

# Foreword

Elizabeth Kilkenny

During my time at the University of Texas at Arlington, I chose to delve into Russian language and cultural studies as part of my International Business degree. I began with two semesters of intensive Russian language, but eventually branched out into Russian Literature, Business Writing, and Translation courses, among others. After less than a year studying Russian, I chose to embark upon a volunteer trip with Allies in Youth Development—a nonprofit organization that my former Russian professor, Tatiana Ivanovna, was affiliated with. Around this time, I was also awarded the Charles T. McDowell Center for Critical Languages' Betty and Roger Ruch Study Abroad Scholarship, which helped to enable this culturally enriching excursion along with my own private fundraising. I will be forever grateful to the Ruch family, Dr. Harrison, and former McDowell Center director Dr. Mark Cichock for that catalyzing support.

I had never even been on a plane before, and I flew Houston to Moscow direct, alone, on an over 12-hour flight. Then I took a night train to St. Petersburg and stayed with vetted hosts from CouchSurfing.org for a few days before meeting up with my volunteer group back in Moscow. From there we brought supplies to and worked with kids at orphanages and halfway homes in the Talovaya region and Voronezh. This experience was completely foreign to me in nearly every way, and it absolutely shaped and prepared me to be able to handle the culture shock of living in Europe more easily later down the line.

After my time at UTA, I pivoted to technology work for a couple of years before being offered a full Erasmus Mundus Scholarship for my International Master in Security, Intelligence, and Strategic Studies, with a concentration in Security and Technology—a degree jointly awarded by the University of Glasgow in Scotland, Dublin City University in Ireland, and Univerzita Karlova (Charles University) in Czechia. Despite my 180° flip to working in tech, my love for international studies was still alive and well, and this degree helped me to marry both passions. During my period of study in Ireland, I was afforded the opportunity to take a course entitled Russia and the Former Soviet Space, led by Professor Donnacha Ó Beacháin. My paper, "Russian Disinformation – The Technological Force Multiplier," as presented in this issue of *Global Insight*, was originally written for this course in 2018.

In today's world, disinformation is a bigger problem than ever before. Disinformation strategies of the past have been updated to work with modern techniques and technologies, and it is easier to reach a target audience as well. Where previously disinformation tended to be crafted more carefully and specifically into the 'Big Lie' style campaigns, such as the campaign that spread the rumor that AIDS is a man-made virus, the most common modern disinformation archetype has instead shifted to a 'firehose of falsehood' model of disinformation. In this new paradigm, rather than crafting a single major lie, the perpetrator intends to sow as much confusion and

discord as possible in the target demographics. The Internet is one of the largest enablers for this new model of disinformation, as this scale of information warfare could not be possible without it. Technological growth has led to easier and faster disinformation campaigns. Even something as positive as the right to free speech in democratic countries contributes to the ability for malicious actors to have a platform. Consequently, my article is an analysis of the evolution of Soviet to modern Russian government disinformation strategies and tactics.

I am honored to publish "Russian Disinformation – The Technological Force Multiplier" in the second issue of *Global Insight*, and recommend looking at the wonderful pieces in the inaugural issue as well. I am delighted to see how The McDowell Center has grown since my time at UTA, and I know this journal will be a wonderful creative outlet for students to present critical global perspectives.

— Elizabeth Kilkenny, July 31st, 2021