the graduate school program at the beginning of 2014 with a projected completion date of December 2015.