The Nature of Russian and Soviet Intelligence Agencies

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ABSTRACT

A historical interpretation of why the Russian Federation has maintained a large intelligence service after the end of the Cold War.

Introduction

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia spiraled into chaos, resulting in the dissolution of the infamous Committee for State Security (KGB). While the West came out of the Cold War victorious, for the newly formed Russian Federation the threat of the West only grew. For former president Boris Yeltsin, the need for a powerful security service remained. Boris Yeltsin stated in 1994 that, “intelligence should and will increase” (Bennett 2000). Out of this need, the Federal Security Service (FSB) was founded on the 12th of April 1995 (Albini and Anderson 2008, 43). When the presidency was passed on to Vladimir Putin, he bolstered with great effect the operational agility and freedom the FSB and Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation (SVR) after the turn of the century (Soldatov 2016, 84). The effects of this decision by Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin to continue intelligence operation abroad was seen when Russian Illegals, i.e. SVR assets operating under false identities were caught as early as 1992 in Finland, 1996 in Canada and the more recent case in 2010 when the U.S. arrested 12 illegals operating out of US cities (Lefebvre & Porteous 2011, 447-448). All this happened while Western assumptions held that the intelligence war was over. As a result of Russian intelligence activities being uncovered, the US and its Western allies, have portrayed Russia as hostile and menacing, painting the country as the aggressor. Historical and political research, as well as the media, has fail to ask the critical question “why?” If Russia has put forth such extensive efforts to maintain an intelligence service after the fall of the Soviet Union, what is the motivation behind such actions? To answer this question, an understanding of the historical impact the intelligence service has had during the Soviet Union and the unrelenting Western geopolitical aggression during the post-Cold War era must be understood. The conclusion is drawn that the primary motivations behind the Russian Federation’s actions to strengthen its intelligence services, are out of a proactive defensive strategy in responding to NATO’s eastward campaign. Russia must do everything in its power to prevent another 75-year-old mistake of allowing its enemy to position themselves right on its borders. Therefore, a strong intelligence service abroad is a fundamental way to actively work to prevent the present threat posed by the US and NATO.

Literature Review

All literature reviewed on Russian intelligence services unanimously concluded the FSB and SVR emerged with greater power and influence by the turn of the 21st century. This is
expressed in great detail by the accounts, stories and interviews conducted from Amy Knight’s 1997 book, *Spies without Cloaks*. Knight’s book gives a detailed account of the structural challenges the security service went through along with the political pressure during the 4 years following the 1991 coup (Knight 1997, ch 1-2). The fundamental argument most Western literature makes supports is how Russia’s intelligence services only changed on the outside. Albini and Anderson’s work also support this argument, under the thesis that, “*Any alteration in KGB techniques and methods have been merely cosmetic*” (Albini and Anderson 1998, Ch. 1-3). Though this is not untrue, the literature becomes too fixated on the leaders in power’s motivation to maintain dominance domestically. It does not address why Russia’s international presence has remained active. The literature therefore suffers from the chronic flaw of conducting the research from the believe that the Russian Federation is still the Soviet Union.

Marcel Van Herpen and Richard Sakwa are two scholars who standout from this position. They both make the argument that the Russian intelligence motivation must take into account the broader picture. Van Herpen’s paper titled *How the West Failed in Ukraine*, and his most notable book *Putin’s Wars: The Rise of Russia’s New Imperialism*, focuses on this issues surrounding the Ukraine crisis of 2014 which resulted in the annexation of Crimea by Russian forces. He argues that the Ukraine crisis was brought about by a variety of factors. These include NATO political and military weakness, ignorance of Russian nationalism and the poor relational decisions the US made during the Obama administration (Van Herpen 2014, 1). The paper point out how the US and NATO’s view of Russia remained ridged throughout the post-Cold War era and failed to adapt to a new Russia. Van Herpen goes further to support his case on the lax nature of NATO to deter Russian actions stating that, “*In 2013, only a few European NATO members fulfilled the criterion of spending 2% of GDP on defense*” (Van Herpen 2014, 6). Van Herpen’s research provides a timeline and strategic look into why the invasions of Crimea should not have surprised the West. He does not go so far as to agree with Russia’s actions as justified, but he confronts the vital proposition that the deterioration of Russian-Western relations is not solely a Russian problem. The Ukraine crisis is the manifestation of a deeper problem, that both Russia and the West has contributed to. This geopolitical tension is very much a result of NATO’s eastward expansion and the rise of new Russian nationalism.

Richard Sakwa’s book *Frontlines Ukraine* also makes the case that the Crimean annexation and the Ukraine conflict has not only been a result of the Euro-Maidan protests, but the larger problem of NATO’s interest in Ukraine since the early 2000’s, which conflicts with Russian interests. The events of 2014 in Ukraine revealed a deeply divided nation both politically and geographically between pro-Western goal of becoming part of NATO and the pro-Russia population. He states that in a post-Cold War era, NATO and the EU refuse to acknowledge Russia’s legitimacy as a nation and its legitimate interests in Ukraine. One of his most prominent point made is on page 90 where he shows how the EU has been subsidizing front groups in Ukraine between the years 2004 and 2013 (Sakwa 2014), directly ignoring Russian defensive interests in keeping Ukraine as a buffer state. Sakwa represents one of the few scholars that have taken a neutral or at the worst contrasting analysis of the larger picture, refusing to dismiss Russian actions as imperialistic Soviet intentions, rather trying to explain the question “why” in perspective to Russia’s legitimate defensive concerns.

A report by two Russian investigative journalists Soldatov and Borogan who specialize in security services gives various examples of how Russia has continued to utilize its intelligence
assets after the end of the Cold War. Their research highlights Putin’s legislative efforts to free up the FSB allowing them to conduct, “more lethal operations abroad,” (Soldatov & Borogan 2011, 89). The research gives the accounts of the FSB assassinations and abductions of terrorist and extremist during the period from 2000-2010. They conclude that the assassinations and intelligence operations in Uzbekistan, Abkhazia, Azerbaijan and Chechnya conducted by the FSB greatly hurt the reputation of Russia on the international field. They see these movements by Russia as an act of control fueled by Western paranoia. The research is important as the conclusion brings out the popular view that Russia’s concern of a Western invasion is not legitimate.

Dr. Victor Madeira, a historian from Gonville and Gaius College is well known for his work in his dissertation turned book Britannia and the Bear. In the articles and reports concerning the recent events around Crimea, he consistently pushes that the West has been lazy and inadequate in funding and personnel. He argues that the West has left the door wide open for Russia to establish itself in Western politics and gain influence amongst influential people. Because of his research revolving around the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) and the Bolshevik revolution, his research concerning the UK’s current position highlights in his view, a xenophobic revisionist character Russia pushes. The research does not attempt to explain why Russia has remained active abroad. The research report takes no efforts to address the various Western displays of power. The author repeatedly refers to Russia’s actions as “the latest chapter in a 100-year-old playbook” (Madeira 2014), directly showing that in his view, Russia has not changed.

As a whole, the literature reviewed went into great detail, outlining what Russian Intelligence services have done in the post-1991-time period and how they have achieved their new formed power. It addresses the ways Russia has achieved its interests, and to what concern they may raise for NATO and the US. However, the literature fails to adequately address the Russian perspective and because of this, comes to a skewed conclusion. The literature is overly fixated on domestic factors relating to corruption and, “Western aggression.” Though this provides a great narrative for readers, it consequently fails to recognize the real factors pushing Russia to act, that is, NATO’s acquisitions of Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Albania, Croatia, and Montenegro, all of which were acquired after the Cold War. These acts though seemingly act of peace, further put Russia at a geographical disadvantage in a wartime scenario and therefore, forces Russia to act as they did in Crimea. When assessing Russia’s military structure, naval funding, and economic potential, there is little practical evidence to assume Russia intends to do anything but defend its borders from its primary threat. As some incidence such as the 2006-2010 assassination spree (Soldatov & Borogan 2011) are understood as morally questionable; the overall assessment of Russia’s intelligence activates maintain the Western viewpoint which is, that Russia is set on dominating its neighbors and expanding its power.

The WW2 Mistake

It had been almost a full year before the Maybach engines of the Nazi Luftwaffe ignited for Moscow in June of 1941. Approximately 3.5 million soldiers were set to take on the red giant in what would be called Operation Barbarossa. At the time, the NKVD along with Soviet military intelligence had concluded that a Nazi invasion was inevitable and though the warning
signs were obvious, a combination of inadequate communication, arrogance and a faith in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (the promise by Germany not to invade the Soviet Union) led to Germany advancing on an unprepared Soviet Union, coming within 12 miles of Moscow within the first year of the invasion (Bayard & Holmes 2015). The failure of the Soviet Union in WWII was at its heart, a failure of preparedness which was out of a failure to respond to the intelligence brought in by the NKVD and Military. For the Soviet Union, it was not until the long overdue T-34 Soviet tanks entered the battlefield with Siberian reinforcements and the winter at their backs that the progress of the German panzer divisions was halted. For the Soviet Union, WWII would take the lives of 26.6 million people (Ellman & Maksudov 1994, 671) and become the “Never Forget,” call to action. To never allow such an invasion and tactical mistake to occur again. Russia’s failure to adequately prepare and respond to the Nazi invasion of 1941 would play a key role in shaping Russia’s military doctrine and strategic readiness through the Cold War. Out of the ashes of World War II, Russia realized the importance of effectively communicating intelligence as an active measure to predict future conflicts. The lesson learned was, knowing the enemies’ move before they become an enemy can greatly define the outcome of war (Bayard & Holmes 2015). When WWII ended, the ever emerging threat the US and NATO posed brought to life a fear of a second invasion. Fixing the problem with Soviet intelligence was therefore, to priority. As a response, Russian intelligence networks would grow to be the largest intelligence service in the world establishing its presence on every continent, serving as the first line of defense for Moscow.

**The Sword and Shield of the Communist Party**

During the Cold War, Russia built up and utilized a security service that was called the Committee for State Security (KGB) formed in 1954. The KGB’s goal simply put was to see the Communist (Marxist-Leninist) ideal and principles spread as far as possible and to secure the interests of the state (Pringle 2017). The KGB was able to operate with virtually limitless resources enjoying unchecked power, flexibility, and operational freedom. Though the KGB was considered a State Committee that was part of the Council of Ministers, (a structure which called for decisions to be made by democratically by the council) the Committee of State Security (KGB) operated with greater autonomy than the other committees making decisions independently. This combined with the Communist moral conviction resulted in debatably the most powerful security organization to date (Pike 1997). An organization that was bold, free to act at a moment’s notice and willing to get their hands dirty.

The exact details of the KGB’s structure were never publicized by the Soviet Union, but over time five Chief Directorates (subsections) were identified. Most notably, the First Chief Directorate Пеpвое главное управление (PGU) was Russia’s foreign intelligence agency tasked with operations abroad. These members operated largely as employees of embassies protected by diplomatic immunity. They also operated “Illegals” who were Russian PGU agents that worked under false identities, often going through several countries to gain citizenship. Unlike the Hollywood depiction, these spies worked to develop and influence citizens within the countries’ policy-making circles, convincing them to work for the Soviet Union (Lefebvre & Porteous 2011, 454). The Second Chief Directorate was in charge of internal political control, the Third Chief Directorate tasked with military counter intelligence, fourth was tasked with counterintelligence in the area of political “ideological counterintelligence,” and the Fifth Directorate (FD) was tasked with ideological subversion and imprisoning people who were seen
as politically volatile to the Soviet Union’s interests. There were also lesser known 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 15th and 16th directorates which served functions in surveillance, domestic security, border guards and other tasks required by the state (Pike 1997).

In the time of the Soviet Union, these departments enjoyed pulling recruits from the top of the population. This is because they compensated their officers well, offered Western economic opportunities, and control the media through the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). It has been often claimed by Russia and others that virtually every country had a KGB officer in it at some point. Foreign Minister Boris Pankin, stated that at one point, half of the Soviet embassy staff in the US worked for the PGU, thought the FBI estimated this to be closer to 25% (Bennett 2000, 2). In 1973 the KGB staff amounted to 490,000 employees and 700,000 in 1986 (Pike 1997). Though the true extent of the KGB cannot be precisely known, there is no doubt that Russia valued intelligence immensely.

**Soviet Value of Intelligence**

The value of utilizing human assets over technological superiority is a notable characteristic of the Soviet Union’s intelligence methods. In many ways, the KGB was able to counter the US’s technological superiority in surveillance capabilities by utilizing human assets on the ground. During the 1960 well though the 1980’s, the US was able to fly over Soviet territory untouched, gathering geographical intelligence without repercussions. This was all possible because Lockheed Martin, a US commissioned company for aeronautics development, produced the SR-71 Blackbird after the 1960 U-2 shoot down incident (Brugioni and Taylor, 2010, 343-346) occurred. The US had a plane that was simply untouchable by Soviet surface-to-air missiles that lacked the altitude ceiling and speed to catch the plane. Inversly, no written evidence of Soviet spy plans performing flyover reconnaissance missions over US territory was ever published. It wasn’t until the latter half of the 1980’s, 20 years later, that the MiG-31 could finally fly fast enough to deter the Blackbird, leveling the playing field once again. Russia’s need for geographic intelligence did not go unmet as PGU operations made up for this disadvantage (Leone, 2013). In the early 2000’s, John Davies discovered a collection of Soviet maps of US, British and German cities that were connected to the soviet intelligence service. These maps were detailed all the way down to the load barring estimation on bridges. All this information was acquired by taking British and American maps within there respective countries and stitching the information together to create a coheriant strategic map of key cities (Davies and Alexander, 2017)(Kirk 2017). Through this, the Soviet Union was able to work around their disadvantage in the skies. It was also far less expensive and debatably more effective at achieving similar goals than hard assets such as advanced spy plans. Over the long run using human intelligence allowed the KGB to become adaptable in the ever changing environment, whereas technology could become out of date before it was ever utilized. The Soviet’s use of human assets also worked with their philosophy of perusing active measures, spreading false information and gaining influence in the media and policy-making circles to secure their interests relatively unnoticed. A CIA research report assessing Soviet military doctrine concluded that Soviet active measures were perused out of the belief that, “Only the strategic offensive offers the possibility of decisively defeating the opponent” (CIA Office of Soviet Analysis 1989, 8). In a report by the Carnegie Moscow Center, it was stated that “Through swift decisions and actions, made without prior warning, Russia is capable of surprising its adversaries and keeping them off-balance” (Trenin 2018, 4). This is what made the KGB so effective. It was their aggressive
and unpredictable nature. The CIA spy planes were measurable, there capabilities and reach. However, the KGB’s capabilities and power could never truly be known. The Soviet Union developed a network that was difficult to measure, ever adapting, and hard to predict. They served as both a first warning indicator for Western aggression and a tool of influence to prevent future aggression. When the Soviet Union collapsed and the KGB was disbanded, many of these needs remained unchanged and therefore for Russia, the need for a strong intelligence service remained ever present.

**1991 Collapse**

When the Soviet Union collapsed, it took the most powerful security service with it. As a result of this break up, funding, media control, and the Communist moral conviction were all thrown out. Initially this created problems within the KGB, causing a period of hemorrhaging to occur between 1991 until 1995. After several years of shifting leadership and corruption, Yeltsin finalized the department under the title of the, *Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation* (FSB). During the time between 1991 and 1996, the inability to maintain funding for agents and foreign assets combined with the loosely regulated free market lead to corruption running rampant within the Russian security services. According to Joseph Albini and Julie Anderson, two professors from the University of Nevada and John Jay College respectively, after the collapse, the Kremlin used the banks to channel CPSU money out of the Country (Albini & Anderson 2008, 32). In 1996 the deputy chief of the FSB's Economic Counterintelligence Department, Vladimir Sergeyev stated in Moscow that roughly $50 trillion rubles (2008) a year were being laundered by the people in elite positions of power (Albini & Anderson 2008, 32). Another problem that damaged the KGB was the influence of the crime networks within the Russian prison system. Before 1991, the KGB had extensive networks in infiltrating gangs and criminal organizations. This infiltration tactic was advantages because it gave the KGB a degree of control over these gangs. When the financial incentive disappeared, many of these officers switched positions and began to work for the criminal organizations they were working against. Additional accounts of KGB officers using their skills for personal profit including assassinations, working for other governments, corporate espionage and private security all were ways officers found other work that utilized their skill set (Albini & Anderson 2008). However, time would prove that Russia had no intention of giving up its most valuable asset and allowing the Intelligence networks to crumble.

**1990’s: Unchanged Goals**

In the 1990’s President of the Russian Federation Boris Yeltsin gave high hopes for Western Europe. He was to be a pro-western leader and a man looking for a peaceful Russian-Western relationship during his time in office (1991-1999). But after the creation of the Russian Federation, Russia was still treated as the successor state of the USSR, and a new Soviet Union. Paul R Pillar, a former CIA officer stressed that Russia has never felt it has been treated fairly and therefore over time, it was made clear that Russia would never get the same respect as other nations from NATO or the US (Jonathan 2016). He states, "*The relationship went wrong when the West did not treat Russia as a nation that had shaken off Soviet Communism. "It should have been welcomed as such into a new community of nations, but instead it was regarded as the successor state of the USSR, inheriting its status as the principal focus of Western distrust”* (Marcus, 2016). This was the first problem, and in the end, motivating factor that signaled to the Russian Federation...
that the West had no intentions of backing off. Because of this, Yeltsin and the FSB’s operations abroad had no reason to stop. Yeltsin, made a statement in 1994 that, “...in a time when military budgets are being cut, intelligence information is becoming an important guarantee of security... the role of intelligence should and will increase” (Bennett 2000). As long as NATO treated Russia as its primary threat, the need for an effective intelligence service remained. Victor Madeira an author and expert on British Intelligence history stated, “despite the ‘end’ of the Cold War, Russia’s decades-long ‘illegal’ programs didn’t miss a beat” (Edward 2016). With intelligence networks taking decades to establish, Russia didn’t assume the future would be any different than the past and therefore, kept with its “active measure” philosophy by continuing its intelligence goals in Western countries. The already established advantages the KGB had along with the worsening geopolitical position meant Russia would continue to organize and develop their Intelligence networks over the 1990’s and early 2000’s while the Cold War went into hibernation. By the time the Federation was handed on to Vladimir Putin (former KGB agent in East Germany), the FSB was already fully utilized in the Chechen War of 1996 and was most likely well established abroad allowing Putin to continue building his most valuable asset, the FSB.

**NATO: History**

After World War II the West realized that they were looking across Germany at a massive war machine that fought a common enemy, but was not by any means an ally. In 1949 NATO was formed to prevent future war and to counter the, “threat posed at the time by the Soviet Union” (NATO/OTAN, 2017). As Ismay Hastings, the Secretary General of NATO at the time stated, “The
alliance had three purposes in Europe: to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down” (Logan 2014). When the Soviet Union collapsed, this primary threat was no longer a presence. This was made clear in the peace talks between Gorbachev and Western leaders centered around the reunification of Germany in February of 1990. The US Secretary of State James Baker was claimed to have stated that NATO would not expand, “one inch eastward” (Savranskaya & Blanton, 2017). This was then followed up time-after-time with countries in Eastern Europe joining NATO when the Russian Federation was told otherwise. A report by Colonel Patrick T. Warren, US Army assesses that, “Benefits can be found in NATO’s continuing to sponsor the stabilization of its struggling neighbors in the Balkans and Eastern Europe” (Warren 2010, 6). NATO’s alliances with Eastern Europe started with Poland Hungary and the Czech Republic. This was not entirely seen as a military move by Russia because they understood the obvious economic and social benefits came with this partnership. But from a strategic point of view, regardless of the motivation to join, the reality was the same; NATO’s new alliances enabled them to place military equipment including nuclear assets closer to Russia’s borders and Moscow.

**NATO: Nuclear Balance**

Over several decades, NATO has expanded with an ambition that has led to several missile defense platforms and nuclear assets being implemented in Europe to protect these new borders. This is not a new endeavor as the Cuban Missile crisis of 1961 was instigated by the placement of Jupiter missiles in Turkey. Even though the Soviet Union collapsed, “…the United States may still store as many as 50 nuclear weapons in Turkey” (Kingston 2017). So while the Cold War threat of Russia went away the threat posed by the West remained. The post-Cold War missile threat started in 2002 at the Prague NATO Summit when there was a proposal made to implement a missile defense system for Europe. In 2007 the US furthered this and negotiated to implement missile defense systems in Poland and the Czech Republic (Taylor & Jones 2008, 1). Russia then gave notice that it was to suspend the Conventional Force in Europe treaty (CFE), an agreement to stabilize the arms race after the Cold War. For Russia, this action by NATO and the US was a blatant act of aggression that arguably has reigned a decades-old arms race. The problem with NATO developing an antiballistic missile system is that it changes the first strike balance of power between nations. The Conventional Force in Europe treaty (CFE) called for limitations on locations and quantities of weapons systems both offensive and defensive in the hopes to prevent and minimize arms races (McCausland 1995, 1-2). The theory of mutual destruction is what keeps countries from having the ability to use weapons of mass destruction without equal consequences. By NATO
perusing a missile defense systems targeted at defending a Russian strike, it shifts the balance of power. In 2002, the US leaf the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty to continue their development and implementations of these systems abroad to counter “rogue states.” The action was seen as a blatant effort to achieve strategic domination and therefore an action against the balance of powers and against Russia (Youngs and Taylor 2003, 1). Vladimir Putin in an interview with journalists in Saint Petersburg addressed this developing problem stating, “You (journalists) do not feel a sense of the impending danger... How do you not understand that the world is being pulled in an irreversible direction” (Braun 2016). The reality is, Russian Western aggression is, in the broader picture, Russia responding to US anti-ballistic program and the decade-long NATO campaign into Eastern Europe.

**NATO: The Ukraine Problem**

Since 1783, Russia has had a naval presence in the Black Sea out of the port of Sevastopol in Crimea (BBC 2018). When the collapse of the Soviet Union occurred the fleet was transitioned to the Russian Federation and was allowed to station there on behalf of Ukraine. Ukraine along with other Eastern European countries (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Eastern Germany, Hungary, Poland and Romania) also has served as a geographical buffer zone between NATO and Russia for many years. Over the years, several of these countries experienced democracy revolutions, or Colour revolutions overthrowing regimes in: Georgia 2003, Ukraine 2004 and Kyrgyzstan in 2005 (Bērziņa 2014). These revolutions resulted in a shift from neutral nations to Western allied nations. Russia points towards Western Intelligence (CIA) intervention to help start these revolutions with the hopes of gaining land to positions their military assets. When the 2013 Maiden Revolution took root in Ukraine after pro-Russian Ukraine president Yanukovych, refused to join the EU agreement in favor of Russian loan bailouts, the Ukrainian people protested and confrontations with local police authorize ended in casualties. Further hostility towards Yanukovych and the pro-Russia stance also developed (BBC 2014). Because of Ukraine’s vitality to Russia, the annexation of Crimea can be considered the only way of ensuring the Black Sea fleet position and its onboard ballistic missile defense capabilities. For

![Figure 3: NATO’s offensive capabilities](image1)

![Figure 4: Russian Missile Defense Coverage](image2)

Gramer. CSIS Missile Defense. *Project Foreign Policy* 2017
Russia, the crisis in 2014 meant Ukraine could not be counted on as a buffer state between Moscow and NATO in future years.

When assessing current NATO and Russian missile capabilities, the picture becomes clear. Geographically, Ukraine and Belarus are the most crucial country to prevent from joining NATO. Inversely, it shows why NATO and Ukraine’s interest in becoming allies would be a particularly aggressive move against Russian security. In figure 3, NATO’s strike abilities are displayed by the green circles. In figure 6 Russia’s missile defense abilities are outlined by the Red dotted circles. If Ukraine were to ally with NATO, the response time Russia would have would potentially be cut in half from the South (Gramar 2017).

“The USA prefers to follow the rule of the strongest and not by the international law. They are convinced that they have been chosen and they are exceptional, that they are allowed to shape the destiny of the world, that it is only them that can be right. They act as they please. Here and there they use force against sovereign states, set up coalitions in accordance with the principle: who is not with us is against us” Vladimir Putin, 2014 (Braun, 2016).

**NATO: The Russian Perspective**

As of 2017, with current NATO power and US economic influence, Russia falls short when assessing an asymmetric conflict between its advisory according to the Carnegie Moscow Center (Trenin, 2018). Putin has worked tirelessly to return Russian to the global stage and one major step of this has been the remodeling of Russia’s military. With the future political climate in Ukraine favoring NATO, the threat to Russia demanded a response. In 2012 alone, Russia increased its military budget by 16%. According to Jonas Grätz, a Senior Researcher for the Global security report think tank at the Center for Security Studies, Russia has worked to restructure their military from 13,000 troop divisions towards 4,000 troop brigades (Grätz 2018). These 4,000 troop brigades favor a more mobile and offensive war stragety which lines up with the CIA’s assessment of Russian millitary stratagy. It is concluded that Russia’s best chance at preventing another devastating invasion, is to take the war to the others territory (Office of Soviet Analysis 2000). Following the assumption that little has happened to change this problem, creating and maintianing a intelligence agency that could be ever present within enemy countries is critical to this stratagy, giving the millitary ears to hear and therefore know when to respond. Russian defense expert Pavel Felgenhauer stated in Dr. Madeira’s 2017 report that the numbers in the FSB are, “the same as the Soviet-era” (Madeira 2017). In 2014 the FSB and SVR has been estimated at 400,000 personnel with the SVR alone employing 13,000 people, contrasting the respective British intelligence services MI5 and SIS/MI6, with only 7,200 employees combined (Madeira 2017). For Russia, the development and bolstering of its intelligence is a critical part of the Russian wartime defensive strategy.

**Russian’s Response**

Russia’s intelligence activities abroad as performed by the FSB in the post-Soviet Union, have remained active. This was relatively ignored or unknown by Western nations during the 1990’s due to the assumption that the Cold War was over. Responding to the increased terrorist incidents also contributed to this shift as the CIA had other priorities in the Middle East. As a result of this shift, the budgets of counterintelligence efforts were diminished. This was
significant because it magnified the incentive for Russia to further establish long-term assets in the US. One of the first signs of post-Cold War Russian activity in America came in 1999 and 2000 when a hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate on the 10th of February testified that a bug was placed in a floor board in the Secretary of State’s office. This bug was discovered when a Russian was found regularly parking outside the building retrieving data and then leaving shortly after. This operation was not so much the result of outstanding espionage as it was a result of a lax security consciousness. Mr. David G. Carpenter, the Assistant Secretary of State for Diplomatic Security stated in a hearing that, “the number of positions (for security and counter-intelligence) was reduced from 41 to 26. The funding for the program was cut from $225,000 to $65,000” (Senate Hearing 2000, 4). In 1982 the Department of State required 31 countries’ employees and staff to be escorted in and out of the building. In 1992 no countries were required to be escorted within the building, often being in the direct vicinity of computers containing confidential material (Senate Hearing 2000, 5). Efforts were made in the late 90’s to increase security measures but redirection of security funding and complaints by political staff resulted in many of these efforts to maintain adequate security unsuccessful. This was all out of the perspective that the intelligence war with Russia was over, but after 8 years that the US did not take the SVR serious anymore and as a result, their activities, at a minimum, were successful within the Department of State.

Russia also maintained their illegals program during this time. The biggest uncovering of Russian illegal spies occurred in 2010 when the FBI arrested 10 SVR agents operating in the US. Some of these agents were placed as far back as 1996 under false identities and backgrounds. They had families, neighbors and careers, not functioning as any sort of James Bond, but primarily as recruiters and asset manager, developing Americans in high positions to feed Russia information. Intelligence gathering is very common among embassy employees functioning under diplomatic immunity in foreign countries. This has become an assumed action all countries with the ability take part in. But an illegals program is much less common and is considered more invasive. Finding these agents in 2010 came as a surprise to the public world because it exposed the reality that Russia was still very much an active player in espionage. This incident was not a new problem for Western counterintelligence. Russians SVR agents have been picked up by, Finland in 1992, Canada in 1996 and 2006 and the US in 2010 (Lefebvre & Porteous 2011).

Russia also has conducted much more deadly operations in this time. In 2006, Alexander Litvinenko was found dead in London from poisoning after living under political asylum after accusing the FSB of domestic terrorism and controlling international drug rings. All Western investigators point with great reason towards Russia due to the substance (Polonium-210), 97% of which is produced in Russia (Pomerantsev 2013, 2). Russia has also operated it its near abroad regions, or countries that border Russia. In 2006 the abduction and subsequent death of five Russian diplomats in the outskirts of Baghdad lead to Russia utilizing its FSB to conduct assassinations abroad. Nikolai Patrushev, Russia’s FSB director stated after the abduction took place, “We should ensure that any terrorist who has committed a crime will not avoid the responsibility... This is not a casual assignment; it is in the logic of what we do” (Soldatov & Borogan 2011, 89). Though the U.S. captured the lead kidnapper, Russia perused more permanent measures starting with legislation proposed by Putin and approved by the state Duma to allow the FSB to carry out assassinations outsides its boarders and technically outsides its jurisdiction. With this all terrorists associated with the abduction were, dealt with. Khamzat
Gitsba, was shot and burned, Chechen field commander Gaji Edilsultanov was shot on the street in Istanbul, Chechen Islamic Warlord Janibekov was shot in front of his family, and all other people involved by 2010 were dead to missing.

In all this, the contrasting philosophy can be seen in the way Russia operates and sees its security services. For Russia, it is a tool to be utilized when it is the most effective response. Unlike Western counterparts, Russia is far less concerned about the diplomatic and political impact some of these operations bring about. Both the passive and active operations given very much could be considered reckless and even a danger to the long term interests of the Russian Federation. Regardless of their impact one key point can be learned from these accounts. Russia does not take security lightly and holds the protection of its borders, its people and its interests above making the international community happy (Soldatov and Borogan 2011, 89-92). When assessing these actions made against foreign countries, an unapologetic message can be seen. Russia will do what it has to ensure its security as a nation and for its citizens.

Conclusion

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the “end” of the Cold War, the West and its academic community has failed to let go of the presupposition that Russia is still the Soviet Union. Historical intelligence and political research reflect this bias and as a result, it communicates a false reality that Russia is another Soviet Union driven by an imperialistic motivation. The vast majority of research fails to recognize the Russia perspective and as a result, has failed to understand Russian decisions over the decades. One of these decisions Russia has made, was to maintain and continue its intelligence and security services influence abroad. With the West looking at this as an act of Western aggression, upon a boarder perspective Russia has been threatened politically and geographically by NATO and US powers. To respond to this threat, Russia has worked to maintain and grow their international intelligence operations for several key reasons. First, Russian has already experienced a devastating invasion in the second World War that could have been to a degree, prevented if proper preparation had been taken. Though their intelligence foreshadowed the invasions, their lack of communication within leadership and inability to modernize left them ill-prepared. The motivation to prevent this from happening again is at the heart of their military strategy and motivation, that is, to never allow another mass invasion to occur again on Russian territory. This reason is amplified by the second point, which is the aggressive geographical movements by NATO over the past 25 years by adopting Eastern European countries and past Soviet states as NATO allies. The strategic threat these alliances pose in regards to the balance of ballistic missile defense platforms has further instigated Russia to return to a doctrine of militarization and proactive intelligence measures. This point has been supported both historically and by the statements from Russian leaders Yeltsin and Putin who both openly express the seriousness they take when dealing with actions against Russia. This is also defended to great extent by Sakwa and Van Herpen, who give in detail the post-Cold War history between NATO and the Russian Federation and how Western actions are as much a part of the problem as Russia is. The evidence that Russia’s intelligence services have continued and grow is prevalent throughout the 21st century as seen by the 2000
department of state bugging, 2006 FSB reforms and subsequent assassinations and the 2010 illegal program uncovered in the US. The third reason that Russian intelligence has continued into the Russian Federation is because of its long history and utilization of great effect, intelligence has had over the years giving Russia no reason to let go of a primary asset.

Russia, therefore, is a country doing its best to represent itself on the global stage and to secure its future as a nation. Because of the West’s long history of inching its military assets closer to Russia’s borders, Russia has identified NATO and the US as its primary threat and therefore has taken active measure to counter this threat. These actions though direct and offensive to the Western expectations, are largely defensive in nature.

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Appendix

**NKVD: People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs**
Народный комиссариат внутренних дел
1934-1946
Predecessor to the KGB. Tasked with Police work and security

**KGB Committee for State Security**
Комитет государственной безопасности
13 March 1954 - 3 December 1991
Internal security agency

**GRU Main Intelligence Directorate**
Главное Разведывательное Управление
7 May 1992 - Present
Foreign military intelligence agency

**PGU First Chief Directorate**
Первое главное управление
1954 - 1991
In charge of foreign intelligence operations for the Soviet Union

**FSB: Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation**
Федеральная служба безопасности Российской Федерации
12 April 1995 - Present
Successor to the KGB, in charge of domestic intelligence and security

**SVR Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation**
Служба внешней разведки Российской Федерации
December 1991 - Present
Successor to the PGU, in charge of foreign civilian intelligence

**CIS Commonwealth of Independent States**
Содружество Независимых Государств
Including: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

**Illegals:** Named by the Department of Justice, refers to Russia intelligence operations classified as “sleeper agents” under nonofficial cover

**FBI Federal Bureau of Investigation**
July 26th, 1908 - Present
US Domestic Security Department tasked with investigating and arresting criminals who violate US federal law.

**CIA Central Intelligence Agency**
September 18th, 1947 - Present
US intelligence service created to collect information abroad
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