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### Intelligence

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## INTELLIGENCE

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The security services are commonly portrayed as one of the most powerful actors in Russian politics. Many observers believe that president Vladimir Putin's background in the Soviet KGB (State Security Committee) is an important guide to his worldview, and his reliance on the KGB and its successor organizations for many top personnel has further solidified the view that Russian security services are one of the dominant, if not *the* dominant, political actors today. The perceived influence of the security agencies often is linked directly to the powerful role of the KGB in Soviet politics. Indeed, in the absence of Communist Party control, many argue that the security services have increased their influence relative to the Soviet era. Putin's Russia is, in this view, a "KGB state" (Marten, 2017; see also Anderson, 2006; Bateman, 2014).

It is therefore surprising that there has been relatively little detailed scholarly analysis of the role of the security services in Russian foreign policy. Most academic works on Russian foreign policy discuss the security services only in passing, and the most prominent and influential accounts on the topic have been written by journalists, think tank analysts, and independent scholars, rather than university professors. This relative scholarly neglect is noteworthy given the high degree of speculation about the role of Russian security services in the domestic politics of other states in recent years. In particular, accusations of Russian interference in the 2016 US presidential election became one of the world's biggest stories, and similar claims were made about Russian meddling in multiple European states (e.g., Galeotti, 2017c). Although the role of the security services in Russian foreign policy is big news, as a scholarly matter it is a marginal concern.

This chapter reviews the state of the English-language literature on Russian security services and foreign policy. Although we know quite a bit about certain aspects of the foreign policy actions of the security services, we still lack a coherent, generalizable framework for thinking about the topic. Future scholarship on the topic would be helped by more systematic comparison to the role of intelligence agencies in the foreign policy process in other countries, and greater integration into general approaches to the study of Russian foreign policy. Explicit statements of underlying assumptions, and clear criteria for assessments of influence and performance (successes and failures), would help advance the accumulation of knowledge. It also would help clarify how useful it is to think of Putin's Russia as a KGB state, a contentious issue in the literature on Russian domestic politics but a relatively underdeveloped debate in writings on Russian foreign policy.

There are several obvious reasons why academic research on the Russian security services and their role in foreign policy remains a niche concern. First, there is the conventional rule of thumb that one should not go looking for the secret services if you don't want them to come looking for you. Second, data on secret activities are, by definition, hard to come by, and even harder to verify using multiple sources. Unlike in the parable of the drunk searching for his keys not where he lost them, but under the streetlight because it's easier to see, studying the security services basically requires that one go looking for information in dark and poorly lit locations. Third, the study of intelligence more generally is often atheoretical and not comparative. Finally, to the extent that we have detailed scholarly work on the role of the security services in authoritarian countries, the focus is usually on their domestic role in protecting the regime, rather than on their international and foreign policy role.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, we note some of the central themes in the general literature on intelligence and security services as it relates to foreign policy. Second, we examine the role of the KGB in Soviet foreign policy. Third, we describe the organization of Russia's security services and provide some background on the literature on their domestic influence. Fourth, and centrally, we analyze the Russian security services as a foreign policy guide and tool. We discuss their mandate and role, and their activities as it relates to analysis and operations. The final section summarizes our key points, and suggests some future directions for the academic study of the foreign policy role of Russia's security services.

### **The study of intelligence and the security services**

State security services are studied in one of two basic ways, either as externally oriented organizations that contribute to the formulation and implementation of foreign and security policy, or as internally oriented bureaucracies that play a role in protecting the state against internal threats, such as espionage or terrorism or, in authoritarian regimes, any potential threat to the ruling authorities. This division of labor reflects the organization of political science as a discipline, in which international relations and comparative politics are treated as separate fields. International relations work on security services is usually thought of as the study of "intelligence." Intelligence as a field of study can refer to certain kinds of information (especially secret), to a set of missions (collecting and analyzing information, counter-intelligence, covert action), to a process (the "intelligence cycle"), or to specific organizations (Johnson, 2007: 1–5). Intelligence research focuses on organizations like the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), MI-6 in the United Kingdom, and the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (*Sluzhba Vneshney Razvedki*, or SVR). When security services are studied as internally oriented bodies, the focus is rarely described as "intelligence"; rather, the topic is regime or state security, or law enforcement. Typical examples include the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Britain's MI-5, and the Russian Federal Security Service (*Federal'naya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti*, or FSB). Experts on comparative politics are interested in topics like state power, coercion, surveillance, and repression.

Multiple experts have noted that the study of intelligence is poorly integrated into mainstream international relations research. Indeed, the British historian Christopher Andrew (2004: 170) observes that intelligence "is all but absent in most contemporary international relations theory." Further, comparative foreign policy studies often ignore the way in which intelligence agencies are not just information sources for policy-makers, but also potential tools for executing policy in the form of covert action (Scott and Jackson, 2004: 141–142).

Much work on intelligence is atheoretical and focused on a single country. Studies of the United States and the United Kingdom dominate the literature, and this work is frequently

historical or focused primarily on organizational structures and processes. Peter Gill (2007: 86–89) notes that intelligence studies “need to get serious about theoretically informed comparative work.” Gill suggests greater attention to levels of analysis issues. Using this approach, work at the individual level would focus on cognition and perception, that at the small group level would examine issues of social psychology and “groupthink,” and that at the organizational level would engage with the literature on bureaucratic politics and organizational culture. More broadly, work at the societal level would explore the effects of regime type (democratic, authoritarian, and mixed or “hybrid” regimes), and transitions from one regime type to another, on intelligence. Systematic, comparative studies of intelligence “successes” and “failures” would also be valuable.

Internally focused work on the security services is motivated by a different set of concerns. In democracies, issues of oversight and accountability have been a core topic, given the secret nature of intelligence and security work, and documented cases of past abuse of power, including in established democracies. Research on security services in authoritarian regimes usually examines their role in regime protection and domestic repression. For example, studies of Middle Eastern politics have emphasized the role of the security services in maintaining authoritarianism in so-called Mukhabarat (intelligence) states (Kamrava, 2000; Bellin, 2004). Much work on both Soviet and post-Soviet Russian security services is in a similar vein, analyzing the internal repression role of these agencies and evaluating their influence in domestic politics (for a survey, see Renz, 2012).

This chapter, consistent with the theme of the volume, focuses primarily on the international roles of the Russian intelligence and security services. For the most part the literature on this topic is not connected to broader debates in international relations theory and does not employ a comparative framework or make explicit assessments of similarities and differences to other countries. One reason for this may be because Russia generally lacks a scholarly community in the social sciences that studies intelligence. Further, existing research tends to focus more on outputs than organizational dynamics, given the paucity of information about internal practices. To put it differently, the primary concern is about missions and activities, rather than the intelligence cycle as an analytical and decision-making process.

### **The KGB and Soviet foreign policy<sup>1</sup>**

The collapse of the Soviet Union represented both a challenge and an opportunity for the study of Russian security services and foreign policy. It was a challenge because the KGB as an organization was dismantled and broken into multiple parts (outlined in the next section). Further, the broader context in which Russian security services operated changed fundamentally: communism as an economic system, single-party rule as a political system, and the Soviet Union itself ceased to exist. The Russian economy and the polity became relatively more open, and the country more connected to the outside world. Thus, it became unclear how much of what we thought we knew about Soviet intelligence was still relevant.

The opportunity is that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the KGB generated a great deal of new information about the Soviet secret services and their role in foreign policy. Some of this information came through the opening of archives in various post-communist states, some from memoirs by former spies and political figures or interviews with these individuals, and some from documents and notes smuggled out of the Soviet Union or Russia by former KGB officials, most notably a former KGB archivist, Vasili Mitrokhin. This material can provide a baseline of knowledge about the role of the security services in Soviet foreign policy, and thus help scholars assess the degree of continuity between the Soviet and post-Soviet period.

We emphasize four general conclusions from recent research on Soviet intelligence. First, intelligence analysis – arguably the most important part of what these agencies did – largely failed at its primary task: provide an accurate picture of what your enemies are up to. Instead, analysis was shaped to meet the preconceptions of Soviet leaders. One officer noted that the guiding principle was, “Blame everything on the Americans, and everything will be OK” (Andrew and Mitrokhin, 1999: 214; see also Andrew and Mitrokhin, 2005: 21, 488). Raymond Garthoff (2015: 99) notes that the Soviet intelligence services gathered a lot of useful information, but that they were weaker at political analysis. He concludes, “Intelligence did not contribute to understanding the adversary.” Rather, Soviet leaders encouraged this tendency to distort intelligence analysis by signaling that they were pleased with reports that fit their ideological preconceptions (Andrew and Gordievsky, 1990: 583–605; Garthoff, 2015: 61–63, 97). On the other hand, Soviet intelligence agencies were generally more successful in the scientific and technical sphere than in political analysis, because information about science and technology “was not distorted by the dictates of political correctness” (Andrew, 2000: 56). The KGB and the main military intelligence directorate (*Glavnoye Razvedyvatel’noye Upravleniye*, or GRU) were able to penetrate vital industries in the West, such as defense, space, and computing (Andrew and Gordievsky, 1990: 621–623; Andrew and Mitrokhin, 1999: 131, 186–188, 215–222).

Second, major shifts in Soviet foreign policy were driven by leadership turnover, not changing perceptions of the outside world due to intelligence work. The views of the top Soviet leaders were generally independent of the work of Soviet intelligence services. Most centrally, perhaps, the dramatic shift in Soviet foreign policy heralded by Gorbachev’s New Thinking was not at all due to input from the KGB. Gorbachev, in fact, ordered the KGB in 1985 to stop distorting intelligence to fit ideological preconceptions (Andrew and Mitrokhin, 1999: 214–215, 555; Garthoff, 2015: 82–83, 99).

Third, the success of so-called “active measures” – “overt and covert actions to exercise influence in foreign countries” (Scott, 2004: 323) – is difficult to judge, because the KGB tended to take credit for positive political developments overseas, even if they played little actual role in bringing them about. For example, a KGB spy in Norway boasted that he had prevented the Nobel Peace Prize committee from awarding the 1978 prize to Soviet dissident Yuriy Orlov, phoning a top member of the Politburo in the middle of the night to pass on the good news (Andrew and Mitrokhin, 1999: 329–330). The Nobel that year went to Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin for the Egyptian-Israeli peace deal, hardly a surprising choice. In general, it appears active measures were more successful in the developing world than in the West, primarily because tales of malign US and CIA influence were perceived as more credible by both masses and elites in the developing world, in part because the United States did often interfere in the internal affairs of other states (Andrew and Gordievsky, 1990: 587, 630–632; Andrew and Mitrokhin, 1999: 19, 428; 2005: 14–15, 32, 267, 483).

Fourth, bureaucratic competition between the KGB and the GRU was a common feature of Soviet foreign intelligence work. In foreign embassies, both the KGB and the GRU would have representatives, and they would send their reports back through their own channels, while diplomatic traffic traveled on a third channel back to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Kozyrev, 2017). In general, the GRU and the KGB did not collaborate in the collection or analysis of intelligence. For example, they had separate responsibilities for the type of signals intelligence (SIGINT) that they would collect, rather than pooling their results. If their responsibilities overlapped, for example in the area of preparations for wartime sabotage, they would clash (Andrew and Mitrokhin, 1999: 213, 337, 361).

General findings about the work of Soviet intelligence – about relative successes and failures depending on the topic and region, about the politicization of intelligence, about bureaucratic

conflict between services, and so on – could serve as the basis for both cross-national and cross-temporal comparison. Certain kinds of temporal analysis, such as work on path dependency and historical legacies (see, for example, Beissinger and Kotkin, 2014; Taylor, 2014), would provide a broader theoretical framework for analyzing the work of Russian security services and its influence on foreign policy.

### The security services in post-Soviet Russia

Both the KGB and the Soviet Union ceased to exist in December 1991. After the failed August 1991 hardliner coup against Gorbachev, led by KGB head Vladimir Kryuchkov, both Gorbachev and Russian President Boris Yeltsin independently supported plans to break the KGB into multiple parts. Most consequentially for this chapter, the First Chief Directorate, responsible for foreign intelligence, was separated from the domestic parts of the KGB and renamed the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR). This separation between foreign and domestic intelligence already had some standing in the KGB, especially because the First Chief Directorate moved its headquarters from the main KGB building at Lubyanka in the center of Moscow to the suburbs in the 1970s (Albats, 1994: 294–359; Knight, 1996: 29–61; Soldatov and Borogan, 2010: 12–14).

The main domestic secret service, after several reorganizations and name changes, became the FSB. The FSB took over domestic and military counterintelligence, counterterrorism, internal surveillance, economic crimes, and other domestic security missions. Although in theory the separation between the SVR and the FSB, the foreign and domestic, is clear, in practice it is not so straightforward. This is true especially because the FSB does not limit its activity to Russia. At first FSB activities outside Russia were primarily confined to other post-Soviet states. The SVR, as part of its coordination with KGB successor organizations in the so-called “near abroad,” had agreed not to spy on these countries (and vice-versa), a position reaffirmed in 2016 by current SVR Director Sergey Naryshkin (2016). The FSB had made no such promise, so a directorate was created to manage FSB activity in the post-Soviet space. Over time the FSB expanded its work to other external states (Soldatov and Borogan, 2010: 209–212).

The other Russian security service involved in foreign policy is the GRU, which is the military intelligence component of the Ministry of Defense. There are also a range of other security and law enforcement agencies that have primarily an internal focus, such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD, responsible for the police), the Federal Guards Service (FSO, responsible for leadership security and domestic analysis), and the National Guard (Rosgvardiya), created in 2016 with the formal role of fighting terrorism and organized crime. Some of these agencies have responsibilities that straddle the domestic/foreign divide, such as the MVD’s migration role and the counter-terrorism role of the National Guard, a responsibility shared with the FSB.

The internal functions of Russia’s “power ministries,” such as the FSB and the MVD, have received relatively more scholarly attention than the external and foreign policy roles of Russia’s security services. This is particularly true because of Putin’s secret service background, and the widespread perception that the Russian government is dominated by *siloviki*, the Russian term for those officials with backgrounds in security, military, and law-enforcement bodies, and particularly *chekisty*, those with a background in the security services. This literature is primarily about domestic politics, touching on topics such as state building, the nature of the political regime, and the importance of informal politics (Kryshtanovskaya and White, 2003, 2009; Anderson, 2006; Renz, 2006, 2012; Rivera and Rivera, 2006, 2014, 2017; Soldatov and Borogan, 2010, 2015; Taylor, 2011, 2014, 2017; Bateman, 2014; Soldatov and Rochlitz, 2018; Marten, 2017).

This internally focused scholarship on the Russian power ministries and the *siloviki*, especially the FSB, tends not to deal with foreign intelligence and foreign policy. The one obvious

way this literature intersects with the standard literature on intelligence services is on the issue of oversight and accountability of the security services. The weakness of democratic control over the Russian security services, and the extremely limited degree to which other branches of government, such as parliament and the courts, can exercise oversight, is a theme that unites writing on the internal and external role of the security services (Kramer, 2002; Tsypkin, 2007). Furthermore, some of this work, particularly research which argues that the security services dominate the state, draws little distinction between operations taken at home to secure the rule of Putin and his team, and those taken abroad. In the rest of our discussion, we focus primarily on the external and foreign elements of the work of Russia's security services, rather than these domestic issues.

### **The security services as a foreign policy guide and tool**

Intelligence agencies serve both as a guide and a tool of foreign policy (Scott and Jackson, 2004). Typically, this distinction is thought of as one between the analytical and operational roles of the secret services. We first discuss the formal mandate and role of Russia's security services, before turning to an enquiry into their analytical and operational roles.

#### ***Mandate and role***

According to the foundational law on foreign intelligence, the law that regulates Russian security services' actions abroad, the official goals of modern Russian intelligence are "to provide the Russian president, the Federal Assembly, and the government with intelligence information necessary for decision-making," as well as "to provide conditions for the successful realization of Russian Federation policy in the field of security," and "to assist the economic development, scientific and technological progress of the country and military-technological security of the Russian Federation" ("O vneshey razvedke," 1996: s.5). The same law names three institutions responsible for achieving these goals and conducting foreign intelligence: the SVR; "bodies of foreign intelligence of the Ministry of Defense," meaning the GRU; and the FSB.

The law on foreign intelligence is almost solely dedicated to the role and authority of the SVR, which makes it de jure the main foreign intelligence agency of Russia if compared to the GRU and the FSB. When the law was adopted in 1996, the SVR arguably was also the de facto most powerful security service of Russia, a direct descendent of the prestigious and elite KGB First Chief Directorate. In 1994 Yeltsin gave a speech at SVR headquarters in which he stressed its central role in foreign policy and in providing for Russia's security (Donaldson and Noguee, 2005: 167). Then-SVR Director Yevgeniy Primakov took the agency somewhat out of the shadows by promoting SVR analytic reports on important foreign policy issues. His conservative line trumped pro-Western politicians of the early Yeltsin era and promoted a more powerful role for *chekisty* in foreign policy (Kozyrev, 2017).

The SVR is responsible for gathering intelligence information in "political, economic, military-strategic, scientific-technological and ecological spheres" ("O vneshey razvedke," 1996) using different types of secret communications, SIGINT, human intelligence (HUMINT), and other methods of gathering information outside of Russia. Anderson (2007) maintains that HUMINT has grown in importance since the Soviet collapse due to a degradation of more technical means. In this regard it is worth noting that, although some KGB documents were declassified (archives), KGB spy networks all across the globe were never revealed (Waller, 1994: 143), and the security services maintained their personnel in foreign embassies of the new Russia (Kozyrev, 2017). It is important to note that the SVR inherited only a small part of

SIGINT capabilities, those that the Soviet Union possessed abroad. Most of the SIGINT capacity was located within Russian borders, and apparently after 2003 the bulk of KGB capability in this realm was transferred to the FSB (Khinsteyn, 2003; Galeotti, 2010: 124; Soldatov and Borogan, 2010: 20), although some experts believe the GRU acquired significant pieces of it as well (Galeotti, 2017b; Golts, 2017).

The FSB, as noted earlier, is primarily a domestically oriented body. On the other hand, it also has foreign policy responsibilities and the authority to conduct foreign intelligence, and it seemingly has expanded its international work under Putin (Soldatov and Borogan, 2010: 209–212). Thus, it has both HUMINT and SIGINT capabilities, and undertakes both analytical and operational missions related to foreign policy.

In contrast with the FSB and the SVR, the GRU has preserved its name and, in many respects, its structure since Soviet times. It is important to stress that the GRU is not an independent security service or agency – it is an integral part of the Ministry of Defense. GRU goals presented on the official website (Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, n.d.) almost entirely replicate those mentioned for the SVR in the law on foreign intelligence. According to Russian security expert Aleksandr Golts (2017), the GRU is the largest entity among intelligence agencies because it has its personnel in almost all military bases across Russia and in almost all Russian embassies across the globe, so HUMINT is a key part of its work. The GRU also plays a pivotal role in technological intelligence (TECHINT), involving both imaging intelligence (IMINT) and SIGINT. The GRU is responsible for spy satellites (Hendrickx, 2005).

Regardless of the fact that the GRU, the FSB, and the SVR all have the authority to conduct operations abroad, each has its own typical – at least as it is understood by researchers and experts – functions and spheres of responsibility. The GRU is mostly interested in military and technological developments of foreign nations and their military plans, while the SVR and the FSB are focused on political and economic issues. Moreover, the focus of the SVR is usually on larger strategic issues in countries other than former USSR republics, while the FSB is considered to be working with rather tactical developments in political and economic life, with special attention to on the so-called “near abroad.” However, this does not mean that if the SVR, for example, recruits a foreign military officer, they will “pass” this source to the GRU. Competition between agencies is considerable, and it forces them to transcend their “typical” spheres of responsibility, thereby blurring them. Thus, the GRU might gather political and economic reports, while the FSB might work far from the near abroad gathering military secrets, just because it can (Golts, 2017).

The heads of both the FSB and the SVR report directly to the Russian president. At least in theory the chain of command for the GRU runs from the president to the Minister of Defense to the Chief of the General Staff to the head of the GRU. Some observers contend that the head of the GRU can also report directly to the president in some circumstances (Galeotti, 2016b: 2; Tsyarkin, 2007: 277). Experts agree that the president is the dominant actor controlling the foreign intelligence services, with little role for parliamentary or public oversight (Knight, 1996: 120; Kramer, 2002; Tsyarkin, 2007). Further, the Law on State Secrets makes it easy for the intelligence agencies to impede investigations through their broad powers of classification (Soldatov and Rochlitz, 2018: 87). This lack of civilian and societal control beyond the president makes it difficult for researchers interested in studying intelligence failures, particularly on a comparative basis, since mistakes are easier to conceal from outsiders than in more open political systems.

### ***Information and analysis***

Informing the leadership about foreign affairs is a key role of the secret services, and therefore information and analysis are core themes in discussions of the security and intelligence services’



influence on Russian foreign policy. Crucial research questions include the process by which the political leadership receives intelligence reports, the weight of this information in decision-making, and the quality of these reports. For example, there does not seem to be an organized process for bringing together reports from divergent agencies that may conflict with each other, at least within the intelligence community. It seems that is left up to the president and the Security Council to sort through this information. Tsypkin (2007: 277) observes that Russia lacks a system for creating any type of “collective judgment” of the different agencies, like there is with the US system of creating “national intelligence estimates.” Rather, each service reports separately and directly.

Competition among different agencies for the president’s ear seems to be a frequent aspect of intelligence analysis. The SVR appeared to take a lead role in the 1990s, including with a series of public reports on such key issues as nuclear proliferation, NATO expansion and its effect on Russian security, and the struggle for political and economic influence in the former Soviet space between Russia and Western powers. Tsypkin (2007: 278) argues that these reports largely restated the Russian government position on these issues, whereas others see the public nature of these reports – in sharp contrast to past KGB practice – as a reflection of a battle between traditionalist and pro-Western forces inside the Russian government (Knight, 1996: 131; Donaldson and Noguee, 2005: 167; Kozyrev, 2017).

Under Putin, most analysts maintain that the FSB has significant influence in terms of providing information and analysis. Soldatov and Rochlitz (2018: 102) contend that, in the absence of Communist Party oversight, the analytical and forecasting department of the FSB has an even more dominant role than the KGB had in the Soviet period. The FSB, they state, “enjoys a near monopoly with respect to the provision of intelligence to the Kremlin.” Further, in their view the FSB director himself has an enormous role in controlling the flow of information to President Putin. Golts (2017) agrees with this analysis about the dominant role of the FSB in providing analysis and information to the president, and goes somewhat further, suggesting that Putin and other top decision-makers are not interested in open source information, relying solely on classified information received from security and intelligence agencies.

Scholars have argued that KGB analysis provided to the Soviet leadership was politicized and ideological, designed to reinforce rather than challenge the prevailing worldview. What about in post-Soviet Russia? Most experts argue that the security services share and reinforce the anti-Western and illiberal views of Putin and his close associates who share KGB backgrounds, such as Security Council Secretary Nikolay Patrushev. For example, Mark Galeotti (2017c), probably the most prolific Western expert on Russia’s security services, argues that the FSB became the dominant source for the Kremlin by tailoring its reports to Putin’s pre-existing worldview. He quotes a former SVR officer claiming that “our mistake was to keep talking about the world as it is, not as he would like it to be.” Further, he claims that the SVR and the GRU have now learned “to flatter Putin’s prejudices and assumptions.” Soldatov and Rochlitz (2018: 100) claim that the FSB “utterly failed” to predict the events that brought about the 2014 Ukrainian “Euro-Maidan” revolution because they were focused solely on the elites and ignored mass sentiments. This failure led the FSB to blame the West for the Ukrainian crisis. More generally, Skak (2016) concludes that Russian strategic culture is heavily influenced by *chekisty*, who blame foreign intelligence services like the CIA for fomenting “colored revolutions” in the post-Soviet space, with Russia as an ultimate target.

This description of the dominant worldview among the political leadership and the security services is echoed by others. Taylor (2017: 54), for example, notes, “It is generally believed that *siloviki* tend to be statist and illiberal, favoring a hard line at home and a confrontational foreign policy abroad.” One organizational embodiment of this worldview is the Russian Institute for

Strategic Studies (RISI), a state-sponsored think tank linked to the SVR that claims to provide analysis for the president and the Security Council. Leonid Reshetnikov, a retired SVR general who was the director of RISI until early 2017, gave several public interviews in which he articulated hardline views, claiming that the United States was behind the 2014 revolution in Ukraine because it sought to make Ukraine a base for deploying missile defense and nuclear weapons, and that the ultimate goal of US policy is to overthrow Putin and dismember Russia (Panyukov, 2015). Some observers, however, suggest that it is a mistake to attribute too much influence to RISI, which adopted far-right views that were too extreme to influence Russian foreign policy (Bershidsky, 2017).

Tsyppkin (2007: 278–279) cautions that it is hard to evaluate the quality of security service analysis because almost all of their work is classified and thus not accessible. He states, “It is difficult to judge whether external intelligence agencies report to the political leadership as objectively as they can, or provide intelligence-to-please, or twist intelligence reports to serve their institutional interests, or all of the above.” This is one of the challenges of conducting research on topics and agencies that are deliberately kept in the dark. Both the process of providing analysis, and the quality of information, therefore, remain opaque, making it hard to provide a detailed accounting of intelligence success and failures.

### ***Foreign operations***

Russian security services do not only provide the government with information for decision-making, they also execute operations abroad in order to assist in achieving foreign – and sometimes domestic – policy objectives (Galeotti, 2016b: 5). In recent years the use of “active measures” to influence politics in other states has received considerable attention, but Russia’s security services perform other foreign policy operations, including counter-terrorism and support for military operations. The secret nature of these foreign operations often makes it difficult to judge how large a tool they are in the overall foreign policy toolkit, compared to more open activities such as diplomacy, the overt use of military force, arms sales and transfers, and trade.

One area in which relatively more information is available is counter-terrorism. The FSB plays a central role in domestic counter-terrorism analysis and operations, including as a law-enforcement body with core responsibilities in this area. The head of the FSB is also the chair of the National Antiterrorism Committee. Terrorism, of course, is an issue that blurs the divide between domestic and foreign policies, since people and ideas can cross state borders to carry out or inspire terrorist attacks. The Chechen Wars, and the broader problem of North Caucasus extremism, have been central to the development of counter-terrorism capabilities by the Russian security services (Pokalova, 2015).

Involvement in counter-terrorism operations at home led the FSB to extend its “counteroffensive beyond national boundaries,” including the use of “extrajudicial assassinations of terrorists abroad” (Soldatov and Borogan, 2010: 193). Soldatov and Borogan (2010: 193–238) provided a detailed account of multiple assassinations outside the country linked to Russian security services, including the killing of the Chechen warlord Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev in Qatar in 2004. Legislation to authorize assassinations by the security services abroad was initially absent, but was passed by the parliament in 2010.

Counter-terrorism cooperation is one component of Russian foreign policy. Russia is often represented in international fora by former or acting security officers. Both the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) have anti-terrorism centers in which the FSB plays a prominent role. According to Soldatov and Borogan (2010: 221), the Regional Antiterrorist Structure of the SCO “began carrying out abductions

across national boundaries and outside standard judicial procedures, much like the infamous CIA practice of extraordinary rendition.”

Perhaps the most controversial and spectacular assassination linked to the Russian security services was the murder of former FSB officer Aleksandr Litvinenko with the radioactive substance polonium in London in 2006. The official British inquiry (Owen, 2016) concluded that it was a “strong probability” that the operation was conducted by the FSB, and that it was “probably” approved by Putin himself. The Russian government has strenuously denied any involvement in this assassination, and other ones as well.

The spectrum of foreign operations abroad was never limited to counter-terrorism and extra-judicial assassinations and abductions. Recently, the use of so-called “active measures” by the Russian security services has become a matter of not only journalistic attention but even hearings in the US Congress (Osnos et al., 2017; *Disinformation*, 2017). In this context the focus has been on computer hacking and propaganda. Allegations of Russian security service involvement apply primarily to the GRU and the FSB, who are said to be responsible for a series of cyber attacks against not targets in the United States and elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> Experts suggest the use of active measures has increased in recent years (Soldatov and Rochlitz, 2018: 106 and Galeotti argues that even international criminal networks – RBOC (Russian Based Organized Crime) – are partially under the control of Russian intelligence and should be considered part of the toolkit (Galeotti, 2017a).

This recent attention to Russian active measures and the role of the security services as a tool of foreign policy suggest the need for greater research on this issue. With respect to scholarship about the influence of the security services on Russian domestic politics, there is a lively debate about whether Putin’s Russia is a “neo-KGB state,” or whether this characterization is overblown. At the level of Russian foreign policy, however, there seem to be few scholars questioning the general perception that the security services are one of Putin’s most important and capable foreign policy tools, although former insiders (Kozyrev, 2017) caution that their role should not be overstated.

For scholars some of the most interesting questions about active measures are the comparative ones: how do current Russian active measures compare to past-Soviet operations, to similar covert activities undertaken by other countries, and to other possible tools in the Kremlin foreign policy toolkit? Mark Kramer (2017) argues that recent Russian active measures are very similar to those used by the KGB and the GRU during the Cold War. Both in terms of the overarching goal of undermining the Western liberal democratic order, and the means (albeit adapted to the cyber age), Kramer sees strong continuity between Soviet and Russian foreign policy. This straight-line connection between the Soviet past and the Russian present is commonplace in analysis of the Russian security services (Knight, 2000; Tsyppin, 2007; Bateman, 2016; Marten, 2017). In partial contrast, some specialists (Taylor, 2011; Galeotti, 2016b) stress both the proliferation of competing security services and the rise of commercial and corrupt motives for security service activity, which mark important differences from the Soviet past.

What about comparisons to other states? Galeotti (2017b) contends that comparisons to Western agencies like the CIA and MI-6 are misleading, in particular because Russian security services “are on a wartime footing . . . in terms of their missions, interactions, and mindsets.” Galeotti does not specify when this shift to a wartime footing took place, although from context it is clear he means at some point under Putin. He claims that this stance has led Russian security services to be much more risk-taking than their Western counterparts, and the feeling of being under direct threat from the West leads to an “unprecedentedly high tempo and visibility of Russian active measures.” In general, his view is shared by many other analysts, although often

only implicitly (Waller, 1994: 9–10; Bateman, 2016: 24). The significant gap in comparative studies is that the comparison is generally limited only to the Western security services.

Finally, in terms of comparison to other tools of foreign policy, this issue is probably the one least likely to be explored, perhaps because experts on Russian foreign policy often ignore the security services, and experts on the security services are often more domestically focused. Still, several analysts have suggested that Russian security services play a relatively large role in foreign policy compared to other tools, because Russia is on a weaker footing vis-à-vis the West in the military and economic realms. In this respect, active measures are treated as a relatively cheap and effective tool, and an area of Russian comparative advantage (Galeotti, 2017b; Rumer, 2017).

One final way in which Russian security services can be used as a tool for foreign policy objectives is as direct participants in military operations. This goes beyond simply the use of military intelligence collected by the GRU to inform the conduct of military operations. Rather, we are interested in the covert use of security service personnel for war-fighting, which could be seen as just another active measure, but probably deserves separate discussion.

The war in Ukraine is most frequently discussed in this respect. Since the beginning of the crisis over Crimea, the term “hybrid warfare” became popular among analysts in the West. This term implies a complex of measures undertaken in various fields, from disinformation to real physical force by the Russian military. An integral part of “hybrid warfare” includes the intelligence and security services operations. Critics of the use of the term have argued, rather convincingly, that a combination of multiple forms of war – conventional, irregular, information, psychological, and so on – is hardly new or unique (Kofman and Rojanksky, 2015; Galeotti, 2016a). Regardless, the term seems to have stuck.

Several detailed studies of Russian operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine highlight the important role of security and intelligence services (Mitrokhin, 2015; Kofman et al., 2017). Apparently all three main security services – the FSB, the GRU, and the SVR – had operatives in Ukraine prior to the fall of the Viktor Yanukovich government in 2014, as well as afterwards during the annexation of Crimea and the start of irregular operations in the Donbas (or Donbass) region of southeast Ukraine (Galeotti, 2016b: 4; Golts, 2017; Kofman et al., 2017: 60, 68). Much of the analytical work done so far simply seeks to piece together from multiple journalistic and online sources the best available picture of Russian security service activity in Ukraine, given the covert nature of these actions. Although Russia eventually admitted its direct role in the Crimean events, it has consistently denied military involvement in the separatist war in Donetsk and Lugansk.

A larger task, beyond trying to describe factually what role Russian security services played in Ukraine, is to assess the success or failure of these activities. This is a standard question in intelligence studies, and some preliminary conclusions have been offered. Galeotti (2016b: 14) argues that in both Crimea and Donbas, the Russian intelligence agencies performed extremely well on a tactical level, providing accurate information on Ukrainian military forces’ deployments and preparations, down to specific judgments on “the willingness of individual officers to fight.” He also credits them with successful political and informational active measures. Kofman et al. (2017: esp. 60, 67–68) suggest that operations in Eastern Ukraine were improvised and incoherent, positing that this may have been due to competition and lack of coordination between the FSB, the GRU, and the SVR. Soldatov and Rochlitz (2018) see the events in Ukraine as a larger strategic failure for the FSB, since the scale of the crisis apparently took them by surprise.

This final point about the role of the Russian security services in terms of policy-making towards Ukraine raises a larger and important question: how much influence do they have over key foreign policy decisions? For example, was the SVR or the FSB asked to provide an

assessment of how the United States, the EU, and NATO might respond to the annexation of Crimea and, if so, what did they say? Putin's own testimony ("Krym. Put' na Rodinu," 2015) suggests that it was a small-group decision taken quickly in response to rapidly changing events in Ukraine, one involving only four or five people. According to other accounts (e.g., Bukkvoll 2016: 273–276), this small group was dominated by close Putin associates with backgrounds in the Leningrad KGB, who at the time were head of the FSB, Secretary of the Security Council, and chief of the Presidential Administration. This image of a highly centralized and informal decision-making process in foreign policy is consistent with more general accounts of elite Russian politics (e.g., Kononenko and Moshes, 2011; Ledeneva, 2013). If accurate, this suggests that the influence of security service personnel is more likely individual than institutional, and a product of their closeness to Putin rather than the bureaucratic weight of the agency they lead (Soldatov and Rochlitz, 2018). Another important and related research question is whether the security services, to the extent that they have formal or informal influence over key foreign policy decisions, tend to be more hawkish than other key actors. This hawkish outlook is frequently assumed, and seems consistent with public statements of key chekisty, but it is harder to demonstrate conclusively in crucial episodes, such as Ukraine and Syria.

### Conclusion: future scholarship

Researching the role of the security services in Russian foreign policy is extremely difficult. This is true because of the nature of the subject and because of the nature of the Russian political system, both of which make good data hard to come by. These formidable obstacles are compounded by the highly politicized debates surrounding the topic, and the current poor state of relations between Russia and the West.

Despite these difficulties, and academic incentives that further discourage social science research on the topic – the study of intelligence and the security services are relatively marginal concerns that lack well-developed, cross-national theories – a determined group of scholars, analysts, and journalists have created a solid body of literature. As outlined earlier, a considerable amount is known about the main Russian security and intelligence services and their various missions related to foreign policy.

Big gaps, however, still remain in our knowledge. Information about the more technical aspects of foreign intelligence work, sometimes referred to as TECHINT and involving both imaging and signals intelligence, is almost entirely inaccessible. Important questions include how TECHINT is shared (if at all) across various agencies, how it is combined with HUMINT, and, more generally, the "intelligence cycle" of collecting, analyzing, and disseminating intelligence.

The difficulties in researching bureaucratic processes (although see Galeotti 2016b; Soldatov and Rochlitz, 2018; Tsytkin 2007) may help explain why the greatest attention seems to be to activities and operations. Covert operations and active measures also make for more exhilarating reading than studies of organizational procedures and small-group decision-making below the level of the political leadership. One potential pitfall of this focus, however, is that it may create a bias toward the dramatic and rare over the routine, and also garner more attention for apparent successes rather than hidden failures. Scott and Jackson (2004: 159) note that some popular culture treatments of intelligence in the West, such as the *Bourne* movies starring Matt Damon, treat these services as "malign, all-powerful, and all-pervasive." One sometimes gets a similar feeling reading about the Russian intelligence services, particularly writing that stresses the influence of *chekisty* and their hostile and aggressive orientation toward the West.

This is not to suggest that these portrayals of the Russian security services are necessarily wrong. In many respects they are probably correct. Rather, the problem is that the overall impression created by this work could be tendentious and lead to an over-estimation of Russian foreign policy proficiency. In an interview with the online Russian paper *Gazeta.ru*, Galeotti (2016c) suggests that Russia isn't getting its best out of its intelligence services. This is because of competition between services, a basically non-existent inter-agency process, politicization, and a failure to allow alternative data and interpretations to reach the political leadership.

One possible way forward for the study of Russian security services and foreign policy is to bring implicit assumptions about their role and influence into the open, stating them in a more generalizable way that allows for comparison both to the Soviet past and to the role of intelligence in foreign policy in other states. A similar approach could also bring out differences across levels of analysis (individual, small group, organizational, and the state as a whole) and issue areas. Moving in this direction might also help to integrate the study of the security services into more general accounts of Russian foreign policy and international relations.

### Notes

- 1 We thank Whitney Baillie for research assistance for this section.
- 2 Cyber operations as a component of Russian foreign policy are covered elsewhere in this volume, so they will not be discussed further here.

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