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RUSSIA'S TROJAN HORSE: A WEAPONZED DIASPORA

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Exercise *Solo Flight*

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INTRODUCTION

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the subsequent declaration of independence by many of its former member states, a Russian diaspora of 25 million people was created, almost over night, without the physical migration of a single person.[1] At the same time "Russia lost control of 52 percent of the Soviet population and 24 percent of Soviet Territory."[2] Early concerns associated with this newly formed diaspora focused on threats to the civic and political rights of the diaspora themselves because the newly established governments were often formed on nationalistic ideologies and the resentment of Soviet rule.[3] Threats to the stability of post-Soviet states, stemming from the Russian diaspora, have since moved closer to the spotlight. As stated by Öncel Sencerman, "…Russia [has] benefited from the Russian population in its neighbouring countries to stir up trouble there and to convince their governments to formulate policies that Moscow appreciates."[4] This has become increasingly evident with Vladimir Putin's rise to power and his intensified efforts to reinforce Russian influence throughout the post-Soviet space.

The creation of the Russian diaspora in the region started with Russian migration during Tsarist Russia in the 16th century and continued until the collapse of the Soviet Union. Russian migration was conducted for several strategic reasons but primarily for the purpose of economic

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[1] Pål Kolstø, "The New Russian Diaspora: Minority Protection in the Soviet Successor States." *Journal of Peace Research* 30, no. 2 (1 May 1993): 197.

[2] Stratfor. "Reassessing the Russian Identity Part 3: The Federations Struggles." Last Modified 28 November 2012. https://www.stratfor.com/article/reassessing-russian-identity-part-3-federations-struggles.

[3] Kristina Kallas, "Claiming the Diaspora: Russia's Compatriot Policy and its Reception by Estonian-Russian Population." *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe: JEMIE* 15, no. 3 (1 July 2016): 4.

[4] Öncel Sencerman, "Russian Diaspora as a Means of Russian Foreign Policy." *Revista De Stiinte Politice* no. 49 (1 Jan 2016): 101.

exploitation of resources and to ensure Russification throughout the region.[5] Russification should be understood as the "enforcement of the Russian language, culture and faith across the Russian empire."[6] Under Soviet rule, Russian people living in the surrounding republics were privileged and enjoyed cultural freedom and the right to operate in their native language. With the collapse of the Soviet Union this reality became questionable. Several Soviet successor states adopted nationalistic ideologies (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Georgia) while others (Belarus, Kazakhstan) maintained closer cultural and political ties with Russia.[7] To address this uncertainty, in 1994 Boris Yeltsin introduced a presidential decree "on the principle directions of the Federation's state policy towards compatriots living abroad"[8] that sought to reassure the protection of the rights of Russians abroad. The concept was not followed up by any tangible action and was primarily used as political rhetoric until the election of Vladimir Putin's as President. In 2001, Putin stressed the idea in his first annual address and later, in 2008, he declared the protection of compatriots abroad as a priority of Russian foreign policy.[9]

A result of Putin's stated priority toward the rights and interests of Russians abroad was the strengthening of the Russkiy Mir (Russian World) concept. According to Kallas, this "signified an identity construction process that took place within Russia, which attempted to overcome the realities of a 'divided nation' and influenced diaspora policies."[10] Putin's new policies were created to reinforce the idea of being Russian as "pro-government, Russian Orthodox, culturally Slavic and against the oligarchs..."[11] Kallas also indicates that the *Russkiy Mir* provides a foundation for Russian policies based on three main elements: "the protection of the rights of compatriots living

[5] Öncel Sencerman, "Russian Diaspora as a Means of Russian Foreign Policy."…, 98.
[6] Stratfor. "Reassessing the Russian Identity Part 3...
[7] Ivan D Loshkariov and Andrey A. Sushentsov, "Radicalization of Russians in Ukraine: From 'Accidental' Diaspora to Rebel Movement." *Southeast European and Black SeaStudies* 16, no. 1 (2 Jan 2016): 75.
[8] Kristina Kallas, "Claiming the Diaspora…", 5.
[9] *Ibid.*
[10] *Ibid.,* 7.
[11] Stratfor. "Reassessing the Russian Identity Part 3…

abroad; support for maintaining ethno-cultural and linguistic identity of compatriots; and development of close ties … with the historical homeland and possible repatriation to Russia."[12] From these concepts, Putin has detailed potential actions Russia could possibly use in the defense of compatriots.[13] While promoted under the auspices of consolidating the Russian diaspora based on language and cultural identity and strengthening their ties to Russia, Putin has deliberately kept the definitions of the 'Russian World' and 'compatriot' ambiguous.[14] He has done this so that they may be employed as tools to justify the use of force against former Soviet states that implement unfavourable geopolitical, political and economic policies that challenge Russia's influence and dominance in the region.[15]

Russia's forceful efforts to gain and maintain its influence within the post-Soviet space are largely based on doctrine promoted by Russian Army Chief of Staff, General Valery Gerasimov. The Gerasimov doctrine is a form of unconventional warfare that requires Russia to leverage all means of national power, including those that are non-military, to achieve the states desired results.[16] Russia has subsequently "adopted not just a whole-of-government, but whole-of-state, approach which sees every aspect of Russian society as having a duty to participate."[17] According to Cockrell, Russia perceives its compatriots living abroad as legally connected to Russia and are therefore a legitimate and useful means of national power.[18] Consequently, in accordance with the Gerasimov's philosophy, the Russian diaspora are employed as agents of

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[12] Kristina Kallas, "Claiming the Diaspora…", 9.
[13] Marlene Laruelle, "The Russian World: Russia's Soft Power and Geopolitical Imagination." *Center on Global Interests* (May 2015): 7.
[14] *Ibid.,* 8.
[15] Kristina Kallas, "Claiming the Diaspora…", 8.
[16] Charles K. Bartles, "Getting Gerasimov Right." *Military Review* 96, no. 1 (Jan 1, 2016): 34.
[17] Mark Galeotti, *Controlling Chaos: How Russia Manages its Political War in Europe*: European Council on Foreign Relations, (2017): 13.
[18] Collins Devon Cockrell, "Russian Actions and Methods Against the United States and NATO." Army University Press, (22 September 2017): 6.

influence "to create viable internal opposition within a state" [19] in order to coerce that state to comply with Russian interests.

Russia sees the use of its diaspora as a legitimate means to influence and coerce former Soviet states to implement pro-Russian policies and, more generally, to maintain its dominance within the post-Soviet space. The aim of this paper is to show how Russia has weaponized its diaspora in order to improve the effectiveness of irregular warfare activities within the post-Soviet space. This paper will highlight the primary methods employed by Russia to weaponize its diaspora and it will use the Clancy and Crossett model for measuring effectiveness in Irregular Warfare to conduct a cursory assessment of the influence Russia's diaspora has had on the effectiveness of its irregular warfare activities.

WEAPONIZING A DIASPORA

Russia's first attempts to maintain influence within the post-Soviet space included the use of large conventional forces, such as in Lithuania in 1991, which demonstrated that the use of conventional military operations against a sovereign state would draw "scrutiny, international pressure, and domestic protest within Russia."[20] However, Russia's control of the Lithuanian Communist Party and the use of Russian operatives to promulgate propaganda and organize protests showed promise in threatening the Lithuanian government's independence from the Soviet Union.[21] During this conflict, Russia learned the utility that its diaspora could provide in support of its objectives. Russia continued to weaponize its diaspora during subsequent conflicts

[19] *Ibid.,* 4-5.
[20] United States Army Special Operations Command, "Little Green Men: A Primer On Modern Russian Unconventional Warfare, Ukraine 2013-2014 (Fort Bragg, North Carolina: USASOC), 10.
[21] *Ibid.,* 9.

in Transnistrria, 1990-1992; Chechnya, 1994-1996; Dagestan and Chechnya, 1999-2009; Georgia, 2008; and Ukraine, 2014. Throughout these conflicts, Russia demonstrated an increased ability to utilize its diaspora to achieve desired results. In order to better understand how Russia has successfully weaponized its diaspora, this paper will explore three methods used by Russia including information operations, soft power instruments, and its irregular forces.

Information Operations

One of the most effective methods employed by Russia to mobilize diaspora are its information operations. The Kremlin has placed a great deal of emphasis on information operations because it has come to appreciate that "post-modern empires are not only created by military means but also by narratives."[22] Russia's information campaign in the post-Soviet space has primarily focused on states that are believed, by Russia, to be those, such as Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, that are divided in their support for further integration with Russia or the West.[23] Russia's narrative is based on the idea of the Russian World, which it uses to directly target diaspora and coerce them to fight based on the promise to be on Russia's side in the future.[24] The concept of the Russian World has been the basis for Russia's legitimacy and ability to wield influence in the region through proxy groups and the associated narrative "encompasses language, culture, history, shared heritage, economic links, religion and conservative values."[25] Therefore, the primary targets of Russian information operations are diaspora groups that have strong ideals and are capable of operating with little more than an

[22] Orysia Lutsevych, "Agents of the Russian World: Proxy Groups in the Contested Neighbourhood." *Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs* (April 2016): 12.

[23] *Ibid*.

[24] Asymmetric Warfare Group, "Russian New Generation Warfare Handbook." ACI Information Group, 15.

[25] Orysia Lutsevych, "Agents of the Russian World…", 8.

endorsement from Russia. The Crimean self-defence groups and separatists in Eastern Ukraine are typical examples of such groups.[26]

The Russian information campaign targets Russian-speaking diaspora scattered throughout the post-Soviet states[27] and includes all means the state has at its disposal, including "politics, economics, social dynamics, military, intelligence, diplomacy, psychological operations, communications, education, and cyber warfare."[28] The Russian approach aims to manipulate the entire information domain and attempts "to create a virtual reality in the conflict zone that either influences perceptions or … replaces actual ground truth with pro-Russian fiction."[29] To appeal to those that identify as Russian, Russia has promoted "itself as a defender of traditional values at home and abroad."[30] Russia alters its narrative to reach as broad an audience as possible. It appeals to the right leaning diaspora by "portraying Russia as the protector of conservative family values while promoting an anti-EU message"[31] and at the same time appeals to those on the left by promoting anti-American and anti-capitalist messages.[32]

State-funded groups such as social media trolls and state television are used to reinforce Russia's narrative and turn information into a weapon by creating confusion, spreading conspiracy theories, and to manipulate opinion.[33] Using all means within the information domain including newspapers, television and internet, Russia has at least three themes to its narrative that are designed to mobilize diaspora groups within the former Soviet states. The first theme is that of a shared culture and history. This narrative is used to reinforce Russia's dominance among the

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[26] Asymmetric Warfare Group, "Russian New Generation Warfare Handbook"…, 15.
[27] United States Army Special Operations Command, "Little Green Men…", 15.
[28] *Ibid*.
[29] *Ibid*.
[30] Orysia Lutsevych, "Agents of the Russian World…", 8.
[31] J. Haaland Matlary and T. Heier (editors). *Ukraine and Beyond*. 1st ed. 2016 ed. DE: Springer Verlag, (2016): 183.
[32] *Ibid.*
[33] Orysia Lutsevych, "Agents of the Russian World…", 13.

post-Soviet states through the creation of its own version of history. The Russian version of history is one that centres on the idea that it is the cradle of an Eastern Slavic civilization that has traditionally fought common cultural threats.[34] Russian media including most types of television programs[35] are available throughout the post-soviet space because most cable providers offer Russian language programming. Due to state control or influence over nearly all its media, Russian language programmes are "strongly political in emphasis, concrete and detailed in terms of their reference and intellectually serious."[36] Therefore, Russian language media often reinforces Putin's narrative of what it is to be *Russkii*, ethnic Russian, and inline with his statement at the 2012 address to the Federal Assembly:

> In order to revive national consciousness, we need to link historical eras and get back to understanding the simple truth that Russia did not begin in 1917, or even in 1991, but rather, that we have a common, continuous history spanning over one thousand years, and we must rely on it to find inner strength and purpose in our national development.[37]

In order to create the historical distortion that supports Putin's narrative, many Russian media outlets receive funding from Rossotrudnichestvo, The Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation. The organization also holds events in Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia and Latvia to promote

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[34] *Ibid.,* 16.

[35] Alexander Bogomolov and Oleksandr Lytvynenko. "A Ghost in the Mirror: Russian Soft Power in Ukraine." *The Royal Institute of International Affairs.* (2012): 12.

[36] James Sherr. "Russia and the West: A Reassessment." *Shrivenham Papers*, No.6, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom (2008): 17.

[37] Vladimir Putin, 12 Dec 2012 President Putin's Address to the Federal Assembly. Last accessed 27 April 2018, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17118.

Russia's version of history.[38] The Ability to promote a consistent narrative through media outlets has provided Russia invaluable influence among the populations of the post-Soviet space.[39]

The second theme of the Russian information campaign uses to mobilize Russian diaspora is the threat posed by the supposed existence of fascism. Russian media has effectively painted the threat of fascism among the former Soviet states. It was evident in "Ukrainian Crimea, where Ethnic Russians, alarmed by the fascist in Kiev that they see on Russian media, have embraced Moscow as their saviour."[40] The Russian generated narrative of a fascist revival has had a particular re-emergence since 2011 in order to discredit Ukraine and the Baltic states as well as generate and strengthen pro-Russian networks abroad, including the Russian diaspora. Russia made full use of this rhetoric in its attempts to discredit the Euromaidan protests and the Ukrainian leadership that replaced pro-Russian government under Viktor Yanukovych.[41] The anti-fascist narrative of the Crimean Tartar protests was a key element in Russia's ability to establish legitimacy for the annexation of Crimea.[42]

A third theme of the Russian information campaign is the promotion of potential economic benefits resulting from closer economic ties with Russia and membership in the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). The theme of further Eurasian integration focuses on countries that demonstrate aspirations of closer ties with the European Union such as Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. While not necessarily promoting the EEU, Russian information operations highlight, Russian invented, negative impacts on the economy and traditional values that closer

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[38] Orysia Lutsevych, "Agents of the Russian World…", 13.
[39] Fred Weir and Sabra Ayres, "Putin's New Soft-Power Media Machine." *The Christian Science Monitor (*26 March 2014): 2.
[40] *Ibid.*
[41] Orysia Lutsevych, "Agents of the Russian World…", 18.
[42] United States Army Special Operations Command, "Little Green Men…", 54.

integration with Europe would bring.[43] The messages promoted by Russia attempt to show that membership in the EU and other Western economic alliances would result in forced adoption austerity measures.[44] At the same time, Russia is sending the message that increased economic alignment with the EEU will result in immediate financial aid. The Kremlin has backed up this notion with action by purchasing national debt and cutting gas prices for countries that turn their backs on European integration in favour of integration with Russia and the EEU.[45] Much like the other key themes of the Russian information campaign, this narrative does not resonate with non-Russians. However, they are designed to primarily target groups that are already open and sympathetic toward Russian ideals and interests. They have had a significant impact on the mobilization of its diaspora against national, anti-Russian, governments in support of Russian influence and interests.

All three themes of the Russian information campaign discussed serve to promote a Russian narrative that attempts to demonstrate possible benefits of closer cultural, security and economic integration with Russia. They also serve to promote an image of incompetency within current national governments and the political inequality imposed upon Russian diaspora. This has had a destabilizing effect on nation building while endorsing Eurasian integration by promoting "the modern Russian ideology as a beacon of conservatism and global anti-Western resistance."[46]

[43] Orysia Lutsevych, "Agents of the Russian World…", 20.
[44] United States Army Special Operations Command, "Little Green Men…", 48.
[45] *Ibid.*
[46] Orysia Lutsevych, "Agents of the Russian World…", 19.

Russian Soft Power Instruments

Much like Russia's information campaign, efforts to generate Russian soft power have little appeal for non-Russians. Therefore, its soft power efforts are most often directed at ethnic-Russians, particularly those living in the post-Soviet space. Joseph Nye's concept of soft power indicates that it "is the ability to obtain preferred outcomes through attraction" and the resources employed must be attractive to the people whose behaviour is to be altered.[47] Putin has directed significantly more resources to the development of improved soft power instruments. However, his version of soft power lacks sufficient attraction to fully align with Nye's definition.[48] Unlike the West, Putin's version of soft power is based on state designed and controlled narratives that use the government and agencies as its primary instruments.[49] While Russian soft power efforts lack sufficient global attraction they do generate a degree of attractiveness for many Russian's living in the post-Soviet space. For the purposes of this paper, the discussion of Russian soft power will be relative to this target audience.

Following the Colour Revolutions, the Kremlin focused on creating a series of NGOs or pseudo-NGOs in support of the Russian World and granted them privileged access to state funding in return for loyalty in the promotion of the pro-Russian narratives in the areas of culture, language, history, religion and politics.[50] The primary mechanism to distribute Russian soft power funding is the *Russotrudnichestvo.*[51] It is estimated that the Russian government spends nearly $130 million annually on soft power projects that primarily target Russian

[47] Joseph Nye. "Get Smart." Foreign Affairs 88 no.4. (July/August 2009): 161.
[48] Yulia Kiseleva. "Russia's Soft Power Discourse: Identity, Status and the Attraction of Power." *Politics* 35, no. 3-4 (November 2015): 322.
[49] Orysia Lutsevych, "Agents of the Russian World…", 5.
[50] *Ibid.,* 9-10.
[51] Öncel Sencerman, "Russian Diaspora as a Means of Russian Foreign Policy."…, 102.

populations of the post-Soviet space.[52] This paper will discuss three areas Russia uses its soft power instruments to weaponize its diaspora. These areas include Russian education, the protection of Russian speakers abroad, and the Russian Orthodox Church. These areas of soft power are seen by Russia as a path "to winning the hearts and minds, or at least a degree of sympathy," of those with which it has strong cultural and historical affinities.[53]

There is a strong belief among many Russians, particularly proponents of the Russian World, that there is a connection between language and the process of thinking in accordance with the ideas of German philosopher, Johann Gottfried Herder.[54] In support of this concept, there is a requirement to fund education that nurtures the learning and use of the Russian language abroad.[55] Russia's efforts, in support of this theory, have been directed toward post-Soviet states where the majority already speak Russian. For example, nearly half of Russia's cultural centres are located in Ukraine where it spends approximately $1 million dollars annually[56] to develop a population that is supportive of Russian objectives. Russia has also used soft power through the implementation of its Russian language program that is primarily controlled by the *Russkiy Mir Foundation* and receives, approximately, 500 million rubles annually from the state and state affiliated companies.[57] In order to use language as a soft power instrument, Russia's most recent efforts have been the implementation of policies, between 2011 and 2015, that promote the language in the former Soviet republics as well as the use of Russian diaspora as translators during the summer Universiade in Kazan 2013 and the Sochi Winter

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[52] Orysia Lutsevych, "Agents of the Russian World…", 10.
[53] Mark Galeotti, *Controlling Chaos…,* 6.
[54] Orysia Lutsevych, "Agents of the Russian World…", 14.
[55] *Ibid.*
[56] *Ibid.*
[57] Öncel Sencerman, "Russian Diaspora as a Means of Russian Foreign Policy."…, 103.

Olympics in 2014.[58] These efforts are done to strengthen the link with the diaspora's Russian homeland. There has also been a great deal of support for those that wish to study in Russian. Vladimir Putin's view is that he must export Russian education and culture in order to promote Russian ideas.[59] Russia, through the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation, provides opportunities for foreign Russian speaking students to pursue higher education.[60] This also contributes to Russia's goal of ensuring that the Russian language is the regional language of commerce, employment and education.[61]

In addition to promoting and providing incentives for studying in the Russian language, the Kremlin has created attraction for Russian speakers by taking steps to protect their perceived right to operate in the Russian language. Russia's support for alleged injustices against Russian diaspora in the former Soviet states has gained a great deal of support. For example, Russia has provided funding for two pro-Russian organizations, the Legal Information Centre for Human Rights and the Russian School in Estonia, to participate in an annual Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe conference [62] and *Russotrudnichestvo* supported organizations have provided "grants to defend the rights of Russians in courts abroad."[63] In addition to providing support to protect the language rights of its diaspora, Russia has also created generous repatriation programs, that have earned a great deal of credit and support among the diaspora remaining abroad.[64] Likewise, Russia has provided substantial support to ethnic Russian separatist movements based on the premise of protecting their language and cultural rights.

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[58] *Ibid.,* 104-105.

[59] Vladimir Putin, Russia and the Changing World. Last modified 27 February 2012. https://www.rt.com/politics/official-word/putin-russia-changing-world-263/.

[60] Alexander Bogomolov and Oleksandr Lytvynenko. *A Ghost in the Mirror…*, 10.

[61] Andrei Tsygankov. "If Not by Tanks, then by Banks? The Role of Soft Power in Putin's Foreign Policy." *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no. 7 (1 November 2006): 1083-1084.

[62] Mark Galeotti, *Controlling Chaos…,* 2.

[63] Orysia Lutsevych, "Agents of the Russian World…", 26.

[64] Mark Galeotti, *Controlling Chaos…,* 9.

Russia has been seen to support the separatist wings of Slavophile and Russophile organizations and has hosted a global separatist congress in Moscow that was partly financed by the state.[65] These separatist movements are enabled by the Kremlin and have been used to further its interests in the former Soviet republics from which the separatist groups originate.

A third soft power instrument the Kremlin leverages to mobilize its diaspora is the Russian Orthodox Church. Putin has placed increased emphasis on the importance and role of the Orthodox Church. He sees it as an opportunity to strengthen connections between the Russian diaspora and the homeland.[66] Patriarch Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, has embraced and fully exploited Putin's support. In return for the support of the President, the church has leveraged its believers abroad to promote a Russian-centric vision of the world and to support the "gathering of Russian lands."[67] The church has become one of the most important tools used to unite ethnic Russians and, in some cases, has resulted in extremism based on Orthodox sentiments.[68] Groups such as the Russian Orthodox Army are motivated by devotion to the Russian Orthodox Church and have received funding from Russia to carry out hostilities to the benefit of Russian interests in the Donetsk region of Ukraine.[69] Additionally in the Donbas region, buildings belonging to the church have been used to store military materials and church groups have provided financial and humanitarian assistance in support rebel groups in the region.[70]

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[65] Orysia Lutsevych, "Agents of the Russian World…", 15-16.
[66] Öncel Sencerman, "Russian Diaspora as a Means of Russian Foreign Policy."…, 140.
[67] Orysia Lutsevych, "Agents of the Russian World…", 24.
[68] Stratfor, "Reassessing the Russian Identity Part 5: Faith, Age and the New Russian." Last Modified 30 November 2012. https://www.stratfor.com/article/reassessing-russian-identity-part-5-faith-age-and-new-russian.
[69] United States Army Special Operations Command, "Little Green Men…", 43.
[70] Orysia Lutsevych, "Agents of the Russian World…", 34.

Russian Irregular Forces

In addition to the support provided to the rebel groups via the Russian Orthodox Church, rebel groups often depend on support from Russian affiliated and funded irregular or unconventional military forces. These irregular forces are made up of a broad range of groups and organizations that include "undeclared conventional forces, peacekeepers, special operators, Cossacks, private military companies, foreign legionnaires, biker gangs, Russian-sponsored NGOs, and cyber/propaganda warriors."[71] These forces often provide the leadership required to organize and carry out much of the diaspora groups' disruptive activities that threaten the stability of home states. In addition to their own objectives, the destabilizing activities are most often supportive of Russian interest in the region. Russia's employment of irregular forces is conducted "to create the political conditions necessary for later decisive military and paramilitary action." [72] In order to achieve the necessary conditions, Russia employs irregular or unconventional military forces to recruit members from regional diaspora, provide military training to diaspora youth as well as integrate "Advise, Assist and Accompany" (AAA) teams within various armed groups. Linked to each of these efforts is the provision of financial support and military materiel such as weapons and ammunition.

Many of the irregular military forces exploited by Russia to leverage influence in the former Soviet region "operate outside of formal channels and promote ultra-radical and neo-imperial vocabulary, and operate youth paramilitary camps."[73] One such group is the Russian Cossack network that has more than 740,000 members and affiliates in the post-Soviet space.[74] They have chapters and conduct youth training programs to teach marksmanship and survival

[71] Charles K. Bartles, "Getting Gerasimov Right."…, 33.
[72] United States Army Special Operations Command, "Little Green Men…", 54.
[73] Orysia Lutsevych, "Agents of the Russian World…", 10.
[74] *Ibid.,* 30.

skills in Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine. Some of these Cossack groups are known to receive Russian state funds through *Rossotrudnichestvo* and Russian consulates.[75]

Not only do Russian unconventional forces provide military training for diaspora youth, they also recruit Russian diaspora into their ranks. Russia's recent activities in Ukraine have demonstrated that Spetsnaz agents are recruited from local populations.[76] This provides Spetsnaz a degree of legitimacy and an improved ability to operate in the various environments. Russia's use of Spetsnaz includes the provision of AAA teams to support local forces in taking violent action against target nations.[77] Additionally, local forces are provided with equipment and the promise of financial benefit to be gained from captured spoils.[78] These tactics enable, or make it appear, as though local forces are conducting the violent acts, thus allowing Russia a degree of deniability, at least in the short term. It is quiet often Spetsnaz or other Russian irregular forces that organize and lead pro-Russian demonstrations and provide the leadership to mobilize local militias and subsequently lead their efforts to seize public administration buildings and media outlets.[79] In some cases, it is these Russian irregular forces that do the hard work of seizing such installations only to hand over to local forces after they are secure. In instances were the provision of Russian leadership and promise of Russian sustainment and support are not enough to encourage local diaspora to take action, Russian irregular forces resort to bribery and intimidation to coerce pro-Russian activities. Bribery was widely used in the annexation of Crimea to ensure support among the ethnic Russian population.[80] Bribery and intimidation were

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[75] *Ibid.*
[76] United States Army Special Operations Command, "Little Green Men…", 43.
[77] Asymmetric Warfare Group Russian New Generation Warfare Handbook…, 4.
[78] *Ibid.,* 15.
[79] United States Army Special Operations Command, "Little Green Men…", 43,56,58.
[80] *Ibid.,* 54,59.

also used to compel local officials to vacate their posts, setting the conditions for pro-Russian groups to takeover public administrative functions.

The argument thus far has focused on Russian efforts to weaponize its diaspora in the pursuit of its national interests and to maintain a dominant influence in the post-Soviet space. Russia has countered this argument by insisting that the posture of the former Soviet republics toward the Russian diaspora is the primary reason that these diaspora groups have mobilized against their home states. Russia has claimed that its involvement has been in the interest of protecting the minority rights of Russians living abroad, as it is its duty to do so. It has been argued that the radicalization of the Russian diaspora is a result of factors primarily created by the host nation. First, is the interests of Russian diaspora are under represented in the political institutions. The second radicalizing factor is the existence of strong nationalist policies that have politicized the Russian diaspora. The third aggravating factor is the lack of political and cultural support from Russia.[81] The narrative highlighted by these arguments strikes at the core of Vladimir Putin's renewed emphasis on the protection of the rights and interests of Russians abroad. It has provided Russia with sufficient justification to intervene in regional conflicts. However, the next portion of this paper will draw doubt on this this narrative by demonstrating the improved effectiveness a weaponized diaspora has provided Russian irregular warfare activities designed to maintain dominant influence in the post-Soviet space.

DIASPORA EFFECTIVENSS

In order to qualify the influence a weaponized diaspora has on the effectiveness of Russian irregular warfare activities within the post-Soviet space, this paper will use the model

[81] Ivan D. Loshkariov and Andrey A. Sushentsov, "Radicalization of Russians in Ukraine…", 77.

proposed by Clancy and Crossett to measure effectiveness in irregular warfare. For the purposes of this analysis, irregular warfare includes asymmetric and the indirect use of force to achieve a desired effect. Clancy and Crossett propose this model because traditional methods of measuring effectiveness are "biased toward measuring physical effects on near-peer forces" [82] where the outcome is predicted by attrition.[83] This is not reflective of how irregular warfare is conducted and as a result conventional warfare measures of effectiveness (MOE) models fail to account for the realities of irregular warfare. The purpose of the Clancy and Crossett proposal is not to provide specific measures but to highlight where MOEs for irregular warfare may be found.[84] They suggest the three areas that need to be explored are sustainability, legitimacy, and stability.[85] Clancy and Crossett's model provides a framework to be employed when endeavouring to identify indicators of success in irregular warfare but it is not sufficient on its own for a quantitative analysis of a particular situation but should prove adequate for a qualitative assessment. A detailed quantitative analysis is beyond the scope of this paper and therefore, the model will provide a suitable framework to conduct a cursory analysis of the impact that Russian diasporas have on Russia's irregular warfare activities.

Sustainability

Clancy and Crossett describe sustainability in irregular warfare as the capacity to sustain action "through a continued and prolonged ability to challenge an opposing force."[86] The Russian diaspora have been instrumental in Russia's ability to sustain irregular warfare activities

[82] James Clancy and Chuck Crossett. "Measuring Effectiveness in Irregular Warfare." *Parameters* 37, no. 2 (Jun 22, 2007): 88.
[83] *Ibid.,* 90.
[84] *Ibid.*
[85] *Ibid.,* 96.
[86] *Ibid.,* 92.

in the post-Soviet space. In Russia's Hybrid Warfare, a mix of conventional and unconventional methods of warfare, the objective is to have locally organized forces bear the brunt of the fighting.[87] While locally organized groups often fall under and are supported and sustained by the Russian government, they allow Russia to conserve its more highly trained forces for operations that have greater operational importance.[88] The use of such armed diaspora groups to conduct the fighting has enabled Russia to sustain greater force projection. The provision of AAA teams, made up of Russian unconventional forces, enables Russia to employ these specialized troops in a more disaggregated manner throughout the region.[89] The presence of diaspora militias and armed groups have allowed Russian Special Forces to focus their efforts on more decisive actions that require highly skilled forces such as the seizing of buildings and facilities. The captured facilities are then handed over to local troops allowing the Russian forces to move on to subsequent objectives. These tactics were broadly used in Russia's activities in Crimea and eastern Ukraine.[90] In addition to the sustainment support provided by armed diaspora groups, other diaspora organizations have played a key role in sustaining Russian irregular forces during periods of conflict. During hostilities in the Donbas region of Ukraine, local Russian Orthodox Church groups regularly provided support to Russian efforts in the region. Buildings belonging to the church have been used regularly to store ammunition. Church associated charities have provided humanitarian aid and financial support to those they see "act as protectors of traditions and orthodoxy."[91] The support provided by armed diaspora groups and pro-Russian organizations has had a significant impact on Russia's ability to sustain the employment irregular forces in the post-Soviet space without having to deploy its more

[87] Asymmetric Warfare Group, "Russian New Generation Warfare Handbook"…, 4.
[88] *Ibid.,* 14.
[89] *Ibid.,* 15.
[90] United States Army Special Operations Command, "Little Green Men…", 43.
[91] Orysia Lutsevych, "Agents of the Russian World…", 34.

conventional forces. The involvement of such groups in armed conflict lends to an improved legitimacy for pro-Russian influence in the region.

Legitimacy

Clancy and Crossett describe legitimacy in irregular warfare as the perception of being "worthy of consideration by those outside its operational group, especially the general population."[92] The use of pro-Russian local forces "serves to strengthen Russia's narrative and information operations on a world stage."[93] Russia exploits local ethnic Russians to serve as witnesses to events on the ground. Local witnesses often serve to portray the existence of an existential threat to all ethnic Russians throughout the post-Soviet space.[94] These reports are employed in the Russian information campaign to provide an impression of broader local support for Russia's actions than actually exists.[95] This was likely the case in eastern Ukraine where Russian forces made up 15 to 80 percent of the combatants but Russia made it appear as though all combatants were locals.[96] Additionally, the use of local ethnic Russians as combatants has assisted the Kremlin to maintain internal legitimacy for its actions abroad because it does not count or publish the statistics associated with casualties sustained by these groups.[97] Russia's use and manipulation of information enabled by its diaspora gives the impression that Russia is a legitimate avenue for addressing societal needs wherever an ethnic Russian population exists.

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[92] James Clancy and Chuck Crossett. "Measuring Effectiveness in Irregular Warfare"…, 93.
[93] Asymmetric Warfare Group, "Russian New Generation Warfare Handbook"…, 14.
[94] Collins Devon Cockrell, "Russian Actions and Methods…", 6.
[95] *Ibid.*
[96] United States Army Special Operations Command, "Little Green Men…", 61.
[97] Asymmetric Warfare Group, "Russian New Generation Warfare Handbook"…, 14.

Stability

Clancy and Crossett describe stability in irregular warfare as stability of the environment or the lack of chaos and the associated presence of securities and livelihoods of a population.[98] In the case of many Russian irregular activities in the region, the primary objective is to create an unstable environment to set favourable conditions for Russian intervention through more conventional methods. Therefore, this paper will focus on the Russian diaspora's ability to destabilize an environment in support of Russian objectives. One of the first steps in Russian hybrid warfare is to target the adversary's population and destabilize the environment before open hostility occurs. Through Russian irregular forces, local ethnic Russian groups are mobilized against the national government making the conflict appear as an internal one rather than a Russian invasion as was the case in Crimea and eastern Ukraine.[99] Legitimate governments have difficulty maintaining order once local ethnic Russian populations are mobilized by notions of "political dissent, separatism and/or social strife."[100] In order to maintain order, the local governments are eventually coerced into using aggressive methods and eventually providing the pretext for Russian intervention followed by the installation of a pro-Russian government, as was the case in Crimea.[101] Russia's ability to use these unconventional methods, to destabilize otherwise stable and legitimate governments, hinges on its ability to establish the support or perceived support of the ethnic Russian populations in the former Soviet republics.

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[98] James Clancy and Chuck Crossett. "Measuring Effectiveness in Irregular Warfare"…, 94.
[99] Asymmetric Warfare Group, "Russian New Generation Warfare Handbook"…, 13.
[100] Charles K. Bartles, "Getting Gerasimov Right."…, 32.
[101] *Ibid.,* 33.

CONCLUSION

The historical dispersion of ethnic Russians throughout the post-Soviet space has provided, maybe unintentionally, the perfect weapon to maintain influence and dominance in the region without having to conduct outright hostile actions against independent states. Russian techniques to exploit the large ethnic Russian populations living throughout the region include a variety of means designed to weaponize and enable its diaspora populations to conduct disruptive activities in support of Russian interests. Russia has targeted its diaspora through information operations, soft power and irregular forces. The Information campaign is designed to discredit national governments and promote a narrative of an improved cultural, economic and security situation for ethnic Russians resulting from closer integration with Russia. In addition to information operations, Russia has placed an increased emphasis on the development of its soft power instruments. Russian soft power has not developed global attraction but has achieved success in creating greater appeal to some ethnic Russians living abroad. Russia has achieved this through the promotion of the Russian language by providing increased opportunity for Russian diaspora to pursue higher education. Russia has also stepped in to provide support for minority Russian populations that they feel have been denied their right to conduct day-to-day business in the Russian language. Another aspect of Russian soft power is the significant attraction generated by the Russian Orthodox Church. Vladimir Putin's endorsement of the church has earned allegiance and influence over a much broader audience throughout the region. Russia's information campaign and soft power instruments set the conditions for irregular or unconventional forces to carry out operations in the post-Soviet space. Russian irregular forces are derived from an extensive spectrum of organizations, all of which are, outside of official channels. This allows Russia to maintain a degree of deniability by giving the impression that

conflicts are internal in nature. Russian irregular forces are used to recruit and provide military training to local ethnic Russians as well as provide the leadership required to plan and organize many of the destabilizing activities. Additionally, Russian irregular forces are used to funnel Russian financial support and military materiel to the locally armed diaspora groups. When these efforts prove to be insufficient to mobilize Russian diaspora, Russia's irregular forces resort to bribery and intimidation to coerce support for Russian interests throughout the region.

Russia maintains that it has taken no initiative to mobilize diaspora groups in the region and insists that it is the actions of the former Soviet states that have driven groups into conflict. The truthfulness of this account of events is easily questioned when looking at the contribution Russian diaspora groups have made in support of Russian irregular warfare activities throughout the region. Russian diaspora groups have increased the effectiveness of such activities by improving the sustainability, legitimacy and stability of Russian irregular warfare. This paper has highlighted several methods employed to weaponize Russia's diaspora and established that diaspora groups have improved the effectiveness of Russia's irregular warfare activities using the Clancy and Crossett model for measuring effectiveness in Irregular Warfare. Therefore, the paper has demonstrated that Russia has weaponized its diaspora in order to support its irregular warfare activities within the post-Soviet space.

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