Tracing Gibridnaya Voyna: how NATO expansion and color revolutions shape Russia's relationship with the West

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Chapter 1: Introduction

March 18, 2014. Three weeks after masked Russian troops without insignia entered Crimea, Russian President Putin addressed both chambers of the Russian Federal Assembly, along with other representatives and deputies. Amongst the crowd were representatives of the Crimean parliament, whom two days earlier had declared Crimea's independence from Ukraine. During his speech, designed to announce the incorporation of Crimea into Russia, Putin reflected on the Crimean crisis by declaring the US and the West to be the instigators of the Crimea crisis and compared it to Western actions in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya. According to Putin, these events fit into a pattern of the West ignoring international law, acting as they please, and unilaterally deciding the world's fate (Putin 2014). Vowing not to accept any belittling of Russia, Putin stressed that the West should accept an obvious fact: "Russia is an independent, active participant in international affairs; like other countries, it has its own national interests that need to be taken into account and respected." (Putin 2014)

While Russian saber-rattling and hostile rhetoric is nothing new, the annexation of Crimea sent a shockwave through Western countries and, most importantly, through NATO. Perplexed by the effective Russian actions in Crimea, NATO quickly sought to explain and understand the combined use of conventional Russian forces with unconventional means and tactics such as the troops without insignia. Dubbed 'little green men,' pictures of these soldiers filled the news and became the face of what was branded as Russia's new way of war: Hybrid Warfare.

A few months after the annexation of Crimea, NATO leaders specifically addressed the challenges posed by Hybrid Warfare at the 2014 Wales Summit, launching the concept to the top of the political and military agenda (NATO 2014). The adoption of the Hybrid Warfare term into NATO discourse and publications saw the creation of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), specifically designed to combat hybrid threats (NATO 2014). Continuing to be a pressing topic at the 2016 Warsaw Summit, Hybrid Warfare has led to the creation of a European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki (NATO 2017). Additionally, NATO decided to incorporate the Hybrid Warfare concept into the NATO 2030 document, showing a long-term commitment to the concept by NATO (NATO 2020).

The adoption of Hybrid Warfare into official NATO rhetoric and the perceived threat of Russian hybrid actions has led to the creation of what Galeotti (2019) aptly calls a 'hybrid-industrial complex.' Researchers, think-tanks, NGOs, and pundits have flocked to the Hybrid Warfare concept, thriving on expanded budgets and alarmism, generating a vast amount of literature with a diverse plethora of research areas and approaches. Of these research areas, not all receive equal attention. Since the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014, research into the Russian interpretation of Hybrid Warfare and its applications has remained insufficient (Fridman, Kabernik and Pearce 2019, 4). Curiously so, as Russia has not only been branded as the foremost practitioner of Hybrid Warfare but also, more importantly, has shown great interest in the Hybrid Warfare concept (Fridman 2018, 100-108).

Having become the subject of extensive debate by Russian researchers, politicians, and other experts, Russia has generated its own understanding of Hybrid Warfare, named Gibridnaya Voyna (the direct Russian translation of Hybrid Warfare). In response to finger-pointing by NATO, Russia counters by citing color revolutions and NATO expansion as evidence of Western Hybrid Warfare against Russia (Fridman, Kabernik and Pearce 2019, 29-30). While these allegations against the West are often dismissed as propaganda, most senior officials and researchers in Russia genuinely believe they are right and are not acting (Galeotti 2019, 17). As Russia ties its understanding of Hybrid Warfare into the broader overarching framework of the world order, the Hybrid Warfare concept not only starts to play a more significant role in NATO-Russian relations but also puts the aforementioned words by President Putin in a different light.

Russian rhetoric concerning NATO expansion and color revolutions is not limited to speeches as it is also present in Russian foreign policy documents and military doctrines. The presence of these Gibridnaya Voyna elements raises important questions about how this understanding came to be and whether certain events and documents have laid the groundwork for this specific understanding of Hybrid Warfare to emerge. Understanding Russia and Gibridnaya Voyna are essential, as Russia indeed is an active participant in international affairs with significant national interests. Understanding these interests through the lens of Gibridnaya Voyna could lead to a better understanding of hybrid warfare and Russia as an actor in international affairs in general. The importance of understanding Russia is further emphasized by Galeotti (2019, 26), who, in quoting the words of Ken Booth,

states that unless we understand the character of Russia, its wants, needs, and fears, the West cannot begin to comprehend the role Russia plays in current and future military problems.

Seeking to comprehend Gibridnaya Voyna better, this thesis analyzes the various foundational Russian foreign policy and military doctrine documents through the broader overarching framework that Gibridnaya Voyna provides. By tracing the development of Gibridnaya Voyna throughout these documents, this thesis aims to provide a contextual understanding of the emergence of Gibridnaya Voyna and establish whether Russia's view is truly a product of events or merely a circumstantial and valuable tool. To achieve this goal, this thesis seeks to answer the following research question: *How did Gibridnaya Voyna become a popular framework in Russia to describe Russia's relationship with the West?*

This thesis will start with a literature review that explains the history of Hybrid Warfare before introducing and reviewing Gibridnaya Voyna literature. Following the literature review, the methodology section will cover the process-tracing method and the development of a causal mechanism. The succeeding chapter will use this causal mechanism to analyze major Russian documents from 1991 to 2016. This chapter is split into three parts. After the analysis, a short overview of found observations will be presented, after which a discussion will follow. Finally, a conclusion will be given.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Due to the earlier mentioned hybrid-industrial complex, the literature on Hybrid Warfare has become vast and often outright confusing. Alarmism and sensation have led the literature to become muddled with conflicting definitions and terms. To make sense of the literature, a clear distinction must be made between the literature relevant to the topic at hand and the broader literature on Hybrid Warfare. To do this, a short historical origin of the Hybrid Warfare concept will be given, as this provides the proper base to establish the difference between the Western understanding of Hybrid Warfare and Russian Gibridnaya Voyna. Once established, the specific literature on Russia and Gibridnaya Voyna will be described chronologically and comprehensively.

2.1 A history of Hybrid Warfare

Although the term's origin can be traced back further, retired lieutenant colonel Frank Hoffman is generally seen as the principal proprietor of the concept. Shortly after publication, Hoffman's work found fertile soil in U.S. military circles, triggering a further storm of publications and debates within the military (Fridman, Kabernik, and Pearce 2019, 69). Built on preceding concepts within the new wars debate, such as fourth-generation warfare, compound warfare, and non-linear warfare, Hoffman’s approach to Hybrid Warfare presented policy recommendations aimed directly at the U.S. military. (Fridman 2018, 46). At this point, the concept of Hybrid Warfare was designed and written to play into U.S. military culture, confined to the operational and tactical level (Fridman, Kabernik and Pearce 2019, 73).

Following this, NATO, being influenced by the U.S. military, tried to adopt the concept in 2010. As NATO is also a political organization, the concept was changed and stretched to better fit NATO and its needs, leading to Hybrid Warfare encompassing any hybrid ways or means that could threaten NATO (NATO 2010). The disinterest of NATO's political sphere would see the concept shelved until the annexation of Crimea in 2014 when political urgency met with military novelty. This combination would provide the fertile ground that sprouted the hybrid-industrial complex. The main take from this historical outline is that in the West, Hybrid Warfare is a concept set in the operational and or tactical domain, used to serve a political need by communicating any threatening hybrid means or ways that an adversary might pose.

2.2 Waves of critique

According to Fridman (2018, 120), the literature presents itself in waves that become subsequently more critical. For the sake of simplicity (Fridman goes on in detail about these waves), these waves can be distinguished from early positive work from 2014 to 2017 to critical works from 2017 and onwards. When examining earlier works, Fridman's observation seems correct. Early literature on Hybrid Warfare after the annexation of Crimea has its fair share of adversarial alarmism, with words such as 'danger,' 'threat,' and 'challenge' prominently displayed in titles and conclusions. For example, the work of Oren speaks of the challenge of Hybrid Warfare from a NATO perspective. Oren (2016, 60-62) provides an extensive list of violated treaties by Russia and poses Hybrid Warfare as a significant challenge to NATO. While Oren acknowledges that the political aspect of NATO might influence the sudden popularity of Hybrid Warfare, this is quickly sidelined. Any form of reference to Russian perceptions is excluded.

Similarly, Veljovski, Taneski, and Dojchinovski (2017, 299-302) wrote about the danger of Russian hybridity by analyzing Russian hybrid means and ways in the Ukrainian conflict. Here, any Russian views or understandings are excluded, as the authors set out to provide a list of the hybrid means and ways that Russia uses. Veljovski, Taneski, and Dojchinovski thus cater to the military need of NATO's Hybrid Warfare concept by staying confined to the Western focus on the operational and tactical domain. The lack of critique in early works explicitly shows itself when one considers that the work of Kilinskas (2016), which shows that Russian actions in Ukraine do not align with the theoretical criteria set out by Hoffman, is ignored. Furthermore, the works in this period are unified by excluding in-depth understanding of Russian views or understandings of the Hybrid Warfare concept.

The later part of the literature is inherently more critical. Following deeper scrutiny and analysis of the Hybrid Warfare concept, this part of the literature presents three main points of critique (Fridman 2018, 111). The first point of critique was the alleged novelty of the concept, which numerous works criticized. Murray and Mansoor (2012) give clear historical examples of Hybrid Warfare being used, dating it as far back as the Peloponnesian War. Amongst others, the work of Murray and Mansoor has led the novelty claim to be dropped by most, if not all, later works on Hybrid Warfare. Unlike the first issue, the second issue proves to be more of an ongoing discussion. Concerned with the ambiguous nature of

the concept, authors such as Koffman (War on the Rocks 2016) state there are too many definitions and forms of Hybrid Warfare, stating that “if tortured long enough, Hybrid Warfare will tell you anything you want to hear.” Despite this, some fully adhere to the concept. For example, Weissmann et al. (2021, 4-5) state that they are not concerned with conceptual ambiguity and merely seek appropriate countermeasures against Hybrid Warfare. This view is shared by researchers that are part of the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats.

The third and final critique criticizes the double-sided outlook that the Western understanding of Hybrid Warfare has. While it is rooted in operational and tactical approaches, Hybrid Warfare is often used on a strategic level (Fridman 2018, 112). This bipolar understanding of Hybrid Warfare undermines the value of Hybrid Warfare as a concept and dilutes the understanding of how and why certain states practice Hybrid Warfare. As Renz (2016, 13-14) argues, Hybrid Warfare is at most practiced on an operational level. Furthermore, by encompassing all Russian actions as Hybrid Warfare, the concept loses meaning and loses sight of the real reasons why Russia acts as it does. Caliskan (2019) adds to this by analyzing Hybrid Warfare through the lens of strategic theory, finding that it is not suitable as a doctrinal concept. Additionally, in a later article along with Liégeois, Caliskan found that this double-sided approach to Hybrid Warfare undermines NATO's strategic thinking by diverting attention from real threats. Based upon interviews with NATO officials, Caliskan and Liégeois (2020, 10) showed that while the adoption of Hybrid Warfare increased budget allocation, it did not change anything regarding NATO's day-to-day activities.

2.3 Researching Russia and Gibridnaya Voyna

What direction remains if the three mentioned critiques are to be taken seriously? As shown, some choose to ignore it and continue down the same path. What is worrying is that all critiquing authors mentioned thus far, even Renz or Caliskan, who call for more profound research, omit an essential part of the existing literature. That is, the Russian side of the story and their understanding of Hybrid Warfare. For some reason, perhaps due to fallout caused by the mislabeling of the Gerasimov Doctrine, the literature stuck in operational and tactical level thinking does not interact with the literature that looks at Russia. This lack of interaction impairs the study of Hybrid Warfare as, according to Najžer (2020, 41), Hybrid

Warfare can only be understood within the overarching framework of the current international order. As an actor with national interests in this order, Russia thus deserves attention.

Fridman is amongst those who pay attention to Russia, finding that Russia has an entirely different understanding of Hybrid Warfare from the West. For Russia, Gibridnaya Voyna takes place on the strategic level and encompasses geopolitical and civilizational clashes. It consists of deliberate attacks aimed at Russia via NATO expansion, color revolutions, and foreign influence (Fridman 2018 100-108; Fridman, Kabernik and Pearce 2019, 31-35). The Russian understanding thus stands in clear contrast with the Western understanding, which is centered on the operational and or tactical level. In a later book, Fridman works with several Russian researchers who underwrite this, stating that Gibridnaya Voyna is far from a conceptual novelty in Russia and that the idea that Russia is under attack is genuine (Fridman, Kabernik and Pearce 2019, 17).

The popularity of and interest in Gibridnaya Voyna are proven by Pynnöniemi and Jokela (2020), who found hundreds of articles concerning Gibridnaya Voyna in Russian military journals and press articles from 2014 to 2019. Pynnöniemi and Jokela cross-referenced these articles to establish the means, targets, and objectives of Gibridnaya Voyna. They similarly find that for the Russians, Gibridnaya Voyna is civilizational and geopolitical and spans decades. For Russia, Gibridnaya Voyna encompasses tools used by the West to maintain its hegemony and destroy Russia's power (Pynnöniemi and Jokela 2020, 836).

2.4 Strategic communication

Whether by design or accident, the early interest in Gibridnaya Voyna shows similarities with the development of the Hybrid Warfare concept in the West. Both gained traction in the early 2000s, were adopted by decisionmakers, and are used to accuse the other. For authors such as Fridman, Galeotti, Caliskan, and Liégeois, the similarities do not end here. For them, the use of the Hybrid Warfare concept by NATO and the use of the Gibridnaya Voyna framework by Russia are examples of the employment of strategic communication by both sides (Fridman 2018; Fridman, Kabernik and Pearce 2019; Caliskan and Liégeois 2020). The concept of strategic communication (strategic in this context meaning long-term) gained prominence at the turn of the century and has been adopted by both NATO and Russia. It

can be defined as the projection of a state's or entity's vital and long-term values, interests, and goals into the conscience of domestic and foreign audiences (Pashentsev 2020, 18-19). The relevance of strategic communication for the study of Hybrid Warfare has increased due to the blurring of the lines between war and peace, the impact of information technology, and the extension of warfare into the public consciousness (Pashentsev 2020, 20).

For NATO, strategic communication entails the earlier mentioned hybrid-industrial complex, using Hybrid Warfare to bolster its defense against hybrid threats on an operational and tactical level and rally its members against Russia, as it sees hybrid threats and Russian actions going against their values, interests, and goals. For NATO, it is established policy to strategically communicate about Hybrid Warfare (Aaronson et al., 2011). Practiced by publishing policy documents, changing military doctrines, establishing the VJTF, and delivering speeches at NATO summits, NATO actively communicates its goals and interests both internally and externally. The creation of the hybrid-industrial complex further amplified this, and as Caliskan and Liégeois have shown, this policy resulted in increased budget allocation and attention while at the same time hampering strategic thinking.

For Russia, indications of an active strategic communication policy regarding the Gibridnaya Voyna framework are yet to be found. This is primarily because of the omission of any deeper scrutiny of how Gibridnaya Voyna came to be. Questions about where the worries about NATO expansion and color revolutions came from are left unanswered. However, if the popularity of the Gibridnaya Voyna framework results from active strategic communication activities, this should be noticeable in Russian foreign policy documents, military doctrines, and speeches. The possible existence of this in the case of Russia is alluded to by Fridman, who states that certain external events pushed Gibridnaya Voyna to the forefront of Russian discourse. He also mentions a noticeable shift in Russian foreign policy and military documents but refuses to elaborate on these changes or explain when this shift happened (Fridman 2018, 147).

This thus leaves a gap in Hybrid Warfare-related research on Russia, as the literature is left with similarities of the rise to prominence of both the Hybrid Warfare and Gibridnaya Voyna concepts in NATO and Russia, but only knowledge of one side actively using the concept for strategic communication. The lack of research on the rise and use of the

Gibridnaya Voyna framework is a significant gap to be filled, as according to Galeotti, the key to understanding Russian actions is rooted in understanding the Kremlin (Galeotti 2019, 60-64). Establishing as to whether the use of the Gibridnaya Voyna framework is a deliberate act of strategic communication by the Kremlin could provide insight into the workings of Russia as an active participant in international affairs and development of concepts such as Gibridnaya Voyna in general.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The research objective of this thesis is to trace the elements of Gibridnaya Voyna throughout Russian acts of strategic communication to establish how Gibridnaya Voyna became a popular framework to describe Russia's relationship with the West. By constructing a causal mechanism, a theory test will be conducted to discover patterns in Russian strategic communication and to discern whether these are event-caused or circumstantial. This is to be achieved through the method of process-tracing, which through the investigation of causal mechanisms offers a leading qualitative method to establish causality (Mahoney 2015, 200-201). This chapter will introduce process-tracing, followed by conceptualizing a causal mechanism and critical concepts. Once a causal mechanism is established, observable implications can be made, along with the selection of cases. The chapter will end with several remarks on the limitations of the selected approach.

3.1 Theory-testing process-tracing

Process-tracing is a widely used research method in the social sciences that aims to locate and explain the factors between cause and effect. By establishing the presence or absence of causal mechanisms, process-tracing allows for a logical inquiry into how something happened. Process-tracing distinguishes itself from other research methods by making within-case inferences, as opposed to most other methods that use cross-case interference (Beach and Pedersen 2013, 1-5). Due to its within-case approach, process-tracing shows many similarities with historical explanation and requires historical and contextual knowledge of the selected case (Mahoney 2015, 200-201).

Within process-tracing, Beach and Pedersen distinguish three different approaches: theory-testing process-tracing, theory-building process-tracing, and explaining-outcome process-tracing (Beach and Pedersen 2013, 13-14). The applicability of these types in research is based on whether the cause and effect are known in the selected case and whether any plausible mechanisms exist within the literature. For theory-testing process-tracing, both the cause and effect are known, and plausible causal mechanisms already exist or can be formulated using logical reasoning (Beach and Pedersen 2013, 14-15). In the case of this thesis, both the cause and effect are known, namely the perceived attacks against Russia in the form of NATO enlargement and color revolutions, resulting in Gibridnaya Voyna being a popular framework to describe these attacks. Additionally, the literature provides a

possible causal mechanism in the form of the notion of strategic communication, which in the case of NATO resulted in creating the hybrid-industrial complex and extensive interest in the Hybrid Warfare concept. As the NATO case shows similarities to Russia, the literature's theory is deemed a plausible causal mechanism. Based on this, this thesis will use the theory-testing process-tracing approach.

3.2 Conceptualizing a causal mechanism

To properly test a causal mechanism, it is required to conceptualize and operationalize the causal mechanism. To start, the abstract notion of 'attacks against Russia' needs to be further specified. To do this, this thesis uses the earlier mentioned work of Pynnöniemi and Jokela, who established a general outline of the means, targets, and objectives of Gibridnaya Voyna out of the hundreds of articles in the Russian debate. Pynnöniemi and Jokela (2020, 836) describe Gibridnaya Voyna as a civilizational and geopolitical conflict, which targets the Russian political and social system to maintain Western hegemony and destroy Russian power. This is achieved through hidden subversion and disruptive interference, which encompass certain technologies or methods used against Russia (Pynnöniemi and Jokela 2020, 833-834).

Within Russian understanding, these methods are always man-made, even if there is no verifiable Western involvement. For example, the method of color revolutions is seen as a destructive political technique applied by the West to achieve specific political goals. For Russia, color revolutions are always Western created artificial events (Fridman, Kabernik and Pearce 2019, 31-35). Due to the lack of a proper overview of all possible methods, the selected methods for this thesis are derived from works in the literature, with the work of Pynnöniemi and Jokela chosen as leading. Supplemented by methods described by others such as Fridman and Galeotti, these primary methods are broadly identified as color revolutions in the post-soviet space and NATO enlargement.

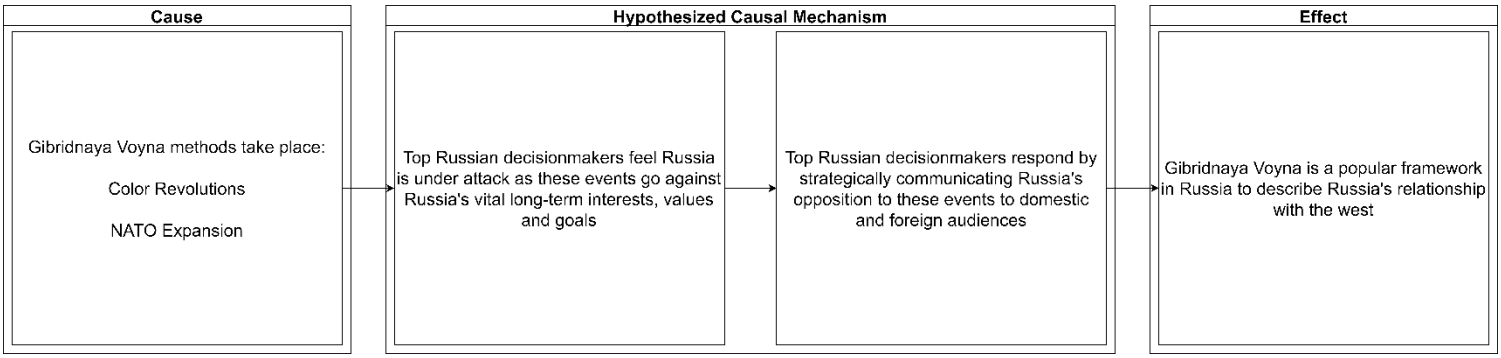

Figure 1 The Gibridnaya Voyna strategic communication mechanism

Having better-specified attacks against Russia, a hypothetical mechanism can now be conceptualized to explain how Gibridnaya Voyna became a popular framework in Russia to describe Russia's relationship with the West. The literature described how for NATO, strategic communication led to the creation of the hybrid-industrial complex and the rise in popularity of the Hybrid Warfare concept. Manifesting in speeches, policy documents, and doctrines, the key mechanism at work was the deliberate communication of NATO's goals and interests into the domestic and foreign conscience when faced with new challenges and threats. The possible presence of this active synchronization of goals and interests with means of communication in Russia has been alluded to by the event-caused shift in foreign policy documents and military documents as described by Fridman. This has resulted in a hypothesized causal mechanism in which top Russian decisionmakers respond to Western actions that go against Russia's vital and long-term interests, values, and goals (i.e., Gibridnaya Voyna) by strategically communicating its denouncement of or defense against these Western actions to domestic and foreign audiences. This results in Gibridnaya Voyna becoming a popular framework in Russia to describe Russia's relationship with the West (see Figure 1).

3.3 Expected observations

The conceptualization of the hypothesized causal mechanism allows for the creation of expected observations for each part of the causal mechanism. These expected observations are the manifestations of the hypothesized causal mechanism in practice, the presence or absence of which show if the mechanism is present and functions as predicted (Ulriksen and Dadalauri 2014, 7-8). A first and seemingly obvious but essential expected observation are the occurrence of color revolutions and NATO enlargement. As Russian decisionmakers are expected to respond to these events, their presence is critical for the mechanism. If, for

example, top Russian decisionmakers feel Russia is under attack without these events taking place, the validity of the proposed mechanism is reduced. A second expected observation is that these events go against Russian interests, as not every color revolution or NATO enlargement (prospective or otherwise) might be directly against Russian interests, such as the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon or Kuwait's Blue Revolution. To account for this fact, these events are expected to take place within the post-soviet space. Also known as Russia's near abroad, the post-soviet space consists of former members of the Soviet Union who are subject to Russian military, economic and cultural influence and are considered highly important for Russia (Orenstein 2019, 83-87).

A third expected observation is an active oppositional response of Russian decisionmakers to these events, both to domestic and foreign audiences. Like NATO's response, the Russian response can vary from denouncement to defensive measures. To conform to the theory of strategic communication, which concerns a state's projection of its vital and long-term goals, interests, and values, the response of Russian decisionmakers is expected to originate from the higher echelons of state to sufficiently reach both domestic and foreign audiences. This prediction is in line with how Russia tends to apply its strategic communication practices regarding other subjects, which are highly centralized (Pashentsev 2020, 19-23).

The expected centralized communication about Gibridnaya Voyna is further emphasized by Galeotti, who points towards the Russian Presidential Administration as the control center of Russia, which throws its weight behind initiatives that it deems worthwhile and suitable to fulfill Russian goals. These goals, in turn, are influenced by events in international affairs (Galeotti 2019, 62-64). If an active response fails to manifest following the earlier sequences in the causal chain, the validity of the hypothesized causal mechanism will be reduced. Furthermore, if a response manifests itself without a preceding event from the Gibridnaya Voyna framework, this might indicate another alternative causal mechanism. Finally, for these responses to contribute to the popularity of Gibridnaya Voyna as a popular framework in Russia to describe Russia's relationship with the West, the responses are expected to directly or indirectly refer to the Gibridnaya Voyna framework.

3.4 Source selection

A proper selection of sources must be made to test whether the theory-based expected observations are present in reality. Within process tracing, there are four different types of evidence: pattern, sequence, trace, and account (Beach and Pedersen 2013, 99). Given the nature of the hypothesized causal mechanism and the expected observations, the best types of evidence for this thesis are sequence and trace evidence. Sequence evidence is concerned with the timing of events, testing that *event B* is expected to follow if *event A* occurs (Beach and Pedersen 2013, 99). For example, in the case of the hypothesized causal mechanism, sequence evidence allows for testing whether reactions to events encompassed in the Gibridnaya Voyna framework occur in the expected order. Trace evidence is evidence whose existence provides proof of the causal mechanism existing wholly or in part (Beach and Pedersen 2013, 100). The direct mentioning of the Gibridnaya Voyna framework in an act of strategic communication is the best example of trace evidence. Pattern and account evidence are disregarded in this thesis, as pattern evidence is concerned with quantitative statistical analysis, and account evidence is used for detailed micro-level analysis of meetings or eyewitness accounts (Beach and Pedersen 2013, 100).

In selecting primary and secondary sources for process-tracing, the danger of selection bias is particularly likely to occur, mainly when source availability is limited (Beach and Pedersen 2013, 124). Limited access to sources is a common problem in researching Russian-related subjects, as Russia tends to keep a tight lid on information and does not publish records or documents freely. Additionally, Russian primary sources can be misleading as they might be part of active Russian disinformation campaigns. What mostly remains as decently reliable are policy statements and doctrine manuals. When using these as primary sources, the best course of action is to seek and identify trends and reactions (Fox 2021). Secondary works are often used to fill in information gaps (Fabian 2019). To minimize bias as best as possible, multiple secondary works for the same types of information will be consulted and cross-referenced.

Having chosen the appropriate types of evidence for theory-testing the hypothesized causal mechanism, a timeline from which evidence can be extracted can now be established. The earliest time NATO expansion and color revolutions can occur is 1991, as these events can only take place after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The end of the timeline is based

upon the availability of Russian primary sources, which, as mentioned earlier, mainly consist of foreign policy documents and military doctrines, the latest of which were published in 2016. These documents will be used as primary sources to conduct the theory test and answer the proposed research question within this timeline.

These primary sources are deemed suitable to test whether the expected observations are present. This decision is made on several grounds. Firstly, Russian foreign policy documents and military doctrines are the most readily available and reliable primary sources. Both types lend themselves well as sequence and trace evidence (Fox 2021; Beach and Pedersen 2013, 140). Secondly, strategic communication theory involves states communicating their long-term and vital interests, goals, and values to domestic and foreign audiences. This places emphasis on high-level documents that have these vital points present and can reach domestic and foreign audiences simultaneously. Foreign policy documents and military doctrines are designed to do this. Thirdly and finally, Russian foreign policy documents and military doctrines are made and published in accordance with the Russian Presidential Administration, which, as described earlier, is the designated central authority that utilizes strategic communication.

3.5 Limitations

There are several limitations to the selected methodology. Firstly, archival evidence is not available for the whole of the selected period. Mostly limited to documents of the Yeltsin period, most archival evidence is also provided by Western institutions or organizations, which might be biased. Secondly, there is no set time for foreign policy documents and military doctrines to appear. Newer publications could appear one year after the last publication or several years later. While one can state that newer publications will only appear if deemed necessary, extensive periods between publications might indicate sequential gaps in the mechanism. Finally, due to the limited availability of sources, sources that may further prove or disprove the causal mechanism can be missed.

Chapter 4: Analysis

This chapter is divided into three parts, each covering a different period of the greater selected timeline. The first part will cover the early years of the Russian Federation from 1991 to 1999. The second part covers 2000 to 2008, and the final part covers 2009 to 2016.

4.1 1991-1999

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the newly formed Russian Federation faced a vast array of issues in the political, economic, and social domains. To solve these issues and reestablish itself as an active actor in international affairs, Russia composed two documents that would clearly define Russia's foreign policy and national interests. Published in 1993, these documents were the Basic Provisions of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation and the General Provisions of the Foreign Policy Concepts of the Russian Federation. These two documents would be the first of an extensive list of official publications covering vital and long-term Russian interests and views, both domestic and abroad.

4.1.1 Lowered threats and new beginnings

Both the 1993 military doctrine and foreign policy concept documents were clear. The end of the Cold War had lowered the threat of war, and nuclear and conventional armaments were being reduced. More so, increased trust in international legal responsibilities and non-violent methods and collective actions by the world community increasingly prevented wars and armed conflicts (Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation 1993, 2-3). The 1993 military doctrine does mention the expansion of military blocs and alliances to the detriment of the interests of the Russian Federation as an external threat to the integrity of Russia yet does not explicitly mention NATO or any other alliance by name (Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation 1993, 4). Additionally, there is no emphasis on the threat of expanding military blocs; it is listed amongst other 'regular' threats such as land invasion or nuclear strikes. More importantly, Russia turned to look inwards as the main threats to Russian interests presented themselves domestically, in the form of religious and ethnic conflict, terrorism, and social-political upheaval. Both documents are established as guides for a transitional period in which Russia seeks to implement democratic reforms and shape a new system of international relations (Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation 1993, 1).

The intentions of the two documents primarily served Russian President Yeltsin, who was the principal advocate for positive Western relations, democratization, and Western-inspired market reform (Hill 2018, 103-104). For Yeltsin, this was the way to allow Russia to join the new international order on equal footing as a great power. Yeltsin based his belief of Russia joining the new international order and security community as an equal to the West mainly on Western promises made to his predecessor Gorbachev and himself. According to the Russians, during the negotiation of German Reunification in 1990, the United States promised that NATO would not expand into Eastern Europe. U.S. officials, however, claim that no such promise was made (Shifrinson 2016, 7-8). Later, in 1993, Yeltsin expressed his concerns about NATO expansion to U.S. President Clinton in a letter. While acknowledging expansion would not mean the alliance would turn against Russia, Yeltsin referred to the promise of the German Reunification treaty to steer NATO expansion (National Security Archive 2018, document 4). The U.S. responded by proposing the Partnership for Peace program (PfP) in 1993, which would be open to all European states and Russia. After getting confirmation that this meant that there would be a partnership with NATO instead of membership, along with acknowledgment of Russia as an equal in the new international order, Yeltsin called the PfP program a stroke of genius (National Security Archive 2018, document 8). However, U.S. officials would later claim Yeltsin misunderstood and that the PfP was merely a postponement of an inevitable expansion of NATO (Hill 2018, 115).

The perceived promises guided Russia's actions in the early 1990s. At a conference in Warsaw in 1993, Yeltsin declared that he would not oppose Poland joining NATO (Marten 2020, 18). In the same year, when the director of Russia's Intelligence Service, Yevgeny Primakov, received indications that NATO was planning expansion, Primakov stated it would be wrong to assume geographical expansion of NATO would serve as a bridgehead to strike against Russia (National Security Archive 2018, document 9). Primakov is an important figure as he would later become foreign minister, vehemently opposing NATO expansion and insisting on Russian primacy in the post-soviet space. His views would become known as the Primakov Doctrine, which has influenced current Russian Foreign minister Sergey Lavrov and General Valery Gerasimov (Rumer 2019, 2-3). The fact that Primakov, despite clear reservations and doubts, did not paint NATO expansion as a direct threat in 1993 indicates Russian thinking at the time.

4.1.2 Broken promises

The guarantees and assurances the Russians hoped for would not come as the year 1994 would be a turn for the worse. Following attacks in Sarajevo by presumed Bosnian Serbs, the UN Secretary-General called on NATO to interfere. NATO would take up the call to conduct airstrikes against Russian interests (Pouliot 2010, 162). Outraged at being sidelined in the decision-making process, the Russians saw how NATO expanded its responsibilities outside its own security space. This expansion of NATO responsibilities without the consent of Russia contradicted, at least in Russian eyes, the spirit of the PfP program and the idea of Russia participating in the new international order on equal footing (Pouliot 2010, 169). As Serbia's historical ally and defender, Russia sought recognition and relevance as an important international actor in this affair (Stent 2019, 120-121). The importance for Russia of countries such as Serbia cannot be overstated. Sharing religious and cultural-historical links, Russia feels tied to countries in its near abroad on a civilizational level (Stent 2019, 141). Intrusions into this space against Russian interests cause animosity and promotes Cold War-era bloc-thinking.

It should come as no surprise that after the NATO intervention in Serbia and the broken promises about NATO expansion, the Russian attitude to the West changed. In January 1997, Primakov, now foreign minister, sent a memo to the Speaker of the State Duma, elaborating Russia's stance on NATO. In this memo, Primakov states that Russia no longer believes promises and statements about the inclusion of Russia. Russia fears that its alienation by NATO will reach such a level that a new confrontation between the East and the West will be likely. For Primakov, NATO's decision to expand would bear consequences that would shape the configuration of Europe for decades to come (National Security Archive 2018, document 25). Compared to his perceptions in 1993, Primakov here clearly sees NATO expansion as a threat. NATO, however, seemed fully prepared to carry the responsibility of shaping the configuration of Europe, as a few months later, during the Madrid Summit, it formally invited the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland to join NATO. Russia protested by stalling the ratification of the second Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (Frederick et al., 2017, 100).

Following these events, Russia would publicize a new foreign policy document at the end of 1997. Named the Russian National Security Blueprint, this new document differed

significantly from the 1993 foreign policy document and military doctrine. Explicitly mentioning NATO by name, the expansion of NATO is presented as a direct and unacceptable threat to Russia's national security (Security Council of the Russian Federation 1997, 2). Furthermore, the document disapprovingly describes the presence of one-sided solutions to critical problems in world politics, including solutions based on military force (Security Council of the Russian Federation 1997, 1). While not mentioned by name, this is clearly in reference to NATO's actions in Serbia in 1995. Finally, the Russian National Security Blueprint expands the limit of threat perception from geographical NATO expansion to include functional expansion. The document states how NATO's transformation into a dominant military-political force in Europe creates the threat of a new split on the continent. Coupled with the grouping of military forces close to Russia's border, Russia sees this as a clear threat to harm Russia's territorial integrity and reduce Russia's influence in world politics (Security Council of the Russian Federation 1997, 7-8).

4.1.3 Kosovo

Not soon after the publication of the Russian National Security Blueprint would Russia, in its eyes, be faced with another attempt to reduce Russian influence and prestige. In 1998, Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic would turn Serbian forces against Kosovo. Aiming to deter attacks against civilians, the international community decided to interfere. Together with President Clinton, Yeltsin would seek to resolve the conflict (Kieninger 2020, 2). However, although Yeltsin attempted to resolve the issue diplomatically, Milosevic would not relent and continued the conflict. This led NATO military authorities to prepare military options to resolve the conflict. In a telephone conversation with Yeltsin in 1998, President Clinton informed Yeltsin about the NATO decision to start conducting airstrikes against Milosevic's forces. Appalled by this decision, Yeltsin stated his severe disappointment (National Security Archive 2018, document 16). During their presidencies, Clinton and Yeltsin enjoyed good working relations with one another. Clinton saw Yeltsin as a vital ally in promoting American interests after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and went to great lengths to ensure Yeltsin's political survival (National Security Archive 2018).

However, it was during this conversation that their good working relations would end. For the sake of their relationship and peace in Europe, Yeltsin would plead to Clinton to renounce the airstrike and solve the issue diplomatically (National Security Archive 2018,

document 16). When Clinton informed Yeltsin that his decision was final, Yeltsin responded by stating that their relationship would not be the same. Yeltsin ended the conversation with a statement that accurately summarizes the development of Russia's relationship with the west from 1991 to 1999:

> But our people will certainly from now have a bad attitude with regard to America and with NATO. I remember how difficult it was for me to try and turn the heads of our people, the heads of the politicians towards the West, towards the United States, but I succeeded in doing that, and now to lose all that. Well, since I failed to convince the President, that means there is in store for us a very difficult, difficult road of contacts, if they prove to be possible. Goodbye. (National Security Archive 2018, document 16)

The announced NATO intervention in Kosovo would start in March 1999 in the form of Operation Allied Force. Along with NATO's intervention, 1999 would also see the ascension of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland into NATO (Pouliot 2010, 195). In this way, NATO expanded geographically and functionally, precisely as the 1997 Russian National Security Blueprint described.

4.2 2000-2008

On 31 December 1999, President Yeltsin unexpectedly resigned, leading to prime minister Vladimir Putin becoming acting President. Putin had been put forward by Yeltsin as his successor and would win the 2000 presidential election. Putin's presidency was marked by the publication of a new military doctrine, national security concept, and foreign policy concept. Following the deterioration of Russia's relationship with the West in the previous years, these three documents entrench the Russian threat perception of NATO expansion.

4.2.1 The new millennium

Publicized first, the 2000 national security concept describes two tendencies in international relations after the Cold War. The first marks the emergence of a multipolar world order in which many states manifest themselves both economically and politically, along with improved mechanisms of multilateral governance of international processes. The second tendency is the attempt of Western states to create a unipolar world order under US leadership where key issues are resolved unilaterally with the use of military force and in circumvention of international law (Security Council of the Russian Federation 2000, 1-2).

For Russia, these tendencies are mutually exclusive. As one of the world's major countries, Russia adheres to the tendency of a multipolar world order. The national security concept describes how the tendency for a unipolar world order manifests in attempts by states to weaken Russia politically, economically, and militarily (Security Council of the Russian Federation 2000, 2). The security concept lists eight factors that threaten Russia in the international sphere, four of which directly relate to NATO expansion and Western actions. Mentioning NATO by name, the security concept states that NATO's eastward expansion is the most pressing threat (Security Council of the Russian Federation 2000, 7).

By presenting the described tendencies in international relations as mutually exclusive, in which Russia seeks to go one way and the US-led West another, the security concept paints a picture of a geopolitical conflict that adheres to the Gibridnaya Voyna framework. It accurately describes NATO expansion as a method to destroy Russian power. This view is reinforced by the two other documents publicized that year. The 2000 Russian military doctrine is designed to upgrade the 1993 document directly and aims to flesh out the national security concept in a military sphere (Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation 2000, 1). As such, it reinstates the importance of a multipolar world order and

identifies the expansion of military blocs and attempts to damage Russia's influence as a threat.

However, the new doctrine does not mention NATO by name or describe a new form of warfare in which NATO expansion is a primary method. Instead, the doctrine still regards conventional conflict as the primary nature of war (Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation 2000, 12-15). The 2000 foreign policy concept similarly paints a picture of a geopolitical clash between a multipolar and unipolar world order, criticizing Western attempts to dominate the international sphere. The foreign policy concept describes NATO's use of force outside its zone of application without the consent of the UN Security Council as an example of this (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2000, 2). Compared to the other two documents, the foreign policy concept is much more diplomatic, as might be expected of this document. The foreign policy concept directly mentions NATO multiple times, urging for better cooperation and adherence to earlier agreements (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2000, 7).

4.2.2 A shift in focus

Given the presence of the issue of NATO expansion in all three documents, the grievances of the 1990s had resonated amongst Russian decisionmakers to such an extent that it warranted extensive strategic communication. Designed to guide Russia through the years to come, Russia's opposition to NATO expansion would form a defining pillar in its relationship with the West. However, NATO expansion is not the only topic in these documents. Both the national security concept and the foreign policy concept stress the issue of Russia's dire economic situation. Furthermore, the issue of domestic terrorism and the state of the military also receive ample attention. Ultimately, domestic issues would prove to be more pressing, with Putin stating in his 2000 annual address that domestic goals would gain supremacy over foreign goals (Putin 2000, 5). The choice to prioritize domestic issues fits in the broader pattern of threat perception at the time. Events such as the September 11 attacks in the US and the Second Chechen War in Russia had globally shifted the security focus towards terrorism (Hill 2018, 171).

This shift in focus would shape Russian threat perceptions for a large part of the 2000-2008 period. Following September 11, Russia and the US would work together to combat global terrorism, with Russia providing intelligence and logistical assistance in

Afghanistan (Hill 2018, 175). The fact that this increased Western military presence in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan did not seem to bother Russia. When NATO invited Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the Baltic States at the 2002 Prague summit, Russian protests were minimal. Even though the ascension of the Baltic States into NATO would entail a direct border with NATO, Russia took satisfaction with the creation of the NATO-Russia Council (Hill 2018, 175).

This rapprochement between Russia and the West is additionally noticeable during the advent of the other primary method within the Gibridnaya Voyna framework. Whereas NATO expansion was an already present topic at the end of the Cold War, color revolutions would only appear during this period. The first color revolution to occur in Russia's near abroad was the 2003 Rose Revolution in Georgia, during which president Shevardnadze was unexpectedly replaced by Saakashvili during unrest over disputed election results. The installment of the pro-Western Saakashvili led to Russian suspicion about foreign interference (Pouliot 2010, 219). However, Russian protests to the Rose Revolution were not strong, as relations with Shevardnadze were rocky. As such, Russia would help mediate Shevardnadze's removal from office (Jonsson 2019, 125).

Russia's diverted focus can similarly be seen in its relatively calm response to the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine. Russia had backed pro-Russian candidate Yanukovych, providing election campaign assistance and economic concessions to persuade Ukrainian voters. When the election commission declared Yanukovych as the narrow victor, riots broke out in Kyiv. After interventions by the OSCE, EU, US, and Russia, a repeat election was held, which Yushchenko won (Hill 2018, 232). Yushchenko's victory was a direct blow to Russian interests in its near abroad, which led to top Russian policymakers protesting Western interference in democratic elections (Pouliot 2010, 219). However, it is essential to note that Russia blamed both internal and external factors for causing the Orange Revolution (Nikitina 2014, 89).

The addition of internal factors as a cause for color revolutions is a crucial aspect, as it determines whether the color revolution is seen as a method applied by the West against Russian power or is simply seen as a negative occurrence. This point is further emphasized by the 2005 Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, during which President Akaev was driven into exile after flawed elections. A crucial detail here is that Kyrgyzstan did not have any pro-

Western parties at the time that could replace Akaev, making a Western-backed color revolution unlikely. Instead, Russia attributed the cause of the Tulip revolution to government weakness and accumulated social and economic problems (Nikitina 2014, 90).

The presence of internal factors in the Orange Revolution and the Tulip Revolution led the Russians to not directly ascribe these revolutions to Western actions (Jonsson 2019, 125). The Russian perception of color revolutions as a more general, not necessarily Western, threat and light response to NATO expansion as part of the shift in security focus possibly explains the lack of newer documents strategically communicating about Gibridnaya Voyna methods. It seems that as for much of the 2000-2008 period, the three major documents published in 2000 were deemed suitable for threats at the time and did not require an upgrade to include color revolutions.

4.2.3 The Munich Speech and Kosovan Independence

However, Russian satisfaction with its strategic communication regarding NATO expansion and color revolutions would not last, as 2007 and 2008 would produce rhetoric akin to the 1990s. Seemingly without a direct cause, Putin would go on the attack at the annual Munich security conference in 2007 (Hill 2018, 251). Putin's speech took the form of an extensive list of Russian grievances with the West. Declaring a unipolar world unacceptable, Putin berated the US for stepping outside its boundaries (Putin 2007, 2-3). Directly addressing NATO members, Putin raised attention to the alleged promises not to expand NATO made to Gorbachev and Yeltsin, asking where those assurances had gone and if anyone even remembers them. The issue of NATO expansion had become a fundamental issue again, even though no new nations were invited. Finally, while not talking about color revolutions directly, Putin remarked on the threat of NGOs and the financing they receive from foreign governments. Putin went on to say that Russia sees this as an instrument of one state, i.e., the financier, exerting influence over another (Putin 2007, 22). This remark fits into Russia's earlier response to the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and thus seems more of a continuation of communication caused by that event.

NATO expansion would again become central to Russian threat perceptions in 2008. In February of that year, Kosovo would unilaterally declare its independence, which was recognized by the US and most European nations. Russia protested heavily against the declaration and recognition as Kosovo was still a sensitive subject ever since NATO's

interference and sidelining of Russia in the 1990s. Furthermore, Russia feared Kosovo's recognition would set a precedent for other breakaway regions and separatist sentiments at home and abroad (Stent 2019, 121-123). The issue of Kosovo's independence would spill over into Georgia, where Russia had supported the breakaway states of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in the Caucasus. Seeking to retaliate against the Western support for Kosovo, the Russian State Duma quickly sought ways to start recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Hill 2018, 258).

4.2.4 Civilizational clashes

With Russian attention already turned towards the Caucasus, the April 2008 Bucharest NATO summit would fuel a rising fire. One of the central points of the summit was the issue of NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine. While in the end, no invitation was sent to Georgia and Ukraine, NATO members did state that in the future, Ukraine and Georgia would become members of NATO. This statement would prove to be one of the accumulating factors which led to the Russian decision to establish direct relations with South Ossetia and Abkhazia, resulting in a diplomatic crisis between Russia and Georgia. By the end of 2008, the rising tensions created by this crisis would result in the Russo-Georgian war.

Russia would not wait for the Russo-Georgian war to adjust its threat perception. Just after the Bucharest summit, Russia updated its foreign policy via the new 2008 foreign policy concept. According to the document, international developments and the domestic strengthening of Russia have necessitated an update to the foreign policy (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2008, 1). The foreign policy concept states that differences between domestic and external means of ensuring national interests are disappearing because of global competition acquiring a civilizational dimension. The clash of value systems and the loss of historical Western dominance resulted in a continued policy of containing Russia (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2008, 3-5). This is the first time a major policy document describes Russia's relationship with the West as civilizational.

Describing Russia's relationship with the West in terms of civilizational clashes is indicative of the Gibridnaya Voyna framework and is a clear step up from the pure mentioning of the methods of NATO expansion and color revolutions. Regarding these

methods, the 2008 foreign policy document appears consistent with the three documents from 2000. Directly mentioning NATO, the document states that Russia opposes NATO expansion in general and, in direct reference to the Bucharest summit, specifically opposes Georgian and Ukrainian membership (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2008, 21). It appears that despite the Russian-US rapprochement and the shift in security focus in the early part of the 2000-2008 period, the end of this period marks more of a continuation than a break in Russia's relationship with the West.

4.3 2009-2016

The 2009-2016 period would start with a noticeable break from Russian fixations on Gibridnaya Voyna methods. Inaugurated in between the Bucharest summit and the Russo-Georgian War, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev seemed to run a more liberalizing course. Despite having Putin as prime minister and a Putin appointed cabinet, Medvedev worked towards a new security agreement between Russia and the West, aimed at solving issues with NATO and the OSCE (Hill 2018, 287-291). Russia appeared to be stable and willing to work with the West despite the clash in Georgia and the global economic crisis. In 2009, Medvedev agreed with a reset of US-Russia relations initiated by the Obama administration, resulting in better cooperation regarding nuclear and trade issues (Jonsson 2019, 131).

4.3.1 Medvedev: a milder tone

The relative ease towards NATO expansion and color revolutions is reflected in Russia's documents and its reactions towards significant events during the early part of the 2009-2016 period. When Albania and Croatia joined NATO in early 2009, Russian reactions were limited (Frederick et al., 2017, 105). While possibly a result of the fact that this expansion did not occur in Russia's near abroad, the limited reaction is a break from the established pattern of reactions to NATO expansion. Roughly at the same time, Russia published its new security strategy. The new security strategy, adequately named National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2020, was designed to establish strategic priorities for an extensive period and serves as an umbrella document for future strategic communication (Giles 2009, 3). The security strategy was worked on by a large working group of various departments (including the Presidential Administration) since 2004 and was delayed several times (Giles 2009, 1-2).

The long development period and extensive scope resulted in a sometimes vague and abstract document. The document presents nothing new regarding NATO expansion, repeating the established rhetoric from earlier documents (Security Council of the Russian Federation 2009, 2-4). Instead, the document appears significantly more optimistic by stating that Russia has overcome the challenges of the late 20th century and is ready to work with others to overcome issues (Security Council of the Russian Federation 2009, 1-6). Compared to the foreign policy document from just a year earlier, which spoke of

civilizational clashes, the 2009 security strategy communicates a milder, more constructive message.

A year after the new security strategy, Russia publicized the new 2010 military doctrine. The military doctrine started around the same time as the 2009 security strategy and was also delayed several times (Giles 2010, 2-3). The doctrine is designed to be in accordance with the 2009 security strategy and, as a result, shares a similar tone and scope. Being the first new doctrine since 2000, the 2010 military doctrine has several interesting differences from its predecessor. The 2010 military doctrine names NATO directly, whereas the 2000 military doctrine only referenced NATO indirectly (Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation 2010, 3). Directly referencing NATO aligns with the other major documents, but it is a first in Russia's military doctrine. It seems that at this point, Russia's adversity to NATO expansion is firmly rooted amongst Russian decisionmakers.

Surprisingly enough, the 2010 document identifies NATO expansion as a danger, whereas the 2000 document identified military block expansion as a threat. This is a significant difference, as in the Russian military language, a threat is described as a state of relations characterized with the real possibility of military conflict. In contrast, a danger is described as a state of relations that could develop into a threat (Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation 2010, 2). The identification of dangers is extended towards what can only be described as indirect references to color revolutions, with the document listing the undermining of sovereignty, disruption of state functions, destabilization of individual states and regions as military dangers (Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation 2010, 3-4).

The inclusion of these references to color revolutions reflects Russian military thinking at the time, which in the background had garnered some interest in color revolutions after the occurrences of the early 2000s (Jonsson 2019, 136-137). However, the Russian military has never been the driver behind its national security or threat identification. Since the times of Zhukov, the Russian military has always been the implementor (Rumer 2019, 2). The references to color revolutions in the 2010 military doctrine should thus be interpreted as following the whims of Russia's political elite. The same is true for the embeddedness of Russia's adversary to NATO expansion. The focus on large military blocs and the prospects of regular military conflicts still dictates political and military thinking at this time. However, the main take from the 2010 military doctrine is that

the emphasis on danger and not on threats makes the 2010 military doctrine noticeably milder than the 2000 version. Along with the 2009 security strategy, this is indicative of Russia's posture at the time.

Russia's mild posture can finally be seen in the advent of the Arab Spring, with Russia not opposing Western intervention in Libya in 2011. In this case, actor agency appeared to play a more prominent role in shaping Russia's response as Medvedev overruled the Russian foreign ministry by ordering to abstain from voting on the UN Security Council Resolution 1973 (Hill 2018, 314). This decision resulted in bickering between Medvedev and his prime minister Putin. When Putin called the Western intervention a crusade, Medvedev denounced Putin's words as unacceptable (Jonsson 2019, 132). While Medvedev's presidency is often seen as a continuation of Putin's will, this clearly shows a discrepancy, with Medvedev leaving a personal mark on Russia's policies.

4.3.2 Putin's return

Regardless of the differences there might have been between Putin and Medvedev, it ended when Medvedev announced he would not run for another term and announced Putin as his successor in late 2011 (Hill 2018, 315). When Putin's party narrowly won in December 2011 with assistance of vote-rigging and other types of manipulation, Russian protesters filled the streets. Amongst these protestors were members of the Russian opposition, who had participated in the Orange Revolution in Ukraine (Jonsson 2019, 132-133). Seeming to connect the dots personally, Putin saw a situation that painted a picture all too similar to the color revolutions seen in Russia's near abroad, leading him to suggest that the US had played a role in the protest and that the protestors were controlled by outside forces (Hill 2018, 316).

With Putin back in the seat of President, Russia would publicize an update to its foreign policy. The new 2013 foreign policy concept was published in line with the security strategy to 2020, thus showing continuity. The foreign policy concept again calls for a multipolar world order, stressing Russia's negative attitude to NATO's expansion. More so, the document repeats an important point found in the previous foreign policy concept by describing global competition in terms of civilizational clashes (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2013, 1-4). It seems that these points are so deeply ingrained in Russian decisionmakers at this point that they survive different presidencies.

New, however, is the introduction of the concept of a comprehensive toolkit of soft power, which the foreign policy concept calls an indispensable component of modern international relations. While the document does not call soft power inherently harmful, it presents a distinctive unlawful and damaging use of soft power akin to descriptions of color revolutions. According to the document, the increased global competition (which is made up of civilizational clashes) results in the unlawful use of soft power by exerting political pressure on sovereign states, interfering in their internal affairs, destabilizing the political situation, and manipulating public opinion to fulfill foreign policy objectives (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2013, 5-6). This description of color revolutions in all but name as a toolkit (i.e., method) in the setting of civilizational clashes, along with the continued opposition to NATO expansion, makes the 2013 foreign policy concept the first major document to strategically communicate all elements of the Gibridnaya Voyna framework.

4.3.3 The Ukraine Crisis

In the same year, Ukraine would become the site of one of the civilizational clashes that the 2013 foreign policy document so well describes. Stuck between two worlds, the states in Russia's near abroad face the choice between East and West, between Russia and the EU (Orenstein 2019, 90). In the case of Ukrainian president Yanukovych, this meant choosing between an Association Agreement (AA) and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) agreement with the EU on the one side and membership in Russia's Customs Union on the other side (Hill 2018, 350). With both sides making the choice mutually exclusive and mounting economic pressure, both choices would have consequences. When Yanukovych ultimately chose to postpone the AA and DCFTA, he underestimated the pro-EU stance of a large part of the Ukrainian public. Sparking riots and protests, which would become known as the Maidan protests, Yanukovych fled to Russia (Hill 2018, 352). Shortly after the installment of an interim Ukrainian government, little green men appeared in Crimea, taking over key locations on the peninsula, quickly followed by a referendum in which 96% of the population voted to join Russia.

Shortly after the events in Ukraine, senior Russian and CSTO officials got together at the Moscow Conference on International Security. Among those present were Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Defense Sergey Shoygu, and Chief of the General Staff

Valery Gerasimov, each ready to give a speech on the conference's main topic: color revolutions. Foreign Minister Lavrov would open with blaming the West for using color revolutions to serve their interests and impose their values. According to Lavrov, the West pushed away Russia by continued NATO expansion and creating a new civilizational Cold War. This helped trigger the crisis in Ukraine, forcing Russia's hand (Cordesman 2014, 9-10).

Having started by repeating Lavrov and the established rhetoric in the major documents analyzed thus far, Gerasimov would add a military dimension to color revolutions. Showing maps of past color revolutions, Gerasimov stated that Ukraine is a prime example of Western attempts to gain dominance in a multipolar world (Cordesman 2014, 12-17). Gerasimov describes a change from a traditional approach for achieving politico-military goals, which uses direct military operations in an opposing state to a new form that adaptively uses concealed force along with color revolutions to bring about regime change (Cordesman 2014, 14-18). For Gerasimov, this application of the color revolutions method, along with NATO expansion and the buildup of NATO forces, poses an increased threat to Russian and international security (Cordesman 2014, 25-26).

This increased threat would translate itself into an update to Russia's military doctrine. The 2014 military doctrine comes across as hastily written and is significantly shorter than its predecessor. However, the 2014 military doctrine brings an interesting update to the 2010 version by widely incorporating all aspects of color revolutions, both internally and externally. The threats in the 2014 version cover the establishment of anti-Russian regimes in Russia's near abroad, the use of information and communication technology against political independence and sovereignty, destabilization of political and social situations, and most notably, the use of subversive information activities against the population, especially young citizens, aimed at undermining traditions related to the defense of the Motherland (Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation 2014, 2-3).

Important to note is that this description does not name color revolutions directly, even though military officials named color revolutions directly during the Moscow Conference. There is some discrepancy in strategic communication when Russian political elites lead it instead of when military officials lead it. This is possibly because of the earlier mentioned implementor role of the Russian military. Feeling the need to signal to the political elites that they take their concerns seriously, military officials go along with the

established strategic communication (Jonsson 2019, 148). When left to their own devices, the communication may change. In this specific case, however, the core message stays the same.

4.3.4 After Ukraine

The events of 2014 kicked up much dust, leading to Western sanctions against Russia, the creation of the VJTF, and increased military posturing on both sides (Frederick et al., 2017, 107-108). In the aftermath of the annexation of Crimea and the Moscow Conference, Russian military theorists began to increase their research and debate about NATO expansion and color revolutions (Jonsson 2019, 140-144). For Russian decisionmakers, the events of 2014 were so far-reaching that the Russian security strategy to 2020 was deemed unsuitable. As a result, Russia published a new security strategy in 2015, immediately nullifying the old one (Security Council of the Russian Federation 2015, 1). Doing away with the milder tone of its predecessor, the 2015 security strategy states that the strengthening of Russia has led the West to lash out, seeking to contain Russia in fear of losing its dominance ((Security Council of the Russian Federation 2015, 3). The document states that the US and EU are the direct sponsors of an anti-constitutional coup in Ukraine, fitting in the established pattern of Western practices to overthrow legitimate political regimes (Security Council of the Russian Federation 2015, 4-5). These practices are explicitly described as color revolutions, which the document lists as the main threat to Russian security (Security Council of the Russian Federation 2015, 8-9). This is the first time that a major document would directly name color revolutions.

2016 would see the further embedment of color revolutions as a significant concern in Russian threat perceptions. Chief of the General Staff Gerasimov would state that color revolutions are used as the primary means to achieve a change of power, with the information resources this method uses having become one of the most effective weapons (Jonsson 2019, 144-145). 2016 would see the creation of the Russian National Guards tasked with guarding public order and ensuring security. The assigned head of the National Guards, Viktor Zolotov, directly related color revolutions with protests. Furthermore, his advisor and former Chief of the General Staff General Baluyevsky stated that it is the direct task of the National Guards to prevent color revolutions (Jonsson 2019, 145-146).

While the topic of color revolutions was becoming deeply rooted in Russia's military sphere, a new foreign policy concept was released that notably differed from the 2013 version, which so accurately described the toolkit of soft power. Published at the end of 2016, the document still regards soft power as a new method in international relations but does not mention any unlawful applications (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2016, 4). The foreign policy concept claims to espouse consistency and predictability, but this is only partly true. While it does continue the opposition to NATO expansion and Russia's wishes for a multipolar world order, the playing down of its description of color revolutions, as opposed to the 2013 version, is notable (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2016, 6-20). A possible explanation for this is the 2016 inauguration of President Trump, who on numerous occasions made favorable remarks regarding Putin and Russia (Hill 2018, 380). Trump's remarks of "getting along" with Putin might have led the 2016 foreign policy concept to play down its rhetoric. Regardless of possible explanations, the inconsistency in strategic communication from Foreign Minister Lavrov's department, who two years earlier was directly blaming the West for inciting color revolutions, is unusual.

Chapter 5: Summary of observations

Having analyzed the documents, events, and surrounding context of the 1991-2016 period, this section will shortly summarize the observations that stem from this analysis. The purpose of this summary is to provide a short overview of all found observations concerning the proposed causal mechanism and the expected observations as set out in the methodology section.

Throughout the 1991-2016 period, several rounds of NATO expansion have taken place. Examples of this are the membership of Hungary and Poland in 1999 and the Baltic States in 2002. NATO expansion has also included the new membership of countries such as Croatia and Albania in 2009. Furthermore, the analysis has shown the occurrence of formal NATO invitations via Membership Action Plans and the communication of NATO intentions during NATO summits. In addition to NATO expansion, the analysis covered the advent of color revolutions, which started in 2003. Examples of these include the Georgian Rose Revolution in 2003 and the 2005 Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan. Analysis of the 1991-2016 period has shown that NATO expansion and color revolution events occur both inside and outside the post-soviet space.

The covered period includes observations of varied responses by Russian decisionmakers. A significant observation is the consistent opposition of Russian decisionmakers to NATO expansion. From 1997 onward, every major Russian document either directly or indirectly states its opposition to NATO expansion. In some cases, these documents directly refer to NATO expansion events, for example, with the 2008 foreign policy concept directly referring to the Bucharest Summit. Despite this consistency, exceptions do exist. On several occasions, Russian decisionmakers did not respond negatively to NATO expansion, as was the case with Yeltsin's reaction to Polish NATO membership in 1993 and Putin's reaction to NATO membership for the Baltic States in 2002.

As for color revolutions, reactions are seemingly more varied. During the advent of color revolutions in 2003, Russian decisionmakers responded negatively but did not directly attribute these events to the West. Instead, early color revolutions were attributed to internal factors. It is only after the 2014 Ukrainian color revolution that major documents describe the West as causing color revolutions. An observation of note not included in the proposed causal mechanism is the effect of Russian presidents and non Gibridnaya Voyna

related external factors influencing the response to events found in the researched documents. The marks of new presidents on Russian reactions to Gibridnaya Voyna events are found in both Putin and Medvedev. The most clear-cut example of this is Medvedev overruling his ministers when reacting to the intervention in Libya. Finally, while no document directly names 'Gibridnaya Voyna,' the descriptions of NATO expansion and color revolutions directly describe Gibridnaya Voyna methods as found within the literature. Mentions of civilizational conflict, unlawful soft power methods, intrusion into Russia's sphere of influence, the sidelining of Russia as a superpower, and the wishes for a multipolar world order are all present.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Following the analysis of the 1991-2016 period and the established observations, the research question can now be answered. Having set out to trace the main Gibridnaya Voyna methods of NATO expansion and color revolutions, this thesis presented a hypothesized causal mechanism which proposed that NATO expansion and color revolutions in Russia's near abroad would spark opposition in Russian decisionmakers, resulting in acts of strategic communication covering Gibridnaya Voyna via major policy documents.

Based on the findings of this thesis, it is evident that the hypothesized causal mechanism adequately covers the process from Gibridnaya Voyna events occurring to Russian responses via strategic communication in Russia's security strategies, foreign policy concepts, and military doctrines. Analysis of the 1991-2016 period seemingly shows how NATO expansion and color revolutions directly steer Russia's major documents, with multiple documents referring to NATO expansion or color revolution. Clear opposition to NATO expansion is shown by finding the direct mention of NATO as an organization in Russia's major documents. Notable is the consistency of which Russia's opposition to NATO expansion is strategically communicated, forming a red line throughout the analyzed period. The consistency of Russia's opposition to NATO expansion is essential in understanding Russia, as this opposition points to a Russian emphasis on military blocs and alliances, which is a more classical way of warfare. This is at odds with the Western understanding of Hybrid Warfare, which emphasizes unconventional methods and gray-zone operations. For those researchers that solely seek to counter Hybrid Warfare, this contrast should be of note.

Compared to NATO expansion, color revolutions are seemingly more in line with the established Western understanding of Hybrid Warfare. Descriptions of unlawful uses of soft power, Western support to oppositions via NGOs, civilizational clashes, and sponsored coups to establish pro-Western regimes and, in some cases, the direct naming of color revolutions are prominent parts of Russia's strategic communication. However, compared to communication about NATO expansion, color revolution rhetoric only shows up at the end of the analyzed period. During the advent of color revolutions in the early 2000s, the Russians pointed towards internal factors as the underlying cause for their occurrence. It was only until the Ukraine crisis in 2014 that color revolutions were launched to the forefront of Russian animosity.

The sudden rise of color revolutions as a Gibridnaya Voyna method in strategic communication is more akin to the Western response to the Ukrainian crisis. The Hybrid Warfare concept was shelved until it became the center of NATO strategic communication in 2014. Here, Russian strategic communication regarding color revolutions can be compared to Galeotti's hybrid-industrial complex, with Russian decisionmakers propelling color revolutions to the main stage during the Moscow Security Conference and via the replacement of its security strategy shortly after. The late mentioning of color revolutions in Russia's major documents shows the different ways in which a perceived Gibridnaya Voyna method can become ingrained in Russia's strategic communication. Since not every NATO expansion or color revolution event causes such a reaction as the 2014 Ukraine crisis, this opens a new avenue of research to establish why some events propel concepts forward in strategic communication and why others do not.

This research avenue exposes a weakness in the hypothesized causal mechanism, as while the causal mechanism proved sufficient in covering both Gibridnaya Voyna methods, in some cases within the 1991-2016 period, the causal mechanism was not wholly present. The most notable cases presented within the analysis are those of Yeltsin not opposing Poland's ascension into NATO, Putin's lack of opposition to NATO membership for the Baltic States, and Medvedev's milder foreign policy. All three instances include presidents dictating or influencing decision making to such an extent that the causal mechanism is partially broken.

Whether it is Yeltsin's pro-Western outlook, Putin's turn in security focus, or Medvedev's milder foreign policy, the expected oppositional responses to NATO expansion or color revolutions do not occur. The causal mechanism has thus failed to incorporate the influence of Russian presidents. This influence additionally works the other way around, as personal convictions of presidents can steer Gibridnaya Voyna to the forefront of strategic communication. One example of note is Putin's speech at the Munich conference in 2007. Future research into Gibridnaya Voyna and Russia could seek to establish how individual actors influence acts of strategic communication over external events.

While the causal mechanism adequately covers the 1991-2016 period, the exceptions show that it can only partially explain how Gibridnaya Voyna became a popular framework in Russia to describe its relationship with the West. The analyzed methods of NATO expansion

and color revolutions are featured heavily in major Russian documents, even if the respective periods of strategic communication about these methods vary highly. While the impact of individual actors is not accounted for, the causal mechanism shows how external events influence and shape Russia's strategic communication. This partially fills an important gap in the literature, as shifts in major Russian documents were noted, but underlying causes were not researched.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This thesis aimed to establish how Gibridnaya Voyna became a popular framework in Russia to describe Russia's relationship with the West. Using the process-tracing method, this thesis traced the two main aspects of the Gibridnaya Voyna framework, NATO expansion and color revolutions, throughout major Russian documents from 1991 to 2016. The necessity for this research was prompted by a curious gap in the literature regarding Hybrid Warfare and Russia. Despite a research tidal wave caused by the 2014 Ukrainian crisis, a significant part of Hybrid Warfare research does not cover Russia's perception of or attitude towards Hybrid Warfare. This is curious, at least for a research field intertwined with NATO via a hybrid-industrial complex aimed at countering (Russian) Hybrid Warfare. Additionally, the literature that does pay attention to Gibridnaya Voyna seems to ignore the underlying causes of how Gibridnaya Voyna came about.

Through the creation of a causal mechanism, this thesis posed that the occurrence of Gibridnaya Voyna methods, these being NATO expansion and color revolutions, prompts Russian decisionmakers to strategically communicate Russia's opposition to these methods via its security strategies, foreign policy concepts, and military doctrines, thereby creating a popular framework in describing its relationship with the West. Analysis of Russia's major documents in the 1991-2016 period showed a consistent event-caused opposition to NATO expansion, with all major documents since 1997 stating opposition against NATO, with some directly referring to NATO expansion events. Surviving multiple presidents, Russia's opposition to NATO expansion forms a redline throughout its relationship with the West since the Cold War and shapes its threat perception to emphasize bloc-based military conflicts.

The method of color revolutions was shown to stand in stark contrast with NATO expansion, as it only became part of Russia's strategic communication after 2014. This showed the effect of the Ukrainian crisis in Russia as an international actor. Furthermore, the discrepancy between the consistent opposition to NATO expansion and sudden opposition to color revolutions shows that Russia's understanding of Hybrid Warfare can be shaped by long-term and short-term relations and encompasses more traditional concepts of warfare along with more grey-zone and hybrid methods. This understanding stands in

contrast with the Western understanding of Hybrid Warfare and should be of note to those seeking to understand and counter Russia's actions in the world order.

The analysis found difficulty in accounting for Russia's transition from blaming internal factors for causing color revolutions to blame external factors (i.e., the West). Here, seemingly personal convictions of Russian presidents interfered and shaped Russia's strategic communication, thereby contesting the causal mechanism proposed in this study. The same contention occurred on numerous occasions within the analysis of NATO expansion events. This shows that the causal mechanism can only partly explain how Gibridnaya Voyna became a popular framework in Russia. Further research is needed to fully explain the causes of this popularity and consider the extent of actors' effects on shaping Russian strategic communication. Addressing when external events or personal convictions of decisionmakers take precedent over the other in shaping strategic communication is a valuable future avenue of research.

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