



ANALYSIS

RUSSIA INFLUENCE OPERATIONS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC, POLAND, AND ROMANIA: MISSILE DEFENSE, COMMON TENDENCIES, AND LESSONS LEARNED*

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The 2018 U.S. *National Defense Strategy* recognized the challenges presented by activities “below the level of armed conflict,” among which are adversarial influence operations.¹ Russia’s political influence and disinformation operations aimed at U.S. allies in Europe have been an important tool in its adversarial competition with the United States. Russia (and previously the Soviet Union) has been conducting these types of operations for decades, with a short pause following the end of the Cold War.² New technologies are increasing the potency of disinformation, making such campaigns cheaper and more readily available than was the case during the Cold War. They enable the Russian Federation to compensate for disadvantages in other areas of state power. This article examines Russia’s influence operations in the context of U.S. missile defense cooperation with the Czech Republic, Romania, and Poland. It offers important lessons for alliance management and for building resilience against Russia’s malign operations, including pursuing policies that place emphasis on transparency, intelligence cooperation, and revitalization of U.S. public diplomacy efforts.

The United States and its allies have always recognized the importance of information to the conduct of warfare, but never before has the manipulation of information been possible to the degree that it is today: even if information is not concrete in revealing a number of tanks or modern aircraft, it can change the course of events. For example, in a recent simulation, researchers at NATO used open sources to gather information about soldiers participating in an exercise and manipulated behavioral outcomes using said information.³ Russia manipulated information leading to chaos and inefficiency within the Ukrainian government during Russia’s invasion of Crimea.⁴ Russia’s activities during the U.S. 2016 election cycle led to a significant increase in interest inside and outside the U.S. government in Russia’s influence and disinformation operations.

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¹ Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America* (2018), p. 6, available at <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>.

² For more information on the Soviet Union/Warsaw Pact influence activities during the Cold War and NATO’s “dual-track” decision, see Vladimír Černý and Petr Suchý, “Spies and Peaceniks: Czechoslovak Intelligence Attempts to Thwart NATO’s Dual-Track Decision,” *Cold War History*, Vol. 20, Issue 3 (March 1, 2020), pp. 273–291, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2020.1724963>.

³ Jānis Sārts and Scott Simon, “NATO Targets Disinformation Efforts,” *NPR.org*, December 7, 2019, available at <https://www.npr.org/2019/12/07/785804847/nato-targets-disinformation-efforts>.

⁴ Daniel Bagge, *Unmasking Maskirovka: Russia’s Cyber Influence Operations* (New York, NY: Defense Press, 2019), pp. 174-186.



For the Russian Federation, disinformation is a relatively cheap tool of political warfare. Russia's efforts are massive in nature and never ending. In recent memory, it wasn't until Russia's 2014 invasion of Ukraine that the United States started to see itself in competition with the Russian Federation. Russia, however, sees itself at war with the West. Russia's activities against its perceived enemies are extensive and unchecked by constraints that democracies impose on themselves. Russia's influence operations need not be fatal to U.S. advancement of its foreign policy and national security goals at home or abroad. The Honorable Victoria Nuland, former Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, stated that Russia's attempt to exercise undue influence "is not an insurmountable challenge if we harden ourselves here, if we expose what is going on, both with digital and with money, and with corruption of politicians, and if we work in concert with our allies to pool information, and if we are willing to apply some of the same medicine to Putin himself where he is vulnerable at home, notably, on corruption."⁵

This article is a modest contribution to that goal. It gives the reader an overview of the Czech, Polish, and Romanian case studies and maps Russia's influence operations on their respective territories. Then it discusses lessons learned and recommends steps the United States can take to counter Russia's malign activities.

U.S.-CZECH MISSILE DEFENSE COOPERATION

The informal part of U.S.-Czech missile defense discussions spanned the timeframe from September 2002 to January 2007. These initial discussions were not particularly regular, partly because the Bush Administration was still internally working out the issue of how to go about deploying a long-range missile defense system. The "representatives of the Czech government expressed a rather robust willingness to participate in U.S. missile defense plans," according to one Bush Administration official.⁶

The Czech press reported the information about the Czech Republic potentially hosting a U.S. missile defense component for the first time in March 2006.⁷ The first reports started public discussions about the role the Czech Republic might play in U.S. missile defense plans in Europe. They also prompted the founding of the civic movement "No Bases Initiative" in August 2006.⁸ The movement's stated purpose was to fight "against the placement of a U.S. missile defense base on the Czech territory, in a non-violent manner."⁹ The movement

⁵ Victoria Nuland, as quoted in, U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Countering a Resurgent Russia*, Hearings, 116th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, D.C.: USGPO, May 1, 2019), p. 58, available at <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA00/20190501/109399/HHRG-116-FA00-Transcript-20190501.pdf>.

⁶ Author interview with David Trachtenberg, then-Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy from 2001 to 2003, January 6, 2019.

⁷ The other two candidates were Poland and, somewhat less seriously, the United Kingdom. Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR (Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs), "Zahraničních politiků České republiky data 3/2006," (Czech Foreign Policy Data 3/2006), March 2006, available at https://www.mzv.cz/public/74/15/11/73274_491937_Data_mesicniku_ZP2006_03.pdf.

⁸ Author translation from a Czech web page. "Vznik společenské iniciativy Ne základnám," (Founding of the No Bases Initiative), August 1, 2006, available at http://www.nezakladnam.cz/cs/106_vznik-spolecenske-iniciativy-ne-zakladnam.

⁹ Ibid.

became a useful conduit for voicing Russia's anti-missile defense sentiments in the Czech Republic.

In January 2007, the United States submitted a formal request to the Czech government to host a U.S. X-band radar as part of a U.S. long-range missile defense system, on its territory.¹⁰ The government agreed to negotiate two main agreements: the Broader Ballistic Missile Defense Agreement (BMDA) and the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). Both required parliamentary approval. The Czech government also started limited communications and outreach efforts to educate the public and political representatives on the missile defense issue. The low level of information about missile defense undoubtedly made it easier for the Russian Federation to penetrate the information space with disinformation and influence Czech public opinion against it. The Czech government's effort came too late relative to the opponents' who were organizing and producing anti-missile defense content since summer 2006.

The U.S. and Czech governments jointly announced the conclusion of negotiations at the 2008 NATO Bucharest Summit. The announcement emphasized the project's Alliance dimension, and that U.S.-Czech security cooperation was an important contribution to NATO's collective security.¹¹ The government hoped that the project would be made more acceptable to the public if framed as a contribution to NATO, which traditionally enjoyed high levels of support among Czech citizens. Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice signed the BMDA on July 8, 2008.¹² The ink was not even dry on the agreements when Russia cut oil supplies to the Czech Republic by half.¹³ The supply was eventually restored.

The Czech government approved a SOFA with the United States on September 10, 2008.¹⁴ The SOFA was signed by Secretary Gates and Defense Minister Parkanová on September 19, 2008, in London.¹⁵ Despite the difficult political position of the Czech government, the Czech Senate gave its consent to the ratification of the Ballistic Missile Defense Agreement and the SOFA on November 27, 2008.¹⁶ The approval was meant to send a message to the incoming

¹⁰ The United States announced its withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in December 2001. The Bush Administration officials briefed allies (and other countries) on the rationale for the U.S. withdrawal. The Czech media noticed the withdrawal with a passing interest.

¹¹ "Česko se dohodlo s USA na radaru, smlouvu podepíše za měsíc" (The Czech Republic and the United States Agreed on a Radar, the Agreement Will Be Signed in a Month), *Natoaktual.cz*, April 3, 2008, http://www.natoaktual.cz/cesko-se-dohodlo-s-usa-na-radaru-smlouvu-podepise-za-mesic-pm7-/na_zpravy.aspx?c=A080403_155553_na_cr_m02.

¹² Jan Wirtnitzer, Josef Kopecký, Pavel Eichler, and Adéla Dražanová, "Česko a USA podepsaly hlavní smlouvu o radaru," (The Czech Republic and the U.S.A. signed a radar agreement), *iDnes.cz*, June 8, 2008, available at https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/cesko-a-usa-podepsaly-hlavni-smlouvu-o-radaru.A080708_143558_domaci_jw.

¹³ Judy Dempsey, "Russia further cuts its oil deliveries to Czech Republic," *The New York Times*, July 30, 2008, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/30/world/europe/30iht-czech.4.14893867.html>.

¹⁴ "Vláda schválila smlouvu SOFA, radar i půda pod ním zůstane Česku" (The Government Approved the SOFA, Radar, and the Soil Underneath Will Remain Czech), *iDnes.cz*, September 10, 2008, available at https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/vlada-schvalila-smlouvu-sofa-radar-i-puda-pod-nim-zustane-cesku.A080910_142601_domaci_klu.

¹⁵ "Parkanová podepsala smlouvu o pobytu amerických vojáků v ČR" (Parkanová Signed an Agreement Regulating U.S. Troops' Stay in the Czech Republic), *iDnes.cz*, September 19, 2008, available at <https://www.novinky.cz/domaci/150035-parkanova-podepsala-smlouvu-o-pobytu-americkyh-vojaku-v-cr.html>.

¹⁶ Senát (Senate), "Vládní návrh, kterým se předkládá Parlamentu České republiky k vyslovení souhlasu s ratifikací Dohoda mezi Českou republikou a Spojenými státy americkými o zřízení radarové stanice protiraketové obrany Spojených států v České republice, podepsaná dne 8. července 2008 v Praze" (Government Proposal for the Parliament of the Czech Republic to Consent to Ratification of the

Obama Administration that the Czech Republic continued to be interested in hosting the radar. But that was not to be. The administration cancelled the plan in September 2009, before the Czech Parliament approved the agreements. For all intents and purposes, this was the end of U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation.

Russian Influence Operations Methods in the Czech Republic

Russia's interference in Czech missile defense discussions was not discussed openly when negotiations between the United States and the Czech Republic were ongoing, partly thanks to Russia's penetration of the Czech media sphere. Additionally, its extensive penetration of the Czech public, business, and political sphere enabled it to spread disinformation in ways that were not obviously traceable to its origin. The lack of attribution of influence activities increased the credibility of disinformation itself. It is likely that Russia not only supported but also funded anti-radar activities on Czech territory, given its level of organization and resources. Russia's material and personnel support for anti-radar activities on Czech territory became even more difficult to trace after the Czech Republic joined the Schengen Area within the EU on December 21, 2007.¹⁷

By the time the United States started discussing missile defense cooperation with the Czech Republic, Russia had a comprehensive network of agents and pro-Russian citizens in place within the Czech Republic. The network drew on connections developed during the Cold War and in some cases, the agents' activities went uninterrupted throughout the 1990s.¹⁸ President Putin's ascendancy to power created a situation in which government's tools of power permeated Russia's economy and blurred the difference between state and private business activities.¹⁹ Consequently, Russia's intelligence services became intertwined with diplomacy, business, and private lives in ways that would be considered unseemly at best and illegal at worst in the United States and other democracies.

As Russia's system of "influence agencies" became more entrenched in the Czech Republic, including on the local level, Russia's efforts became focused on delegitimizing the Czech government, Czech foreign policy, transatlanticism, democratic institutions, and the NATO alliance writ large.²⁰ Russia's broader goals related to influence operations have remained unchanged since the end of the Cold War: the relativization of truth, undermining of pro-U.S. foreign policy in the Czech Republic, and undermining of democratic institutions in general.

Agreement Between the Czech Republic and the United States on Building a U.S. Radar Station in the Czech Republic, Signed on 8 July, 2008, in Prague), November 27, 2008, available at <https://www.senat.cz/xqw/xervlet/pssenat/hlasy?G=9432&O=7>.

¹⁷ The Schengen Area is a border-free area within which the citizens of 26 European countries may travel freely without passports.

¹⁸ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2009" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2009), 2010, p. 5, available at <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocní-zpravy/2009-vz-cz.pdf>.

¹⁹ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2008" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2008), 2009, p. 5, available at <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocní-zpravy/2008-vz-cz.pdf>.

²⁰ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2000," (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2000), June 1, 2001, p. 17, available at <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocní-zpravy/vyrocní-zprava-2000.pdf>.

The network was activated with the purpose of derailing U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation and decreasing support for it among the Czech public and Czech politicians. Russia's connections and pre-existing relations from decades of Soviet occupation made Russia's task easier. Pre-existing connections and contacts with Russia are a common denominator among many current U.S. allies that were a part of the Warsaw Pact during the Cold War. The degree of Russia's penetration is partly determined by how they managed their transitions to democracy following the breakup of the Soviet Union and how successful they were in weeding out Soviet agents from their intelligence and security apparatus.

Russia successfully built a friendly network among Czech politicians, including members of parliament and their assistants, and members of political parties responsible for their respective party's foreign policy and security agendas.²¹ Some Czech government officials do not feel particularly loyal to the Czech state, which makes them more susceptible to collaboration with Russia.²² When exposed, their collaboration with Russia undermines the public's faith in the soundness of Czech democratic institutions and plays right into Russia's hands. The penetration of Czech local governance structures is a long-term challenge for the health of Czech politics because the more that local politicians advance in their careers, the more power and access to information they have and the more damage they can cause to Czech interests if blackmailed.

Russia's intelligence services' extensive connections in all levels of Czech society provided with multiple opportunities to wage the campaign against the radar deployment, particularly after discussions between the United States and the Czech Republic became a matter of public debate in summer 2006. Russia's influence operations reached "an extremely high intensity and sophistication" in 2007, the year in which the United States and the Czech Republic intensely negotiated the SOFA and BMDA.²³ According to the Czech Military Intelligence Service 2008 annual report, stopping the U.S. radar deployment to the Czech Republic became Russia's diplomatic and intelligence priority.²⁴

The execution of an "active measures" campaign, which included media events, publications, reports, and cultural and social events, became one of Russia's significant priorities on Czech territory.²⁵ In fact, the No Bases Initiative was suspected of accepting Russia's help in organizing and funding its activities.²⁶ Russia's intelligence operatives focused on ways to influence Czech public opinion and steer it further away from supporting the U.S. radar deployment. They contacted, infiltrated, and manipulated groups and

²¹ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2008" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2008), 2009, op. cit, p. 5.

²² Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2012" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2012), 2013, p. 13, available at <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/2012-vz-cz.pdf>.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Military Intelligence Service, "Výroční zpráva o činnosti Vojenského zpravodajství 2008" (Annual Report of the Military Intelligence Agency), 2009, p. 17, available at <https://www.vzcr.cz/uploads/41-Vyrocnizprava-2008.pdf>.

²⁵ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2006" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2006), 2007, p. 5, available at <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/2006-vz-cz.pdf>.

²⁶ ČTK and Jan Markovič, "Rusko nás neplatí, popírají odpůrci radaru reportáž ČT" (The Russians Are Not Giving Us Money, Opponents of the Radar Dispute Czech Television's News Segment), *MF Dnes*, November 27, 2007, available at https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/rusko-nas-neplati-popiraji-odpurci-radaru-reportaz-ct.A071127_124402_domaci_mr.

individuals active in civic movements (including the No Bases Initiative), politics, and the media. They were often unwitting collaborators with the Russian Federation.²⁷

The end of U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation did not mean the end of Russia's influence operations and intelligence efforts in the Czech Republic. Rather, Russia's efforts refocused on traditional areas of interest: obtaining economic advantages for Russian businesses, particularly in the energy sector, improving Putin's image among the Russian-speaking community in the Czech Republic, obtaining access to Czech research and development, and accessing Czech or EU funding for projects in Russia's interest.²⁸

Czech intelligence services were recently able to prove beyond doubt that Russia was involved in an ammunition depot explosion on Czech territory in October 2014. The authorities had to evacuate several villages in the vicinity of the explosion, two Czechs were killed, and over 50 tons of privately owned weapons material were destroyed. The weapons were reportedly owned by a Bulgarian with customers in Ukraine, which Russia invaded in February 2014. The Czech authorities believe that the explosion was not intended to happen on Czech territory, but later when the weapons were en route to their customers, potentially in Ukraine.²⁹

U.S.-POLISH MISSILE DEFENSE COOPERATION

Poland decided to participate in the U.S. ballistic missile program in the 2006/2007 timeframe by hosting a GMD interceptor site. From a Polish perspective, the more U.S. troops on its territory, the better deterrence against Russia's expansionism and political influence. Polish then-Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski expressed this sentiment when he stated: "Come on! You [the United States] spend more on military than the rest of the world put together. Of course you have unique credibility as regards security measures. So, of course everybody assumes that countries that have U.S. soldiers on their territory do not get invaded."³⁰

A few days after the Obama Administration cancelled the Bush Administration's missile defense plan, Poland agreed to host an Aegis Ashore site, a part of the Obama Administration's new European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA), a regional missile defense plan for Europe. Missile defense negotiations between the two countries were less

²⁷ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2007" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2007), 2008, p. 4, available at <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocní-zpravy/2007-vz-cz.pdf>; and Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2008" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2008), 2009, op. cit., p. 5.

²⁸ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2009" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2009), op. cit., 5, and Czech Security and Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2014" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2014), 2015, p. 10, available at <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocní-zpravy/2014-vz-cz.pdf>.

²⁹ Ondřej Kundra, Jaroslav Spurný, "Za výbuchem muničního skladu ve Vrbětčích stojí ruští agenti, kteří se pokusili zabít Skripala" (Russian Agents that Tried to Kill Skripal behind Vrbetice Munitions Depot Attack), *Respekt*, April 17, 2021, available at <https://www.respekt.cz/agenda/za-vybuchem-municniho-skladu-ve-vrbeticich-stoji-rusti-agenti-keri-se-pokusili-zabit-skripala>.

³⁰ Radoslaw Sikorski, "Remarks at the Atlantic Council," *Transcript*, November 19, 2008, available at <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/commentary/transcript/transcript-polish-foreign-minister-radoslaw-sikorski-talks-to-council/>.

controversial in Poland than they were in the Czech Republic and enjoyed relatively broader political support. The missile defense agreement entered into force in September 2011.³¹ Poland and the United States broke the ground on a missile defense site near the Redzikowo military base in a joint ceremony in May 2016.³² The ceremony marked a milestone toward the completion of the EPAA's Phase 3, which was expected in the 2018 timeframe.³³ But the completion of the Redzikowo missile defense site has not been without challenges and the site is still not operational.

In March 2013, then-Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel cancelled the last phase of the EPAA, which involved deploying long-range missile defense interceptors.³⁴ The Russian Federation objected to this part most. Following the cancellation, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said that it "is not a concession to Russia, nor do we regard it as such," and that "all aspects of strategic uncertainty related to the creation of a US and NATO missile defense system remain. Therefore, our objections also remain."³⁵

In addition to participating in the EPAA, Poland has pursued other air and missile defense efforts—driven by Russia's belligerent foreign policy, its direct threats against Poland, and by Poland being within range of Russia's vast missile arsenal (both conventional and nuclear). Poland announced its intent to spend as much as \$4.75 billion on a mix of missile and air defense systems, including the purchase of a U.S. Patriot PAC-3 system.³⁶ According to the U.S. Department of State, "Poland jointly hosts the NATO Multinational Corps and Division Northeast Headquarters," "units from a rotational U.S. Armored Combat Brigade Team, Combat Aviation Brigade, and a NATO enhanced Forward Presence battalion (with the United States as the framework partner)."³⁷ Poland also hosts a U.S. Aviation Component and a component of MQ-9 unmanned aerial vehicles, among others.³⁸ Poland facilitated joint military exercises and will likely continue to do so. In 2021, Poland decided to buy 250 Abrams tanks, pushing the value of U.S.-Polish military cooperation to about \$6 billion.³⁹

³¹ Lukasz Kulesa, "Poland and Missile Defense: The Limits of Atlanticism," Institut Français des Relations Internationales, 2014, pp. 19-20, available at <https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/pp48kulesa.pdf>.

³² U.S. Missile Defense Agency, "U.S. and Poland Break Ground On Aegis Ashore Site In Poland," *Press Release*, May 13, 2016, available at <http://www.defense-aerospace.com/articles-view/release/3/173831/us,-poland-break-ground-on-aegis-ashore-site-in-poland.html>.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ "US scraps final phase of European missile shield," *BBC News*, March 16, 2013, available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-21812161>.

³⁵ Fred Weir, "US drops Europe missile defense plan – but Moscow is unimpressed," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 18, 2013, available at <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2013/0318/US-drops-Europe-missile-defense-plan-but-Moscow-is-unimpressed>.

³⁶ Matthew Kroenig, "Poland's Missile Defenses are Critical for the Defense of Europe," *Defence24.com*, August 19, 2019, available at <https://www.defence24.com/polands-missile-defenses-are-critical-for-the-defense-of-europe-opinion>.

³⁷ U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Relations with Poland," *Factsheet*, January 20, 2021, available at <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-poland/>.

³⁸ For a complete list, see Polish Ministry of National Defense, "Increasing the U.S. Military Presence in Poland," <https://www.gov.pl/web/national-defence/increasing-the-us-military-presence-in-poland>.

³⁹ "Poland to buy 250 U.S. tanks as it seeks to beef up defenses," *Reuters*, July 14, 2021, available at <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/poland-buy-250-us-tanks-it-seeks-beef-up-defences-2021-07-14/>.

Russian Influence Operations Methods in Poland

Poland “has become one of the most important targets of Russia’s state-funded information machinery.”⁴⁰ Blatantly pro-Russian narratives do not find much support in Polish society because of Polish fears over Russian expansion into the country grounded in Poland’s historical experience.⁴¹ Together with the Baltic Republics, Poland is at the forefront of NATO’s efforts to treat the threat that the Russian Federation presents to NATO seriously. To counter or moderate some of the anti-Russian sentiments, Russia tries to use pan-Slavic philosophy. Pan-Slavism is a 19th-century, relatively popular, idea that people with a common ethnic background in Central and Eastern Europe ought to unite to achieve political and cultural goals.⁴² Russia, of course, would be a leader of these Slavic countries and a counter to the West’s “malign” influence.

Poland’s fears are shaped by two significant historical factors that are ingrained in Polish strategic culture: (1) the Russian/Soviet partition of Poland, first in 1772, 1793, and 1795, and then the Soviet annexation of Poland in cooperation with Germany on September 17, 1939; and (2) the Soviet occupation of Poland during the Cold War.⁴³ The Soviet Union committed atrocities against Poland, including killing almost 22,000 of its military officers and intelligentsia in what became known as the Katyn massacre.

The Soviets denied responsibility for the Katyn massacre until after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power, have yet to disclose pertinent historical documents to Poland, and have never agreed to classify the action as a war crime or a mass murder.⁴⁴ Correspondingly, the Polish government “has consistently conditioned the improvement of relations with Moscow on the condemnation of Soviet crimes committed against the Poles.”⁴⁵ Russia, on the other hand, is in the habit of reinterpreting history to serve Putin’s agenda, which does not permit any doubt about Russia’s “greatness” in defeating the Nazi Germany.

Unlike a majority in the Czech Republic, the Poles actively resisted the Soviets throughout the Cold War. The Solidarity movement, a trade union founded in 1980, contributed to spreading anti-communist and pro-western ideas in the Eastern bloc in 1980s and is credited with being one of the main factors that led to ending communist rule in Poland. Its first president, Lech Wałęsa, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983 and became Poland’s first freely elected head of state in over 60 years when he won the Polish presidential

⁴⁰ Stanisław Żaryn, “How Poland Views the Kremlin’s Creeping Aggression,” *Washington Examiner*, January 2, 2019, available at <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/op-eds/how-poland-views-the-kremlins-creeping-aggression>.

⁴¹ Péter Krekó et. al., “The Weaponization of Culture: Kremlin’s Traditional Agenda and the Export of Values to Central Europe,” Political Capital Institute, August 4, 2016, p. 8, available at https://www.politicalcapital.hu/wp-content/uploads/PC_reactionary_values_CEE_20160727.pdf.

⁴² Vladislava Vojtišková, Vít Novotný, Hubertus Schmid-Schmidfelden and Kristina Potapova, “The Bear in Scheep’s Clothing,” *Wolfgang Martens Centre for European Studies*, 2016, p. 25, available at https://www.martenscentre.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/russia-gongos_0.pdf.

⁴³ Łukasz Wenerski and Michał Kaciewicz, “Russian Soft Power in Poland,” Political Capital Institute, April 2017, p. 13, available at https://www.politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC_NED_country_study_PL_20170428.pdf.

⁴⁴ Katarzyna Utracka, “The Katyn Massacre – Mechanisms of Genocide,” *The Warsaw Institute Review*, May 18, 2020, available at <https://warsawinstitute.review/issue-2020/the-katyn-massacre-mechanisms-of-genocide/>.

⁴⁵ Igor Gretskiy, “Poland and Russia: The Conflict of Incompatible Identities,” *Riddle*, November 26, 2018, available at <https://www.ridl.io/en/poland-and-russia-a-conflict-of-incompatible-identities/>.

elections in 1990. This historical experience gives Poland a degree of resilience against Russia's influence operations—and, important for the topic of this research, shows it is not easily replicable in other countries.

On the other hand, Poland was a part of the Warsaw Pact and a portion of its government and intelligence services were reportedly penetrated with Russian agents. Even President Wałęsa has not avoided controversy over whether he accepted money in return for reporting on his colleagues to the Polish secret service in the 1970s.⁴⁶ Poland reportedly sought a “zero option” of building its intelligence services from scratch after the fall of the Soviet Union and did not have enough qualified people to run them, which necessitated keeping people from the previous regime in place, potentially leaving Poland vulnerable to exploitation and penetration by adversaries. All former Soviet republics faced this challenge and tackled it with varying degrees of success.

Russia's goals in Poland were to secure Russia's economic interest, maintain political influence, and prevent significant geopolitical changes.⁴⁷ Russia's activities on Poland's territory include efforts to stir-up Polish-Ukrainian animosities (and therefore strip the Ukrainian government of as much Polish government support as possible), raise questions about the Polish government's historical policy, and replace historical narratives with pro-Russian versions.⁴⁸ But Russian activities can include acts of political sabotage and can involve kinetic actions that are intended to impact other allied states.⁴⁹ For example, a Polish far-right activist was reportedly hired to burn down a Hungarian cultural center in Uzhorod, Ukraine, and make it look as though Ukrainian nationalists were responsible.⁵⁰ Uzhorod has a large Hungarian minority and the act contributed to increasing tensions among the two countries—to the benefit of Russia. Russia also reportedly simulated a nuclear attack on Poland during its military exercises.⁵¹

Personal connections between Russian agents and Polish politicians, businessmen, and intelligence officers have proven critical to advance Russia's interests. In 1997, then-Interior Minister Zbigniew Siemiatkowski warned of increasing Russian penetration of Polish political and business circles, which led to efforts to strengthen the reliability of the Polish

⁴⁶ Carla Bleiker, “Former Polish President Walesa Did Help Secret Police, experts say,” *DW.com*, January 31, 2017, available at <https://www.dw.com/en/former-polish-president-walesa-did-help-secret-police-experts-say/a-37344633>.

⁴⁷ Artur Gruszczak, “The Polish Intelligence Services,” 2009, Research Gate, p. 140, available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241032145_The_Polish_Intelligence_Services.

⁴⁸ Stanisław Żaryn, “Poland's Internal Security Service is critical to hunting down spies,” *Defense News*, December 2, 2019, available at <https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/commentary/2019/12/02/polands-internal-security-service-is-critical-to-hunting-down-spies/>.

⁴⁹ Stanisław Żaryn, “Russia's Hybrid Warfare Toolkit Has More to Offer than Propaganda,” *Defense News*, August 9, 2019, available at <https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/commentary/2019/08/09/russias-hybrid-warfare-toolkit-has-more-to-offer-than-propaganda/>.

⁵⁰ Shaun Walker, Christian Davies, and Emily Schultheis, “Polish Far-Right Trial Raises Spectre of ‘False Flag’ Tactics,” *The Guardian*, January 27, 2019, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/27/polish-far-right-trial-raises-spectre-of-false-flag-tactics-german-journalist-russia-ukraine-fire-court>.

⁵¹ Stephen Blank, “Moscow Pulls Back the Curtain on Zapad 2013,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 10, Issue 118 (June 21, 2013), <https://jamestown.org/program/moscow-pulls-back-the-curtain-on-zapad-2013/>; and Dylan Malyasov, “Russian Army Carries Out Mock Nuclear Attack on American Troops in Poland,” *Defense Blog*, September 20, 2021, <https://defence-blog.com/russian-army-carries-out-mock-nuclear-attack-on-american-troops-in-poland/>.

intelligence community, left largely intact after the fall of the Soviet Union.⁵² Attempts to rebuild the community from scratch were abandoned due to a lack of trained professionals.

In 2005, the Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość or PiS)-led government disbanded the Military Intelligence Service (Wojskowe Służby Informacyjne or WSI) on account of the agency's penetration by Russian interests, replaced it with two separate intelligence and counterintelligence agencies, and populated these two new agencies with PiS's own relatively inexperienced people.⁵³ In February 2007, President Lech Kaczyński (PiS) released a report on the dissolution of the WSI, which revealed previously classified and personal data of top Polish intelligence officers, effectively making it impossible for them to continue doing their jobs.⁵⁴ The stated rationale behind the step was to rid the intelligence community of Russian influence. The step was controversial in Poland. While some praised it as a step toward a more trustworthy intelligence community, others alleged that the step was politically motivated and done mainly with the purpose of strengthening the PiS's hold on the government.⁵⁵

Poland has viewed negatively the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014.⁵⁶ Polish foreign policy has traditionally been oriented toward helping Ukraine integrate into the West, with the implicit intent of creating a buffer between Poland and Russia. Russia's continued disregard for Ukraine's sovereignty and support for the separatist movement is viewed negatively by Warsaw. Following Russia's invasion, Poland suspended many cooperative endeavors with Russia and has remained one of the most vocal supporters of Ukraine internationally.

Polish-Russian relations, strained by Russia's invasion of Georgia, took a further hit in 2010 when an airplane carrying 96 high-level Polish government officials and dignitaries, including President Lech Kaczyński and his wife, crashed near Smolensk in Russia on the way to commemorate the anniversary of the Katyn massacre.⁵⁷ While a joint Polish-Russian investigation concluded that the Polish crew bore most of the responsibility for the crash, the Polish side rejected Russia's attempts to pin all the blame on Poland, for example arguing that Russia's controllers contributed to the accident by giving the Polish crew wrong information about their location.⁵⁸ Polish investigators had been objecting to Russia's obstructionism with respect to returning the aircraft's wreckage and black boxes.⁵⁹ The Russian side has claimed that it cannot return the wreckage while the investigation is still ongoing.⁶⁰

⁵² Artur Gruszczyk, "The Polish Intelligence Services," 2009, op. cit., p. 140.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 131.

⁵⁴ Loc. cit.

⁵⁵ Edmund Janniger, "Polish Spy Agencies Had Russian Moles," *Politico*, November 6, 2015, available at <https://www.politico.eu/article/polish-spy-agencies-had-russian-moles-antoni-macierewicz-pis-kaczynski-government/>.

⁵⁶ Wenerski and Kaciewicz, "Russian Soft Power in Poland," op. cit., p. 13.

⁵⁷ Loc. cit.

⁵⁸ Marcin Sobczyk, "Poland Faults Its Pilots for Crash but Implicates Russia," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 30, 2011, available at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424053111904800304576475660195378844>.

⁵⁹ "Smoleńsk Plane Crash Wreckage to Be Examined by US Experts," *Poland In*, October 28, 2019, available at <https://polandin.com/45053521/smolensk-plane-crash-wreckage-to-be-examined-by-us-experts>.

⁶⁰ Then-President Dmitry Medvedev put then-Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in charge of the investigation.

The Smolensk tragedy has contributed to a substantive polarization within the Polish political spectrum, with some politicians accusing others of being Russian agents collaborating with Putin and participating in the tragedy's cover-up.⁶¹ It also reportedly led to trivialization of discussions about Russia's interference and influence operations campaign.⁶² This is one of the examples of Russia using a politically charged issue to introduce mistrust into the Polish political process and undermine Polish democratic institutions. As long as Russia's goals are being advanced, it does not matter whether groups or actors executing influence operations are openly affiliated with it. In fact, in the case of Poland, it is considered better for Moscow that the potential connections not be known—increasing the importance of counterintelligence activities that can shed light on precisely these types of linkages.

Only a few openly pro-Russian actors and web sites produce pro-Russian content in Poland. Most people know who they are and do not find their activities particularly convincing or effective. It also makes it easier to keep them under surveillance. The danger comes mostly from disinformation from websites that they operate finding its way to mainstream media without attributing this information to a source sympathetic or otherwise affiliated with Russia.⁶³ Most Polish politicians are careful to avoid appearing on Russian media operating in Poland (such as RT or Sputnik) to avoid giving them added credibility.⁶⁴

Nevertheless, Russia has been able to capitalize on increasing polarization within the Polish political spectrum.⁶⁵ The Russian Federation indirectly utilizes selected pro-Russian political organizations and some nationalistic organizations to spread disinformation in Poland with a broader objective of undermining the public's trust in Polish democratic institutions and the public's positive perceptions of the United States (and NATO) as viable security partners.⁶⁶

Since Russia cannot obtain significant direct influence in Poland, its activities focus on exploiting historic animosities among Poland, Ukraine and Lithuania, as well as undermining the view of NATO as a viable security partner.⁶⁷ Russia also employs several other narratives "aimed at indirect subversion of the consensus, and at encouraging social discord."⁶⁸ Experts flagged several of these as particularly effective for these purposes: assertions that the West is morally bankrupt, anti-immigration and anti-Muslim messages, narratives that overemphasize historical animosity between Poland and Ukraine, and the already mentioned narratives around the Smolensk tragedy.⁶⁹

⁶¹ Cardena, Kucharczyk, Mesežnikov, and Pleschová, "Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence," op. cit., p. 95, available at <https://www.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Sharp-Power-Rising-Authoritarian-Influence-Full-Report.pdf>.

⁶² Loc. cit.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 103.

⁶⁴ Loc. cit.

⁶⁵ Stanford Internet Observatory, "Poland: Presidential Election 2020 Scene-Setter," January 28, 2020, available at <https://cyber.fsi.stanford.edu/io/news/poland-scene-setter>.

⁶⁶ Krekó et. al., "The Weaponization of Culture: Kremlin's Traditional Agenda and the Export of Values to Central Europe," August 4, 2016, op. cit., p. 10.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 50.

⁶⁸ Cardena, Kucharczyk, Mesežnikov, and Pleschová, "Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence," op. cit., p. 100.

⁶⁹ Ibid, pp. 100-101.

Marches and protests against the United States, NATO, and the EU are among the most important events organized by pro-Russian influence networks in Poland.⁷⁰ Since Russia's annexation of Crimea, rallies against the Ukrainian government in support of Russia-supported separatists are Russia's other target.⁷¹ They generate a measure of visibility that Russia can take advantage of for its own domestic propaganda purposes. But perhaps a more effective way in which the Russian Federation can influence how it is perceived in Poland is through cultural exchanges, concerts, language classes organized by the Russian embassy, and music festivals.⁷² These events also serve the function of obtaining contacts that might prove useful in the furtherance of Russia's future goals because they generally tend to be attended by people who are likely to view Russia more positively than the general population.

Russia's other avenue of attack thrives on the fact that a large majority of Poles (as many as 87 percent) are Roman-Catholics.⁷³ Russia's propaganda portrays the West as a decadent actor threatening a traditional way of life, economy, and statehood.⁷⁴ Russia's anti-LGBT policies strike a particular chord among Poland's more conservative population.⁷⁵ Russia feeds on anti-Muslim and anti-immigration narratives promulgated by Poland's right-wing parties, including the PiS.⁷⁶ These narratives are not imported and implanted in Russia, rather they are organic to Polish society given its traditional values. Russia is merely taking advantage of existing widespread opinions.

U.S.-ROMANIAN MISSILE DEFENSE COOPERATION

Romania decided to participate in the EPAA in February 2010 by hosting an Aegis Ashore site.⁷⁷ Negotiations on the agreement with Romania commenced on June 17, 2010, and took seven rounds to complete.⁷⁸ The Deveselu Air Base in Romania was selected as a suitable location for the Aegis Ashore missile defense system.⁷⁹ The United States and Romania

⁷⁰ Krekó et. al., "The Weaponization of Culture: Kremlin's Traditional Agenda and the Export of Values to Central Europe," op. cit., p. 59.

⁷¹ Yaroslav Shimov and Aleksy Dzikawicki, "E-Mail Hack Gives Glimpse Into Russia's Influence Drive In Eastern Europe," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, March 11, 2017, available at <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-e-mail-hack-belarusian-usorsky-piskorski-dugin/28363888.html>.

⁷² Cardena, Kucharczyk, Mesežnikov, and Pleschová, "Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence," op. cit., p. 105.

⁷³ "Poland: Population: Demographic Situation, Languages and Religions," *European Commission Eurydice*, March 4, 2021, available at https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/population-demographic-situation-languages-and-religions-56_en.

⁷⁴ Salome Samadashvili, "Muzzling the Bear—Strategic Defence for Russia's Undeclared Information War on Europe," *Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies*, June 2015, p. 39, available at https://www.martenscentre.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/russia-gongos_0.pdf.

⁷⁵ Carlie Porterfield, "Anti-LGBTQ Rhetoric Is Ramping Up In Eastern Europe, Human Rights Advocates Say," *Forbes*, June 10, 2020, available at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/carlieporterfield/2020/06/10/anti-lgbtq-rhetoric-is-ramping-up-in-eastern-europe-human-rights-advocates-say/?sh=6425bfe231ee>.

⁷⁶ Cardena, Kucharczyk, Mesežnikov, and Pleschová, "Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence," op. cit., p. 95.

⁷⁷ Kristen Chick, "Romania Agrees to Host US Missile Interceptors," *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 5, 2010, available at <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/terrorism-security/2010/0205/Romania-agrees-to-host-US-missile-interceptors>.

⁷⁸ Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Romania's Participation in the Missile Defense System," available at <https://www.mae.ro/en/node/2161>.

⁷⁹ U.S. Department of State, "Ballistic Missile Defense Agreement Between the United States of America and Romania," *Factsheet*, September 13, 2011, accessed February 2, 2021, available at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/09/172258.htm>.

signed an agreement on the deployment of a missile defense system to Romania two years after the Obama Administration cancelled the Bush Administration's missile defense plan, in September 2011.⁸⁰ The agreement faced no significant opposition in the Romanian Parliament and was ratified on December 6, 2011.⁸¹ It entered into force on December 23, 2011.⁸²

While the agreement on deployment of a missile defense system was signed quickly, negotiations about its implementation details continued between 2012 and 2013.⁸³ Five implementing agreements were signed in July 2011.⁸⁴ Six additional implementing agreements were signed between December 2012 and July 2013.⁸⁵ Despite the cancellation of the SM-3 Block IIB interceptors, the Obama Administration started to implement the EPAA and the Deveselu site was operationally certified in May 2016.⁸⁶ It has continued operating without major issues since then.

Russian Influence Operations Methods in Romania

Russia has a long history of exercising its influence in Romania, although Romania sees the Russian Federation as a threat.⁸⁷ The successors of Romanian communists retained power in the country even after the end of the Cold War and did not reform until 2000, although they were not directly beholden to Moscow.⁸⁸ Even during the Cold War, the Romanian dictatorship preserved a measure of independence from the Soviet communists, winning the regime some positive attention from the West. This pragmatically independent streak carried over to Romania's post-Cold War regimes. The Nicolae Ceaușescu dictatorship was replaced by the "soft" authoritarian rule of Ion Iliescu, who wanted to uphold the appearance of formal democracy.⁸⁹ Iliescu remained in power until 1996 (and then came back after elections in 2000).

The 1996 democratically elected government wanted to integrate into Western political and military structures and took the first steps to do so. The effort was rather unwelcomed

⁸⁰ U.S. Department of State, "U.S.-Romania Agreement on the Deployment of Missile Defense," September 13, 2011, available at <https://fas.org/irp/world/romania/bmd2011.pdf>.

⁸¹ Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Questions and Answers Regarding Romania's Participation in the US Ballistic Missile Defense System | Ministry of Foreign Affairs," accessed February 6, 2021, available at <https://www.mae.ro/en/node/2162?page=5>.

⁸² Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Romania's Participation in the Missile Defense System," op. cit.

⁸³ U.S. Missile Defense Agency, "Agreement Between the United States of America and Romania on the Deployment of the United States Ballistic Missile Defense System in Romania," October 3, 2013, available at <https://photos.state.gov/libraries/romania/231771/PDFs/Deveselu-Agreement-English.pdf>.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ U.S. Department of Defense, "Work Helps to Inaugurate Ballistic Missile Defense Site in Romania," May 12, 2016, available at <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/758307/work-helps-to-inaugurate-ballistic-missile-defense-site-in-romania/>.

⁸⁷ Marcin Zaborowski, "Central European Security: History and Geography Matter," *NATO Defense College Policy Brief*, May 7, 2021, p. 4, available at https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep29575.pdf?ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3A618559717f2aa16e878c602d35b47ab4.

⁸⁸ Theodor Tudoroiu, "From Spheres of Influence to Energy Wars: Russian Influence in Post-Communist Romania," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (August 14, 2008), p. 388, available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13523270802267922>.

⁸⁹ Loc. cit.

by the Russian Federation, which was used to a friendly regime in Bucharest; a regime that, by and large, acted in accordance with Russia's interests. The change in political winds prompted Russia to exercise effort and spend resources to regain the influence it had previously from Romania's pro-Soviet elites without significant effort.⁹⁰ But democratic parties lost in the 2000 elections to the successor to Romania's Communist Party, the Social Democracy Party of Romania, due to corruption, political infighting and inability to pass economic reforms that would revive Romania's economy. Iliescu won the presidential race.⁹¹

Iliescu signed a Russian-Romanian Treaty on Friendly Relations and Cooperation, which he did not manage to do in his other term.⁹² The two countries signed a few other cooperative agreements.⁹³ After the signing ceremony, Russian President Putin made clear that he was particularly interested in cooperation in Romania's energy sector, machine building, metallurgy, light industry, foodstuffs and transport infrastructure spheres.⁹⁴ In parallel, Romania's efforts to join NATO and the EU continued. Russia was significantly concerned with these efforts but ultimately was unable to stop them. Romania joined NATO in 2004 and the EU in 2007.

Romania is one of the EU's least energy-dependent states due to its large domestic gas and oil reserves.⁹⁵ The Russian Federation has been intent on expanding its influence over Romania's energy and transportation sector, particularly by purchasing and increasing its share in Romania's energy companies. Russia likely tried to exercise influence to that effect over Romania's government representatives. Moreover, the Russian Federation does not appear hesitant to involve itself in Romania's domestic politics, including by covertly supporting organized protests.⁹⁶

Corruption has been a persistent problem in Romania, and has given Russia another means to influence events in the country to its liking.⁹⁷ Romania ranks 69th in Transparency International's annual Corruption Perception Index, among the lowest ranking in the EU.⁹⁸ In a survey, 20 percent of public service users "paid a bribe in the previous 12 months."⁹⁹ Personal connections and networks are an important enabling factor for bribery. This is not

⁹⁰ Loc. cit.

⁹¹ "Romania After the 2000 Elections: Background and Issues for Congress," *Congressional Research Service Report for Congress*, No. RS20886, April 12, 2001, pp. 1 and 3, available at https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20010412_RS20886_185752dfe4b5fbf902aab902be12b86e57703dea.pdf.

⁹² Eugen Tomiuc, "Romania/Russia: Political Treaty Sealed After Decade Of Uneasy Relations," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, May 6, 2003, available at <https://www.rferl.org/a/1103137.html>.

⁹³ News release, "A Russian-Romanian Summit Was Held in the Kremlin," Office of the President of Russia, July 4, 2003, available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/28969>.

⁹⁴ "Press Statement and Answers to Questions at a Press Conference Following Russian-Romanian Talks," *Office of the President of Russia*, July 4, 2003, available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22046>.

⁹⁵ Felix Heilmann et al., "The Political Economy of Energy in Central and Eastern Europe: Supporting the Net Zero Transition," *The E3G Report*, 2020, p. 26, available at www.jstor.org/stable/resrep21847.

⁹⁶ Tudoroiu, "From Spheres of Influence to Energy Wars: Russian Influence in Post-Communist Romania," op. cit., p. 398.

⁹⁷ Jim Compton, "The Struggle for Civil Society in Post-Revolution Romania," *The Seattle Times*, October 22, 2006, available at <https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/the-struggle-for-civil-society-in-post-revolution-romania/>.

⁹⁸ *Corruption Perceptions Index*, "Romania," Transparency International, 2020, available at <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/romania#>.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

so different from personal connections through which Russian agents can spread Russia's disinformation and propaganda.

The 2008 "Activity Report" produced by the Romanian Intelligence Service (Serviciul Român de Informații or SRI) stated that one of its operational priorities is "protecting classified national information from unauthorized breach attempts by foreign intelligence services (non-EU/NATO, mostly *Eastern*)."¹⁰⁰ (Emphasis added.) This was the only geographically explicit mention of other states' intelligence activities on Romanian territory in SRI reports between 2008 and 2011. It likely had to do with the SRI's investigation of one Bulgarian and one Romanian spy who sold intelligence information to Ukrainian officials (and possibly to other countries, including Russia).¹⁰¹

The reports indicate the SRI's larger concern with potential terrorist activities, illegal immigration, corruption, and with improving the service's image among the Romanian population—an understandable goal given the Romanian intelligence services' rather complicated relationship with Romania's civil and democratic society.¹⁰² The 2012 "Activity Report" mentioned other states' "espionage" activities in connection with Romania's participation "in setting up the U.S. anti-missile shield (by hosting on the national territory some of its components)" and mentioned that these actions placed Romania "under the scrutiny of players with divergent interests."¹⁰³ The report also listed as one of its priorities for 2013, "hostile" activities of "certain intelligence services."¹⁰⁴ The SRI did not publicly name which countries' intelligence activities it was worried about, although it is reasonable to assume that Russia would be one of the priorities.¹⁰⁵

Since Russia's 2014 invasion of Ukraine, Romania has grown more concerned with Russia's intelligence (and other potentially adversarial) activities on its territory and its intelligence services have become more involved in countering them.¹⁰⁶ Romania's 2020 *National Defense Strategy* states that: "*The attitude and actions of the Russian Federation carried out in violation of international law lead to continued and extended divergences with a number of Western and NATO states and, represents a serious obstacle to identifying viable solutions for stability and predictability of the security environment.*"¹⁰⁷ (Emphasis in original.)

¹⁰⁰ Romanian Intelligence Service, "Report on the Activity of the Romanian Intelligence Service in 2008," p. 11, available at https://www.sri.ro/assets/files/reports/2008/REPORT_on_the_Activity_of_the_Romanian_Intelligence_Service_in_2008.pdf.

¹⁰¹ Joseph Fitsanakis, "Romania-Ukraine Spy Scandal Turning Into Full Diplomatic Row," *Internews.org*, March 6, 2009, available at <https://intelnews.org/2009/03/06/01-92/>.

¹⁰² On this point, see for example V. G. Baleanu, *The Enemy Within: The Romanian Intelligence Service in Transition* (Camberley, UK: Royal Military College Sandhurst, Conflict Studies Research Centre, 1995), available at <https://fas.org/irp/world/romania/g43.html>.

¹⁰³ Romanian Intelligence Service, "Report on the Activity of the Romanian Intelligence Service in 2012," p. 5, available at https://www.sri.ro/assets/files/reports/2012/REPORT_on_the_Activity_of_the_Romanian_Intelligence_Service_in_2012.pdf.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹⁰⁵ More comprehensive versions of Activity Reports are available for two additional years in Romanian, but they do not appear to mention Russia at all. Activity Reports after 2014 are significantly shorter and lack the comprehensiveness of their previous versions.

¹⁰⁶ "Kremlin Influence in Visegrad Countries and Romania: Overview of the Threat, Existing Countermeasures, and Recommended Next Steps," European Values and Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, October 23, 2017, p. 7, available at <https://www.europeanvalues.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Kremlin-Influence-in-Visegrad-Countries-and-Romania.pdf>.

¹⁰⁷ "National Defense Strategy 2020–2024: Together for a Safe and Prosperous Romania in a World Marked by New

Romania is clearly concerned about differences of opinions on how to address Russia's threat within the EU and NATO. Romania feels threatened by "certain states with regional leadership ambitions" (emphasis in original), and considers "the revival of the strong and assertive policy of some non-Western powers" (emphasis in original) to be "the major variable that will influence the global distribution of power, regional equilibriums and future configuration of the international relations."¹⁰⁸ This listing of Russia as a direct threat was remarkable in that it was the first time since the end of the Cold War that Romania's strategic document described it as such.¹⁰⁹

Romania's *National Defense Strategy* for 2015 to 2019 did not directly label the Russian Federation a threat to Romania, although it mentioned that the relations between NATO and Russia were deteriorating and that Russia's actions "impact" regional stability.¹¹⁰ Romania's 2016 *Military Strategy* considered "the strategic partnership" with the United States "essential."¹¹¹ The 2016 *Military Strategy* was more explicit in calling Russia's actions in the region "destabilizing."¹¹²

Some experts reportedly consider Romania "Russia-proof," or immune to Russia's propaganda.¹¹³ That assessment appears counterintuitive because Romania's political instability and corruption create just the environment in which Russian influence operations thrive. On the other hand, there is no fondness for the Russian Federation in Romania. Romania's public sees Russia as a threat to national security and both countries compete for influence in neighboring Moldova.¹¹⁴

Russia used the issue of stationing a missile defense asset on Romania's territory to advance U.S. and NATO's security at Romania's expense.¹¹⁵ Regardless of Russia's activities, public polls indicate that the United States and U.S.-Romanian missile defense cooperation have enjoyed extensive public support with almost three quarters respondents stating in 2018 that the United States should remain Romania's main strategic partner.¹¹⁶

Russia's influence operations exploit existing societal divisions and tensions. Post-Cold War economic liberalization created as many winners as it did losers, generating swaths of

Challenges," The Presidential Administration, 2020, p. 19, available at https://www.presidency.ro/files/userfiles/National_Defence_Strategy_2020_2024.pdf.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Marcel Gascón Barberá, "Romanian Warning About Russian 'Security Threat' Riles Kremlin," *Balkan Insight*, June 12, 2020, available at <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/06/12/romanian-warning-about-russian-security-threat-riles-kremlin/>.

¹¹⁰ "National Defense Strategy 2015–2019: A Strong Romania within Europe and the World," op. cit., pp. 5 and 13.

¹¹¹ Romania Ministry of National Defence, "The Military Strategy of Romania" (2016), available at https://www.eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/Defence-Procurement-Gateway/ro_milstrategy.pdf.

¹¹² Ibid, p. 8.

¹¹³ Stephen Flanagan and Irina Chindea, "Russia, NATO, and Black Sea Security Strategy: Regional Perspectives from a 2019 Workshop," RAND Corporation, 2019, p. 8, available at https://www.rand.org/pubs/conf_proceedings/CF405.html.

¹¹⁴ Dimitar Bechev, "The Russian Challenge in Southeast Europe," in Mai'a Cross and Paweł Karolewski (eds.), *European-Russian Power Relations in Turbulent Times* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2021), p. 196, available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.10202357.10>.

¹¹⁵ Oana Popescu and Rufin Zamfir (eds.), "Propaganda Made-to-Measure: How Our Vulnerabilities Facilitate Russian Influence," *Global Focus*, February 2018, pp. 25, available at <https://grass.org.ge/uploads/other/2019-02-22/359.pdf>.

¹¹⁶ Flanagan and Chindea, "Russia, NATO, and Black Sea Security Strategy: Regional Perspectives from a 2019 Workshop," op. cit., p. 8; and Irina Marica, "Study: Romanians Are pro-US, Most See Russia as the Greatest Enemy of National Interests," *Romania Insider*, October 29, 2018, available at <https://www.romania-insider.com/study-romanians-pro-us-russia-enemy>.

society dissatisfied with their economic conditions and the personal costs incurred by Romania joining the EU.¹¹⁷ These groups of people happen to share Russia's goals and are easily targeted by tailored messages.¹¹⁸ Russia's influence operations thrive on Romania's clientelist and incompetent public administration.¹¹⁹ Russia actively conceals its operations in Romania.¹²⁰ Its activities in the country were a "source of concern" for the U.S. embassy in Bucharest in 2019.¹²¹ They included attempts to influence local politicians, weaken relations with the West, and delegitimize Romania's electoral system and democratic institutions while presenting Russia as a viable alternative model to that offered by Western democracies.¹²²

Russia maintains a "solid" intelligence presence in Romania, according to Teodor Melescanu, former Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs.¹²³ Mihai Fifor, former Romanian Minister of Defense, stated that there is not "a single day without a challenge" from the Russian Federation, from cyber-attacks to political interference.¹²⁴ The Romanian government is aware of Russia's intelligence activities on its territory. Romania is also a subject of Russia's cyber attacks and political espionage operations.¹²⁵

RECOMMENDATIONS

The United States and its allies do not have to be passive recipients of Russia's influence operations. They can and should take the following steps to counter such activities:

1. **Expose an adversary's influence operations.** Russia's activities are hiding in plain sight. Making public authoritative and comprehensive assessments of Russia's activities on an annual basis would improve the quality of public debate on the issue. The United States and its allies ought regularly to publish comprehensive reports on Russia's influence operations, ideally in multiple languages because transparency is one of the key components of countering Russia's influence operations. For example, the Czech Security Service publishes such annual reports, written in a way that does not compromise intelligence sources and methods but that allows an informed reader

¹¹⁷ Popescu and Zamfir (eds.), "Propaganda Made-to-Measure: How Our Vulnerabilities Facilitate Russian Influence," op. cit., p. 15.

¹¹⁸ Loc. cit.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 18.

¹²⁰ Flanagan and Chindea, "Russia, NATO, and Black Sea Security Strategy: Regional Perspectives from a 2019 Workshop," p. 8, and Marica, "Study: Romanians Are pro-US, Most See Russia as the Greatest Enemy of National Interests."

¹²¹ "Russia Wants to Divide Romanian Society," Warsaw Institute blog, February 27, 2019, <https://warsawinstitute.org/russia-wants-divide-romanian-society/>.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ "Foreign Affairs Minister: Russian Espionage, Present in Romania," *Romania Insider*, April 2, 2018, available at <https://www.romania-insider.com/russian-espionage-present-romania>.

¹²⁴ Irina Marica, "Romanian Defense Minister: I Don't Think There's a Single Day without a Challenge from Russia," *Romania Insider*, June 26, 2018, available at <https://www.romania-insider.com/defense-minister-challenge-russia>.

¹²⁵ Chris Bing, "Russia-linked hackers impersonate NATO in attempt to hack Romanian government," *Cyberscoop*, May 11, 2017, <https://www.cyberscoop.com/dnc-hackers-impersonated-nato-attempt-hack-romanian-government/>; and Marcel Gascón Barberá, "Romania: From 'Hackerville' to Cybersecurity Powerhouse," *BalkanInsight*, March 27, 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/03/27/romania-from-hackerville-to-cybersecurity-powerhouse/>.

to develop a picture of hostile actors' activities in allied countries. The United States can do much to shed light on Russia's activities in allied countries, not just through government circles but also by supporting U.S. or local nonprofit organizations.¹²⁶ The Department of State's Global Engagement Center (GEC)—specifically set up to recognize, understand, expose, and counter foreign propaganda and information—contributed to this effort by publishing a report on Russia's disinformation in August 2020 and January 2022.¹²⁷ But two reports are not enough. The Administration should make more of GEC's work publicly available.

2. **Know your enemy—and your ally.** Over six decades ago, U.S. strategist Herman Kahn made the following observation about U.S. arms control negotiations: “[W]e must do our homework. We must know what we are trying to achieve, the kinds of concessions that we can afford to give, and the kinds of concessions that we insist on getting.... All of this will require, among other things, much higher quality preparations for negotiations than have been customary.”¹²⁸ The observation about the necessity of increasing the quality of the U.S. government's preparation for negotiations is applicable to other areas of U.S. diplomacy. Russia's influence operations in allied countries are aimed at advancing Russia's interests, which are fundamentally incompatible with U.S. goals. To understand how the Russian Federation operates, the United States must not only better understand Russia's influence operations, but also the modalities of the environment in which Russia conducts its business.
3. **Increase transparency.** The Russian Federation's influence operations are conducted by a variety of intelligence services. Counterintelligence is a critical component of revealing and disrupting them and making the public aware of foreign manipulation. Not all disclosures of Russia's activities have to be made public—as long as they are securely shared with allies. The United States should not think about Russia's intelligence activities and influence operations as two separate activities; rather they represent a continuum. Especially in Poland and Romania, the Russian Federation goes the extra mile to conceal its activities—because they would lose their potency once it was revealed they originated in Russia. Additionally, the degree of transparency ought to be increased in the nonprofit sector in allied countries.¹²⁹ Many nonprofits do not have to reveal sources of their funding. Unless they are conducting illegal activities, it would not be proper to try to restrict their activities. The goal is to

¹²⁶ For an example of a good non-government product contributing to transparency see Heather Conley et al., “The Kremlin Playbook,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, October 13, 2016, available at <https://www.csis.org/analysis/kremlin-playbook> and its second iteration from March 2019 that can be found at https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/190326_KP2.pdf.

¹²⁷ U.S. Department of State, “GEC Special Report: Russia's Pillars of Disinformation and Propaganda,” August 2020, available at <https://www.state.gov/russias-pillars-of-disinformation-and-propaganda-report/>; and U.S. Department of State, “GEC Special Report: Kremlin-Funded Media: RT and Sputnik's Role in Russia's Disinformation and Propaganda Ecosystem,” January 2022, available at https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Kremlin-Funded-Media_January_update-19.pdf.

¹²⁸ Herman Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2007), p. 576.

¹²⁹ This idea is advanced in Vladislava Vojtíšková, Vít Novotný, Hubertus Schmid-Schmidfelden and Kristína Potapova, “The Bear in Sheep's Clothing,” 2016, op. cit., p. 66.

increase transparency, not limit freedom of speech—an essential component of a democratic society.

4. **Revitalize the U.S. communications and public diplomacy campaign.** The West needs a plan to counter Russia's disinformation narratives. Due to the shared language and cultural heritage between Central and Eastern Europeans and the Russians, these narratives are more appealing to some segments of the population in Central and Eastern Europe. Efforts to counter Russia's disinformation and influence activities were more prevalent during the Cold War. The United States aired its messaging to Soviet citizens and the citizens of captive nations, distributed books that the Soviet Union prohibited, and generated large quantities of public diplomacy material in various languages.¹³⁰ The United States ought to resurrect the United States Information Agency (USIA), a government agency that was responsible for generating U.S. public diplomacy content until its breakup in 1999. The agency's functions were subsumed most recently by the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM, formerly known as the Broadcasting Board of Governors), which runs several entities including the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. The USAGM is not considered a particularly effective successor to its Cold War predecessor.¹³¹ The United States must recognize that the media landscape today is very different from the media landscape during the Cold War and that modern technologies require adaptation of old approaches to new conditions.
5. **Go on the offensive.** The United States and its allies ought to produce material that delegitimizes Vladimir Putin and his regime in the eyes of the Russian population and Russia's sympathizers in allied countries. Russia has many self-generated problems—from widespread corruption to human rights violations to poor living standards for the population—and the Russian government can be put on the defensive. The United States and its allies should try to complicate Russian disinformation efforts, not acquiesce to them.
6. **Build capacities to counter Russian propaganda, disinformation, and influence operations.** The United States has tremendous expertise and advantages in the technology and communication fields that can be used effectively to counter Russia's malign efforts. With its prosperity, rule of law, personal freedom, and individual opportunity, the United States can also offer a much more appealing image for the future than can Vladimir Putin. As former Secretary of Defense James Mattis stated during his confirmation hearing before the Senate, "The power of inspiration of America at times has got to be employed just as strongly."¹³² There is no better time than now to use America's power of inspiration.

¹³⁰ For a brief review of U.S. Cold War public diplomacy activities and their importance see James Critchlow, "Public Diplomacy during the Cold War: The Record and Its Implications," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2004): pp. 75-89, available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26925348>.

¹³¹ Loc. cit.

¹³² Jamie McIntyre, "Top 11 Mattis Quotes from His Senate Confirmation Hearing," *Washington Examiner*, January 12, 2017, available at <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/top-11-mattis-quotes-from-his-senate-confirmation-hearing>.

7. **Create compelling narratives as a part of rollout of strategies and policy announcements.** Important policy announcements must be accompanied by communication roll out strategies that anticipate and preemptively blunt an adversary's counter-narratives. Adversaries should not be allowed to set the terms of the debate. No team wins by being only reactive and defensive.
8. **Strengthen allied cooperation in the area of counterintelligence and countering Russia's influence operations.** The United States has a network of allies that Russia does not have, which provides the United States with strategic and tactical advantages. The United States should leverage its relationships with allies to allow greater information-sharing and closer counterintelligence cooperation. While the Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania cannot apply the same amount of resources to countering Russian disinformation that Russia can to propagating it, cooperating with the United States can help mitigate the disparity.
9. **Do not relativize the threat.** The United States and its allies must be clear eyed about threats to their interests. The absence of well-reasoned arguments that show how the Russian Federation is manipulating narratives about the West will make it more difficult to counter them—as the United States demonstrated with its ill-advised pursuit of the Russia “reset” policy. The Obama Administration's effort to “reset” the relationship with Russia had a chilling effect on allies speaking out about the true nature of Russia's threat until Russia invaded Ukraine and seized Crimea in 2014.
10. **Support local independent journalists and non-government organizations focused on countering influence operations.** New technologies and the new media environment require new ways to address and counter the spread of disinformation and Russian propaganda. They must be tailored to their respective audiences, which requires a deep understanding of the local realities on the ground. That is why the United States and its allies ought to support local independent journalists, even if they are not in support of all U.S. goals and policies.¹³³

CONCLUSION

The most significant tendency is Russia's advancement of very similar strategic goals through its influence operations. Russia wants to undermine target countries' populations' faith in democratic institutions and in the desirability of a relationship with the West and the United States. Russia clearly pursues the goal of undermining democratic institutions as one of its strategic objectives in the United States, too.¹³⁴

¹³³ Thomas Kent, *Striking Back: Overt and Covert Options to Combat Russian Disinformation* (Washington, DC: The Jamestown Foundation, 2020) elaborates on the idea in greater detail.

¹³⁴ See, for example, “Transcript: Fiona Hill and David Holmes Testimony in Front of the House Intelligence Committee,” *The Washington Post*, November 21, 2019, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/11/21/transcript-fiona-hill-david-holmes-testimony-front-house-intelligence-committee/>.

In Central and Eastern Europe, Russia wants to regain influence and offer its governance model as a viable alternative to a Western-style democracy. It wants to weaken NATO and alliance relations so it can advance its own geopolitical goals. It wants to create an image of the United States as an unreliable ally and undermine U.S. relations with the Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania. Russia wants to relativize the truth and inoculate publics in allied countries from an understanding of right and wrong. If the truth is relative, who is to say there is anything worth standing up for or objecting to? Creating such an environment makes the public more susceptible to manipulation and exploitation by Russia's intelligence services.

Russia's second goal, in some ways connected to the first, is to expand its economic influence in countries that used to be a part of the Warsaw Pact. Russia does so particularly in the energy, infrastructure development, and heavy industry sectors where it has some advantages, including knowledge of local laws and culture and familiarity with Soviet legacy systems.¹³⁵ To advance its economic interests, Russia draws on networks of personal connections developed during the Cold War and sustained throughout the 1990s. While the value of the Warsaw Pact era-connections declines with the passage of time, Russia's efforts became particularly vigorous after Putin's ascendance to power when intelligence services obtained additional resources and leadership attention. Russia does not hesitate to bribe regional and state-level government officials and even threaten them with violence. That is a potential problem in the long-run because regional-level politics feeds national politics.

Russia's intelligence operatives do not particularly care whether they stay within the bounds of law of countries in which they function when executing their intelligence and influence operations. In fact, organized crime networks were a key to sustaining Russia's intelligence services' presence in the Czech Republic in the 1990s. On the other hand, based on interviews with regional experts, these networks in Romania did not develop particularly cooperative relations with Russian intelligence services due to the former's general lack of affinity toward Russia.

In the pursuit of Russia's national goals, which include the facilitation of Russia's strategic objectives, including expanding its domination and control of states near Russia's vicinity, Russian intelligence agencies may take on interchangeable functions; for example, Russia's Federal Security Service, a domestic intelligence agency, can and does operate outside of Russia, performing functions that are generally within the purview of Russia's military intelligence service (GRU). This malleability makes it harder to understand Russia's activities. On the other hand, given Russia's strategic culture, it likely contributes to bureaucratic infighting with potential negative effects on the overall efficiency of the system.

The cyber domain has become an important tool of Russia's influence operations and information warfare. The ultimate objective is reflexive control: creating a reality in an adversary's mind so that his decisions would benefit the Russian Federation without him

¹³⁵ These are areas in which the People's Republic of China (PRC) is starting to challenge the Russian Federation. The PRC has much more resources at its disposal than Russia and the competition over influence in what Russia sees its traditional spheres of interest is not welcomed by Moscow.

knowing.¹³⁶ Modern technologies give Russia relatively cheap options for compromising the adversary's software and hardware, obtaining access to critical information, and controlling information in whatever shape it takes.¹³⁷ Disseminating false information is easy and cheap in today's information age and Russia is well positioned to take advantage of the current environment.

The case studies of the Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania illustrate that different strategic cultures matter because an ally's strategic culture will inform the approach that an adversary will choose to achieve his goals (and potentially thwart cooperation with the United States). The way Russia operates in the Czech Republic is different from the way it operates in Romania or Poland, even though the goals it advances are similar. The differences are driven by unique historical experiences with the Soviet Union and the post-Cold war transformation of each of the states for which the Russian Federation must account to maximize its chance of success.

In the battle to counter Russia's influence activities, alliances are the most important advantage that the United States and its allies have. Allies' ability to cooperate on a much deeper level than would be the case among non-allies, particularly on intelligence matters, provides one of the most important synergies that is not available to Russia. While Russia has an intelligence and resources advantage vis-à-vis the Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania, U.S. allies cooperating within a NATO framework or bilaterally and with strong U.S. backing can mitigate that advantage. Improving this cooperation and making it more effective will continue to be a critical element of any future efforts to counter Russia's influence operations.

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¹³⁶ Keir Giles, "The Next Phase of Russian Information Warfare," *NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence*, 2016, p. 4.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 6.

