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TABLE OF CONTENTS

NATO IN THE NEW HYBRID WARFARE ENVIRONMENT	3
<i>Barbora Maronkova</i>	
FACING THE RUSSIAN SCHOOL OF SOFT POWER	9
<i>Tony Jensen</i>	
IMAGE OF EUROPE IN RUSSIAN MEDIA: JOURNALISM OR CREATION OF ENEMY IMAGE?	19
<i>Liubov Tsybulska</i>	
THE KREMLIN'S INFORMATION WARS IN THE 21ST CENTURY: ESTONIA, GEORGIA, UKRAINE	27
<i>Maksym Kyiak</i>	
RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA: A BIG WAR FOR A SMALL AUDIENCE	36
<i>Vladislav Saran</i>	
STOKING THE FLAMES: RUSSIAN INFORMATION OPERATIONS IN TURKEY	43
<i>Balkan Devlen</i>	
CARNIVALISATION OF CARNIVAL	50
<i>Volha Damarad</i>	
COUNTERING RUSSIAN DISINFORMATION: UKRAINIAN NGOS ON THE FRONTLINE	59
<i>Olena Churanova</i>	

STOKING THE FLAMES: RUSSIAN INFORMATION OPERATIONS IN TURKEY

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Russian propaganda and information operations, or more accurately political warfare, in the West and near abroad have been covered extensively. Neither is it a new phenomenon, having a century-long history going back to the Bolsheviks in the early 20th century. However, Russian operations outside these areas received little attention. Therefore, in this paper Russian propaganda and information operations in and against Turkey will be examined. This paper argues that Russia is winning the propaganda war in Turkey and that does not bode well for the future of international order and the transatlantic alliance.

Russian propaganda and information operations, or more accurately political warfare, in the West and near abroad have been covered extensively.¹ Neither is it a new phenomenon, having a century-long history going back to the Bolsheviks in the early 20th century.² However, Russian operations outside these geographic areas received little attention.³ Therefore, in this paper, I look at Russian propaganda and information

operations in and against Turkey. Russia's relations with Turkey have a complicated history – they have fought 12 wars since the 16th century and were on the opposite sides in the Cold War. Nevertheless, Turkey remains important to Russia for geopolitical reasons – in terms of both Black Sea security and access to the Mediterranean via the Turkish Straits – and increasingly for economic reasons, especially as a consumer

¹ There are now several reports and in-depth studies of various aspects of Kremlin's political warfare. They are too numerous to list here, but among others see M. Galeotti, *Controlling Chaos: How Russia Manages Its Political War in Europe*, "European Council on Foreign Relations", September 2017, [http://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/controlling_chaos_how_russia_manages_its_political_war_in_europe]; M. Weiss, P. Pomerantsev, *The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture, and Money*, "The Interpreter", 22 November 2014, [http://www.interpretermag.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/The_Menace_of_Unreality_Final.pdf]; O. Lutsevych, *Agents of the Russian World: Proxy Groups in the Contested Neighbourhood*, "Chatham House", April 2016, [<https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/agents-russian-world-proxy-groups-contested-neighbourhood>]; H.A. Conley et al., *The Kremlin Playbook: Understanding Russian Influence in Central and Eastern Europe*, "CSIS", October 2016, [<https://www.csis.org/analysis/kremlin-playbook>]; C.S. Chivvis, *Hybrid War: Russian Contemporary Political Warfare*, "Bulletin of Atomic Scientists", Vol. 73(5), 2017, pp. 316-321; K. Giles, *Handbook of Russian Information Warfare*, "NATO Defense College", November 2016, [<http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/downloads.php?icode=506>].

² "Active measures" or subversion as it was called during the Cold War. See R. H. Schultz, R. Godson, *Dezinformatsia: Active Measures in Soviet Strategy*, Pergamon-Brassey's: London, 1984.

³ For a recent project regarding the global reach of Russia's political warfare, see *The Return of Global Russia*, "Carnegie Endowment for International Peace", [<http://carnegieendowment.org/publications/interactive/global-russia/>]. For the Turkish case, the reporting and op-eds by M. Bahadırhan Dincaslan for *Kırım Haber Ajansı* (Crimea News Agency) [<http://qha.com.ua/tr/authors/m-bahadirhan-dincaslan/>] and for Euromaidan Press [<http://euromaidanpress.com/author/bahadirhan/>] are notable exceptions.

and transit hub for Russian natural gas. The increasing Russian influence in Turkey that might look like a “marriage of convenience”⁴ right now has the potential to further weaken and undermine NATO and the transatlantic alliance by driving a wedge between allies at a time when Russia is engaging in a sustained political warfare against the West.



The increasing Russian influence in Turkey that might look like a “marriage of convenience”⁴ right now has the potential to further weaken and undermine NATO and the transatlantic alliance

Despite using a variety of tools (from “fake news” and cyber-attacks to corruption, covert operations, and subversion) and adopting/tuning its message according to the particular politico-historical context of the target country/society, the current manifestation of Russian political warfare has a fundamental goal – to undermine and weaken the Western liberal democratic order and the Transatlantic institutions.⁵ The Turkish case, apart from the immediate geopolitical concerns, should be seen as a part of this broader attempt to weaken the liberal international order and reassert Russia as a global power on its own terms.

There are three main episodes of Russian information operations in Turkey:

- during and immediately after the Russian invasion in Crimea in 2014,

- from the downing of a Russian fighter jet that violated Turkish airspace in November 2015 to June 2016, when the relations started to normalize,
- and finally since the failed coup attempt by the Gulenists in July 2016 in Turkey.

Russian Propaganda in Turkey about the Conflict in Ukraine

The first episode is about presenting the Russian invasion and the illegal annexation of Crimea and the continuing conflict in eastern Ukraine in a pro-Russian way in the Turkish media. Apart from the “official” propaganda by the Turkish language service of Sputnik News, this is generally carried out using socialist, communist, left-nationalist, and Eurasianist media sources in Turkey that are inherently suspicious of pro-Western and pro-American governments abroad. Primary among them are the newspapers Sol, Aydınlık, Oda TV, and Birgün. Using the usual tropes of Russian propaganda, these outlets reflect the Kremlin’s versions of the events surrounding Crimea’s invasion and annexation by Russia as well as the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.⁶ They tend to tie the developments in Ukraine and the Russian actions there to a broader struggle against the so-called imperialist West, and hence portray Russia as an anti-imperialist force that stands up to the “imperialist Americans and Europeans”.

This version of pro-Kremlin propaganda found fertile ground in Turkey in 2014 and early 2015 due to the presence of latent anti-Americanism among both the right


⁴ D. Triantaphyllou, quoted in *Should the West Fear a Turkey-Russia Convergence?*, “Center on Global Interests”, 08 August 2016, [<http://globalinterests.org/2016/08/08/should-the-west-fear-a-turkey-russia-convergence/>].

⁵ On the Russian challenge to the international order, see B. Devlen, *Russia’s Challenge to International Order*, [in:] A. Sprüds, K. Bukovskis (eds.), *Riga Conference Papers 2015: Towards Reassurance and Solidarity in the Euro-Atlantic Community*, Latvian Institute of International Affairs: Latvia, 2015.

⁶ For a detailed study of Russian propaganda tropes, see *A Guide to Russian Propaganda*, “Euromaidan Press”, May 2016, [<http://euromaidanpress.com/2016/05/05/a-guide-to-russian-propaganda-part-1-propaganda-prepares-russia-for-war/>].

and the left in Turkish politics.⁷ Using that anti-Americanism as a useful tool to push a Kremlin line about the developments in Ukraine, the Russian propaganda machine replicated stories that they used in the West in Turkish news media as well. Turkish “fellow travellers” on the left followed along, motivated by a combination of pro-Soviet nostalgia, anti-Americanism, and a self-professed “anti-imperialism” that sees Euromaidan as another “Coloured Revolution” and an example of American meddling in the region.

Sol (which literally means “Left” in Turkish), the extreme left-wing newspaper closely affiliated with the Turkish Communist Party (TKP), was especially active. For example, it created and maintained an interactive website titled “Civil War in Ukraine” and was and is a very willing conduit of Russian propaganda regarding Ukraine.⁸ The newspaper published 398 items (reporting or op-eds) in 2014 and 507 in 2015 on Ukraine.⁹ Almost all of them are related to the conflict. Such “fellow travellers” tended to promulgate the Kremlin propaganda about an “American coup” being carried out against the then Ukrainian President Yanukovich in 2014 and the so-called “neo-Nazis” taking over in Kyiv. The headline from Sol on 02 August 2014 that reads “Neo-Nazis in Ukraine: ‘Our goal is fascist dictatorship’” is typical of this type of “reporting”.¹⁰ Left-nationalist and Eurasianist groups (more on them below) linked the developments in Ukraine (which



the impact of such propaganda activities has been to neutralize the effects of sympathy of the Turkish public towards the plight of Crimean Tatars as a result of the invasion and annexation of Crimea by Russia

they call a “coup by a neo-Nazi junta”) to a conspiracy by the West against Turkey, warning, “Turkey will be next”.¹¹

Left-wing political movements, as well as extreme left-wing websites and news sources that are cited in this article, have limited political influence in Turkey. However, the impact of such propaganda activities has been to neutralize the effects of sympathy of the Turkish public towards the plight of Crimean Tatars as a result of the invasion and annexation of Crimea by Russia. Attempts to craft a counter-narrative to the Russian propaganda, mostly by Kırım Haber Ajansı (QHA; Crimea News Agency) and a few young journalists such as M. Bahadırhan Dincaslan had limited success.¹²

Russian Propaganda Targets Turkey

The second episode of the Russian disinformation operations targeting Turkey started after the Turkish air force shot down a Russian jet that violated the

⁷ On anti-Americanism in Turkey, see B. Kadercan, *Turkey's Anti-Americanism Isn't New*, “The National Interest”, 23 August 2016, [http://nationalinterest.org/feature/turkeys-anti-americanism-isnt-new-17448?page=show].

⁸ *Ukrayna İç Savaşı (Ukrainian Civil War)*, “Sol”, [http://interaktif.sol.org.tr/ukrayna/index.html].

⁹ *Keyword Search: Ukrayna*, “Sol”, [http://haber.sol.org.tr/arama?metin=ukrayna].

¹⁰ *Neo-Nazi'ler Ukrayna'da: 'Hedefimiz faşist diktatörlük' (Neo-Nazis in Ukraine: "Our Goal Is Fascist Dictatorship")*, “Sol”, 02 August 2014, [http://haber.sol.org.tr/dunyadan/neo-naziler-ukraynada-hedefimiz-fasist-diktatorluk-haberi-95408].

¹¹ *Ukrayna'dan sonra sıra Türkiye'ye (After Ukraine, It's Turkey's Turn)*, “OdaTV”, 08 March 2014, [https://odatv.com/ukrayna-kardes-olarak-gormuyorsa...0803141200.html].

¹² See for example, M.B. Dincaslan, *Kremlin trollerinin temel özellikleri (The Basic Characteristics of the Kremlin Trolls)*, “QHA”, 10 September 2016, [http://qha.com.ua/tr/fikir-yazilari/kremlin-trollerinin-temel-ozellikleri/148910/].

Turkish airspace near the Syrian border in November 2015.¹³ The same Russian media that had pumped pro-Kremlin lines regarding the conflict in Ukraine, promoted Turkey as a vacation and holiday spot for Russians, and tended to avoid criticizing Turkey in general, did a rapid 180-degree turn and start producing news and propaganda material that targeted Turkey directly.

This campaign was mostly directed towards domestic Russian public as well as the international community. The main modus operandi was to manufacture “fake news” about Turkey and Turkish foreign policy, such as claiming Turkey was supporting ISIS¹⁴, that Turkey was about to be kicked out of NATO¹⁵, or that Turkey was violating international law¹⁶ and committed war crimes¹⁷. Russians and Westerners have been warned about traveling to Turkey, portraying it as an unsafe country in which you could get in trouble all the time.¹⁸

What is remarkable is that right after the crisis started, the Kremlin propaganda machine shifted gears and started to

spit out anti-Turkish propaganda at an alarmingly sustainable rate. This rapid and agile reaction to a crisis suggests at least two features of the Russian propaganda apparatus. First, it is an adaptable and versatile instrument that can be wielded in a relatively efficient manner against friends and foes alike. Second, it is likely that there exist “dossiers” for even friendly countries and regimes that can be used to launch a rapid, sustained, and well-targeted propaganda campaign at an immediate notice from the Kremlin.

Nevertheless, by summer 2016, the relations with Russia were largely normalized and this torrent of anti-Turkish Russian propaganda in the Russian media almost disappeared overnight. The Russian tourists started to return to Turkey once again when Putin lifted the tourism ban.¹⁹ The talk of a new natural gas pipeline from Russia to Turkey bypassing Ukraine, the Turkish Stream, was back.²⁰ The Turkish government started negotiations with Russia to purchase S-400 air defence systems, which resulted in a \$2.5-billion deal, signed in September 2017.²¹

¹³ For Turkish policy towards Russia prior to this incident, see B. Devlen, “Don’t Poke the Russian Bear”: *Turkish Policy in the Ukrainian Crisis*, “Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution”, June 2014, [https://noref.no/Publications/Themes/Emerging-powers/Don-t-poke-the-Russian-bear-Turkish-policy-in-the-Ukrainian-crisis].

¹⁴ *Beril Dedeoğlu: Propaganda wars, “Stop Fake”*, 15 December 2015, [https://www.stopfake.org/en/beril-dedeoglu-propaganda-wars/] and *Ankara Defends ISIS, Turkish Officials Have Financial Interest in Oil Trade with Group - PM Medvedev*, “RT”, 25 November 2015, [https://www.rt.com/news/323373-ankara-defends-isis-medvedev/].

¹⁵ *Fake: Turkey to Be Thrown out of NATO*, “StopFake.org”, 28 November 2015, [https://www.stopfake.org/en/fake-turkey-to-be-thrown-out-of-nato/]; *France Condemned Turkey’s Downing of Russian Su-24 During NATO Council*, “SputnikNews.com”, 27 November 2015, [https://sputniknews.com/world/201511271030880392-nato-downing-su-france-council/].

¹⁶ *Fake: Turkey closes the Bosphorus and Dardanelles for Russia*, “StopFake.org”, 01 December 2015, [https://www.stopfake.org/en/fake-turkey-closes-the-bosphorus-and-dardanelles-for-russia/].

¹⁷ *Murder of Su-24 Pilot: Are Turkey, NATO ‘Responsible for War Crime’?*, “SputnikNews.com”, 27 November 2015, [https://sputniknews.com/politics/201511271030873929-turkey-syria-nato-russia-provocation-international-law/].

¹⁸ *Turkey-Russia Jet Downing: Moscow Announces Sanctions*, “BBC News”, 28 November 2015, [http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34954575].

¹⁹ *Putin Lifts Turkey Tourism Ban*, “RT”, 30 June 2016 [https://www.rt.com/news/349041-putin-lifts-turkey-sanctions/].

²⁰ M.B. Dincaslan, *Turkish Stream or Russian Stream?*, “Euromaidan Press”, 20 October 2016, [http://euromaidanpress.com/2016/10/20/turkish-stream-or-russian-stream/].

²¹ *Turkey Signs Deal to Get Russian S-400 Air Defence Missiles*, “BBC”, 12 September 2017, [http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-41237812].

Wooing Turkey and Sowing Discord within the Transatlantic Community

As Turkey and Russia were developing a *modus vivendi* regarding Syria, the third episode of the Russian information operations started. This phase aimed to portray Russia as an ally of Turkey in Syria, aimed to increase suspicion and create resentment and animosity towards the US and European partners. This period of Russian propaganda found a much broader audience as well as more willing participants due to the presence and increasing salience of anti-Americanism in Turkey.²² This is carried out via two mediums: the Russian propaganda channels and their “fellow travellers” in the Turkish media and politics.

On the one hand, there are Russian “official” propaganda channels such as Sputnik News and RT.²³ They focus on highlighting the overlap/concurrence between Turkey and Russia on the one hand, while emphasizing and exaggerating the differences between the US and Turkey on the other.²⁴ A few recent examples will be sufficient to illustrate this point. On 03 March 2018, Sputnik News ran

a story titled “Analyst Explains Why Turkey ‘Can Calmly Withdraw from NATO’ after Putin’s Speech”.²⁵ Quoting a retired general from the Turkish Air Force, the article hammers home the message that Turkey will be more safe outside NATO rather than inside in the face of a conflict between Russia and the US. The article is littered with such quotes as “Moscow underscores that Turkey can calmly withdraw from NATO, and after doing so Ankara will have guarantees that it will not face any threat in terms of ensuring its own security.”²⁶

Just two days before this article, again Sputnik News ran an opinion piece on a supposed secret plan to carve up the Middle East by the US, UK, France, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, quoting at length a former Turkish ambassador to France and Libya.²⁷ In August 2017, Sputnik News ran a story with the core message of “Russia, Turkey, Iran, and Syria need to team up in order to clear terrorists from Syria”.²⁸ This media outlet repeatedly claimed that the US is helping ISIS in Syria.²⁹ The message to the Turkish audience is clear: Russia is your friend and you should be weary and suspicious of the West as they are plotting behind your back.

²² M.B. Dincaslan, *NATO Losing War of Narratives while Russia Emerges as Leader of Nationalist Bloc*, “Euromaidan Press”, 08 August 2016, [http://euromaidanpress.com/2016/08/10/nato-losing-war-of-narratives-while-russia-emerges-as-leader-of-nationalist-bloc/] and M.B. Dincaslan, Soner Yalçın: FSB’nin Türk Tetikçisi (Soner Yalçın: FSB’s Turkish Hitman), [http://mbdincaslan.com/index.php/koseyazilari/item/509-soneryalcintetikci].

²³ L. Dearden, *Nato Accuses Sputnik News of Distributing Misinformation as Part of ‘Kremlin Propaganda Machine’*, “The Independent”, 11 February 2017, [http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/sputnik-news-russian-government-owned-controlled-nato-accuses-kremlin-propaganda-machine-a7574721.html].

²⁴ This does not mean that there are no real differences between Turkey and its allies regarding Syria but that Russian propaganda focuses on enlarging such differences and encouraging Turkey to move away from the West.

²⁵ *Analyst Explains Why Turkey ‘Can Calmly Withdraw from NATO’ after Putin’s Speech*, “Sputnik News”, 03 March 2018, [https://sputniknews.com/analysis/201803031062188502-russia-turkey-nato-deterrence/].

²⁶ *Analyst Explains Why Turkey ‘Can Calmly Withdraw from NATO’ after Putin’s Speech*, “Sputnik News”, 03 March 2018, [https://sputniknews.com/analysis/201803031062188502-russia-turkey-nato-deterrence/].

²⁷ *Five Countries Decide to Carve up the Middle East – Ex-Envoy*, “Sputnik News”, 01 March 2018, [https://sputniknews.com/analysis/201803011062105491-turkey-envoy-plan/].

²⁸ *How US Military Presence in Middle East Driving Together Turkey, Iran, Russia*, “Sputnik News”, 24 August 2017, [https://sputniknews.com/politics/201708241056756352-us-military-iraq-syria/].

²⁹ *US Helicopters Spotted in Al-Hasakah Reportedly Evacuating Daesh Members*, “Sputnik News”, 21 February 2018, [https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201802211061871761-us-helicopters-transporting-daesh/]; *US Reportedly Evacuates Daesh Leaders from Syria’s Deir ez-Zor Again*, “Sputnik News”, 29 December 2017, [https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201712291060410421-us-continues-daesh-evacuation-syria-reports/].



One of the most prominent examples of such pro-Russian “fellow travellers” are the Turkish supporters of so-called Eurasianism

This message is further amplified not only by the second medium – “fellow travellers” in the Turkish media and politics – but this time also by the mainstream media.³⁰ The rapprochement between Turkey and Russia has made the mainstream media, which take their cue from the government, more receptive to Russian propaganda.

One of the most prominent examples of such pro-Russian “fellow travellers” are the Turkish supporters of so-called Eurasianism, an ideology that was developed and promoted by the Russian political theorist Aleksandr Dugin.³¹ Turkish Eurasianists see the closer relations and coordination between Russia and Turkey regarding Syria as an opportunity to push for a more pro-Russian orientation in Turkey and aim to exacerbate anti-American and anti-Western sentiments in the country.³² Their most prominent leader is Dogu Perincek, the chairman of Vatan Partisi (VP; Homeland Party), a rebranding of his previous political party İşçi Partisi (Workers Party).³³

Perincek was once a Maoist but has been promoting a version of Dugin’s Eurasianism in the past 20 years. Despite the limited appeal of VP as a political party (it got 0.3% of the vote in the last general elections in 2015), Eurasianism has a significant, albeit generally exaggerated, following among the Turkish military officers, both active and retired.

The failed coup attempt by the Gulenists in the Turkish Armed Forces in July 2016 and the following purge of the Gulenist coup-plotters from the military provided an opportunity for the Eurasianist faction to be more influential than they have been before.³⁴ *Aydınlık* is a newspaper of VP and therefore of the Turkish Eurasianists. A couple of examples from its recent reporting will illustrate how closely they follow the Moscow line. Reporting on a roundtable organised in Russia on Syria, *Aydınlık* quoted Russian experts arguing that the US “lost” Turkey and that Russia understands Turkish concerns regarding Northern Syria.³⁵ Writing in February 2018, Dogu Perincek argued that the real enemy and the target of the US is Turkey, and not Russia, Iran, or Syria.³⁶ In a recent press conference, Perincek argued that “the Atlantic age is over” and that “Turkey and Russia will determine the future of the world”.³⁷ Finally, not to be outdone by

³⁰ M.B. Dincaslan, *Türk Medyasında Rusçu Rüzgar (Pro-Russian Winds in Turkish Media)*, “Kırım Haber Ajansı”, 10 February 2017, [http://qha.com.ua/tr/analiz-haber/turk-medyasinda-ruscu-ruzgar/152657/].

³¹ On Turkish Eurasianists, see O. Tufekci, *The Foreign Policy of Modern Turkey: Power and the Ideology of Eurasianism*, IB Tauris: London, 2017.

³² On the pro-Russian nature of Eurasianism, see M.B. Dincaslan, *Avrasyacılık Tehlikesi ve Neo-Sovyetizm (Eurasianism Danger and Neo-Sovietism)*, [http://mbdincaslan.com/index.php/koseyazilari/item/440-avrasyacilik].

³³ See this Wikipedia entry of Perincek for a brief intro to this complicated and somewhat shadowy politician: *Doğu Perinçek*, “Wikipedia.org”, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Do%C4%9Fu_Perin%C3%A7ek].

³⁴ M.B. Dincaslan, *Yeni paraleller Avrasyacılar mı olacak? (Will the Eurasianists Be the New Parallels?)*, “QHA”, 28 September 2016, [http://qha.com.ua/tr/fikir-yazilari/yeni-paraleller-avrasyacilar-mi-olacak/149245/].

³⁵ *Rus Uzmanlar: ABD Türkiye’yi Kaybetti (Russian Experts: USA Lost Turkey)*, “Aydınlık”, 21 January 2018, [https://www.aydinlik.com.tr/rus-uzmanlar-abd-turkiye-yi-kaybetti-dunya-ocak-2018].

³⁶ D. Perincek, *ABD-Rusya Kapışması mı? (US-Russia Fight?)*, “Aydınlık”, 07 February 2018, [https://www.aydinlik.com.tr/abd-rusya-kapismasi-mi-dogu-perincek-kose-yazilari-subat-2018].

³⁷ *Türkiye ve Rusya dünyanın geleceğinde belirleyici olacak (Turkey and Russia Will Be Determinants of the Future of the World)*, “Aydınlık”, 28 February 2018, [https://www.aydinlik.com.tr/turkiye-ve-rusya-dunyanin-geleceginde-belirleyici-olacak-politika-subat-2018-3].

Sputnik News, *Aydınlık* also claimed that the US has a five-step plan to divide Syria in the near future.³⁸

In short, there is a clear overlap, almost coordination, between the messages coming out of the official Russian propaganda outlets and the ones that various “fellow travellers”, especially the Eurasianists, promote in the media and politics in Turkey. The existing differences between Turkey and its allies on Syria provide a fertile ground for the pro-Russian propaganda to be effective among both the public and the policymakers.³⁹ This phase of the Russian information operations is still ongoing and seems to be more successful than the first two phases that this article discusses.

Conclusion

There is now a sizeable literature on Russian political warfare including hybrid warfare, propaganda, and information operations. However, most of it focuses on the US, the EU, and the former Soviet countries. In this brief paper, a short overview of Russian propaganda and information operations in and against Turkey since 2014 was presented. One can identify three clusters of Russian propaganda activities in Turkey. From the early 2014 to November 2015, it focused on promoting a pro-Russian narrative regarding the conflict in Ukraine. The downing of a Russian jet by the Turkish Air Force in November 2015 radically changed the tone and target of the Russian propaganda, placing Turkey firmly in the bull’s-eye. Turkish-

Russian relations improved dramatically after June 2016, and the failed coup attempt on 15 July 2016 provided even further impetus for mending the relations.

Once again, the Russian propaganda did a 180-degree turn and started to hammer home the message that Russia is Turkey’s true friend and its NATO allies are plotting against her in Syria and elsewhere. Given the actual policy differences between Turkey and its allies on Syria, this last episode of the Russian propaganda seems to be more successful as it is not only being promoted by Russian outlets and pro-Russian elements in Turkey such as Perincek-led Eurasianists but also increasingly being picked up and used by the mainstream media. This radically amplifies the reach and effectiveness of the Russian propaganda in Turkey. As Turkey and its Western allies drift further apart, it puts a strain on the transatlantic institutions. It is Russia that benefits the most from this discord, and Russia gets closer to its goal of weakening and undermining the liberal international order.

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³⁸ *ABD'nin beş aşamalı Suriye'yi bölme planı (USA's Five-step Plan to Divide Syria)*, “*Aydınlık*”, 03 March 2018, [<https://www.aydinlik.com.tr/abd-nin-bes-asamali-suriye-yi-bolme-planı-dunya-mart-2018-1>].

³⁹ A recent survey carried out by Kadir Has University in 2017 found that most Turks (65% of respondents) identify the US as the biggest security threat to Turkey. Russia is ranked as the biggest threat only by 18% of the respondents: H. Hacıoğlu, *Türkiye’de ABD Algısı Giderek Kötüleşiyor (In Turkey, Perception of the US Continues to Worsen)*, “*Amerika'nın Sesi*” (VoA Turkish Service), 21 July 2017, [<https://www.amerikanin sesi.com/a/turkiye-de-abd-algisi-gitgide-zayifliyor/3953895.html>].