PROPAGATING THE IMAGE WITH PLAUSIBLE DENIABILITY: COVERT MEDIA POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS IN THE CONTEXT OF POSTWAR POSTMODERNITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper shows that international social media disinformation campaigns reflect the emergence of the nuclear era ending war as a viable deliberate policy option for great powers towards each other. They instead engage in competitive interference within the polities of third actors as well as targeting not only one another, but their own national public opinion. They aim to empower their respective local political allies at the expense of the perceived local confederates, witting or unwitting, of the other great power competitor. The paper explains that the rise of nationalism increased local resistance and thereby increased the political costs of overt external intervention. Postwar international human rights norms came to include national self-determination, making covert intervention abroad politically preferable by governments as well. The paper demonstrates that these propaganda operations are labelled as disinformation because their external state instigation is therefore purposefully obscured. These trends contributed to the emphasis on covert intervention and the creation of national security bureaucracies for implementing it. Today's hybrid warfare covert competitive interference is familiar. Russian state operative Internet-based covert intervention in the 2016 American presidential election highlights that the United States is fully integrated into the postmodern world that it helped create after 1945.

INTRODUCTION

Competive Cold War aid and assistance included financial and military support to respective local clients, exacerbating deadly conflicts within polarized communities around the world. Great power competition became indirect; the nuclear setting made avoiding the outbreak of direct conflict the primary, but not the only, high level strategic foreign policy goal. The US and the USSR responded to solicitations from readily identified local political actors in third states in more or less intense conflict with local opponents. They solicited US or Soviet external aid and assistance to prevail in their local struggle, and inexorably, their opponents sought aid from the other superpower opponent (Cottam, 1967). Great power competition for international influence and control focused on dominating polities, supporting local actors as political clients. The nuclear era was concurrent with the rise of mass political participation in the so-called developing world, and a feature of its expression included nationalism. The postwar focus of this competitive intervention increasingly was on polity constituencies, such as discontented ethnic minorities and classes, in addition to individual, cooperative political figures. Resistance to external intervention within the target polity intensified, raising the costs to the intervening power in attempting to control the target's foreign policy. Washington as well as Moscow interfered covertly and indirectly through local clients, which served to obscure this external intervention in the eyes of local public opinion (Schmitt 2018, 38-39). It thereby reduced immediate political resistance and lowered its immediate costs to the intervenor.

These efforts to obscure external intervention also served to reduce domestic resistance within the US to this intervention while the US promoted itself as an advocate for national self-determination (Downes and Lilley, 2010, 291). Ultimately, if a local client risked overthrow, the US and the USSR would at times directly intervene against the threatening local actor. E.g. the US intervened in Korea and Vietnam, the USSR in Afghanistan and earlier in Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

"The covert aspect of information and propaganda dissemination … has been of exceptional importance during the Soviet-American cold war" [*sic*] (Cottam and Gallucci, 1978, 32). This external intervention, if perceived by particular local actors in effect as an intolerable infringement on national sovereignty, would generate resistance. This opposition would often be suppressed, if necessary, through authoritarianism, justified as necessary for modernization (Duara, 2011). The rationalization was typically the portrayal of a dire threat from the aggressive other side in this local aspect of the global Cold War struggle. This intervention would contribute to intensifying domestic polarization within the target polity. The resulting exacerbation of the perceived threat from the local other would thus appear to vindicate the intervention by their respective external patrons in the eyes of each local side. Disinformation as part of what is often today called "hybrid warfare" would encourage this mobilization against the perceived threat (Isikoff and Corn 2018, 44). The local contestant and its external patron would portray this resistance-themed disinformation against the portrayed threat to national sovereignty as local in origin. The external instigation and support for one side or the other would be intentionally obscured, if not hidden (Voss 2016, 40). The extent to which this resistance was accepted as fundamentally local was limited; concealing indefinitely external involvement involving numerous individuals is not possible.

The lack of clarity of involvement, together with attitudes of suspicion and paranoia that emerge from generations of obscured imperial control, create fertile conditions for conspiracy theories. Post-colonial, so-called Third World polities are particularly prone to such perceptual stereotypical tendencies (Gray, 2010). Even so, the popularity of conspiracy promoter Alex Jones in the US is evidence of this mass public predisposition in at least one so-called developed state (Williamson, 2018). Large media company outlets market authors claiming conspiratorial threats to American national sovereignty by cabals of domestic and external adversaries. These narratives generate high sales volume and profits (Rutenberg, 2018). Hostility towards this intervention and the local actors supposedly cooperating in it is intensified due to perceived treasonous disloyalty, deceitfulness and underhandedness. The inherit malfeasance of the other requires that the perceiver maintain its own external cooperative alliances in order to counteract the former. The former may represent some perceived global movement risking critical national values with an array of international actors overtly and covertly in league with the despised local other. The perceiver must find and solicit counterbalancing external actors who shares its concerns about the fundamental values at stake.

The term, hybrid warfare, is problematic. Aside from the exploitation of new media and communication infrastructure technologies, Washington as well as Moscow displayed this covert policy behavior historically (Renz, 2016, Ransom, 1977). Target polities included domestic public opinion as well as foreign publics (Wilford, 2017). In an attempt at clarification, Schnaufer advocates for the term, non-linear warfare. He highlights the disinformation campaign component of a sovereign state's assault upon the resistance national morale of a target polity by intensifying polity polarization (2017, 22). Schnaufer reserves the term, hybrid warfare, for a sovereign state's sponsorship of an insurgency against a target actor. In late 2018, the term hybrid warfare still dominates news media headlines. They showcase the combination of national security organizational resource deployments along with exploiting Internet-based technologies to affect the target polity's power capabilities (Cottam and Gallucci, 1978). These attacks include covert psychological social media-oriented public opinion campaigns and damaging Internet-based infrastructure hacking attacks to achieve national security and foreign policy objectives.

This paper aims to elaborate on the internal, state-level factors of analysis that shape a state's international behavior, including the formation of preferences for tactical foreign policy aims (Waltz, 1954[2001]). The

neoclassical realist literature on international relations focuses analytical attention on the particular internal political characteristics of polities in shaping their international behavior. Neoclassical realism concentrates on the sources of the prevailing, yet evolving, distinctive behavioral patterns that states display in their relations with other actors (Kitchen, 2010). At the core of neoclassical realism, "grand strategy emerges through these processes of empirical assessment [of the political environment (BD)] and ideational competition within the state" (Kitchen, 2010, 136). This competition occurs among its different internal political constituencies. Domestic constituency political dynamics articulated in ideational forms mediate between this empirical assessment of the political environment and a state's foreign policy. These mediating variables, in the words of various neoclassical realists, include, *inter alia*:

divisions between and within elites in the foreign policy executive (Lobell, 2003, 2009); entrenched strategies formed at the national level during previous historical periods (Brawley, 2009); the need or desire of parts of the governing class to appeal to nationalist sentiment, even in contexts of economic interdependence (Sterling-Folker, 2009); embedded ideological constructions in the domestic political culture within which national foreign policy must be justified (Dueck, 2004, 2006, 2009); the ability of powerful domestic forces to shape the pursuit of the national interest by threatening the security in office of the government (Ripsman, 2009); the capacity of some states relative to others to 'extract' resources for the purposes of foreign policy (Taliaferro, 2009); and the role of a strong, coherent state, with a complementary ideology, to make expansionary policy on the part of a state possible [*sic*] (Schweller, 2008, 2009) (Quinn 2013, 164). The paper focuses on the forces of nationalism as a critical mediating variable in assessing post-Cold War external competitive political interference in the internal political dynamics of states. This paper applies the conceptualization of nationalism by Cottam and Cottam (2001) as the overarching framework for analyzing Moscow's post-Cold War hybrid warfare campaign targeting the US. It thereby highlights critical shared elements in post-Cold War grand strategy. While structural realism emphasizes security maximization amidst international anarchy, neoclassical realism emphasizes states' proactive policies to influence and shape their "environment" (Sears, 2017, 23). These policies target the policy making dynamics within polities to influence this political environment. This paper highlights the influence of Cold War-era organizational actors as domestic political vested interests that shape today's foreign policy. It incorporates neoclassical realism's orientation towards a historical sociological path dependency approach (Zodian, 2015, 189). These domestic vested interests, including the Cold War-founded national security establishments, are significant domestic factors shaping the foreign policy processes within their respective polities. Their influence includes constituting the prevailing behavioral patterns of an initiator state regarding attempts to generate influence within the policy making processes of a target state in the nuclear setting. Nationalism helps energize these behavioral patterns.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This political dynamic of competitive international interference to support the political influence of cooperative clients thereby intensifying domestic polarization continues in the post-Cold War context. The state-level political environment is one in which popular political awareness and expectation in effect to participate in policy making is nearly total among the global population (Cottam and Cottam 2001, 39). National self-determination concomitantly has become a human right, albeit one contentiously defined (Cassese, 2005, 16, 39, 63, 75, 84, 207). External interference in a polity's domestic political affairs is prone to be suspect by major constituencies in the target polity as a violation of this national community right. As with other forms of political interaction, social media and the Internet more broadly have facilitated this intervention. It has also provided greater opportunities to obscure the sources of this interference/intervention/violation (Sanger, 2018a, para. 22). The local client's actions on behalf of its external intervening patron are less likely to be rejected by other constituencies within the target polity through concealing this external patronage. Thereby, it lessens the possibility of a coordinated response by political actors within the polity to the cyber-intervention as well as to social media disinformation influence campaigns. So-called legitimation domestically of a policy proposal by these clients typically requires that

this external actor's instigation and patronage of the local client and its policy positions remain masked. It must be at least questionable and plausibly deniable, i.e. target polity consensus around 100% certainty of foreign origination cannot be achieved. If it is not concealed, then it must be publicly justified by claiming it is a counteraction to the imperialist intervention of another external actor.

Concomitantly, one's own collaboration with external actors is self-servingly perceived as not being collaboration. The collaboration may be explicit, i.e. overtly or covertly receiving funds and other material support from an external actor. The collaboration may be implicit, i.e. benefiting from externally-supported social media disinformation campaigns that were not formally requested by the local actor. Since the expenditure of resources was not in the form of a direct allocation into a local client's bank account or other direct gift, it may be more readily characterized as insignificant. It is not likely to be viewed as treasonous, particularly if the external actor is already viewed as an ally. Some American and European national political actors and constituencies view Putin's regime in Moscow as a redoubt for traditional, so-called Christian, conservative family and national values (LaFranchi, 2016). Post-Soviet era cooperation with Putin's regime is less likely to be viewed as vulnerable to charges of treason. It is rather to be seen as a recourse and resource to resist the assimilationist cosmopolitanism that so-called globalist values and their transnational and local carrier constituencies pose. According to this worldview, they are allegedly a threat to the nation's sovereignty and therefore ultimately to the nation's very existence.

American conservative populist nationalists have dismissed allegations that the Trump campaign won the 2016 presidential campaign with significant covert assistance from Moscow (Buskirk, 2018). They apparently view the threat to the American nation from globalist forces as so dire that they need allies from corresponding conservative populist nationalists in other polities rejecting globalization (Tharoor, 2016). In accordance with the psychological balancing maxim that the enemy of my enemy is my friend, they tend to perceive these related nationalists in accordance with the positive, ally stereotype (see Table 1). Treason never occurred; treason occurs only in promoting the influence of an enemy. Conservative Christian nationalist, anti-globalist Russia is not an enemy. Cooperating in the influence efforts by an initiator actor perceived, self-servingly or otherwise, as having benign motives is not treason:

[…] Trump lavished praise on the Russian hacking effort [against the Democratic National Committee, with this material later distributed by Wikileaks (BD)]. Referring to State Department emails that were deleted from Hillary Clinton's private email server, Trump announced at a campaign press conference: "Russia, if you're listening, I hope you're able to find the 30,000 emails that are missing . . . I think you will probably be rewarded mightily by our press." One month before the election, Trump announced: "I love Wikileaks." Trump clearly understood that the Russian hack was politically beneficial to his campaign […] a study by Politifact found that Trump referred to Wikileaks a total of 124 times during the last month of the campaign (Gaughan, 2017, 104). Gaughan describes Trump's response to Moscow's actions as "stunning" (Ibid.). Proving intent to participate wittingly in a criminal conspiracy or collusion is necessary to convict a participant on a charge of distributing illegally obtained classified or proprietary information (Savage, 2018a, Savage, 2018b).

Intermediaries between Julian Assange, Wikileaks' founder, and Russian intelligence agencies providing the hacked emails facilitates legally "plausible deniability" regarding Assange's intent in obtaining them (Barnes, Goldman and Savage, 2018, para. 23). Gaughan's theme is that the 1970's-era US Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) is outdated. The evidence is not clear that the Trump campaign's Russian contacts were illegal under FECA (2018, 104). Not surprisingly, at least one prominent Trump partisan views them as not illegal, not to mention treasonous (Buskirk, 2018). Trump in mid-2018 enjoyed exceptionally stable and high approval survey ratings among Republican party self-identifiers at 88%, while 7% of Democrats rated his performance positively (Dunn, 2018). In sum, among Trump partisans, treason is not an issue, except insofar as Trump opponents attempt to make it an issue to weaken Trump domestically. Republican party self-identifiers tend not to share the view of post-Soviet, anti-globalist Russian foreign policy behavior

and capability as being urgently dangerous to the US. Benefitting politically from Russian interference within the US polity does not constitute treason. The utilization of Russian influence does not justify in effect nullifying the 2016 US presidential election result and the subsequent US foreign and domestic policy process outcomes that derive from it.

Table 1 shows the negative and positive image simplification tendencies, i.e. stereotyping, towards which political contestants engage upon confronting a perceived challenge, whether it be threat or opportunity. The positive ally stereotype of another is derivative of a shared perceived threat from another actor, i.e. the enemy of my enemy is my friend. On the basis of the components of the stereotype of a target held by an initiator, the initiator adopts behavioral tendencies, i.e. policy pattern inclinations. As simplifications, stereotypes are in opposition to perceiving complexity in the internal politics determining the policies of a target actor and contribute to ineffective policies, or worse. Stereotyping associates with intense emotional affect and constitutes a pathology in the initiator actor's policy making process. Nationalism associates with stereotyping (Cottam and Cottam, 2001, 99-121). A negative comparative evaluation of self with a perceived, threatening, aggressive target actor seen as superior in capability and culture leads to the conspiratorial worldview inherent in the imperial stereotype.

Table 1: Image Attributes of a Perceived Source of Comparative Challenge (I.E. Threat or Opportunity) to Perceived Status of the Nation

Image/ Stereotype	Capability (as Perceived)	Culture (as Perceived)	Intentions (as Perceived)	Decision Makers (as Perceived)	Threat/Opportunity (as Perceived)
"Enemy"	Equal	Equal	Harmful	Small elite	Threat
"Barbarian"	Superior	Inferior	Harmful	Small elite	Threat
"Imperial" (stereotype of targeted imperial power by the colonial/client) [emphasis BD]	*Superior*	*Superior*	*Harmful*	*A few groups*	*Threat*
"Colonial/ Client" (stereotype of targeted colonial subject by the imperial power)	Inferior	Inferior	Benign	Small elite	Opportunity
"Degenerate"	Superior or equal	Weak-willed	Harmful	Confused, differentiated	Opportunity
"Rogue"	Inferior	Inferior	Harmful	Small elite	Threat
"Ally" (the individual social relationship analogue is "friend.")	*Equal*	*Equal*	*Good*	*Many groups*	*Threat (jointly shared towards a third actor by two "allies"; i.e. the enemy of my enemy is my "friend")*

The "ally" stereotype is derivative of a perceived intense threat (Cottam and Cottam, 2001, 98). Western conservative populist nationalists are prone to perceive an imperial threat to national sovereignty from globalization and its perceived globalist advocates. These conservative populist nationalists are correspondingly predisposed to perceive other conservative populist nationalists in the international community as external allies in their respective internal struggles with their perceived globalist adversaries including their domestic agents. This table was also reproduced by the author in an earlier article (DeDominicis, 2013, 52).

In this worldview with Russia as an ally, conservative populist nationalists from Russia having influence in the American polity is actually benevolent. It is certainly not a source of treasonous threat since both are supposedly fighting common enemies, e.g. political Islamist militants as well as transnational governance networks undermining traditional values. Corresponding historical cases include American prevailing views regarding London's influence over US foreign policy in the twentieth century and the influence of the Zionist lobby today. Sheldon Adelson with his wife, Miriam, were the biggest donors to Republican 2018 midterm congressional election campaigns. Their support acknowledges the Trump administration's intensification of US backing for Israel, particularly moving the US embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv (Peters, 2018). Immediately after the November 2018 US midterm elections, Trump awarded Miriam Adelson the Presidential Medal of Freedom (Krugman, 2018). In this worldview, the Cold War has been replaced by a loose alliance of nationalist actors who collectively see themselves resisting globalists seeking

to undermine and eventually erase national sovereignty (Chhor, 2017). Putin's Russia is in the camp of the former, supporting other nationalists such as the formerly-named National Front in France, and the Trump political phenomenon in the US (Henley, 2017). The political far-right has long fixated on George Soros' alleged globalist activities (Porubcansky, 2018). At least one EU establishment figure has called such populist nationalist forces a "fifth column" in Europe alleging hidden substantial support from Moscow (Stone, 2018). Each camp uses the supposed treasonous, conspiratorial collaboration of the other with external forces to justify its own cooperation, if not collaboration, with its external allies. The US rightwing religious political movement has been noticeably reticent to call attention to, not to mention condemn, the Trump administration. "Republican promises to shift the Supreme Court further to the right … have been one of the major reasons conservatives say they are willing to tolerate an otherwise dysfunctional Republican-controlled government" (Peters and Dias, 2018, para. 8).

The Cold War demonstrated how great powers fight their conflicts in the nuclear setting. A primary imperative is to maintain the greatest degree of control possible over potentially escalatory conflict dynamics. The US government has not formally declared war in its use of deadly force in international relations since the Second World War. One aim has been to avoid attempting to formulate a national public consensus that would politically further constrain presidential decisional latitude in a crisis (Boylan and Phelps, 2001). States are more likely to combat indirectly, by competing for influence within the polities of third actors. For this type of covert intervention to have greater effect, the source of the disinformation and black propaganda must be interpreted to be within the target polity itself. This imperative derives from the rise of mass public political participation including the ascent of nationalism and the preoccupation with national sovereignty. The proponent of the disinformation who is external to the targeted national polity must be not only hidden. The product must be portrayed as a product of autonomous elements within the targeted polity. "Black Elevation" is one notorious case regarding a covert Russian government-propagated Internet-based US influence campaign during the 2016 US presidential election campaign (Frenkel, 2018). It built on already-existing American societal polarization around the Black Lives Matter movement. Intensifying polarization through encouraging opposing sides simultaneously appears to be the Russian modus operandi (Conger and Savage, 2018). News reports reiterate the efforts by these Russian state actors to keep their lobbying efforts hidden (Rosenberg, Vogel and Benner, 2018).

Disinformation campaigns obscure their external patronage to avoid interpretation of the motives of the collaborators that would allow for target perceiver dismissal of the misinformation as foreign propaganda (Roose, 2018c). Moscow's interest in doing so lies partly in the Cold War legacy of such programs (Allen and Moore, 2018, Abrams, 2016). Prior to social media disinformation campaigns, the importance of identifying a source of organized political effort as a foreign government has expression in the requirement to register as a foreign agent. US law enforcement agencies arrested former Trump presidential campaign manager Paul Manafort for violating the US Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) among other charges (Vogel, 2018). Trump US presidential campaign manager Manafort hid the Ukrainian government as the client behind his firm's lobbying activities on President Yanukovych's behalf. The unfolding of the 2016 US presidential campaign and its consequences have revitalized the previously somnolent enforcement of FARA (LaFraniere, 2018).

Public international law has long required that individuals working as agents of influence for a foreign government must declare publicly their status. "States have always vigorously protested and claimed compensation when foreign States have exercised on their territory public [i.e. state government-orchestrated (BD)] activities that have not been previously authorized. They have also reacted in this way when the public action on their territory had been performed secretly or by State agents allegedly acting as private individuals" [*sic*] (Cassese, 2005, 51). Under pressure from the US government, Facebook now requires that purchasers of political ads verify that they are "United States citizens or permanent residents" (Frenkel and Isaac, 2018a, para. 11). A "loophole" in Facebook's new ad policy "allows advertisers, once they have verified their identities and are approved to run political ads, to fill the "paid for by" field in their

ads with whatever text they want, essentially letting them disguise their identity" (Roose, 2018b, para. 12). Facebook reported foreign-based social media influence campaigns targeting the US 2018 midterm congressional elections and other global targets (Guynn, 2018).

Not only international actors seek intermittently to hide and deceive target perceivers regarding instigation of social action. Political donors may prefer to hide their contributions purposefully if legally feasible: so-called dark money donors (Ridout, Franz and Fowler, 2015, 156). They seek to obscure themselves as the source in order to avoid strategically undesirable interpretations of intent. Thereby, by avoiding disclosure they aim to generate or support the desired influence on the target by the discreetly or indirectly supported political campaign or lobbying effort. One media report quotes one Democratic party activist claiming that research shows, "[t]hey [American voters (BD)] really dislike dark money and any type of political spending [but they] trust outside-group ads more than they trust candidate ads" (Burns, 2018, para. 25). Astroturfing, "that much-loathed, much-feared practice of faking grass-roots support online," utilizes the capacities of the Internet to more readily mispresent sources, levels and types of public support (Dewey, 2016, para. 4). Internet communication generates concern that large organizations disguise their identities to seek "grassroots" credibility for greater influence over their targets, i.e. they "astroturf" (Shafie, 2008, 401). Astroturfing at the international level involves for-profit companies hiding behind the façade of a non-profit, non-governmental organization (NGO) that implies universalistic humanitarian motivation. It thereby increases their influence within the process of global policy making. Durkee highlights the challenges of astroturf activism at the international business regulatory level regarding, for example, tobacco commerce. UN-approved regulations currently forbid for-profit businesses from the formal right of consultancy input into UN international treaty negotiations (2017, 206). For-profit corporations create and manipulate non-profit NGOs to mask their covert business input into UN international treaty-making via the formal designation as an UN NGO consultant:

As for transparency problems, the fact that the identities of the actors driving the agenda are obscured (an *opacity* problem) renders more complex the more common problem that it is difficult to determine an organization's mission and, in turn, its fidelity to that mission (a *mission accountability* problem). These problems make it challenging for gatekeepers to do their job, which perhaps explains the fact that those gatekeepers have largely avoided excluding organizations for opacity or mission accountability issues (a *gatekeeping* problem). Finally, a legal regime that forces nonprofit organizations either to engage in astroturf activism or to not participate at all sacrifices benefits the private sector may otherwise offer to the lawmaking process (an *access* problem) [*sic*] (Durkee, 2017, 243-44).

Durkee calls for full disclosure of for-profit business influence in UN treaty-making by modifying the current international legal regulatory regime. "An international lawmaker must be able to identify and rely on the authenticity of the mission the organization pursues in order for the lawmaker to effectively assess that input" (Durkee, 2017, 245). I.e. the international lawmaker has to have a plausible opportunity to discern the ultimate motivation of the NGO to evaluate its input. Generally, by disguising its intent or instigation, a political actor thereby aims to generate the desired cognitive and affective response from the target perceiver (Aakhus, 2016, 202-03). The perceiver's interpretation of the public campaign would be negatively skewed should the perceiver see the particularistic, for-profit motivation behind the advocacy of a public policy position. As Heider (1958[2015]) noted, participant observers as so-called naïve scientists tend to evaluate and attribute motives while interpreting the significance of a perceived action by another (Harris and Fiske, 2008, 210-11, Körner, Tscharaktschiew, Schindler, Schulz and Rudolph, 2016, 2-3). Inferences regarding a perceived causal actor's mental state are critical for understanding and explaining social phenomena (Vogeley, 2013, 297). Political contestants generating disinformation have an incentive to hide their partisan association so that the receiver is less prone to dismiss the disinformation for what it is, i.e. partisan propaganda. The rise of dark ads on social media is a feature both of domestic and external covert disinformation campaigns (Singer, 2018b).

According to social psychological concepts of motivational attribution, cognitive dissonance and balancing, a perceiver will tendentiously impute plausible causation to a political act if one is not explicitly provided (Pishghadam and Abbasnejad, 2017, 137). The notion of transparency requires awareness of sponsorship for a political act. With or without transparency, the perceiver will likely attribute, correctly or not, sponsorship. Making this sponsorship known allows the perceiver to have what he or she believes to be the minimum necessary information. It is needed to attempt plausibly to predict the political implications of the perceiver's own choice of behavior in response. On the basis of understanding the source and motivation, and therefore the real significance, of the public statement claim, the perceiver selects his or her own response to the attempt to persuade this perceiver.

Regime Control and Political Legitimation

The history of Donald J. Trump's national political career raises questions about whether the chief executive of the US government actually believes the conspiracy theories which he has promoted continuously:

"We have a president who pushes these ideas because he built a coalition that believes in conspiracy theories," said Joseph Uscinski, an associate professor of political science at the University of Miami who studies conspiracy theories. "He has to continue pushing these ideas to keep his people motivated" … "If we had President Jeb Bush, we wouldn't be wondering if he believed these theories" (Roose, 2018a, para. 21, 25). Trump politically exploited successfully the American cultural "institutionalized technique for recreating the sacred" to become the national leader (Mast, 2016, 243, referencing Durkheim, 1912 [1995] and Shils and Young, 1953). A core component of Trump's coalition are evangelical Christians perceiving a threat to American national sovereignty, equated effectively with protecting traditional patriarchal White Judeo-Christian supremacy (Hummel, 2016, 3, 5). The global postwar rise of political sectarianism emerges amidst religious community political mobilization in response to intensifying community challenges from perceived out-groups (Martin, 2014). Political Islam has been excoriated in Western media, but it is a global phenomenon in response to weakening of traditional community ties and bonds of solidarity (Sajoo, 2017).

National self-identity expression amidst globalization's attendant economic insecurity and social anxiety tends increasingly to shift in terms of compensatory attitudes to a traditional, conservative focus. It emphasizes stereotyped romantic parochiality of the nation: workplace, home, family and church. When utilitarian economic control incentives weaken, i.e. "eudaemonic legitimation" declines, then this neo-traditional propaganda may compensate as nationalism remains a political regime's foundation (Robinson, 2017, 348). The political struggle over legitimation is as much about controlling public political participation in the policy making process as it is about promoting it (Brown and Jones, 2000). Outsourcing and privatization is a way to manage public opinion participatory critique by obfuscating the linkage with public/state institutions. Interference in the sovereign affairs of the national polity critically threatens the authority of perceived political collaborators/traitors, including their policy proposals.

Perception of imperialism is subjectively defined; the degree and extent of external actor's influence within the target is intolerable, i.e. imperialistic, if the target actor(s) perceive it so. The issue then becomes how widespread and intense within the polity is this perception of imperialism. Worldwide conservative nationalist populism as a reaction to globalization is characterized by elements of the imperial stereotype motivating it in reacting to global capitalism (see Tables 1, 2 and 3). The imperial stereotype reflects the Hobson-Lenin perception of motivation of global capitalism (Cottam, 1977, 70-71). The imperialist's motivation is to exploit the perceiver's national community via neo-colonial instruments of informal, behind-the-scenes control (Ibid.). Table 2 elaborates upon the imperial stereotype in terms of the politically relevant components of the simplified image in regard to policy making in an initiator actor perceiving an imperial threat from a target. This image associates with familiar and tragic conspiracy theories that still emerge in today's political discourse, e.g. anti-Semitism. In the contemporary setting of nuclear weaponry and globalizing economics, actors holding this stereotype tend to see the threat from multilateral

international political economic agreements and frameworks. Trump exploited this sentiment as a critical component of his successful presidential election campaign.

Table 2: The Imperial Stereotype

Motivation of Target:	A Simple, Single-Minded, And Aggressive Motivation to Control in Order to Control, Exploit and Assimilate.
Decisional Locus of Target:	A diffuse and obscured but monolithic network decisional structure.
Decisional Style of Target:	Characterized by a superior degree of rationality and technical competence, sufficient to plan and orchestrate elaborate conspiracies, i.e. the hidden hand behind political events and trends.
Capability of Target:	Its capability advantage derives from the imperial power's cultural and technical superiority. The imperial actor is extraordinarily clever and competent, and has access to virtually infinite external technical resources. The true nature of the hidden master plan may be revealed and the requisite national will and determination mobilized to counteract national assimilation through nationalist militant action. If the anti-sovereign national assimilation scheme it has propagated is revealed and resisted, then the highly rational imperial threat will seek new means of covert neocolonial imperial control. E.g. obstruction of multilateral trade, labor and finance liberalization is supplanted by UN-orchestrated global cooperation to combat alleged human-induced climate change.
Those Compatriots Who Disagree with the Above Portrayal of the Target:	Those citizens who fail to understand this picture of the imperial master are either traitorous imperial globalist agents or, at best, naïve dupes of traitorous imperial globalist agents.

Data adapted from Cottam and Cottam, 2001, 111-14, Cottam, 1977, 70-73. The imperial stereotype derives from perception of threat from an actor perceived as superior in culture and capability. It typically is associated with colonial and post-colonial communities. It also applies in postmodern developed societies experiencing increasing socio-economic income differentials. As a consequence of globalization, production, commerce and financial transactions generate distribution of benefits tending toward the more highly educated as a minority of society. Those without higher education tend to remain at the base of the consumption percentile. 33.4% of US adults had a bachelor's degree or higher in 2017 (United States Census, 2017). 65% of jobs in 2020 will require post-secondary education (Lumina Foundation, 2015).

Table 3 summarizes the emotional affective and behavioral policy predispositions that associate with each negative stereotype; as noted, the ally stereotype is derivative of a shared perceived threat. The imperial stereotype leads to behavioral action by the initiator in unstable political conditions. The possibility of challenging the imperial threat is no longer perceived as hopeless because perceived weaknesses and vulnerabilities have emerged. The extended, deep 2008 global recession accelerated the pace of societal change, e.g. the election of an African-American as US President, intensifying the mobilization of conservative populist nationalism.

Table 3: Images and Policy Predispositions

Image/Stereotype of Perceived Challenger	**General Policy Predispositions Towards Perceived Challenger**	**Policy Predispositions Towards Perceived Challenger in Intense Conflicts**
"Enemy"	Wary suspicion, containment	Hostility, defense
"Barbarian"	Fear, form alliances	Preemptive strikes, precipitate alliance intervention (potential for genocide)
"Imperial" (stereotype of the imperial actor by the colonized)	*When domination is stable: fear, avoid conflict, submit*	*When conflict is unstable: anger, shame, struggle for liberation*
"Colonial/Client" (stereotype of targeted colonial subject by the imperial actor)	Paternalistic policy guidance and direction	Most commonly nonviolent repression
"Degenerate"	Contempt, mobilize for competition	Disgust, offensive aggression
"Rogue"	Derogate, isolate	Hostility, violent repression (potential for genocide)

Each image/stereotype has policy behavior trend patterns that associate with it (Cottam and Cottam, 2001, 100). The deep, extended global economic recession in 2008 disrupted the regime control system in place in the US and elsewhere as illustrated by the election of an African-American as US president and his re-election in 2012 (see Table 6, Figure 1 and Figure 3). US White traditional conservative self-identifiers tended to react strongly to this accelerated political evolution in the American polity. The vulnerable Democratic female candidate for president as Obama's successor further instigated a response from this constituency viewing its position under continuing challenge, energizing the Tea Party movement and Trump presidential campaign. This table was also reproduced by the author in an earlier article (DeDominicis, 2013, 54).

The Imperial Image and the Plausibly Deniable Hidden Hand

Cottam and Cottam note that nationalistic elements within the so-called developed world continue to see neo-colonial imperial threats to the sovereignty of the nation. Progressive elements have tended to abandon nationalism as a progressive vehicle and as an ideal for promoting social change, at least to varying degrees. This abandonment is most advanced among the progressive elite in continental Western Europe (2001, 48). Significant components of the mass public remain nationalistic and they can be mobilized by political entrepreneurs, especially during periods of accelerating societal change (Ibid., 53). In the conspiratorial imperial worldview, on the surface the system appears to operate through local leaders. Cottam and Cottam note that in fact this nationalistic element tends to view the imperial threat as pulling the strings, often at a level of great detail. Orchestrating developments of extraordinary complexity and doing so with great subtlety is the view of this conservative nationalistic/populist societal constituency towards the perceived imperial threat. The description of this style has it operating through a "hidden hand" (2001, 112-13). This hidden hand purportedly orchestrates conspiracies working through suspect, scapegoated groups and particular, publicly vilified individuals (Druxes and Simpson, 2016, 8). Budapest-based Hungarian analyst Ivan Dénes, witnessing the rising political hegemony of Viktor Orban's Fidesz conservative nationalist populist movement, describes the rhetoric these movements employ:

The offenders are never flesh-and-blood figures, but rather mythic beings exempt from the rules of human coexistence and communication. […] It goes back to disastrous experiences of political terror, mass murder, military occupation, or territorial loss (cases, such as: Italy, 1796-1797, 1809; Germany, 1806, 1918, 1945; Spain, 1808-1809, 1936-1939; France, 1793, 1870, 1940; Poland, 1795, 1831, 1863, 1939, 1947; Hungary, 1849, 1920, 1944/1945, 1949, 1956/1957). And these instil an overwhelming fear of the possibility of their reoccurrence, the whole community trying to avoid this at any price and by any means. Its usual concomitant is a conspiracy theory with the victimized image of the community self and a diabolic image of an enemy bent on conquering, exploiting or annihilating it [*sic*] (2012, 521-22). Echoes emerged in Trump's January 2017 inauguration speech claiming "American carnage" within the disproportionately white US interior due to global finance and trade liberalization (Berezin, 2017, 327).

Trump's electoral strategy focused on traditional conservative American White mobilization against groups that appear to threaten traditional values corresponding with the former's authority predominance. It invoked scapegoating to appeal to those resenting loss of socio-economic status due to increasingly inadequate skills in the globalizing American economy. "I love the poorly educated!" Trump shouted in early 2016 at one campaign rally (Berezin, 2017, 324). In Germany, "right-wing populism generally holds Russia up as a model against local democratic elites" (Druxes and Simpson, 2016, 5). The European regional integration variant of globalization appears to benefit most strongly a constituency which tends to be younger and multilingual along with higher levels of higher educational certification:

[…] [Y]ounger Europeans are more likely to report an attachment to the European Union than those 55 and over, according to the most recent Eurobarometer survey. In Britain before the [Brexit (BD)] balloting, surveys showed that 57 percent of voters ages 18 to 34 wanted it to remain in the bloc. (An identical percentage over age 55 supported the Leave campaign.) (Breeden, 2016, para. 14). They are prone to exploit the substantive social mobility and social creativity/self-identity innovation opportunities that Europeanization creates for the multilingually-skilled and more highly-educated.

As Cottam and Cottam note, social creativity/self-identity innovation opportunities involve the individual or group perceiver adopting different comparative dimensions. These dimensions must be materially feasible and substantive as a basis for engaging in action responses, e.g. Europeanization, to a negative comparative self-evaluation. In response to an unfavorable in-group comparative self-evaluation, individual social mobility and ingroup social creativity support peaceful conflict resolution. Social competition, in contrast, involves severing the perceived, zero-sum competitive relationship. It may be exhibited by a

national minority seeking self-determination by seceding, violently or otherwise, to create a sovereign state (2001, 98). In a nation state, this perception of threat as perceived by the nationalistic, traditional constituency today tends to shift towards those perceived domestic proponents of globalization. Political entrepreneurs, e.g. Trump, may emerge to exploit this perception of fear and encourage perceptions of injustice and unfairness during these periods of accelerating societal change. Such periods include phases of acceleration of extensive socio-economic restructuring of society, as occurred in the developed world in the 1930s and again in 2008.

Cottam and Cottam note that when the weaker, subordinate group considers the relationship and interaction as unjust, then emotions and action preferences will be different on both sides. Experiencing jealousy, the weaker party seeing an imperial threat will make claims, argues Smith (1993, cited in Cottam and Cottam, 2001, 113). Equality (of resources, status, or power) will be a demand while the conflict receives considerable attention. Even though they are well aware of the potential consequences, rebellion may be the consequence as anger and shame accompany the feeling of jealousy and can push people toward antagonistic and hostile actions. An important component in producing the propensity for hostile action toward a more powerful group is the lack of what the subordinate group perceives as fairness. Such actions are likely when social mobility and creativity are not perceived as options and when the subordinate group identifies alternatives (2001, 113-14). In such situations, i.e. the deep global recession that began in 2008, the extremity of mutual stereotyping increases among constituencies polarizing around intrastate traditional political polarization fault lines.

Cottam and Cottam claim that the conditions of not having options for social mobility and creativity occur when the superior group is not permeable and when the salience of the attachment to one's group is highest (Lalonde and Silverman, 1994, cited in Cottam and Cottam, 2001, 114). For the latter conditions to be in place, the subordinate group must perceive the system of dominance to be unstable. This instability provides the subordinate group with cognitive alternatives to the current system. The salience of social identity increases people's sense of reality and arousal in such situations and emotional intensity would increase. The identification of alternate options together with threats to prevailing goals and standards can provoke these conditions (2001, 114). The insurgent Trump campaign articulated alternate, stereotype-based options while simultaneously intensifying perceived threats to traditional norms in mobilizing support. As explained below, Internet social media facilitate increasing the salience of social identity.

Labelling as rational or irrational reflects the colonial stereotype when perceiving an influence expansion opportunity challenge from a target perceived as weaker in culture and capability (see Tables 1 and 3, Cottam and Cottam, 2001, 118-21). An actor seeking to civilize a target weaker in perceived capability and culture will determine what is appropriate behavior, and inappropriate behavior is irrational. A perceived barbarian threat from a powerful actor would also be characterized as irrational as well as cruel and dangerous (see Tables 1 and 3, Cottam and Cottam, 2001, 108-11). In sum, the terms rational and irrational are rhetorical political weapons aiming for influence if not control by the deployer of these terms. In the policy making process, the term is also employed as part of the political struggle over policy options in terms of stereotyping opponents. Allies of globalization would point to the material wealth that epistemic communities such as neoclassical economists would highlight as a consequence of trade liberalization (Mkandawire, 2010). Some structural realists would also point to the benefits of international organization under US leadership for its allies to gain security benefits from American benign hegemony (Steele, 2007). Being rational in these terms is being a supporter of neoliberal and structural realist formulae for promoting global peace and prosperity under US postwar global leadership.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This study has relied on a survey of the public record as well as triangulation using conclusions and information provided in peer-reviewed scholarly publications. This analysis relies upon *New York Times*

investigative reporting partly because scholarly research indicates that it is the most influential US news outlet via agenda setting for other media news outlets (Denham, 2014, 18-19). This study outlines a framework for comprehending the political incentives behind externally-originated covert disinformation operations as well as local political propaganda campaigns. Note that the legacy of Cold War covert operations is used to justify current covert operations, e.g. the Iranians have called their cyberespionage hacking corps the "Ajax Security Team" (Sanger and Erlanger, 2014, para. 14). The name "Ajax" corresponds with the codename for the 1953 CIA operation that overthrew the Iranian secular nationalist prime minister Mohammad Mossadeq to install Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (Blout, 2015, 35).

During the Cold War, the American leadership tended to defer from highlighting the covert, long-term, continuous struggle with the USSR to intervene globally (Carson and Yarhi-Milo, 2017). Competitive pressures confronting the for-profit media would also comport with its consumer public's emotional predisposition to avoid cognitive dissonance by deemphasizing these events. These US actions, while supposedly necessary to contain a nuclear-armed, Soviet enemy aggressor, were discomforting to an American public generally disengaged from foreign affairs (Cottam and Gallucci, 1978, 32-33). The American romantic self-image included a commitment to national self-determination. Participating to varying degrees in the overthrow of foreign regimes would be generally uncomfortable for American public opinion due to "cognitive dissonance" (Adie, 2003, 13). In the Cold Warrior viewpoint, American citizen voters often did not understand the nature of threat to their national security that enemy Soviet worldwide subversion efforts posed. The Soviet leadership had the advantage in that it allegedly did not have to worry about Soviet public opinion. The US national security establishment would need some degree of insulation from American public opinion pressure in carrying out its long-term global struggle with Moscow and its allies, a struggle that was often covert (Segal, 1994, 389-90).

The end of the Cold War appeared to vindicate this long-term battle of the vast US national security establishment (Platon, 2015). The USSR, seen after the Second World War as bent on attempting what Hitlerian Germany failed to achieve, surrendered its empire and collapsed (Cox, 2011, 629-30). The Cold War witnessed terrible suffering and the deaths of millions in places like Southeast Asia. Yet, the imperialist, nuclear-armed Soviet Union was defeated and expired without another, worldwide hot war. In this Cold Warrior worldview, forty-five years of persistent resistance by Cold War containment institutions, despite numerous obstacles and intermittent failures of US political leadership, had succeeded. These institutions included the intelligence and covert action arms of the US national security establishment, who were able to compensate for the (alleged) intermittent failures of US political leadership.

Few international relations experts anticipated Gorbachev's détente strategy not to mention the end of the Cold War and the peaceful dissolution of the USSR (Winzoski, 2017, 682). Yet, this apparent victory appeared to illustrate to them that they understood the challenges to US national security, while the mass public requires leadership. If leadership is poor, then public opinion will not be supportive. Even so, among the most militant Cold Warriors, the stakes were too high to allow US national security policy to be made by fickle public opinion as represented by the Congress. Lt. Col. Oliver North admitted to lying to the US Congress about US covert operations for this reason during the public US Congressional Iran-Contra hearings ("Special to the New York Times," 1987). Congressman Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.), chairman of select House committee on the Iran-Contra scandal, responded, "the task of leadership is to build public support for policy" (Hamilton, 1987, para. 23).

Public opinion abroad was to be influenced, led and, if necessary, circumvented internationally and a similar imperative had come to apply to US domestic public opinion. These Cold War trends lead to an increasing convergence between US military and covert intelligence operations (Chesney, 2012). The US national security establishment that emerged out of the Cold War claiming victory was strengthened and adapted to meet the new challenge of the G.W. Bush administration's war on terror (Patman, 2009). The post-Soviet Moscow security establishment interfered in the 2016 US presidential election to manipulate or at least

influence US public voter opinion. The consequences confirmed the necessity of leadership in shaping US public opinion by the US national security establishment (McGeehan, 2018, 56-57). The elected leadership should be the face of this control, a domestic form of internal, informal control over public opinion. It conforms with the elite paradigm of politics as articulated by Mills (1956 [2000]). Those not equipped educationally or temperamentally to participate satisfactorily in this US-led, Cold War-founded globalization may react negatively to their perceived marginalization. Donald J. Trump claims to represent them (Kardaş 2017, 8-9). Amidst this polarization, each flank may scapegoat and stereotype the other, instigated by the 2008 recession, the longest and deepest recession since the 1930s.

Trump's support base appears to represent the anxiety and insecurity of sections of American society that perceive a threat from the forces and consequences of globalization. They perceive a threat to their positive identity self-evaluation, and this threat is imperial in nature, i.e. superior in culture and capability: global capitalism and globalization. Global capitalism as well as the international regulation of its behavior and side effects is stereotypically portrayed and perceived as a threat to the sovereignty of the nation state. This segment of the public tended to support Donald J. Trump because they trusted him as a perceived American traditional conservative White advocate as having the political capacity to confront these forces. Trump is a "master of the deceptive arts […] [and] in a treacherous world, you need a treacherous ally -- treacherous, at least, to your mutual enemies" (Ogden, 2018). Hence, ""I can't really say that anything he says is true," a Wyoming Trump supporter told us a few days ago, "but I trust him." More to the point, as his former press-manager-for-a-moment, Anthony Scaramucci, put it: "He's an intentional liar. It's very different from just being a liar liar."" [*sic*] (Egan, 2018, para. 10-11).

The Globalization of Hybrid Warfare

This need to maintain plausible deniability as achieved through manipulation of social media had precedents in the rise of outsourcing of security operations to private sector contractors. The Russian government has relied on covert military outsourcing through mercenary groups associated with the Moscow authorities such as the Wagner group (Higgins and Nechepurenko, 2018, Ilyushina, Hodge and Shukla, 2018). After the collapse of the USSR, NATO outsourced military advising to a for-profit consultancy group of former US officers for Croatia's summer 1995 offensive to expel Serb forces to end the Bosnian war (Cohen, 1995). Booz Allen, Boston Consulting Group, and McKinsey closely engage the Saudi government in providing a wide range of national security-related services while simultaneously coordinating with Washington (Forsythe, Mazzetti, Hubbard and Bogdanich, 2018). The use of contractors as mercenaries or otherwise is an ancient practice because of its political utility (Peters, 2006). States view the outsourcing governments as having state responsibility for the behavior of these outsourced contractors, but to the public the outsourcer's control over them is obscured. A blowback danger is that the arms-length relationship leads to the potential for contractors developing capacities for government service to be co-opted via monetary gain by other governmental actors. Palantir, Cambridge Analytica and Strategic Communications Laboratories with relationships with state agencies apparently developed capacities exploited by other private actors. These actors may have had relationships with other state agencies (Confessore and Rosenberg, 2018).

Outsourcing these services including cyberattacks adds another layer of plausible deniability. Private contractors working with the US or Russian national security establishment can plausibly, if not convincingly, appear to be private actors responsible for their own deeds. Reporting of discussion for greater reliance on private contractors to replace US forces in Afghanistan is the latest proposal for US official state responsibility to be diluted. Erik Prince, the founder of the Blackwater firm involved in fighting at the beginning of the US occupation of Iraq, has proposed this privatization of western security activities in Afghanistan. The Kabul government's position appears increasingly precarious since the US drew down its force level to a small fraction of its troop strength at the height of the US-led occupation. Critics of this proposal include Brian Katulis, a senior fellow at the left-leaning Center for American

Progress. Katulis noted that privatization would make oversight of the Afghan fighting harder for Congress and others because knowing precisely what is happening in the war. One report quoted Katulis: "It makes an already murky position murkier … The cost savings is not worth the potential damage to oversight of U.S. national security" (Lee, Kube and Lederman, 2018). The Trump administration confronts a political crisis due to its difficulty in delivering on its campaign promise to resolve favorably the "stalemate" in the generation-long Afghanistan war (Woodward, 2018, 222, 258, 260).

Making the public political situation murkier is in fact one of the tactical aims of privatization. By establishing an arms-length relationship via mercenary contractors, the government aims to obscure publicly its responsibility for policy actions undertaken by utilizing for-profit outsourcing. The aim in covert disinformation campaigns is to exacerbate polarizations within the target state that already exist (Satariano, 2018). Isikoff and Corn report that General Valery Gerasimov, chief of staff of the Russia's armed forces, in February 2013 published an article in an obscure Russian military journal. Gerasimov outlined the harnessing of social media to "weaponize political divisions within another nation" through information warfare to weaken targeted governments and regimes (2018, 44).

Isikoff and Corn note that as one part of the reformulated doctrine of "hybrid warfare," Gerasimov called for greater reliance on nonmilitary means to achieve political and strategic goals. The role of social media in facilitating what became known as the Arab Spring apparently illustrated the usefulness of social media for achieving desired political outcomes in targeted polities. "Frontal engagements" by military units would become "a thing of the past" (2018, 44). Isikoff and Corn labelled this portrayal the "Gerasimov doctrine" (2018, 190). The St. Petersburg-based, unofficial state sponsored hacking group, the Internet Research Agency, illustrated the effectiveness of this hybrid warfare tactic in the 2016 US presidential campaign. "With fewer than a hundred operatives … the I.R.A. achieved an astonishing impact: Facebook estimates that the content reached as many as a hundred and fifty million users" (Osnos, 2018, para. 12). The degree of American cultural discourse awareness and sophistication in the Agency's ongoing "Project Lakhta" American polarization promotion disinformation campaign has increased (Goldman, 2018, para. 5). The US government has intensified its cybernetic countermeasures (Barnes, 2018). Russian specialists trained Burmese military personnel in social media disinformation techniques, exacerbating virulent domestic ethnic animosities and targeting externally-based dissidents (Mozur, 2018).

The for-profit motive has interacted with the national security establishment to promote outsourcing. Digital media companies oppose restrictive privacy laws because they reduce their capacity to aggregate and sell data to public opinion campaigners as well as private sector marketers (Confessore, 2018). The *New York Times* reported that Facebook expanded its own outsourcing to a public relations firm, Definers Public Affairs, beyond media monitoring to campaigning against further government regulation. Definers in summer 2018 tied the Facebook regulation campaign to liberal Jewish-Hungarian billionaire financier and philanthropist George Soros. Soros has long been a focus of globalist conspiracy theories among conservative nationalist populists (Frenkel, Confessore, Kang, Rosenberg and Nicas, 2018, para. 94). Concerns about national economic technological competitiveness have also inadvertently facilitated hybrid warfare. The developers of so-called 5G digital technology highlight the necessity of gathering personal data to create communication links between a consumer and his or her device to cater to the consumer's preferences (Wallace, 2018, para. 1). 5G technology has also been referred to as the internet of things. So-called smart machines rely on aggregated data of its owner's preferences through recording and analyzing the owner's myriad choices. It follows much the same logic as targeted advertising towards specific viewer audiences. Cyberattacks are useful in the nuclear era because they are disruptive and costly but identifying the source is difficult and time consuming (Sanger, 2018b). Culpability is never so obvious because undeniable public evidence of an attack is absent. The US and Israel have never admitted to their Stuxnet cyberattack against Iran's nuclear weapons program, which the latter never publicly admitted existed (Sanger, 2018b). As blowback, Stuxnet via the Internet then infected computer systems far beyond Iran (Broad, Markoff and Sanger, 2011). Irrefutable evidence of a Pearl Harbor-type cyberattack would generate

a nationalist public reaction that would necessitate a proportionate response in the era of mass politics. Any government failing to do so would risk regime change.

Strong retaliation to a cyberattack that is demonstrably attributable to another regime that causes real regime instability may also generate concern regarding escalation. According to Isikoff and Corn, in contemplating retaliation for Russian cyberattacks during the 2016 presidential campaign, the Obama administration considered sanctions. Rogue regime-type public sanctions like those applied to Iran, e.g. banning any firm doing business with Russian banks from working with US financial institutions, were contemplated. Highlighting Obama administration trepidation regarding such retaliation, one administration official reacted that such sanctions would be interpreted by Putin as an attempt at regime change. "Speaking metaphorically" according to Isikoff and Corn, a top Obama aid responded "this could lead to nuclear escalation" (2018, 195). Media reports highlight that US security officials limit their cybernetic countermeasures against Russian hacking efforts to avoid provoking Russian escalation to direct military confrontation (Barnes, 2018). The political vulnerability of the nuclear-armed Russian regime, together with the relative deprivation of the Russian economy, themselves are a source of diplomatic bargaining leverage towards the US. In sum, the US has more to lose economically, while perceived post-Soviet Russian authority desperation and irrationality in confronting a much more powerful US constrains the US (Cottam and Gallucci, 1978).

This competitive interference is directed at targets that go far beyond officials in government bureaucracies. They include targets within the broader polities, including constituency leaders and activists to increase polarization between constituencies in the polity. Establishment elite control in the targeted polity becomes more difficult as these constituencies transfer their allegiance and obedience to political entrepreneurs seeking access to resources. Precedents can perhaps be located in the total warfare doctrines that came to prevail during the mid-twentieth century, i.e. all societal constituencies contribute to the war effort (McGeehan, 2018, 52). Therefore, they are prospective targets, even if they are formally civilians. The post-1945 nuclear setting also required specific, covert/unofficial/informal targeting of particular civilian as well as military constituencies if only to reduce the potential for uncontrolled escalation (Carson, 2016).

This theme of intensifying polarization has been emphasized in recent media reporting on Russian state-sponsored social media activity among the US public. Social media globally has contributed to the intensification of polarization around long-existent cultural, racial, ethnic and sectarian conflicts due to the nature of the social media business model (Shane, 2017). Social media account holders can self-select to be on particular distribution lists for particular content, including content that portrays itself as news. Social media platforms like Facebook use algorithmic formulae to select and direct content regardless of accuracy to selected account holders. These computer software formulae route this content on the basis of account holder interest as algorithmically inferred from their aggregated previous content viewing selections, selected likes/dislikes, selected friends, and other inputs. A result is the intensification of so-called echo chamber effects on citizen perceptions and attitudes, effects that associate with stereotyping (DiFonzo, Suls, Beckstead, Bourgeois, Homan, Brougher, Younge, Terpstra-Schwab, 2014). This term describes the consequence of the opportunities for news media consumers to select news outlets that comport with their pre-existing ideological views. These outlets have vastly expanded beginning with the rise of cable television. The US Federal Communications Commission during the Reagan administration accelerated this process with the jettisoning of the Fairness Doctrine in 1987. Adopted in 1949 by the Federal Communications Commission, "requiring a reasonably balanced presentation" of alternative political opinions, it built on the earlier 1927 Radio Act (Lepore, 2018, para. 7). The Fairness Doctrine was rarely enforced (Clogston, 2016, 377-78).

The intensely-competitive for-profit news media business generates products for consumption that ideologically interpret current events in accordance with various editorial slants. The modal consumer/citizen tends to make news media consumption choices that correspond with their existing

political perceptions and attitudes. Discordant information and framing that generates unpleasant emotional responses because it conflicts with these strongly held perceptions and attitudes can much more readily be avoided. The effect is to reinforce pre-existing consumer/citizen political perceptions and attitudes on a variety of issues. The greatly increased diversity of news sources has reinforced self-validation of socio-political self-identity for the media-consumer/citizen. He or she can find apparent confirmation for their pre-existing more or less intensely held political views from intensely competitive for-profit news media product vendors. The latter stridently claim to be authorities as part of their marketing strategies, thereby supporting this self-validation, including a belief of membership in a legitimated social identity community. These political views include implicit and explicit shared elements of favored worldviews regarding political causation and effects. These worldviews include identification of benign and malign actors and their influences, real or conspiratorially imagined.

Emotional affect associates with stereotypical image formation (Cottam and Cottam, 2001, 99-105). Actors more inclined to nationalistic behavior are more prone to stereotyping and affect, ceteris paribus (Ibid., 105-121). As national news outlets, framing of news reports tends to relate ultimately to implicit or explicit implications for the well-being of the nation (Horton and Brown, 2018, 3). The definition and conceptualization of well-being and even survival of the nation are also defined according to the respective worldview/editorial slant. Emotional affect among the public audience/citizenry constituency/market share is likely to be aroused. It must be aroused; emotional stimulation and gratification drives consumption and consumer allegiance while competing for advertising and subscription revenue. The façade of objectivity in news reporting must be maintained and lip service paid to it as part of the marketing strategy for all news products to be promoted for consumption as news. Maintaining this consumer allegiance in what has become a fragmented, very diverse set of ideological niche markets becomes a business imperative. Serving/pandering to these niche market expectations to maintain market share tends to reinforce and intensify these pre-existing viewpoints.

This dynamic of maintaining media-consumer/citizen allegiance in this context tends towards stereotyping non-conforming views as not only incorrect, but morally wrong, even reprehensible. In effect, reinforcing political in-group tendencies concomitantly reinforces differentiation from political out-groups (Bruchmann, Koopman-Holm and Sherer, 2018). The news media thereby acts metaphorically not only as an echo chamber for the media-consumer/citizen but also as an amplifier. The news media rather less serves as a set of institutions where the consumer/citizen can expose their preconceptions to testing through contact with additional information. This latter portrayal may always have been at best an ideal. It may have been part of the general metaphor of the news media as the "watchdog of democracy" (Orzeata, 2016, 135). Another is the media as the vehicle for the "marketplace of ideas" (Asenas and Hubble, 2018, 38). Discordant information was harder to avoid or dismiss in the postwar era with at least the pro-forma existence of the Fairness Doctrine and national television news limited to three networks.

The echo chamber effect is a term used to describe a source of American political polarization with the development of the Internet-based social media vehicle for media product distribution (Matakos, Terzi and Tsaparas, 2017). The rise of Internet social media has greatly magnified this dynamic, at times with violent, tragic results. One report noted that a Sri Lankan militant used Facebook to broadcast paranoia and hatred that contributed to an anti-Muslim riot that killed one person and made many more homeless. The report quoted a Sri Lankan official several days after the arrest of this militant, "Facebook doesn't seem to get that they're the largest news agency in the world" (Fisher, 2018, para. 8). Facebook's algorithmically driven content distribution system reflects these dynamics, with "reality-distorting misinformation that can run rampant on the newsfeed, which promotes content that will reliably engage users; extremism and hate speech that tap into users' darkest impulses, and polarize politics; malicious actors granted near-limitless reach on one of the most sophisticated communications platforms in history, relatively unchecked by social norms or traditional gatekeepers; and a private company uneager to wade into contentious debates, much less pick winners and losers" (Fisher, 2018, para. 10).

The imputation of motive is essential in planning personal as well as organizational and national strategy towards another actor. Transparency regarding financial sponsorship of political advertisements has always been part of contemporary regulation of campaign financing (Bauer, 2018). The concern regarding corporate influence over politics relates to the vast financial reserves available to the private sector. Voters need to know the funders behind a political campaign to predict with a degree of self-assurance what a successful campaigner will do once in office. It assumes that financial incentives are an important motivator for political behavior. Concurrently, campaigns require funds to succeed regardless of their ultimate motivation or strategic goal. Identification of the financial donor to a campaign provides insights into what those strategic goals may well be. Predictability is necessary to reduce insecurity and to limit fear and polarization within society. Transparency in sponsorship facilitates inferring motivations and therefore permits the citizen voter to predict with more security the consequences of his or her own political participation actions. The absence of transparency contributes to anxiety and fear and the consequent stereotyping of global capitalism as a source of imperial threat. It enhances support for a Donald J. Trump figure. Nation states have vastly more resources to deploy in interfering in the internal political processes of target states via social media while choosing to conceal their involvement (Bauer, 2018).

Use of social media user data allows microtargeting to focus appeals towards particular groups to intensify affective hostility towards other groups within the same polity (Singer, 2018a). Exacerbation of US polarization by Russian actors in the midst of the prevailing imperial stereotype among some constituencies fearing globalization extends even to controversies such as the effect of vaccines (McNeil, 2018). Russian internet hackers/imposters encouraged polarization by instigating counter-protests against a 2018 Washington DC "United the Right Rally II." It had been organized a year following the Charlotte, Virginia 2017 protests and violence (Conger and Savage, 2018, para. 16). Weakening the power capability of a state can involve weakening the governmental and, more broadly, regime stability by increasing the intensity of societal political polarization within it. Raising the intensity of public political polarization can contribute to undermining the political mobilization base available to the authorities. Increasing internal political conflict can also undermine the international appeal of the ideology that a particular government claims to represent (Cottam and Gallucci, 1978). The 2018-19 US partial government shutdown over funding to fulfill a polarizing 2016 Trump campaign pledge to build a wall on the Mexican border further undermines the US potential power base. E.g. it degrades the appeal of US federal government employment by the highly-skilled (Robertson, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In relation to external intervention and polarization, this section comparatively analyzes the controversy regarding claims of American White hostility to challenges to its core cultural status within the polity. Challenges to this status due to increasing ethno-racial diversity concomitant with economic globalization contribute to a political context more vulnerable to societal polarization. As formulated by Gordon (1964) and elaborated upon by Alba and Nee (1997), the core culture is that cultural community that politically dominates the state. The core community generates positive and negative incentives to minorities to accommodate to the core, and if permeable, into which they may assimilate (Oh, 2011). Short of assimilation, minorities are subject to hierarchical status stratification (Alba and Nee, 1997). According to Gordon (1964), the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) community constitutes the core community that historically dominates the American state. The core de facto imposes the traditional stereotyped standards for evaluation of the appropriateness of socio-political behavior within the polity. Antonsich notes that the continuous political tension and contestation involved in assimilation highlights that this sociological process involves struggle among ethnic and sectarian in- and out-groups. The ethnic/ethno-sectarian majority group is typically the gatekeeper (2012, 73). Gorski (2016) provides a sociological analysis for what is today called American white Christian nationalism in explaining the strong appeal of Trump among white Christian evangelical voters. Setzler and Yanus (2018) found that perception of threat to American traditional racial and gender role norm prejudices, not gender or education level, most strongly

correlated with voting for Trump. This section concludes with implications for American domestic and foreign policy.

Authoritarian Populism

The relationship of sectarian collective identity to nationalism in American authoritarian populism is an important theoretical issue to comprehend the significance of the globalization of hybrid warfare. The relationship between national and religious identity is "extremely opaque" (Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism,* 1990, 71 cited in Cottam and Cottam, 2001, 21). Cottam and Cottam note that emotional attachments to the dignity and esteem of religious communities can also become particularly important as mass political participation characterizes a national community. As mass politics becomes a characteristic feature of the political development process, religious-community attachments became especially important in much of the world in the twentieth century. Today, polarization occurs around the sectarian community component of national identity. Groups within the nation-state may share a first-intensity attachment to the national community and also to a religious community, but the intensity of attachment to the religious community varies greatly. This polarization among religious and territorial national community attachments is most intense in the Middle East. It is also present in the Christian political movement in the US, the influence of the Jewish right in Israel, and the Hindu nationalist movement in India (2001, 66-67).

People having important values will tend to perceive the political environment in ways which allow them to avoid making difficult choices in that choosing one value means sacrificing others. They instead perceive/impute motivations to salient political actors so that they do not perceive a situation in which they have to make a difficult choice. I.e. they engage in cognitive balancing (Heider 1958[2015]). Cottam and Cottam elaborate that citizens who share a primary intensity self-identification both with the territorial national community and their sectarian community identity will tend to reconcile these values. They will incline to perceive a political context in which they are allowed cognitively and affectively to promote the influence and well-being of both simultaneously. Little conflict will be perceived to exist between the two. Defending one requires defending the other. E.g. a strong American national and conservative Christian evangelical community self-identifier will tend to see both as sharing the same enemies (e.g. political Islam) and allies (e.g. Israel). The members of the national community, however, who identify with the religious community but with a lesser level of emotional intensity will demonstrate a stronger inclination to view religion in doctrinal terms, and not as a national duty.

They will tend to resent, often with very great intensity, any moral diktat from religious leaders, i.e. they are so-called secular nationalists. This polarization prevails in the Islamic Republic of Iran: a post-authoritarian populist political regime (2001, 67) (see Figures 2 and 3). Political trends are increasing the likelihood of such regime characteristics in the US. Cottam and Gallucci define the modes of control constituting a political regime in the following manner: Coercion - the use of force and fear to compel a people to acquiesce to the authority of a government; Utilitarian - the satisfaction of material consumption and career influence demands of the members of the public; "Normative habitual - a non-conscious acceptance of government authority via an acquiescence in the customary norms through which authority is exercised; Normative active - the attraction of support for authority through the device of manipulation of symbols with high saliency" (Cottam and Gallucci, 1978, 15-16). This conceptualization of control system elaborates upon a framework which Etzioni initially presented for the analysis of control systems in complex organizations (Etzioni, 1961). An authoritarian populist regime (a fascist regime is the European variant, see Table 4) is fundamentally different from a Stalinist-type regime (e.g. Baathist Iraq, North Korea, see Table 5). If much of the population experiences coercion but another part gives enthusiastic support because of effective symbolic appeals which their leaders make, then the willingness to make sacrifices will vary. The 1939 Nazi German leadership controlled a polarized society with an enthusiastic constituency base and a large, cowed minority. State leaders mobilized societal resources for a militantly aggressive foreign policy (Cottam and Cottam, 2001, 144-45).

Cottam and Cottam argue that fascism, i.e. authoritarian populism, is a political regime type, not an ideology. The agency of state terror and a demagogic manipulation of national romantic symbols are the means by which an aspiring elite establish and maintain totalitarian control over a society. It is the defining characteristic of the phenomenon of fascism. Likely to fail is the search for a doctrinal definition of fascism. Examples of authoritarian populism include 1939 Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan as well as 1980 Iran. Of these three among great powers: Hitlerian Germany, Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan, only Japan clearly met this ideal-typical definition (2001, 273). Cottam and Cottam maintain that the aspiring elite in Japan was the Japanese military and it was already a core element in the ruling elite. It was in fact an institution which had solidly established itself, having deep cultural roots, rather than being a vanguard of a counter-elite. Elite alteration was underway in Imperial Japan but nothing comparable occurred to the elite replacement which occurred in Germany and Italy (2001, 136).

Table 4 illustrates the political regime, i.e. the control system, in Hitlerian Germany on the eve of what became the Second World War. It illustrates the orientations by which the revolutionary Nazi authorities maintained their control over the German state; normative habitual control was a tertiary component of the regime. Hitlerian Germany arguably approached the ideal-typical exemplar of a militantly aggressive modern great power nation state. By comparatively applying this abstract framework, the implications of the internal nature of a regime regarding the government's foreign policy behavioral predispositions may be highlighted. Mobilization of the enthusiastically supportive majority of the public required manipulation of stereotypical images of self and other that appealed to the mass public, i.e. nationalistic stereotypes. Reliance upon such nationalistic, normative active appeals made delivery of successful results through a militantly belligerent foreign policy as critical for regime survival. The repulsion generated in the large minority was countered by coercion, i.e. terror delivered through a state coercive bureaucratic apparatus.

Table 4: The Political Control System in 1939 Germany

A	Normative active
	Coercion
B	Utilitarian
C	Normative habitual

The control system in a polity describes the relationship between the political authorities and the public. Hitlerian Germany was relatively less effective compared to the US control system in mobilizing its full potential power base for war because of the intense polarization within society (see Figures 1 and 2). An intensely motivated, large constituency constituted Hitler's support base, but a large section of the society was terrorized into silence and submission, including the liberal intelligentsia. The liberal traditional elite would re-emerge after the removal of the relatively thin Hitlerian ruling elite through conquest and occupation. The lasting impact of the Nazi regime on the society would appear relatively minimal (Cottam and Gallucci, 1978, 16, Cottam and Cottam, 2001, 144-45).

Determining the political control system (regime) in place in a polity is necessary for estimating the mobilizational base of a state actor. This type of regime is predisposed towards expansionism in international relations because of its reliance on satisfaction of national grandeur predilections among its core support group. Normative active control typically involves leadership manipulation of romantic nationalist self-identity community symbols. For the leadership manipulating these symbols to have credibility, successful delivery of national grandeur achievements becomes a pressing political imperative. These romantic stereotypical images of self have corresponding negative stereotypical images of other. The multi-generational conflicts between Germany and France and Poland had institutionalized these stereotypical images of self and other among a modal segment of the German public. Hitler's promise to restore Germany's past perceived greatness would involve targeted enemies that were scapegoated as responsible for Germany's degradation (Salvendy, 1999, 152-53). Hitler's domestic appeals and policies were highly polarizing; a large segment of the public found particular policies to be sufficiently provocative to engage in effective nonviolent resistance (Dombrowski, 2000). The foreign policy behavior patterns which this symbol manipulation would promote and support added fear and horror to this distaste among this segment of society. The intensity of societal political polarization increased (Sekulic, 2010).

An authoritarian populist regime in a great power state risks suicide in attacking another great power in the nuclear era. Use of deadly force to afford national grandeur rather focuses on punishment of so-called rogue states, i.e. lesser, (heretofore) non-nuclear states with authorities stereotyped as international criminal outlaws (see Tables 1 and 3, Cottam and Cottam, 2001, 116-17). The provision of national grandeur integrates with the provision of sectarian identity satisfaction in the era of mass politics and nuclear weapons. The Trump administration may also compensate by appealing to its elite constituency base components by appearing to demonstrate the primacy of the US in renegotiating trade relations. One report quotes a George W. Bush administration official on Asian policy, Michael Green, characterizing the Trump administration's attitudinal behavior: "The White House approach to every country now is that we want you to cave on these random issues we have chosen, which are prioritized by nothing more than presidential whim […] And you have to visibly lose on them. There are no win-wins" (Gardiner, 2018, para. 15).

For the modal American citizen, the details of trade agreements are esoteric. Radical rejection of existing trade agreements would cause such immediate economic dislocation that mass public support for the government may be threatened. One component for a control formula in this context is to focus more on the perceived internal adversary, portrayed as undermining so-called traditional national American values (Seaton, 2017). These traditional values are heavily sectarian in nature in regard to their stereotyped source, as well as in terms of their contemporary legitimation. The postwar conflict between Western (including Israel) and some Muslim communities may set the stage for Muslim communities internally and externally to be vulnerable for scapegoating. They may become adversarial foci as part of an American national grandeur strategy. Regarding nuclear-armed great powers such as China, the displacement towards competition in the so-called soft power arena as part of the nuclear setting includes a greater emphasis on promoting clients. One would expect that an expansionist Trump administration will more likely support liberal democratic, prosperous Taiwan's aspirations towards international recognition as a sovereign state (Chin, 2016). Among the rogue states that are targets of US foreign policy, Saddam Hussein's Iraq was closer to the 1939 Soviet regime, as is the regime in North Korea. Table 5 highlights the regime that existed in Stalin's multinational Soviet Union at the start of the Second World War. While both Stalin's USSR and Hitlerian Germany were highly coercive, revolutionary regimes, they differed in their capacity to mobilize potential power resources through symbolic mass public appeals. Nation states, as opposed to multinational states like the USSR or Yugoslavia, have the power potential mobilizational advantage. Cottam and Cottam note that legitimate nation state authorities more effectively mobilize the public to accept sacrifices to create military and other policy instruments to achieve government policy objectives. This capacity stems from the shared, sole, primary intensity loyalty of the public to the territorial community bounded by the state, which comprises by definition their national identity. This national community may be collectively defined by its members as traditionally sharing the same ethnicity, race, sect or territory (2001, 2). Despite generations of often highly coercive policy efforts to create a prevailing Soviet national identity, the dissolution of the USSR demonstrated that a shared Soviet territorial identity remained relatively weak. The traditional national ethnic identities within it remained predominant as displayed once the coercive Soviet coercive control element disintegrated.

In the Soviet case, the symbols of Marxism-Leninism excited a comparatively small proportion of the public, disproportionally represented in the state control bureaucratic apparatus. After the initial phase of the German invasion, the Soviet authorities would resort to the manipulation of the romantic symbols of the Russian nation to mobilize Soviet resources more effectively. They thus made a normative active control mode a primary facet of the wartime regime (Cottam and Cottam, 2001, 214-15). Myers (2010) has argued that the North Korean regime authorities initially inherited and adopted the Japanese imperial fascist regime model. Cottam and Cottam argue that comparatively, the US had a better support base for the purpose of granting a government the latitude to mobilize the community's resources to meet a perceived external challenge. Its regime demonstrates primary reliance upon habitual, customary support for the authority system from the large majority of the population and not necessarily for any particular set of leaders. The ability to mobilize will be particularly strong if, when confronted with a major challenge, the political

leaders can count on the population to respond favorably to calls to action. It will react with excitement to a heavily symbolic appeal for support during a crisis. Such a government has broad legitimacy. The regimes in 1939 USSR and Germany lacked such broad legitimacy (2001, 142-44).
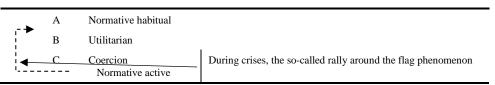
Table 5: The Political Control System in 1939 USSR

A	Coercion
B	Utilitarian
C	Normative active
	Normative habitual

The revolutionary Stalinist regime intensively manipulated symbols of Marxism-Leninism but it generated relatively much less enthusiastic response from the general public beyond the enthusiastic minority that provided the personnel for the state apparatus. The poor performance of the Soviet army in the opening stages of the German invasion illustrated the mobilizational weakness in this regime. The Soviet leadership adjusted the regime to include intensive manipulation of traditional romantic symbols of Russian nationalism and the fighting ability of the Soviet army increased. It concurrently undermined efforts to convince the non-Russian segments of the Soviet public that the Soviet Union was not in effect a neo-colonial version of the Russian empire (Cottam and Gallucci, 1978, 16, Cottam and Cottam, 2001, 145-47, 214-17).

Examples of regimes having broad legitimacy include 1939 United States, as well as the liberal democratic regime in the American nation state prior to the election of Trump. Table 6 portrays the political regime, i.e. the relationship between the state authorities and the American public, throughout most of the twentieth century. This type of political regime is most effective in mobilizing the state's potential power resources. The citizenry overwhelmingly assumes the authorities to be nationally representational and rightfully occupying their position. The modal American citizen views politics as a voluntary part-time activity that delegates policy making to the government. Citizens should obey the law (even if privately at times they do not). Mass political mobilization to sacrifice material wealth and personal well-being to achieve government-articulated goals increases significantly during wartime. This so-called rally around the flag phenomenon describes the capacity of the state authorities to utilize effectively normative active, symbolic nationalist appeals during a time of perceived external threat.

Table 6: The Political Control System in 1939 USA

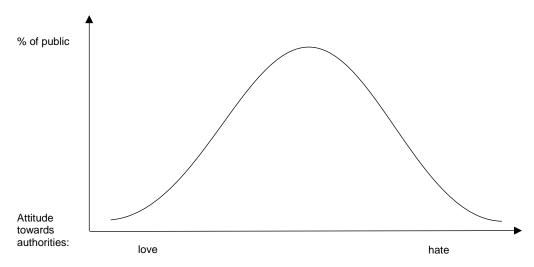| A	Normative habitual	
B	Utilitarian	
C	Coercion	During crises, the so-called rally around the flag phenomenon
	Normative active	

The American regime control system is the most effective in mobilizing the power potential base of the community because of its relative lack of intensive societal polarization during most of the twentieth century. A normative habitual regime relies upon habitual obeisance of the public to the authorities through internalization of the authority norms of the society as personal moral expectations of right and wrong. In effect, the members of the public do not perceive themselves as being controlled. This system came under challenge during the 1960s with anti-Vietnam War mobilization providing much of the impetus. The end of the war and mandatory military service, as well other accommodations to minority demands, reconstituted the regime (Cottam and Gallucci, 1978, 16, Cottam and Cottam, 2001, 142-44).

The traditional US control system corresponds with a society relatively lacking in intense political polarization. Figure 1 represents the American national political environment within which the authorities, and the government more specifically have functioned within most of the twentieth century. As Lipset explains in his analysis of so-called American exceptionalism, the absence of political polarization derives from the comparative, generally low level of salience of political mobilization within the US. The relative weakness of class polarization, for example, is due to a variety of historical and cultural factors. They include founding by European congregationalist protestant sectarian immigration, indigenous population extinction, removal and displacement as well as geographic isolation. The post-Civil War vast economic expansion of the US provided additional incentives to pursue personal needs through private economic and civil society associations. Social movements tended to seek access to utilitarian resources rather than

revolutionary change. The American citizenry consequently is more likely to view individual and group social deviance as an individual, personal failing, rather than as a social justice issue. African-American enslavement and its societal stereotype legacies constitute the great exception within American exceptionalism (1997). They generate the most important dynamic fault line for potential American political polarization.

Figure 1: The US Public's Affective Orientation Towards the Authorities, Prior to Trump's Election

The typical twentieth century US authority relationship with the public was one characterized by moderation in terms of general public overall restraint in the intensity of enthusiasm or dislike towards the authorities. More recently, the US polity has shown trends in polarization with intensifying mutually perceived threat among societal sectors towards each other. The Trump political campaign and administration has fortified this polarization by exploiting these cleavages to make them more salient for the aim of mobilization of electoral support. The Trump campaign was evidently supported in these tactics covertly through Internet social media intervention by state-affiliated Russian actors.

The American context contrasts with the relationship in 1930s Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy and 1980 Iran between the authorities and the public. Figure 2 portrays the intense polarization in these authoritarian populist regimes. The majority of the adult population enthusiastically supports the authorities. They are highly receptive to the latter's reliance upon appeals to established positive and negative stereotypes of national self and other. These portrayals include internal opponents as agents of national degeneracy and treason. They are coercively targeted and scapegoated, and they are politically immobilized through terror. Authority system legitimation requirements create strong political incentives for the government to seek achievement of national grandeur through external aggressive, imperialist behavior.

In the post-revolutionary Iranian context, the regime has evolved away from the ideal-typical authoritarian populist regime in Khomeini's Iran that emerged immediately after the overthrow of the Shah. The US and British helped install the Shah's regime in 1953 through covert subversion of the secular nationalist elected government under prime minister Mohammad Mossadeq. The Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, claimed that his authoritarian government's policies were a modernizing force pulling Iran into US-led secular modernity (Pahlavi, 1961). Khomeini's core supporters tended to view the Shah's domestic enthusiasts as blasphemous traitors. Figure 3 arguably shows the evolution of such an authoritarian populist nation state regime which is not destroyed by war and occupation as were Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan. Intense societal political polarization still characterizes the regime, but the control system has become institutionalized in this post-revolutionary era. The rules for avoiding persecution are more clear, i.e. reliance on normative habitual obedience has increased. Enthusiasts and enemies of the regime authorities now each constitute significant minorities, with the rest of the politically attentive adult population accommodating or acquiescing to the authorities.
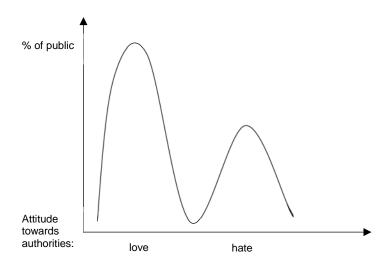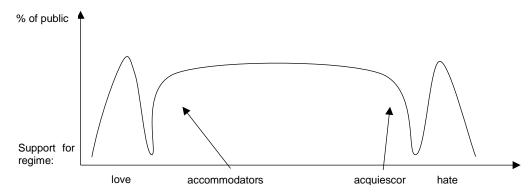
Figure 2: The 1939 Japanese, German and Italian Public, 1980 Iranian Public's Attitudes to the Authorities

The closest to an ideal-typical polarization within a so-called developed nation state is Hitlerian Germany. This polity, with its starkly polarized contrasts in perceptions of the ruling authorities, also had its consequences in seeing the opposing base constituency in intensely threatening, contemptuous terms. This type regime also characterized Khomeini's Iran. Charges and suspicion of treason characterize the political discourse in such polarized polities with totalitarian control systems.

The post-revolutionary phase of the regime implies national institutionalization, i.e. greater normative habitual control. The charismatic founder of the authoritarian populist regime left the scene, taking his political magnetism with him. He bequeathed to his successors the bureaucratic coercive control apparatus which remains a critical support constituency of the regime. The post-revolutionary authorities supplement their continued primacy through provision of utilitarian economic and participation benefits as well as assertive external national influence promotion. They do so within a context of higher levels of national institutionalization of the processes of public and foreign policy making. As noted above, increasing polarization characterizes nation state policy making elsewhere. Post-revolutionary Iran may provide insights into political trends that associate with populist conservative nationalist social movements that are the core support base for the US Trump administration. It may also point to the domestic and foreign policy behavioral predispositions that associate with those that succeed in taking control of the state.

As Cottam and Cottam highlight, a common consensus between these two militant poles in Figure 3 regarding the external and internal challenges to the shared national community commonly is unlikely to emerge. Regime enthusiasts equate their sectarian identity community membership with Iran national community membership. Regime opponents tend to be secularists. The result is the emergence of a sharp polarization between these two groups. The former, for example, favors expenditure of national resources to protect Iran's core culture co-religionist Shiite Muslims throughout the Middle East. In their worldview, an intensely assertive international position is necessary for the well-being, even long-term survival, of the Islamic republic. The latter will tend to resent the costs and burdens upon the Iranian national community due to opposition from the opponents to Iran's influence expansion in Lebanon, Yemen, Syria and Iraq and elsewhere. They will come to view each other with intense distaste. This polarization phenomenon is increasingly prevalent throughout the world, but especially so in Muslim states. The consequences include both very positive and very negative affective responses having a focus on the forces of politically resurgent Islam (2001, 53-55). Polarization is a tendency present in the US, India, Israel as well as in other great power states, e.g. Russia and China. The affective response can be sufficiently serious to produce hatred at a level of intensity which can in the extreme produce violent responses. With the 2016 election of US President Donald J. Trump supported by the covert Internet-based intervention of Russian state-sponsored actors, American polarization trends are arguably intensifying.

Figure 3: Post-Revolutionary Iranian Public's Attitudes to the Islamic Republic Authorities (and Towards Which Other Polities May be Evolving)

The US and other developed polities do not display the extreme polarization present within Hitlerian Germany at the height of the latter regime's reliance on normative active control. The US and other developed states may rather be moving in a direction in accordance with a picture that prevails in the post-Khomeini Islamic Republic of Iran. It may correspond to the type of regime towards which the Trump administration as a consequence of policies strengthening American polarization trends risks steering the US. Undocumented immigrants as well as gender and religious minorities and others, e.g. legal abortion access supporters, are currently groups at risk of scapegoating and becoming targets of increasing levels of societal and governmental coercion.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

In the nuclear setting, interfering in target polities' policy making processes is an important tactical means by which states engage in cold war. Hot war among great powers is suicide in the nuclear era, although accidental military escalation may occur, e.g. the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. This threat of accidental escalation during a crisis is itself a source of diplomatic bargaining leverage especially in the nuclear era (Cottam and Gallucci, 1978). This additional diplomatic bargaining leverage is the incentive for states to develop and deploy nuclear weapons. The Cold War's indirect, covert and overt competitive interference in the politics of third actors is the historical template by which state leaders choose to fight wars in the nuclear context. Post-Cold War globalization has facilitated the polities of the nuclear powers themselves as well becoming targets of competitive interference, today labelled hybrid warfare. The goal of this paper has been to analyze hybrid warfare within its postwar historical context. Its theoretical contribution lies within the framework of neoclassical realism, focusing specifically on the implications of nationalism in relation to hybrid warfare state behavior. It outlines the implications of nationalism in the nuclear setting for hybrid warfare, focusing on the high-profile case of Russian covert intervention in the US 2016 presidential election campaign. The necessity of an appropriate theory of nationalism for this analysis led the author to apply the framework developed by Cottam and Cottam (2001). This analysis relied on information in the public record, particularly investigative reporting by *The New York Times* and other newspapers of record in this current, unfolding inquiry.

This analysis demonstrated how an initiator state can seek to instigate regime evolution in a nation state target in a direction exhibiting polarization. That state's foreign policy is more prone to display belligerent behavior in foreign affairs in reaction, ceteris paribus. E.g. US relations with Russia and China appear to be worsening at the time of this writing. Stereotype-based, dysfunctional assumptions regarding target actors will tend to correlate more closely with foreign policy behavior choices in such polarized polities. The result can be an increasing propensity towards foreign policy entanglements from which the target state may have great political difficulty extracting itself. Cottam and Cottam note that nation state polities are more willing to grant their leaders the decisional latitude they desire to seize perceived opportunities to expand the state's international influence. Nationalistic polities are likely to constrain greatly the decisional latitude of a leader to withdraw, because it risks suffering a serious blow to collective national self-esteem after much sacrifice (2001, 13). The domestic political difficulty the US had in leaving Vietnam illustrated

this dynamic. Such dilemmas will be more typical in the present era of direct military intervention in the internal politics of non-nuclear third states. The US leadership appears to face a comparable dilemma in multi-ethnic, Sunni Muslim-dominated Afghanistan (Riedel, Bergen, Anderson and Sageman, 2010, Nordland and Abed, 2018). In Iraq, US forces have clients in the large majority Shiite Arab and Kurdish population who tend to share a perceived a threat from Sunni Muslim-dominated pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism, e.g. the Islamic State (Iov and Marincean, 2017). Immediately after US President Trump's December 2018 announcement of US military withdrawal from Syria, strong US domestic political opposition to US withdrawal continues to build (Sanger, Weiland and Schmitt, 2019).

This analysis found that authoritarian populism in the interwar period is typically portrayed as a world historical aberration. Most recent trends indicate that it is a directional tendency towards which the post-Cold War world may be moving more generally. Hitlerian Germany was the closest in reality to an ideal-typical case of an authoritarian populist regime in a great power pursuing an intensely revisionist, imperialist foreign policy. It remains a real exemplar by which to evaluate these tendencies today in other great power states. If so, then it was not really an aberration but rather the most militant illustration. Polarization is a critical issue in correlating with the type of domestic political control system regime a state manifests. As the intensity of domestic political polarization intensifies in Russia, China, the US and elsewhere, their respective foreign policies will evolve accordingly. Widespread nuclear weapons capability is a critical differentiating historical factor in postwar foreign policy behavior.

Regarding limitations of this paper, it presents indications and warnings in terms of worst-case scenarios derived from the historical experiences with Germany, Italy and Japan in the 1930s and Iran in the 1980s. The analysis underlined that it is not claiming that the US regime is now similar to these regimes. In terms of countervailing forces, the political role of economic vested interests must not be underestimated as well as overestimated. The vast vested economic interests that have evolved amidst globalization may have the capacity to restrict the political latitude to adopt policy decisions that would generate large economic dislocation. Such disruption would be necessary to mobilize the mass public. Foreign policy crises may mobilize nationalist forces that temporarily override economic interest group lobby pressures in the foreign policy making process. The American mass public is otherwise generally disengaged from US factional establishment elite versus counter-elite struggles that threaten postwar global political and economic cooperative regimes (Tavernise, 2018).

On the one hand, the threat of disruption alone will not automatically restrict US presidential decisional latitude. Such disruption may generate greater support for American nationalist militancy amidst societal polarization. In the Trump administration, the establishment elite has intervened to preserve the US-Republic of Korea Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA and the World Trade Organization since Trump's inauguration (Woodward, 2018, xvii-xxi, 233, 264-65). The establishment elite has the responsibility longer term to mobilize its constituencies to constrain foreign policy belligerence deriving from American conservative populist nationalism. How they may do so is an issue of practical political significance. What observers may have taken for granted for most of the postwar era can no longer be viewed as such. Trump White House trade advisor Peter Navarro castigated members of the American business community lobbying Washington to prevent escalation of the US-China trade conflict: "*When these unpaid foreign agents* engage in this kind of diplomacy, so-called diplomacy, all they do is weaken this president and his negotiating position […] No good can come of it. If there is a deal, if and when there is a deal, it will be on President Donald J. Trump's terms, not Wall Street terms" (Palmer, 2018, emphasis BD).

On the other hand, this analysis seeks to avoid hyperbole while comparatively examining other historical cases, highlighting only potential implications of current events. The US witnessed high levels of polarization in the 1960s and early 1970s, which lead to the resignation of US President Richard Nixon. The post-Vietnam resurgence of conservatism leading to the Reagan presidency did not lead to dangerous levels of American political polarization. A key differentiating factor for today's context is the absence of

a common perceived great power ideological and military threat in the form of the USSR. The absence of such a unifying threat may paradoxically displace threat perception towards the internal in the form of stereotyped agents of globalization. Further research may focus on the behavioral patterns of authoritarian great power regimes perceiving imperial threat from alleged foreign-initiated conspiratorial orchestration of a "color revolution" (Cave and Buckley, 2019, para. 18).

Future research might focus on the relationship of American nationalist sentiment as affiliated with particular national institutions, e.g. the intelligence community. Globalization and Internet social media have facilitated external interference in the internal politics of target states. The response is likely to be the evolutionary strengthening of the national security state that first emerged in the twentieth century (Frenkel and Isaac, 2018b). These national security institutions may seek to channel conservative nationalist populism in directions that consolidate their own authority within the control regime. An arena of symbolic contestation may be intensified focus on alleged conspiratorial globalist foreign state threats to national sovereignty. Some Trump supporters such as Roger J. Stone Jr. raise alarms of a so-called deep state in league with George Soros scheming to circumvent the democratically expressed will of the American electorate (Newman, 2018). How the US justice system responds to these claims would be another research focus.

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