

Is Russia a Threat to Western Democracy? Russian Intervention in Foreign Elections, 1991-2017

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Russian intervention has recently received extensive attention in the wake of revelations of interference in the U.S. election of 2016. However, Russia has long interfered in the politics of other countries. Since 1991, we can identify two waves of Russian efforts to influence regime outcomes outside its borders. While the first wave solely targeted post-Soviet countries and relied on a relatively standard playbook, the latest wave that began in 2014 has expanded dramatically to include a range of established democracies in the West and utilized a variety of novel strategies. Insofar as it has targeted established democracies rather than hybrid regimes, this second wave represents more of a direct challenge to democracy than the first wave. This paper briefly explores the nature of these waves and focuses in particular on the *efficacy* of Russian intervention. To what extent has Russia been successful at influencing politics abroad? What has been the impact of such intervention on democracy and Russian interests?

We argue that in the first wave of Russian interference only sporadically undermined democracy and in some cases actually promoted greater pluralism. Furthermore, such intervention often did more to undermine rather than bolster Russia's geopolitical interests. What about the impact of the current second wave of intervention? While it is arguably too early to make a full assessment, preliminary conclusions are possible. On the one hand, it is deeply disturbing that Russia has engaged in such extensive attempts to undermine Western democratic institutions. At the same time, there is little evidence thus far that Russia has had much of an impact on Western democracies. Russia is better thought of as a *symptom* rather than cause of democratic crisis in the West: the fact that Russia's threat must be taken seriously is more of an outgrowth of deep underlying problems in Western democracy rather any real Russian threat. At the same time, certain Russian activities – in particular the hacking of election systems – present a potentially very serious threat to the electoral process.

The First Wave of Russian Interference

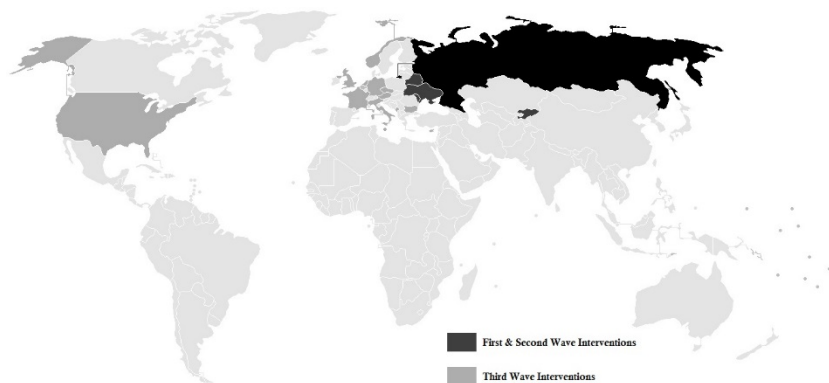
Russia began interfering in the domestic politics of countries in the “near abroad” in the early 1990s shortly after the Soviet Union broke up. This early intervention relied on military, financial, and

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diplomatic efforts to shape events and reflected a somewhat crude understanding of the dynamics of public opinion in the target countries. In addition to military interventions in Tajikistan, Georgia, and Moldova, the Russian government provided electoral assistance to pro-Russian politicians in Presidential elections Belarus and Ukraine in 1994 – including cheap energy to support the Presidential campaign of the incumbent Viacheslav Kebich in 1994, and positive media coverage on Russian media (that then blanketed Ukraine) for the opposition leader Leonid Kuchma. The Russian government also gave strong support for Aliaksandr Lukashenka during his battle with the legislature in 1996 and subsequently provided vast economic assistance – in the form of cheap energy resources and other support – that at points totaled an estimated 20 to 30 percent of Belarusian GDP and one third of government revenue in the 1990s and 2000s.³ In the early 2000s, Russia exported more sophisticated techniques of opinion manipulation and negative advertising adopted from Western campaigns and drawing on the experience of the 1999 Russian parliamentary election. In particular, Gleb Pavlovsky and his Fund for Effective Politics became active in advising the 2004 Yanukovych campaign in Ukraine.⁴

Two points are worth making about these initial efforts at Russian intervention. First, while it is almost certainly true that Putin has “been most comfortable dealing with authoritarian leaders who will support Russian interests,”⁵ the Russian government gave little priority to promoting autocracy as such. Putin’s administration rarely if ever applied pressure or conditionality strictly in response to democratic behavior.⁶ Instead of bolstering authoritarianism per se, the Russian government focused overwhelmingly on supporting pro-Russian candidates – which sometimes ironically meant *strengthening* rather than undermining pluralism in the near abroad. Thus, Russian media support for Kuchma in 1994 gave Kuchma positive exposure on television that was otherwise completely dominated by the incumbent Leonid Kravchuk. Similarly, in Kyrgyzstan in 2010 the Russian government put pressure on the autocratic Kurmanbek Bakiyev that may have contributed to his downfall and the rise of more democratic leaders (Roza Otunbayeva and Almazbek Atambayev).



The point is *not* that Putin is actually a democracy promoter – but instead that authoritarianism as such is far less important than geopolitics.

Second, it is worth pointing out that the Russian government frequently failed to affect outcomes in the desired manner. Thus, three elections that are widely seen as “clear-cut” examples of Russian

³ See Lucan Way, *Pluralism by Default: Weak Autocrats and the Rise of Competitive Politics*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015.

⁴ See Andrew Wilson, *Virtual Democracy: Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

⁵ Mark Kramer, “Russian Policy Toward the Commonwealth of Independent States: Recent Trends and Future Prospects,” *Problems of Post-Communism*, vol. 55, no. 6 (2008): 5.

⁶ Thus, the Russian government would likely have given Yanukovych in Ukraine the same amount of support in 2004 if he had been able to win election absent manipulation or fraud. On the other hand, Viktor Yushchenko in Ukraine and Mikheil Saakashvili in Georgia would not have helped their cause with the Russian government had they engaged in more fraud or censorship.

interference in post-Soviet elections – in Ukraine in 2002 and 2004; and Moldova in 2005⁷ – were all ones in which anti-Russian forces achieved substantial victories. Russian efforts also failed to keep Kebich in power in Belarus in 1994 as well as pro-Russian candidates in power in Moldova in 2009 and Ukraine in 2004 and 2014.

The Second Wave: 2014-present

The last three years have witnessed a dramatic expansion and transformation of Russian activities abroad.⁸ Not only has the geographic scope of Russian interference radically expanded, but the methods of intervention have grown increasingly sophisticated. Furthermore, this second wave has challenged established democracies and is thus more of a direct threat to democracy than the first wave which mostly targeted competitive authoritarian or fully authoritarian regimes. While these interventions are frequently undertaken with care to maintain plausible deniability, it is possible to piece together the more credible claims of Russian interference to analyze patterns. Moscow has used four primary intervention strategies in this period ranging from more traditional to innovative: sponsoring coup attempts, funding right-wing parties, disinformation campaigns, and cyberattacks. We will briefly consider each in turn.

First, Russia appears to have been behind a coup attempt in Montenegro in order to thwart that country's efforts to join NATO in mid-2016. After Montenegrin Prime Minister Milo Đukanović signed a NATO accession,⁹ two alleged agents of Russian military intelligence plotted to seize Montenegro's parliament, kill PM Đukanović, and install a new government hostile to NATO. While Russia has resolutely denied involvement, the conspirators are safely back in Moscow and British government officials confirmed a Russian role in the plot. The coup attempt ultimately failed, and in April of this year Montenegro joined NATO as its 29th member.

Russia has also funded right-wing parties throughout Europe, from the National Front (FN) in France, which has ties with Moscow beginning with trips by FN leaders to Moscow in 2012 and the receipt of “a critical loan” from a Kremlin-connected bank to the party in 2014. The Russian regime has also forged “close ties” with the Alternative for Germany (AfD), and there are allegations that Moscow has provided covert funding to the group. In December 2016 the Austria Freedom Party (FPÖ) signed a cooperation agreement with United Russia, but denies “allegations that it receives funds from Moscow.” In Italy, the neo-fascist Northern League “has had a long-standing and ongoing relationship with Russia for many years.”

Beyond these relatively conventional tactics, Moscow has engaged in increasingly sophisticated strategies to interfere in Western elections since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The third set of methods used by Moscow involves a variety of disinformation campaigns, including the use of official Russian media, ‘troll’s and fake Facebook accounts, and fake news. Russia has increasingly utilized its foreign-oriented media outlets, Russia Today (RT) and Sputnik to spread fake news

⁷ Jakob Tolstrup, “Studying a Negative External Actor: Russia's Management of Stability and Instability in the ‘Near Abroad,’” *Democratization*, vol. 16, no. 5 (2009): 932, 935.

⁸ While it is difficult to pinpoint specifically the sources of this change, it likely had to do with the worsening of East-West relations in the wake of the invasion of Crimea as well declining oil prices that have weakened other mechanisms of Russian influence abroad. Thus, most of the hacking and other techniques are relatively cheap and carry few risks (at least as compared to efforts to shut off gas supply or invade another country).

⁹ The protocol “dashed Russian hopes of securing a naval foothold in the Adriatic.”

stories such as “the Lisa case,” a [false story about the rape of a 13 year old German girl named Lisa](#). Russian media [also ran stories](#) claiming 700,000 Germans left the country due to Chancellor Angela Merkel’s refugee policy, that refugees had destroyed the oldest church in Germany, that Merkel was mentally ill, that highlighted alleged US and NATO aggression, radical Islam, and problems with migrants and refugees. Kremlin-connected groups have also utilized [fake Facebook accounts to purchase political ads in the United States](#), as well as [anti-immigrant advertisements](#), and to [organize anti-refugee protests in the US](#). Facebook recently estimated that Russia-based operatives published about 80,000 posts over a two year period as part of an effort to sway US politics, and that about [126 million Americans may have seen the posts during that time](#). The “[notorious St. Petersburg troll factory](#)” produces “[dozens of articles every day that praise Putin, cast Ukraine as a failed Nazi state and expose the nefarious machinations of the United States](#).” Russia has also been behind the dissemination of fake news stories targeted at candidates and campaigns it seeks to undermine, from the [Czech Republic](#), to [the Netherlands](#), to [France](#).

Finally, the Kremlin engaged in a series of cyberattacks and cyberespionage against Western democracies. In the United States, [Russian government hackers targeted 21 US state voter registration systems](#), infiltrated the email correspondence of candidate Hillary Clinton and [disseminated the emails to Wikileaks](#) along with [fake documents](#). Moscow has also been behind a series of distributed denial of service (DDOS) attacks against Germany, including April and May 2015 [attacks on the German Federal legislature \(Bundestag\)](#). Phishing attacks against parties and campaigns have affected governments including [Malta](#), [Norway](#), and [Germany](#).

Assessing the Efficacy of Russian Intervention

This new wave of interference is deeply troubling, but has it been effective at altering outcomes in Russia’s favor? While analyses of the methods by which the Putin regime has interfered in the elections of Western democracies are abundant, there have been very few attempts to consider systematically whether such interventions have achieved what might plausibly be Russian strategic goals. Table 1 (following page) displays all Russian electoral interventions, 1991-2017. While Russian interference has increased in scope and intensity, there is only limited evidence that it has been particularly effective. Of 18 cases in which Russians appear to have intervened after 2014, 5 turned out the way Russia hoped – but only some of these (3) can plausibly be attributed to Russia. And among these three (Bulgaria, Netherlands, and the United States in 2016) the evidence is still unclear. We examine these cases below

First, on April 6, 2016, Dutch voters resoundingly rejected an EU-Ukraine Association Agreement that had been the target of a Russian [disinformation campaign](#) through Sputnik and RT. However, the turnout was very low (32%) and many voters said “[they were opposing not only the treaty but wider European policymaking on matters ranging from the migrant crisis to economics](#).” Therefore, it is difficult to separate the specific role played by Russian disinformation relative to general anti-establishment protest voting. Moreover, as the referendum was nonbinding, Dutch parliament ignored the results and [backed the association agreement](#) which [came into force](#) on September 1, 2017.

Russian interference in Bulgaria can also be considered partially successful. Russian meddling in Bulgaria has been long running, and Sofia [is highly dependent on Moscow for energy imports](#) in addition to high economic integration in other areas. Russia has been accused of bankrolling

“protests in 2012 and 2013 that helped topple a pro-Western government” and has backed the far-right, anti-EU Ataka party (“Attack”) since the mid-2000s. In the run-up to presidential elections in

Year	Target Country	Target Event	Description	Outcome Favorable to Russia?	Evidence of Russian Impact?
2017	Czech Republic	General election	Fake news/disinformation campaign	Partial	Low
	Cyprus	Reunification negotiations	Cyberattacks, leaking documents	Ongoing	-
	France	Presidential election	Cyberattacks, fake news/disinformation campaign, financial support to FN	No	Low
	Germany	Federal election	Cyberattacks, fake news/disinformation campaign	Partial (strong AfD performance)	Low-Medium
	Macedonia	Coalition formation crisis	Fake news/disinformation campaign	No	Low
	Malta	General election	Cyberattacks	No	Low
	Montenegro	NATO membership referendum	Cyberattacks, coup attempt	No	Low
	Netherlands	General election	Fake news/disinformation campaign	No	Low
	Spain	Catalonia independence referendum	Fake news/disinformation campaign	Ongoing	-
	United Kingdom	General election	Cyberattacks	No	Low
2016	Austria	Presidential election	Support for FPÖ	No (but strong FPÖ performance)	Low
	Bulgaria	Presidential elections	Fake news/disinformation, cyberattacks on Central Election Commission (2015)	Partial	Medium
	Montenegro	Parliamentary elections	Cyberattacks, coup attempt	No	Low
	Norway	Labour party operations	Cyberattacks	No	Low
	Netherlands	Nonbinding referendum on EU-Ukraine Association Agreement	Fake news/disinformation campaign	No	Medium
	United States	Presidential election	Fake news/disinformation campaign, cyberattacks	Partial	Medium
2015	Germany	Christian Democratic Union party operations	Cyberattacks	No	Low
	United Kingdom	General election	Fake news/disinformation campaign	No	Low
2014	Moldova	Parliamentary elections	Direct financial support to pro-Moscow party (Patria)	No	Low
	Ukraine	Presidential election	Cyberattacks, attempts to fake vote totals	No	Low
2012	Georgia	Parliamentary elections	Threatened military intervention, leaks of prison abuse video	Yes	Low
2011	Transnistria	Presidential election	Expression of displeasure with incumbent	Yes	Low
2010	Kyrgyz Republic	Anti-government demonstrations	Imposing energy tariffs, negative media coverage on Russian-language television of incumbent	Yes	Medium
	Ukraine	Presidential election	Direct support to Yanukovich, criticism of opponents	Yes	Low
2009	Moldova	Parliamentary elections	Direct election support to PCRM	No	Low
2006	Belarus	Presidential election	Favorable media coverage, direct election support, assistance in post-election repression	Yes	Low
2005	Moldova	Parliamentary elections	Direct election support for opponents	No	Low
2004	Ukraine	Presidential election	Direct election support to Yanukovich, favorable media coverage	No	Low
2002	Ukraine	Parliamentary elections	Direct election support for Kuchma’s allies	No	Low
1996	Moldova	Presidential election	Direct election support for Lucinschi	Yes	Low
1994	Belarus	Presidential election	Direct election support for Kebich	No	Low
	Ukraine	Presidential election	Direct election support for Kuchma	Yes	Low
Cases of interventions in which outcomes favorable to Russia (yes and partial)					12 of 32
Share of favorable outcomes with some evidence of a Russian impact					4 of 12
Share of total interventions with a favorable outcome and evidence of a Russian impact					4 of 32

November 2016, the opposition Socialist Party “received a secret strategy document proposing a road map to victory at the ballot box” which included recommendations to “plant fake news and promote exaggerated polling data.” “The document offered advice on how to burnish the candidate's image by planting stories with Moscow-friendly news outlets. The stories were to be closely coordinated, publishing first in fringe blogs before entering mainstream media en masse to

create maximum impact and ultimately become election talking points for the party. The report recommended the party emphasize issues that dovetailed with Kremlin policy: calling for an end to Russian sanctions, criticizing NATO and talking up the U.K.'s vote to leave the EU.” Bulgarian security service officials allege that the dossier was produced by a Kremlin-connected think tank and delivered by a former Russian spy on a US sanctions list. After Rumen Radev and his Euroskeptic, pro-Moscow platform defeated Boyko Borisov’s Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) candidate Tsacheva, Borisov resigned as PM until parliamentary elections in March 2017 elections. However, GERB recovered its support in these elections and won a plurality. Borisov again became PM again in April. These results “appeared to be a disappointment for President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, who has sought to exploit divisions in the European Union to strengthen Russia’s influence – particularly in a country like Bulgaria, which was one of the Soviet Union’s closest allies.”

More generally, it is important to put Russian efforts in the context of a wide range of other forces promoting the rise of populism in Europe. The impact of Russia’s misinformation campaign and modest support for rightwing parties are almost certainly dwarfed by other factors such as rising inequality and the refugee crisis that have likely spurred support for far right parties.

Finally, the 2016 US election undoubtedly represents the most successful Russian undertaking in this second wave of intervention. Many smart and reasonable commentators – including Ezra Klein at Vox and Harry Enten at Fivethirtyeight believe that Russian intervention played a key role in the election. In fact, the sheer breadth and extent of Russian interference makes it is hard to believe that such actions did not have *some* kind of impact. Indeed, the Russian government created fake Facebook and Twitter accounts that were used to distribute negative and often false news about Hillary Clinton. As noted above, Russian individuals contributed 80,000 posts focusing mostly on divisive issues such as race relations and gun rights. This is all in addition to the hacked emails, attacks on the voting system, and evidence of collusion with the Trump campaign. With such revelations coming out on a nearly daily basis, it would be foolhardy to make any definitive claims about the limits of Russian influence.

Nonetheless (since the first author has long been known to be a fool anyway), it is worth noting that so far the onslaught of revelations fails to reveal direct evidence that Russian interference was critical to Trump’s victory. *At worst*, the role of Russian influence is equivalent to the impact of pneumonia in killing those afflicted with AIDS: it only has influence because the body politic is already in deep crisis. It is very possible that Russia played an even less significant role in affecting the outcome of the American election.

First, Russia may “demonstrate a deft understanding of the [American] political terrain;” but the Russian information war added few new ingredients to the mix that were not already present in abundance in American politics. (The important exceptions are the hacked emails discussed below.) American politics was obviously extremely polarized long before Russian forces began stoking things. And while the scale of Russian activities is shocking at one level – it is dwarfed by domestic and other forces producing the same types of material. The viewership of RT in the US is “relatively small.” And the recently revealed 80,000 Facebook posts account for just one of every 23,000 posts on Facebook. Simultaneously, relatively few fake news stories have so far been traced originally to Russian sources – although more could yet be discovered. More importantly, RT and other Russian sources are just a few of the thousands of accounts distributing fake news – and far from the most significant. Indeed homegrown misinformation was “vastly more prevalent” than Russian

misinformation in the runup to the 2016 election. Furthermore, [one of the main drivers in the spread of fake news](#) is the fact that news articles that go viral can [draw significant advertising revenue](#). So it is not clear that Russian intervention was in any way necessary to promote the proliferation of misinformation. Russian efforts have simply added to an already deafening cacophony of inflammatory rhetoric and misinformation.

Furthermore, it is important not to exaggerate the impact of fake news. Indeed, [a recent study](#) by two economists suggests that fake news stories were seen “only a small fraction of Americans” during the 2016 elections. More importantly, the effect of fake news is limited by the fact that it operates mostly by reinforcing preexisting beliefs. People clicked and spread misleading stories about Clinton because they *already* disliked her. Thus, while it is certainly possible that fake news reinforces beliefs, it is unlikely that it changed many minds.

In fact, it is extraordinarily hard to find evidence that Russian information had any impact on support for Hillary Clinton. The most important Russian “contribution” to the election was the hacked emails from the Clinton campaign. The two biggest releases of emails occurred in late July with the release of DNC emails and in early October with the publication of the John Podesta emails. If the release of these emails had a major impact on Clinton’s approval, we would expect her support in polls to fall when their content became widely known. (Support in polls is here measured by Fivethirtyeight.com’s “[chance of winning](#)” that reflects Clinton’s and Trump’s performance in aggregated polls.¹⁰) Indeed, in the week after FBI Director James Comey’s announcement that he had found new evidence related to the Clinton email scandal, Clinton’s chances of winning [plummeted from 82 to 65 percent](#). By contrast, the evidence of Russia’s impact is far less clear. While Clinton’s support noticeably declined (from 59 to 54 percent chances of winning) in the week following the release of the DNC emails in July, this drop would have almost certainly occurred absent the emails given that the Republican convention occurred during this time. And following the release of the Podesta emails in October, Clinton’s chances of winning *increased* from 81.8 to 85.4 a week later to 86.5 two weeks later. Furthermore, if the Russian material hurt Clinton, we might have expected to see a drop in peoples’ trust in her. Yet, in fact, trust in Clinton [remained more less the same](#) throughout October.

None of this proves that Russia had no influence on the outcome. Obviously, a lot of things happened in the days after the Podesta emails were released – including the release of the Access Hollywood tapes that showed Trump in a very bad light and Clinton’s well reviewed performance during the Presidential debates. It is very possible that Clinton’s bounce after Access Hollywood and the debates would have been more dramatic in October– or that her decline during the Republican convention would have been less severe—in the absence of hacked Russian emails. Furthermore, [as Enten notes](#), “the drip, drip, drip” nature of these emails “makes it all but impossible to measure their effect precisely.” It is very possible that these revelations lowered her ceiling of support. The release of the DNC emails (that were incorrectly interpreted as evidence that the DNC “rigged” the primaries in favor of Clinton) may have hardened Bernie Sanders’ supporters’ opposition to Clinton. But as of yet, we simply do not know.

¹⁰ One might be tempted to discount such polls because they seem to have failed to predict Trump’s victory. In fact, Fivethirtyeight gave Trump a nearly 30 percent likelihood of winning the election—which indicated that his victory was very much in the realm of the possible. Evidence suggests that polls were relatively accurate during the election. The reason why so many forecasts were off is the large numbers of undecided voters and the closeness of the election in many critical states.

One of the reasons why these various arguments warrant attention is that the closeness of the election means that virtually *any* factor – no matter how small – can be argued to have tipped the election. But this begs the question of why the election was so close in the first place. The strange thing is that few predicted a Trump victory despite the fact that most political science models – based on economic factors and the party’s time in office – [forecast either a narrow Democratic victory or a Trump win](#).¹¹ Many of these predictions were discounted – even by their authors – because Trump seemed like such a strange candidate. It was widely assumed that Trump’s obvious unfitness for office would convince many Republican voters to sit out the election.

In fact, however, the American electorate is so polarized that roughly the same share of Republicans supported Trump as backed Republican candidates in previous Presidential contexts. By the time that Trump was nominated, a close election was virtually inevitable. Polarization itself has roots in American politics that [long predate the rise of Trump](#). Russian influence might have been decisive in affecting Trump’s victory in the primaries; but there is no indication that Russian operatives were particularly active at this stage of the game.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that Russia has clearly failed to achieve its main strategic goal of interfering in US politics. Even if Russia *did* tip the election in Trump’s favor, this result has done nothing to encourage the dropping of U.S. sanctions. While Trump may personally support reducing sanctions, controversies surrounding Russian interference have hardened Republican opposition and made such a move nearly impossible.

To summarize, while the 2016 election is surely the most successful example of Russian second wave interference, there is so far little clear evidence that such meddling had a decisive impact on the outcome. Of course, it is amazing that the impact of Russian intrusion has to be taken seriously at all. But this fact stems much more from the long-term crisis of American democracy than any Russian actions. Russia is much more of a symptom than a cause of this crisis.

Overall, Russian efforts have failed to yield many dividends. The modular outcome has been failure. With pro-EU victories in Austria, France, Germany, Macedonia, Malta, and the Netherlands, Russian interference did not turn the tide toward the anti-EU, far-right parties. Perhaps no case is more illustrative of Russian strategic failure than Montenegro, where Moscow could not prevent the 2,000 person military from becoming NATO’s 29th member despite an attempted coup and disinformation campaign.

Conclusion

Over the last three years, Russia has engaged in a virtually unprecedented assault on Western democracy – funding far right parties, and engaging in a far-flung information war that has encompassed both the release of hacked emails and the distribution of fake or misleading news. While this turn of events warrants serious concern, it is important not to exaggerate the threat posed by Russia. First, in the vast majority of cases Russian activities have had little if any impact on political outcomes. (In a number of countries in the former Soviet Union, such interference has

¹¹ A long time in office is thought to encourage party supporters to grow disappointed and divided; while the opposition becomes increasingly motivated by the prospect of victory. This appears to be exactly what happened in 2016.

backfired.) Rather, Russian activities have at best reinforced already existing tendencies and problems that long predated Russian interference. Furthermore, the scale of Russian actions (such as the spread of fake news) has mostly been dwarfed by homegrown activities. Finally, in those cases where Russia has added something new to the mix – as with the release of Clinton emails in July and October – it is extremely difficult to identify any specific impact.

However, none of this means that Russia will not be able to threaten Western democracy in the future. In particular, the hacking of the election count – as was attempted in Ukraine in 2014 and the US in 2016 – could potentially throw into doubt electoral results. While relatively hard to pull off, such a measure would create an existential crisis in the United States unforeseen in the constitution.

Appendix: Russian Electoral Interventions, 1991-2017

Year	Target Country	Target Event	Description	Likely Goals	Outcome	Outcome Favorable to Russia?	Evidence of Russian Impact
2017	Czech Republic	General Elections	Ahead of general elections in October 2017, Czech officials “are convinced the Kremlin is behind about 40 Czech-language websites presenting radical views, conspiracy theories and inaccurate reports. The officials believe the objective is to transform the Czech Republic’s current status as a western-aligned country.” Russian support has also been alleged for the Czech President who was elected in 2013. The websites used for displaying Czech election results was hacked on October 21 st , but the Czech Statistical Office noted that “the vote count was not affected.” In the Czech Republic, “sites with questionable content are now being read by about a fourth of all Czechs, according to estimates, and the current government is concerned that many of their owners are supporting the Kremlin in Moscow. There are viral anti-Muslim tirades, incidents are being declared terror attacks without evidence, and false rumors are circulating about NATO and the E.U.”	Reduce pro-Brussels and pro-Washington alignment in Prague.	Far right Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) party “performed surprisingly well” winning around 10.7% of the vote. Billionaire Andrej Babis, the “Czech Trump” won the election with nearly 30% of the vote going to his ANO party. However, coalition talks are ongoing.	Partial	Low
	Cyprus	Unification Negotiations	In settlement talks with Turkish Cyprus, Greek-Cypriot officials are concerned about potential Russian interference. Their fears are partially based on a 2009 hacking of United Nations computer systems which leaked documents to a pro-Russian Cypriot newspaper, some of which “were doctored in a way that inflamed Greek-Cypriot fears of any settlement” and the UN “concluded that only a foreign intelligence service could have orchestrated such an operation.”	Preventing a strengthening of NATO and likely damage to Gazprom.	-	-	-
	France	Presidential Elections	According to a cyber security firm, Russian operatives targeted the campaign of candidate Emmanuel Macron and “there is already evidence of Russia using fake news, social media trolls, and other tactics to disrupt the election in France and other European countries.” Macron’s campaign manager stated that his campaign faced “hundreds, if not thousands’ of cyberattacks originating in Russia and targeting campaign databases as well as the leaking of stolen emails online. Ties between Marine Le Pen’s National Front (FN) and Russia stretched back to around 2011-2012, and the FN received “a critical loan” from a Russian bank in 2014 of \$11.7 million.	Election of the FN, discrediting of French democracy	Historically good performance by FN, but overwhelming victory by Macron.	No	Low
	Germany	Federal Elections	Germany’s domestic intelligence agency “has accused Russia of cyberattacks and cyberspying” as well as spreading a disinformation campaign, using RT and Sputnik to spread fake news, such as a refugee rape story. The Kremlin is linked to three key German-language “propaganda outlets” which have been operating in Germany since 2013. Russia has also aided the far-right and pro-Russian Alternative for Germany (AfD). In January 2015, pro-Russian hackers undertook a distributed denial of service attack on German government servers which coincided with the visit of Ukrainian PM Yatsenyuk. In the run-up to the federal elections of September, 2017, despite German expectations of Russian interference, there was no evidence of Russian interference either through fake news or bots.	Victory or solid performance by AfD, discrediting of German democracy	Limited evidence of Russian interference directly before election, but AfD cleared parliamentary threshold, capturing 12.6% of the vote.	Partial	Low-Medium
	Macedonia	Government Coalition Formation Crisis	Moscow has claimed an “anti-national coup is being conducted in Skopje under U.S. direction. Even more menacingly, according to Russian disinformation that penetrates the region’s media and social networks, Washington supports carving up Macedonia and Serbia and creating a greater Albania.” Macedonia has been in a 25 year attempt to gain accession to the EU and NATO, and the two year political crisis has ended with a new government in Skopje taking power in June 2017.	Prevent Macedonian NATO/EU membership	Victory by center-left Social Democrats after the competitive authoritarian regime of Nikola Gruevski.	No	Low

	Malta	General Elections	Maltese Prime Minister “Muscat said that Malta’s security service have been alerted to possible Russian interference in local affairs. Relations between Russia and Malta have soured recently, mainly after Valleta’s refusal to allow Russian warships heading to Syria to refuel in Malta.” The PM also accused Russia of being behind a series of cyberattacks which have increased 40% from “the normal level.”	Undermine EU/NATO government	PM Muscat wins elections	No	Low
	Montenegro	Referendum on NATO Membership	In October, 2016, “Montenegro said Russian spy agencies and local pro-Russian parties conspired to halt the bid, assassinate the-then Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic and bring the opposition to power. The Kremlin dismissed that as absurd.”	Prevent Montenegrin NATO membership	Montenegro becomes the 29 th member of NATO on June 5, 2017.	No	Low
	Netherlands	General Election	During the election, Russia spread fake news. To prevent Russian hacking, Dutch officials announced the national election votes would be counted manually.	Aid anti-EU, anti-NATO PVV party of Geert Wilders	Incumbent PM Mark Rutte and his VVD Liberal party retain control.	No	Low
	Spain	Catalonia Independence Referendum	Spanish media reported that Russia has interfered in the unauthorized Catalonia referendum, with “a combination of propaganda and social-media ‘bots’” and fake news dissemination. These allegations “suggest that Russia is seeking to meddle in support of Catalan independence and to discredit the Spanish central government’s position that the referendum is illegal.”	Undermine EU/NATO member, encourage separatism in other EU countries	Ongoing	-	-
	United Kingdom	General Elections	Despite pre-election fears of Russian hacking of the UK general elections, the UK ultimately concluded there was no Russian interference.	Undermine NATO government, aid UKIP	Theresa May and Conservative Party victory	No	Low
	Austria	Presidential Elections	Prior to the presidential elections, a dossier prepared by US intelligence agencies stated that Austria was “one of the countries in which Russia was attempting to interfere in national politics.” The FPÖ had signed a cooperation agreement with United Russia and there are allegations it receives funds from Moscow.	Undermine EU/NATO government, far right (FPÖ) victory	The FPÖ lost the election by less than one percentage point to pro-EU Van der Bellen	No	Low
2016	Bulgaria	Presidential Elections (2016), Parliamentary Elections (2017)	In the run-up to presidential elections in November 2016, the opposition Socialist Party “received a secret strategy document proposing a road map to victory at the ballot box” which included recommendations to “plant fake news and promote exaggerated polling data.” “The document offered advice on how to burnish the candidate’s image by planting stories with Moscow-friendly news outlets. The stories were to be closely coordinated, publishing first in fringe blogs before entering mainstream media en masse to create maximum impact and ultimately become election talking points for the party. The report recommended the party emphasize issues that dovetailed with Kremlin policy: calling for an end to Russian sanctions, criticizing NATO and talking up the U.K.’s vote to leave the EU.” Bulgarian security service officials allege that the dossier was produced by a Kremlin-connected think tank and delivered by a former Russian spy on a US sanctions list. After Radev and his Euroskeptic, pro-Moscow platform defeated Borisov’s GERB candidate Tsacheva, Borisov resigned as PM until parliamentary elections in March 2017 elections which saw the center-right GERB party won a plurality and Boyko Borisov became PM again in April, the results of which “appeared to be a disappointment for President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, who has sought to exploit divisions in the European Union to strengthen Russia’s influence – particularly in a country like Bulgaria, which was one of the Soviet Union’s closest allies Russian economic integration with and leverage over Bulgaria is substantial. In addition to the more recent intervention, Moscow has “been accused of hacking the country’s Central Election Commission ahead of a referendum and local elections in 2015” as well as bankrolling “protests in 2012 and 2013 that helped topple a pro-Western government” According to a CSIS report, Russia cultivated close ties to the far-right, anti-EU party Ataka (“Attack”) starting in the mid-	Promote anti-Brussels and anti-Washington sentiment in a NATO/EU member state, elect pro-Russian party.	Rumen Radev won the presidential elections, but his Socialist Party lost parliamentary elections the following year.	Partial	Medium

			2000s.				
	Montenegro	Parliamentary Elections	After Montenegrin PM Djukanovic signed an accession protocol of NATO membership in May of 2016 which “dashed Russian hopes of securing a naval foothold in the Adriatic,” two Russians initiated an ultimately failed plot to seize Montenegro’s parliament, kill the prime minister, and install a new government hostile to NATO. The two Russians did visit Moscow and are alleged to be GRU operatives, but there no confirmed Russian government role (though a Russian role is confirmed by British government officials). Contemporaneously with the coup attempt, Montenegro also “suffered a series of coordinated cyberattacks.”	Prevent Montenegro from joining NATO	PM Djukanovic stepped down after Russian interference uncovered, handing power to his deputy in the Democratic Socialist Party.	No	Low
	Norway	Labour Party	The Norwegian Policy Security Service (PST) alerted the Labour Party it had been attacked by a group PST determined had ties to Russian intelligence.	Undermine NATO member	No change	No	Low
	Netherlands	Nonbinding Referendum, EU-Ukraine Association	Russia ran a disinformation campaign through Sputnik and RT in an attempt to discredit the government of Ukraine. The referendum saw very low turnout (32%) but nearly two thirds of voters rejected the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. However, voters said “they were opposing not only the treaty but wider European policymaking on matters ranging from the migrant crisis to economics.” However, despite this outcome, Dutch parliament backed the association agreement and the association agreement came into force September 1, 2017.	Prevent EU-Ukraine association agreement	While the referendum failed, it is difficult to credit the Russian role separate from general anti-establishment protest voting; Dutch parliament passed the measure anyway	No	Medium
	United States	Presidential Elections	Russia interference in the US election is widely acknowledged, with US consideration of retaliation beginning under the Obama administration. Russian intelligence and Kremlin-connected hackers infiltrated voting systems, leaked Clinton campaign emails to Wikileaks, created fake documents leaked alongside real documents to Wikileaks, used Facebook pages to spread anti-immigrant propaganda, paid for pro-Trump Facebook ads, used Facebook to organize anti-immigrant protests in the US.	Discrediting American democracy, electing Donald Trump	Donald Trump wins US Presidency	Partial	Medium
2015	Germany	Christian Democratic Union Party	German officials claim “a Russian hacking group was behind a major attack” on parliament in Berlin and also attacked the Christian Democratic Union party of Angela Merkel.	Undermine pro-EU party of Merkel	No change	No	Low
	United Kingdom	General Elections	Former Labour minister, Chris Bryant, claims there is evidence of “direct” involvement by Russia in the 2015 UK elections. Russia “took an active interest in the Scottish referendum which threatened Britain’s Trident base at Faslane and which was given extensive coverage on Russia Today. Afterwards, Russia claimed the count was flawed and suggested the result was rigged.”	Discrediting UK democracy, victory for UKIP	Victory for David Cameron and the Conservative Party	No	Low
2014	Moldova	Parliamentary Elections	The Moldovan Central Election Commission disqualified the pro-Moscow Patria party days before the legislative elections for illegal use of foreign funds and allegations that the head of the party admitted to being an FSB agent. In early November, Putin held a high-profile meeting with the head of the Socialist Party, Igor Dodon.	Supporting pro-Moscow Patria Party and the PSRM	The pro-Russia PSRM won the most seats in parliament, but the Liberal Democrat Party of Moldova maintained control of government	No	Low
	Ukraine	Presidential Elections	In the Ukrainian presidential elections of 2014, Russia “launched a series of coordinated cyber-attacks” including “attempts to fake vote totals” and used malware to “infect the servers at Ukraine’s central election commission.”	Undermine Ukraine, particularly Poroshenko	Poroshenko victory	No	Low
2012	Georgia	Parliamentary Elections	With pro-Moscow candidate Ivanishvili running against Saakashvili, Moscow “raised the specter of a military confrontation to an alarming pitch” and Moscow-linked Georgian organized crime groups leaked a prison abuse video.	Support pro-Moscow Georgian Dream coalition	Georgian Dream Coalition victory	Yes	Low

2011	Transnistria	Presidential Elections	Russian expression of displeasure with Igor Smirnov was argued to “have contributed to a sense that the aging Smirnov was on his way out and thus a lame-duck.” Russia’s preferred candidate, Anatoly Kaminsky lost to Evgeny Shevchuk, the latter of which also campaigned on promises of good relations with Moscow.	Maintain pro-Moscow Transnistrian regime, support Kaminsky	Shevchuk defeats Kaminsky	Yes	Low
2010	Kyrgyz Republic	Anti-Bakiyev Demonstrations	Russia launched a campaign against the incumbent Bakiyev “that contributed to his ousting from power in 2010.” In March, Moscow increased tariffs on energy exports to Bishkek and Russian mass media (widely watched in Kyrgyzstan) began an anti-Bakiyev campaign.	Topple Bakiyev regime	Bakiyev ousted by popular uprising	Yes	Medium
	Ukraine	Presidential Elections	In the 2010 Ukrainian elections Russia criticized Yushchenko and supported Yanukovych.	Yanukovych victory	Yanukovych and his Party of Regions wins	Yes	Low
2009	Moldova	Parliamentary Elections	In the 2009 parliamentary elections Russia provided election support for Voronin and the PCRM, including a high-profile meeting with Medvedev in March and a promise to distribute oil to Moldovan farmers prior to the elections to boost incumbent popularity.	PCRM victory	PCRM wins, cannot form a government, fresh elections held in April, July elections result in victory for pro-Brussels Alliance for European Integration (AEI)	No	Low
2006	Belarus	Presidential Elections	In the March 2006 presidential elections Russia gave favorable media coverage to Lukashenka, Kremlin advisers aided the campaign and directly provided funds, Moscow promised not to raise gas prices, and the FSB directly assisted the Belarusian KGB in targeting opposition.	Lukashenka victory	Lukashenka victory	Yes	Low
2005	Moldova	Parliamentary Elections	Russia interfered against Voronin and the PCRM in the March 2005 parliamentary elections and Moldovan secret service expelled 21 Russians who were allegedly sent to spy on the president and other politicians prior to the election.	Punish Voronin for his post-2003 pivot away from Moscow	PCRM victory	No	Low
2004	Ukraine	Presidential Elections	In the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections Russia interfered ‘massively’ on behalf of Kuchma’s chosen successor, Yanukovych, providing somewhere between \$50 and \$600 million to his campaign from October-November. Putin also held high profile meetings with Yanukovych where he praised the latter on Ukrainian national television.	Yanukovych victory	Yushchenko victory	No	Low
2002	Ukraine	Parliamentary Elections	Russia provided support for pro-Kuchma parties.	Pro-Kuchma party victories	Our Ukraine Bloc (Yushchenko) wins largest seat share	No	Low
1996	Moldova	Presidential Elections	Russia provided election support for Lucinschi.	Lucinschi victory	Lucinschi victory	Yes	Low
1994	Belarus	Presidential Elections	Russia provided election support for Kebich against Lukashenka.	Kebich victory	Lukashenka victory	Partial	Low
	Ukraine	Presidential Elections	Russia provided election support for Kuchma in his challenge against incumbent president Kravchuk.	Kuchma victory	Kuchma victory	Yes	Low
Total interventions						32	
Share which resulted in favorable outcome (yes and partial)						37.5% (12)	
Share of favorable outcomes with some evidence of a Russian impact						33.3% (4)	
Share of total interventions with favorable outcome and evidence of Russian impact						12.5% (4)	