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## Russia's Influence Operations in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania

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**Russia's Influence Operations in the  
Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania**

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Cover design by Stephanie Koesshall.

*This Occasional Paper is dedicated to Fritz Ermarth, a brilliant  
colleague, mentor, and friend.*



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## Executive Summary

This *Occasional Paper* advances understanding of the mechanics of Russia's influence and disinformation operations and how these types of activities can affect U.S. allies and alliance politics. It is a comparative study of Russia's influence operations in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania. What originally started out as an exploration of Russia's activities in the context of these countries' missile defense cooperation with the United States turned into a broader analysis of Russia's influence operations in these countries, highlighting different methods that Russia employs to execute them. Russia's influence and disinformation operations aimed at U.S. allies in Europe are an important tool in its competition with the United States – hence the United States and its allies need to understand how Russia conducts them and how to counter them.

In Central and Eastern Europe, Russia wants to regain influence and offer its governance model as a viable alternative to Western-style democracies. It wants to weaken the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (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.

Two factors are particularly important in determining how the Russian Federation conducted influence operations in the examined countries: (1) the level of penetration of a country's operating environment by Russia's collaborators,



agents, and interests, and (2) the level of permissiveness with which Russia's actors can operate. Whereas the Czech Republic was until recently very permissive, Poland and Romania are not, even though they have vulnerabilities of their own. Poland and Romania consider Russia an adversary (or very close to it, in the case of Romania), which leads Russia to conduct its operations on their respective territories more covertly than is the case in the Czech Republic.

This *Occasional Paper* offers recommendations to counter Russia's influence operations. Chief among them is publicly exposing Russia's activities. Transparency is one of the key components in countering them. Russia's influence operations in allied countries are aimed at advancing Russia's interests, which are fundamentally incompatible with those of the United States. Without this recognition, U.S. steps to counter Russia's influence operations will never be as effective they should be.

The United States must revitalize its communications and public diplomacy campaigns; a task to which it has not paid sufficient attention since the end of the Cold War. The United States and allies should take their own steps to complicate Russia's disinformation efforts, not acquiesce to them. No team wins by playing only defense, and being more proactive in conducting influence operations against Vladimir Putin's regime is long overdue.

The United States should leverage its relationships with allies to allow greater information-sharing and closer intelligence cooperation to generate synergies not available to its adversaries and to allow allied governments to use their limited resources more efficiently. While the Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania cannot apply the same amount of resources to countering Russian disinformation than Russia can to propagating it, cooperating with the United States can help to mitigate the disparity. The United States and its allies ought to support local independent

journalists that would help them to understand realities on the ground and tailor more effective counter-narratives to Russian disinformation.

In a battle to counter Russia's influence activities, alliances are the most important advantage that the United States has. The views and values that allies share allow cooperation on a much deeper level than would be the case among non-allies. This is particularly true with regard to cooperation on intelligence matters, and provides United States one of the most important synergies that is not available to Russia. While Russia has an intelligence and resource advantage vis-à-vis the Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania, these U.S. allies cooperating within a NATO framework, or bilaterally with strong U.S. backing, can mitigate that advantage. Improving this cooperation will continue to be a critical element of any future efforts to counter Russia's influence operations and its malign activities on NATO member states' territories.



# Introduction

*We are facing increased global disorder, characterized by decline in the long-standing rules-based international order – creating a security environment more complex and volatile than any we have experienced in recent memory.*

– 2018 U.S. National Defense Strategy, Summary

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.<sup>1</sup> Russia’s political influence and disinformation operations aimed at U.S. allies in Europe are important tools in its competition with the United States. Russia (and previously the Soviet Union) has been conducting these types of operations for decades, with a short slow down following the end of the Cold War.<sup>2</sup> This *Occasional Paper* analyzes Russia’s influence operations over the past twenty years in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania, specific to the three countries’ missile defense cooperation with the United States. It offers important lessons for alliance management and for building resilience against Russia’s malign operations.

The expressed intent of the Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania to join the U.S. missile defense program led to an increase in Russia’s influence and disinformation operations on their respective territories. In the Czech

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. 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>.

<sup>2</sup> 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*, March 1, 2020, pp. 1–19, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2020.1724963>.

Republic's case, these operations resulted in Russia's first successful post-Cold War influence and disinformation campaign in a NATO country, due to a unique political constellation and a high degree of Russian penetration of Czech politics, as well as the business, economic, and education spheres.<sup>3</sup> Despite its efforts, Russia has not succeeded in derailing U.S. missile defense efforts in Poland and Romania where they continue to enjoy broad public support.

The Russian Federation has always been opposed to U.S. missile defense because it could diminish Russia's coercive potential against the United States and its allies. U.S. missile defense efforts in Central and Eastern Europe have been particularly difficult to accept for Russia. This is because the United States chose to cooperate with countries in Russia's former sphere of influence (the Czech Republic, Poland and Romania). The United States did so not to spite the Russians, but due to the suitable geographical location for systems fulfilling a missile defense mission that the United States has been trying to accomplish since its withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002. Over the past several years, the United States has been learning the hard way that it is incredibly difficult to push back against Russia's influence operations.

The selected cases presented here raise several important policy questions, for example: Why was the Russian Federation successful in helping to turn the majority of the public against a U.S. missile defense presence in the Czech Republic, but not in Poland and Romania? What were some of the effective ways to counter this type of malign activity? This is the first comprehensive comparative analysis of these cases. As the United States faces its own set of challenges with regard to the Russian Federation's influence operations and domestic political

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<sup>3</sup> Michaela Dodge, *U.S.-Czech Missile Defense Cooperation: Alliance Politics in Action* (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, 2020).

interference, it is essential to understand the mechanics of Russian operations, the potential to disrupt them and counter them, and how to build resilience against them.

For the Russian Federation, disinformation is a relatively cheap tool of political and information warfare. Russia's efforts are massive in nature and never ending. It wasn't until 2014, when Ukraine lost a part of its territory to Russian invasion and occupation, 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 in peacetime impose on themselves.

The United States has 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 certain information does not mislead an adversary on observable aspects of warfare, such as the number of tanks or modern aircraft, it can change the course of events. Russia's activities during the 2016 U.S. election cycle led to a significant increase in interest inside and outside the U.S. government in Russia's influence and disinformation operations. In a recent simulation, researchers at NATO used open sources to gather information about soldiers participating in a military exercise. NATO used that information to manipulate soldiers' behavioral outcomes and showed a vulnerability that adversaries might exploit.<sup>4</sup>

In recognition of the danger of Russia's (and other foreign actors') disinformation and political influence campaigns, NATO founded the Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in October 2014 to support the Alliance's strategic communications efforts. The center

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<sup>4</sup> "NATO Targets Disinformation Efforts," *NPR*, December 7, 2019, available at <https://www.npr.org/2019/12/07/785804847/nato-targets-disinformation-efforts>.

contributes to improved strategic communications capabilities within NATO, but is not a part of the NATO Command Structure and does not speak for NATO.<sup>5</sup> The center currently has 14 members.<sup>6</sup> The proliferation of modern technologies offers an opportunity for malign actors and U.S. adversaries to challenge U.S. interests and potentially undermine the U.S. alliance structure – without being noticed or challenged. For example, Estonia suffered a massive cyberattack seemingly backed by the Russian government following Estonia’s decision to move a monument to Soviet soldiers erected in 1947 to a less prominent space.<sup>7</sup> Russia manipulated information, leading to chaos and inefficiency within the Ukrainian government during Russia’s 2014 invasion of Crimea.<sup>8</sup> It is undoubtedly in the interest of U.S. policymakers, diplomats, and warfighters to understand how these new tools might be used against them and how to best counter them.

The United States is more transparent about its activities abroad than the Russian Federation. A majority of U.S. defense and diplomatic activities are discussed publicly, including in Congress, and funds for them are appropriated annually. All U.S. foreign and defense activities are subject to congressional oversight, and firm firewalls exist between domestic and foreign intelligence and counterintelligence services. Transparency is advanced by independent journalism and foreign policy reporting; however, the

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<sup>5</sup> In this *Occasional Paper*, “Alliance” refers to NATO, while “alliance” refers to other allied groupings.

<sup>6</sup> France and Hungary were supposed to join the center in 2021; it is not clear that they have done so.

<sup>7</sup> Damien McGuinness, “How a Cyber Attack Transformed Estonia,” *BBC News*, April 27, 2017, available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/39655415>.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Bagge, *Unmasking Maskirovka: Russia’s Cyber Influence Operations* (New York: Defense Press, 2019), pp. 174–186.

quality of this journalism is said to have decreased since the end of the Cold War.<sup>9</sup>

The Russian Federation lacks such transparency, and its operations at home and abroad are directed by a relatively small and closed group of leaders.<sup>10</sup> Russia weaponizes modern technologies and takes advantage of other countries' openness to sow discord and advance its political goals. Despite many strengths in other areas, democracies are particularly susceptible to this type of interference due to their openness and the ability of anyone to access information.<sup>11</sup> According to some estimates, only about 10 percent of Russia's intelligence operations (which include influence operations) are known to Western intelligence services.<sup>12</sup>

There are several additional reasons for why Russia's influence operations have not been well understood within U.S. policymaking and decision-making circles. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, the United States hoped that the Russian Federation would join the increasing number of new democracies, and the perception of it as a threat largely vanished from U.S. strategic thinking. President George W. Bush famously "looked the man [Vladimir Putin] in the eye" and got a "a sense of his soul."<sup>13</sup> The Administration's

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<sup>9</sup> Janine di Giovanni, "The First Draft of History," *Foreign Policy*, January 15, 2021, available at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/01/15/history-foreign-correspondents-media-press-journalism-war-reporting-photography>.

<sup>10</sup> There is always a possibility of rogue actions in line with the leadership's perceived intent by active or retired officers of Russia's intelligence services (as the saying goes, there are no former KGB agents), but these are not an object of this inquiry into Russia's activities in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania.

<sup>11</sup> For an excellent elaboration of this topic, see, for example, Matthew Kroenig, *The Return of Great Power Rivalry: Democracy versus Autocracy from the Ancient World to the U.S. and China* (Oxford, UK: University Press, 2020).

<sup>12</sup> Dan Sabbagh, "Only 10% of Russian Spy Operations in Europe Uncovered, Says Former MI6 Chief," *The Guardian*, April 19, 2021, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/19/uk-government-registration-scheme-foreign-spies-boris-johnson>.

<sup>13</sup> "Bush Saw Putin's Soul," C-SPAN, June 17, 2001, available at <https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4718091/user-clip-bush-putins-soul>.



2001 Nuclear Posture Review concluded that “the U.S. will no longer plan, size or sustain its forces as though Russia presented merely a smaller version of the threat posed by the former Soviet Union,” even as it contained language about a hedge against worsening geopolitical developments.<sup>14</sup> In 2002, the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (known as the Moscow Treaty or SORT) reflected what the United States thought was a transformation of the relationship between the two countries.

These trends were a continuation of a broader post-Cold War state of affairs that considered the Russian threat to be significantly diminished. The United States wanted to believe that Russia itself had transformed into a country desirous to integrate into a Western democratic world.<sup>15</sup> The perception led to a loss of interest in Russian affairs in U.S. academia, the intelligence community, and within the U.S. policymaking community in general. The U.S. may not have been interested in a potential adversary, but the Russian Federation remained interested in the United States and its allies—and eventually adapted old methods to cause mischief using new technologies, knowing that, just like during the Cold War, it would be unable to compete with the United States head on.

The Russian Federation does not distinguish between its domestic and international security apparatus. Russia’s Duma does not provide any real oversight and serves as a relatively enthusiastic rubber stamp for Putin’s policies. While the United States maintains a strict separation between intelligence agencies operating at home and abroad, such a distinction is largely nominal in the case of

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<sup>14</sup> Donald H. Rumsfeld, *Foreword to Nuclear Posture Review Report*, January 9, 2002, available at <https://sgp.fas.org/news/2002/01/npr-foreword.html>.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review Report*, 2001, p. 23, available at <https://fas.org/sgp/news/2002/01/npr-foreword.html>.

the Russian Federation.<sup>16</sup> This is not to say that institutional differences do not exist, but to highlight that “domestic” intelligence services can perform intelligence missions abroad in ways that would be illegal in the United States – which perhaps makes them more difficult to comprehend by those unfamiliar with how Russia’s intelligence services operate. This lack of distinction further increases the level of confusion and makes it more difficult to understand Russia’s influence operations and disinformation activities.

Connections exist among the Russian business world, organized crime, and the state intelligence apparatus, making it more difficult to understand how each operates, and how they operate jointly in pursuit of a given goal. The adage that there is no such thing as a former KGB agent rings true because “formers” are expected to continue to promote the Russian Federation’s interests in their new roles after leaving government service.<sup>17</sup> This makes tracing, analysis, and evaluation of Russia’s disinformation and influence operations yet more difficult.

But Russia’s influence operations need not be fatal to U.S. advancement of its foreign policy and national security goals at home or abroad. Victoria Nuland, former Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, and Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs in the Biden Administration, 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

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<sup>16</sup> “Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2008” (Czech Security Information Service, 2009), available at <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocní-zpravy/2008-vz-cz.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> “Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2006” (Czech Security Information Service, 2007), available at <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocní-zpravy/2006-vz-cz.pdf>.

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.<sup>18</sup>

This *Occasional Paper* is a modest contribution to the important effort of exposing Russia's tactics and conduct of its influence operations in select U.S.-allied countries. It is designed to deepen and broaden the West's understanding of how the Russian government utilizes influence and disinformation operations in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania. It offers actionable policy recommendations for how to best counter Russia's malign activities in the United States, how to make societies more resilient to disinformation and propaganda, and how the United States can assist allies in dealing with the challenge. The author is grateful for experts sharing their time and knowledge to help to highlight Russia's influence operations in their respective countries. She is also grateful to her colleagues at the National Institute for Public Policy for reviewing the draft version of this *Occasional Paper*, to Karina Rollins for her excellent editing work, and to Amy Joseph for doing a superb job in finalizing the product. Any errors are solely the author's own.

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<sup>18</sup> Victoria Nuland, hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, May 1, 2019, p. 58, available at <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA00/20190501/109399/HHRG-116-FA00-Transcript-20190501.pdf>.

The *Occasional Paper* was finalized before Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. It therefore does not incorporate implications of the crisis, nor potential additional recommendations.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For example, one such implication might be that, as countries shut down Russia's diplomatic presence and prohibit Russian-backed media channels from operating freely, it will be relatively harder for Russia to conduct influence operations. Russian influence operations decreased in the Czech Republic after it expelled Russia's diplomats in 2021. For more information, see Raymond Johnson, "Russian Embassy Housed a Troll Farm, Activity Slowed After Expulsions," *Expat.cz*, June 29, 2021, available at <https://www.expats.cz/czech-news/article/seznamzpravy-russian-embassy-housed-a-troll-farm-activity-slowed-after-expulsions>.



## Chapter I: Missile Defense and the End of the Cold War

*This authoritarian influence is not principally about attraction or even persuasion; instead, it centers on distraction and manipulation.*

– *Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence*  
National Endowment for Democracy, 2017

Russia faced challenging economic circumstances after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Given its dire economic conditions, its defense expenditures plummeted, and its geopolitical ambitions had to adjust to these new circumstances. Nevertheless, Russia spent the 1990s maintaining and sustaining its intelligence networks—a difficult task given Russia’s economic woes stemming from a transition to a market economy. In keeping with Cold War tradition and because it is relatively cheap for Russia, Russia prioritized human intelligence.

Russia was able to increase its ambitions and resources flowing into its clandestine activities in the 2000s due to President Vladimir Putin’s prioritization of intelligence services as a tool of state power, and additional sources of revenue stemming from increased oil and gas prices. Russia’s activities against U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation starting in 2006 are an example of Russia’s first major successful influence operation on NATO-allied state territory since the end of the Cold War. Russia successfully contributed to mobilizing a majority of the Czech population against the radar, which is why this *Occasional Paper* focuses on this particular case. But Russia’s activities, of course, have not been limited to the Czech Republic. Today, Russia conducts influence and disinformation operations in many countries, including in the United States.

While the tools that Russia employs may vary by country, in the United States, Russia's overall objectives go beyond delegitimizing the institution of the Presidency, an effort that brought Russia's activities to the forefront of the U.S. public's attention during the 2016 presidential election. "The Russian government's goal is to weaken our country, to diminish America's global role and to neutralize a perceived U.S. threat to Russian interests," stated Fiona Hill, former Deputy Assistant to the President and Senior Director for European and Russian Affairs on the National Security Council during the Trump Administration.<sup>20</sup> Russia deploys "millions of dollars to weaponize our own political opposition research and false narratives" and seeks to "divide us against each other, degrade our institutions, and destroy the faith of the American people in our democracy."<sup>21</sup>

These goals do not depend on the persona of the President or on which political party is in power. In the context of U.S. alliances, which are among the most important tools and advantages that the United States has over its adversaries,<sup>22</sup> Russia seeks to undermine allies' faith in the United States and NATO, but also their respective populations' faith in domestic democratic institutions. Russia seeks to exploit existing societal cleavages, relativize truth, and exploit divisions within society to further its political goals.

When analyzing Russia's influence operations in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania, it quickly becomes clear that in Poland and Romania, where missile defense

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<sup>20</sup> "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/>.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> For an excellent elaboration on this theme, see Mira Rapp-Hooper, *Shields of the Republic: The Triumph and Peril of America's Alliances* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020).

cooperation with the United States enjoys support across the political spectrum and within the population, Russia's activities were not focused on missile defense as they were in the Czech Republic. That does not mean, however, that they were non-existent, as this *Occasional Paper* illustrates.

The cases of the Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania are instructive for advancing an understanding of how the Russian Federation executes influence operations and the tools it employs to achieve its goals. The Russian Federation is "being put on a mobilization footing" and "has allocated massive resources to spend on information operations like *Russia Today* and 'troll factories' in Russia."<sup>23</sup> As stated, not all of Russia's activities are connected to U.S. missile defense efforts. But U.S. missile defense provides an interesting vantage point – partly because Russia dislikes it so much, and so it is guaranteed to elicit a strong reaction.

While the Russian Federation does not shy away from threatening NATO members in more direct ways, including issuing nuclear threats against Allied territories, its strategy to exercise its influence goes beyond the use of military tools to incorporate non-material factors, such as national will, endurance, and the loyalty of Russian citizens (living in Russia as well as abroad) to the regime.<sup>24</sup> This is a much

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<sup>23</sup> Stephen Blank, "Cyber War and Information War à La Russe—Understanding Cyber Conflict: 14 Analogies," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, accessed May 15, 2020, available at <https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/10/16/cyber-war-and-information-war-la-russe-pub-73399>.

<sup>24</sup> Keith B. Payne et al., *Russian Strategy: Expansion, Crisis and Conflict* (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, 2016), p. 7, available at <https://nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/FINAL-FOR-WEB-1.12.16.pdf>. See also, for example, Maria Tsvetkova, "Putin Says Russia Beefing Up Nuclear Arsenal, NATO Denounces 'Saber-Rattling,'" Reuters, June 16, 2015, available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/16/us-russia-nuclear-putinidUSKBN0OW17X20150616>; Damien McElroy, "Russian General Says Poland a Nuclear 'Target,'" *The Telegraph*, August 15, 2008, available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/georgia/2564639/Russian-generalsays-Poland-a-nuclear-target-as-Condoleezza-Rice-arrives-in-Georgia.html>; and Elisabeth Braw, "Sweden and Finland's Awkward NATO



more comprehensive approach to conflict than generally considered in the United States. Russia's emphasis on influence and disinformation operations is a reflection of its effort to further capitalize on these types of psychological factors.

Given leaders' propensity to engage in mirror imaging, Russia's own thinking suggests a purpose of its influence and disinformation activities.<sup>25</sup> President Putin stated in 2015: "Western special services continue their attempts at using public, nongovernmental and politicized organizations to pursue their own objectives, primarily to discredit the authorities and destabilize the internal situation in Russia."<sup>26</sup> The Russian Federation obviously employs an integrated strategy to advance its national security interests at the expense of the United States and its allies. Information plays a prominent role in Russia's strategy. According to the current Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and First Deputy Defense Minister Valery Gerasimov, net-centric and information warfare are a new fourth dimension for conflict.<sup>27</sup>

There are many ways in which the Russian Federation exercises influence in countries of interest. It employs various instruments of state power, including state-owned energy firms, intelligence agencies, and organized-crime

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Tango," Politico.eu, August 24, 2015, available at <http://www.politico.eu/article/sweden-finland-natorussia-defense-nordic-military/>.

<sup>25</sup> Dmitry Gorenburg, "Kremlin Paranoia Cooks Up New Threats," *The Moscow Times*, June 8, 2014, available at <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/06/08/kremlin-paranoia-cooks-up-new-threats-a36272>.

<sup>26</sup> "After the Fall of the Soviet Union, the U.S. Tried to Help Russians," *The Washington Post*, May 4, 2015, available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/after-the-fall-of-the-soviet-union-the-us-tried-to-help-russians/2015/05/04/cc4f7c20-f043-11e4-8666-a1d756d0218e\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/after-the-fall-of-the-soviet-union-the-us-tried-to-help-russians/2015/05/04/cc4f7c20-f043-11e4-8666-a1d756d0218e_story.html).

<sup>27</sup> Russia Defense Policy, "Gerasimov Speaks," February 16, 2013, available at <https://russiandefpolicy.com/2013/02/16/gerasimov-speaks/>.

organizations, and it pressures host governments to give its intelligence operatives diplomatic immunity that places them out of reach of local law enforcement.<sup>28</sup> Russia uses cyberattacks and intelligence operations to obtain information that it then uses to try to affect elections in the West.<sup>29</sup> The Russian Federation strives to buy key businesses in other states (particularly in the energy sector), donate funds to political movements and nonprofit organizations that share Russia's interests, blackmail and bribe important decision-makers, influence Russian-speaking communities in the target countries' respective territories, and influence journalists to generate coverage favorable to Russia.<sup>30</sup>

Pro-Russian trolls generate disinformation reports that sometimes get picked up by a state's unwitting media, including foreign-language broadcasts. Russia tries to increase the credibility of these reports by deploying fake experts. It plants fake news in foreign media using cyber operations. Victory in information warfare "can be much more important than victory in a classical military conflict, because it is bloodless, yet the impact is overwhelming and can paralyze all of the enemy state's power structures," according to General Yuri Baluyevsky, Chief of the General Staff and First Deputy Defense minister from 2004 to 2007.<sup>31</sup> Some of these other methods are illustrated in the subsequent chapters. It is also necessary to point out that Russia does not employ all its instruments at the same time,

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<sup>28</sup> Blank, "Cyber War and Information War à La Russe—Understanding Cyber Conflict."

<sup>29</sup> Kseniya Kirillova, "The Putin Regime Uses Blackmail Against Its People and the West," *StopFake.org*, November 2018, available at <https://www.stopfake.org/en/the-putin-regime-uses-blackmail-against-its-people-and-the-west/>.

<sup>30</sup> Blank, "Cyber War and Information War à La Russe—Understanding Cyber Conflict."

<sup>31</sup> "Russian Military Admits Significant Cyber-War Effort," *BBC News*, February 23, 2017, available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39062663>.

but tailors them to be most effective in each target country and for each target group within a country.

### **Russia's Opposition to U.S. Missile Defense Systems**

Despite extensive U.S. attempts at involving Russia productively and cooperatively in U.S. missile defense efforts, the Russian Federation has always been opposed to them.<sup>32</sup> This aspect of Russia's opposition is a common thread running through all three case studies. Political complaints against U.S. missile defense systems and against U.S.-allied governments that host them are a standard repertoire of Russia's diplomatic and public relations statements.

Any consideration of U.S. strategic missile defense deployments to Europe would not be possible if the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty were still in effect. The treaty, originally signed with the Soviet Union in 1972, prohibited research, development, and deployment of any significant homeland missile defense capabilities. But in December 2001, the United States announced its intention to withdraw from the treaty, invoking the "supreme national interest" clause. While President Putin called the U.S. withdrawal a "mistake," he also indicated that Russia was not threatened by this U.S. step when he said: "So, with full certainty, I can say that the decision made by the President of the United States does not threaten Russia's national security."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> With a brief interlude during the early 1990s when it was interested in potentially cooperating on the Global Protection Against Limited Strikes system with the United States. The cooperation has come to naught, partially due to the Clinton Administration's unwillingness to abandon the Cold War-era "mutually assured destruction" paradigm.

<sup>33</sup> "Russian President Vladimir Putin's Response to the U.S. Decision to Withdraw from the ABM Treaty," *Atomic Archive*, December 13, 2001, available at <https://www.atomicarchive.com/resources/documents/missile-defense/putin-abm-remarks.html>.

The United States was concerned over North Korea and Iran developing long-range ballistic missiles that could eventually reach the U.S. homeland and hold the U.S. population hostage to regimes that were perceived as unpredictable and perhaps even undeterrable. Two months after the withdrawal announcement, President Putin accused the United States of initiating an arms race and undermining global stability, even though the Russian Federation signed the Moscow Treaty in May 2001. The treaty mandated the largest strategic offensive arms reductions in the history of arms control.<sup>34</sup> Russia's signing the treaty showed that missile defenses and arms control need not be mutually exclusive.

When the United States started to reach out to allies in Eastern Europe about potential missile defense deployments, Russian officials started to vocalize threats, including nuclear threats, against NATO allies interested in missile defense cooperation with the United States.<sup>35</sup> Russian officials voiced these threats not because they worried about capabilities of the very limited and vulnerable planned missile defense sites, but because they worried about the loss of geopolitical influence due to the U.S. presence in countries that were formerly part of the Warsaw Pact. Russian officials are aware that current limited U.S. missile defense capabilities cannot undermine Russia's strategic arsenal, with President Putin even calling

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<sup>34</sup> Thomas Shanker and Mark Landler, "Putin Says U.S. Is Undermining Global Stability," *The New York Times*, February 10, 2007, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/11/world/europe/11munich.html>.

<sup>35</sup> See for example Jack Mendelsohn, "European Missile Defense: Strategic Imperative or Politics as Usual?" Arms Control Association, October 2007, available at <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2007-10/features/european-missile-defense-strategic-imperative-politics-usual>. For an explanation of the Cold War stability paradigm, see Keith B. Payne, "Redefining 'Stability' for the New Post-Cold War Era," National Institute for Public Policy *Occasional Paper*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (January 2021), available at <https://nipp.org/papers/papers-1/>.

Russia's weapons "invincible."<sup>36</sup> Russian officials reiterated on many occasions that the U.S. ballistic missile defense system is no match for Russia's ballistic missiles.<sup>37</sup>

Since the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, Russian officials have made several threats against allied governments hosting or interested in hosting U.S. missile defense systems, including threatening a pre-emptive nuclear attack and stating that hosting a U.S. missile defense system will make them Russia's priority targets in a conflict.<sup>38</sup> Russia argued that U.S. missile defense systems in Europe are "capable of upsetting strategic stability," derived from a Cold War understanding of the term "strategic stability" that is dependent on both Russia and the United States maintaining assured-destruction capabilities, a situation in which missile defenses were considered destabilizing.<sup>39</sup> But this paradigm is wholly inadequate for dealing with multiple new adversaries armed with ballistic missiles that the United States and allies face today, aside from the fact that the sites do not have enough capability to significantly diminish Russia's missile capabilities.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Adam Taylor, "Putin's New Missiles Could Probably Strike the U.S. The Old Ones Could, Too," *The Washington Post*, March 2, 2018, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/03/02/putins-new-missiles-could-probably-strike-the-u-s-he-old-ones-could-too/>.

<sup>37</sup> Mark Schneider, "Russian Lies and Hypocrisy Concerning Missile Defense," National Institute for Public Policy, April 17, 2018, available at <https://www.nipp.org/2018/04/17/schneider-mark-russian-lies-and-hypocrisy-concerning-missile-defense/>.

<sup>38</sup> For a list of Russia's threats against U.S. allies in Europe, see statement by Keith B. Payne in "Examining the Proper Size of the Nuclear Weapons Stockpile to Maintain a Credible U.S. Deterrent," hearing before the Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, Senate Committee on Appropriations, 112th Congress, 2nd Session., July 25, 2012, available at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-112shrg75444/html/CHRG-112shrg75444.htm>.

<sup>39</sup> "Russia Says US Missile System Breaches Nuclear INF Treaty," BBC News, May 11, 2016, available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36269734>.

<sup>40</sup> Payne, "Redefining 'Stability' for the New Post-Cold War Era.

Following the activation of a U.S. Aegis Ashore missile defense site in Romania in 2016, President Putin stated: "If yesterday in those areas of Romania people simply didn't know what it means to be in the cross hairs, then today we will be forced to carry out certain measures to ensure our security."<sup>41</sup> Russia considers a defensive system in Europe a "direct threat" and some Russian commentators even stated that because Romania is hosting a U.S. missile defense system, it could be reduced to smoking ruins.<sup>42</sup> These statements are outlandish given both the defensive character and limited capabilities of the system deployed to Romania, and to Poland.

Russia is reportedly just as "concerned" over other NATO and U.S. missile defense systems in Europe.<sup>43</sup> On its face, Russia's concerns are unfounded. The sites are neither capable enough nor sufficiently protected to pose any serious obstacle to Russia's military capabilities in a conflict. In 2017, a Russian foreign ministry official called Romania, a country with no nuclear weapons and lagging behind Russia in almost all common power indicators, "a clear threat" to Russia.<sup>44</sup> In August 2018, President Putin said that Russia "must react to the deployment of components of the

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<sup>41</sup> Susanna Capelouto, "Russian President Vladimir Putin Warns He'll Retaliate against NATO Missiles," CNN, May 28, 2016, available at <https://www.cnn.com/2016/05/28/europe/putin-threatens-romania/index.html>.

<sup>42</sup> Andrew E. Kramer, "Russia Calls New U.S. Missile Defense System a 'Direct Threat,'" *The New York Times*, May 12, 2016, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/13/world/europe/russia-nato-us-romania-missile-defense.html>.

<sup>43</sup> Irina Marica, "Russia, 'Extremely Concerned' about NATO Antiballistic Systems in Romania and Poland," *Romania Insider*, April 28, 2016, available at <https://www.romania-insider.com/russia-concerns-nato-antiballistic-systems-romania-poland>.

<sup>44</sup> "Russia Calls Romania 'a Clear Threat' and NATO Outpost: Ifax," Reuters, February 9, 2017, available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-romania-nato-idUSKBN15O0W0>.

U.S. antiballistic [missile] system close to our borders.”<sup>45</sup> Despite U.S., Polish, and Romanian assurances about the defensive purpose of the Aegis Ashore site, the Russian leadership is reportedly concerned about a decapitating strike against it from the Aegis Ashore site.<sup>46</sup>

Russia’s threats are by no means exclusive to Poland and Romania. The Russian Federation responded negatively to initial public reports of U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation in 2006.<sup>47</sup> A large part of Russia’s opposition was the Czech political representatives’ desire to leverage U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation as a hedge against Russia’s political influence in the country. At the time of U.S.-Czech missile defense discussions, General Yuri Baluyevsky, then-Russian Chief of the General Staff, argued that a missile defense site on Czech territory could cause an “arms race” and “take away resources to solve many other problems, not only in the United States and Russia, but also in other nations.”<sup>48</sup> On another occasion, he called the U.S. placing a missile defense component close to the Russian border an adversarial step, and even threatened destruction of a U.S. missile defense component on Czech

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<sup>45</sup> “Putin Says Russia Must React to Antiballistic Systems in Neighboring Countries,” *Romania Insider*, August 23, 2018, available at <https://www.romania-insider.com/vladimir-putin-russia-react-antiballistic-systems>.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> “Zahraničních politika České republiky data 5/2006” (Czech Foreign Policy Data 5/2006).

<sup>48</sup> “Šéf Ruské Armády Je Proti Základně USA u Nás Či v Polsku” (Russian Army Chief Is Against U.S. Missile Base in Poland or the Czech Republic), *Hospodářské Noviny* (Economic Newspaper), September 6, 2006, available at <https://zahranicni.ihned.cz/c1-19242370-sef-ruske-armady-je-proti-zakladne-usa-u-nas-ci-v-polsku>.

territory first in a conflict.<sup>49</sup> Russia extended these preemptive threats to Poland, too.<sup>50</sup>

Andrei Kokoshin, chairman of the State Duma Committee on the Commonwealth of Independent States and Relations with Expatriates, threatened negative consequences should the Czech Republic agree to host a U.S. missile defense system.<sup>51</sup> Others, for example, General Director of the Russian Federal Space Agency Vladimir Popovkin, even called an X-band radar the United States wanted to place in the Czech Republic with no offensive capabilities whatsoever an “apparent” threat to Russia’s security.<sup>52</sup> Russian “experts” went out of their way to point out the supposed damage that hosting a U.S. radar on Czech territory would do to Russia’s security.<sup>53</sup> The Russian Federation issued yet more threats against the Czech

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<sup>49</sup> “Klaus jede do Moskvy. Radil se s Topolánkem o radaru” (Klaus Is Going to Moscow. He Consulted with Topolánek about the Radar), *Aktuálně.cz*, April 13, 2007, available at <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/politika/klaus-jede-d Moskvy-radil-se-s-topolankem-o-radaru/r~i:article:397864/>; and “Zahraničních politika České republiky data 1/2007” (Czech Foreign Policy Data 1/2007) (Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 2007), available at [https://www.mzv.cz/public/fd/f7/5e/73308\\_491959\\_Data\\_mesicniku\\_ZP2007\\_01.pdf](https://www.mzv.cz/public/fd/f7/5e/73308_491959_Data_mesicniku_ZP2007_01.pdf). Neither Romania nor the Czech Republic shares a border with the Russian Federation. Poland shares a border with a Russian enclave, Kaliningrad Oblast, that itself does not share a direct border with the Russian Federation.

<sup>50</sup> For an example, see “Zahraničních politika České republiky data 2/2007” (Czech Foreign Policy Data 2/2007) (Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, February 2007), available at [https://www.mzv.cz/public/c1/76/a7/73312\\_491960\\_Data\\_mesicniku\\_ZP2007\\_02.pdf](https://www.mzv.cz/public/c1/76/a7/73312_491960_Data_mesicniku_ZP2007_02.pdf).

<sup>51</sup> “Zahraničních politika České republiky data 1/2007” (Czech Foreign Policy Data 1/2007) (Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 10, 2019), available at [https://www.mzv.cz/public/fd/f7/5e/73308\\_491959\\_Data\\_mesicniku\\_ZP2007\\_01.pdf](https://www.mzv.cz/public/fd/f7/5e/73308_491959_Data_mesicniku_ZP2007_01.pdf).

<sup>52</sup> “Rusko: Americká základna v ČR je ‘jasná hrozba’” (Russia: U.S. Base in the Czech Republic Is a “Clear Threat”), *Hospodářské noviny* (Economic Newspaper), January 22, 2007, available at <https://zahranicni.ihned.cz/c1-20236130-rusko-americka-zakladna-v-cr-je-jasna-hrozba>.

<sup>53</sup> “Americká základna prý poškodí bezpečnost ČR” (U.S. Base in the Czech Republic Will Damage Czech Security), *Týden* (Week), February 6, 2007, available at [https://www.tyden.cz/rubriky/domaci/americka-zakladna-pry-poskodi-bezpecnost-cr\\_2700.html?showTab=nejtenejsi-7](https://www.tyden.cz/rubriky/domaci/americka-zakladna-pry-poskodi-bezpecnost-cr_2700.html?showTab=nejtenejsi-7).



Republic throughout the duration of U.S.-Czech negotiations.<sup>54</sup> President Putin even equated a U.S. decision to place missile defense components in Poland and the Czech Republic to the U.S. decision to place Pershing II missiles in Western Europe during the Cold War.<sup>55</sup>

These threats are obviously part of a broader effort to delegitimize missile defenses and undermine allied cooperation; they cannot be viewed in isolation. The objective of Russia's narratives against U.S. missile defense systems in Europe is to split NATO between states that support missile defenses and states that do not, in order to exploit the potential cleavage generated by this disagreement. Because this inherent purpose is political, it does not matter how hard NATO and the United States try to assure Russia that their missile defense architecture is incapable of undermining Russia's strategic deterrent and missile capabilities. To the Russian leadership, NATO is a useful opponent because it helps the Putin regime to distract the Russian public's attention from domestic problems, such as widespread corruption, poor economic performance, and repression of civil society.<sup>56</sup>

Given the large disparity between Russia's offensive arsenal and U.S. missile defense capabilities, none of the U.S. Administrations' missile defense plans since the ABM Treaty withdrawal could even remotely counter Russia's missile arsenal. Russia deploys thousands of missiles of various ranges (including hundreds capable of reaching the U.S. homeland) on hundreds of launchers. Missile defense

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<sup>54</sup> "Na Česko zaměříme rakety, hrozí Moskva" (We Will Train Rockets on the Czech Republic, Threatens Moscow), *Novinky.cz*, February 19, 2007, available at <https://www.novinky.cz/zahranicni/evropa/109718-na-cesko-zamerime-rakety-hrozi-moskva.html>.

<sup>55</sup> "Zahraničních politika České republiky data 4/2007" (Czech Foreign Policy Data 4/2007).

<sup>56</sup> Bilyana Lilly, "How Putin Uses Missile Defence in Europe to Distract Russian Voters," *NATO Review*, January 29, 2015, available at <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2015/01/29/how-putin-uses-missile-defence-in-europe-to-distract-russian-voters/index.html>.

would not make a significant difference should Russia attack NATO with either nuclear or conventional weapons. Further underscoring the political nature of Russia's objections to missile defense placements in Europe, Sergei Karakaev, Russia's Strategic Missile Forces Commander, said in December 2015 that Russia could destroy NATO's missile defense sites in Europe.<sup>57</sup>

### **U.S. Missile Defense Sites in Europe and Russia's Arms Control Concerns**

There is another criticism that Russia leveraged against U.S. missile defense deployments in Poland and Romania. These deployments are different from those the Bush Administration planned, as is shown later in this paper.<sup>58</sup> Russia argued that the Aegis Ashore sites in Europe violated the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty when the treaty was in force.<sup>59</sup> Russia even demanded that the United States dismantle the missile defense site in Romania due to Russia's arms control concerns.<sup>60</sup> Russia's accusations were perhaps inspired by its own cheating on the INF Treaty, which was made public

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<sup>57</sup> Irina Marica, "Russia Says It Can Destroy NATO's Antimissile Defense Systems in Romania and Poland," *Romania Insider*, December 17, 2015, available at <https://www.romania-insider.com/russia-says-it-can-destroy-natos-antimissile-defense-systems-in-romania-and-poland>.

<sup>58</sup> U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation for all intents and purposes stopped after the Obama Administration's announcement of the European Phased Adaptive Approach in September 2009.

<sup>59</sup> The Trump Administration withdrew from the INF Treaty in August 2019 as a consequence of Russia's violations of the treaty and its unwillingness to come back into compliance with terms of the treaty.

<sup>60</sup> "U.S. Says 'In Compliance' with Treaty After Russia Demands Washington Destroy Defense System," *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, February 8, 2019, available at <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-demands-u-s-destroy-missile-defense-system-in-romania-military-drones/29758623.html>.

in the U.S. Department of State's 2014 *Annual Compliance Report*.<sup>61</sup>

Just like Russia's many other criticisms of allied missile defense efforts, its allegations of U.S. INF Treaty violations were untrue. Aegis Ashore sites are incapable of launching Tomahawk cruise missiles absent software and hardware modifications. The United States could not perform such modifications without Romania's and Poland's consent. In Poland and Romania, the Aegis Ashore sites can only launch defensive interceptors, which were not subject to elimination provisions under the INF Treaty.

In the case of Romania, it is possible that a renegotiation of the basing agreements would be required should the purpose of the site be changed, as its missile defense agreement with the United States explicitly states that the site is for defensive purposes only.<sup>62</sup> Russian officials maintain that they cannot "understand what tasks the Aegis Ashore system will accomplish in the missile defense area... Perhaps, the problem is that we understand missile threats differently than the U.S. and its allies."<sup>63</sup> That is likely. NATO and Russia do not face the same adversaries, nor do they share political values or geopolitical goals. In fact, Russia considers NATO its adversary, which would make it surprising if Russia shared NATO's threat perceptions.

Russia's INF Treaty objections to Aegis Ashore sites, even though factually incorrect, became moot when the Trump Administration withdrew from the treaty in August

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<sup>61</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments," July 31, 2014, available at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/avc/rls/rpt/2014/230047.htm#inf2>.

<sup>62</sup> News release, "The United States Remains in Compliance with the INF Treaty," U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, February 8, 2019, available at <https://nato.usmission.gov/press-release-the-united-states-remains-in-compliance-with-the-inf-treaty/>.

<sup>63</sup> "Moscow Receives US Explanation on Deployment of THAAD System to Romania," TASS Russian News Agency, April 26, 2019, available at <https://tass.com/politics/1055978>.

2019 due to Russia's years-long cheating on the treaty, and unsuccessful U.S. attempts to bring Russia back into compliance.<sup>64</sup> Following the withdrawal, the United States tested an intermediate-range ballistic missile from a MK 41 launcher, a similar but different type of launcher that is deployed in Romania and will be deployed in Poland in the future.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, the missile defense site in Romania lacks "essential elements for launching a land-attack missile, including software, fire control hardware, and additional support equipment," which means that it cannot be used for offensive purposes, according to Brian McKeon, the Obama Administration's Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Policy.<sup>66</sup>

### **Missile Defense Cooperation in the NATO Context**

In parallel with missile defense negotiations with Poland and the Czech Republic, and later with Poland and Romania, the United States and proponents of missile defense cooperation in Europe worked on developing a NATO framework for missile defense cooperation. Securing NATO's consensus was extremely important given Russia's sustained opposition to missile defense, as it would prevent a major split on the issue among NATO allies. NATO initiated a missile defense feasibility study in November

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<sup>64</sup> Amy Woolf, "U.S. Withdrawal from the INF Treaty: What's Next," *Congressional Research Service In Focus*, updated January 2, 20210, available at <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11051>.

<sup>65</sup> Idrees Ali, "U.S. Tests First Ground-Launched Cruise Missile after INF Treaty Exit," *Reuters*, August 19, 2019, available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-pentagon-missiles-russia/after-inf-treaty-exit-u-s-tests-ground-launched-cruise-missile-idUSKCN1V911V>.

<sup>66</sup> Larry Luxner, "Top Pentagon Official Disputes Russian Claims That Aegis Ashore Violates INF Treaty," *Atlantic Council blog*, June 26, 2015, available at <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/top-pentagon-official-disputes-russian-claims-that-aegis-ashore-violates-inf-treaty/>.

2002.<sup>67</sup> The study examined “options for protecting Alliance territory, forces and population centers against the full range of missile threats...consistent with the indivisibility of Allied security,” and concluded that U.S. missile defense plans were compatible with NATO missile defense systems.<sup>68</sup> Heads of state and governments acknowledged the study at the Riga Summit in November 2006.<sup>69</sup>

The 2008 Bucharest Summit declaration endorsed U.S. missile defense plans as a contribution to Allied security, and the 2009 Strasbourg/Kehl Summit declaration stated that “Ballistic missile proliferation poses an increasing threat to Allies’ forces, territory, and populations,” and called for additional work on NATO missile defense.<sup>70</sup> At the 2010 Lisbon Summit, NATO decided to “develop a missile defense capability to pursue its core task of collective defense.”<sup>71</sup> An interim missile defense capability was announced at the Chicago Summit in 2012.<sup>72</sup> These declarations were not just about systems in Poland and Romania, but encompassed other allied contributions to

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<sup>67</sup> Peppino DeBiasso, “Missile Defense and NATO Security,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Vol. 51 (September 2008), p. 50.

<sup>68</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “NATO Prague Summit Declaration,” November 21, 2002, available at [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_19552.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_19552.htm).

<sup>69</sup> Peppino DeBiasso, “Missile Defense and NATO Security,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Vol. 51 (September 2008), p. 50.

<sup>70</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Bucharest Summit Declaration,” April 3, 2008, available at

[https://www.nato.int/cps/us/natohq/official\\_texts\\_8443.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/us/natohq/official_texts_8443.htm), and North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Strasbourg/Kehl,” April 4, 2009, available at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_52837.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_52837.htm).

<sup>71</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Lisbon Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Lisbon,” November 20, 2010, available at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_68828.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_68828.htm).

<sup>72</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Chicago Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Chicago on 20 May 2012,” May 20, 2012, available at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_87593.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_87593.htm).

missile defenses (such as the United Kingdom and Denmark hosting early warning radars, or Spain hosting missile-defense-capable ships).

Following these declarations, NATO countries developed the Active Layered Theatre Ballistic Missile Defense (ALTBMD) command-and-control system, a backbone of NATO's missile defense efforts to which individual countries can "plug in" their missile defense capabilities. Contributions to ALTBMd are voluntary and national, but the 2014 Wales Summit declaration states that its expansion to territorial defense is "eligible for common funding."<sup>73</sup> The ALTBMd is designed for short-range and intermediate-range ballistic missile threats of up to 3,000 kilometers. It is "the communications, command and control and battle management software that binds national capabilities into an Alliance capability."<sup>74</sup> The ALTBMd offers an elegant solution to how allies with different missile defense capabilities and assets can contribute to the joint task of defending NATO members. It is a good example of pooling and sharing limited defense resources.

With respect to Aegis Ashore sites in Poland and Romania, due to the short timelines involved in a ballistic missile intercept, a decision to shoot down an incoming ballistic missile would be made by the United States and not subject to the North Atlantic Council's approval. The United States, however, goes out of its way to provide as much transparency in its decision-making and operational planning as possible. The United States extends a degree of transparency to the Russian Federation too; for example, it invited Russia to observe an SM-3 interceptor

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<sup>73</sup> "Secretary General Stoltenberg: Romania Is Helping Keep NATO's Citizens Safe," *Romania Insider*, October 9, 2017, available at <https://www.romania-insider.com/stoltenberg-romania-keep-natos-citizens-safe>.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

demonstration and to use Russia's own sensors to measure a U.S. missile defense test.<sup>75</sup>

## Conclusion

Russia's influence operations suffered a temporary slowdown after the end of the Cold War. This slowdown was driven by a lack of resources and Russia's difficulties in transitioning to a market economy and implementing democratic procedures after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the Russian Federation worked to maintain contacts built up during the Cold War and made use of them once resources became more plentiful. Following the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, the opposition to U.S.-allied missile defense cooperation became an important target of Russia's influence operations, particularly in the Czech Republic. In fact, Russian efforts to exploit the polarization surrounding the radar issue in the Czech Republic led to Russia's first successful large-scale influence operation on a NATO member's territory since the end of the Cold War.

At the same time, since the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, missile defense efforts became more broadly supported within NATO, despite Russia's claims that U.S. missile defense systems in Romania and Poland violated the now-dead INF Treaty. As allies found a common understanding on missile threats, they started to develop capabilities within their means to advance NATO's missile defense missions.

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<sup>75</sup> "Russia Won't Accept Invitation to Observe U.S. Missile Test," *The Moscow Times*, April 3, 2012, available at <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/04/03/russia-wont-accept-invitation-to-observe-us-missile-test-a13776>, and Susan Cornwell and Jim Wolf, "U.S. Invites Russia to Measure Missile-Defense Test," Reuters, October 18, 2011, available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/russia-usa-missiles/u-s-invites-russia-to-measure-missile-defense-test-idUSN1E79H18N20111018>.

Today, allies contribute their own capabilities that can be plugged into the ALTBMD for the benefit of many NATO members. These capabilities remain limited relative to Russia's nuclear and conventional ballistic missile arsenal, but Russia objects to their political implications and the grounding of Eastern and Central European NATO states more firmly within the transatlantic space.





## Chapter II: U.S.-Czech Missile Defense Cooperation and Missed Opportunities<sup>76</sup>

*It is difficult, however, to make people resilient against dangers that are never identified out loud.*

—Thomas Kent, *Striking Back: Overt and Covert Options to Combat Russian Disinformation*, 2020

The Czech Republic was the first NATO country to experience Russia's significant influence and disinformation operations after the end of the Cold War. Russia activated its networks built during the Cold War and maintained them throughout the 1990s and early 2000s to derail the U.S. and Czech governments' efforts to place an element of a U.S. ballistic missile defense system in the Czech Republic.<sup>77</sup> The United States officially asked the Czech government to cooperate on ballistic missile defense in January 2007, but the issue had already permeated into the public consciousness in the summer of 2006.<sup>78</sup> Unbeknownst to the public and many Czech members of Parliament, the United States and the Czech Republic had held serious missile defense cooperation discussions for years prior to 2006, including technical discussions narrowing down potential missile defense sites on Czech territory. It is extremely unlikely that the Russian Federation would not have known about these ongoing

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<sup>76</sup> This chapter draws on several previously published works: Michaela Dodge, "Russia's Influence Operations in the Czech Republic During the Radar Debate and Beyond," National Institute for Public Policy *Occasional Paper*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (February 2021); and Michaela Dodge, *U.S.-Czech Missile Defense Cooperation: Alliance Politics in Action* (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, 2020). The author is grateful to the National Institute for its permission to use these works.

<sup>77</sup> Dodge, "Russia's Influence Operations in the Czech Republic During the Radar Debate."

<sup>78</sup> Michaela Dodge, "U.S.-Czech Ballistic Missile Defense Cooperation: Lessons Learned and Way Forward for Others," *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (May 3, 2020), p. 291, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/01495933.2020.1740573>.

interactions, particularly given the U.S. Administration's desire to advance a broader cooperative relationship with Russia.

This chapter illustrates two decades of Russia's efforts to continue to penetrate Czech politics, the country's national security apparatus, its business world, and its public and media space, culminating in Russia's actions against Czech interests during U.S.-Czech radar discussions and even blowing up a Czech munitions depot in a separate action against the Czech Republic in 2014.<sup>79</sup> The main sources for this chapter are the Czech Security Service's annual reports (the first one was published in 1998), which highlight the remarkable consistency of Russia's intelligence activities and influence operations on Czech soil, even after the end of the Cold War, and after the Czech Republic's accession to NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004.<sup>80</sup> The Czech Security Service is a counterintelligence institution, and its reports demonstrate that it is possible to have unclassified discussions of a foreign actor's malign activities. These annual reports ought to be emulated by other NATO members that do not publish them yet because transparency is an important tool in countering influence operations.

The Russian Federation initially focused on maintaining and expanding existing relationships with other countries for business purposes. In the Czech Republic, it was particularly interested in the energy sector. Relationships between Russia's agents and Czech citizens were created during the Cold War when the Czechoslovakia was a part of the Warsaw Pact. When opportunities presented themselves, Russia did not hesitate to take advantage of

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<sup>79</sup> Russia's efforts were documented in Michaela Dodge, "Russia's Influence Operations in the Czech Republic During the Radar Debate," *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (March 3, 2020), pp. 162–70, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/01495933.2020.1718989>.

<sup>80</sup> "Security Information Service Annual Reports," accessed May 18, 2020, available at <https://www.bis.cz/en/>.

these relationships in order to affect political processes in the Czech Republic for the sake of advancing its own interests. Even though the annual counterintelligence reports are a good source of information about Russia's influence activities on Czech territory, different Czech governments displayed different levels of interest in discussing Russia's operations in the Czech Republic. For example, the Czech government publicly said very little during the most active part of U.S.-Czech ballistic missile negotiations in 2007 and 2008. The lack of commentary on Russia's activities was surprising given its vigorous efforts to disrupt U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation.

### **U.S.-Czech Missile Defense Cooperation: A Brief History**

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 consistent in frequency, partly because the issue of how to go about deploying a long-range missile defense system was still being worked out by the Bush Administration. For example, there was no activity during the Stanislav Gross government (between April 2004 and April 2005), which itself was consumed by domestic corruption scandals.

Then, in January 2007, the United States submitted a formal request to the Czech government that the Czech Republic host an X-band radar, a part of the U.S. missile defense system, on its territory.<sup>81</sup> The Czech government agreed to discuss the issue with the United States. Before the United States submitted a formal request, the Czech public and parliamentarians knew precious little about

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<sup>81</sup> The United States announced its withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in December 2001. Bush Administration officials briefed allies (and other countries) on the rationale for the U.S. withdrawal. The Czech media noted the withdrawal with passing interest.

cooperative missile defense efforts, and their understanding of ballistic missile defense systems was largely perfunctory. This low level of information undoubtedly made it easier for the Russian Federation to manipulate information about a missile defense system and influence Czech public opinion against it.

The Czech Ministry of Defense was the primary point of contact for the initial missile defense discussions with the United States. That is because these discussions concerned technical aspects of missile defense systems, particularly those pertaining to stationing a system component on Czech territory. Several Czech armed services' military training areas were selected as candidate sites.

These initial discussions "were very small, quiet, and carefully crafted," according to a George W. Bush Administration official.<sup>82</sup> Missile defense systems were an enigma for Czech government officials. Not many people appreciated their importance and the "long-term consequences that such cooperation could have," according to Karel Ulík, then-desk officer for Ballistic Missile Defense and Weapons of Mass Destruction Policy at the Defense Policy Department of the Czech Ministry of Defense.<sup>83</sup> The political environment seemed good as "representatives of the Czech government expressed a rather robust willingness to participate in U.S. missile defense plans," according to one Bush Administration official.<sup>84</sup> With the exception of the Czech Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (*Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy* or KSČM),

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<sup>82</sup> Author interview with Ambassador J.D. Crouch, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy from 2001 to 2003, and Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor from March 2005 to June 2007, by phone, January 11, 2019.

<sup>83</sup> Author interview with Karel Ulík, desk officer for Ballistic Missile Defense and Weapons of Mass Destruction Policy at the Defense Policy Department of the Czech Ministry of Defense from 2002 to 2007, by video, January 12, 2019.

<sup>84</sup> Author interview with David Trachtenberg, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy from 2001 to 2003, in person, January 6, 2019.

which has historically opposed any cooperation with the United States due to its anti-Americanism and affinity for the Russian Federation, Czech political parties seemed in agreement that missile defense cooperation with the United States would strengthen the Czech geopolitical position and was in the Czech interest.<sup>85</sup>

Early on, Czech political representatives linked the missile defense issue to missile defense at NATO and argued that allies would benefit from missile defense capabilities, as Czech Defense Minister Jaroslav Tvrdík of the Czech Social Democratic Party (Česká strana sociálně demokratická or ČSSD) did during his September 2002 visit to Washington, D.C.<sup>86</sup> Another mention of U.S.-Czech missile defense efforts occurred in October 2002 when Czech Foreign Minister Cyril Svoboda of the Christian and Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party (Křesťanská a demokratická unie – Československá strana lidová or KDU-ČSL) stated that the government had a “generally positive” attitude toward missile defense cooperation with the United States.<sup>87</sup>

The Czech *National Security Strategy* published in 2003 briefly mentioned missile defense. The document announced the government's interest in opportunities, including joint ones, to protect the Czech Republic from weapons of mass destruction and more specifically from

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<sup>85</sup> Stanislav Houdek, Zuzana Janská, and Pavel Otto, “Česko může hostit americké rakety, tvrdí v USA” (The Czech Republic Can Host U.S. Interceptors, So They Say in the United States), *Hospodářské noviny*, October 3, 2002, available at <https://archiv.ihned.cz/c1-11601640-cesko-muze-hostit-americke-rakety-tvrdi-v-usa>.

<sup>86</sup> “Tvrdík: V USA jsem nic nesliboval” (Tvrdík: I Did Not Promise Anything in the United States), *Hospodářské noviny*, September 20, 2002, available at <https://archiv.ihned.cz/c1-11530250-tvrdik-v-US-jsem-nic-nesliboval>.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. “Ujišťuji všechny, že nikdy Česká republika neřekla ústy žádného člena vlády, že jsme se rozhodli pro tu, či onu participaci (na projektu)” (“Let me assure you all that no representative of the Czech government has ever promised to participate one way or another (on the missile defense project), and “obecně příznivý přístup” (“generally positive attitude”).

ballistic missile proliferation.<sup>88</sup> While the document did not specifically mention missile defense cooperation with the United States, Foreign Minister Svoboda said he was counting on Czech participation in U.S. missile defense plans.<sup>89</sup>

In September 2003, the United States delivered technical requirements for a potential missile defense site to the Czech Republic.<sup>90</sup> In October 2003, Foreign Minister Svoboda reiterated that discussions on U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation were “serious and sensitive.”<sup>91</sup> In February 2004, the Czech government admitted that discussions about a potential missile defense host site with the United States may include “preliminary technical and technical-organizational” information.<sup>92</sup> The Czech Republic provided the United States with information about the three most suitable locations for hosting a missile defense component based on parameters provided by the United States.<sup>93</sup> The parameters had to do with a potential site’s infrastructure and soil composition.<sup>94</sup> Regardless of

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<sup>88</sup> “Bezpečnostní strategie České republiky” (National Security Strategy of the Czech Republic), 2003, p. 12.

<sup>89</sup> Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR (Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs), “Zahraniční politika České republiky data 7-8/2003” (Czech Foreign Policy Data 7-8/2003), available at [https://www.mzv.cz/public/ea/3e/8b/23102\\_14945\\_Data78\\_2003.doc](https://www.mzv.cz/public/ea/3e/8b/23102_14945_Data78_2003.doc).

<sup>90</sup> Government of the Czech Republic, “Anti-Missile Defence in the Czech Republic,” September 22, 2009, available at <https://www.vlada.cz/en/media-centrum/aktualne/anti-missile-defence-in-the-czech-republic--61942/>.

<sup>91</sup> Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR (Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs), “Zahraniční politika České republiky data 10/2003” (Czech Foreign Policy Data 10/2003), available at [https://www.mzv.cz/public/c9/e1/81/23110\\_14945\\_Data10\\_2003.doc](https://www.mzv.cz/public/c9/e1/81/23110_14945_Data10_2003.doc).

<sup>92</sup> Government of the Czech Republic, “Usnesení vlády České Republiky č. 119” (Government Resolution No. 119), February 4, 2004, available at [https://kormoran.vlada.cz/usneseni/usneseni\\_webtest.nsf/0/4C0C759480015142C12571B6006BD017](https://kormoran.vlada.cz/usneseni/usneseni_webtest.nsf/0/4C0C759480015142C12571B6006BD017).

<sup>93</sup> Czech Ministry of Defense, “Chronologie vývoje projektu protiraketové obrany USA” (Chronology of U.S. Missile Defense Programs), available at <http://www.army.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=8781>.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

these fairly involved discussions, Foreign Minister Svoboda talked only about the existence of expert-level discussions.<sup>95</sup>

The information about the Czech Republic potentially hosting a U.S. missile defense component was reported in the Czech press for the first time in March 2006.<sup>96</sup> Then in May 2006, the Czech press reported on the Bush Administration's plan to place 10 long-range interceptors in Europe.<sup>97</sup> These first reports started public discussions about the role that the Czech Republic might play in U.S. missile defense plans in Europe. The reports also prompted the founding of the civic movement "No Bases Initiative" in August 2006.<sup>98</sup> The initiative's stated purpose was to fight "against the placement of a U.S. missile defense base on Czech territory, in a non-violent manner."<sup>99</sup> The Russian Federation did not welcome discussions about Czech participation in a U.S. missile defense program. By the appearances of its subsequent actions, it resolved to thwart U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperative efforts.

The June 2006 elections were a pivotal moment for U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation. The Social Democratic

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<sup>95</sup> Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR (Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs), "Zahraničních politika České republiky data 7-8/2004" (Czech Foreign Policy Data 7-8/2004), August 2004, available at [https://www.mzv.cz/public/eb/f6/65/23146\\_14945\\_Data78\\_2004.doc](https://www.mzv.cz/public/eb/f6/65/23146_14945_Data78_2004.doc).

<sup>96</sup> The other two candidates were Poland and, somewhat less seriously, the United Kingdom. Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR (Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs), "Zahraničních politika 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](https://www.mzv.cz/public/74/15/11/73274_491937_Data_mesicniku_ZP2006_03.pdf).

<sup>97</sup> Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR (Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs), "Zahraničních politika České republiky data 5/2006" (Czech Foreign Policy Data 5/2006), May 2006, available at [https://www.mzv.cz/public/fb/50/60/73282\\_491940\\_Data\\_mesicniku\\_ZP2006\\_05.pdf](https://www.mzv.cz/public/fb/50/60/73282_491940_Data_mesicniku_ZP2006_05.pdf).

<sup>98</sup> Author translation from Czech. "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](http://www.nezakladnam.cz/cs/106_vznik-spolecenske-iniciativy-ne-zakladnam).

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.



Party, an original supporter of U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation leading the government since 1998, narrowly lost elections in the Chamber of Deputies, the lower chamber of the Czech Parliament, to the Civic Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana or ODS), a traditionally pro-American and pro-transatlantic party. The two parties were unable to agree on forming a coalition. Coalition-building is essential in a plurality electoral system where leading parties usually score about a third of the total votes at most and need the support of half the members of the Chamber of Deputies to govern. The Social Democrats found themselves in opposition, and the issue of missile defense cooperation with the United States became a visible way to distinguish themselves from the Civic Democrats. Their opposition and distancing from previous policies undoubtedly opened the door for an increased scope of Russia's influence operations.

But before the Social Democrats made the 180-degree turn, U.S. officials and technical experts assessed the missile defense site suitability of selected Czech locations under the auspices of the Social Democratic, now lame-duck, government.<sup>100</sup> The Social Democratic Party had to publicly acknowledge these ongoing technical-organizational discussions.<sup>101</sup> The lame-duck government also requested that the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defense make a joint recommendation should the Czech government be asked to host a U.S. missile defense site in one of these locations.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Radek Honzák, "Američané chtějí základnu v Česku už od května" (Americans Wanted the Base in the Czech Republic Since May), *Hospodářské noviny* (Economic Newspaper), August 8, 2006, available at <https://archiv.ihned.cz/c1-19045630-americane-chteji-zakladnu-v-cesku-uz-od-kvetna>.

<sup>101</sup> Government of the Czech Republic, "Usnesení vlády České Republiky č. 929" (Government Resolution No. 929), July 26, 2006, available at [https://kormoran.vlada.cz/usneseni/usneseni\\_webtest.nsf/WebGovRes/CBA2A2543790623DC12571CE0047EDE2?OpenDocument](https://kormoran.vlada.cz/usneseni/usneseni_webtest.nsf/WebGovRes/CBA2A2543790623DC12571CE0047EDE2?OpenDocument).

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

That was not the end of electoral woes. The winning Civic Democrats were unable to assemble a government capable of obtaining the Chamber of Deputies' approval until January 9, 2007, and relied on a few renegade opposition parliamentarians for support. But these parliamentarians did not commit to endorsing the government's program, which made the political situation even more volatile. The Czech government, led by Prime Minister Miroslav Topolánek, was always on the verge of losing the Chamber of Deputies' confidence and falling. The political volatility had a negative effect on U.S.-Czech missile defense negotiations due to the lack of a broad political mandate that would have precluded the excessive politization of the issue in the public sphere.<sup>103</sup>

The Social Democratic Party reportedly promised to support the continuation of the government's missile defense project, which is why the government did not put much thought into a communications campaign in support of these efforts.<sup>104</sup> For years, the party had sanctioned and advanced U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation. But in opposition it became politically expedient to oppose the cooperation, since about half the Czech population did not support hosting a U.S. missile defense component when the discussions became public. Initially, about a third of Social Democrats were reportedly in favor of Czech participation

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<sup>103</sup> The first proposed government was voted down in the Czech Chamber of Deputies on October 3, 2006.

<sup>104</sup> Tereza Šídlová, Jindřich Šídlo, "Předsednictví EU je opruz, zkusme se u něj totálně nerozhádat, doporučuje Topolánek" (Presidency of the EU Is Boring, Let's Try to Avoid Disruptive Arguments over It, Recommends Topolánek), *Seznam*, December 29, 2021, available at [https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-politika-predsednictvi-eu-je-opruz-zkusme-se-u-nej-totalne-nerozhadat-doporucuje-topolane-183245#utm\\_content=ribbonnews&utm\\_term=EU%20je%20opruz&utm\\_medium=hint&utm\\_source=search.seznam.cz](https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-politika-predsednictvi-eu-je-opruz-zkusme-se-u-nej-totalne-nerozhadat-doporucuje-topolane-183245#utm_content=ribbonnews&utm_term=EU%20je%20opruz&utm_medium=hint&utm_source=search.seznam.cz).

in U.S. missile defense plans in Europe.<sup>105</sup> Once relegated to opposition status, the party started to criticize the very missile defense cooperation with the United States that it had pursued when it was in power.<sup>106</sup> The irony was not lost on supporters of U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation who pointed out that the Czech Social Democrats had supported and pursued the Czech Republic's participation in U.S. missile defense plans for years.<sup>107</sup>

Nevertheless, the opposition ČSSD argued that hosting a U.S. missile defense component was a "unilateral" project, without a broader implementation agreement and a "clear" mission, and that it was not in the Czech Republic's interests. The ČSSD argued that the potential geopolitical and military impacts of the project were too unclear for the government to commit to a plan.<sup>108</sup> Ironically, because the previous ČSSD-led governments were secretive about their missile defense discussions with the United States and

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<sup>105</sup> Viliam Buchert, "Radar v Brdech podporuje stále více voličů zelených i ČSSD" (Radar in Brdy's Support Among the Green Party and the Social Democratic Party Voters Increasing), *MF Dnes*, October 6, 2008, available at [https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/radar-v-brdech-podporuje-stale-vice-volicu-zelenych-i-cssd.A081006\\_080812\\_domaci\\_jte](https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/radar-v-brdech-podporuje-stale-vice-volicu-zelenych-i-cssd.A081006_080812_domaci_jte).

<sup>106</sup> There were intra-party disagreements over whether to support the plan. For example, Social Democrat Miroslav Svoboda agreed that the Czech Republic should host a U.S. radar site: Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR (Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs), "Zahraničních politika České republiky data 4/2007" (Czech Foreign Policy Data 4/2007), April 2007, available at [https://www.mzv.cz/public/dc/49/79/73320\\_491964\\_Data\\_mesicniku\\_ZP2007\\_04.pdf](https://www.mzv.cz/public/dc/49/79/73320_491964_Data_mesicniku_ZP2007_04.pdf).

<sup>107</sup> "Paroubek: ČSSD nechce základnu USA" (Paroubek: Czech Social Democratic Party Does Not Want a U.S. Missile Base), *Hospodářské noviny* (Economic Newspaper), September 5, 2006, available at <https://archiv.ihned.cz/c1-19225330-paroubek-cssd-nechce-zakladnu-usa>.

<sup>108</sup> Jan Červenka, "Americké protiraketové základny v ČR a Polsku z pohledu domácí veřejnosti" (U.S. Missile Defense Bases in the Czech Republic and Poland from the Perspective of the Public), Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění (Public Opinion Research Center), September 10, 2007, available at [https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com\\_form2content/documents/c3/a1136/f28/%c4%8cervenka,%20Jan.%20Americk%c3%a9%20protiraketov%c3%a9%20z%c3%a1kladny%20v%20%c4%8cR%20a%20Polsku%20z%20pohledu%20dom%c3%a1c%c3%ad%20ve%c5%99ejnosti.pdf](https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com_form2content/documents/c3/a1136/f28/%c4%8cervenka,%20Jan.%20Americk%c3%a9%20protiraketov%c3%a9%20z%c3%a1kladny%20v%20%c4%8cR%20a%20Polsku%20z%20pohledu%20dom%c3%a1c%c3%ad%20ve%c5%99ejnosti.pdf), p. 4.

severely restricted any information about it not only for the general public, but also for a majority of parliamentarians in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, the change of stance on this issue did not incur any political penalties for the party.<sup>109</sup>

In fact, given the public's split on the issue, a switch may have even helped the Social Democrats to gain more recognition and electoral votes in elections two years later. Nor did Czech President Václav Klaus (who held the office from 2003 to 2013) know about ongoing discussions with the United States until two months after the June 2006 elections, although perhaps that factor is not as significant given the Czech president's largely representative role.<sup>110</sup>

The ČSSD's new-found opposition to U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation gave added legitimacy to those who opposed such cooperation—and the party thus became an enabler of Russia's influence operations in the Czech Republic.

Prior to September 2006, it was not clear in the Czech Republic what kind of missile defense presence the United States had in mind when discussing missile defense cooperation with other European countries. In September 2006, the U.S. government reportedly expressed an interest in two ballistic missile defense sites rather than one

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<sup>109</sup> "Zápis z 8. společné schůze zahraničního výboru, výboru pro obranu, výboru pro bezpečnost a ústavně právního výboru" (Record from the 8th Joint Session of the Committees on Foreign Affairs, Defense, Security, and Constitutional and Legal Affairs), January 31, 2007, available at [https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&ved=2ahUKEwivlZDZqcjAhUshOAKHT8ICDQQFjADegQIBhAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.psp.cz%2Fsqw%2Ftext%2Forig2.sqw%3Fidd%3D8721&usg=AOvVaw1yNiLKue\\_eqaMLUsnK4RF6](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&ved=2ahUKEwivlZDZqcjAhUshOAKHT8ICDQQFjADegQIBhAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.psp.cz%2Fsqw%2Ftext%2Forig2.sqw%3Fidd%3D8721&usg=AOvVaw1yNiLKue_eqaMLUsnK4RF6).

<sup>110</sup> "Klaus podpořil referendum o radaru" (Klaus Expressed Support for a Referendum on a Radar), *Novinky.cz*, June 13, 2007, available at <https://www.novinky.cz/domaci/116961-klaus-podporil-referendum-o-radaru.html>.

integrated site.<sup>111</sup> In December 2006, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates recommended that the United States deploy 10 two-stage Ground-Based Midcourse Defense (GMD) interceptors in Poland, and a radar installation in the Czech Republic, to protect the United States and parts of Europe from North Korean and Iranian ballistic missiles.<sup>112</sup> The United States was in the process of deploying a three-stage variant of the GMD interceptor to Alaska and California, which improved the image of the project, since the research and development for the interceptors to be placed in Europe would not have to start from scratch.

The Czech government thought that hosting a radar would be politically less contentious than hosting interceptors. Yet, generating and sustaining political support for hosting even a U.S. radar with no offensive capabilities whatsoever proved to be an extremely difficult challenge for the Czech government. The opposition to the placement painted the radar as an offensive, aggressive system that would threaten Czech security, the environment, and the health of those living within the vicinity of the radar.

Negotiations between the United States and the Czech Republic about hosting a radar on Czech territory officially started on January 19, 2007, shortly after the ODS-led government obtained the Chamber of Deputies' support.<sup>113</sup> The government negotiated two main agreements: the Broader Ballistic Missile Defense Agreement (BMDA) and the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). Both of them

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<sup>111</sup> "Zápis z 8. společné schůze zahraničního výboru, výboru pro obranu, výboru pro bezpečnost a ústavně právního výboru" (Record from the 8th Joint Session of the Committees on Foreign Affairs, Defense, Security, and Constitutional and Legal Affairs).

<sup>112</sup> Robert Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War* (New York, NY: Vintage, 2015), p. 159.

<sup>113</sup> "Chronologie vývoje projektu protiraketové obrany USA" (Chronology of U.S. Ballistic Missile Defense Programs).

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. Its effort was belated relative to those of the opponents' who had been organizing and producing content since the summer of 2006. The missile defense issue was not on anyone's priority list; as one Czech academic stated, "Politicians were largely ignorant of and were not interested in the issue."<sup>114</sup> The sentiment was not limited to Czech politicians; the general public was equally plagued by a general lack of interest in defense issues and in missile defense in particular.

U.S.-Czech missile defense negotiations were hampered and delayed by the Czech government's political instability and marked by the public's rising opposition to the United States placing a radar on Czech territory, some of it expressed through demonstrations. Nevertheless, negotiations concluded in April 2008.<sup>115</sup> The U.S. and Czech governments jointly announced the conclusion at the 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.<sup>116</sup> The government hoped that the project would be more acceptable to the public if framed as a contribution to NATO, which traditionally enjoyed high levels of support among Czech citizens. Czech Foreign

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<sup>114</sup> Author interview with Petr Suchý, head of the Department of International Relations and European Studies, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Czech Republic, via WhatsApp, November 20, 2019.

<sup>115</sup> "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, available at [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](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).

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

Minister Karel Schwarzenberg and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice signed the BMDA on July 8, 2008.<sup>117</sup>

The Czech government approved a SOFA with the United States on September 10, 2008.<sup>118</sup> The SOFA was signed by Secretary Gates and Defense Minister Parkanová on September 19, 2008, in London.<sup>119</sup> Despite the difficult political position of the Czech government, the Czech Senate gave its consent to the ratification of the BMDA and the SOFA on November 27, 2008.<sup>120</sup> By then, the winner of the U.S. presidential election had become known. Democrat Barack Obama had stated during his campaign: "I will cut tens of billions of dollars in wasteful spending. I will cut investments in unproven missile defense systems."<sup>121</sup> These words caused concern for Czech supporters of missile defense cooperation. The Czech Senate's vote was meant to signal to the Obama Administration the government's hope

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<sup>117</sup> "Česko a USA podepsaly hlavní smlouvu o radaru," *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](https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/cesko-a-usa-podepsaly-hlavni-smlouvu-o-radaru.A080708_143558_domaci_jw).

<sup>118</sup> "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](https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/vlada-schvalila-smlouvu-sofa-radar-i-puda-pod-nim-zustane-cesku.A080910_142601_domaci_klu).

<sup>119</sup> "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, <https://www.novinky.cz/domaci/150035-parkanova-podepsala-smlouvu-o-pobytu-americky-ch-vojaku-v-cr.html>.

<sup>120</sup> 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 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>.

<sup>121</sup> Angie Drobnic Holan, "Obama Wants to Reduce Stockpiles, Not Disarm," *Politifact*, July 15, 2008, available at <https://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2008/jul/15/chain-email/obama-wants-to-reduce-stockpiles-not-disarm/>.

that it would not cancel the plan to place an X-band radar on Czech soil. The Czechs had been assured by Bush Administration officials that the X-band radar deployment would be necessary even if interceptors in Poland were cancelled.

For the Czech government, the difficulties with the new U.S. Administration's potential lack of support for the X-band radar deployment were just the beginning of the end. The Topolánek government fell when it lost its fifth no-confidence vote in the Chamber of Deputies on March 25, 2009. While missile defense was not the primary reason for this outcome, it certainly contributed to it. The decisive factors were the government's corruption scandals and support for unpopular steps like lowering benefits for families with children and increasing out-of-pocket healthcare fees.<sup>122</sup> But with the fallen government so invested in U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation, the damage to the cause of U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation was done.

Opponents of a U.S. X-band radar deployment to the Czech Republic, as well as the Russian Federation and its collaborators in the Czech Republic, pinned the government's fall almost solely on its missile defense support. The provisional, or "caretaker," government led by Prime Minister Jan Fischer was not supposed to stay past the originally expected fall 2009 elections but ended up serving the rest of the regular term (the next elections were held in October 2010).<sup>123</sup> The provisional government did not have enough political support to ratify the SOFA and

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<sup>122</sup> "Koaliční vláda padla kvůli aférám, krizi a radaru" (The Coalition Government Fell Due to Crises and the Radar), *Deník.cz*, March 25, 2009, [https://www.denik.cz/z\\_domova/vlada-pad-neduvera-afery-krize-radar20090325.html](https://www.denik.cz/z_domova/vlada-pad-neduvera-afery-krize-radar20090325.html).

<sup>123</sup> "Úřednická vláda pod vedením Jana Fischera končí" (The Bureaucratic Cabinet Under the Leadership of Jan Fischer Ends), *iRozhlas*, July 12, 2010, available at [https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/urednicka-vlada-pod-vedenim-jana-fischera-konci\\_201007121648\\_mkopp](https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/urednicka-vlada-pod-vedenim-jana-fischera-konci_201007121648_mkopp).



BMDA in the Chamber of Deputies. Both agreements remained controversial. That likely contributed to the Obama Administration's decision to change U.S. missile defense plans and cancel the X-band deployment to the Czech Republic.<sup>124</sup> The cancellation was announced in September 2009.<sup>125</sup>

Despite the cancellation of missile defense deployments to the Czech Republic and Poland, the Obama Administration did not abandon U.S. missile defense in Europe altogether. It announced the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA), which, if implemented according to the announced plan, would have resulted in more missile defense capability than the Bush Administration's missile defense plan. While Poland continued to play a significant role as a host nation, the Czech Republic was left out of the new missile defense plan.<sup>126</sup> Interestingly, most Czechs—even those who had supported the Bush Administration's deployments to the Czech Republic and Poland—supported the Obama Administration's decision to cancel the Bush missile defense plan.<sup>127</sup> The reason for this anomaly could have been general fatigue with the politicization of the issue.

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<sup>124</sup> "Fischer: O vládě budu mít jasno ve čtvrtek" (Fischer: I Will Be Clear About the Government on Thursday), *Česká televize* (Czech Television), April 25, 2009, available at <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/domaci/1410558-fischer-o-vlade-budu-mit-jasno-ve-ctvrtek>.

<sup>125</sup> Ken Dilanian, "Obama Scraps Bush Missile-Defense Plan," ABC News, September 17, 2009, available at <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/obama-scraps-bush-missile-defense-plan/story?id=8604357>.

<sup>126</sup> Jesse Lee, "Stronger, Smarter, and Swifter Defenses," The White House blog, September 17, 2009, available at <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2009/09/17/stronger-smarter-and-swifter-defenses>.

<sup>127</sup> Jan Červenka, "Jak občané hodnotí rozhodnutí vlády USA odstoupit od plánu na vybudování protiraketové radarové základny v ČR?" (How Do Czech Citizens Assess the Cancellation of the U.S. Decision to Build a Radar in the Czech Republic?), Public Opinion Research Center, November 30, 2009, available at [https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com\\_form2content/documents/c2/a655/f9/100971s\\_pm91130a.pdf](https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com_form2content/documents/c2/a655/f9/100971s_pm91130a.pdf).

Shortly after the Obama Administration's cancellation announcement, the Czech Republic harbored hopes of participating in its new missile defense plan, particularly given the many high-level Administration officials who visited the Czech Republic between October and November 2009, including then-U.S. Vice President Joe Biden.<sup>128</sup> In an effort to smooth out a rocky situation following the cancellation, the United States offered the Czech government an opportunity to host an early warning data center in November 2009.

Hosting an early warning data center would not require ratification of a bilateral agreement or permanent U.S. military presence, which made it an attractive option for those who thought that participating in a U.S. missile defense program in some way was better than not participating at all.<sup>129</sup> Yet, the data center would not provide the Czech government or allies with any new capabilities and would be expensive for the Czech Republic, so the plan never received wider support.<sup>130</sup> For all intents and purposes, this was the end of U.S.-Czech missile defense

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<sup>128</sup> "Američané posílají do Česka tři delegace kvůli protiraketové obraně" (Americans Send Three Delegations to the Czech Republic Because of Missile Defense), *iDnes.cz*, November 4, 2009, available at [https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/americane-posilaji-do-ceska-tri-delegace-kvuli-protiraketove-obrane.A091104\\_115248\\_domaci\\_jw](https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/americane-posilaji-do-ceska-tri-delegace-kvuli-protiraketove-obrane.A091104_115248_domaci_jw), and "Biden: USA a Česko budou jednat o raketách v listopadu" (Biden: The United States and the Czech Republic Will Negotiate Rockets in November), *Aktuálně.cz*, October 23, 2009, available at <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/zahranici/biden-usa-a-cesko-budou-jednat-o-raketach-v-listopadu/r~i:article:650969/>.

<sup>129</sup> Judy Dempsey and Dan Bilefsky, "Czechs, Disliking Role, Pull Out of U.S. Missile Defense Project," *The New York Times*, June 15, 2011, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/16/world/europe/16shield.html>. In the Czech original: "velitelství kosmických válek;" and Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic), "Zahraníčních politika České republiky dokumenty 7-8/2010" (Czech Foreign Policy Documents 7-8/2010), available at [https://www.mzv.cz/public/e1/44/d1/991028\\_920007\\_Dokumenty\\_mesicniku\\_ZP2010\\_07\\_08.doc](https://www.mzv.cz/public/e1/44/d1/991028_920007_Dokumenty_mesicniku_ZP2010_07_08.doc).

<sup>130</sup> Dempsey and Bilefsky, "Czechs, Disliking Role, Pull Out of U.S. Missile Defense Project."

cooperation, even as the Czech Republic continued to support NATO missile defense efforts.

### **Russian Influence Operations in the Czech Republic**

The story of Russia's influence operations in the Czech Republic remained largely untold until fairly recently.<sup>131</sup> Neither the United States nor the Czech Republic openly discussed Russia's activities on Czech territory during U.S.-Czech missile defense negotiations. It is likely that the story is still not complete, as some of the participants in these events and in Russia's influence operations continue to be politically active. During discussions and negotiations with the United States, the Czech government almost never discussed Russia's efforts to turn the Czech public and politicians against missile defense cooperation. This was always an odd aspect of the Czech government's communications strategy: Why did it not discuss Russia's interference in Czech sovereign political processes more openly? After all, transparency is one of the most important counter measures to influence operations.

The Czech media were not particularly interested in covering Russia's interference either, partly because national security topics generally do not enjoy a similar level of attention as domestic issues and therefore are not as interesting to cover, and partly due to Russia's penetration of the Czech media sphere. The situation appears to have grown worse over the past decade, with Russia operating a network of Czech-language broadcast media that significantly contributed to the Czech population's lack of solidarity with the Ukrainians following Russia's 2014

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<sup>131</sup> For more information see Michaela Dodge, *U.S.-Czech Missile Defense Cooperation: Alliance Politics in Action* (National Institute Press: Fairfax, VA, 2020).

dismemberment of Ukraine.<sup>132</sup> Additionally, the Russian Federation's extensive penetration of the Czech public, business, and political spheres enabled it to spread disinformation in ways that were not obviously traceable to its origin. Any suggestions that Russia was involved in influencing Czech politicians or the public were met with disbelief and skepticism—emotions that Russia stoked as part of its denial-and-deception campaign and that make up a standard influence operations repertoire.

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 on December 21, 2007.<sup>133</sup>

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. Russia activated its network 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 part of the Warsaw Pact during the Cold War. Russia's ability to conduct influence operations on their territories is partly determined by how they managed their transitions to

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<sup>132</sup> Salome Samadashvili, "Muzzling the Bear—Strategic Defence for Russia's Undeclared Information War on Europe," Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, June 2015, p. 32, available at [https://www.martenscentre.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/russia-gongos\\_0.pdf](https://www.martenscentre.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/russia-gongos_0.pdf).

<sup>133</sup> The Schengen Area is a border-free area within which the citizens of 26 European countries may travel freely without passports.

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's Activities Prior to U.S.-Czech Missile Defense Negotiations**

Appreciating the scale and scope of Russia's activities on Czech territory, as well as Russia's tactics and factors that enabled a successful execution of its influence operations, is essential to countering Russia's future influence operations. It is not that Russia knew or anticipated that the Czech Republic would be considered a U.S. missile defense host site when it maintained its network of influence agents in the 1990s; it is that Russia was prepared to move and gain the initiative when the opportunity presented itself. Russia most likely has built, or is building, similar networks in other countries to activate them when the opportunity presents itself.

The Soviet intelligence services never left the Czech Republic, they simply became Russian after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Affiliates of Soviet intelligence services continued their activities under new names, sometimes without as much as a break.<sup>134</sup> In the early 1990s, they were mostly concerned with economic activities and worked through organized crime networks and radical left-wing groups. The ascension of Vladimir Putin to power in the late 1990s rejuvenated the intelligence services and their activities became focused on "regaining its [Russia's] superpower status and influence in Central Europe; an effort that is not justified by references to ideologies like

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<sup>134</sup> Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2009" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2009), 2010, available at <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocní-zpravy/2009-vz-cz.pdf>.

during the Cold War but to power politics.”<sup>135</sup> President Putin created a situation in which the government’s tools of power permeated Russia’s economy and blurred the difference between state and private business activities.<sup>136</sup> Consequently, Russia’s intelligence services became intertwined with diplomacy, business, and private lives in ways that would be unseemly at best and illegal at worst in the United States and other democracies.

Russia’s initial goal was to improve its image among the Czech population following the breakup of the Soviet Union and to obtain the Czech Republic’s support for Russia’s geopolitical agenda in Central Europe.<sup>137</sup> As Russia’s economic situation deteriorated in the 1990s, these interests expanded to helping Russian companies to obtain economic influence in Czech strategic industries, particularly in the heavy industry and energy sectors. Most countries in Central and Eastern Europe were dependent on Russia’s oil and gas at the time, a situation that Russia has tried to perpetuate because it can use energy dependence as a political weapon.

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, and democratic institutions and the NATO

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<sup>135</sup> Czech Security Information Service, “Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 1998 a 1999” (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 1998 and 1999), 1999, available at <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocní-zpravy/zprava-o-cinnosti-za-rok-1998-a-1999.pdf>.

<sup>136</sup> Czech Security Information Service, “Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2008” (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2008), 2009, available at <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocní-zpravy/2008-vz-cz.pdf>.

<sup>137</sup> Czech Security Information Service, “Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 1998 a 1999” (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 1998 and 1999).

alliance writ large.<sup>138</sup> Czech participation in NATO's foreign missions has offered Russia an avenue for influencing the Czech public against NATO, particularly given Czech casualties incurred during foreign missions. Nevertheless, NATO continues to enjoy widespread popular support in the Czech Republic (hence the Czech government's efforts to portray U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation as part of a NATO project). Russia's broader goals related to influence operations have remained unchanged since the end of the Cold War: the relativization of truth, the undermining of pro-U.S. foreign policy in the Czech Republic, and the undermining of democratic institutions in general. These goals are another common denominator in all three case studies and shape Russia's activities beyond the states examined in this *Occasional Paper*.

The position of Russia's intelligence services in the Czech Republic has traditionally been fairly strong. One aspect mentioned already are the benefits of pre-existing connections, another is their knowledge of Czech culture and the operating environment.<sup>139</sup> Russian intelligence services were never short on willing collaborators and have not had a particularly difficult time penetrating the Czech government, business, academic, and private spheres. The information infrastructure and connections were developed in some cases decades before the United States started to discuss missile defense cooperation with the Czech Republic.

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<sup>138</sup> 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, available at <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocní-zpravy/vyrocní-zprava-2000.pdf>.

<sup>139</sup> Czech Security and Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2004" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2004), 2005, available at <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocní-zpravy/vyrocní-zprava-bezpecnostni-informacni-sluzby-za-rok-2004.pdf>.

Until relatively recently, the number of Russia's intelligence operatives in the Czech Republic has been disproportionate to the Czech presence in Russia, to the extent that the number of Russian intelligence operatives on Czech territory is known at all.<sup>140</sup> Following the disclosure that two Russian agents blew up a munitions depot in the Czech Republic, killing two Czech citizens, the Czech government addressed one of the important sources of disparity. It expelled over a hundred members of the Russian diplomatic corps and their family members and capped the number of Russian officials permitted to work at the Russian Federation's embassy in Prague to seven diplomats and 25 administrative and technical support personnel (the same number the Czechs are permitted to retain at their embassy in Moscow).<sup>141</sup> In the past, Russia routinely bullied the Czech Republic into accrediting its intelligence operatives as diplomats, thereby placing them out of reach of Czech laws, which undoubtedly made their work easier because that meant Russia's intelligence operatives could not be prosecuted for illegal activities like bribery and corruption.<sup>142</sup>

Before the recent expulsion, the number of Russian operatives was unusually high relative to the total embassy staff; about half of the Russian Federation's diplomatic representation in the Czech Republic were intelligence officers.<sup>143</sup> The disparity meant that if the Czech Republic

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<sup>140</sup> "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2009" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2009).

<sup>141</sup> Robert Muller, "Russia's Prague Embassy Stronghold Cleared Out in Spy Dispute," *Reuters*, May 31, 2021, available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russias-prague-embassy-stronghold-cleared-out-spy-dispute-2021-05-31/>.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., and "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2004" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2004).

<sup>143</sup> Czech Security and Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2005" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2005), 2006, available at



refused to accredit incoming diplomats or wanted to expel intelligence officers accredited as diplomats for breaking Czech laws, Russia's tit-for-tat retaliation would disproportionately hurt the Czech Republic due to its already lesser presence in Moscow. When the Czech government declined to grant visas to Russian intelligence officers posing as academics and tourists in 2013, Czech diplomats bore the burden of Russia's retaliation.<sup>144</sup>

Even more Russian intelligence officers visit the Czech Republic under the pretense of tourism or academia. It is very difficult to say how many additional intelligence operatives are among these visitors, which is why it is near impossible to track the total number of Russia's intelligence operatives on Czech territory. To say that Russia's activities in the Czech Republic present a target-rich environment does not even begin to give a proper sense of the scale of the problem, since the Czech Republic has nowhere near Russia's intelligence resources. But the case does underscore the importance of good relations among allied intelligence services, one of the most important advantages the United States and allies have over Russia.

Lastly, the Czech Republic joining NATO (in 1999) created an opportunity to leverage Russia's Czech networks to obtain classified information from other NATO members, particularly in light of Russia's efforts to penetrate the Czech Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs. These efforts have historically been helped by the fact that the Czech Army is a successor of the Czechoslovak Army, an institution directly culpable in Soviet occupation. Despite the Czech Army's professionalization in the 1990s,

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<https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocní-zpravy/vyrocní-zprava-bezpečnostní-informační-slужby-za-rok-2005.pdf>.

<sup>144</sup> Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2013" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2013), 2014, available at

<https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocní-zpravy/2013-vz-cz.pdf>.

fulfilling one of the conditions for the Czech Republic's admission to NATO, some of the Soviet-era mentality remained, according to Czech Defense Minister Vlasta Parkanová's 2008 interview. She highlighted a difference between the "old guard" and a new generation of officers who joined the Czech Army after the end of the Cold War and who were more pro-transatlantic.<sup>145</sup>

### **Russian Influence Operations During U.S.-Czech Missile Defense Negotiations and Discussions**

Even though Czech politicians and the public did not know much about early U.S.-Czech missile defense discussions, it is inconceivable that the Russian Federation did not know, particularly given the Bush Administration's efforts to improve its strategic relationship with Moscow. Russia likely used this advance knowledge to prepare its networks should the discussions become more serious, even though in the early 2000s its primary goal was to advance Russia's economic interests in the Czech Republic.<sup>146</sup>

In the early 2000s, Russia continued efforts to improve its image among the Czech public. It utilized Russian-embassy-sponsored cultural activities and articles in sympathetic media. These activities reportedly permitted Russia's intelligence officers better access to people more likely willing to be recruited for Russia's intelligence

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<sup>145</sup> Jiří Kubík, "Parkanová: Milenec by mi prošel, písnička o radaru ne" (Parkanová: I Could Get Away with a Lover, But Not with a Song About a Radar), *MF Dnes*, July 20, 2008, available at [https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/parkanova-milenec-by-mi-prosel-pisnicka-o-radaru-ne.A080719\\_160539\\_domaci\\_abr](https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/parkanova-milenec-by-mi-prosel-pisnicka-o-radaru-ne.A080719_160539_domaci_abr).

<sup>146</sup> Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2004" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2004), 2005.

services.<sup>147</sup> Further, the Russian Federation worked on obtaining influence among the Czech media.

Russian-speaking journalists in the Czech Republic (and perhaps in other countries) are often Russia's intelligence officers. They participate in spreading disinformation and propaganda and this bad information sometimes finds its way from the fringe news outlets into the mainstream media.<sup>148</sup> The period of U.S.-Czech missile defense discussions was marked by a distinct lack of serious reporting on Russia's disinformation activities in the Czech Republic, despite the evidence hiding in plain sight. Due to historical factors, the permissiveness of the environment in the Czech Republic for Russia's intelligence activities, including propaganda and disinformation, is much higher than in Poland or Romania.<sup>149</sup> Another contributing factor was the lack of non-governmental organizations tracking Russia's activities on Czech territory. Today, world-class work in mapping Russia's disinformation operations is performed by, for example, the European Values think-tank and the civic movement Czech Elves (*Čeští elfové*).

Because of the Czech Republic's history of occupation by the Soviet Union, during which Soviet intelligence operatives were able to develop a network of collaborators, and lack of decommunization in the Czech Republic after the end of the Cold War (such as allowing many Communist Party apparatchiki to keep their positions), Russia has had a relatively easy time getting Czechs to cooperate with its intelligence services, including those in

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<sup>147</sup> Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2005" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2005), 2005.

<sup>148</sup> Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2012" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2012), 2013.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

government positions.<sup>150</sup> In Czech schools, even modern history continues to be taught from a pro-Russian point of view.<sup>151</sup> Principally, there are three large and sometimes overlapping groups of recruits most likely to cooperate.

First, former Czechoslovak Communist Party members are of particular interest to Russia's intelligence officers, especially those former Czechoslovak Communists who achieved professional success in the post-Cold War era.

Second are those who were educated in the Soviet Union. Russia's intelligence officers presume that these former students had a positive experience during their formative young years and thus would be more likely to cooperate with them as adults. More often than not, students selected for educational programs and opportunities in the Soviet Union (or in other Warsaw Pact countries) were pre-screened and their loyalty to the communist regime established, usually because their parents were loyal members of the Communist Party or because these students themselves were active in communist youth organizations.

The third group of interest to Russia's intelligence operatives are Russians living in the Czech Republic, and former KGB officers who worked in Czechoslovakia during the Cold War and maintained their network after transitioning to other careers.<sup>152</sup> Former KGB intelligence

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<sup>150</sup> Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2008" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2008), 2009.

<sup>151</sup> Czech Security and Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2017" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2017), 2018, available at <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/2017-vz-cz.pdf>.

<sup>152</sup> Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2003" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2003), 2004, available at <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/vyrocnizprava-bezpecnostni-informacni-sluzby-za-rok-2003.pdf>.

officers, no matter their new jobs, are expected to act on behalf of the Russian Federation.<sup>153</sup>

This is not to say that Russia does not target other people, but Russia's intelligence services are generally judicious when it comes to spending their resources and like to increase their chances of successful recruitment as much as possible. The name of the game is quality of preparation over quantity of contacts.

In the case of the debate about hosting a U.S. radar in the Czech Republic, an additional permissive factor for Russia's influence operations was the radar's planned location in a military training area formerly occupied by the Warsaw Pact military. There were many Warsaw Pact army retirees in the area and, given their military and ideological training in preparing to combat NATO, they held generally more favorable opinions of the Russian Federation.<sup>154</sup> Additionally, the Russian Federation was very successful in building 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.<sup>155</sup>

The multi-mission nature and overlapping tasks and authorities of Russia's intelligence agencies make counterintelligence work more difficult for allied intelligence services, allowing Russia to make use of synergies not available to Western democracies. While a Czech citizen may be under the impression of working with his Russian counterpart on a legitimate cooperative endeavor (such as countering terrorism or drug trafficking),

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<sup>153</sup> "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2006."

<sup>154</sup> Karel Ferschmann, "Starostové chtěli informace o radaru aneb jak to skutečně bylo," *Obec Němčovice* (blog), September 23, 2007, available at <https://www.nemcovice.cz/starostove-chteli-informace-o-radaru-aneb-jak-to-skutecne-bylo/>.

<sup>155</sup> Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2008" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2008), 2009.

the Russian counterpart's real goals may be malign.<sup>156</sup> Russia's domestic intelligence agencies can occasionally perform tasks in foreign countries. This approach and operational structure are very different from the organization and authorities of democratic intelligence services, which are subject to parliamentary/congressional oversight and operate within strict legal boundaries.

Russian intelligence services' connections to organized crime networks in the Czech Republic provided another benefit: Due to the illegal nature of their activities and occasional successes in bribing local politicians and law enforcement, these networks have information about individuals willing to accept bribes or engage in other unlawful conduct. This information can be used in schemes years later.<sup>157</sup> In addition, some Czech government officials do not feel particularly loyal to the Czech state, which makes them more susceptible to collaboration with Russia.<sup>158</sup> When discovered, 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.

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<sup>156</sup> Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2012" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2012), 2013.

<sup>157</sup> Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2011" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2011), 2012, available at <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocní-zpravy/2011-vz-cz.pdf>.

<sup>158</sup> Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2012" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2012), 2013.

Russia's intelligence services' extensive connections at all levels of Czech society provided Russia with multiple simultaneous opportunities to wage its campaign against the radar deployment, particularly after discussions between the United States and the Czech Republic became a matter of public debate in the summer of 2006. According to the Czech Security and Information Service's 2008 annual report, stopping the U.S. radar deployment to the Czech Republic became Russia's diplomatic and intelligence priority.<sup>159</sup>

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 in 2006 and 2007.<sup>160</sup> In fact, the No Bases Initiative was suspected of accepting Russia's help in organizing and funding its activities, although a direct connection was never reported in Czech news.<sup>161</sup> The movement benefitted from the Czech strategic culture of pacifism and dislike for any permanent foreign military presence on Czech territory, even though comparing four decades of Soviet occupation, which the Czechs neither invited nor wanted, with what would be a very limited U.S. presence is like comparing apples to oranges.

One of the most decisive enabling factors for Russia's influence operations was the Czech Social Democratic Party's transition from leading the government to the opposition after its election loss in June 2006. Missile

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<sup>159</sup> Military Intelligence Service, "Výroční zpráva o činnosti Vojenského zpravodajství 2008" (Annual Report of the Military Intelligence Agency), 2009, at available at <https://www.vzcr.cz/uploads/41-Vyrocní-zpráva-2008.pdf>.

<sup>160</sup> Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2006" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2006), 2007.

<sup>161</sup> 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](https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/rusko-nas-neplati-popiraji-odpurci-radaru-reportaz-ct.A071127_124402_domaci_mr).

defense cooperation with the United States became just another publicly prominent topic that the Social Democrats used to distinguish themselves from the Civic Democrats, a party leading the government. Regrettably, missile defense cooperation became politicized in the weeks and months following elections, and the non-partisan agreement on supporting U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation dissolved, even though it was the Social Democratic Party that had conducted missile defense discussions with the United States for years before they became public knowledge.

### **U.S.-Czech Negotiations and Russian Influence Operations**

Russia's influence operations reached "an extremely high intensity and sophistication" in 2007, the year in which the United States and the Czech Republic negotiated the SOFA and BMDA.<sup>162</sup> 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 individuals active in civic movements (including the No Bases Initiative), politics, and the media. These groups could then further negatively affect Czech public opinion, even though they were not willing collaborators with the Russian Federation.<sup>163</sup> The Czech Security Service also made clear that a majority of the members in these movements were unwitting collaborators and exploited victims. Good intentions or not, they undoubtedly became

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2007" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2007), 2008; and Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2008" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2008), 2009.



spokespeople for Russian interests in the Czech Republic. The most obvious way to trace Russia's influence on these groups is to read commentaries and statements that their representatives produced on the issue of U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation—they often read like Kremlin talking points, including factual errors about how a missile defense system operates and what its capabilities are.

The Czech government was surprisingly silent about Russia's influence operations against U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation. One of the few commentaries occurred in the following exchange (translated from Czech by the author of this *Occasional Paper*) between Defense Minister Parkanová and a Czech journalist, published in *iDnes.cz* in 2008:

[In response to the journalist's question about why the government's radar campaign isn't particularly effective in changing the Czechs' minds.]

**Defense Minister Parkanová:** "...Then we add scare tactics, targeted disinformation campaigns, which were not spontaneous but organized from somewhere."

**Journalist:** "From where? By whom? Do you know something we don't?"

**Defense Minister Parkanová:** "Now I'm getting myself into a dumb situation in which I'll either have to be secretive or accuse one of the superpowers. I almost need to backtrack. Or I'll be in a position of a character from *Yes, Minister* [the British TV comedy series] who would say, whenever he'd get in trouble, that it was a matter of a state secret. But seriously, there are things that cannot be made public, but it is impossible to not see them."<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Jiří Kubík, "Parkanová: Milenec by mi prošel, písnička o radaru ne" (Parkanová: I Could Get Away with a Lover, But Not with a Song About a Radar).

Defense Minister Parkanová did not mean the United States when she referred to “scare tactics and targeted misinformation.” The Americans were very clear that no deployments would happen unless they have the support of the Czech government and the Parliament.

Technical complexities of missile defense systems and how a system works made countering Russia's disinformation difficult. This factor would likely come into play with regard to U.S. missile defense deployments to other allied countries.<sup>165</sup> The Czech government did not expect such strong opposition and anti-missile defense activities from Russia, and it was put on the defensive from the beginning. A general lack of understanding on security issues related to ballistic missile proliferation and missile defense cooperation made it harder to counter disinformation.

Stirring anti-radar sentiment fit within Russia's broader goal of restoring its influence in former Warsaw Pact countries. Russia would pursue this goal even if U.S.-Czech missile defense negotiations fell through.<sup>166</sup> Given that the Czech government was conducting missile defense discussions for years, its utter lack of preparedness for the public discussion was inconceivable and difficult to comprehend. Its lack of transparency about Russia's involvement in manipulating the public debate was another factor that cost support for U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation.

According to Czech intelligence services, Russia's activities declined in 2008, likely due to Russia's efforts to draw international attention away from its invasion of

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<sup>165</sup> For example, China produced misinformation about the capabilities of the Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system when it was being deployed to South Korea in 2017.

<sup>166</sup> Czech Security Information Service, “Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2007” (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2007), 2008.

Georgia.<sup>167</sup> Russia's action brought to light its belligerence and the dangers of its political influence in the Czech Republic. In the minds of Czech transatlanticists, placement of a U.S. radar on Czech territory was supposed to serve as a geopolitical hedge against Russia's political influence. But the Czech government failed to capitalize on this communication priority.

When the Obama Administration entered office, one of its first foreign policy initiatives was to launch a "reset" policy with Russia. Countries in Central and Eastern Europe were less than thrilled. The Czech Security Service's 2009 annual report stated that the Czech Republic "does not get to pick its adversaries, nor does it dictate how they operate. They [adversaries] pick the Czech Republic and methods of their works, regardless of the state of the world in its many changes and varieties, and with an emphasis on their own interests and needs."<sup>168</sup> Russia's intelligence activities are described as "contrarian and at times adversarial."<sup>169</sup>

As Russia's intelligence and influence network expanded, Russia was increasingly able to influence expatriates living in the Czech Republic and even use its connections in local government structures reportedly to threaten expatriate civic organizations in the Czech Republic that were not interested in serving Russia's government's interests.<sup>170</sup> That speaks to a frightening depth of the Czech government's infiltration. But the

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<sup>167</sup> Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2008" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2008), 2009.

<sup>168</sup> Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2009" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2009), 2010.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

Russian-speaking community in the Czech Republic is overall less interested in being a pawn for Putin's agenda.<sup>171</sup>

### **The New U.S. Administration and New Missile Defense Plans**

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, they refocused on traditional areas of interest: obtaining economic advantages for Russian business, 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 of Russian interest.<sup>172</sup> Intelligence officers continued to work on undermining faith in the Czech political system and democratic institutions. The relativization of truth and objectivity became one of Russia's principal objectives.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014 was supported by Russia's diplomatic and intelligence efforts to frustrate the international response to the Ukrainian government's calls for help and perhaps exploit disagreement on the proper response to Russia's aggression among NATO members.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2012" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2012), 2013.

<sup>172</sup> Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2009" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2009), 2010; 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, available at <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/2014-vz-cz.pdf>.

<sup>173</sup> Czech Security and Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2015" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2015), 2016, available at <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/2015-vz-cz.pdf>.

Russia's hybrid warfare campaign became focused on Ukraine, NATO, and the European Union.<sup>174</sup> In the context of the 2014 conflict in Ukraine, Czech intelligence services were recently able to prove that Russia was involved in an ammunition depot explosion in the Czech town of Vrbětice 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.<sup>175</sup>

This is how the Russian military intelligence agency (GRU) was identified as having orchestrated the attack: The Czech police investigation of the 2014 explosions was suspended in 2015 for lack of evidence. But then, Russia used the same two GRU officers who later poisoned former Russian spy Sergey Skripal with a Novichok nerve agent in Salisbury in the United Kingdom in March 2018. Those two officers made the 2018 U.K. trip under the same fake identities with which they had entered the Czech Republic in 2014, which allowed the Czech intelligence services to identify the culprits behind the explosion in Vrbětice.

The Czech government's announcement in April 2021 of Russia's involvement in the Vrbětice attack put a damper on the Czech government's efforts to pursue cooperative

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<sup>174</sup> Czech Security and Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2016" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2016), 2017, available at <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocní-zpravy/2016-vz-cz.pdf>.

<sup>175</sup> Ondřej Kundra, Jaroslav Spurný, "Za výbuchem muničního skladu ve Vrbětích stojí ruští agenti, kteří se pokusili zabít Skripala" (Russian Agents that Tried to Kill Skripal behind Vrbětice Munitions Depot Attack), *Respekt*, April 17, 2021, available at <https://www.respekt.cz/agenda/za-vybuchem-municniho-skladu-ve-vrbeticich-stoji-rusti-agenti-kteri-se-pokusili-zabit-skripala>.

relations with Russia. Less than a week before information about the attack became public, the government had sacked Foreign Minister Tomáš Petříček, in part over his opposition to using Russia's Sputnik V COVID-19 vaccine, which, at the time of this writing, was still not approved in the EU because of Russia's inability to provide sufficient data.<sup>176</sup> Deputy Prime Minister Jan Hamáček was due to travel to Moscow to officially discuss the possibility of Russia supplying vaccines to the Czech Republic, and possibly participation of Russian state-owned Rosatom in a Czech multibillion-dollar competition to expand the Dukovany Nuclear Power Station. The trip was arranged with his knowledge of Russia's involvement in the Vrbětice explosions and was cancelled after the public backlash. Hamáček faced suspicion of planning on making a deal with the Russians for the Czech government to keep quiet about Russian involvement in the Vrbětice attack in exchange for a supply of the Sputnik V vaccine and a promise to hold a Biden-Putin summit in Prague.<sup>177</sup>

With the announcement of Russia's involvement in the explosion, the Czech government found itself in a tug-of-war between the desire to continue to please Russia-serving President Miloš Zeman and strong public pressure not to do so. Under pressure of popular sentiment and bearing in mind the fall 2021 elections, the Czech government decided to cut the Russian diplomatic presence at Russia's embassy in Prague by two thirds and force bilateral parity in diplomatic personnel between the Russian embassy in

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<sup>176</sup> Mark Galeotti, "A Seven-Year Fuse Blows Up Czech-Russian Relations," *The Moscow Times*, April 23, 2021, available at <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/04/19/a-seven-year-fuse-blows-up-czech-russian-relations-a73645>.

<sup>177</sup> Janek Kroupa, Kristyna Cikorková, "Svědectví: Hamáček chtěl v Moskvě vyměnit Vrbětice za milion Sputniků" (Testimony: Hamáček Wanted to Trade Vrbětice for a Million Sputnik Vaccines in Moscow), *Seznam Zprávy*, May 4, 2021, available at <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/svedectvi-hamacek-chtel-v-moskve-vymenit-vrbetice-za-milion-sputniku-152959>.

Prague and the Czech embassy in Moscow. The agreement was implemented at the end of May 2021.

The government has also taken steps to exclude Russia from the Dukovany expansion. This is the correct course of action. Selecting Russia as a key supplier for this project would doom the Czech Republic to decades of increased energy dependence on Russia, potentially giving it another tool to bully or punish the Czech government. The Czech Republic was already on the receiving end of Russia's willingness to use energy dependence as a political weapon when Russia stopped the oil supply to the Czech Republic in 2008.

## Conclusion

Even though Russia's influence operations undoubtedly contributed to the derailment of U.S.-Czech missile defense negotiations, it would be inaccurate to say that they were the principal cause of the failure of U.S.-Czech efforts. This is, in a way, good news because some of the conditions that made Russia's activities successful are unlikely to be present in other countries. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to dismiss them as unimportant, if for no reason other than that Russia conducts influence operations in other NATO countries.<sup>178</sup> Russia undoubtedly analyzes its approaches and adapts them to the specific circumstances and the strategic culture in which operations are carried out.

Unlike Poland or Romania, the Czech environment is exceptionally permissive when it comes to Russia's activities and influence operations on Czech territory. This includes the government, public, business, and private

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<sup>178</sup> Ondřej Golis: "V Česku probíhá informační válka, jsme testovací laboratoří Ruska, přiznává brigádní generál Řehka" (There is an information war in the Czech Republic, states Brigadier General Řehka), *iRozhlas*, August 31, 2018, available at [https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/karel-rehka-informacni-valka-rusko-armada-rozhovor\\_1808310600\\_ogo](https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/karel-rehka-informacni-valka-rusko-armada-rozhovor_1808310600_ogo).

spheres. The situation is a consequence of over four decades of Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia during the Cold War and the resultant established relations, maintained by Russia's organized crime networks in the early 1990s. These relations were invigorated further and expanded when President Putin took over Russia's intelligence services. Russia's penetration of local and regional politics is particularly troublesome from a long-term perspective (because local politics feeds national politics) and additional resources ought to be devoted to vetting local politicians before they take on more prominent national roles.<sup>179</sup> It is plausible that Russia employs similar long-term approaches in other countries that are allied with the United States. That way, it would have an infrastructure to execute its influence operations when an opportunity presents itself.

Russia's goals were undoubtedly helped by the Civic Democrats' election loss in June 2006 and the politically fragile situation that followed. The Czech government could not rely on majority support in the Chamber of Deputies, and as the Czech Social Democrats distanced themselves from U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation they not only gave legitimacy to those opposing it, but actively encouraged their efforts. This made it harder yet to counter Russia's false information about the nature, purpose, and capabilities of the radar. When Prime Minister Topolánek's government fell in March 2009, the successor government did not have enough political support to ratify the SOFA and BMDA, let alone pressure Americans for a speedier deployment of the system (which would have made the Obama Administration's cancellation more difficult).

One condition that was not present during U.S.-Czech missile defense negotiations that plays an important role today is Russia's use of modern technologies and social

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<sup>179</sup> The author is grateful to Jiří Payne, former Czech member of the European Parliament, for this insight.



media to spread its disinformation. Spreading false messages and disinformation is cheaper and relatively less complicated than it was 15 years ago and has been a large factor in contemporary influence operations.

The Czech government's communications strategy was inadequate for the task of convincing the Czechs that hosting a U.S. radar was in the national interest. Its communications strategy started too late and was not well organized. The cacophony of messages that the Czech government tried to communicate, from basic information on how a missile defense system works to the radar's role in NATO's missile defense project, resulted in confusion and further attacks on the Czech government's credibility. Worse, the Czech government was completely silent about Russia's efforts to manipulate the Czech public against the radar until years later. The omission was particularly glaring after Russia's invasion of Georgia, although by then it was likely too late for the United States to start the project anyway.

## Chapter III: Twists and Turns in U.S.-Polish Missile Defense Cooperation

*[T]he key area of the Kremlin's "weaponization of culture" is its self-proclaimed crusade against Western and liberal values through the promotion of an ultraconservative social agenda.*

—Jacek Kucharczyk

"Instruments of Russian Influence in Poland," 2019

Poland is the largest country in Eastern Europe and, unlike some of its neighboring states, has a proud history of resisting the Nazi occupation during World War II and the Soviet occupation during the Cold War. Poland joined the European Union in 2004. It is the most important member of the Visegrad Four, a regional cooperative alliance that includes the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, and militarily the strongest member on NATO's eastern flank. The three *leitmotifs* of Polish foreign policy in the post-Cold War era have been (1) integration into Western political and military structures, (2) independence from Russia's geopolitical influence, and (3) energy independence. Together with the Baltic republics, Poland is at the forefront of NATO's efforts to take the Russian threat seriously.

Poland is considered one of the most resilient countries when it comes to Russian propaganda. Nevertheless, some argue that this may make Poland susceptible to Russian disinformation and influence operations in other ways—because the point of Russia's disinformation is to sow chaos and achieve its goals without necessarily publicly taking credit for doing so or revealing who is behind the chaos.<sup>180</sup> It appears that Russia is occasionally able to take advantage

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<sup>180</sup> "Today's Potemkin Village: Kremlin Disinformation and Propaganda in Poland," Warsaw Institute blog, May 15, 2018, available at <https://warsawinstitute.org/todays-potemkin-village-kremlin-disinformation-propaganda-poland/>.

of polarization and controversial issues to stir up questions about the legitimacy of Polish democratic institutions.

In fact, in all three case studies, obscuring Russia's role in influence and disinformation operations is to its advantage because the publics in the examined countries do not generally hold positive views of Russia's government or Russian interference in their internal affairs. Nevertheless, the Russian Federation's network of influence agents in Poland appears to be extensive. Unlike some other NATO countries (such as the Czech Republic and Estonia), the Polish government does not systematically publish reports on Russia's influence and disinformation operations.<sup>181</sup> But Polish government officials got their articles about their counterintelligence successes published in U.S. media (such as in *Defense News*) and certainly maintain government-to-government relations between different agencies, including intelligence services.

Since the end of the Cold War, Poland has taken significant geopolitical steps to integrate itself into Western political and military structures. Poland considers NATO, and particularly its relations with the United States, to be a core component of Poland's security. The experience of Poland's 1939 partition between the Soviet Union and Germany (and between Russia and other countries in the 18<sup>th</sup> century) is a part of its strategic culture. It continues to influence Polish geopolitical thinking, and to some degree explains why Poland looks across the Atlantic rather than to the European Union for its main security guarantees. Polish representatives appear more willing to describe the Russian Federation as a threat publicly and realistically, an aspect that the Russians want to use against them internationally by arguing that Polish "fearmongering" is irrational and counterproductive to "good" relations between the EU or other states and the Russian Federation.

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<sup>181</sup> Kremlin Watch, "Poland," available at <http://www.kremlinwatch.eu/countries-compared-states/poland/>.

Russia's increasingly belligerent policies in recent years, including its invasions of Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, strengthened Poland's efforts to get the United States to increase the U.S. military presence on its territory. Its decision to host U.S. missile defense sites was a part of this broader pursuit. But Poland's security cooperation with the United States goes beyond missile defense, and in fact, the Poles tried to leverage their missile defense cooperation (fairly successfully) to obtain U.S. cooperation on other defense endeavors.

From a Polish perspective, the more U.S. troops there are on Polish territory, the better the deterrence against Russia's expansionism and political influence. Poland's 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."<sup>182</sup> For example, unlike the Czech Republic, Poland negotiated its missile defense agreements rather broadly—to eliminate obstacles to an increased U.S. presence in Poland if needed. More recently in August 2020, Poland signed an Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement with the United States that sets out a framework for increasing the number of U.S. troops in Poland.<sup>183</sup>

In the realm of ballistic missile defense, Poland decided to participate in the U.S. ballistic missile program in 2006 and 2007 by hosting a Ground-Based Midcourse Defense

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<sup>182</sup> 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/>.

<sup>183</sup> Matthew Lee, "Pompeo Inks Deal to Support More American Troops in Poland," *Military Times*, August 17, 2020, available at <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2020/08/16/pompeo-inks-deal-to-support-more-american-troops-in-poland/>.

(GMD) interceptor site. Poland also responded relatively mildly to the Obama Administration's cancellation of that plan, particularly given that it leaked on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Poland's partition by Russia. Just a few days after the cancellation announcement, Poland agreed to host an Aegis Ashore site, a part of the Obama Administration's European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA), a regional plan initially for European missile defense and for the protection of the U.S. homeland in its later phases. Unlike the Czech Republic, Poland was able to secure an important continued role in U.S. missile defense plans despite U.S. missile defense policy and program changes. Additionally, Poland of course supported NATO's missile defense efforts.

### **U.S.-Polish Missile Defense Cooperation**

U.S.-Polish missile defense cooperation proceeded in two distinct phases. The first, during which Poland negotiated an agreement to host U.S. two-stage GMD interceptors, began during the George W. Bush Administration and ended during the first year of President Obama's term when his Administration changed U.S. missile defense plans in September 2009. The second phase started during the Obama Administration and continues (with some modifications and delays) to this day.

When the Obama Administration announced the missile defense change in Poland, it argued that the ballistic missile threat from Iran had changed, along with U.S. technological developments on missile defense.<sup>184</sup> Its 2010 *Ballistic Missile Defense Review* emphasized regional missile

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<sup>184</sup> Luke Harding and Ian Trainor, "Obama Abandons Missile Defence Shield in Europe," *The Guardian*, September 17, 2009, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/sep/17/missile-defence-shield-barack-obama>.

defense, adaptability and flexibility.<sup>185</sup> The following section chronologically describes U.S.-Polish missile defense cooperation during the Bush and the Obama Administrations and concurrent Russian influence operations in Poland. Needless to say, in the case of Poland, missile defense cooperation with the United States did not stir Russian influence operations like in the Czech Republic, mostly because Poland's political parties are largely united in their support for U.S.-Polish defense cooperation, which extends to missile defense.

### **The Two-Stage Ground-Based Midcourse Defense Interceptor Site in Poland**

At first, missile defense negotiations between the United States and Poland ran in parallel with U.S.-Czech missile defense negotiations. Preliminary discussions between the two countries started in summer 2002, after the United States withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. Public information about the project did not appear until fall 2005 in Poland and potential host sites were examined in summer 2006.<sup>186</sup> The United States expressed a preference for Poland to host an interceptor site near the Redzikowo air base. The United States correctly assumed that Polish support for the plan was high enough to sustain hosting an interceptor site, which would have been a non-starter in the Czech Republic.

Missile defense negotiations were less controversial in Poland than they were in the Czech Republic and enjoyed relatively broader political support. But, just like in the case

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<sup>185</sup> "Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report," February 2010, p. 12, available at [https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/features/defenseReviews/BMDR/BMDR\\_as\\_of\\_26JAN10\\_0630\\_for\\_web.pdf](https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/features/defenseReviews/BMDR/BMDR_as_of_26JAN10_0630_for_web.pdf).

<sup>186</sup> Tomasz Paszewski, "Us Missile Defense Plans: Central and Eastern Europe," *Revue d'Études Comparatives Est-Ouest*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (2013), pp. 35–60, available at <https://doi.org/10.4074/S0338059913003045>.

of the Czech Republic, U.S.-Polish negotiations were affected by electoral politics. The coalition of political parties, the Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska, or PO) and the Polish People's Alliance (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, or PSL), that succeeded the fervently pro-American Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, or PiS) party and its allies after the October 2007 elections, was more skeptical of hosting a U.S. interceptor site than its predecessors, which led to some delay related to both the government transition and the need to re-establish U.S.-Polish missile defense cooperation as a worthy good.<sup>187</sup>

The new government was also more intent on improving relations with Germany and the Russian Federation. Germany was rather cold toward the Bush Administration's missile defense project while Russia was antagonistic. The PO won four consecutive elections until recordings of private conversations made public resulted in a scandal that forced most of its leadership from the government.<sup>188</sup> The scandal contributed to the PiS's resounding victory in 2015 parliamentary elections. Some argued that the scandal had the markings of Russia's interference in elections and that Russia had used Poland as a laboratory for interference in the U.S. 2016 presidential elections.<sup>189</sup>

Negotiations were also made more difficult by the Polish government's insistence on a linkage between the missile defense agreement and Polish military modernization, which "proved to be the main stumbling

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<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>188</sup> Sławomir Sierakowski, "Russiagate in Poland," Project Syndicate, September 14, 2017, available at <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/poland-government-russia-ties-by-slawomir-sierakowski-2017-09>.

<sup>189</sup> Vanessa Gerra, "Was Polish Scandal a Russian Test for US Election Tampering?" Associated Press, August 4, 2019, available at <https://apnews.com/article/europe-ap-top-news-elections-international-news-russia-8dd3980d7cf44c8695767665d41f0dee>.

block" in negotiations.<sup>190</sup> This linkage and Polish efforts to extract as much help from the United States as possible delayed the conclusion of missile defense agreements. Consequently, the construction of an interceptor site in Poland was delayed.

Polish intent to advance its military modernization frustrated the Czech government's efforts to conclude its own missile defense agreement with the United States because the Czech government couldn't leverage the Polish agreement to generate support for an agreement of its own (this factor, admittedly, was not as important as other ones). It is possible that, had the sites been under construction when the Obama Administration took office, it would have been much harder for the Administration to cancel the project. Meanwhile, between December 2005 and September 2009, opponents of U.S.-Polish missile defense cooperation outnumbered supporters by about six percentage points—but support for missile defense cooperation remained much higher than in the Czech Republic during the same timeframe.<sup>191</sup>

Nevertheless, military modernization became an imperative for Poland, particularly after Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008. Poland is within range of Russian short-range systems that are stationed in the Kaliningrad Oblast, Russia's territory between Poland and Lithuania. Russia reportedly moved nuclear weapons to Kaliningrad in 2001.<sup>192</sup> Russia reportedly simulated a nuclear attack on

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<sup>190</sup> Paszewski, "Us Missile Defense Plans: Central and Eastern Europe," p. 47.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>192</sup> "Russia Transfers Nuclear Arms to Baltics," *The Washington Times*, January 3, 2001, available at <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2001/jan/3/20010103-020441-2511r/>. More reports of Russia's nuclear-related activities in Kaliningrad appeared since, for example Jack Stubbs, "Russia Deploys Iskander Nuclear-Capable Missiles to Kaliningrad: RIA," Reuters, February 5, 2018, available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-nato-missiles/russia-deploys-iskander-nuclear-capable-missiles-to-kaliningrad-ria-idUSKBN1FP21Y>, and



Poland during its military exercises.<sup>193</sup> Additionally, Poland borders Belarus, which has been ruled by pro-Russian dictator Alexander Lukashenko since 1994. Russia and Belarus maintain close military and defense ties, and their military integration has significantly progressed in recent years. Missile defense negotiations were meant to strengthen the Polish position with respect to obtaining systems to counter Russia's threat, even though Polish politicians were not explicit in stating the link between the two in the public.<sup>194</sup>

The Polish government also desired stronger military-to-military cooperation, support for energy-related projects that would decrease Polish dependence on Russian gas and oil, increased intelligence sharing, opportunities for Polish businesses to participate in U.S. missile-defense-related projects, and support for Poland's bid to host NATO's Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) system.<sup>195</sup> It is clear that the Polish government's objectives were shaped by its need to strengthen its geopolitical standing vis-à-vis the Russian Federation. The U.S. government officially proposed that Poland host multiple two-stage GMD interceptors in January 2007.<sup>196</sup> Poland's insistence on U.S.

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Hans Kristensen, "Russia Upgrades Nuclear Weapons Storage Site In Kaliningrad," *The Federation of American Scientists*, June 18, 2018, available at <https://fas.org/blogs/security/2018/06/kaliningrad/>.

<sup>193</sup> Stephen Blank, "Moscow Pulls Back the Curtain on Zapad 2013," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 10, No. 118 (June 21, 2013), available at <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, available at <https://defence-blog.com/russian-army-carries-out-mock-nuclear-attack-on-american-troops-in-poland/>.

<sup>194</sup> Lukasz Kulesa, "Poland and Missile Defense: The Limits of Atlanticism," *Institut Français des Relations Internationales*, 2014, p. 12, available at <https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/pp48kulesa.pdf>.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>196</sup> Bruce Konviser, "U.S. Missiles in E. Europe Opposed by Locals, Russia, Kremlin Calls Proposed Interceptors a 'Clear Threat,'" *The Washington Post*,

support for modernization of the Polish military stalled negotiations in mid-2008.<sup>197</sup>

Poland and the United States signed the broader missile defense agreement on August 20, 2008.<sup>198</sup> The agreement is more detailed than the one signed between the United States and the Czech Republic, and perhaps that was one of the reasons why it took longer to negotiate.<sup>199</sup> The same day, Poland and the United States signed a declaration on U.S.-Polish strategic cooperation.<sup>200</sup> The declaration included specific references to air and missile defense cooperation in the area of political-military cooperation, and recognized the need for increased information sharing and for promotion of joint defense and technological cooperation.<sup>201</sup> The Polish desire to extract as many concessions on military modernization as possible was reportedly another factor that delayed finalizing the agreements. The declaration was meant to illustrate concrete benefits to Poland stemming from hosting a U.S. missile interceptor site on its territory.

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January 28, 2007, available at

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2007/01/28/us-missiles-in-europe-opposed-by-locals-russia-span-class=bankheadkremlin-calls-proposed-interceptors-a-clear-threatspan/b1c7ef2a-92f6-4b8d-9955-8adc63d7b537/>.

<sup>197</sup> Steven Hildreth and Carl Ek, "Long-Range Ballistic Missile Defense in Europe," Congressional Research Service, April 26, 2010, pp. 10–11, available at <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL34051>.

<sup>198</sup> "Poland and U.S. Sign Missile-Defense Pact," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, August 20, 2008, available at [https://www.rferl.org/a/Poland\\_And\\_US\\_Sign\\_Missile\\_Defense\\_Pact/1192539.html](https://www.rferl.org/a/Poland_And_US_Sign_Missile_Defense_Pact/1192539.html).

<sup>199</sup> The text of the agreement, with small changes made after the U.S. change in missile defense plans in September 2009, can be found here: U.S. Department of State, "Status of Forces: Agreement between the United States of America and Poland," December 11, 2009, available at <https://fas.org/irp/world/poland/sofa.pdf>.

<sup>200</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Text of the Declaration on Strategic Cooperation Between the United States of America and the Republic of Poland," August 20, 2008, available at <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2008/aug/108661.htm>.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

By this point, the U.S. 2008 presidential election was in full swing and the Polish government decided it would delay the ratification of the agreement until after the election.<sup>202</sup> The Polish government did not want to find itself in a situation in which the agreement would be ratified and the new U.S. Administration could change the missile defense deployment plan. This cautious approach turned out to be justified given the Obama Administration's cancellation of the Bush plan a few months later.

### **The European Phased Adaptive Approach**

On September 17, 2009, the Obama Administration cancelled missile defense deployments to the Czech Republic and Poland. The Obama Administration announced the cancellation on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Soviet Union's annexation of Poland enabled by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Numerous Polish politicians and experts considered the date selection for the announcement a strategic communications mistake. Instead of the Bush Administration's missile defense plan, the Administration announced the EPAA—phased missile defense deployments intended to be responsive to the development of the ballistic missile threat.<sup>203</sup> The Administration argued that Iranian short-range and intermediate-range ballistic missiles were a more pressing threat than long-range missiles and that NATO needed to be protected from them. Any substantive increases in the protection of the U.S. homeland could wait until 2020 given the alleged delay in the development of Iran's and North Korea's long-range

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<sup>202</sup> Hildreth and Ek, "Long-Range Ballistic Missile Defense in Europe," pp. 11–12.

<sup>203</sup> The White House, "FACT SHEET U.S. Missile Defense Policy a Phased, Adaptive Approach for Missile Defense in Europe," September 17, 2009, available at <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/fact-sheet-us-missile-defense-policy-a-phased-adaptive-approach-missile-defense-eur>.

missiles. "Our new missile-defense architecture in Europe will provide stronger, smarter, and swifter defenses of American forces and America's allies," argued President Obama.<sup>204</sup>

The EPAA was to consist of four phases:

- **Phase One (in the 2011 timeframe):** Deployment of the sea-based Aegis Weapon System with the Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) Block IA, and forward-deployment of sensors, such as the forward-based Army Navy/Transportable Radar Surveillance system (AN/TPY-2) closer to Iran;
- **Phase Two (in the 2015 timeframe):** Deployment of a more capable version of the SM-3 Block IB in both sea-based and land-based configurations, and more advanced sensors;
- **Phase Three (in the 2018 timeframe):** Deployment of the more advanced SM-3 Block IIA to counter short-range, medium-range, and intermediate-range missiles; and
- **Phase Four (in the 2020 timeframe):** Deployment of the SM-3 Block IIB to help better cope with medium-range and intermediate-range missiles and a potential future intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) threat to the U.S. homeland.<sup>205</sup>

The Obama Administration argued that "the United States possesses a capability to counter the projected threat from North Korea and Iran for the foreseeable future."<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Ken Dilanian, "Obama Scraps Bush Missile Defense Plan," *USA Today*, September 17, 2009, available at <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/obama-scraps-bush-missile-defense-plan/story?id=8604357>.

<sup>205</sup> The White House, "FACT SHEET U.S. Missile Defense Policy a Phased, Adaptive Approach for Missile Defense in Europe."

<sup>206</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, "Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report," February 2010, p. iv, available at [https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/features/defenseReviews/BMDR/BMDR\\_a\\_s\\_of\\_26JAN10\\_0630\\_for\\_web.pdf](https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/features/defenseReviews/BMDR/BMDR_a_s_of_26JAN10_0630_for_web.pdf).

This assumption made missile defense changes possible. Short-range and intermediate-range missiles were considered a more imminent threat to European NATO allies and U.S. forward-deployed forces. Experts and policymakers in the United States and abroad criticized the Administration's decision as a concession to Moscow as part of President Obama's efforts to "reset" relations with the Russian Federation.<sup>207</sup> Obama Administration officials denied that was the case.<sup>208</sup>

The government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk argued that the decision was not surprising given President Obama's lack of enthusiasm to proceed with construction of the site.<sup>209</sup> It is also worth mentioning that the Tusk government attempted its own version of "resetting" relations with Russia and aligning its foreign policy with other EU countries, most notably Germany.<sup>210</sup>

The PiS party accused the government of not pursuing missile defense cooperation with the United States vigorously enough (for example, the U.S.-Polish missile defense agreement was still not approved by the Parliament at the time of President Obama's cancellation).<sup>211</sup> Polish concerns over losing U.S. attention due to a lack of missile

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<sup>207</sup> Marc Champion and Peter Spiegel, "Allies React to U.S. Missile U-Turn," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 18, 2009, available at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB125317801774419047>.

<sup>208</sup> "Poland Agrees to Host Part of New U.S. Missile Defense Plan," CNN World, October 21, 2009, available at <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/europe/10/21/poland.missiles/index.html>.

<sup>209</sup> Puhl, "Warsaw Fears Washington Losing Interest in Eastern Allies."

<sup>210</sup> Juan Pablo Cardena, Jacek Kucharczyk, Grigorij Mesežnikov, and Gabriela Pleschová, *Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence*, National Endowment for Democracy, December 2017, pp. 97–98, available at <https://www.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Sharp-Power-Rising-Authoritarian-Influence-Full-Report.pdf>.

<sup>211</sup> Jan Puhl, "Warsaw Fears Washington Losing Interest in Eastern Allies," *Spiegel International*, September 17, 2009, available at <https://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/pires-react-warsaw-fears-washington-losing-interest-in-eastern-allies-a-649688.html>.

defense cooperation were short-lived. In October 2009, Poland agreed to host an Aegis Ashore site under the EPAA.<sup>212</sup> The agreement, originally providing for ground-based interceptor (GBI) deployments, was adapted and signed in July 2010 and approved by the Polish Parliament and entered into force in September 2011.<sup>213</sup> Poland and the United States broke the ground on the site in a joint ceremony in May 2016.<sup>214</sup> The ceremony marked a milestone toward the completion of the EPAA's Phase 3, which was expected in the 2018 timeframe.<sup>215</sup>

But the completion of the Redzikowo missile defense site has not been without challenges, and the site is still not operational. The construction of the site has been delayed several times over issues with the contractor and other technical difficulties. It was supposed to reach initial operational capability in 2018, then 2020, then 2022, and now by the end of 2023.<sup>216</sup> The system is "roughly 95 percent complete."<sup>217</sup> The construction company has reportedly

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Kulesa, "Poland and Missile Defense: The Limits of Atlanticism," pp. 19–20.

<sup>214</sup> News release, "U.S. and Poland Break Ground on Aegis Ashore Site in Poland," U.S. Missile Defense Agency, 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>.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Jen Judson, "Construction Issues Still Plague Polish Aegis Ashore Site," *Defense News*, August 14, 2018, available at <https://www.defensenews.com/land/2018/08/14/construction-issues-still-plague-polish-aegis-ashore-site/>; Paul McLeary, "Stalled Polish Missile Defense Site Needs Extra \$96M, 2 Years," *Breaking Defense* blog, February 12, 2020, <https://breakingdefense.com/2020/02/stalled-polish-missile-defense-site-needs-extra-96-million-two-years/>; Dylan Malyasov, "Lockheed Martin Gets \$30.6M Deal to Support Aegis Ashore Site in Poland," *Defence Blog*, May 27, 2021, available at <https://defence-blog.com/lockheed-martin-gets-306m-deal-to-support-aegis-ashore-site-in-poland/>.

<sup>217</sup> Jen Judson, "Missile Defense Agency Director Wants Less Complex, More Mobile Aegis Ashore," *Defense News*, August 20, 2021, available at <https://www.defensenews.com/digital-show-dailies/smd/2021/08/20/missile-defense-agency-director-wants-less-complex-more-mobile-aegis-ashore/>; and Rich Abbott, "Aegis Ashore Poland Set to Be

struggled “to configure the auxiliary controls, heating, power and cooling, which feed the combat system and are part of the construction contract.”<sup>218</sup>

Some in the Obama Administration reportedly saw missile defense as an obstacle to reaching an agreement with Moscow on arms control and potentially in other areas.<sup>219</sup> The perception that the United States was placating the Russians made Poland (and other Eastern European allies) nervous, but as long as the project in Poland proceeded, the Polish government did not strenuously object. The impression that the Obama Administration was not serious about deploying missile defenses in Europe was strengthened by President Obama’s 2012 comment caught on a hot microphone to then-President Dmitry Medvedev that he will have more “flexibility” on contentious issues like missile defense after the U.S. election.<sup>220</sup>

This was not the only challenge to the credibility of a U.S. commitment to missile defense in Poland. In March 2013, then-Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel cancelled Phase 4 of the EPAA.<sup>221</sup> For his part, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said that the Phase 4 cancellation “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

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Operational by End of 2022,” *Defense News*, November 22, 2021, available at <https://www.defensedaily.com/aegis-ashore-poland-set-to-be-operational-by-end-of-2022/missile-defense/>.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Robert Joseph, Eric Edelman, and Rebeccah Heinrichs, “After You, Mr. Putin,” *National Review*, March 4, 2015, available at <https://www.nationalreview.com/2015/03/after-you-mr-putin/>.

<sup>220</sup> “Obama Tells Russia’s Medvedev More Flexibility After Election,” Reuters, March 26, 2012, available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nuclear-summit-obama-medvedev/obama-tells-russias-medvedev-more-flexibility-after-election-idUSBRE82P0J120120326>.

<sup>221</sup> “US Scraps Final Phase of European Missile Shield,” BBC News, March 16, 2013, available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-21812161>.

system remain. Therefore, our objections also remain.”<sup>222</sup> U.S. actions did not entirely undermine its missile defense cooperation with Poland but are a timely reminder that relations, credibility, and cooperation build up (or deteriorate) over time based on the consistency of actions that governments take. Actions matter more than words.

Just like the Bush Administration's missile defense plan, the EPAA is a contribution to NATO ballistic missile defense, an endeavor endorsed by the Alliance at the Bucharest Summit in 2008.<sup>223</sup> NATO itself has large support among Polish citizens with over 82 percent viewing it favorably according to a relatively recent Pew Research poll.<sup>224</sup> In 2020, Poland was the only European country in which most poll respondents trusted President Donald Trump to do the right thing on foreign policy.<sup>225</sup>

In the coming years, the U.S. and Polish governments could face a coordinated targeted campaign aimed at activating local opposition to a U.S. ballistic missile defense site or to a U.S./NATO military presence in general.<sup>226</sup> The Russian Federation may try to delegitimize the U.S. presence in Poland. The U.S. and Polish governments are

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<sup>222</sup> 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>.

<sup>223</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Bucharest Summit Declaration,” April 3, 2008, available at [https://www.nato.int/cps/us/natohq/official\\_texts\\_8443.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/us/natohq/official_texts_8443.htm).

<sup>224</sup> Moira Fagan and Jacob Poushter, “NATO Seen Favorably Across Member States,” Pew Research Center, February 9, 2020, available at <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/02/09/nato-seen-favorably-across-member-states/>.

<sup>225</sup> Jacob Poushter, “How People Around the World See the U.S. and Donald Trump in 10 charts,” Pew Research Center, January 8, 2020, available at <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/01/08/how-people-around-the-world-see-the-u-s-and-donald-trump-in-10-charts/>.

<sup>226</sup> Jakub Janda et al., “How Do European Democracies React to Russian Aggression?” *European Values*, April 22, 2017, p. 9, available at <https://www.europeanvalues.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/How-do-European-democracies-react-to-Russian-aggression.pdf>.



likely to see further efforts to undermine the legitimacy of Poland's democratic institutions, quite in line with Russia's broader strategic objectives against the West and NATO.

### **Other U.S.-Polish Defense Cooperation**

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 requested the purchase of U.S. JASSM, a long-range, conventional, air-to-ground, precision standoff missile, deliveries of which appear to have started in 2017.<sup>227</sup> 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 in 2019.<sup>228</sup>

According to the U.S. Department of State, "Poland jointly hosts the NATO Multinational Corps and Division Northeast Headquarters" and "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)."<sup>229</sup> Poland also hosts a U.S. Aviation Component and a component of MQ-

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<sup>227</sup> Jacek Siminski, "Polish F-16s Have Received the First AGM-158 JASSM Low Observable Standoff Air-Launched Cruise Missiles," *The Aviationist*, January 31, 2017, available at <https://theaviationist.com/2017/01/31/polish-f-16s-have-received-the-first-agm-158-jassm-low-observable-standoff-air-launched-cruise-missiles/>.

<sup>228</sup> 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>.

<sup>229</sup> 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/>.

9 unmanned aerial vehicles, among others.<sup>230</sup> 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.<sup>231</sup> In 2020, Poland signed a contract to procure 32 F-35s valued at \$4.6 billion from the United States.<sup>232</sup>

## Russian Influence Operations in Poland

Poland “has become one of the most important targets of Russia’s state-funded information machinery.”<sup>233</sup> 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.<sup>234</sup> To counter or moderate some of the anti-Russian sentiments, Russia tries to use pan-Slavic philosophy. Pan-Slavism is a 19<sup>th</sup>-century, relatively popular, idea that people with a common ethnic background in Central and Eastern Europe ought to unite to achieve political and

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<sup>230</sup> For a complete list, see Polish Ministry of National Defense, “Increasing the U.S. Military Presence in Poland,” available at <https://www.gov.pl/web/national-defence/increasing-the-us-military-presence-in-poland>.

<sup>231</sup> “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/>.

<sup>232</sup> Jarosław Adamowski, “Poland Inks \$4.6 Billion Contract for F-35 Fighter Jets,” *Defense News*, January 31, 2020, available at <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2020/01/31/poland-inks-46-billion-contract-for-f-35-fighter-jets/>.

<sup>233</sup> 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>.

<sup>234</sup> 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](https://www.politicalcapital.hu/wp-content/uploads/PC_reactionary_values_CEE_20160727.pdf).

cultural goals.<sup>235</sup> Russia, of course, would be the 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 partitions of Poland in 1772, 1793, and 1795, and the Soviet annexation of Poland in cooperation with Germany on September 17, 1939; and (2) the Soviet occupation of Poland during the Cold War.<sup>236</sup> 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 in 1940.<sup>237</sup>

The Soviets denied responsibility for the Katyn massacre until after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power. The Russian government has yet to disclose pertinent historical documents to Poland, and has never agreed to classify the action as a war crime or a mass murder.<sup>238</sup> Correspondingly, the Polish government "has consistently conditioned the improvement of relations with Moscow on the condemnation of Soviet crimes committed against the Poles."<sup>239</sup> 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 Nazi Germany.

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<sup>235</sup> Vladislava Vojtišková et al., "The Bear in Sheep's Clothing," *Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies*, 2016, p. 25, available at [https://www.martenscentre.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/russia-gongos\\_0.pdf](https://www.martenscentre.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/russia-gongos_0.pdf).

<sup>236</sup> Łukasz Wenerski and Michał Kaciewicz, "Russian Soft Power in Poland," April 2017, p. 13, available at [https://www.politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC\\_NED\\_country\\_study\\_PL\\_20170428.pdf](https://www.politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC_NED_country_study_PL_20170428.pdf).

<sup>237</sup> 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/>.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>239</sup> Igor Gretskey, "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/>.

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 the 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 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—a precise experience that cannot be replicated 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 by Soviet (and later Russian) agents. Even President Wałęsa did not avoid controversy over whether he accepted money in return for reporting on his colleagues to the Polish secret service in the 1970s.<sup>240</sup> Poland reportedly sought a “zero option” of building its intelligence services from scratch after the fall of the Soviet Union but 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.

As in the Czech Republic, Russia's goals in Poland were to secure Russia's economic interest, maintain political

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<sup>240</sup> 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>.

influence, and prevent significant geopolitical changes.<sup>241</sup> 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.<sup>242</sup> But Russian activities can also include acts of political sabotage and kinetic actions that are intended to affect allied states.<sup>243</sup> For example, a Polish extremist was reportedly hired to burn down a Hungarian cultural center in Uzhorod, Ukraine, and make it look as though Ukrainian nationalists were responsible.<sup>244</sup> Uzhorod has a large Hungarian minority and the act contributed to increasing tensions among the two countries – to the benefit of Russia.

As in the other case studies in this *Occasional Paper*, personal connections between Russian agents and Polish politicians, businessmen, and intelligence officers have proven critical to advancing Russia's interests. In 1997, then-Interior Minister Zbigniew Siemiatkowski warned of increasing Russian penetration of Polish political and business circles. The warning led to efforts to strengthen the reliability of the Polish intelligence community, which was

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<sup>241</sup> Artur Gruszczak, "The Polish Intelligence Services," 2009, p. 140, available at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241032145\\_The\\_Polish\\_Intelligence\\_Services](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241032145_The_Polish_Intelligence_Services).

<sup>242</sup> 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/>.

<sup>243</sup> 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/>.

<sup>244</sup> 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>.

left largely intact after the fall of the Soviet Union.<sup>245</sup> Attempts to rebuild the intelligence community from scratch were abandoned due to a lack of trained professionals.

In 2005, the PiS 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.<sup>246</sup> 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.<sup>247</sup> 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 taken mainly to strengthen the PiS's hold on the government.<sup>248</sup>

Poland condemned the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008 and Russia's support for separatists in Ukraine after Russia invaded it in 2014.<sup>249</sup> 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

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<sup>245</sup> Artur Gruszczak, "The Polish Intelligence Services," Research Gate, 2009, p. 140, available at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241032145\\_The\\_Polish\\_Intelligence\\_Services](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241032145_The_Polish_Intelligence_Services).

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>248</sup> 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/>.

<sup>249</sup> Wenerski and Kaciewicz, "Russian Soft Power in Poland," p. 13.

disregard for Ukraine's sovereignty and support for the separatist movement is viewed negatively by Warsaw. Following Russia's 2014 invasion, Poland suspended many cooperative endeavors with Russia started under the Tusk government and has remained one of the most vocal supporters of Ukraine internationally. Polish-Russian relations also took a hit in 2010 when an airplane carrying 96 high-level Polish government officials and dignitaries including Polish President Lech Kaczyński crashed near Smolensk in Russia on the way to commemorate the anniversary of the Katyn massacre.<sup>250</sup>

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, arguing that Russian controllers contributed to the accident by giving the Polish crew wrong information about their location.<sup>251</sup> Polish investigators objected to Russia's refusal to return the aircraft's wreckage and black boxes.<sup>252</sup> The Russian side claims that it cannot return the wreckage while the investigation is still ongoing.<sup>253</sup>

In 2010, a government commission set up by then-Defense Minister Antoni Macierewicz, the same person who prepared the controversial report on the WSI disbandment, argued that the plane was destroyed by an explosion, and that Russian air traffic control deliberately

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> 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>.

<sup>252</sup> "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>.

<sup>253</sup> Then-President Dmitry Medvedev put then-Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in charge of the investigation.

misled Polish pilots.<sup>254</sup> Macierewicz himself is a divisive figure in Polish politics and reportedly has connections to some pro-Kremlin and pro-Russian groups in Poland.<sup>255</sup> His deputy was accused of maintaining contacts with pro-Kremlin far-right groups that Russia reportedly funds to undermine European unity.<sup>256</sup>

Russia has not been forthcoming in assisting Poland with the interrogation of the air traffic controllers who were on duty in Smolensk at the time of the crash. In 2021, the Polish National Prosecutor's Office asked a Warsaw court for their temporary arrest; a first step toward issuing an international warrant.<sup>257</sup> Russia's continued possession of the downed plane gives it a potential lever against Poland and might even give it a way to turn up hostility in Polish politics (for instance, by making statements about a potential airframe repatriation in the Polish media when Russia needs to distract Polish politicians from other issues).

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.<sup>258</sup> It also reportedly led to trivialization of

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<sup>254</sup> "Polish Presidential Plane Was Likely Destroyed by Explosion: New Report," Radio Poland, April 10, 2017, available at <http://archiwum.thenews.pl/1/9/Artykul/302051>.

<sup>255</sup> Josephine Huetlin, "Is This Defense Minister a Russian Double Agent?" *The Daily Beast*, August 1, 2017, available at <https://www.thedailybeast.com/is-this-defense-minister-a-russian-double-agent>.

<sup>256</sup> Christian Davies, "Polish Minister Accused of Having Links with Pro-Kremlin Far-Right Groups," *The Guardian*, July 12, 2017, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/12/polish-minister-accused-of-having-links-with-pro-kremlin-far-right-groups>.

<sup>257</sup> "Smolensk Crash Investigation Extremely Difficult—Justice Minister," *The First News*, April 9, 2021, available at <https://www.thefirstnews.com/article/smolensk-crash-investigation-extremely-difficult---justice-minister-21107>.

<sup>258</sup> Cardena, Kucharczyk, Mesežnikov, and Pleschová, "Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence," p. 95.



discussions about Russia's interference and influence operations campaign.<sup>259</sup> This is one example of Russia using a politically charged issue to introduce mistrust into the Polish political process and undermine Polish democratic institutions. Truth or lie, the only thing that matters to Russia is undermining allied governments and sowing discord.

This situation illustrates that even with a strategic culture predisposed against seeing Russian influence operations in a positive light, it does not mean that Poland is immune to Russia's activities on its territory. 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 probably considered better for Moscow that the potential connections are not known—increasing the importance of counterintelligence activities that can shed light on precisely these types of connections.

According to interviews with regional experts, there are a few openly pro-Russian actors and websites producing pro-Russian content in Poland. Most people know who they are and do not find their activities particularly convincing or effective. Allowing them to operate also makes it easier to keep them under surveillance. The danger comes mostly from disinformation from such websites finding its way to mainstream media without attributing this information to a source sympathetic to, or otherwise affiliated with, Russia.<sup>260</sup> 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.<sup>261</sup>

Nevertheless, Russia has been able to capitalize on increasing polarization within the Polish political

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

spectrum.<sup>262</sup> In the Czech Republic, Russian intelligence services have access to mainstream political parties, media, and non-governmental organizations. In Poland, the Russian Federation indirectly utilizes selected pro-Russian political organizations and some nationalistic organizations to spread disinformation with a broader objective of undermining the public's trust in Polish democratic institutions, as well as the public's positive perceptions of the United States (and NATO) as viable security partners.<sup>263</sup>

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.<sup>264</sup> Russia also employs several other narratives "aimed at indirect subversion of the consensus, and at encouraging social discord."<sup>265</sup> Experts flagged several of these as particularly effective for these purposes: a narrative that the West is morally bankrupt, Russia's anti-immigration and anti-Muslim messages that resonate with some segments of Polish society, narratives that overemphasize historical animosity between Poland and Ukraine, and the already mentioned narratives about the Smolensk tragedy.<sup>266</sup> None of these is related to the issue of missile defense cooperation with the United States.

Marches and protests against the United States, NATO, and the EU are among the most important events organized by pro-Russian networks in Poland.<sup>267</sup> Since Russia's

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<sup>262</sup> Stanford Internet Observatory, "Poland: Presidential Election 2020 Scene-Setter," January 28, 2020, available at <https://cyber.fsi.stanford.edu/io/news/poland-scene-setter>.

<sup>263</sup> Krekó et al., "The Weaponization of Culture: Kremlin's Traditional Agenda and the Export of Values to Central Europe," p. 10.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>265</sup> Cardena, Kucharczyk, Mesežnikov, and Pleschová, "Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence," p. 100.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 100–101.

<sup>267</sup> Krekó et al., "The Weaponization of Culture: Kremlin's Traditional Agenda and the Export of Values to Central Europe," p. 59.

annexation of Crimea, rallies against the Ukrainian government in support of Russia-supported separatists are among Russia's other activities.<sup>268</sup> They generate a measure of visibility that Russia exploits 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.<sup>269</sup> These events also provide contacts that might prove useful in the furtherance of Russia's goals because they generally tend to be attended by people who are likely to view Russia more positively than the general population.

Externally, Russia focuses on discrediting Poland and decreasing its credibility in the eyes of NATO allies by portraying it as reflexively and emotionally anti-Russian. And while emotions undoubtedly play a role in Polish perceptions of Russia, they are grounded in Russia's own violent, adversarial, and belligerent policies toward Poland and other countries.

Russia's other avenue of attack thrives on the fact that a large majority of Poles (as many as 87 percent) are Roman Catholics.<sup>270</sup> Russia's propaganda portrays the West as a decadent actor threatening a traditional way of life, economy, and statehood.<sup>271</sup> Russia's anti-LGBT policies

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<sup>268</sup> 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>.

<sup>269</sup> Cardena, Kucharczyk, Mesežnikov, and Pleschová, "Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence," p. 105.

<sup>270</sup> "Poland: Population: Demographic Situation, Languages and Religions," European Commission, March 4, 2021, available at [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/population-demographic-situation-languages-and-religions-56\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/population-demographic-situation-languages-and-religions-56_en).

<sup>271</sup> 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](https://www.martenscentre.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/russia-gongos_0.pdf).

strike a particular chord among Poland's more conservative population.<sup>272</sup> Russia also feeds on anti-Muslim and anti-immigration narratives promulgated by Poland's right-wing parties, including the PiS.<sup>273</sup>

## Conclusion

Russia's disinformation and influence activities are unlikely to derail the Polish pro-U.S. and pro-NATO foreign policy stance, nor U.S.-Polish ballistic missile defense cooperation for that matter. Both enjoy widespread political support—especially because of Poland's geopolitical position as a strong country between two other strong players with which Poland has had bad historical experiences (Germany and Russia).

NATO and U.S. security guarantees are a cornerstone of Poland's post-Cold War security. Poland currently does not have another realistic alternative for countering Russia's capabilities. Russia's influence operations can, however, contribute to worsening cleavages within Polish society, which could cause political instability in which Russia's influence operations generally thrive and which could cause problems for the United States and its allies.

Russia's activities are generally aimed at undermining the Polish public's confidence in NATO, for example by disseminating fake news reports that Polish generals do not trust NATO allies to defend Poland. Russia works toward making these types of reports a part of the mainstream media to give them added legitimacy. Russia also employs a network of agents and pro-Russian sympathizers to

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<sup>272</sup> 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>.

<sup>273</sup> Cardena, Kucharczyk, Mesežnikov, and Pleschová, "Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence," p. 95.

amplify the message, but these do not appear to be particularly effective. Today, Russia is using modern technologies and social networks, such as Twitter and Facebook, to amplify its messages and give them further legitimacy by repeating them from seemingly independent, but Russia-affiliated, sources. Any efforts that can increase transparency of the connections between these outlets and Russia-affiliated supporters would go a long way toward discrediting these types of fake news.

Russia strives to portray Poland as an unreliable ally to the West, for example by describing its political elite as irresponsible and Russo-phobic.<sup>274</sup> The goal is to weaken Poland's legitimate objections to Russia's belligerent foreign policy, particularly when it comes to Ukraine.

The Polish government does not produce an unclassified annual report on Russia's influence operations on its territory, although the government maintains allied intelligence cooperation, and government representatives are informed about Russia's activities. Nevertheless, consistent annual reports would make it easier to understand Russia's influence operations and would increase transparency, which is one of the most effective ways of countering them.

Polish resilience to Russia's influence operations has been largely shaped by its strategic culture. While it is good that Poland's strategic culture is inherently more resistant

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<sup>274</sup> Jonáš Syrovatka et al., "Information Warfare in the Internet," Centre for International Relations, June 2017, p. 33, available at [https://www.stopfake.org/content/uploads/2017/07/Information-warfare-in-the-Internet\\_report\\_19.07-2.pdf?\\_\\_cf\\_chl\\_jschl\\_tk\\_\\_=1a8e494cc34680398c13c6706cbaa03f0a6c9c68-1580197587-0-ARMPvvJPODK\\_RBZJMX-7IeKkt5SI108UFyFvT-n09skqe2Lly1bpIycJrDxZk\\_0LpdoHYeGn8pR23Qu2N5KFF4OtFmjv6SGZrtC4xOR3hmKsUJEYuli8C07hm\\_fFa\\_L8aZTyLx2X-QgPyJ1OOPAimxFBmtvk0Am40vwluwlabpxvLZpVVLAlfRjTjDSxVGKa0KGNaf9WMh5cgffgUZtjJlTbtasN5pMFAxUelSqVJgfDnrN4-WrgRiLgW9OwjD4uWuawvMqidyDa\\_ugZ9BZS6juzCajwSqP\\_wx2jNDgyMvxnl eet9HhZgb3NrwMULFf1uzJmvgA1vojKbXh1FUlgf6Q9dR-8GfPkauN\\_6TQmhlE2ypAqXeRNpzxCEI49oEcVg](https://www.stopfake.org/content/uploads/2017/07/Information-warfare-in-the-Internet_report_19.07-2.pdf?__cf_chl_jschl_tk__=1a8e494cc34680398c13c6706cbaa03f0a6c9c68-1580197587-0-ARMPvvJPODK_RBZJMX-7IeKkt5SI108UFyFvT-n09skqe2Lly1bpIycJrDxZk_0LpdoHYeGn8pR23Qu2N5KFF4OtFmjv6SGZrtC4xOR3hmKsUJEYuli8C07hm_fFa_L8aZTyLx2X-QgPyJ1OOPAimxFBmtvk0Am40vwluwlabpxvLZpVVLAlfRjTjDSxVGKa0KGNaf9WMh5cgffgUZtjJlTbtasN5pMFAxUelSqVJgfDnrN4-WrgRiLgW9OwjD4uWuawvMqidyDa_ugZ9BZS6juzCajwSqP_wx2jNDgyMvxnl eet9HhZgb3NrwMULFf1uzJmvgA1vojKbXh1FUlgf6Q9dR-8GfPkauN_6TQmhlE2ypAqXeRNpzxCEI49oEcVg).

to Russia's influence operations, the downside is that culture cannot be replicated in other countries to increase their level of resilience against Russia's influence operations. Poland has paid a tremendous price in blood, sweat, and national pain for its current state of resilience against Russia's influence operations.

Nevertheless, Poland is not altogether immune to the effects of Russia's influence operations, particularly when those cannot be easily traced to Russia. The Russian Federation exploits narratives that are already popular and generally socially acceptable in most of Polish society, such as the focus on traditional values and opposition to unregulated immigration. Russia-supported narratives occasionally find their way into the mainstream media. No one should underestimate the importance of person-to-person contacts and connections that the Russian Federation develops and cultivates, sometimes over long periods of time. Exposing those connections would go a long way toward minimizing the effect of Russia's influence operations.



## Chapter IV: Russian Influence Operations in Romania<sup>275</sup>

*[F]or most Romanians Russia remains a “pole of repulsion” owing to long-term Russian bids to stifle Romanian independence. So it is difficult for Romanian interests hostile to the Western democratic project to take measures which are seen as analogous to ones being promoted by “red-brown” forces in Russia itself.*

– Tom Gallagher, “Building Democracy in Romania: Internal Shortcomings and External Neglect,”  
*Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe*, Vol. 2, 2001

This chapter analyzes U.S.-Romanian missile defense cooperation and Russia’s influence operations in Romania. U.S.-Romanian missile defense cooperation is ongoing, and Russia’s influence operations directly related to it are minimal. Rather, Russia focuses on taking advantage of Romania’s political instability and its general propensity for corruption. Just like in Poland and the Czech Republic, Russia nurtures one-on-one contacts and relationships with people willing to advance Russia’s goals (even if helping Russia is not their primary objective).

### A Brief History of U.S.-Romanian Missile Defense Cooperation

Romania benefitted from the Obama Administration’s cancelation of the Bush Administration’s ballistic missile defense plan in Poland and the Czech Republic in 2009. Romania decided to participate in the EPAA in February

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<sup>275</sup> This chapter draws on previously published research: Michaela Dodge, “A Decade of U.S.-Romanian Missile Defense Cooperation: Alliance Success,” National Institute for Public Policy *Information Series* No. 482, March 18, 2021. The author is grateful to the National Institute for the permission to use this work.



2010 by hosting an Aegis Ashore site.<sup>276</sup> Negotiations on the agreement with Romania commenced on June 17, 2010, and took seven rounds to complete.<sup>277</sup>

The United States and Romania agreed in May 2011 that the Deveselu Air Base in Romania would be a suitable location for an Aegis Ashore missile defense system.<sup>278</sup> An Aegis Ashore site consists of a fire-control radar deckhouse; an associated Aegis command, control, and communications suite; and launch modules that contain SM-3 interceptors.<sup>279</sup> The interceptors, 24 in total, are launched from an MK 41 Vertical Launching System, which can launch Tomahawk cruise missiles and other sea-based conventional missiles. That has led the Russian Federation to complain that the system serves offensive purposes, even though the capabilities of the land-based system are limited.<sup>280</sup> The land-based Aegis lacks the necessary software and hardware for launching cruise missiles. The system is not capable of defending itself against Russian cruise missiles or hypersonic weapons; the system only has exo-atmospheric capability. Unlike Russia's own air and

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<sup>276</sup> 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>.

<sup>277</sup> Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Romania's Participation in the Missile Defense System," available at <https://www.mae.ro/en/node/2161>.

<sup>278</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Ballistic Missile Defense Agreement Between the United States of America and Romania," *Fact Sheet*, September 13, 2011, available at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/09/172258.htm>.

<sup>279</sup> Navy Installation Command, "Naval Support Facility Deveselu," available at [https://www.cnmc.navy.mil/regions/cnreurfacent/installations/nsf\\_deveselu.html](https://www.cnmc.navy.mil/regions/cnreurfacent/installations/nsf_deveselu.html).

<sup>280</sup> Alison Mutler, "NATO Shows Off Missile Base in Romania, Calling It 'Purely Defensive,'" *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, November 25, 2019, available at <https://www.rferl.org/a/nato-shows-off-missile-base-in-romania-calling-it-purely-defensive-/30291193.html>; and Larry Luxner, "Top Pentagon Official Disputes Russian Claims That Aegis Ashore Violates INF Treaty," *Atlantic Council Blog*, June 26, 2015, available at <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/top-pentagon-official-disputes-russian-claims-that-aegis-ashore-violates-inf-treaty/>.

missile defense systems, which are often dual-use, U.S. interceptors use hit-to-kill technologies and do not rely on nuclear explosions to destroy the incoming missiles.<sup>281</sup> Moreover, the agreement between Romania and the United States permits the site to be operated only for defensive purposes.

The United States and Romania signed an agreement on the deployment of a missile defense system to Romania in September 2011, two years after the Obama Administration cancelled the Bush Administration's missile defense plan.<sup>282</sup> In the agreement, the two countries specifically mentioned the system's defensive non-nuclear character and its contribution to NATO, while clarifying cost-sharing arrangements and responsibilities for providing security for the site.<sup>283</sup> The agreement also limited the number of U.S. military and civilian personnel operating the site to 500, with about 150 to 200 Americans deployed to the base on a day-to-day basis.<sup>284</sup> The agreement faced no significant opposition in the Romanian Parliament, as U.S.-Romanian missile defense cooperation has support across the political spectrum, and was ratified on December 6, 2011.<sup>285</sup> It entered into force on December 23, 2011.<sup>286</sup>

While the agreement on the deployment of a missile defense system was signed quickly, negotiations about its implementation details continued between 2012 and

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<sup>281</sup> Pavel Felgenhauer, "Russia Seeks to Impose New ABM Treaty on the US by Developing BMD," *The Jamestown Foundation*, July 16, 2010, available at <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-seeks-to-impose-new-abm-treaty-on-the-us-by-developing-bmd/>.

<sup>282</sup> U.S. Department of State, "U.S.-Romania Agreement on the Deployment of Missile Defense."

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>285</sup> Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Questions and Answers Regarding Romania's Participation in the US Ballistic Missile Defense System," available at <https://www.mae.ro/en/node/2162?page=5>.

<sup>286</sup> Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Romania's Participation in the Missile Defense System."

2013.<sup>287</sup> Five implementing agreements were signed in July 2012.<sup>288</sup> Six additional implementing agreements were signed between December 2012 and July 2013.<sup>289</sup> Splitting the negotiations this way likely allowed the main agreement to be signed faster than otherwise would be the case and indicated to the Americans the Romanian unity on hosting a U.S. missile defense site. This appeared to be a wise step informed by the complications and public relations challenges that were caused by the delays in ratifying the agreements in the Czech Republic and Poland. The Romanian government was uniformly supportive of missile defense cooperation with the United States, which was an additional factor that contributed to the progress of the project.<sup>290</sup>

Romania was wary when then-Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel announced the cancellation of the fourth phase of the EPAA in March 2013. Phase 4 generated the most opposition from the Russian Federation and therefore caused considerable trepidation on the part of some of the U.S.'s European allies, such as Germany, that were uncertain about missile defense. The SM-3 Block IIB interceptor, part of Phase 4, was supposed to be capable against ICBMs and was cancelled due to a lack of congressional support and technological challenges.<sup>291</sup> However, the more important aspect for Romania was the continued U.S. commitment to a missile defense system on

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<sup>287</sup> Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Romania's Participation in the Missile Defense System," available at <https://www.mae.ro/en/node/2161>.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>290</sup> Contrast this situation with the Czech Republic's efforts under the Bush Administration's "Third Site" plan. The Czech Parliament never managed to approve either the Status of Forces Agreement or the Ballistic Missile Defense Agreement.

<sup>291</sup> "US Scraps Final Phase of European Missile Shield," BBC News, March 16, 2013, available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-21812161>.

Romanian territory rather than specifics of which interceptor would be deployed.

Despite the cancellation of the SM-3 Block IIB interceptors, the Obama Administration started to implement the EPAA, and in October 2013, U.S. and Romanian officials broke ground on the site at Deveselu.<sup>292</sup> The site was operationally certified in May 2016.<sup>293</sup> It has operated without major issues since then.<sup>294</sup>

The Aegis Ashore site is Romania's most significant—though not its only—contribution to NATO missile defense and the EPAA. For example, Romania purchased four Patriot Advanced Missile Defense units from the United States<sup>295</sup> and is authorized to purchase three additional Patriot units through the State Department's Foreign

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<sup>292</sup> Vince Little, "US, Romania Begin Work on Aegis Ashore Missile Defense Complex," U.S. Army, October 31, 2013, available at [https://www.army.mil/article/114203/us\\_romania\\_begin\\_work\\_on\\_aegis\\_ashore\\_missile\\_defense\\_complex](https://www.army.mil/article/114203/us_romania_begin_work_on_aegis_ashore_missile_defense_complex).

<sup>293</sup> 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/>.

<sup>294</sup> In summer 2019, the United States deployed a Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system to Romania while the United States performed a scheduled update to the Aegis Ashore system. The THAAD system supported NATO's missile defense architecture. The Aegis Ashore update did not add any new capabilities to the system and the THAAD system left Romania after the upgrade was complete. See Thomas Shanker and Mark Landler, "Putin Says U.S. Is Undermining Global Stability," *The New York Times*, February 10, 2007, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/11/world/europe/11munich.html>; and David Axe, "Russia Won't Like This: THAAD Missile Defense System Headed to Europe," *The National Interest*, April 14, 2019, available at <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/russia-wont-thaad-missile-defense-system-headed-europe-52437>.

<sup>295</sup> Raytheon Company, "Romania to Procure Additional Patriot Air and Missile Defense Systems," November 1, 2018, available at <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/romania-to-procure-additional-patriot-air-and-missile-defense-systems-300742345.html>.

Military Sales program.<sup>296</sup> It already has one fire unit in place with more scheduled to arrive in 2022.<sup>297</sup> In addition to defending Romania, the system will contribute to NATO's missile defense. The total estimated program cost is \$3.9 billion,<sup>298</sup> and the Patriot purchase is an indication of Romania's political commitment to an alliance with the United States and NATO. The bill approving the procurement of the first Patriot battery passed the Romanian Senate in a 108-to-1 vote.<sup>299</sup> The Romanian Chamber of Deputies approved the purchase in a 278-to-1 vote (with one abstention).<sup>300</sup>

## Russian Influence Operations in Romania

Russia has a long history of exercising its influence in Romania, although Romania sees the Russian Federation as a threat today.<sup>301</sup> Romania borders the Black Sea, an area of

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<sup>296</sup> Defense Security Cooperation Agency, "Romania-Patriot Air Defense System and Related Support and Equipment," July 11, 2017, available at <https://www.dsca.mil/press-media/major-arms-sales/romania-patriot-air-defense-system-and-related-support-and-equipment>.

<sup>297</sup> Raytheon Company, "Romania on Track to Receive New, Modernized Patriot Systems in 2022," May 21, 2021, available at <https://www.raytheonmissilesanddefense.com/news/feature/romania-track-receive-new-modernized-patriot-systems-2022>.

<sup>298</sup> Defense Security Cooperation Agency, "Romania-Patriot Air Defense System and Related Support and Equipment," op. cit.

<sup>299</sup> "Senate Plenum Approves Bill on Procurement of the First Patriot Missile Battery. Acquisition of Patriot System Makes Romania Part of Select European and Global Defence Club," Nine O'Clock, November 20, 2017, available at <https://www.nineoclock.ro/2017/11/20/senates-defence-committee-greenlights-bill-on-patriot-missile-systems-purchase-defmin-the-purchase-places-romania-in-a-select-european-and-world-defence-club/>.

<sup>300</sup> "Romanian Parliament Votes Patriot Missile Purchase from US," *Romanian Insider*, November 22, 2017, available at <https://www.romania-insider.com/parliament-votes-patriot-missile-purchase/>.

<sup>301</sup> 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](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep29575.pdf?ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3A618559717f2aa16e878c602d35b47ab4).

significant geopolitical importance, competition, and interest to Russia.<sup>302</sup> A brief historical background helps to highlight some of the complexities of the relationship between the two countries. The successors of Romanian communists, although not directly beholden to Moscow, retained power in the country even after the end of the Cold War and did not reform until 2000.<sup>303</sup> Even during the Cold War, the Romanian dictatorship had 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.<sup>304</sup> Iliescu remained in power until 1996 (and then was elected again in 2000).

Romania's pro-democratic and Western-committed parties won the 1996 elections, partly due to then-President Iliescu's efforts to sign a Friendship Treaty with the Russian Federation, which cost him some popular support. Likely on the Russian Federation's insistence, the treaty ignored the matter of the Bolsheviks stealing Romania's treasure in 1918, and condemned the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop pact only in the annex, not in the main body of the treaty. Both of these issues were significant for the Romanian public.<sup>305</sup>

The democratic government wanted to integrate into Western political and military structures and took the first steps toward doing so. The effort was not welcomed by the Russian Federation, which was used to a friendly regime in

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<sup>302</sup> Flanagan and Chindea, "Russia, NATO, and Black Sea Security Strategy: Regional Perspectives from a 2019 Workshop," pp. 1–2.

<sup>303</sup> Theodor Tudoroiu, "From Spheres of Influence to Energy Wars: Russian Influence in Post-Communist Romania," *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 3, No. 24 (August 14, 2008), p. 388, available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080%2F13523270802267922>.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 388.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 392–393.

Bucharest; a regime that, by and large, acted in accordance with Russia's interests. The change in political winds prompted Russia to seek to regain the influence it enjoyed previously from Romania's pro-Soviet elites without incurring significant costs.<sup>306</sup>

Russia reportedly tried to destabilize Romania prior to the 1999 elections, for example by supporting the miners' protests, although Russia's overall impact on the election results was arguably negligible.<sup>307</sup> During these elections, the center-right coalition of parties did not even meet the threshold to be represented in the Parliament. The successor to Romania's Communist Party, the Social Democracy Party of Romania, won with 37 percent of the vote. Moreover, Iliescu won the presidential race.<sup>308</sup> The main reason for democratic parties losing voter share was political infighting and their inability to pass economic reforms that would revive Romania's economy.<sup>309</sup> The main reason for the ruling parties' loss was the widespread corruption in the context of privatization.

The new-old government continued the policy of overtures to Russia. President Iliescu even signed a Russian-Romanian Treaty on Friendly Relations and Cooperation, which he had not managed to do in his previous term.<sup>310</sup> The two countries signed a few other cooperative

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid, p. 398.

<sup>308</sup> "Romania After the 2000 Elections: Background and Issues for Congress," Congressional Research Service *Report for Congress* No. RS20886, April 12, 2001, p. 3, available at [https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20010412\\_RS20886\\_185752dfe4b5fbf902aab902be12b86e57703dea.pdf](https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20010412_RS20886_185752dfe4b5fbf902aab902be12b86e57703dea.pdf).

<sup>309</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>310</sup> 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>.

agreements.<sup>311</sup> After the signing ceremony, Russian President Putin made clear that he was particularly interested in cooperation in Romania's energy, machine-building, metallurgy, light-industry, foodstuffs, and transport-infrastructure spheres.<sup>312</sup>

The treaty did not resolve existing controversial issues; nevertheless, the expectation was that it would move relations between the two countries to friendlier terms. NATO welcomed the effort, partly because its leadership still believed that more productive and amiable relations with Russia were possible.<sup>313</sup> Despite its treaty with Russia, Romania's efforts to join NATO and the EU continued. Romania was the first country to participate in the Partnership for Peace program, NATO's program for cooperating with newly independent states. Romania wanted to join NATO to integrate into Western political and military structures, gain an impetus for the necessary democratic reforms of its military, and contribute to securing stability in the region. Russia was significantly concerned, but ultimately was unable to prevent Romania from joining NATO in 2004, and the EU in 2007.

Unlike the Czech Republic and Poland, Romania is one of the EU's least energy-dependent states due to its large domestic gas and oil reserves.<sup>314</sup> But just like in the Czech Republic, the Russian Federation has been intent on expanding its influence over Romania's energy and transportation sector, particularly through increasing its

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<sup>311</sup> 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>.

<sup>312</sup> "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>.

<sup>313</sup> Eugen Tomiuc, "Romania/Russia: Political Treaty Sealed After Decade of Uneasy Relations."

<sup>314</sup> 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](http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep21847).



share in Romania's energy companies. It would not be surprising if Russia tried to influence Romania's government representatives to be more supportive of Russia's activities in these sectors. And, just like in the Czech Republic, the Russian Federation does not appear hesitant to involve itself in Romania's domestic politics, including by covertly supporting organized protests.<sup>315</sup>

Corruption has been a persistent problem in Romania, and has given Russia another potential means to influence events in the country to its liking.<sup>316</sup> Romania ranks 69<sup>th</sup> in Transparency International's annual *Corruption Perception Index*, among the lowest ranking in the EU.<sup>317</sup> In a survey, 20 percent of public service users said they "paid a bribe in the previous 12 months" compared to 10 percent in Poland and 11 percent in the Czech Republic.<sup>318</sup> Personal connections and networks are an important enabling factor for bribery. This is not so different from personal connections through which Russian agents often 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*."<sup>319</sup> (Emphasis added.) This was the only

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<sup>315</sup> Tudoroiu, "From Spheres of Influence to Energy Wars: Russian Influence in Post-Communist Romania," p. 398.

<sup>316</sup> 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/>.

<sup>317</sup> *Corruption Perceptions Index*, "Romania" Transparency International, 2020, available at <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/romania#>.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> "Report on the Activity of the Romanian Intelligence Service in 2008," Romanian Intelligence Service, p. 11, available at [https://www.sri.ro/assets/files/reports/2008/REPORT\\_on\\_the\\_Activity\\_of\\_the\\_Romanian\\_Intelligence\\_Service\\_in\\_2008.pdf](https://www.sri.ro/assets/files/reports/2008/REPORT_on_the_Activity_of_the_Romanian_Intelligence_Service_in_2008.pdf).

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).<sup>320</sup>

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 SRI's rather complicated relationship with Romania's civil and democratic society due to its role in suppressing dissent during the Cold War.<sup>321</sup> The reports do not mention Romania's involvement in the U.S. missile defense program as a security factor with regard to these threats.

The 2012 "Activity Report" mentioned other states' "espionage" activities in connection with Romania's participation "in setting up the US 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."<sup>322</sup> The report also listed as one of its priorities for 2013 "hostile" activities of "certain intelligence services."<sup>323</sup>

During the timeframe for which English-language "Activity Reports" are available (2008 to 2012), the SRI did not publicly name which countries' intelligence activities it

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<sup>320</sup> "Romania-Ukraine Spy Scandal Turning into Full Diplomatic Row," Internews.org, March 6, 2009, available at <https://intelnews.org/2009/03/06/01-92/>.

<sup>321</sup> 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>.

<sup>322</sup> "Report on the Activity of the Romanian Intelligence Service in 2012," Romanian Intelligence Service, p. 5, available at [https://www.sri.ro/assets/files/reports/2012/REPORT\\_on\\_the\\_Activity\\_of\\_the\\_Romanian\\_Intelligence\\_Service\\_in\\_2012.pdf](https://www.sri.ro/assets/files/reports/2012/REPORT_on_the_Activity_of_the_Romanian_Intelligence_Service_in_2012.pdf).

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

was worried about, although it is reasonable to assume that Russia would be one of the priorities.<sup>324</sup> The report coincided with Romania's political crisis following Prime Minister Victor Ponta's efforts to restrict the independence of the judicial branch and force President Traian Băsescu to step down.<sup>325</sup> While these efforts gained Romania U.S. and EU condemnation, a Russian radio broadcast reportedly welcomed them.<sup>326</sup>

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.<sup>327</sup> Romania's 2020 National Defense Strategy states: "*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.*"<sup>328</sup> (Emphasis in original.)

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<sup>324</sup> In Romanian, more comprehensive versions of "Activity Reports" are available for two additional years, but they do not appear to mention Russia at all. After 2014, "Activity Reports" are significantly shorter and lack the comprehensiveness of their previous versions.

<sup>325</sup> Sven-Joachim Irmer, "Romania After the Elections: A Country Searching for Its Path into the Future, and Encountering Its Past as It Does So," Konrad Adenauer Stiftung *International Reports* (March 2013), pp. 92–93, available at [https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep10122.8.pdf?ab\\_segments=0%2Fbasic\\_search\\_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3Aaa96b6cff5f9216de4f35e7da1ee9c6b](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep10122.8.pdf?ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3Aaa96b6cff5f9216de4f35e7da1ee9c6b).

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>327</sup> "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>.

<sup>328</sup> "National Defense Strategy 2020–2024: Together for a Safe and Prosperous Romania in a World Marked by New Challenges," The Presidential Administration, 2020, p. 19, available at [https://www.presidency.ro/files/userfiles/National\\_Defence\\_Strategy\\_2020\\_2024.pdf](https://www.presidency.ro/files/userfiles/National_Defence_Strategy_2020_2024.pdf).

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."<sup>329</sup> 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.<sup>330</sup> Russia reacted by issuing a strong statement accusing Romania of plagiarizing Western governments, lacking "independent thinking," and "increasing tensions and distrust in the region."<sup>331</sup>

Romania's *National Defense Strategy 2015-2019* 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.<sup>332</sup> The 2016 *Military Strategy of Romania* considered "the strategic partnership" with the United States to be "essential."<sup>333</sup> In a relative break from Romania's previous strategic defense documents, the 2016 *Military Strategy of Romania* was more explicit in calling

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<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> 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/>.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

<sup>332</sup> The Presidential Administration, "National Defense Strategy 2015-2019: A Strong Romania Within Europe and the World," 2015, pp. 5 and 13, available at <https://www.eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/Defence-Procurement-Gateway/national-defense-strategy-2015---2019.pdf>.

<sup>333</sup> Romanian Ministry of National Defense, "The Military Strategy of Romania," 2016, available at [https://www.eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/Defence-Procurement-Gateway/ro\\_milstrategy.pdf](https://www.eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/Defence-Procurement-Gateway/ro_milstrategy.pdf).

Russia's actions in the region "destabilizing."<sup>334</sup> Russia maintains a "solid" intelligence presence in Romania, according to Teodor Melescanu, former Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs.<sup>335</sup> Mihai Fifor, former Romanian Minister of Defense, stated that there is not "a single day without a challenge" from the Russian Federation, from cyberattacks to political interference.<sup>336</sup> Romania is also a target of Russia's cyberattacks and political espionage operations.<sup>337</sup>

Some experts reportedly consider Romania "Russia-proof," meaning immune to Russia's propaganda.<sup>338</sup> That assessment appears counterintuitive because Romania's political instability and corruption create an environment in which Russia's influence operations can thrive. On the other hand, there is no inherent liking for the Russian Federation in Romania. Romania's public sees Russia as a threat to national security. A majority of Romanians, over 80 percent, belong to the Romanian Orthodox Church.<sup>339</sup> The Romanian Orthodox Church reportedly competes for influence with the Russian Orthodox Church, which the

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<sup>334</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>335</sup> "Foreign Affairs Minister: Russian Espionage, Present in Romania," *Romania Insider*, April 2, 2018, available at <https://www.romania-insider.com/russian-espionage-present-romania>.

<sup>336</sup> 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>.

<sup>337</sup> Chris Bing, "Russia-Linked Hackers Impersonate NATO in Attempt to Hack Romanian Government," *Cyberscoop*, May 11, 2017, available at <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, available at <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/03/27/romania-from-hackerville-to-cybersecurity-powerhouse/>.

<sup>338</sup> Stephen Flanagan and Irina Chindea, "Russia, NATO, and Black Sea Security Strategy: Regional Perspectives from a 2019 Workshop," RAND, p. 8, available at [https://www.rand.org/pubs/conf\\_proceedings/CF405.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/conf_proceedings/CF405.html).

<sup>339</sup> U.S. Department of State, "2019 Report on International Religious Freedom: Romania," June 10, 2020, available at <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/romania/>.

Russian government has been trying to use as a diplomatic tool to spread its influence.<sup>340</sup>

Both Romania and Russia are competing for influence in neighboring Moldova.<sup>341</sup> Moldova has been trying to develop closer relations with the West, with support from Romania, but has been hampered by a frozen conflict in its Transnistria region where Russia has been supporting the separatist movement.<sup>342</sup> More important, Moldova faces additional challenges to its integration into the West: widespread corruption, a clientelist and unstable political system, lack of transparency, and “discriminatory use of political leverage over judicial bodies and the abusive practices of regulatory bodies.”<sup>343</sup>

Russia used the issue of the U.S. stationing a missile defense asset on Romanian territory to claim that the United States is advancing U.S. and NATO's security at Romania's expense.<sup>344</sup> 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 of respondents stating in 2018

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<sup>340</sup> For an excellent account of the Russian Orthodox Church's influence on Russia's nuclear forces see Dmitry Adamsky, *Russian Nuclear Orthodoxy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019).

<sup>341</sup> Dimitar Bechev, “The Russian Challenge in Southeast Europe,” in Mai'a Cross and Pawel 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>.

<sup>342</sup> “Moldovan President Seeks ‘Pragmatic Relationship’ with Russia,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, August 23, 2021, available at <https://www.rferl.org/a/moldova-sandu-interview-russia/31424192.html>.

<sup>343</sup> Oana Popescu and Rufin Zamfir, eds., “Propaganda Made-to-Measure: How Our Vulnerabilities Facilitate Russian Influence,” *Global Focus*, February 2018, pp. 221–222, and 229, available at <https://grass.org.ge/uploads/other/2019-02-22/359.pdf>.

<sup>344</sup> Popescu and Zamfir, eds., “Propaganda Made-to-Measure: How Our Vulnerabilities Facilitate Russian Influence,” p. 25.

that the United States should remain Romania's main strategic partner.<sup>345</sup>

As in Poland, 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 society dissatisfied with their economic conditions and the personal costs incurred by Romania joining the EU.<sup>346</sup> These groups of people happen to share Russia's goals and are easily targeted by tailored messages.<sup>347</sup> Russia's influence operations thrive on Romania's clientelist and incompetent public administration.<sup>348</sup>

Russia actively conceals its operations in Romania.<sup>349</sup> Its activities in the country were a "source of concern" for the U.S. embassy in Bucharest in 2019.<sup>350</sup> These 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 Western democracies.<sup>351</sup> In Romania, the Russian Federation appears to be using a similar indirect approach as in Poland, namely avoiding activities that would directly link it to a source of divisive

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<sup>345</sup> Flanagan and Chindea, "Russia, NATO, and Black Sea Security Strategy: Regional Perspectives from a 2019 Workshop," 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>.

<sup>346</sup> Popescu and Zamfir, eds., "Propaganda Made-to-Measure: How Our Vulnerabilities Facilitate Russian Influence," p. 15.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>349</sup> 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."

<sup>350</sup> "Russia Wants to Divide Romanian Society," Warsaw Institute blog, February 27, 2019, available at <https://warsawinstitute.org/russia-wants-divide-romanian-society/>.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

messages and to some degree concealing its connections within Romania's political and business spheres.

The Romanian government is aware of the dangers posed by Russia's antagonism related to Romanian NATO membership.<sup>352</sup> Some consider Romania a "below-the-radar" supporter of programs countering Russia's influence operations, stating that it prefers to be less vocal than other countries in Europe due to its complicated historical relations with Russia.<sup>353</sup> On the other hand, Romania has been at the forefront of states condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine, and an active participant in all international resolutions and sanctions against Russia after Russia's annexation of Crimea. Romania is also an initiator of a proposal for a NATO flotilla in the Black Sea. Recently, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis argued for a greater U.S. military presence in Eastern Europe to counter Russia's increased military presence in Ukraine.<sup>354</sup>

## Conclusion

Eleven years after Romania agreed to participate in U.S. missile defense efforts, it is clear that U.S.-Romanian missile defense cooperation has been a success story and did not offer Russia a significant opportunity to exercise its influence over Romania. A U.S. Aegis Ashore site in Romania became operational in early 2016 and has contributed to NATO missile defense, despite the Russian Federation's objections to the project. Romania has proven to be a valuable U.S. ally, further encouraging national security cooperation between the two countries. The

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<sup>352</sup> Romania joined NATO in 2004.

<sup>353</sup> Janda et al., "How Do European Democracies React to Russian Aggression?" p. 102.

<sup>354</sup> "Send More NATO Troops to Protect Us Against Russia, Romania's Leader Tells Biden," Euronews, May 10, 2021, available at <https://www.euronews.com/2021/05/10/send-more-nato-troops-to-protect-us-against-russia-romania-s-leader-tells-biden>.



Romanian example also shows that missile defense basing agreements need not be comprehensive and highly detailed.

This example of close U.S.-Romanian defense cooperation is a model that demonstrates promise for other countries seeking to defend their sovereignty and national interests from potential Russian influence operations by aligning with the United States and the West. Given ballistic missile proliferation around the world, it is a lesson well worth learning.

## Chapter V: Common Tendencies and Lessons Learned

*A new type of war has emerged, in which armed warfare has given up its decisive place in the achievement of the military and political objectives of war to another kind of warfare – information warfare."*

– Vladimir Kvachkov, quoted in Keir Giles,  
*Handbook of Russian Information Warfare*, 2016

This chapter elaborates on common tendencies that marked Russia's influence operations in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania with a particular focus on their respective missile defense discussions and negotiations with the United States. It also illustrates the most significant differences between the Russian and the U.S. approach to influence operations. These differences generate synergies that are not, in some cases, available to the United States. On the other hand, the United States can to some degree compensate with advantages that are not available to the Russian Federation—provided it puts in place a smart comprehensive package of countermeasures.

The most significant tendency is Russia's advancement of very similar strategic goals through its influence operations. On the broadest level, Russia wants to undermine others' faith in democratic institutions and in the desirability of a positive 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.<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>355</sup> 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. Creating such an environment makes the public more susceptible to manipulation and exploitation by Russia's intelligence services.

Russia's second goal is to expand its economic influence in countries that used to be 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.<sup>356</sup> To advance its economic interests, Russia draws on networks of personal connections developed during the Cold War and sustained throughout the 1990s. Russia also does not hesitate to bribe government officials and even threaten them with violence, including on the regional level. That is a potential problem in the long run because regional politics feeds national politics.

Several key factors currently make Russia's influence operations more potent than Allied efforts to counter them.<sup>357</sup> Some of these factors are illustrative of general differences between the West's and Russia's approach to

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<sup>356</sup> 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 for influence in what Russia sees as its traditional spheres of interest is not welcomed by Moscow.

<sup>357</sup> This chapter draws on an already published work: Michaela Dodge, Petr Suchý, and Michael Rühle, "U.S.-Czech Missile Defense Cooperation: Alliance Politics in Action," National Institute for Public Policy *Information Series* No. 477, January 29, 2021. The author is grateful to the National Institute for the permission to use this work.

influence operations: their long-term character, Russia's willingness to utilize illegal tools as part of standard operating procedures, the lengths to which it will go to execute the task at hand, and the resultant asymmetry between the means it employs and those that the United States employs. This makes it potentially easier for Russia to recruit agents, witting or unwitting, to advance its goals. On the other hand, it is reasonable to assume that institutional rivalries and bureaucratic infighting could make Russia's operations less efficient in an environment in which authorities and responsibilities are not clearly delineated.

In the Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania the Russian Federation uses networks that were built during and shortly after the Cold War. While the value of connections from the Warsaw Pact era has been declining with the passage of time, Russia's efforts to expand these networks became particularly vigorous after Vladimir Putin's ascendance to power in 2000. It was then that intelligence services obtained additional resources and leadership attention and became a stronger component of Russian statecraft. Russia was in a unique position to take advantage of its pre-existing networks; its knowledge of political, cultural, and regulatory environments, and to build on this knowledge.

Even though each of the countries adopted different measures to prevent continued infiltration by Russian intelligence services and political and economic interests after the end of the Cold War, Russia has the advantage of being very familiar with the operating environment in each country. And while this *Occasional Paper* focuses on Russia's activities *inside* these countries, Russia is also conducting influence operations aimed at undermining these countries' images in other European capitals, as well as in the United States. These operations are aimed at questioning the Czech

Republic's, Poland's, and Romania's trustworthiness and value as Western allies and weakening NATO from within.

After all, alliances are the most important advantage that the United States and its allies have in countering Russia's activities. The ability of alliances to cooperate on a much deeper level than non-allied states, particularly regarding cooperation on intelligence matters, gives them one of the most important synergies that is not available to Russia. While Russia has an advantage vis-à-vis the Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania when it comes to intelligence and information operations resources, when allies cooperate within the NATO framework, or bilaterally with strong U.S. backing, Russia's advantages can be mitigated. 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 and its malign activities on NATO members' territories.

Russia's intelligence operatives do not particularly care whether they stay within the bounds of the law in other countries when executing their intelligence and influence operations. In fact, organized crime networks were key to sustaining the Russian intelligence 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 Romania's general lack of affinity toward Russia.

Utilizing organized crime networks developed during the 1990s in the Czech Republic meant that Russia's intelligence services could take advantage of their propensity for violence, corruption, and bribery. This gave Russia additional tools to develop potential compromising information about Czech politicians on the local and regional levels. These types of activities are among the most significant hallmarks of the long-term character of Russia's operations because such "kompromat" material may be

useful years later when (and if) these local politicians rise to national ranks. Generally speaking, adherence to the rule of law in democracies, accompanied by strict oversight procedures, precludes extensive illegal intelligence gathering operations, in contrast to authoritarian regimes.

Perhaps even more worrisome have been Russia's efforts to use Czech domestic institutions to threaten Czech non-governmental organizations run by Russian expatriates if they do not openly support Vladimir Putin. This marks an uncomfortable degree of penetration of Czech local government institutions by pro-Russian elements. The situation was made worse when Russia had many of its intelligence operatives accredited as diplomats in the Czech Republic, which meant that transgressions against Czech law were practically unpunishable.<sup>358</sup> On the bright side, the Czech Republic seemed to be an outlier among the three cases studied in this *Occasional Paper*, as the institutions in Poland and Romania do not display evidence of such high levels of penetration.

Russia's intelligence operatives are able to function in several divergent environments, from politics to business to media to organized crime. Sometimes, they access their targets on a pretense of advancing a discussion about a legitimate topic of common interest, for example countering terrorism, only to use it as a pretense for advancing Russia's own goals that have nothing to do with the original topic, or gaining introductions to Czech decision-makers, politicians, or scientists.

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, Russian intelligence agencies may take on interchangeable functions; for example, Russia's Federal Security Service, a

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<sup>358</sup> While diplomats can be expelled, the willingness of host countries to expel Russian diplomats often depends on whether a country has the same number of diplomats in Russia as Russia has in the host country.

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 knowing.<sup>359</sup> 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.<sup>360</sup> 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 its 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 different historical experiences with the Soviet Union and the post-Cold War transformation of each of the states, which the Russian Federation must take into account to maximize its chance of success.

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<sup>359</sup> Keir Giles, "The Next Phase of Russian Information Warfare," NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 2016, p. 4.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6.

Generally speaking, a target's strategic culture will inform how an adversary approaches the execution of his influence operations and which tools he uses to implement them. In order to improve U.S. missile defense cooperation with allies and to be effective against an adversary's influence efforts, the United States must make allowances for the different strategic cultures of allies, and for the methods that adversaries employ to reach their respective goals. They should be part of a thought-out strategy before beginning serious cooperative efforts.

The United States must understand its allies and adversaries as well as possible in order to understand the threat posed by Russia's influence operations and how to best help allies to defend against them. The U.S. must understand its allies and adversaries from their own perspectives. That is, contrary to habitual U.S. mirror-imaging, whereby the U.S. assumes the adversary's decision-makers and decision-making structures to be similar to its own, the United States must have an understanding of how an adversary's decision-makers *see themselves* and how *they* understand their goals. Armed with this knowledge, the United States will be able to understand an adversary's actions better and will also be able to create more effective strategies to help allies to counter adversaries.

## Conclusion

Tools that the Russian Federation employs in the pursuit of its goals vary based on the permissiveness of the operative environment, the importance it attributes to the goals it advances, Russia's image among the target audience, and a target country's strategic culture. Each of the countries studied in this *Occasional Paper* differ in these aspects. Whereas the Czech Republic was until recently very permissive (and remains so in many respects), Poland and



Romania are not, even though they have vulnerabilities of their own. Both countries consider Russia an adversary (or very close to it, in the case of Romania) and both consider their alliance with the United States and NATO a core guarantee of their security. Consequentially, their policies have been focused on integrating into the West's political and military structures and building up closer relations with the United States.

Conceptually, the permissiveness of the operating environment may not be necessarily correlated with Russia's image among the population, even though it is fair to assume that the more the population views Russia as a positive actor, the easier it would be for Russia to pursue its goals. For example, Russia may cultivate relatively good access to politicians and decision-makers to reach its objectives while concealing its activities from the general public that is less sympathetic to its interference and manipulation. These politicians and decision-makers may not be motivated by seeing Russia as a positive actor and may have more base motives for their support of Russia's goals, for example simple greed.

By now, Russia's goals ought to be well understood in the West given the years of evidence of Russia's activities and increasing alertness to its belligerent actions: undermining civil societies, exercising influence in Europe, undermining alliances and democratic institutions. The following chapter offers comprehensive recommendations on how to tackle Russia's activities and protect the world's democracies.

## Chapter VI: Countering Russia's Influence Operations<sup>361</sup>

*At the front lines of this war are not paratroopers or fighter jets, but journalists.*

– Czech paratrooper to author, 2019

This *Occasional Paper* advances understanding of the mechanics of Russia's influence and disinformation operations and how these types of activities can affect U.S. allies and alliance politics. It started with the intention of shedding light on Russia's malevolent activities in connection with Allied ballistic missile defense cooperation because of the assumption that due to Russia's dislike of missile defense, one would see its influence activities most clearly. The assumption was proven partially incorrect. While missile defense cooperation with the United States did provide a major focal point for Russia's influence operations in the Czech Republic, it did not serve the same mobilizing purpose in Poland or Romania for reasons expounded upon in the country chapters.

The United States currently cooperates on missile defense with over 30 countries, including Poland, Romania, Israel, and Japan.<sup>362</sup> The case studies make clear that the United States ought to be prepared to counter adversaries' influence operations against its missile defense cooperation efforts internationally, and to help allies to counter Russia's malign activities that are more broadly aimed at undermining their political systems.

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<sup>361</sup> This chapter draws on previously published research: Michaela Dodge, "Different Countries, Different Methods, Same Goal: Destroy Democracy," National Institute for Public Policy *Information Series* No. 517, March 7, 2022. The author is grateful to the National Institute for the permission to use this work.

<sup>362</sup> "MDA-International Cooperation," available at [http://mda.mil/system/international\\_cooperation.html](http://mda.mil/system/international_cooperation.html).

This *Occasional Paper* recommends the following steps to counter Russia's influence operations:

**1. Expose an adversary's influence operations.** Russia's activities are hiding in plain sight, and 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 to publish regular and 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 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.<sup>363</sup> 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.<sup>364</sup> But one report is not enough. The Administration should make more of the GEC's work publicly available.

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<sup>363</sup> 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](https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/190326_KP2.pdf). Another was the Department of Defense's series *Soviet Military Power* produced annually between 1981 and 1991.

<sup>364</sup> 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/>.

**2. Know your enemy—and your ally.** Over six decades ago, the great 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.”<sup>365</sup> The observation about the necessity of increasing the quality of the U.S. government’s preparation is applicable to the threat posed by Russian influence operations. Historically, the United States has tended to assume that its values are universally shared, and if only it would explain the situation better, other countries would understand, see the error of their ways, correct their course, and do what the United States considers to be rational. Instead, Russia’s influence operations in allied countries are aimed at advancing Russia’s interests, which are fundamentally incompatible with those of the U.S. Without that recognition, U.S. steps to counter Russia’s influence operations will never reach the effectiveness they ought to have.

**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

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<sup>365</sup> Herman Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2007), p. 576.

potency once it was revealed that they originated in Russia. Pulling the curtain back on Russia's efforts to conceal its activities could be very helpful, including, for example, increasing transparency of how Russia uses the nonprofit sector in allied countries to advance its influence operations.<sup>366</sup> The goal is to increase transparency, not limit freedom of speech – an essential component of a democratic society.

**4. Revitalize the U.S. communications and public diplomacy campaigns.** The West needs a plan to counter Russia's disinformation narratives. Due to the shared cultural heritage of some Central and Eastern Europeans and Russians, these narratives are more appealing to some segments of the population in the region. 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 materials in various languages.<sup>367</sup> 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.<sup>368</sup> The United States must recognize that the

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<sup>366</sup> This idea is advanced in Vojtišková et al., "The Bear in Sheep's Clothing," op. cit., p. 66.

<sup>367</sup> 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>.

<sup>368</sup> Loc. cit.

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 general 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. The Russian time and resources needed to defend against such U.S. and allied efforts may help to constrain the time and effort that Russia is able to devote to its influence operations.

**6. Build capacities to counter Russian propaganda, disinformation, and influence operations.** The United States has tremendous expertise and advantages in 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" as its "power of intimidation."<sup>369</sup> There is no better time than now to use America's power of inspiration.

**7. Create compelling narratives as part of roll-out strategies and policy announcements.** Important policy

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<sup>369</sup> 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>.

announcements must be accompanied by communications roll-out strategies that anticipate and pre-emptively blunt an adversary's counter-narratives. Being put on the defensive makes it more difficult to catch up and counter an adversary's disinformation, and puts the United States and an allied government in a reactive mode from which it is difficult to recover. Adversaries should not be allowed to set the terms of the debate. No team wins by playing only defense.

**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. While this provides the United States with strategic and tactical advantages, it also provides Russia with opportunities to create mischief. 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 than Russia can to propagating it, cooperating with the United States can help mitigate the disparity

**9. Refuse to 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 allied willingness to speak out about the true nature of Russia's threat until Russia invaded Ukraine and seized Crimea in 2014.<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> Author interview with an expert from an allied country who prefers to remain anonymous.

**10. Support local independent journalists and non-government organizations focused on countering influence operations.** New technologies and new media environments require new ways of addressing and countering the spread of disinformation and Russian propaganda. These new ways must be tailored to their respective audiences, which requires deep understanding of 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.<sup>371</sup>

## Conclusion

In the battle to counter Russia's influence activities, alliances are the most important advantage that the United States has. The views and values that allies share allow cooperation on a much deeper level than would be the case among non-allies. This is particularly true with regard to cooperation on intelligence matters and provides one of the most important synergies that is not available to Russia. While Russia has an intelligence and resource 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 be a critical element of any future efforts to counter Russia's influence operations and its malign activities on NATO member states' territories.

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<sup>371</sup> 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.





## *About the Author*

Dr. Michaela Dodge is a Research Scholar at the National Institute for Public Policy. Before joining the National Institute, Dr. Dodge worked at The Heritage Foundation from 2010 to 2019. She took a leave of absence from Heritage to serve as Senator Jon Kyl's Senior Defense Policy Advisor from October to December 2018. Her last position at Heritage was as Research Fellow for Missile Defense and Nuclear Deterrence.

Dr. Dodge's work focuses on U.S. nuclear weapons and missile defense policy, nuclear forces modernization, deterrence and assurance, and arms control. She was a Publius Fellow at the Claremont Institute in 2011 and participated in the Center for Strategic and International Studies' PONI Nuclear Scholars Initiative. Her 2020 book *U.S.-Czech Missile Defense Cooperation: Alliance Politics in Action* details factors that contribute to ballistic missile defense cooperation between two states in the context of alliance cooperation, as well as Russia's influence operations.

Dr. Dodge received her Ph.D. from George Mason University in 2019. She earned a Master of Science in Defense and Strategic Studies from Missouri State University in 2011. At Missouri State, she was awarded the Ulrike Schumacher Memorial Scholarship for two years. In 2009, she received a bachelor's degree in international relations and defense and strategic studies from Masaryk University, the second-largest university in the Czech Republic.

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