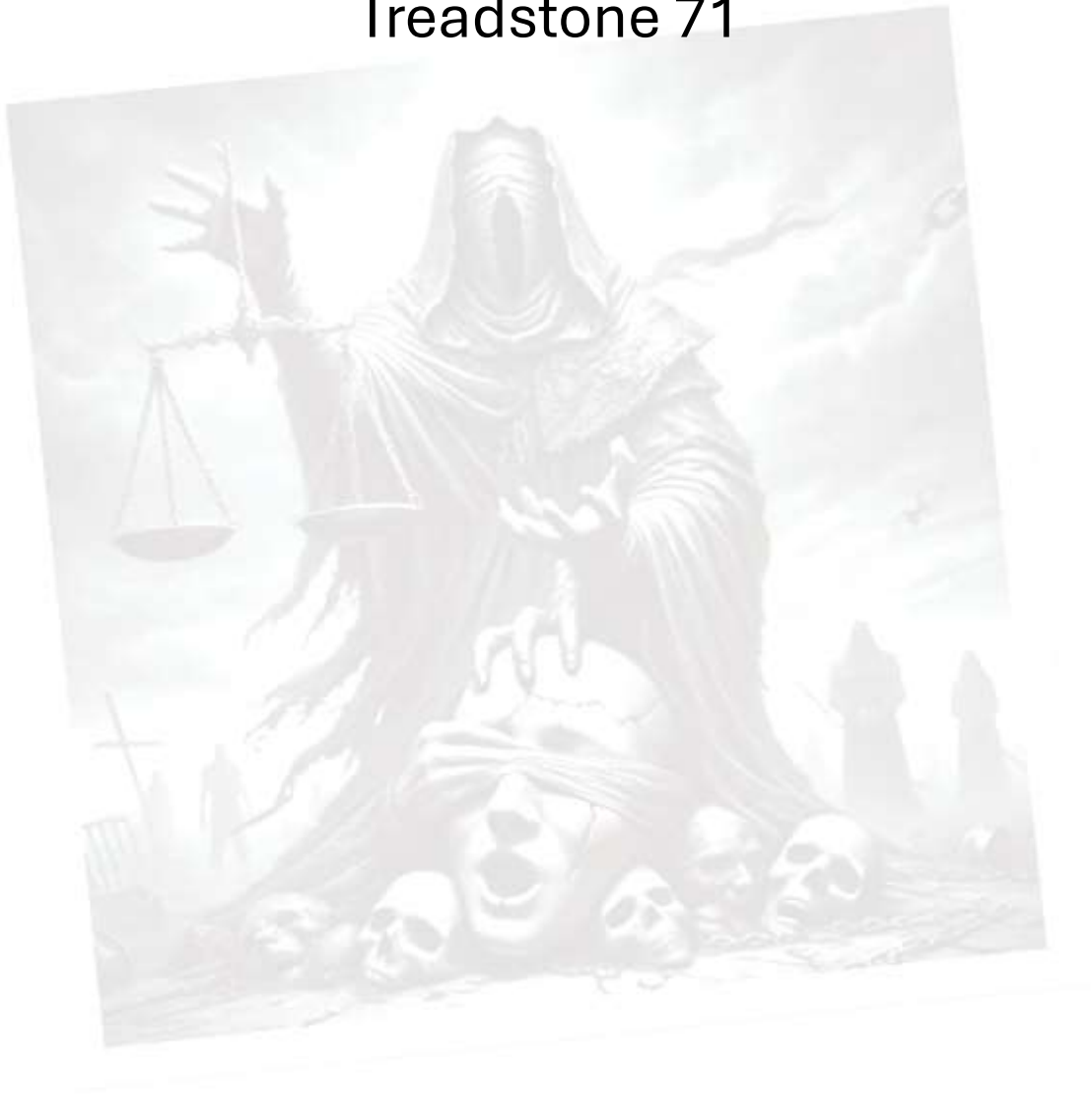


The Kremlin's Masterclass in Manufactured Persecution

Treadstone 71



Introduction	4
Dissecting Russia's Perpetual Victimhood Through the Seven Radicals	6
The Radical Deconstruction of Russian Victimhood.....	6
Power as Perception	6
Maintaining Continuous Pressure	6
Ridicule and Discrediting Opponents	7
Targeting Accessible Platforms and Vulnerabilities	7
Chaos as an Appeal	7
Amplifying Threats Beyond Reality.....	7
Rapid Adaptation and Tactical Shifts	8
The Perverse Theater of Russian Victimhood	8
Further Analysis of Psychopathy, Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and Schadenfreude	9
Psychopathy	9
Narcissism	10
Machiavellianism	10
Schadenfreude	10
The Dark Core of Russian Victimhood.....	11
Psychopathy.....	11
Narcissism.....	11
Machiavellianism.....	11
Schadenfreude.....	11
Calculated Strategy.....	12
Purposeful Psychological Manipulation	12
Strategic Exploitation of Democratic Vulnerabilities	12
Why This Matters	13
Strategic Roadmap to Combat Russian Influence Operations and Cognitive Warfare.....	13
Understanding the Threat.....	13
Strategic Goals	14
Components of the Strategy	14
Implementation Roadmap	16
Wrap Up.....	16

Appendix A	19
------------------	----

Figure 1 Joint report Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and on the human rights situation in individual countries Moscow – Minsk 2024	5
--	---

Figure 2 Step-by-Step Roadmap	15
-------------------------------------	----

Figure 3 Seven Radicals analysis applied to Russia's victimhood narrative.....	19
--	----

Figure 4 Illustrating the interplay of psychopathy, narcissism, Machiavellianism, and schadenfreude in Russia's victimhood narrative-	20
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Figure 5 Strategy Visualization.....	21
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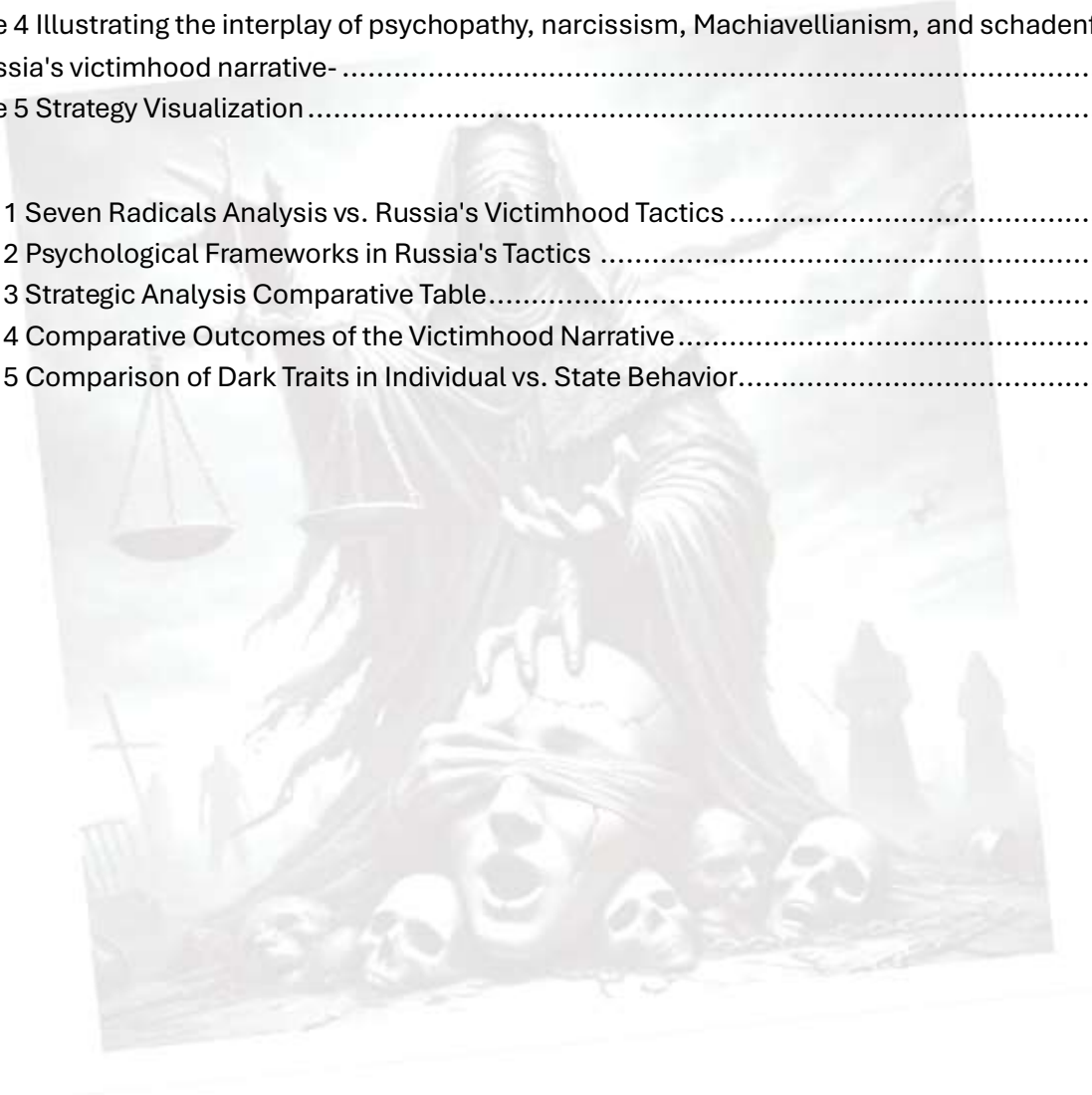
Table 1 Seven Radicals Analysis vs. Russia's Victimhood Tactics	8
---	---

Table 2 Psychological Frameworks in Russia's Tactics	11
--	----

Table 3 Strategic Analysis Comparative Table.....	14
---	----

Table 4 Comparative Outcomes of the Victimhood Narrative	17
--	----

Table 5 Comparison of Dark Traits in Individual vs. State Behavior.....	18
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Introduction

Russia's influence operations present a calculated assault on the values of democratic societies. The Kremlin's strategies combine disinformation, psychological manipulation, and a carefully constructed narrative of victimhood designed to destabilize, divide, and disorient its adversaries. Far from a passive response to global criticism, Moscow's victimhood narrative is a weaponized strategy of deception, rooted in psychological warfare tactics that exploit empathy and manipulate perceptions.

At the heart of this strategy lies the deliberate framing of Russia as a persecuted state, besieged by Russophobia and unjustified aggression. The well-crafted narrative, repeated across propaganda channels and amplified through influence campaigns, demands sympathy while masking acts of imperial aggression, domestic repression, and systemic corruption. Through their manipulation, Russia diverts attention from its violations of sovereignty and human rights, reframing itself as the defender of culture, history, and identity.

A deeper analysis reveals the psychological underpinnings of Russia's methods. Traits associated with psychopathy, such as a lack of empathy and moral disengagement, support the Kremlin's ability to rationalize widespread suffering in pursuit of its objectives. Narcissistic tendencies manifest in its grandiose claims of cultural superiority and hypersensitivity to criticism. Machiavellian tactics manipulate narratives and exploit democratic vulnerabilities. A sense of schadenfreude emerges as Moscow revels in the discord and confusion sown among its adversaries, finding satisfaction in its ability to destabilize Western unity.

The challenge lies in understanding these tactics and effectively countering them. A robust response must encompass advanced measures to dismantle disinformation, bolster institutional defenses, and foster societal resilience. Building counter-disinformation units capable of real-time analysis and response, strengthening cyberintelligence frameworks, and educating the public to recognize and resist manipulation form the foundation of an effective defense. Collaborative international efforts, supported by strategic communication campaigns and technological innovation, ensure a unified and adaptive counter-strategy.

Addressing Russia's influence operations is an exercise in defense. It is a necessity for preserving the integrity of democratic institutions and alliances. Allowing these operations to succeed threatens to normalize disinformation as a tool of statecraft. Tools of this type empower authoritarian regimes and undermining global stability. The principles of truth, transparency, and accountability stand at the center of this fight. The principles demand decisive action to expose and neutralize Russian manipulation.

Understanding the mechanics of Russian influence and its psychological dimensions creates a framework for a coordinated response. Protecting democratic societies requires more than reactive measures; it demands foresight, unity, and a commitment to countering the insidious tactics that erode trust and foster division. The stakes are high, but so are the opportunities to outmaneuver these threats and reinforce the resilience of free and open societies.

СОВМЕСТНЫЙ ДОКЛАД
Министерства иностранных дел
Республики Беларусь
и
Министерства иностранных дел
Российской Федерации

О ситуации
с правами человека
в отдельных странах

Москва – Минск
2024

Figure 1 Joint report Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and on the human rights situation in individual countries Moscow – Minsk 2024

Dissecting Russia's Perpetual Victimhood Through the Seven Radicals

Russia's incessant lamentations of global victimhood epitomize a strategy steeped in psychological manipulation and hypocrisy. Its latest report, cataloging alleged "Russophobia," reeks of projection, as it rails against perceived injustices abroad while ignoring the suffocating repression it imposes domestically. Analyzing this spectacle through the Seven Radicals framework exposes the underlying psychological and strategic mechanisms while dismantling the façade of righteous grievance that Russia seeks to construct.

The Radical Deconstruction of Russian Victimhood

Power as Perception

Russia's perennial cries of victimhood cloak its aggression under a veil of moral authority. Their allegations of a "surge in Russophobia" present itself as the protector of oppressed compatriots, and Moscow projects an image of beleaguered nobility. The narrative collapses under scrutiny. The Kremlin uses this tactic to obscure its predatory policies, including the brutal repression of dissent within its borders. While it parades as a guardian of culture abroad, it suppresses independent thought and media at home, revealing its pleas as strategic theater rather than sincere concern.

Reality Check

Russia is not a noble defender; it is a pyromaniac demanding praise for extinguishing the fire it started.

Maintaining Continuous Pressure

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs churns out these grievances with the precision of a propaganda machine, ensuring that its narrative stays omnipresent. They perpetually accuse the "collective West" of Russophobia, sustaining a climate of tension designed to distract from its atrocities. Their constant barrage forces targeted nations to spend energy countering baseless accusations while Russia continues its subversive activities unabated.

Strategic Reality

Russia's "continuous pressure" is a smokescreen designed to drain the resolve of its adversaries.

Ridicule and Discrediting Opponents

The Kremlin's claims that nations like Ukraine and the Baltics are neo-Nazi regimes reveal the absurdity of its rhetorical playbook. They accuse others of historical revisionism and monument desecration while weaponizing memory by whitewashing Soviet-era atrocities. The irony is staggering. Russia is a regime that jails historians for uncovering Stalin's crimes and now accuses others of "rewriting history."

Tactical Observation

Russia's record of repression makes its sanctimonious outrage laughable—a wolf howling that the sheep are too aggressive.

Targeting Accessible Platforms and Vulnerabilities

Russia amplifies its victim narrative through every accessible platform, using international fora to lament cultural restrictions while deploying propaganda networks to inflame divisions abroad. They intend to destabilize nations by exploiting their democratic values and multicultural frameworks, turning their strengths into vulnerabilities.

Psychological Manipulation Russia's exploitation of minority issues abroad contrasts sharply with its institutionalized xenophobia at home, revealing a duplicitous agenda.

Chaos as an Appeal

The Kremlin thrives on chaos, using its exaggerated tales of persecution to foment uncertainty and division within the international community. They portray themselves as the eternal victims of a Russophobic conspiracy. Moscow obscures its criminal actions, from its illegal annexation of Crimea to its barbaric invasion of Ukraine.

Analysis

Russia's chaos-driven strategy mirrors that of an arsonist claiming victimhood as the flames engulf the neighborhood.

Amplifying Threats Beyond Reality

Russia excels at magnifying the scale of its supposed victimization, painting every restriction on its propaganda as a human rights atrocity. The absurdity of equating bans on Soviet flags with systemic persecution shows the Kremlin's shameless hyperbole. Meanwhile, the everyday oppression faced by ordinary Russians under authoritarian rule is still conspicuously absent from its reports.

Insight

Russia's victimhood is less a genuine concern and more a calculated ploy—a propaganda cudgel wielded to deflect accountability.

Rapid Adaptation and Tactical Shifts

Moscow swiftly adapts its narrative to suit geopolitical conditions, pivoting between cultural victimhood, historical grievance, and allegations of discrimination. Their planned fluidity keeps adversaries off-balance while reinforcing its domestic propaganda machine. However, this adaptability also exposes the lack of genuine principle behind its claims; its grievances shift not in response to reality but to propaganda expediency.

Critical Perspective

Russia's rapid narrative shifts are not a sign of resilience but of desperation as it scrambles to justify its indefensible actions.

The Perverse Theater of Russian Victimhood

Russia's victimhood narrative, analyzed through the Seven Radicals, appears as a masterclass in hypocrisy and psychological warfare. Russia uses fabricated grievances to obscure its transgressions, destabilize opponents, and sustain an authoritarian grip at home. The self-proclaimed victim is the oppressor—a nation that exports chaos while demanding sympathy for its self-inflicted wounds.

Russia's victimhood is neither credible nor compelling. It is a hollow cry of a predator masquerading as prey, a cynical strategy to evade responsibility while perpetuating harm. The international community must see these tactics for what they are- a desperate attempt to rewrite reality in Russia's favor. Recognizing and rejecting this manipulative theater is the first step toward holding Moscow accountable for its transgressions.

Table 1 Seven Radicals Analysis vs. Russia's Victimhood Tactics

Radical	Russia's Behavior	Effect
Power as Perception	Positions itself as a persecuted moral authority.	Deflects criticism; obscures aggression.
Continuous Pressure	Constant accusations of Russophobia in international forums.	Drains adversary resources; sustains tension.
Ridicule and Discrediting	Labels critics as neo-Nazis or historical revisionists.	Undermines opponents' legitimacy.
Targeting Vulnerabilities	Exploits cultural and linguistic divides in target nations.	Sows' division and destabilization.
Chaos as an Appeal	Amplifies uncertainty through exaggerated persecution claims.	Creates mistrust and paralyzes coordinated responses.

Radical	Russia's Behavior	Effect
Amplifying Threats	Magnifies bans on symbols like Soviet flags as existential threats.	Escalates perception of persecution; justifies aggression.
Rapid Adaptation	Shifts narratives to suit geopolitical realities.	Keeps opponents off-balance; sustains narrative dominance.

Further Analysis of Psychopathy, Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and Schadenfreude

Russia's perpetual victim narrative is not merely a geopolitical tactic—it is a psychological projection rooted in traits that resemble the "Dark Triad" of psychopathy, narcissism, and Machiavellianism, with a substantial dose of schadenfreude. Analyzing the Kremlin's rhetoric and behavior through these lenses reveals a nation-state strategy that mirrors the pathology of toxic individuals, where the victim role is wielded to mask malevolence, manipulate others, and derive sadistic satisfaction from the suffering of its adversaries.

Psychopathy

Ruthlessness Disguised as Righteousness

Psychopathy, characterized by callousness, a lack of empathy, and a predatory approach to relationships, is strikingly clear in Russia's geopolitical behavior. The Kremlin weaponizes the language of victimhood not to seek genuine justice but to justify barbarity. The Kremlin portrays sanctions, media restrictions, and criticism as cruel persecution while simultaneously inflicting unimaginable suffering on others, from the bombing of Ukrainian cities to the imprisonment of dissenters.

Hallmarks of Psychopathy

The brazen disregard for human life in Ukraine, coupled with the shameless audacity to claim the moral high ground, epitomizes psychopathy's core traits. Russia shows zero empathy for the millions displaced and brutalized by its actions, instead demanding that the world pity it for being "misunderstood."

Russia behaves like a violent criminal who sobs in court, claiming to be the real victim while the actual casualties lie in ruins. Its calls for justice are nothing but crocodile tears shed to obscure the blood on its hands.

Narcissism

Grandiosity Cloaked in Grievance

Narcissism drives Russia's insistence on portraying itself as the center of a global conspiracy, where the world allegedly conspires to stifle its greatness. The Kremlin's narrative reeks of self-obsession- it equates the banning of Soviet flags and the removal of monuments to a historical reckoning with existential persecution. Narcissistic rage fuels its hyperbolic accusations of "Russophobia," as it cannot tolerate criticism or opposition to its imperial ambitions.

Grandiosity in Action

Russia's delusional belief in its historical and cultural superiority underpins its victimhood narrative. Russia presents itself as the aggrieved savior of civilization, trying to demand deference while evading responsibility for its catastrophic failures, from corruption to military incompetence.

Russia's victimhood is a mirror of narcissism's fragility- a desperate need to appear noble and aggrieved to mask an inability to accept its mediocrity. The Kremlin, or should we say, Putin, is not a persecuted titan—he is a petulant bully with an inflated ego and a persecution complex.

Machiavellianism

Manipulation Through Deception

The Kremlin's victim narrative is a masterpiece of Machiavellian manipulation. Russia calculates its grievances to achieve maximum propaganda value, using them to fracture alliances, sow discord, and paralyze international responses. They feign concern for Russian-speaking minorities abroad, manufacturing pretexts for aggression, as seen in Ukraine, while painting its opponents as heartless oppressors.

Cunning and Calculated

Russia's grievances are not expressions of genuine concern but tools of strategic deception. The claims of discrimination in the Baltic states, for example, are designed to provoke outrage and justify interference while concealing its true imperialist motives.

Russia's crocodile tears are the currency of Machiavellian deceit. They prey on the empathy of others to manipulate the narrative, orchestrating the very oppression it decries. The world must recognize these tears for what they are- a calculated ploy to further tyranny.

Schadenfreude

Reveling in the Pain of Others

Russia's narrative of victimhood is infused with schadenfreude, as it derives perverse satisfaction from the chaos and suffering it causes while projecting blame outward. The Kremlin gloats over its ability to destabilize the West, exploiting divisions it helps create while accusing its adversaries of persecution. This sadistic delight is clear in celebration of the economic and political strain its actions impose on other nations.

Gloating Over Destruction

The Kremlin's narratives of "Russophobia" and international conspiracies are not just defensive—they are offensive weapons gleefully used to divide and weaken opponents. Russia enjoys creating confusion and watching its enemies struggle under the weight of propaganda and disinformation.

Russia's victimhood narrative is the smirk of a sadist, delighting in the harm it inflicts while demanding sympathy for imaginary wounds. It is the behavior of a provocateur reveling in chaos, not of a legitimate global actor.

The Dark Core of Russian Victimhood

The Kremlin's victimhood complex is a psychological and strategic weapon wielded with the precision of a pathological manipulator. The Kremlin's rhetoric exploits the empathy of the global community, displaying the hallmarks of psychopathy, narcissism, Machiavellianism, and schadenfreude.

Psychopathy

Devoid of empathy, Russia masks its atrocities behind crocodile tears.

Narcissism

Delusions of grandeur drive its inability to accept criticism while demanding adoration.

Machiavellianism

Every grievance is a calculated ploy to manipulate and destabilize.

Schadenfreude

The Kremlin's victimhood smirks at the confusion it causes, reveling in the suffering of others.

Table 2 Psychological Frameworks in Russia's Tactics

Trait	Key Behaviors	Strategic Outcome
Psychopathy	Lack of empathy for inflicted harm; masking aggression with victimhood rhetoric.	Enables brutality while claiming moral high ground.
Narcissism	Grandiose claims of cultural superiority; hypersensitivity to criticism.	Demands deference while justifying aggression as noble.
Machiavellianism	Exploits minority issues and global empathy to manipulate narratives.	Diverts attention from its actions and fractures opposition.

Trait	Key Behaviors	Strategic Outcome
Schadenfreude	Delights in the confusion and strain its actions impose on adversaries.	Maintains morale internally while revealing adversaries' difficulties.

Calculated Strategy

Russian influence operations targeting the West follow a calculated strategy deeply rooted in psychological manipulation, historical grievances, and strategic deceit. The Kremlin understands that narratives can be as effective as physical warfare when designed to destabilize societies, create divisions, and erode trust. Its victimhood narrative, analyzed through the Seven Radicals and psychological frameworks such as psychopathy, narcissism, Machiavellianism, and schadenfreude, exemplifies a sophisticated and dangerous approach to hybrid warfare.

Purposeful Psychological Manipulation

Russia's perpetual cries of "Russophobia" and persecution are not genuine pleas for justice, but psychological weapons designed to exploit Western sensibilities. Western societies value fairness, human rights, and the protection of minority groups. Russia weaponizes those values to portray itself as a victim deserving sympathy while diverting attention from its aggressive actions. The tactic undermines opposition by equating legitimate criticism with bigotry, silencing dissenting voices under the weight of manipulated moral outrage.

The victimhood strategy extends beyond rhetoric. Russia claims to act on behalf of Russian-speaking minorities, using this pretext to justify interventions in sovereign states like Ukraine. These claims often gain traction among Western audiences unfamiliar with the complexities of Eastern European politics, sowing confusion and inhibiting collective action. Such psychological manipulation destabilizes opponents without confrontation, leaving targeted nations to grapple with internal debates and resource-draining efforts to counter disinformation.

Strategic Exploitation of Democratic Vulnerabilities

Democratic societies thrive on open discourse and diversity, but Russia exploits those strengths to sow discord. Accusations of Russophobia and discrimination against Russian culture amplify existing societal divisions, creating an environment of mistrust and polarization. Western nations find themselves locked in debates over free speech, cultural sensitivity, and foreign policy, often at the expense of addressing Russia's actual transgressions.

Russia's adaptability in shaping narratives ensures it is still an ever-present disruptor. As sanctions intensify or its military actions falter, the Kremlin pivots to emphasize persecution, reframing external pressure as evidence of Western aggression. This narrative shift keeps adversaries on the defensive, forcing them to address accusations rather than focus on proactive countermeasures.

Why This Matters

Western policymakers must grasp the intent behind Russian influence operations to counter them effectively. The victimhood narrative is not merely a tool of deflection but a calculated strategy to erode trust in democratic institutions, weaken alliances, and fracture public consensus. Left unchecked, it normalizes aggression under the guise of self-defense, enabling further destabilization.

Russia's actions also set dangerous precedents. If allowed to manipulate international norms through disinformation and fabricated grievances, other authoritarian regimes could replicate the approach, further threatening global stability. The psychological underpinnings of Russia's strategy—rooted in the Dark Triad and schadenfreude—reveal its long-term goals of dominance through chaos rather than cooperation.

Russia's influence operations are not merely a regional threat but a global challenge to democratic integrity and international norms. Allowing the Kremlin to weaponize victimhood emboldens authoritarianism, undermines multilateral efforts, and weakens collective security. Recognizing and addressing the psychological and strategic dimensions of this threat is essential for preserving stability, promoting accountability, and ensuring that manipulative narratives do not gain ground in shaping global opinion.

Strategic Roadmap to Combat Russian Influence Operations and Cognitive Warfare

Russian influence operations rely on psychological manipulation, disinformation, and exploitation of societal vulnerabilities. Combating this threat requires a coordinated, adaptive, and sustained response that integrates political, technological, and societal measures. Developing resilience against these tactics ensures the protection of democratic values and societal stability.

Understanding the Threat

Russian cognitive warfare operates through layers of deception, amplification of grievances, and strategic disinformation. The Kremlin employs victimhood narratives to manipulate

perceptions, weaken alliances, and sow discord. This method transcends traditional propaganda, using psychological and cultural levers to embed doubt and fracture public unity. Any effective counter-strategy must dismantle these mechanisms while reinforcing institutional and societal defenses.

Table 3 Strategic Analysis Comparative Table

Aspect	Russian Tactics	Counter-Strategy
Psychological Warfare	Exploits victimhood to manipulate perceptions.	Expose contradictions and amplify truthful narratives.
Disinformation	Spreads falsehoods to sow discord and erode trust.	Implement counter-disinformation units with real-time capabilities.
Social Fragmentation	Amplifies societal divisions through tailored messaging.	Promote media literacy and unify messaging among allies.
Exploitation of Technology	Uses AI to amplify propaganda reach.	Leverage AI for real-time tracking and response to influence operations.
Cultural Manipulation	Manipulates historical grievances and identity issues.	Highlight cultural truths and provide accurate historical context.

Strategic Goals

The primary goals must focus on exposing disinformation, fostering societal resilience, and neutralizing the efficacy of Russian influence. Achieving these requires synchronized action across governments, private sectors, and civil society while supporting ethical principles and transparency.

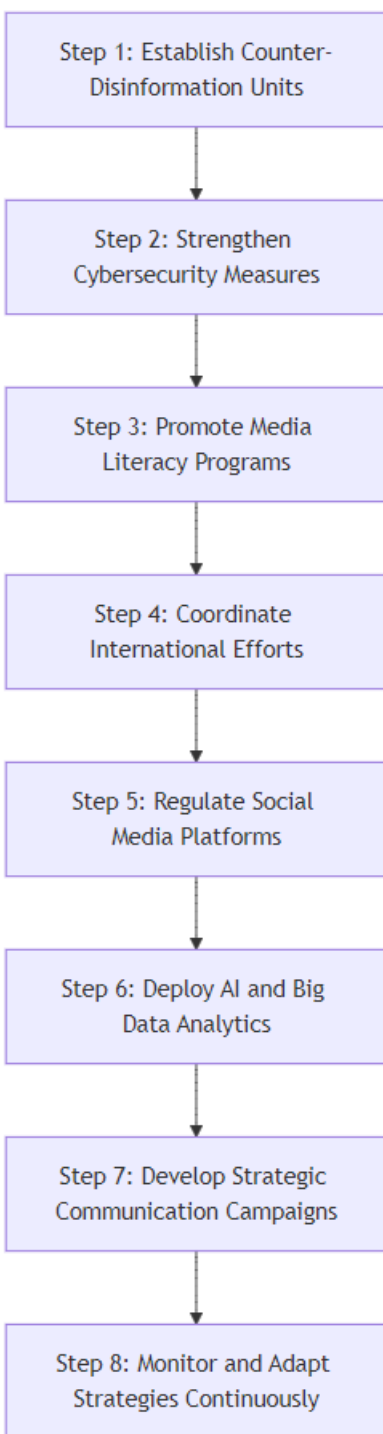
Components of the Strategy

1. Exposing Disinformation and Manipulation

Exposing the falsehoods underlying Russian influence operations undercuts their credibility. Systematic debunking of disinformation, coupled with prompt dissemination of accurate information, neutralizes cognitive manipulation. Establishing specialized counter-disinformation units equipped with AI tools enhances the ability to identify and counteract emerging narratives.

2. Building Resilience in Societies

Resilience begins with informed populations. Promoting media literacy and critical thinking skills reduces susceptibility to manipulation. Schools, universities, and public campaigns should teach individuals how to discern credible information from propaganda.



Incorporating historical and cultural education about Russian influence tactics further strengthens understanding.

3. Enhancing International Cooperation

Collaboration between nations prevents Russia from exploiting fragmented responses. Sharing intelligence, coordinating policies, and establishing joint monitoring initiatives ensure a unified front. Platforms like NATO and the European Union provide structures for comprehensive cooperation.

4. Strengthening Institutional Defenses

Governmental and institutional frameworks require reinforcement to withstand cognitive warfare, including cybersecurity measures, regulations for social media platforms, and policies targeting foreign interference. Incentivizing transparency and accountability in information dissemination platforms reduces opportunities for manipulation.

5. Employing Technology and Innovation

Advanced technologies play a crucial role in combating influence operations. Artificial intelligence, machine learning, and big data analytics enable real-time tracking and analysis of disinformation campaigns. Developing tools to monitor narrative evolution and counter their spread ensures adaptability.

6. Countering Narratives Through Strategic Communication

Proactive communication strategies, grounded in truth and ethical standards, effectively counteract propaganda. Highlighting inconsistencies in Russian narratives while

presenting evidence of aggression and manipulation creates public awareness. Using

Figure 2 Step-by-Step Roadmap

culturally tailored approaches ensures that messages resonate with diverse audiences.

Implementation Roadmap

Short-Term Measures

Immediate actions focus on countering existing disinformation campaigns. Governments should set up centralized counter-disinformation units and strengthen international collaboration for intelligence sharing. Social media platforms must adopt stricter regulations to mitigate Russian influence.

Mid-Term Initiatives

Mid-term initiatives address societal resilience and institutional preparedness. Introducing media literacy programs, funding independent journalism, and enacting policies to regulate online content create a sustainable defense against manipulation. Developing alliances with tech companies to deploy counter-disinformation tools ensures robustness.

Long-Term Vision

Long-term success lies in fostering a culture of critical thinking and transparency. Establishing think tanks to study and predict influence operations supports adaptability. Promoting global awareness campaigns about the nature of cognitive warfare fosters international solidarity against authoritarian manipulation.

Neutralizing Russian influence operations requires a holistic, multi-dimensional approach that integrates exposure, resilience, technology, and international collaboration. Democracies must act with urgency and unity, recognizing that cognitive warfare is an existential challenge to trust, transparency, and stability. Building long-term societal defenses ensures freedom from manipulation and reinforces the foundational principles of open societies.

Wrap Up

Russia's influence operations represent one of the most sophisticated threats to global stability and democratic values. By weaving disinformation, psychological manipulation, and strategic exploitation of vulnerabilities into its narratives, the Kremlin executes cognitive warfare with precision. Its victimhood rhetoric, bolstered by psychopathy, narcissism, Machiavellianism, and schadenfreude, creates a dangerous façade that obscures its aggressive ambitions. Understanding and countering these tactics requires an equally

calculated and comprehensive approach, one that dismantles the foundation of Russia's manipulation while fortifying societal and institutional defenses.

The heart of Russia's influence operations lies in its calculated victimhood narrative. Through accusations of "Russophobia," cultural persecution, and historical grievances, the Kremlin crafts an image of moral authority while masking its own aggression. This narrative exploits the West's commitment to human rights and fairness, weaponizing empathy to sow division and silence opposition. By projecting blame outward, Russia shifts attention from its domestic repression and international violations, leaving targeted nations in a constant state of reactive defense.

Table 4 Comparative Outcomes of the Victimhood Narrative

Dimension	Claimed Objective	Actual Objective	Result
Moral Authority	Defending Russian citizens and culture abroad.	Masking imperialist motives and aggression.	Creates a façade of righteousness while oppressing dissent domestically.
Global Perception	Countering alleged Russophobia.	Distracting from human rights abuses.	Deflects criticism; sustains domestic support.
Cultural Dominance	Preserving the Russian language and history.	Justifying interference in sovereign states.	Erodes trust in international norms and institutions.

Exposing the psychological dimensions of these tactics reveals the darker motivations behind them. Psychopathy explains the Kremlin's ruthless indifference to human suffering and its ability to rationalize aggression as self-defense. Narcissism drives its inflated self-image and hypersensitivity to criticism, while Machiavellianism underpins its strategic deception and manipulation of democratic vulnerabilities. Schadenfreude adds a sinister layer, as Russia revels in the chaos and confusion it creates, finding satisfaction in the fractures it imposes on its adversaries.

Combating these operations demands a well-structured and proactive roadmap. Establishing counter-disinformation units ensures that falsehoods are swiftly identified and dismantled. Cybersecurity measures protect institutions from external interference, while media literacy programs equip populations with the tools to recognize manipulation. International cooperation strengthens the collective response to Russian tactics, uniting allies against a common threat. Regulating social media platforms disrupts the channels Russia uses to spread propaganda, while deploying AI and big data analytics ensures real-time tracking of disinformation trends. Strategic communication campaigns counteract propaganda with truth, exposing contradictions in Russian narratives and fostering public trust.

Table 5 Comparison of Dark Traits in Individual vs. State Behavior

Dark Trait	Individual Manifestation	State-Level Manifestation
Psychopathy	Lack of empathy; manipulative; disregard for harm.	Rationalizes aggression as a defense; ignores humanitarian impact.
Narcissism	Inflated self-image; hypersensitivity to criticism.	Positions self as a global victim; demands unearned reverence.
Machiavellianism	Strategic deceit; exploitation of others.	Manufactures grievances to manipulate and destabilize adversaries.
Schadenfreude	Taking pleasure in others' suffering.	Revels in the chaos caused by its actions while shifting blame outward.

Sustained success in this effort hinges on adaptability and continuous monitoring. Russian influence operations evolve rapidly, requiring counter-strategies to remain flexible and forward-looking. A culture of resilience, driven by critical thinking and transparent governance, creates an environment where manipulative narratives fail to gain traction. Collaborative efforts between governments, tech companies, and civil society amplify the impact of these measures, ensuring a multi-dimensional defense against cognitive warfare.

The stakes in countering Russian influence operations extend beyond the immediate. Allowing the Kremlin's tactics to succeed sets a dangerous precedent for authoritarian regimes worldwide. Each false narrative, each division sown, chips away at the principles of democracy, eroding trust in institutions and alliances. Protecting against this threat safeguards not only the integrity of nations but also the shared values that underpin global stability.

Neutralizing Russia's cognitive warfare demands action that is deliberate, comprehensive, and unyielding. Dismantling its manipulation, exposing its hypocrisies, and fortifying against future threats forms the backbone of a strategy that defends democratic societies from one of the most insidious challenges of the modern age. The responsibility to act lies with those who value truth, freedom, and justice—ensuring that disinformation and manipulation fail to dictate the narrative of the future.

Appendix A

Figure 3 Seven Radicals analysis applied to Russia's victimhood narrative.



- The central node, "Russia's Victimhood Narrative," stands for the overarching strategy.
- Each of the Seven Radicals branches out from this node, illustrating how specific psychological and tactical elements are employed.
- Sub-nodes under each Radical highlight detailed strategies or manifestations tied to Russia's hybrid warfare tactics.
- Classes differentiate between the main narrative and the Radicals' specific contributions for better visual clarity.

Figure 4 Illustrating the interplay of psychopathy, narcissism, Machiavellianism, and schadenfreude in Russia's victimhood narrative-



- The central node, "Russia's Victimhood Narrative," serves as the foundation.
- Each branch stands for a Dark Triad trait or schadenfreude, illustrating how these psychological dimensions influence Russia's behavior-
 - **Psychopathy**- Focuses on callousness and lack of empathy.
 - **Narcissism**- Highlights delusions of grandeur and hypersensitivity to criticism.
 - **Machiavellianism**- Underscores manipulative strategies and exploitation of empathy.
 - **Schadenfreude**- Explores Russia's delight in causing harm and confusion.
- Sub-nodes detail specific manifestations of each trait in Russia's hybrid warfare tactics.
- Visual styling differentiates the main narrative (central), the traits (darktrait), and specific behaviors (detail).

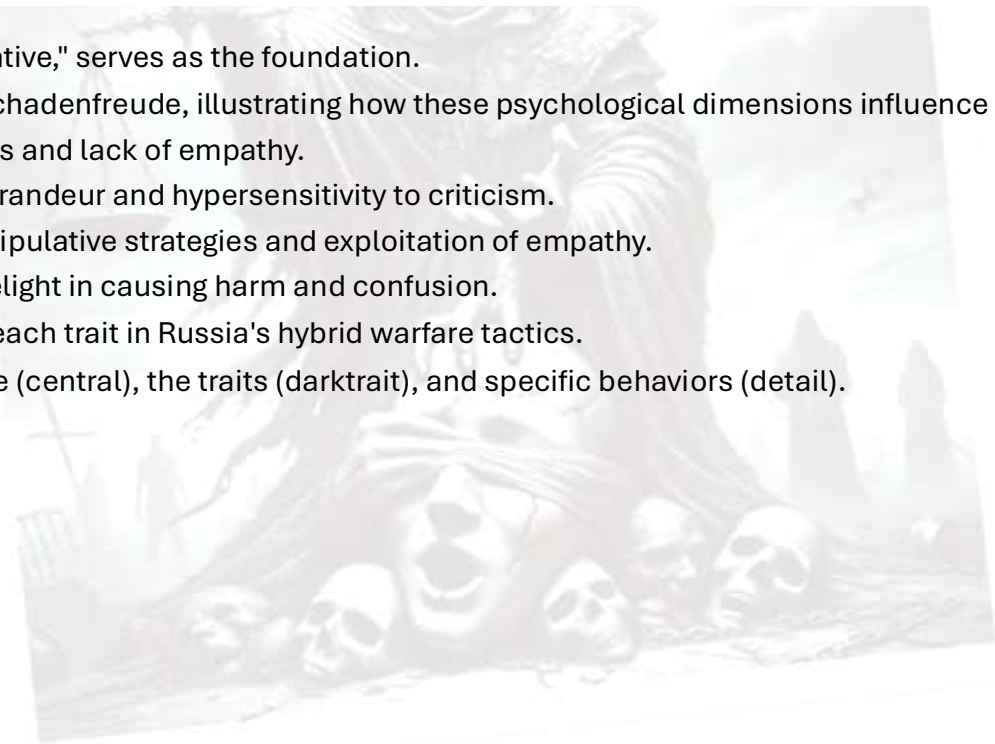




Figure 5 Strategy Visualization

