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Militarism, Economics, and Nationalism: The Russian and Chinese Expansionist Foreign Policy of the 21st Century

Paul Charles Gargiulo Jr.
Fordham University, pgargiulo@fordham.edu

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Militarism, Economics, and Nationalism: The
Russian and Chinese Expansionist Foreign Policy of
the 21st Century

Paul C. Gargiulo, Jr

pgargiulo@fordham.edu

Professor Olena Nikolayenko

onikolayenko@fordham.edu

Europe Track

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I. Abstract

While the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 may have harkened in a new era of global peace, the rise of nationalist governments in China and Russia have changed this circumstance as seen in their respective spheres of influence. During the first two decades of the 21st Century, China and Russia have become increasingly aggressive in the application of their foreign policies, attempting to assert their presence on the global stage. From 1945 through 1991, there has been a historical precedence of Chinese and Russian dominance in the South China Sea and in Eastern Europe. This was in part because China and the Soviet Union, Russia's predecessor state, sought to establish their relevance in geopolitical affairs and to consolidate power within their spheres of influence. Since 2008, China and Russia have sought to follow this aggressive foreign policy to in establishing their status' as global powers and to consolidate their influence in their respective spheres of influence to deter foreign powers. This thesis argues that the rise of militarism, economic power, and nationalist identity accounts for an escalation in China and Russia's expansionist foreign policy.

II. Introduction

Over the course of the past decade, China and Russia have become the biggest threats to global stability and the liberal world order. In 2014, this became apparent when Russia unilaterally invaded Eastern Ukraine and annexed the Crimean Peninsula. Since the end of the Cold War, there had been a relative peace in Europe, however this military action completely changed this situation, forcing Western powers to posture themselves towards Russia. While China has always operated and claimed territories in the South China Sea, China has been aggressively increasing the usage of their military forces to both occupy disputed waters and islands since 2008. This has caused the United States and its allies to begin to pivot its military forces in the region to protect international waters and the sovereign territory of local countries. While the United States is still a superpower, China and Russia are both attempting to rival the United States and its allies by radically shifting the global world order that existed in the early and mid-2000s.

This thesis argues that China and Russia have become increasingly aggressive and expansionist in their foreign policy throughout the early 21st Century. This increased expansionism in the South China Sea and in Ukraine can be seen through the context of militarism, economics, and nationalism during the 2010s. These contexts can be observed through the growth of militarism in China and Russia, which has provided a catalyst for an increased military budget and modernization. The context of economic influence on the increase of Chinese and Russian aggression can be seen with the growth of their respective gross domestic products, which have allowed for increased military investment and forced each country to protect local economic and trade interests. Additionally, the nationalist sentiments of the Chinese and Russian governments also provided reason for change in foreign policy in both

countries. The nationalist beliefs amongst the populations in China and Russia have increasingly advocated for an assertion of hard power on the global stage to provide a counter-balance to Western power. The current contexts of militarism, economics, and nationalism in China and Russia have incentivized increased military presence and operations in the South China Sea and in Ukraine.

To further this argument, this thesis begins with a literature review to establish what is known of the expansionist policies of China and Russia and to discuss the limitations of these variables. Following this, the methodology will provide insight into what type of information and sources will be collected and included to support the argument. Next, there will be a discussion of the historical precedence in expansionism in the South China Sea and in Ukraine by China and the Soviet Union, Russia's predecessor state. This discussion will provide context into the current state of affairs in both regions. In following, there will be two case studies exploring Chinese expansion in the South China Sea and Russian expansion in Ukraine to establish the reasonings behind both countries increasingly aggressive foreign policies. The thesis will explore findings into how military growth, economic growth, and nationalism have all played a part in leading towards the recent rise in the outwardly aggressive foreign policies of China and Russia. Finally, there will be a summarization of the findings in a conclusion and draw further implications based on these findings.

III. Literature Review

Prolific research demonstrates that militarism, economics, and nationalism have provided cause for the aggressive assertion of Chinese and Russian dominance. Research has demonstrated that the assertion of power allows for China and Russia appear to be strong to other global powers, which allows for both countries to gain further influence and relevance in global

affairs. The appearance of weakness creates the notion that China and Russia can be taken advantage by foreign powers and makes both countries irrelevant. In asserting military and economic domination in the South China Sea and in Ukraine, China and Russia are consolidating their power in their sphere of influences, removing other foreign influences, and making themselves relevant to global powers. Additionally, nationalism provides the image to the global community that China and Russia are resolved in their actions and that their country is united in their beliefs.

i. Militarism

Chinese involvement in the South China Sea is a result of years of contested sovereignty claims between China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and the Republic of China. China is more often than not ready to use force to solve disputes involving islands or regions they claim. This is in part due to “China's experiences with European imperial expansion in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century and more recent experiences with separatist movements in Tibet and Taiwan” (Wu and Bueno de Mesquita, 1994). The usage of force on the part of China when dealing with territorial disputes is to assert its unquestionable dominance in the region to maintain its sovereignty and to intimidate potential challengers claiming sovereignty of these disputed territories. The usage of its military allows China to apply pressure to its weaker neighbors to prevent them from responding and attempting to take these territories.

China's application of its military in these territorial disputes is also an effort to prevent Western powers, such as the United States, from becoming involved in these disputes. A large Chinese military presence in the South China Sea is a show of force to the West that any Western aid toward challenging countries would be taken as a threat to China and may result in a possible

use of force. The notion of the protection of Chinese sovereignty is integral to the maintenance of the Chinese state this was evident in:

“The weakness of the People's Republic of China's (PRC) predecessor in defending Chinese sovereignty at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 galvanized protests and a general strike, forcing the government to sack three officials and reject the Treaty of Versailles, which awarded territories in China to Japan” (Chen Weiss and Dafoe, 2019).

In the eyes of the Chinese government, the protection of its sovereignty is integral to the survival of the Chinese state, resulting from the land-grabs of imperialist powers during the 19th and early-20th Centuries. The military use of force to protect its claimed sovereignty is an absolute necessity to prevent challengers from questioning Chinese authority over its claimed territories to prevent land grabs that would delegitimize the authority of the Chinese government.

The successful Russian incursion into Eastern Ukraine and Crimea in 2014 was the result of a strategy known as *fait accompli*. *Fait accompli* is a strategy wherein a country conducts a swift, limited land grab at the cost of an adversary attempting to force the adversary to relent, rather than use force to reclaim the lost territory (Altman, 2017). The incursion into Crimea in 2014 revolves around the notion that Russia maintained the capability to seize Crimea and felt the need to express the power it maintained to the rest of the world. In the application of the *fait accompli* strategy, “Russia's sudden and secretive invasion of Crimea using soldiers without identifying insignia gave Ukraine little time to prepare or deploy troops whose loyalty was not in question” (Altman, 2017). The lack of threats or ultimatums for Ukraine to cede Crimea to Russia is due to the seriousness on behalf of the Russian government to take Crimea. The issuing of such ultimatums would present a warning to Ukraine that Russia would possibly want to invade the region, allowing time for their forces to prepare for a Russian attack. The lack of

such warnings allowed for Russia to deploy its military into the region and take the military objective from Ukraine with little to no resistance. The swiftness of the Russian take-over prevented the Ukrainians from organizing a proper response and deterred them from counter-attacking to retake the Crimean Peninsula.

The usage of *fait accompli* allowed for the Russians to display to the international community that their military might in the region was unquestionable, as the Ukrainians did not put up an organized defense of the peninsula due to the swiftness and lack of warning of the Russian land grab. While there were multiple diplomatic responses and complaints to the Russian land-grab, the lack of a military response from Western powers and Ukraine ultimately displayed that Russian authority in the region. Using the swiftness of the *fait accompli* strategy, the international community was also unprepared to militarily influence Russia to withdraw from Crimea. The lacking military response played into the Russian objective of reasserting their unquestionable dominance in Eastern Europe, which was proven by being able to occupy territories in the region without being forced out by the international community.

ii. Economics

With the South China Sea being a major avenue for maritime commerce, it is no surprise China seeks to maintain a monopoly over the region. This is in part due to the protectionist ideology of Chinese trading philosophy wherein “economic nationalism in Asia, spurred by a desire to enhance economic sovereignty to match political independence and aimed at reducing vulnerability to foreign economic forces” (Acharya, 2014). China sees the involvement of the United States and other foreign powers in the South China Sea as a threat to Chinese trading relations in the region. China views the South China Sea as a potential sphere of influence since the 1990s, becoming a focal point of Asian regionalization (Acharya, 2014). Foreign dominance

of trade in the South China Sea interrupts Chinese dominance as the local countries in Southeast Asia and island countries, such as the Philippines and Indonesia, will look towards the United States for economic dependence. This in effect reduces China's role as being the regional economic power.

Chinese dominance of trade in the South China Sea is important for Chinese national defense due to the imported products that transverse through the region. The trade routes and energy supplies that run through the Malacca Straights in Indonesia contain the majority of China's energy supply (Buszynski, 2012, 20). For China, the control of these sea lanes is vital to maintain this energy supply and in the event of war, Chinese naval dominance of the South China Sea will allow for the continued maintenance of that energy supply. The necessity to control the South China Sea through military influence is partially fueled by the protectionist ideology of the Chinese government. In order to advance Chinese national influence and economic prowess, China must expel foreign powers to dominate the economic playing field of Southeast Asia. Additionally, control of the sea lanes in the South China Sea is vital to the Chinese economy as it protects the energy resources being imported from abroad. Foreign influence in the South China Sea is detrimental as it could cut China off from potential economic partners and from its imprinted energy resources.

Since the end of the Cold War, the Russian economy has not been able to make a significant return to the levels it had been during the era of the Soviet Union. Much of this economic downfall dealt with the loss of many of the states of the Soviet Union that became independent countries. While the loss of these countries had hindered the Russian economy, the former Soviet bloc countries that remained within the Russian sphere of influence have nevertheless assisted in keeping the Russian Federation afloat. Russia has bolstered its economy

through its oil production and distribution, of which it has dominated Western European markets. Not only does Russia dominate the oil market, “the Russian government has periodically attempted to use oil (and gas) exports to sway political and commercial decisions” (Crane et al., 2009, 29) in the former Soviet republics and in Western Europe. During the Orange Revolution, where Ukraine replaced its pro-Russian government with a pro-Western European government, Russia cut-off gas transmission to the Ukraine (Crane et al., 2009, 33). In response, the Ukrainian government denied Russia from controlling its gas distribution networks, even going as so far as to pass a law in 2008 fending the sale of gas and oil assets to Russia (Crane et al., 2009, 34). The gas and oil transmission lines that traverse through Ukraine are vital to the Russian economy as they allow for Russia to distribute oil to Western Europe and other Eastern European countries.

The loss of Ukraine from the Russian sphere of influence will end Russian control of these transmission lines, putting oil and gas sales at risk. Additionally, Russia maintains many oil refineries in the Black Sea which pump oil to sell to its customers abroad. The potential for Russia to lose these oil refineries also puts oil production and distribution at risk. A Ukrainian government aligned with Western Europe could halt production and distribution of Russian oil and gas if Russian does not act in the interest of the West. This leverage Ukraine maintains is threatening to Russia and this has led to an increased Russian military presence in Ukraine to prevent such an economic loss.

iii. Nationalism

In recent history, information regarding disputes in the South China Sea have remained under tight control by the Chinese government, with little being disseminated to the Chinese public. An example of this was during the 1990s when “China and Russia negotiated an

agreement on their long land border. At that time, few in China knew of the negotiation or the final agreement” (Wang, 2015, 515). However, in the past decade, the usage of social media and the internet has skyrocketed and now maritime disputes in the South China Sea and East China Sea have become a topic of coverage on Chinese media platforms (Wang, 2015, 515). Many state-run newspapers and news outlets have been “calling for China to adopt tougher and stronger positions, especially on disputes with other countries” (Wang, 2015, 516). The propaganda disseminated by these state-run news outlets have a significant effect on the thoughts and understandings of the Chinese people due to the monopoly on information the Chinese government maintains. With the Chinese government being able to control the flow of information, the government can call on the support of the Chinese people through the dissemination of media supporting Chinese claims in the South China Sea.

In addition to the government influencing nationalist support for the expansionist Chinese policy, Chinese media has also affected government policy. In 2011, a media commentator named Luo Yuan “submitted a detailed proposal on the South China Sea, arguing that China should strengthen its presence” where he “proposed that China should conduct more patrols, trainings, and drills” (Wang, 2015, 518). A year later, Yuan’s proposals became reality when in 2012, the Chinese navy began conducted regular patrols in the South China Sea in addition to taking steps to expand its resource exploration in the region (Wang, 2015, 519). The while the rise in Chinese nationalism has been spurred by the Chinese government to gain support for its political objectives, this government-fueled nationalism has begun to affect Chinese foreign policy in disputed areas.

Russian claims for dominance in Ukraine are more than a belief that Russia is reclaiming territory lost in the collapse of the Soviet Union, but rather it is being done to subsume ethnic

Russians back into the Russian state. In 2014, Vladimir Putin mentioned that Crimea was a primordial land and that the capital of Ukraine, Kiev, was “the mother” of Russian cities (Alexseev, 2016, 160). The large presence of ethnic Russians in Ukraine has convinced the Russian people and the Russian government that this gives Russia a say in Ukraine’s internal policies. The removal of the pro-Russian government in Ukraine during the early 2010s has been viewed by Putin and many in Russia as an interference in Russian affairs. This hardened Putin’s goal to “expand Russia’s territory and dominance in the former Soviet space under the banner of ethnic russkii nationalism” (Alexseev, 2016, 160). The change in Ukrainian government to being pro-European Union is a display that the country is pulling away from the Russian sphere of influence.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, many former Soviet republics not only abandoned the Russian sphere of influence, but immediately turned towards Russia’s former adversaries. Many of these countries joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union, backing Russia into a defensive corner as these countries are located near the Russian border (Rumer and Skolsky, 2019). Ukraine was one of the few remaining countries in the Russian sphere of influence, providing a buffer between Russia and its NATO adversaries. The shift in government changed this political situation, leaving Russia to be bordering a possible NATO and European Union ally. Using the 1.5 million ethnic Russian in the country, Putin was able to rally support to intervene in Ukraine to justify the reassertion of ‘Russian primacy in its “near-abroad,” essentially pull the country back under the Russian yoke’ (Rumer and Skolsky, 2019). Russia’s intervention in Ukraine is not an offensive one, but rather defensive in nature to reassert Russian influence and to create a buffer between Russia and its adversaries.

IV. Methodology

In researching the influence of militarism in the rise of Chinese and Russian expansionism in the South China Sea and Eastern Europe, this thesis will explore the rise of military spending. The importance of military spending in both China and Russia is that an increase allows for an amplified production of military equipment and the expansion of manpower. The bolstering of military equipment and manpower allows for the governments of China and Russia to maintain forces in disputed regions to compete with other foreign powers. A resource that will be useful to find this information is the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) Military Expenditure Database. The SIPRI Military Expenditure Database is a reputable resource and updates their reports annually. While the reports submitted by China and Russia may be to some degree tampered with, the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database uses information from all open source resources mitigating the falsification of reports.

In addition to using military spending as a resource, one could also discuss how the funding from China and Russia's military expenditures is spent within their armed forces. It is important to note whether the expenditures have been spent on modernization, an increase in manpower, naval shipbuilding, or development of new aircraft or vehicles. This will allow for a better comprehension of why China and Russia increased their military expenditures and what they plan on purposing their armed forces towards. Access to this information can be found through common public and private news sources of which typically maintain relative credible information.

In the influence of economics on China and Russia in their assertive foreign policies, the Gross Domestic Products (GDP) of both countries will provide a great deal of insight. The GDPs of both China and Russia will provide an indication on the health of their economies.

Based on this, one can conduct further research into why the GDPs of China and Russia have affected their foreign policies. The World Bank, a reputable global banking institution, maintains an accurate list of GDPs for all countries. In addition to using the World Bank, one can explore how the levels of China and Russia's GDPs have affected their foreign policies and why this has led to assertive actions in disputed regions.

The effect of trade in Chinese and Russian foreign policy will also assist research in why both countries are expanding in the South China Sea and Ukraine. China and Russia both maintain trade routes where they export and import products that are vital for their economies. Control over these trade routes assist in protecting the flow of these resources from potential foreign competitors. Foreign competition can stimulate an increased military presence due to the loss of trade routes and in what resources are being sold abroad. In using academic journals, such as those found on JSTOR or the Journal of Conflict Resolution, one will be able to find information that will explain the effect of trade on Chinese and Russian foreign policy. This will also help explain why trade has led to China and Russia to expand the use of their military forces in the South China Sea and Ukraine.

In researching the effect of nationalism in the aggressive foreign policies of China and Russia, one can infer from the effect of state-run social media organizations on the local populations. In using graphs quantifying Chinese and Russian public opinions of the state of the Ukrainian government and the American presence in the South China Sea, one will be able to see how nationalism has taken hold in the Chinese and Russian public. The importance of these social media articles is how they affect the public support of Chinese and Russian involvement in the disputed regions. Without public support, China and Russia will not be able to carry out their foreign policy objectives. Additionally, public support empowers the governments of China and

Russian to continue expanding into the South China Sea and Ukraine to satiate the public's interest.

China and Russia's votes as members of the United Nation's Security Council also provides an accurate indicator of the proliferation of a nationalist foreign policy. Since the early-2010s, there have been numerous votes on the issues pertaining to international disputes involving both countries. In researching the way China and Russia voted on these issues and the reasoning behind why they voted in a certain way, one can gain insight into how nationalism has affected government policy in both countries. The United Nations is a sound resource for this information as, for the most part, it is unbiased in its reports on voting matters.

V. Historical Precedence

i. Chinese Involvement in the South China Sea (1949-1991)

After the victory of Communist Chinese forces in 1949 over the Nationalist Chinese in the Chinese Civil War, the People's Republic of China was immediately involved in territorial disputes in the South China Sea. In 1949, the defeated Nationalist Chinese forces fled to the island of Taiwan where they established the Republic of China, colloquially known as Taiwan. Neither the People's Republic of China nor Taiwan recognized each other's governments and both governments claimed to be the sole claimants of mainland China. During the 1950s, the People's Republic of China (China) twice attempted to invade Taiwan to bring the island under their control. In 1954, the First Taiwan Strait Crisis began with the China bombarding Taiwanese islands off of Taiwan. In early 1955, China invaded two small Taiwanese islands. This led to the both the United States Senate and House of Representatives to pass the Formosa Resolution, stating that if China were to invade the island of Taiwan, the United States military would be sent to defend Taiwan. Additionally, both President Eisenhower and Secretary of State

Dulles stated publicly that the United States may use atomic weapons to defend Taiwan. Upon this public declaration, China backed down due to the Soviet Union refusing to retaliate against the United States with nuclear weapons (The Taiwan Straits Crises: 1954–55 and 1958, 2016).

The threat of nuclear war did not deter China's Chairman of the Communist Part, Mao Zedong. In 1958, Mao sought to "demonstrate the vulnerability of the United States in the Strait area" (Gurtrov, 1976, 49). Mao believed that retaking Taiwan would prove to the Soviet Union and the United States that China was self-sufficient economically and militarily. In August of 1958, the military of China began shelling Taiwan, with this continuing until October of that year. The attacks on Taiwan again brought in military aid from the United States to Taiwan. This effectively shut down any possibility of Mao being able to reclaim Taiwan. Additionally, Mao did not want a war with the United States to prevent his self-reliance initiatives and the Great Leap economic programs (Gurtrov, 1976, 94). This effectively ended any notion of China from reconquering Taiwan during the Cold War.

Beginning in July of 1950, China had been active in assisting North Vietnam in establishing a unified, Communist Vietnam (Jian, 1995, 357). Upon the intervention of the United States in the Vietnam conflict, the relationship between Vietnam and China became very close, with China providing military assistance and aid in starting a communist revolution in South Vietnam. Additionally, China pledged its support to North Vietnam that China would assist Vietnam militarily if the United States were to invade (Jian, 1995, 359). At this time, relations were deteriorating between the Soviet Union and China due to the rise of Premier Khrushchev and de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union. Mao believed that this regime and policy change was a move away from communism and towards capitalism (Jian, 1995, 363). Mao saw the opportunity of Vietnam as a way to increase Chinese influence abroad and compete with the

Soviet brand of communism. The relationship between Vietnam and China began to deteriorate when the North Vietnamese began to negotiate with the United States regarding an end to the war. Concurrently, the Vietnamese were further establishing ties with the Soviet Union, pressing the divide between China and Vietnam. After the conclusion of the Vietnam War, a recently unified communist Vietnam invaded Cambodia to intervene in the Khmer Rouge's genocidal regime. This caused China to attack Vietnam in an effort "to teach Hanoi a lesson" (Jian, 1995, 385). China was opposed to Vietnam acting unilaterally and without their blessing, in their sphere of influence. While the Chinese attack in Vietnam was repelled, the state of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship was permanently in shambles. This made Vietnam an opponent in the eyes of China, leading to future conflict with Vietnam along its land border and its maritime border in the South China Sea.

Since the 1970s, China has claimed many disputed territories in the South China Sea. One of the most contentious of those disputes is that of the Spratly Islands. While this dispute includes almost a dozen countries, the most important claimants are China, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Taiwan. Before the United Nations recognition of China in the 1970s, Taiwan maintained a military occupation of the Spratly Islands. After the 1970s, Taiwan withdrew from the islands, leaving the disputed islands up for grabs by China, the Philippines, and Vietnam. In March 1988, Vietnam and China squared off in the Johnson South Reef for control of the Spratly Islands. While both sides dispute the actual events, what was apparent was that China sent four ships and three frigates to Johnson South Reef. When the Chinese troops landed on the reef, they opened fire on the Vietnamese troops sent to protect the Vietnamese flag planted on the reef. The initial Chinese landing defeated the small Vietnamese contingent, however, the Vietnamese counter-attacked the next day, starting a skirmish with the Chinese troops present.

Within the year, the Chinese were able to occupy and secure the island from Vietnam (Bradley, 2019). The involvement of the People's Republic of China in the South China Sea during the Cold War era has caused for many territorial disputes that have lasted to the modern era, providing cause and reason to the current state of events in the South China Sea.

ii. Soviet Involvement in Eastern Europe (1945-1991)

While the Soviet Union was involved in Eastern Europe prior to 1945, Soviet dominance of region did not begin until the end of the Second World War. After the Soviet Union conquered all of the formerly held Nazi territories in Eastern Europe, they demanded the creation of their own sphere of influence during the Yalta Conference. Upon the surrender of the Nazis in May 1945, the Soviet Union established puppet communist governments in many Eastern European countries. The first major crisis as a result of this Soviet dominance in Eastern Europe was the Berlin blockade, wherein the Soviet Union closed access to the allied controlled West Berlin. The blockade was caused by a disagreement of the usage of the West German or East German Mark in Berlin, resulting in the Soviet Union withdrawing the Allied Control Council (Roberts, 1988, 200). This made it apparent that the Soviet Union was uninterested in cooperation with the United States and its allies in rebuilding Europe. The Soviet Union sought to establish its own sphere of influence in Eastern Europe and prevent the Western allies from expanding their sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. While the blockade concluded in 1949 after the Berlin Airlift, it became clear that the Soviet Union would only accept their dominance in the region.

The exit of a country from the Eastern Bloc posed a threat to the Soviet Union, as it displayed the weaknesses of communism and the lack of control the Soviets had of their sphere of influence. In 1956, after students began protesting and demanding free elections, "armed

citizens took possession of the streets of Budapest, Hungary, and under the leadership of Imre Nagy, declared their country a free, multi-party, and neutral state” (Gluck, 1980, 258). Upon the outbreak of revolution, the Soviet Army intervened, deploying soldiers and armored vehicles throughout the country. However, the revolutionaries were able to force the collapse of the communist Hungarian government. The new government called for an exit from the Soviet defense treaty, the Warsaw Pact, and become a neutral country. While the fighting had led to a standstill, the Soviet Army received orders from Moscow to begin a second intervention to end the revolution. While the Hungarian military and revolutionaries put up heavy resistance, with some pockets lasting for almost a week, Soviet forces were able to overthrow the revolutionary government and reestablish Hungary as a communist state. While the United States and the West did not actively take part in the revolution, the Soviet Union saw the fall of communism in Hungary as a victory for the United States and its allies. The Soviet Union intervened in Hungary not only to stave off the fall of communism, but also to uphold its reputation and its sphere of influence.

The threat of democratization fueled the Soviet Union in maintaining a watchful eye over its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. After Alexander Dubcek’s rise to power in Czechoslovakia, he initiated a series of reforms to liberalize the Czechoslovak economy and political sphere. These reforms ended media censorship and travel restrictions, providing many Czechoslovaks civil rights they previously did not have (Stoneman, 2015, 103). While Dubcek did not intend to completely rid the country of socialism, he sought to bring about democratic reforms not in line with the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. The “liberalization of Czechoslovakia during the Prague Spring was a threat to the unity of the Soviet bloc nations under strict Soviet hegemony, and therefore to the strength of the Soviet Union” (Stoneman,

2015, 106). The Soviet Union then summoned Dubcek to a meeting in East Germany, he outright refused the Soviet demands of ending his reform program.

After this meeting, the Soviet Union met with other countries of the Warsaw Pact to authorize an intervention in Czechoslovakia. In early August of 1968, the Soviets once again called Dubcek to meet in Bratislava in Czechoslovakia to discuss the terms of the Bratislava Declaration with other members of the Warsaw Pact. The Bratislava Declaration “stated that the Soviet Union would intervene if a bourgeois system were established with multiple parties” (Stoneman, 2015, 106) challenging the Czechoslovak Communist Party and also outlined that a socialist Czechoslovakia should continue to have friendly relations with the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. While Dubcek was under the impression that Czechoslovakia had made greater strides in autonomy from the Soviet Union, the Soviets and the Warsaw Pact were using the declaration to buy time. In mid-August, the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact invaded Czechoslovakia with over 200,000 troops to brutally end the Prague Spring movement (Stoneman, 2015, 106). Rather than organize an armed resistance similar to Hungary in 1956, Dubcek ordered that the Soviet troops be met with massive, peaceful demonstrations. The Soviets forcibly removed the liberal reforms and reestablished the norms that existed in the pre-Dubcek regime. The actions that took place in August 1968 put into practice the Brezhnev Doctrine for the first time which reinforced the notion that if a country were to attempt to leave the Soviet sphere of influence, armed aggression would be used as a deterrent.

The Soviet Union asserted control over its sphere of influence not just through armed intervention, but through the application of political pressure. In 1980, trade unions in Poland dissatisfied “with climbing food prices and stagnating wages” and “with a lack of basic freedoms under the communist political system” (Gompert, Binnendijk, and Lin, 2014, 140) formed the

Solidarity movement. The Solidarity movement consisted of trade unions seeking to reform the government and upend Communist authoritarian rule in Poland. The notion of ending Communist rule in Poland made the Soviet Union fear the loss of Poland would geographically isolate East Germany and vulnerable to a Western influence (Gompert, Binnendijk, and Lin, 2014, 140). With the impending threat, the Soviet Union began talks with the Warsaw Pact to intervene in Poland and end the political upheaval. However, the Soviet Union decided against military intervention for a multitude of reasons. The two main reasons were “an invasion could meet fierce Polish resistance” and “the United States warned of grave consequences if Poland was invaded” (Gompert, Binnendijk, and Lin, 2014, 141-142). While the decision not to militarily intervene signaled the end of the Brezhnev Doctrine of military intervention to prevent the collapse of communism, it did not mean the Soviets ended their participation in the crisis. To exert political control over the Polish government, the Warsaw Pact threatened to intervene militarily (Gompert, Binnendijk, and Lin, 2014, 142) in an effort to pressure the Polish government to impose martial law.

When the leader of the Polish government, Stanislaw Kania, refused to impose martial law, the Soviet Union “engineered the replacement of Kania” (Gompert, Binnendijk, and Lin, 2014, 142) with Wojciech Jaruzelski. Jaruzelski, the former Polish defense minister, immediately imposed martial law ending the crisis. While the Soviet Union did not militarily intervene, such as in Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968, they were able to manipulate governments within their Eastern European sphere of influence, as seen in Poland in 1981. The current events unfolding in countries bordering modern Russia has a direct correlation to the historic interventions conducted by the Soviet Union wherein Russia intervenes in Eastern Europe to maintain its sphere of influence. Similarly to the Soviets, Russia maintains the view that if one

country exits their sphere of influence, other countries will leave, diminishing their role as the regional power.

VI. Case Study 1: Chinese Expansion in the South China Sea

i. Militarism

The growth of the People's Liberation Army in China has led to the capability to utilize its armed forces to intervene in territorial disputes, such as those in the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. An indicator of this growth is China's military expenditure, which since 2008, has grown by \$141,810,000,000 USD. In 2008, China's military expenditure was \$108,187,000,000 USD and rose dramatically in ten years to \$249,997,000,000 USD (Military Expenditure by Country, in Constant (2017) US\$ m., 1988-2018, 2018). The dramatic rise in military spending over the past ten years seems to be in an effort to not expand their armed forces by personnel, but rather to upgrade their military equipment. This expenditure increase seems to be "going mainly to raise living standards for service members, increase training, and prepare for potential crises on the Korean Peninsula, the border with India or in the South China Sea or Taiwan Strait" (Bodeen, 2018) China is focusing its attention on balancing the tide in the Indo-Pacific region, in an effort to compete with the United States, Japan, and India. To be able to conduct anti-access and area denial operations, China needs to invest in upgrading its naval forces by purchasing new nuclear-powered attack submarine, modern guided-missile destroyers, new anti-ship missiles "with longer ranges than those of their U.S. counterparts," in addition to beefing their auxiliary naval forces, the Chinese Coast Guard and the Chinese naval militia (Bodeen, 2018).

While China's expenditure does not nearly match that of the United States, it is allowing for the expansion of the Chinese navy to not only contest the American presence in the South

China Sea, but to contest territorial disputes in the Indo-Pacific region. China's military participation in these territorial disputes is very much connected with its capabilities to contest the presence of the United States in the South China Sea. In China's off shore defense strategy, as discussed in the 2010 National Defense White Paper "involves three major tasks or missions" to be able to achieve its goal of total naval dominance. One of these objectives is preventing Taiwanese independence and to discourage the United States Navy from supporting it during a conflict (Buszynski, 2012, 20). The American presence provides a deterrence to Chinese claims to the many islands in the South China Sea, including Taiwan, a noted American ally. An additional objective is "to deploy and defend a submarine-based second strike nuclear capability which would be able to target the mainland United States" (Buszynski, 2012, 21). As of now, the United States maintains an upper-hand over China in regards to being able to maintain a nuclear deterrence around the globe at all times. In possessing similar capabilities, China is under the impression that they could prevent the United States from retaliating if the Chinese military were to invade Taiwan or realize any of their other territorial claims.

Current Chinese naval strategy in the South China Sea is influenced by the idea of zonal defense, promoted by Liu Huaqing, the commander of the Chinese navy during the 1980s. Based off of Russia's Cold War naval strategy, "Liu gave expression to a Chinese version of zonal defense according to which China's control of sea territory was to extend from the mainland in two island chains" (Buszynski, 2012, 22). In the first part of this strategy, Liu intended for China to control the first island chain, consisting of Southern Japan, Taiwan, and the South China Sea, by 2000. This control would provide China with "near seas defence," to be able to protect and control the waterways bordering the mainland. In the second portion of Liu's strategy, China was to expand its dominance into the second island chain, consisting of the

Japanese archipelago and the Philippines, to provide “far seas defence” (Buszynski, 2012, 22).

The strategy employed by Liu still informs modern Chinese naval strategy. In controlling these territories of the first and second island chains, China can expand its influence in the Indo-Pacific region, detracting from adversaries such as the United States, Japan, and India who also seek to maintain a level of dominance in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Chinese goals in the South China Sea, while expansionist, are also defensive in nature. Pushing its maritime dominance past the second island chain, would prevent foreign powers from being able to establish a military presence near the Chinese homeland. China intends on using the South China Sea as a form of sanctuary, where new naval capabilities are being “deployed in safe bases the surrounding zones become subject to various degrees of control and become sanctuaries to be protected” (Buszynski, 2012, 22-23). In using the South China Sea as a Chinese “sanctuary,” it would provide protected access to the Indo-Pacific region, wherein the Chinese navy can utilize its new aircraft carriers and submarines without being concerned of harassment by foreign navies. Without the sanctuary of the South China Sea, the Chinese navy would be useless as it would be confined near its coastal areas by a hostile naval or airforce” (Buszynski, 2012, 23). Military dominance of the South China Sea would provide China with the ability to access the open seas. Access to the open sea allows China to expand from being a regional power, to a global power as its military would have access to regions beyond the shores of the Chinese mainland.

The Chinese expansion of its military expenditure is due to the rising need to provide for its armed forces and to realize Liu Huaqing’s strategy of zonal defense. In expanding its armed forces, China has the ability to further its military control of the South China Sea and maintain naval dominance in the region. This dominance of the South China Sea will provide China with

a safe haven to realize their ambitions of becoming a global military power that can operate outside of its sphere of influence.

ii. Economics

A typical indicator on the health of a country's economy is their GDP, as it describes the ability of a country to manufacture products within their borders. As of 2018, China's GDP is approximately \$13,608,151,000 (GDP (Current US\$), 2019). Since China maintains the second-largest GDP in the world, it is a clear indication that it maintains a healthy economy. Although China maintains one of the world's most powerful economies, it is heavily reliant on trade to carry this status. As previously discussed, China has sought to expand its sphere of influence in the South China Sea to push out foreign influence near China's borders to allow for Chinese expansion. There is also a defensive aspect to China's expansion in the South China Sea. The Chinese 2010 National Defense White Paper includes the objective of securing trade routes for much needed energy supplies vital to the growing industrial economy of China (Daniels, 2014). These trade routes and energy supplies that run through the Malacca Straights in Indonesia contain the majority of China's energy supply (Buszynski, 2012, 20). It is a commonly held view by Chinese military strategists that China must maintain naval dominance in the South China Sea to protect those trade routes. In the hypothetical situation that China becomes involved in a military conflict with a near-peer power, that power can use their naval forces to blockade China and strangle the country of its energy resources into submission. In maintaining naval dominance over foreign powers in the South China Sea, China has the ability to protect its trade vital to the prosperity of the country.

China's rapid climb in becoming one of the world's most powerful economies has led to the massive consumption of oil. The massive consumption of energy in China and the rest of

Asia, “has caused the continent to have the world’s second-highest oil supply deficit because its consumption strongly outpaces its supply of energy sources” (Daniels, 2014). The solution to the lack of oil is to harness the energy resources of the South China Sea, rather than importing resources from Africa and the Middle East, all of which are considered “volatile” (Daniels, 2014). This, for China, has made it all the more necessary to control the South China Sea. In controlling the region, China would have the ability to drill for oil without having to import it from abroad. Additionally, this would allow for China to become an oil exporter, competing with the likes of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other Western oil exporting organizations.

However, the fact that the South China Sea has approximately 11 billion barrels of oil reserves and 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves (Daniels, 2014) has not gone unnoticed by the West. Since the discovery of oil in the Spratly Islands in 1976 by the Philippine government, both American and British companies have involved themselves in the region (Daniels, 2014). While China has recently been able to block further Western incursions into the Spratly Islands for oil, the notion that American and British oil companies are drilling in the South China Sea signifies that the region is a Western interest. In being a region of Western interest, the armed forces of Western countries will have a presence in the South China Sea to protect their economic and capital interests. Chinese military dominance in the region would allow for China to control the energy resources in the South China Sea, preventing them from being siphoned off and capitalized on by Western countries. In addition, a Chinese-dominated South China Sea would allow for China to control the trading and usage of these energy resources, providing the opportunity to make capital on the region.

The expansion of the Chinese economy and trade in the South China Sea has put China in the position to be able to maintain dominance in the region. In July 2010, prior to the Hanoi ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), “China's embassy in Washington requested the State Department not to raise the issue of the South China Sea in the expectation that the United States would agree” (Buszynski, 2012, 25). The reasoning behind this request was summarized by a Xinhua newspaper stating “by adding the South China Sea to its core interests, China has shown its determination to secure its maritime resources and strategic waters” (Buszynski, 2012, 25). A potential Chinese announcement at an Asian economic summit would have legitimized the claims of Chinese economic and military dominance in the South China Sea. Additionally, the lack of a response from the United States would have quietly affirmed that a Chinese sphere of influence, out of reach of the West, existed in the South China Sea.

In an unexpected turn of events, the United States responded by affirming American interests in the South China Sea and stated the importance of collaborating with all of America's partners in the region, including China. In this situation, the United States would have lost credibility before its Asian allies which would have forced them to come to their own agreements with China (Buzyinski, 2012, 25). In losing credibility of power, the United States, freedom of navigation laws typically upheld by the United States would have been left in the hands of China, allowing for maritime control of the South China Sea. This is important in the economies of local countries which rely on the natural resources of the South China Sea. In 2011, the Philippines reported seven incidents of harassment involving China including an incident where “two Chinese patrol boats harassed an oil exploration ship in the Philippine claim zone 250 km west of Palawan.” Another important incident occurred in 2012 wherein “a Philippine maritime vessel responded to the presence of eight Chinese fishing boats around

Scarborough Shoal and tried to arrest one of them” (Buzyinski, 2012, 26). It has been becoming abundantly clear that the Chinese government has intentions of economically dominating the South China Sea through the usage of force. In using its naval and maritime law enforcement vessels, China has been forcing other countries to comply to its economic prowess and prevent them from taking advantage of the local resources. Additionally, in using its commercial fleet, China has been forcing itself into the sovereign waters of local countries to harness the available resources in their local waters.

iii. Nationalism

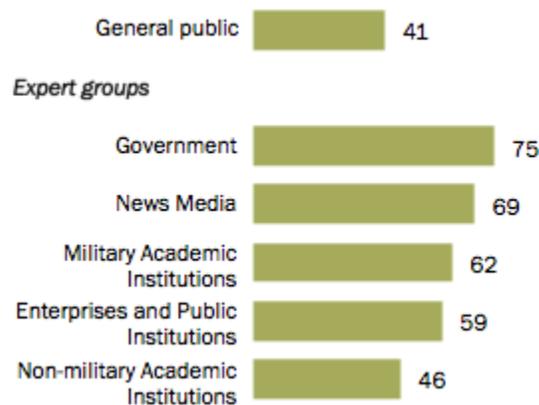
Since 2000, China has used its veto power in the United Nations Security Council ten times. All of the resolutions China vetoed were not regarding issues taking place in the South China Sea, however, they were all written by the United States, the United Kingdom, or France (United Nations, Security Council, 2019). The importance of this is that China is seeking to carve out its own influence outside of its borders. While it is Chinese government policy to assert its influence and expand the clout of China, this is also being influenced by the people of China. It is the general consensus that nationalism in China is increasing, consisting of a populist, mass movement, rather than a product of government policy which stems from “the vacuum created by the demise of communist ideology, from a deeply-felt national humiliation suffered during its recent colonial history, and also from greater international self-confidence gained with China's rising economic power” (Hoffman and Larner, 2013, 189). The colonialist history of China, combined with the country’s economic rise has forwarded the populist notion of China to be able to seek equal footing with other global powers. Domination of local regions provides this opportunity as it allows for China to control local neighbors and maintain a sphere

of influence. The South China Sea is the logical area for this expansion to occur due to the many trade routes and natural resources located in the region.

A recent “phenomenon in Chinese media is the emergence of new platforms focused on China’s relations with other countries” (Wang, 2015, 515). The emergence of the discussion of disputes such as the South China Sea in Chinese media has turned the topic towards a public forum. The now public nature of this topic, combined with the government control of the broadcasted information makes for a one-sided story in favor of the Chinese government. With many of the Chinese population in favor of expanding the presence of Chinese influence, this newfound exposure to Chinese exploits in the South China Sea has caused for greater interest in the region by Chinese citizens. The paradigm transformation of China’s media to cater towards a nationalist identity changes the social media landscape, where “national newspaper the *Global Times* and China Central Television Channel 4 (CCTV-4) emerged as two major sources of opinions and comments regarding the South China Sea.” The *Global Times* “trademark is a strong voice on foreign affairs, calling for China to adopt tougher and stronger positions, especially on disputes with other countries,” providing mostly opinion articles regarding topics concerning international affairs (Wang, 2015, 516). An important factor to note in the popularity of these newspapers is that *Global Times* circulates more than 2,400,000 papers a day, making it the third most circulated newspaper in China. Additionally, The *Global Times* is “a commercial newspaper, relying on individual readers’ subscriptions and retail sales, not on subscriptions by government funding.” (Wang, 2015, 516). The significance of the above figures is that the Chinese people are seeking to learn more about the issues in the South China Sea and are leaning towards opinion pieces that are confrontational in nature. The additional importance is that while these newspapers are influenced by the Chinese government, one must pay for a

subscription and is not provided to the citizenry by the government. This nationalist support for the expansion of Chinese influence has been seen on television where talk shows on China's national television network, Chinese Central Television (CCTV), discuss the benefits of an aircraft carrier. The popularity of the issues and discussions on maritime policy have led CCTV to air additional programs on the subject” (Ross, 2009, 62) One of the most recent popular programs on the CCTV was a series titled “The Rise of Great Powers,” discussing lessons of history regarding the rise of China as a world power.

Figure 1. Chinese Experts Say American Military Presence in East Asia is Major Threat



Note: The opinion poll was conducted in 2012. Percentages indicate major threat to China.

Source: Pew Research Center, The for Contemporary China, Report on 2012 China-U.S. Security Perceptions Project

While Chinese nationalism may have been sparked by government influence, it has now grown into a force of its own, with the Chinese people calling for greater Chinese influence abroad, especially in the South China Sea. There is a unified consensus between the Chinese

people and their government that China must assert itself as the region's dominant power. In a 2012 Pew Research Center poll, this assertion of dominance can be seen with the Chinese public's views on the American presence in the South China Sea. It is noted that over 40 percent of the general Chinese population were against an American presence in the South China Sea. Additionally, it can be seen that 75 percent of the Chinese government and almost 70 percent of the Chinese media were against America's presence in the region. These beliefs have helped support the Chinese doctrine in expanding its influence in the South China Sea (Wike, 2013). The support to expand Chinese naval forces for usage in the South China Sea "has spread to the provinces and to all sectors of Chinese society, including to universities, government think tanks, industrial circles, the political elite, and the general public" (Ross, 2019, 61). This popular support for the expansion of the Chinese navy is making it possible for the Chinese government to realize its goals for naval dominance of the South China Sea. In maintaining, the widespread support of the people, the government has legitimized its reasonings for expanding the influence of China abroad.

VII. Case Study 2: Russian Expansion in Ukraine

i. Militarism

The growth of the Russian armed forces since the collapse of the Soviet Union has in recent times, allowed for the Russian government to maintain the capability of using its armed forces to impress its capability on surrounding Eastern European countries. A signal of the growth of Russia's armed forces is the \$13,355,000,000 USD increase in military expenditure since 2008. In 2008, the Russian government spent on average \$48,033,000,000 USD on its armed forces, compared to 2018 where the Russian government has spent \$61,388,000,000 USD. From 2008-2016, there had been a steady increase in Russian military spending, however, from

2016 to 2018, the expenditures have dropped from \$82,576,000,000 USD to \$61,388,000,000 USD (Military Expenditure by Country, in Constant (2017) US\$ m., 1988-2018, 2018). While there has been a reduction in expenditures since 2016, the increase nevertheless corroborates with the time when Russia began its incursion into Ukraine.

In 2010, after the beginning of Russia's major increases in military spending, "President Vladimir Putin launched a massive 20 trillion rubles (\$700 billion at the time) military modernization project aimed to replace 70 percent of Soviet-era military hardware by 2020" (Gady, 2015). The purpose of this modernization program was to construct new fighter planes for the air force, new vehicles for the army, and to build around 50 new vessels for the navy. However, similarly to China, Russia did not spend its money on increasing the size of its personnel. Although the Russian military did not reduce its personnel, it focused its money on replacing antiquated Soviet military equipment. Since 2016, Russia's military expenditure has been reduced due to the declining Russian gross domestic product, leaving almost 20 million citizens in poverty. Due to Russia's bouts of economic instability, Putin has redirected his focus, promising social programs focuses on infrastructure repair and child welfare. The diversion of government funds has forced Putin to slash the military budget (Noack, 2019). While Russia's military expenditure has been declining due to its shrinking gross domestic product, Russia's military expenditure remains significantly above its pre-2008 levels and continues to maintain a large military presence in both Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

While over the past few years Russian military expenditure has declined due to a falling GDP, it must be examined why Russian military expenditure had dramatically increased from 2008 to 2016. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO had been steadily expanding its membership into Eastern Europe, including former Soviet bloc countries such as Poland, the

Czech Republic, and the Baltic states. Vladimir Putin's government feared that the Russian grip on its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, especially after the pro-Western color revolutions in Eastern Europe. Russia felt it necessary to respond to this NATO expansion by modernizing its armed forces to provide a counter-balance to the already present American and NATO forces.

Partially in response to "the Russian army's poor performance in the 2008 conflict with Georgia," Russia's dramatic increase in military expenditure influenced the goal of modernizing 70 percent of the army's equipment by 2020 (Pifer, 2016). The Putin government also intended on using this increase in military expenditure to close an existing technological gap between Russia and Western countries. While some of Russia's current capabilities are modern, 'such as the sea-launched cruise missiles that the Russian Navy launched late last year against targets in Syria, the Russian Air Force drops some smart weapons against targets in Syria, the majority appear to be "dumb bombs.'" This contrasts with the United States military of which drops almost always uses smart weapons against current targets (Pifer, 2016). Although Russia may not be as up to speed as the West regarding military development, its military modernizations were seen in 2014 when the Russian government used its modernized special operations forces in Crimea (Pifer, 2016). The advancements in equipment assisted the Russian military in having the capability to take Crimea from the Ukraine and maintain an undisputed military presence in the country.

As previously discussed, the expanding influence of the West arrived at its focal point in November 2013, when Ukrainians ousted the Yanukovich government for declining to enter an association agreement with the EU (McFaul, 2014, 170). The ousting of a Russian-backed government in Ukraine was the culmination of Putin's fears of Western European expansion. The Ukrainian government that replaced the pro-Russian President Yanukovich was deemed

both friendly to NATO and the European Union, both viewed in the eyes of Russia as scheming to draw Eastern European countries away from Russia and its sphere of influence. Putin viewed this change in government as a coup, putting the blame on the United States and Western Europe. Maintaining this polarized framework, Putin “reacted unilaterally in a way that he believed tilted the balance of power in his favor, annexing Crimea and supporting armed mercenaries in eastern Ukraine” (McFaul, 2014, 170). While the military actions in 2014 were fueled by Putin’s anti-Western ideology, it would not have been possible if there was no force to support the Russian government’s agenda. The availability of military force, made possible through an increased budget and modernization program, gave the Russian government the means to be able to invade Ukraine and foment armed uprisings in Eastern Ukraine. In maintaining military might to challenge the West, Russia has the capability to enforce its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe.

ii. Economics

The GDP of the Russian Federation in 2018, the most recent year data was taken, was \$1,657,553,770,000 USD. Compared to 2008, the Russian Federation’s GDP was 1,223,000,000,000 USD. While this may seem like an increase over the course of ten years, there had been a considerable drop in the Russian Federations GDP since 2013. Russia reached an all-time high for its GDP in 2013, topping at \$2,297,000,000,000 USD. From 2013 onward, there was a consistent drop in GDP down to \$1,283,000,000,000 USD in 2016. However, from 2016 onwards, the GDP had consistently improved to the numbers stated above in 2016 (GDP (Current US\$), 2019). The GDP of the Russian Federation indicates a few important points regarding its expansion into Ukraine. First, sustained increase in GDP from 2008 to 2013 correlates with Russia’s military modernization program that began in 2010. Second, the

considerable drop in GDP from 2013 to 2016 correlates with the time period of Russian's incursion into Ukraine and the unilateral take-over of Crimea in 2014. Unlike China's economic build-up being the key to its military expansion abroad, for Russia, it seems that its expansion into Ukraine is caused by economic distress.

One of Russia's economic priorities in Ukraine and in the former Eastern Bloc is its control over the import and export of oil. Russia's state-controlled gas company, Gazprom, facilitates the many gas lines that transit through these countries, where they sell oil to both Eastern and Western Europe. Russia is heavily dependent on the oil industry in the region as "Gazprom has no other markets to replace Europe. In addition, European markets account for almost all of Gazprom's profits, as the company faces a highly regulated, loss-making domestic market" (Crane et al., 2009, 32). It is also worth noting that the loss of these pipelines would affect the Russian government and economy as Gazprom's revenues account for 20 percent of the overall government income (Crane et al., 2009, 32). Besides Russia using these pipelines to enter the European energy market, Russia uses these pipelines to maintain leverage over former Eastern Bloc countries, as this is their only source of gas. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Russian government kept Gazprom's prices low to help preserve ties and maintain influence in former Soviet states (Crane et al., 2009, 32). What this has done was keep these former Soviet states dependent on Russia for gas and when these countries introduce policies opposed to Russia's, Gazprom astronomically increases their gas prices.

In the Ukraine, this has occurred on numerous occasions in the past decade when in 2006, Gazprom refused to supply Ukraine with gas after Ukraine refused to pay the high prices that were demanded. In response, Ukraine began to siphon gas from the Russian pipelines, causing for Russia and Ukraine to come to an agreement, with Russia restoring gas flow (Crane et al.,

2009, 33). However, disagreements over gas payments led to Gazprom ending the gas supply for Ukraine and Europe in January 2009. The Ukrainian government stated “that the cutoffs were inspired by political as well as economic reasons” where the “Russian government had actively attempted to thwart the Orange Revolution, which resulted in a second election for the presidency, which Russia’s preferred candidate lost” (Crane et al., 2009, 33-34). While the loss of the Ukrainian and Western European energy markets occurred in 2009, before the consistent drop in Russia’s GDP, this does connect to the 2014 invasion of Crimea. The Russia’s economic stagnation in 2013 forced the government to look towards ways to increase trade to strengthen the economy as the loss of the Ukrainian and Western European energy markets left Russia without a significant amount of its government income.

The 2009 loss of the Ukrainian and Western European energy markets not only may have led to the 2013 economic stagnation, but provided incentive for Russia to become militarily involved to reopen the gas lines to strengthen the economy. After the invasion of Crimea, ‘The Ukrainian Energy Ministry reports that “Ukraine has lost 80% of oil and gas deposits in the Black Sea and a significant part of the port infrastructure due to the annexation of Crimea”’ (Cohen, 2019). The importance of Crimea is the access it provides towards the Black Sea. Within the Black Sea, there are blocks of natural gas available for licensing ranging from 92 billion cubic meters to over 500 billion cubic meters. This includes “some 70% of potential natural gas deposits of the Black Sea are concentrated in just two blocks,” both of which are within the newly established Russian Exclusive Economic Zone around Crimea (Cohen, 2019). The Russian invasion of Crimea allowed for Russia to not only potentially reopen the Gazprom gas lines within the country, but to acquire the energy resource rich region of the Black Sea.

It is important to observe that since 2016, two years after the Russian invasion, the Russian GDP was able to rebound and continually rise, although not to the levels seen in 2013. The blockage of Gazprom's access to the oil markets in Ukraine and Western Europe combined with the economic stagnation of the Russian economy caused for Russia to use military force in Ukraine. The invasion of Crimea allowed for Russia to access the energy resources of the Black Sea to sell on the market and deny that same access to the Ukrainian economy, hurting their markets. The Ukrainian loss of Crimea also provided a display to the rest of the former Eastern bloc countries, that if one were to economically challenge Russia, there would not only be economic retaliation, but both political and military retaliation.

iii. Nationalism

From the year 2000 to the present, the Russian Federation has used its veto power in the United Nations Security Council a total of twenty-two times. The most precedented of these times was on 15 March 2014 regarding a letter sent by the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the President of the Security Council regarding the Russian invasion of Crimea. Additionally, all of the resolutions vetoed by the Russian Federation were written by the United States, the United Kingdom, or France (United Nations, Security Council, 2019). These vetoes by Russia are an indicator that not only is Russia seeking to establish a greater voice in global affairs, but that Russia will not allow for Western powers to dictate Russia's presence in Eastern Europe, especially in Ukraine.

This policy of maintaining a Russian sphere of influence in Eastern Europe is stemming from the Russian government's agenda that the Russia maintained a right to involve itself in neighboring countries maintaining a significant Russian population. In a speech delivered before a joint session of Russia's two parliamentary bodies, President Vladimir Putin stated 'Crimea

was now “a primordial russkaia land”, its key port of Sevastopol – “a russkii city” and Ukraine’s capital Kyiv – “the mother of russkie cities” (Alexseev, 2016, 160). This popularly held view was the government’s rationale for intervening in Ukraine and taking Crimea from Ukraine. After the ascension of the pro-European Union government in Ukraine, the Russian government saw this as a threat to ethnic Russians living abroad in bordering countries. The annexation of Crimea from Ukraine was a blunt statement to the international community that Putin, along with Russia, was determined to expand Russia’s influence in the former Soviet space under the notion of ethnic nationalism. The annexation of Crimea also had the goal of displaying to ethnic Russians abroad, and to the world, that these ethnic Russians “belonged in the Russian state just as much as the majority ethnic Russians (russkie) did” (Alexseev, 2016, 160). This nationalistic cause is to reassert the role of ethnic Russians in Eastern European society.

In his ethnic nationalist ideals, Putin claims that Eastern European civilization is centralized around Russia, with ethnic Russians playing a leading role (Alexseev, 2016, 161). This ethnic nationalism played out by Putin is an effort to reestablish the domination of ethnic Russians in the post-Cold War era. The former Soviet Union dominated Eastern Europe and allowed for ethnic Russians to play a much larger role in the communist society the Soviet Union advocated. Since the demise of the Soviet Union, Eastern European countries had been realigning themselves towards Western countries. This was blatantly seen after the ousting of the pro-Russian government in Ukraine and the installation of its pro-European Union replacement. This was deemed a threat to Russian interests as this pulled Ukraine, a country bordering Russia, away from its influence. Putin in “proposing a non-Marxist repackaging of the Soviet principle that ethnic Russians should play a leading role in the process of the ‘merging and getting closer’ (sliianie i sblizhenie) of all ethnic group,” (Alexseev, 2016, 160) sought to

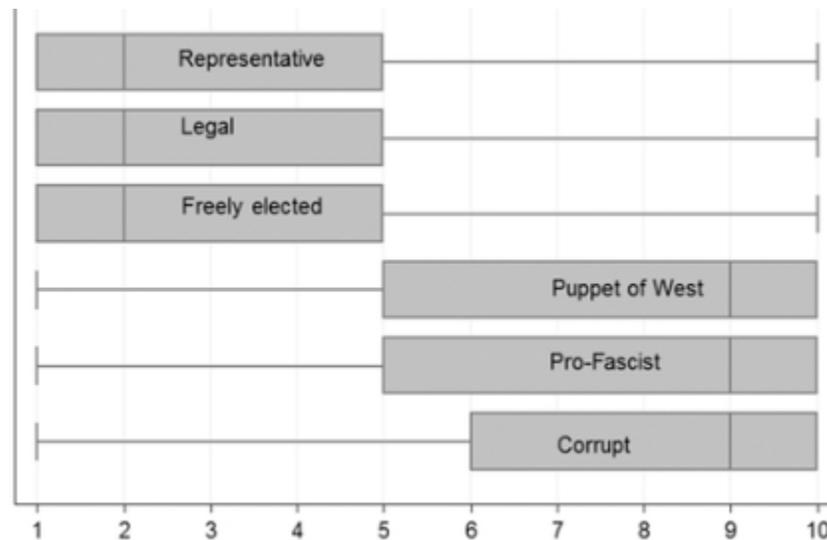
build ethnic nationalist sentiment in Russia to achieve the aim of rebuilding Russian influence. This catalyst provided Putin and the Russian government reason to annex Crimea and involve itself militarily in Ukraine.

The Ukrainian transition of government in May 2014 changed the Russian public's perception of the events occurring in Ukraine and the idea that this would cause for backlash against ethnic Russians living in Ukraine. Putin asserted that Russia's presence was to protect the Russian population from pro-European Union protesters. (Alexseev, 2016, 160). This belief combined by the Russian people's view that 'Ukraine's current leadership was not only corrupt, but simultaneously a "puppet of the West" as well as "pro-fascist"' (Hutchings and Toltz, 2016, 195-196) caused for popular support of the invasion. This belief is perpetrated by the notion that the Ukraine cannot maintain its own government and protect its own citizens, much less ethnic Russian inhabitants. Rather, Ukraine needs Russian paternalistic oversight to assure that it does not regress into a fascist-run state. Ukrainian realignment with the West and the European Union is the antithesis of this belief as those countries are not looking out for the benefits of Russia and will threaten Russian independence.

In achieving the means to popularize the nationalist agenda of the Russian government, disinformation is disseminated through social media to influence both Russian and foreign populations. After the 2014 pro-European Union revolution in Ukraine, wherein the pro-Russian president was deposed, the Kremlin took to social media branding "the post-revolutionary government a "fascist junta," the Russians took every opportunity to portray it and the Ukrainian state as purveyors of xenophobia, racism, and, especially, anti-Semitism" (Sokol, 2019). In likening the new Ukrainian government to a fascist regime, the Russian government was attempting to delegitimize the new government. This Russian propaganda is also noted for

conducting black flag-type operations where pro-Russian operatives would spray paint fascist symbols onto synagogues and blame these acts on right-wing Ukrainian groups (Sokol, 2019). This occurred in Crimea immediately prior and during the Russian occupation of the peninsula in an attempt to rally both Ukrainians and Russians to support the Russian intervention. This propaganda is also disseminated through government-sponsored programs such as RT which often twist real events and portray a distorted narrative (Sokol, 2019). An example of this was when RT published an article stating that the displacement of over 32,000 Ukrainian Jews was due to the rise in Ukrainian nationalism, when rather, it was due to the Russian invasion.

Figure 2. Agreement that the current Ukrainian government is...



Note: Opinion survey conducted in Russia during November 2014. Boxes represent 25th to 75th percentiles, vertical lines represent median

Source: Nation-building and nationalism in today's Russia (NEORUSS) project

The effectiveness of this disinformation can be seen in the Russian public's attitudes towards the Ukrainian government. As seen, the majority of Russians were under the impression that the pro-Western Ukrainian government was not only a western puppet state, but a fascist and corrupt government (Alexseev and Hale, 195). The usage of ethnic nationalism and disinformation by the Kremlin has concerted the Russian people to further advance foreign intervention, providing Putin the popular support to achieve his expansionist agenda.

VIII. Conclusion

In examining the foreign policies of both China and Russia in the South China Sea and in the Ukraine in the context of militarism, economics, and nationalism during the 2010s, it can be concluded that both countries have increased in expansionism within their claimed spheres of influence. While each of the three contexts discussed are distinctive in their own right, they are all interrelated. The economic might of China and Russia provide the monetary incentive to carry out their nationalist goals and to build their armed forces to enact their visions. Militarization provides China and Russia the means to protect trade routes and natural resources, strengthening their economies. Additionally, militarization incentivizes the citizens of China and Russia to support further military operations in the disputes regions both countries are involved. Nationalism provides the basis on which militarization can occur, giving the Chinese and Russian governments the public support needed to conduct military operations abroad, and provides incentive to protect and strengthen their economies.

From 2008 to the present, the influence of militarization can be seen in both China and Russia have both increased the budgets of its armed forces to modernize their armed forces in an effort to not only counter perceived Western aggression, but to maintain dominance in their respective regions. While Russia from 2013 to 2016 significantly decreased their military

spending, they continually increased their military expenditures from 2008 to 2013 and from 2016 to the present to both modernize its forces and to fund its military operations abroad. The increased military spending and modernization programs in China and Russia incentivized the increased military presence and operations in the South China Sea and in Ukraine.

The economic situations in China and Russia also proved to be a catalyst for increased expansionist policies. While China's gross domestic product is on the rise, the need to protect trade routes in the South China Sea is proving to be a growing necessity. With trade routes in the South China Sea providing China with the majority of its energy resources, it is apparent for the Chinese to build and maintain a large military presence to be able to deny adversarial forces access to those sea lanes. The presence of natural resources in the South China Sea also provides incentive for the expansion of Chinese influence. The ability to control these natural resources allows for China to use and distribute these resources to potential international clients. Similar to China, Russia's involvement in Ukraine revolves around control of natural resources. The blockage of oil pipelines from Russia into Western Europe heavily effected the Russian economy. Additionally, the presence of natural resource in the Black Sea, which could be access through Crimea, provided for incentive for the expansion of Russian influence in the country. The unilateral military action in Ukraine and Crimea allowed for Russia to regain access to its oil pipelines and access to the natural resources in the Black Sea, boosting the Russian economy.

The nationalist sentiments of the Chinese and Russian governments also proved to be a cause for the change in foreign policy in both countries. Both countries seek to reassert themselves on the global stage to provide a counter-balance to Western power. In China, this aim is achieved through the usage of social media to forward the ideas of Chinese nationalism. In using government-sponsored social media platforms, the Chinese government was able to

create a popularist movement that was not the product of official government policy. In achieving this, the Chinese government was able to gain support for Chinese expansion in the South China Sea from the population, legitimizing the government's foreign policy in the region. In gaining support for its expansionist goals in Ukraine, the Kremlin exploited ethnic nationalism and disinformation to legitimize its actions. Putin used the idea of ethnic Russian superiority to demonstrate Russia's claim to a sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. In recalling the dominance of the Russian people during the Soviet Union, Putin is stating that Russia is not behaving with unwarranted aggression, but rather that it is reclaiming influence that rightfully belonged to Russia. Through the usage of disinformation, the Russian government was able to distort situations in their favor to portray Ukraine as a fascist, anti-Semitic, unstable government that required Russian intervention to restore order. Not only was this propaganda spread in Russia, but in Ukraine and in other countries to accrue support for Russian intervention. The usage of nationalism and mass media allowed for China and Russia to successfully disseminate information to their populations in an effort to gain widespread support for their aggressive foreign policy goals.

The changing foreign policies of China and Russia can be likened to the early days of the United States, where under President James Monroe, the United States asserted itself as a regional power through the Monroe Doctrine. The Monroe Doctrine stipulated that the United States would challenge any European colonial power seeking to establish colonies in the Western hemisphere. In the case of China and Russia, both countries are challenging the presence of Western powers in their perceived spheres of influence through the usage of military force. In doing so, both China and Russia are seeking to impress their authoritarian governments on weaker nations, unable to protect themselves from the whims and selfish aims of these

governments. The current presence of international, Western partners, is keeping Russian expansionist goals in Ukraine and Eastern Europe at bay and keeps shipping lanes open for vessels sailing in the South China Sea.

Chinese and Russian expansionism in Ukraine and the South China Sea also have larger, global implications. These unilateral actions send a message to all countries that larger countries can bully smaller countries into accessing natural resources and controlling other countries' domestic interests. Giving into these power grabs, reminiscent of those of those in the pre-World War II era with Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany, empower these authoritarian countries into attempting to gain more power. As seen in the past, the empowerment of authoritarian countries national interests inevitably led to war. In stymieing these imperialistic goals at the root, proponents of the liberal world order have the opportunity to prevent the outbreak of war and needless suffering of innocent people. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly necessary for Western powers and their regional partners to provide a counter-balance to the aggressions of China and Russia, allowing for countries in these regions to maintain autonomy and the right to self-determination.

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