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**CHARACTER ASSASSINATION AS A TOOL IN
INTERNATIONAL POLITICS (A CASE STUDY OF THE UNITED
STATES-RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S RELATIONS)**

**SPECIALTY 562.01 - THEORY AND METHODOLOGY OF
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY**

Doctoral thesis in Political Science

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**DENIGRAREA CA INSTRUMENT ÎN POLITICA
INTERNAȚIONALĂ (STUDIUL DE CAZ AL RELAȚIILOR
DINTRE STATELE UNITE ȘI FEDERAȚIA RUSĂ)**

**SPECIALITATEA 562.01 – TEORIA ȘI METODOLOGIA RELAȚIILOR
INTERNAȚIONALE ȘI A DIPLOMAȚIEI**

Teza de doctor în științe politice

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ADNOTARE

la teza *Denigrarea ca instrument în politica internațională (Studiul de caz al relațiilor dintre Statele Unite și Federația Rusă)*, elaborată de către **Jason Jay Smart** pentru gradul de doctorat în științe politice, specialitatea 562.01 - Teoria și metodologia relațiilor internaționale și a diplomației, Chișinău, 2019.

Structura tezei: introducere, 3 capitole, concluzii și recomandări, bibliografie din 430 surse, 18 anexe, 140 de pagini text de bază. Rezultatele tezei au fost reflectate în 10 articole științifice, publicate în reviste academice internaționale și din Republica Moldova.

Cuvintele cheie: relații internaționale, politica externă, denigrare, defăimare, imagine politică, propagandă, politică internațională, strategie, tehnologii politice.

Domeniul de cercetare - știința politică, teoria relațiilor internaționale, studiile diplomatice.

Scopul principal al acestei teze Scopul acestei teze este de a investiga din punct de vedere teoretico-conceptual denigrarea ca instrument în politica internațională, evaluând, în acest fel, cazul relațiilor dintre Statele Unite ale Americii și Federația Rusă. În baza scopului propus, au fost formulate următoarele **obiective:** analiza surselor teoretice existente și a fundamentelor studiului de denigrare a caracterului; definirea metodologiei de cercetare; stabilirea specificului tradiției rusești de denigrare a caracterului în politica internă și externă; evaluarea contrastelor dintre abordările naționale ale SUA, privind denigrarea caracterului în politica secolelor XX-XXI; proiectarea succeselor și eșecurilor strategiilor de denigrare a caracterului în politică externă a SUA și Federației Ruse; caracterizarea specificului denigrării caracterului ca instrument al strategiilor de stat ale Statelor Unite și al politicilor Federației Ruse; identificarea resurselor de denigrare a caracterului în atacurile mass-media.

Noutatea și originalitatea științifică rezidă în conceptualizarea de către autor a atacurilor de denigrare a caracterului ca instrument în relațiile internaționale și realizarea unui studiu analitic comparativ al influenței denigrării de caracter asupra relațiilor bilaterale dintre SUA și Federația Rusă, ca instrumente împotriva conducerii fiecărei țări. **Problema științifică importantă soluționată în lucrare** constă în adaptarea conceptului de denigrare a caracterului la sfera politicii internaționale, evaluarea gradului în care fiecare țară folosește atacuri de caracter împotriva conducerii celeilalte țări, în contextul relațiilor internaționale contemporane, analiza relațiilor dintre SUA și Federația Rusă pe parcursul unei perioade determinate pentru a demonstra modul în care denigrarea caracterului, ca instrument politic, evoluând la nivel transnațional, influențează relațiile dintre state.

Semnificația teoretică a studiului derivă din prezentarea fundamentelor teoretico-conceptuale ale denigrării ca instrument și strategie în relațiile internaționale; determinarea specificului tradiției rusești de denigrare a caracterului în politica internă și externă și a contrastelor dintre abordările naționale ale SUA, privind denigrarea caracterului în politica secolelor XX-XXI; proiectarea succeselor și eșecurilor strategiilor de denigrare a caracterului în politică externă a SUA și Federației Ruse; caracterizarea specificului denigrării ca instrument al strategiilor de stat ale Statelor Unite și al politicilor Federației Ruse pe arena internațională; identificarea resurselor de denigrare a caracterului în atacurile mass-media privind politică externă.

Valoarea aplicativă a lucrării Rezultatele concluziile și recomandările acestei cercetări pot servi drept un suport politologic pentru factorii de decizie guvernamentali și nonguvernamentali de a înțelege natura, locul și rolul denigrării ca instrument și strategie în politica internațională în vederea evaluării efectelor aplicării acestui fenomen în relații bilaterale, precum și elaborarea strategiilor, instrumentelor adecvate amenințărilor existente pentru politică externă a statelor independente, inclusiv Republicii Moldova, la etapa contemporană.

Implementarea rezultatelor științifice. a fost realizată prin examinarea și aprobarea lor în cadrul ședințelor Departamentului Relații Internaționale și ale Seminarului Științific de profil al USM, prin rapoarte și comunicări la 7 conferințe științifice, în calitate de participant al Proiectului Comisiei Europene FP7 Marie Curie Acțiuni (IRSES) și în cadrul activității a autorului în calitate de consultant internațional al actorilor politici din Republica Moldova, Ucraina, și altor state, prin experiența sa de cercetător superior al Societății internaționale pentru Studii ale Denigrării. (ISSCA, Fairfax, Virginia, U. S.A. at George Mason University).

ANNOTATION

of the dissertation *Character Assassination as a Tool in International Politics (A Case Study of the United States - Russian Federation's Relations)*, written by **Jason Jay Smart** for the degree of Ph.D. in Political Science, specialization 562.01 – Theory and Methodology of International Relations and Diplomacy. Chisinau, 2019.

Work structure: introduction, 3 chapters, conclusions and recommendations, the bibliography from 430 sources, 18 appendixes, 140 pages of the basic text. Thesis results have been stated in 10 scientific articles, published in academic national and international journals and editions.

Keywords: international relations, foreign policy, character assassination, political image, propaganda, international politics, strategy, political technology.

Area of research: political science, theory of international relations, diplomacy studies.

The main aim of this work is to investigate the theoretical-conceptual bases of character attacks as tool in international politics, thereby evaluating the framework of character assassination in the context of relations between the United States of America and the Russian Federation. The research goal involved the following **objectives:** analysis of existing theoretical sources and fundamentals of character assassination study; defining of the study methodology; to establish specific of the Russian tradition of character assassination in internal and foreign policy; to evaluate the contrasts between U. S.A. national approaches to character assassination in politics of 20th-21st centuries; to define successes and failures of character assassination strategies in foreign policy of U. S. A. and Russian Federation; to characterize specific of character assassination as a tool in US State Strategies and Russian Federation Policies and resources of character assassination in mass media attacks.

The scientific novelty and originality exists in the author's conceptualization of character attacks as a tool in international relations and in realization of comparative analytical study of the U. S. A.'s and the Russian Federation's utilization of character attacks as instruments against each country's leadership. **The important scientific problem** tackled in the dissertation research is the adaption of the character assassination concept to the international politics sphere, via the evaluation of the degree to which each country uses character attacks against the other country's leadership in the context of contemporary international relations based on the analysis of the U. S.-Russian Federation relationships during a defined period to demonstrate how character assassination as a political tool, being evolved on the transnational level, influences the relationship between the states.

The theoretical significance of the research derives from the theoretical and conceptual presentation of the character attacks as a tool and strategy in international relations; promotion of understanding the nature and role of character attacks in international relations as an interdisciplinary academic field of study; determination of the specific of the tradition of character attacks in Russian internal and foreign policies; comparative evaluation the contrasts between U.S.A. national approaches to character assassination in politics of 20th-21st centuries; comparison of successes, failures and specific of character assassination strategies in foreign policy of U. S. A. and Russian Federation; and identification of mass media resources of character assassination as aggressive political tool in bilateral relations.

The practical significance of the study. Results, conclusions and recommendations of the research could serve as political support for governmental and non-governmental decision makers to understand the nature, place and role of denigration as an instrument and strategy in international politics to assess the effects of applying this phenomenon in bilateral relations and to develop strategies, instruments appropriate to existing foreign policy threats of independent states, including the Republic of Moldova, at the contemporary stage.

Implementation of scientific results was realized through examination and approval at the Department of International Relations and Profile Seminar of Moldova State University, by presentation of reports and communications at 7 scientific conferences, within the participation of the author in the European Commission Project FP7 Marie Curie Acțiuni (IRSES), international consulting of political actors from Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, USA și alte state, as well as experience of Senior Researcher at the International Society for the Study of Character assassination (ISSCA, Fairfax, Virginia, U. S.A. at George Mason University).

АННОТАЦИЯ

к диссертации *Очернительство репутации как инструмент в международной политике (на примере отношений между США и Российской Федерацией)*, автора Джейсона Джея Смарта, на соискание ученой степени доктора политологии. Специальность: 562.01 - Теория и методология международных отношений и дипломатии. Кишинэу, 2018.

Структура работы: введение, 3 главы, общие выводы и рекомендации, библиография из 430 источников, 18 приложений, 140 страниц основного текста. Результаты диссертации были изложены в 10 научных статьях, опубликованных в научных журналах и изданиях.

Ключевые слова: международные отношения, внешняя политика, очернительство, политический имидж, пропаганда, международная политика, стратегия, политические технологии.

Область исследования. Политические науки, теория международных отношений, дипломатические исследования.

Основная цель данной работы – реализовать теоретико-концептуальное исследование очернительства как инструмента в международной политике, основываясь на котором, оценить в качестве примера отношения США и Российской Федерации. Цель исследования включает такие **задачи:** анализ существующих теоретических научных источников и концептуальных основ очернительства как инструмента в международной политике; определение методологии исследования; установление особенностей российской традиции очернительства во внутренней и внешней политике; оценка различных подходов в национальной политике США к очернительству в международных отношениях в XX-XXI веках; выявление успехов и просчетов стратегий очернительства во внешней политике США и РФ; характеристика особенностей очернительства как инструмента в государственных стратегиях США и политике РФ; выделение ресурсов очернительства как инструмента в международной политике в атаках масс-медиа.

Научная новизна и оригинальность заключается в теоретической концептуализации очернительства как стратегии в международных отношениях, и в реализации сравнительного аналитического исследования использования инструмента очернительства в США и России против руководства каждой из стран. **Важная научная проблема**, решенная в диссертации состоит в оценке степени, при которой каждая из стран использует очернительство против руководства другой страны в контексте современных международных отношений и американо-российских отношений.

Теоретическая значимость исследования состоит в представлении теоретико-концептуальных основ очернительства в качестве инструмента и стратегии в международных отношениях; в обосновании особенностей российской традиции очернительства во внутренней и внешней политике и в различных подходах США к очернительству в международной политике в XX-XXI веках; выявление успехов и просчетов применения очернительства во внешней политике США и РФ; характеристика особенностей использования очернительства как инструмента в государственных стратегиях США и политике РФ на международной арене; идентифицирование ресурсов очернительства как инструмента в международной политике в атаках масс-медиа.

Практическая значимость исследования. Результаты и выводы данного политологического исследования позволяют государственным и негосударственным акторам, влияющим на принятие решений, понять природу, место и роль очернительства в качестве инструмента и стратегии в международной политике, влияющем на двухсторонние отношения, а также с учетом этого способствовать разработке стратегий и инструментов внешней политики, адекватных существующим угрозам для независимых государств, включая Республику Молдова.

Внедрение научных результатов было обсуждено и одобрено на заседании Департамента международных отношений и профильного семинара Молдавского госуниверситета и отражено в докладах и сообщениях автора на 7 национальных и международных конференциях, в участии в международном проекте Европейской Комиссии FP7 Marie Curie Acțiuni (IRSES), в деятельности в качестве международного консультанта политических акторов в Молдове, Украине, России, США и других стран, а также в опыте старшего исследователя Международного общества по изучению очернительства (ISSCA, Фэйрфаксе, Вирджиния, США, Университет Джорджа Мейсона).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- C. I. S.** – Commonwealth of Independent States.
- C. N. N.** – Central News Network.
- E. C. A.** – Ethnographic content analysis.
- E. U.** – European Union.
- K. G. B.** – Committee of State Security (of the U. S. S. R.).
- N. A. T. O.** – North Atlantic Treat Organization.
- O. S. C. E.** – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.
- R. F.** – Russian Federation.
- Q. C. A.** – Quantitative Content Analysis.
- U. N.** – United Nations.
- U. S.** – United States.
- U. S. A.** – United States of America.
- U. S. S. R.** – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

INTRODUCTION

The research theme's relevance. In the contemporary world that is ever more complex and interdependent, international relations take place within the permanent confrontation of states; we are witnessing the more frequent use of character assassination as a tactic of international relations. International actors have used diverse tools to defame political leaders in different countries. Of the many ongoing examples are the numerous attacks on US President Donald Trump, those of Russian President Vladimir Putin and other political leaders in France, Great Britain, etc. Character assassination is often used as a political strategy in international relations, manifesting new approaches and tools with a strong influence on interstate relations. Character assassination is sometimes used as a political strategy in international relations and by new independent states as Republic of Moldova or Ukraine, manifesting new approaches and tools with a strong influence on interstate relations.

Today's world has shown that the increasingly popular and effective mechanism for defamation is via electronic media resources, such as Twitter, Facebook, etc. through which massive attacks on individuals are being conducted internationally. It is worth noting that though the instruments of character assassination may differ as time passes, some have existed for many generations. Today there is an entire industry built around finding humor in attacks (e.g. the French publication *Charlie Hebdo*), or the multitude of video materials that have the purpose of attacking and destroying the reputation of political leaders in the international arena.

Therefore, it is important to study not only the quantity of attacks but to also examine the nature of the attacks, to cast light on the question as to whether countries' leaderships intentionally seek character attacks against their counterparts during periods of strained relations in the context named as "warm" and "cool" relations. The comparison research of both warm and cool periods in diplomatic relations between two nations could determine the dependence between the cooling of relations and an increase of attacks against foreign leaders including the counterpart nation's Presidential figure.

The proposed topic for research is current and relevant as it occupies a special place in the research of international political processes, becoming in the current international context a frequent political strategy used as a complex instrument of defamation of the reputation of the international political leaders, but also of the international image of the states. In this context is important to

examine how the leaders of the United States of America and the Russian Federation are portrayed in the other country's press during times of warm bilateral relations and during times of stressed bilateral relations. By examining the history of character assassination in both countries, then contrasting it against several case studies covering a period of nearly a quarter of a century, could help possible to determine how the relations between the countries were influenced by the media presentations of the foreign leaders.

The level of elaboration of the problem. Character assassination is a comparatively new concept in political science, especially on the level of international relations. Rising in popularity since 1930s, and drawing on psychology, linguistics and management, the term "character assassination" refers to destroying the credibility and reputation of a subject such as person, institution, social group, or even a nation.

In societies where public debate, rather than violence, is the method of determining the distribution of scarce resources, character assassination is a valuable tool at the disposal of political rivals, allowing them to socially destroy opponents through defamation. That is why in modern politics character assassination most often takes the form of negative campaigning.

Among the most prominent researchers of character assassination and its adjacent concepts, American political scientists of Russian origin M. Icks, E. Shiraev and S. Samoilenko can be singled out as the pioneers of conceptualization and classification of the phenomena of character assassination and the forms it takes in the political sphere, being the members of The Lab for Character Assassination and Reputation Politics (CARP) housed at George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, U. S. A. and The International Society for the Study of Character Assassination (ISSCA). [29, 36, 41, 21] M. Hasselmayer and M. Jenny contributed the negative campaigning approach to the definition of character assassination. [9, 10] C. Shultz and M. Pancer conducted one of the first studies of character attacks in politics. [7]

Among other western researchers, the following must be highlighted: T.L. Budesheim, [8] D.A. Houston, [8] S.J. DePaola [8], J. Johnson [11], J.A.Thurber [12], C.J. Nelson [12], R.R. Lau [14, 15], L. Sigelman [53, 4, 14], I.B. Rovner [14, 15], M. Kugler [53], R.A. Jackson [16], J.J. Mondak [16], R. Huckfeldt [16], F.H. Jonas [56] for their contribution to the understanding of negative campaigning and attacks, which was built upon the theoretical basis formulated by previous generations of scientists and philosophers, including of N. Machiavelli [24], F. Bacon [25], I. Kant [26], G. Tarde [27], W. Lippmann [28].

In the Russian and Moldovan scientific community, topics relevant to the study of international relations is covered by such authors as S.V. Gorin [1], A.U. Trubetskoy [2], V.I. Ivanov [73], O.N. Yanitsky [114], I. Klovov [75], M. Taritse [37], V. Vera [113], A.N. Krylov [77], G.V. Kusov [78], O. Issers [80], A. Vujma [74], O.N. Parshina [81], A.A. Vlasov [120], and A. Ledeneva [20], who elaborate on both reputation and national interest in politics or foreign policy.

In the historiography of the proposed topic, along with the works from Russia, there are scientific works of researchers from post-Soviet countries, for example, from Moldova: G. Rusnac [104-106], V. Saca [104], C. Solomon [105], V. Teosa [90-92], G. Vasilescu [110, 111], P. Varzar [83-85]. In their works, these researchers do not directly consider defamation as a political tool, but they allow the author to understand the nature, values and traditions that influenced the formation and evolution of the post-Soviet political context and the nature of the studied phenomenon. The research topics in Moldova directly include works by V. Moraru [94-95], C. Marin [93], V. Moşneaga [96-98], A. Peru-Balan [100-103], L. Braga [83], I. Bucataru [96-97], A. Ejov and C. Ejov [86-89], A. Solcan [107-109] and others, which make it possible to understand the formation of modern approaches to communication technologies, PR strategies, means of manipulation, information wars and “fake news” during the pre-election period and in the political parties struggle of these countries, both in theory and practice, which is necessary for the analysis of the use of modern political technologies in international politics. More than just the stated authors, historical sources, newspapers and online sources articles and law documents, juridical acts were analyzed to describe the concept more fully.

As the literature review shows, most of the study of character attacks has been focused on American national politics. In the context of the United States discussion of negative campaigning and attack ads is not uncommon. A much lesser amount of academic effort has been exerted on the study character attacks as related to international politics or foreign affairs, but due to the world’s transition to becoming “a digital society,” the concept has risen in importance. In fact, the literature review revealed that the study of attacks – specifically through the lens of character assassination – in international relations had yet to be studied in the United States and Europe. In the context of digitalization and “hybrid wars” (which includes informational wars) the concept of character assassination becomes even more necessary to study.

The problematic of dissertation research includes the question of whether and how character attacks are used in international politics. The nature of relationships between countries has been

thoroughly studied, but an examination of these relations in the context of their deliberate attacks against the other's leader has not been fully conducted in political science and international relations. Specifically, attempts to understand the ebb and flow of U. S.-Russian relations and their associated pointed attacks against senior government leaders is missing from the academic literature.

The problem of research important to study in this dissertation is to examine the historical bilateral relations of the United States and Russia to understand and to discover if a significant relationship exists between the worsening of countries' diplomatic relations and intentional attacks on the other country's leadership through official government organs or the government-backed press. A thorough understanding of this phenomenon will help academics and experts to assess the status of the relations between two countries. Moreover, it provides a tool for those seeking to improve the relations between countries, allowing them to interpret the relationship through the accompanying data set of types of attacks. Additionally, this study aids in the understanding of the typology of character attacks, a possibility to make prognoses onto states' relations according to the usage of such practices, and in what contexts they are made, as the type of attack made varies according to the state of bilateral relations.

The purpose and the objectives is to investigate the theoretical-conceptual bases of character attacks as tool in international politics, thereby evaluating the framework of character assassination in the context of relations between the United States of America and the Russian Federation. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to meet the following *objectives*: to analyze the existing theoretical literature sources and history of character assassination study; to generalize theoretical fundamentals of character assassination study in political science; to define the key methodological approaches of studying character assassination in applied research; to establish specific of the Russian tradition of character assassination in internal and foreign policy; to evaluate the contrasts between U. S.A. national approaches to character assassination in politics of 20th-21st centuries; to define successes and failures of character assassination strategies in foreign policy of U. S. A. and Russian Federation; to characterize specific of character assassination as a tool in US State Strategies and R. F. Policies; to identify resources of character assassination in mass media attacks.

The scientific novelty resides in the author's conceptualization of character attacks as a re-emerging tool, especially the conceptualization of character assassination not only as a domestic phenomenon, but also one that takes place on the level of international relations, and in the realization of a comparative analytical study of the U. S. A.'s and Russian Federation's utilization of

character attacks against each country's leadership: establishing the character assassination's structure, its dependence on mass media and informational sources, prognostic potential, and influencing international relations and diplomacy.

The major scientific problem solved in this PhD dissertation is the adaption of the character assassination concept to the international politics sphere, via the evaluation of the degree to which each country uses character attacks against the other country's leadership in the context of contemporary international relations based on the analysis of the U. S.-Russian Federation relationships during a defined period to demonstrate how character assassination as a tool in state strategies and policies, being evolved on the transnational level, influences the relationship between the states.

The theoretical significance derives from the theoretical and conceptual presentation of the character attacks as a tool and strategy in international relations; promotion of understanding the nature and role of character attacks in international relations as an interdisciplinary academic field of study; determination of the specific of the tradition of character attacks in Russian internal and foreign policies; comparative evaluation the contrasts between U.S.A. national approaches to character assassination in politics of 20th-21st centuries; comparison of successes, failures and specific of character assassination strategies in foreign policy of U. S. A. and R.F.; and identification of mass media resources of character assassination as aggressive political tool in bilateral relations.

The practical value of the thesis. Results, conclusions and recommendations of the research could serve as politological support for governmental and non-governmental decision makers to understand the nature, place and role of denigration as an instrument and strategy in international politics to assess the effects of applying this phenomenon in bilateral relations and to develop strategies, instruments appropriate to existing foreign policy threats of independent states, including the Republic of Moldova, at the contemporary stage.

Approval of the results. was realized through examination and approval at the Department of International Relations and Profile Seminar of Moldova State University, by presentation of reports and communications at 7 scientific conferences, within the participation of the author in the European Commission Project FP7 Marie Curie Acțiuni (IRSES), international consulting of political actors from Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, USA and other states, as well as experience of Senior Researcher at the International Society for the Study of Character assassination (ISSCA), which is headquartered in Fairfax, Virginia, U. S.A. at George Mason University.

Work structure consists of the introduction, 3 chapters, conclusions and recommendations, the bibliography from 429 sources, 18 appendixes, and 136 pages of the basic text. **The first chapter - HISTORIOGRAPHY AND THEORETICAL FUNDAMENTALS OF CHARACTER ASSASSINATION IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS** - is an analysis of the historiographical situation, theoretical and conceptual issues and definitions of research on the subject of character assassination in terms of political science and international politics studies.

The first subchapter is an analysis of the theoretical fundamentals of character assassination of political science approaches to this phenomenon. It establishes the prerequisites of applying the concept of character assassination to the international politics and describes differences in approaches to defining character assassination.

This discussion continues in the second subchapter, beginning with a thorough literature review. Sources were taken from the United States, Europe and Russia, allowing comparison between how academics in different countries understand the concept of character assassination. A discussion about the findings in the literature and the operationalization of terms used concludes the literature review, continued by restating the definitions of character assassination and character attacks which fit the dissertation's goal.

The second chapter – CHARACTER ASSASSINATION IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS: EVOLUTION OF APPROACHES IN RUSSIAN AND AMERICAN HISTORY – is a comparative investigation carried out via the method of studying the phenomenon of character assassination and analysis of its attributes. The main goal is to identify the difference in character attack traditions in Russia and the United States.

The first subchapter is focused on defining the analytical methodology applied to the study conducted by the author to analyze, interpret and explain the evolution, new trends and prospects of character assassination in international politics. This subchapter analyzes and selects feasible methods of research according to subject and context. Representatives of the main schools of international relations theory, and the thinking of researchers, experts and politicians at different stages of development of international relations theory relating to character assassination in different eras is thoroughly analyzed.

In the second subchapter, the methodology and selected methods are applied to a historical comparison with a descriptive study of the use of character assassination throughout Russian history. In the Russian domestic case comparisons, several major patterns routinely appeared as

means for attempting character assassinations. Among the most prevalent attacks are those that question the loyalty of the leader to the country and attacks on the person's sexual behavior. The cases of Tsarina Alexandrovna, Grigorii Rasputin, Leon Trotsky and more modern political leaders of Russia such as Mikhail Gorbachev, Vladimir Putin and Dmitriy Medvedev are examined.

In the third subchapter the historiographical descriptive study continues by examining cases on the American side. The cases of George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, George W. Bush and Barack Obama are analyzed. This examination concludes with a comparison of Russian and American traditions of character assassination practices and the examination of differences between them.

The third chapter - CHARACTER ASSASSINATION STRATEGIES AND INSTRUMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL POLITICS - is the analytical and prognostic application for testing the hypothesis, namely that there is a relationship between worsening political relations between country and an increase in attacks against the reputation of the other government's leaders. Character assassination is also considered within the scope of modern trends in mass media and nongovernmental actions.

In the first subchapter the similarities and differences of problems and new trends of character assassination are explored. The purpose of subchapter is the analytical analysis of the main problems of the studied phenomenon and identifying the systemic causes that will help to define the necessary conclusions for testing dissertation hypothesis. Character attacks are analyzed in "warm" and "cool" periods of the relationship using examples of attacks on countries' leaders' personas.

The second subchapter analyzes the evolution of the development of the domestic politics of character assassination into the interstate level. Accordingly, it develops the instrumental nature of character assassination, showing its use as a tool in state strategies and policies. This subchapter includes case studies of character attacks on Russian and American presidents overall.

The third subchapter describes the role of the media in the phenomenon of character assassination using the analysis of differences between character attacks in the Russian and American press. In this way the practical tools and resources of character assassination are illustrated. This subchapter also uses content analysis of online sources to determine the nature of attacks. Case studies of the Pussy Riot incident and similar incidents are examined.

General conclusions. The author indicates the results and perspectives regarding the study of character assassination in international politics.

1. HISTOGRAPHY AND THEORETICAL FUNDAMENTALS OF CHARACTER ASSASSINATION IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

Character assassination is both a complex process and the result of deliberate and constant efforts undertaken for the purpose of harming the reputation of, or undermining confidence in, an individual. Social groups and institutions may also aim to denigrate the reputation of individuals or institutions. The first attempts to study character assassination were performed in the political sphere, supplemented by the knowledge from the realms of social psychology and communication theory. Individuals can stop being positively recognized by their professional community, or their social environment, as a result of character assassination campaigns. That is why this concept requires study and its social and political impacts must be demonstrated. It should be done not only on behalf of a particular “victimized” individual or group, but also to show the possible global impact of varying attitudes towards specific public personas and opinion leaders, particularly in the era of globalization and “information society” where news spreads with the speed of light and public opinion changes by the moment.

This chapter represents an analytical study of the history and situation in the field of the research, generalization of the definitions, theoretical, and conceptual issues of the character assassination in the political science and international politics.

The first subchapter deals with the preceding research, beginning with a thorough literature review. Scientific sources were taken from the United States, Europe and post-Soviet countries to compare and contrast how the countries each understood the concept of character assassination. A discussion about the findings in the literature and the operationalization of terms used concludes the literature review.

This discussion is continued in the second subchapter by analysis of the theoretical fundamentals of character assassination in political science approaches to this phenomenon. The subchapter highlights the prerequisites of applying the concept of character assassination to international politics, describing the differences in the approaches in defining character assassination, and defines the concept of character assassination and character attacks which is within this dissertation’s purposes.

1.1. Character Assassination in Political Science: A Historiographical Study

Representing a multidisciplinary approach (connecting fields of political science, communication theories, reputational analysis, international relations, and cultural diversity), this research delves deeply into cross-cultural understanding of how countries with different dominant national languages interact, therefore it is important to make sure we clearly define all of the words needed in this analysis. As English is the dominant language of this dissertation, we will begin by determining who can be the victim of character attacks and how these terms are most commonly defined in the English language. Specifically examined are the terms “slander,” “character assassination,” “character attack,” and “libel.” After concluding this analysis of how others have defined the terms in popular media and scholastic journals, there will be an explanation as to how the terms will be applied for the duration of this dissertation.

Defining “character attacks,” versus “character assassination,” versus “negative advertising,” versus “comparative advertising,” versus “libel,” versus “slander,” is a complex endeavor – especially given the cross-cultural context of this research. However, many similarities between the terms exist that allow us to have a foundational understanding of how they can best be operationalized for our academic research purposes. A careful review of existent political science literature relating to character assassination shows that there are no universal norms in defining these terms and that the range of opinions on the matter vary considerably.

The search for definitions was quite broad and reached into many different fields, including into the emerging field of political reputation. This new scientific direction in the study of reputation management, called “reputiology,” is on the rise according to S. Gorin. Reputiology studies the patterns in the creation and management of the reputations of people and legal entities and explores it as a phenomenon in society. [1] Like character assassination, it seeks to understand the strengths and weaknesses of people’s reputations and how they seek to protect it from being dirtied. People however, unlike character assassination, reputiology takes a more wholistic approach and seeks to understand what makes, or breaks, a reputation and how it can be maintained through all good and bad periods during a person’s life.

Reputation politics changes over time though the influence of socio-political events, and depending on the information that appears in the media about the subject. This gives an opportunity for reputation correction via political reputation management. Under political reputation

management, deliberate actions are undertaken to create and maintain the desired reputation of a person elected to a socially significant position in their society. [2] This is frequently done by conducting events or participating in activities that would be viewed positively by the society at-large. This is both helpful for someone seeking to maintain a good reputation, as it is very helpful for someone who has taken a public fall and is seeking to rebuild his image and reputation. The key in all scenarios is that the public should view the actions to be sincere and in-line with his desire to help them: If they view it as a cheap gimmick, or electoral trick, it actually has the potential to backfire and to hurt the candidate more than to help him win votes.

Years of research support the results of the L. Sigelman and C. K. Sigelman study which found that “voters are drawn to cast their ballot in the direction of the candidate most like themselves.” [4] The personal aspect of politics is the one that most intrigues voters, beyond any of the policy considerations. C. Schultz and M. Pancer cite the A. H. Miller, M. P. Wattenberg and O. Malanchuk study [5] that found that respondents made two times more negative comments about the personality of political candidates than they did about the political positions or views of candidates. R. D. Brown, S. D. Lambert, B. J. Kay and J. E. Curtis' [6] research of Canadian elections found that a startling three out of four answers given by respondents dealt with personality traits. This sheds light on why character attacks are so critically important in politics: It is the personality and personal qualities of a candidate that does a large part in assisting voters to formulate their opinions on what they think of candidates. Thus, we can deduce that since personal qualities of the candidate count for so much, by effectively attacking the reputation of a candidate, or by destroying his image, it is quite possible to dissuade voters from supporting him and though they may not now vote for the attacking candidate, they will at least now not be producing another “no” vote against the attacker.

Interestingly, M. Pancer et al. found that in Canada, Britain and the United States, integrity was viewed as the most important trait for a candidate to possess. This tracks with why attacking an opponent's honesty is such a common tactic in political campaign strategy: it hits at the heart of issues that matter to voters – how much they can trust the person for whom they are voting. The historical comparisons in this dissertation found that attacking a leader's honesty has been a staple of character attacks for hundreds of years. Though it is hard to prove that someone is dishonest, it is quite conceivable that an attacker could raise doubts in the minds of citizens, thereby allowing the citizens to never fully trust that elected leader again.

C. Schultz and M. Pancer examined the role that sex played in the perceptions of character

attack. The authors found that people were more sympathetic to attacks read by people of the same sex as them. Equally, they found a more negative reaction when the author was of the opposite sex. [7, p.100] This supports the earlier conclusions made by the authors that voters tend to support candidates who are more similar to themselves.

T. L. Budesheim, D. A. Houston and S. DePaola argue that not all ads are equally as effective or successful in taking down their opponents. Ads' effectiveness is interpreted by the audience according to at least two factors: what justification existed for the attack and the political affiliation of those who are involved in the attack. [8] In both cases people do not relish in the ideas of there being attacks, but they do understand that at times it could be relevant to their decision making when elections approach. Thus, if information is distributed in such a way as to be perceived as being an honest portrayal of the opponent's background (e.g. the case of Swift Boat Veterans for Truth), we see that voters react strongly to it as they believe they are now more informed about the "truth" of the other candidate and so the information helps them to make up their mind as for whom they will be voting in the elections. Likewise, it is important that when laying out an attack, a person is not perceived as being mean-spirited, but doing an attack for some greater purpose.

M. Haselmayer and M. Jenny's *Friendly fire? Negative campaigning among coalition parties* [9] articulates a fundamental problem faced in political science literature, namely that what exactly qualifies as a negative attack is remarkably unclear and undefined. R. R. Lau and I. B. Rovner find that negative campaigning is any nature of campaign statement in regards to an opposing political opponent or political actor. [14] This would be a very broad definition though as a race is, at its most boiled-down element, simply a contest between multiple participants: And thus a candidate is not operating in a vacuum but is actually positioned as to have to be in opposition to the other candidates, lest they gain some electoral upper hand. Thus, it is not only necessary, but wise to mention the opposing candidate so that people understand what players are running in the race, and why one candidate is a better decision for them than the other candidates.

A separate study by M. Haselmayer and M. Jenny used "crowd-coding" to create a data-based approach to establish if ads were negative. To execute this crowd-coding, the authors created a dictionary of negative words which they then ran through various media reports and political ads. If those words appeared, it was determined that the ads had been negative. The authors were then able to study the frequency of said attacks and also to gauge the relative negativity and acidity of them. [10] Though the M. Haselmayer and M. Jenny study's results were not contrasted to the

results of this dissertation, a similar mechanism of contrast was applied to the research found within this dissertation as specific words and word choice were run through news and online stories over more than a decade to find what trends existed between worsening or improving relations and the increase or decrease of stories that were negative or positive.

American academic J. Johnson's extensive study of American political consultants, "Political Consultants and Campaigns: One Day to Sell" [11], examined how professional political consultants view politics, political campaigns and strategy in modern America. In specifically looking at attack ads in politics, J. Johnson departs from earlier studies by noting that those who make the actual decisions as to whether use negative ads are not studied. J. Johnson laments that "...political practitioners are seldom included in the negative advertising studies. Many political scientists assess campaign negativity through content analysis or the coding of ads." [11]

J. Johnson continues that a problem in earlier research is that "the few negative advertising studies that included political practitioners in the results are often more nuanced and proscriptive, since the creators and implementers of the ads themselves were involved," J. Johnson continues that "the other major complication in negative advertising research is that the majority of political science literature fails to provide any actual definition of negative advertising at all." [11]

After conducting his national survey of Democratic and Republican political operatives, J. Johnson noted that, "From the beginning a few key themes stood out. The first was the distinction between 'attack' and 'negative' advertising, the second a distinction between 'contrast' and 'attack' advertising, and finally some divergence among consultants about what actually constituted a 'personal character attack.'" [11, p. 11] One could argue that the contrast that exists between negative ads and attack ads is an interesting distinction. However, character attacks and negative ads will frequently have a great deal in common, character assassination is a different field as it is an effort to completely destroy the public's perception of not an "opposing politician," but to destroy him as a human. That is, to so sufficiently destroy his reputation and public image that the public is no longer willing to even consider him in the same light again. A negative ad, on say taxes, could lessen one's views on a candidate – but it does not change how they perceive him as a person. If it attacks him, for instance for his sexuality than it could actually forever alter the way that the public perceives him as a person – not just as a politician.

Likewise, this differs from earlier academic research on the subject as "the distinction between 'attack' advertising and 'negative' advertising is one that is not often specifically stated in

the political science literature but was replete in the responses from the consultants. Consultants in the survey made a distinction between the two types of ads, although the distinction often fell on the same definition.” [5, p. 13] This underlines that even practitioners in politics, who deal every day with negative ads, are not entirely sure how these terms should be operationalized.

In a similar vein, J. A. Thurber and C. J. Nelson argue in “Campaign Warriors: Political Consultants in Elections” that in U. S. political campaigns “when incumbents make challengers the subjects of their campaign ads, they do not do so in a flattering way. This suggests that campaign professionals encourage greater negativity in the elections.” However, the authors observe that “challengers conduct the most opposition-oriented campaigns,” which “...provides additional evidence for the belief that campaign professionals encourage candidates to wage negative campaigns.” [12, p.81]

J. A. Thurber and C. J. Nelson write that although 98.5% of political consultants do not have a problem using negative campaigning and that most have no problem “focusing on criticisms of one’s opponent (which may be termed a “contrast”) and focusing on the opponent’s record and personality are considered fair game in modern elections,” 97.5% of U. S. political consultants feel that making untrue statements is unethical and 71.5% are opposed to the use of push polling.

Though an effective means of swaying voters, negative campaigns run the serious risk of alienating voters rather than galvanizing them. In order to avoid this potential blowback, which could destroy a candidate’s chances of winning in an election, M. Dolezal, L. Ennser-Jedenastik and W. Mullers’ 2015 study of Austrian political campaigns, which looked at over 600 candidates’ actions, titled “Who will attack competitors? How political parties resolve strategic and collection action dilemmas in negative campaigning” found that heads of government, cabinet members, party leaders (both in government and in the opposition), were less likely to attack a competitor than were party floor leaders (both in government and in the opposition) and party general secretaries (again, either in government or in the opposition). [13, p. 6]

R. R. Lau, L. Sigelman and I. B. Rovners’ comprehensive study of earlier political science literature on the subject of negative campaigning found that negative campaigning does little to attract new votes, and despite concerns that it is damaging to the political process, “research literature does not bear out the idea that negative campaigning is an effective means of winning votes, even though it tends to be more memorable and stimulate knowledge about the campaign. Nor is there any reliable evidence that negative campaigning depresses voter turnout, though it does

slightly lower feelings of political efficacy, trust in government, and possibly overall public mood.” [14] This was again echoed R. R. Lau and I. B. Rovner which found that “there is little scientific evidence that attacking one's opponent is a particularly effective campaign technique, or that it has deleterious effects on our system of government” [15] together with other studies [16, 17] or those with an inconclusive result [18].

In the *SAGE Encyclopedia of Corporate Reputation*, S. Samoilenko, an America-based academic of Russian origin, argues that there are seven types of character attacks. These are: name-calling, where the person is literally called a derogatory name; misquoting by other editing or taking a quote out of context; anonymous lies, where completely false information based on “sources” is cited; acts of vandalism, where a person or group’s public symbols are destroyed or damaged in order to show the community’s rebuking of them; sexual deviance, where they are declared to be of abnormal or deviant sexual appetites; mental illness, where they are accused of not being mentally fit and questions are raised about their mental stability. [36, p.116]

Importantly, S. Samoilenko’s analysis concludes that “character assassination strategies can be a part of information warfare efforts which involve the management and the use of information in pursuit of a competitive advantage over an opponent. This approach may involve dissemination of propaganda or disinformation to demoralize the enemy or manipulate the public, thus undermining the quality of the responding information and denying opportunities for information collection by the opponent. In propaganda, disinformation is designed to manipulate the audience at the rational level by either discrediting conflicting information or supporting false conclusions. A common disinformation tactic is to mix some truth and observation with false conclusions and lies. It can be used through falsifications that involve exaggeration, misleading half-truths, or factual manipulation to present an untrue picture of the opponent.” [36]

As we will see later in this research, character attacks are frequently used against entire bodies of people, not only individuals. Moreover, as a means of propaganda, character attacks can be highly effective in changing a population’s opinion about leaders, peoples, and countries. By actively seeking to attack the character of an opponent, a country can put itself into a better position to defeat its opponents by casting doubts about the opposing leaders, or by causing disarray in the foreign country’s leadership ranks.

The study of character attacks and assassination as an academic pursuit is very new in Russia. S. Samoilenko was one of the first to study “character assassination” under an academic

lens. In an interview with the Russian blog “DrSpin1,” [19] he was asked about meaning of the term “reputation assassination” and its difference from well-known and frequently used terms like “media assassination”, “political assassination”, “network assassination”. [19]

S. Samoilenko responded, “My colleagues and I use the term ‘character assassination,’ or ‘destruction of reputation.’ The destruction of reputation is deliberate acts aimed at undermining the authority, image and credibility; destruction of the reputation of public individual in the media or in social space. In particular, such technologies are used by political opponents to discredit an individual or a group of individuals, weaken their social status or support, to cause negative publicity, or to erase their merits and achievements from public memory. Often, public attacks and mocking on a public figure in the public space are links of in the systematic process of undermining one’s authority and proponents’ social support. The methods of discreditation are small attacks in the media turning into persecution, ‘below the belt’ political satire and, also ‘jabs’ in the forms of pamphlets, slanders, anonymous letters, etc. In the long run, such destruction of reputation attacks are often aimed at the destruction of the popular ideology, political actions or a successful corporate brand, the conductor of which is a reputational attack’s victim.” [19]

S. Samoilenko observed that the intentional destruction of a reputation can “be planned, or spontaneous; used against individuals, or entire social groups (*‘kulaking’*), as well as take place directly during person's life, or posthumously. For example, there are instances when historians have questioned the reputation of prominent political figures such as Lenin, Stalin, Gandhi, even after their death.” Ultimately, S. Samoilenko examines character attacks in the global political dynamic and states that “The challenge of psychological warfare is in bringing panic to the enemy’s soul and in breaking the spirit of their army and people. In former wars the conquest of the territory was regarded as important.” [19]

He concludes that, “political, social, economic fronts will emerge behind a gun front; wars will happen not on the two-dimensional surface, just like they were before, not in three-dimensional space, as they have been since the birth of military aviation, but in four-dimensional space, where the belligerent nations’ mentality is that fourth dimension...” [19]

Referring to the Russian sources, V. I. Ivanov states that “in primitive legal proceedings, the concept of ‘death’ implied two separate legal events. The first is the biological death that ensued as a result of the murder, and the second is the infliction of a ‘mental’ death to the victim, equivalent to the notion of ‘the assassination of personality.’ The concept of ‘mental death’ is equivalent to

homicidal cruelty, the essence of which is the dehumanizing effect on the victim and his social environment”. [73]

The rise of “black PR” was momentous in Eastern Europe following the collapse of the Soviet Union. A. Ledeneva in “How Russia really works: The informal practices that shaped post-Soviet politics and business” [20] asserts that the most common use of character assassination through the tumultuous 1990s was businesses seeking to sway public opinion simultaneously in their favor, while turning public opinion against their competitors. “The ‘information wars’ of the 1990s, waged daily on the pages of the Russian press, employed *kompromat* in character assassination, blackmail, and the manipulation of public opinion. During the same period, the electoral bids of local, regional, and federal candidates were advanced through the skilled use of ‘political technologies’ and black PR.” [20]

A. Vuyma, the author of a book about black PR gives its definition as “any information attacks aimed at destroying business, image, and corporate ties. It is the purposeful dissemination of negative information concerning an inanimate or animate object. We can say that ‘black PR’ is a kind of method of information warfare,” adding that it has three major principles: causing doubt, attacking the most important attributes, and using truthful information.” He states that “Black PR has to pursue good and socially useful goals,” [74] which as we will see, does not always happen. I. Klovov wrote about black PR that “PR from the art of achieving harmony, as its creators called it, turned into the opposite, namely, into the means of creating chaos” [75] and has become detrimental to its own primary aim of making the world more transparent.

Some researchers believe that “black PR” as a term, which is commonly believed to be of Russian origin due to V. Pelevin’s book *Generation "II"* [76]. However, even if it did not start in Russia, it was certainly invented (and then implemented) in one of the countries of eastern Europe in the 1990s. [77, p.118-120] V. Pelevin maintains that the term “black PR” refers to “dirty advertising technologies” and “defamation,” however these two things differ. As is discussed later in this dissertation, defamation is a type of communicative distortion; it is the “public dissemination of information discrediting someone,” [78] while discreditation consists of “deliberate actions aimed at undermining authority, image and trust.”[79]

O. Issers focused on the linguistic perspective and studied examples of discreditation methods. She counted more than 20 basic models which can be realized through different communicative strategies and tactics: such as irony, allusions, implications, bracket usage,

metaphors, accusations, etc. [80, p.160-176] Accusations, along with insults, as O. Parshina lays out, are the two main tactics of discreditation used by the modern political elites of Russia [81, p.84-93] and are directed toward a specific person or political agent. This means that these kinds of attacks are personal (i.e. *ad personam* attacks) from the classical theory of argumentation, where it is not the line of the opponent's argumentation that is criticized but their personal qualities [82] these are *ad hominem* attacks, which according to T. I. Bikmetova and I. A. Gerasimova consist of “among the substantive arguments, the arguments related to the person can be present, such as the experience and knowledge of a person, their worldview, way of thinking, way of life, the circumstances of biography, character traits and even appearance.” She also notes that in some cases the *ad hominem* argumentation can reflect the essence of the case, but in other cases is used simply to discredit the opponent. [112, p.89-93]

Discreditation of opponent can even become a kind of profession, called “*mediakiller*” (the term “TV-killer” was also popularized in the 1990s). TV-killer (or “media killer”) is a term used against a journalist who builds his work of collecting, filing and composing prejudging compromising materials in order to unmask and discredit the object of research. It is suggested that in 1996 the phrase “corrupt journalist” was widely replaced by this word, and in the late 1990s that work of this kind became a phenomenon in post-Soviet media industry. During Mayor Yuri Luzhkov and Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov’s discreditation, Sergei Dorenko became the main character in this genre; in fact, the term “TV-killer” first appeared referring to S. Dorenko. [113]. The struggle between ideologies and programs was replaced by the struggle of virtual images and public figures. All of this confirms the thesis of M. Castells that today political competition revolves around “personalized politics.” Hence, the main weapon in this struggle is “reputation assassination” [114, p.157] and character attacks.

E. Shiraev and J. Smart discussed the logic of character attacks in their chapter “Character Attacks and American Presidents” [21, p.215-235], published in 2014, where they stated that, “With a few exceptions, “character attacks are generally driven by the zero-sum logic of politics: to win, you have to defeat your opponent. The attackers strike on behalf of political parties or special interests and simultaneously target two opposite groups of people. One group, the supporters of the victim of an attack, are expected to be discouraged and weakened. A successful attack should damage the reputation of a person (such as a president or a presidential candidate) by distracting, annoying, and angering him or her. This should damage public support for the victim. It should take

also the victim's time, energy, and resources to respond, to decide about whether or not to launch a response, and if doing so, which response should be given, when, and how. The attackers, or those acting on their behalf, are supposed to be encouraged by the negative impact of a character attack on the victim, who is their opponent". [21, p.215-225]

A successful character attack should "negatively affect not only the victims, but also their close associates and supporters. They too could be distracted, frustrated, and even confused, for at least some time. They may have to mobilize additional financial resources and consult with their associates about an effective response to the attacks. Others may respond quickly yet inappropriately, thus creating more problems for the victim of the attack. Attacks may increase a candidate's public visibility and bring backing from interest groups or political donors. Relatively unknown or so-called independent candidates (in the United States, those who typically do not belong to the Democratic or Republican Parties) commonly launch character attacks against their powerful opponents simply to get noticed". [21, p.225-235],

M. Icks and E. Shiraev state that "three features of character attacks are important to understand. First, their intention: character attacks are by definition deliberate. Second, the public nature of the attacks: private insults do not lead to reputation damage. And third, the importance of the public perception of the attacks, which means that the truth of allegations is irrelevant." [54]

The works of such Moldovan researchers as G. Rusnac [104-106], V. Saca [104], V. Moşneaga [96-98], V. Ţurcanu [106], V. Teosa [90-92] do not show character assassination and defamation as a political tool, but allow the author to understand the nature, values and traditions of this phenomenon better. Those works influenced the formation and evolution of the post-Soviet political context in the period of social transformation to democracy. Other Moldovan researchers, like G. Vasilescu [110, 111], P. Varzar [83-85], L. Braga [83] reveal the features of the ethical and politico-cultural dimension of the democratic transit in the Republic of Moldova, considering it along with the history and traditions of the Eurasian doctrine, which makes it possible to take a fresh look at the approaches to the give topic in the Russian Federation context.

At the same time, some aspects of defamation as policies or means in the political struggle noted in the works of V. Mosneaga [96-98], C. Solomon [105], I. Bucataru [96,97] P. Varzar [83-85], A. Solcan [107-109], and they are linked to the theoretical and practical studies of the political elite and political parties in election campaigns, shaping the image of political leaders and political parties. It should be emphasized that the works presented by A. Ejov and C. Ejov [86-89] are

extremely useful for the research, as a major part of them includes the analysis of the history, theory, methodology and practice of forming the image of the state, emphasizing the role of political image in international relations.

In the Moldovan political science field, in the works of V. Moraru [94, 95], C. Marin [93], A. Peru-Balan [100-103], attention is paid to the interaction of political reality, the mass media and international communication. These studies examine modern approaches to communication technologies, PR strategies, means of manipulation, information wars and fake news during the pre-election period and at various stages of the political struggle in theory and practice.

These works are significant for the dissertation, despite the fact that they do not directly consider defamation and character assassination as a political tool. As for the opinion of the author, following the tradition of European political science, they expand limits of denigration in international relations from private to the general, and enrich its understanding - from political technology to political strategy. They also vary the objectives of its application from the personal level to the national and international levels.

These findings fully apply to other works of researchers from post-Soviet countries, for example, from Ukraine, which allowed a deeper understanding of internal and international political processes, and therefore open up opportunities for more effective use of modern political technologies, which is one of the objectives of this scientific research. Moreover, researchers from the post-Soviet space allow an understanding that is unique from that of their American colleagues as it was forged from a completely different set of life experiences and political realities that are not found in the United States.

In this dissertation, the term “character assassination” was operationalized by the author as per the definition given by The Lab for Character Assassination and Reputation Politics’s (CARP) (where the author is a part of research team) “Glossary of terms related to character assassination” as meaning the “deliberate destruction of an individual’s reputation. Character assassination is the result of successful character attacks. The word can also be used to refer to the process of reputation-destruction.” [122] This definition well captures the essence of what differs between a character attack versus a successful character assassination, while at the same time setting parameters (or scope) through which an authentic character assassination should be analyzed.

Though, it is important to look at the term character assassination through the prism of law and jurisprudence, especially on the international level. It isn’t clearly indicated in the national

defense strategies of the United States and of Russian Federation, but can be applied to them through the context of digitalization and hybrid wars if seen from the jurisprudence point of view. For instance, the National Defense Strategy of the U. S. underlines the possibility of “information warfare” [115] and the Russian Federation’s Strategy has paragraph 2.2., where it is stated that, “new forms of illegal activity, in particular, using information, communication and high technologies emerge” [116], both of which can be regarded as opening the possibility of a character attack’s dissemination.

A wide number of international laws exist that touch upon the ideas of character attack. One international document that tackles this specifically is that of the “European Convention on Transfrontier Television,” where it describes “a right of reply within the meaning of the Convention is a right exercised by a natural or legal person in order to correct inaccurate facts or information, in cases where such facts or information concern him/her or constitute an attack on his/her legitimate rights (especially in regards to his/her dignity, honor or reputation)” [117]. The United Kingdom’s Defamation Act, 2013 [118] is of fundamental interest as it relates to character assassination in Article 10 of "Freedom of Expression" of the “European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.” Some could argue that these laws in fact are in opposition to free speech, as they determine what types of speech warrant government intervention on the behalf of the attacked – something that is virtually nonexistent in the American political reality - however this vein of research falls outside of the scope of this dissertation.

“Everyone has the right to express their opinion freely. This right includes freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authorities and regardless of frontiers... The exercise of these freedoms, which imposes duties and responsibilities, may be subject to certain formalities, conditions, restrictions or sanctions that are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in order to protect the reputation or rights of others.” [119]

Though not the primary subject of the dissertation, it is important to remember that in the legislation of different regions (or states) of one country, there can be major differences in how *defamation* or *character assassination* cases are dealt with: “We cannot ignore the fact that the statute of limitations under US defamation laws is set at one year. In the Russian civil law (Article 208) there is no statute of limitations for the protection of honor, dignity and business reputation”. [120]

Through careful consideration of the problematics in the historical bilateral relations of the United States and Russia, this dissertation seeks to discover if a statistically significant relationship exists between the worsening of countries' diplomatic relations and intentional attacks on the other country's leadership through official government organs or the government-backed press. A thorough understanding of this phenomenon will help academics and experts to assess the status of the relations between two countries. Moreover, it provides a tool for those seeking to improve the relations between countries, allowing them to interpret the relationship through the accompanying data set of types of attacks. Additionally, this study aids to improve the understanding of the typology of character attacks, which therefore would allow scientists to make prognoses as to a state's relations according to the usage of such practices, and in what contexts they are made, as the type of attack made varies according to the current state of bilateral relations.

By examining the theoretical basis of character attacks in international relations and evaluating the effects and degree of intentional character assassination attempts launched against the other country's leadership through the 20th and 21st centuries, as well as by studying the framework of character assassination in international politics in the context of contemporary relations between the United States of America and the Russian Federation it is hoped to achieve the following *objectives*:

- to analyze the existing theoretical literature sources and history of character assassination study;
- to generalize theoretical fundamentals of character assassination study in political science
- to define the key methodological approaches of studying character assassination in applied research;
- to identify the nature of the Russian tradition of character assassination in internal and foreign policy;
- to evaluate the contrasts between U. S.A. national approaches to character assassination in politics of 20th-21st centuries;
- to define successes and failures of character assassination strategies in foreign policy of U. S. A. and Russian Federation;
- to characterize specifics of character assassination as a tool in US State Strategies and Russian Federation Policies;
- to identify resources of character assassination in mass media attacks.

1.2. Theoretical Fundamentals of Character Assassination Study in Political Science

The origin of ideas about reputation and its blackening (character assassination), deriving from public opinion, date back to antiquity; even in classical Chinese philosophy the importance of studying public opinion was discussed as an element of governance. [22] The Sophists of ancient Greece, as supporters of a democratic state, emphasized the importance of public opinion. Democritus and his followers believed that the opinion of the majority was the most important criterion for the organization of all social life. The works of Plato, in contrast, lay out the position that the "opinion of the wise" (aristocracy) is truer than the "opinion of the majority" [23]. Aristotle believed that the opinion of the people can be an instrument through which one can monitor the affairs of the state.

Character assassination consists of character attacks in the form of verbal and nonverbal assaults which can consist of rumors, insults, written and illustrated ads, pamphlets, etc. Character assassination can be referred to in the same manner as destroying an actual human life, because the damage from it can last for years, or for a lifetime, and can socially kill a person, especially a public individual. Historical figures (e.g. emperors, rulers, leaders, chieftains) have been damaged by attacks which endured for the period of their lives and even after their physical death, continuing even for centuries. As the saying goes, "History is written by the victors."

In the example of the Roman Empire, the "collective memory" was a valuable and limited commodity; emperors along with representatives of the elite, set for themselves the goal of having history remember them positively, as victors, reformers, and as esteemed leaders. That is why biographers and historians played a key role in the creation of the collective memory and the perception of various public figures. If an emperor died while the tide of public opinion was against him for having reigned not by the rules and standards, but in a lackluster way, historians could write about him in a very "cold" way, creating the permanent image of deceased having been not only a failure, but also accusing him of different misdemeanors. As S. Samoilenko reminds, "For example, the writings of Roman second-century biographer Suetonius focused on the emperors' sex lives contributed to establishing the bad name of many Roman rulers for centuries to come. Character assassination has been a widespread method of power struggle for centuries. Cicero's "First Catilinarian Oration" still serves as an instructive example to modern-day cases of character assassination. In this speech from 63 BCE, the famous statesman and orator Cicero slandered his

political rival Catiline during a meeting of the Roman senate.” [29]

Still, Roman leaders and their circles concentrated most of their attacks on a person’s politics and not on the person of their opponents, unlike the tendency of modern politicians. As nationalistic and populist moods have been rising in the United States and the European Union, accusations and name-calling have become more common and have become a major part of character assassination strategies. According to S. Samoilenko’s research, “...in sixteenth-century Europe, the attacks on popes during the protestant Reformation were mainly successful due to the first mass-scale use of the printing press (invented circa 1450) to wage a war of ideas. Protestant Reformers like the German monk Martin Luther launched vicious attacks against the decadence and corruption of the Catholic Church in general and the Pope in particular, issuing numerous pamphlets with inflammatory texts and striking images of popes in league with demonic forces.” [29]

N. Machiavelli, in the treatise "The Emperor," took a complex political interpretation of public opinion. He saw "great strength" in the people, a powerful support for the sovereign, and noticed that some socio-psychological aspects reflected the public opinion of the sovereign. [24] F. Bacon drew attention to the fact that false judgments exert a certain influence on the public mindset which the powerful can use for their own ends. However, he associated the spread of prejudices in public opinion with the people's natural desire to uncritically perceive social ideas, with feelings and thoughts distorting knowledge. [25]

I. Kant explained that the public has the right to refuse to support a tyrant who, being placed in conditions of moral isolation and fearing an elemental rebellion, will have to heed the voice of the people, observe existing laws or reform them if they need correction. [26]

The interpretation of the concept of "public opinion" in its modern meaning first appears at the end of the 20th century in the work of the French sociologist G. Tarde’s "Public Opinion and the Crowd." The public is viewed as a collection of people who consume the same information and develop in many ways the same opinions and assessments, that is, public opinion - the opinion of a community, a group of people, based on the acceptance or rejection of emotionally charged information. At the same time, G. Tarde tried to reveal the origins of the existence of public opinion. According to his concept, the creator of public opinion is a certain audience with very mobile and obscure boundaries, rooted in particular in the mass spiritual and psychological processes. [27]

One of the key concepts of public opinion was proposed by W. Lippmann. The definition of "public opinion" proposed by W. Lippman was considered classical in the first half of the 20th

century when he wrote, "Those features of the external world that are related to the behavior of other people - to the extent that this behavior intersects with ours - depends on us and interests us, - we roughly call 'public opinion.' Images in the minds of people - images of themselves, other people, their needs, goals and relationships - are their public opinion." [28]

W. Lippman also introduced the concept of stereotypes [28] - schematized, simplified and standardized images or representations about objects, phenomena and processes of social reality, characterized by high stability and pronounced emotional coloring. It is a constantly acting and in fact determining factor of mass consciousness, and consequently of public opinion (and even in creating public and political myths).

This leads to the notion of reputation - the opinion (social evaluation) of a group of subjects about a person, a group of people, or an organization on the basis of a certain criteria. Thus, the generalized reputation of the figure of a state leader is built precisely with the help of public opinion, which is manipulated to defame and discredit leaders.

As for the American tradition of character assassination, R.K. Scher refers to mudslinging in politics "as American as apple pie". [30] In the 19th century politicians started to use newspapers, the main source of information, to blacken their opponents' reputation and to unleash their negative thoughts of contradictors. For example, adversaries of American president Abraham Lincoln spread rumors and false facts about his own life and lifestyle. One of the most common themes of attacks was his appearance: Lincoln was called a "baboon" or an "ape." Needless to say, these name-calling examples were modest compared to the more offensive insults that were also published during that time. The concept of character assassination as a subject of scholarly study was originally introduced by J. Davis in 1950 [34] in his collection of essays about political smear campaigns. [36]

The 1950s in the United States, according to historian G. Stone, was memorable for the "bare-knuckled exploitation of anticommunism," [31] presenting an opponent as a communist became common and was widely used in debates. Despite this tactic being the most popular from 1940s until the fall of Berlin Wall in 1989, calling someone a "communist" continues to be used in U. S. politics today. [32]

In the 20th century, character assassination was used in the framework of propaganda campaigns during World War I and World War II. The most important elements of such propaganda and information was the demonization and dehumanization of the enemy. S. Samoilenko provides the example of educational propaganda in Nazi Germany, which "was intentionally designed to

create a dehumanized conception of Jews by shaping the beliefs of school children through the reading of assigned texts in which the Jews were compared to poisonous mushrooms.” [29]

As earlier stated, character assassination is a deliberate and sustained effort to damage the reputation or credibility of an “agent,” that is a direct object embodied by an individual, group or organization. Character assassination refers to both the process (such as the attack campaign), and the outcome (the now damaged reputation). Reputation is the fixed opinion about a person or a group of people but often overlooked as a target for academic study. Character assassination is an attempt to ruin a reputation. According to the researcher A. Phelps, “structurally, a character assassination requires for its commission three parties, the character assassin or agent, the public whose estimation is to be altered or audience, and the person targeted or victim. The study of character assassination is a study of the methods and the psychology of the agent; it is a study of the credibility of the agent's slanders to the audience - that is, an attitude change question; and it is the study of the responses and the adaptation of the victim”. [33]

Character assassination involves different types of defamation attacks which will be discussed later in this dissertation. Some attacks are akin to the *argumentum ad hominem* attacks, abusing context in political ads in order to redirect the attention from the real topic of the debate to an opponent’s characteristics. *Ad hominem* more often refers to the human “characteristics, while character assassination can resemble *ad personam* arguments used to point to “personal” attributes and traits. But unlike *ad personam* and *ad hominem* attacks, character assassination can be applied beyond debates and dialogues as it is “one-sided.”

The European scholar Marius Taritse proposes a mythological approach to understanding defamation practices in media. Myths discussed in his article [37] were based on surveying media articles written in Russia and are divided into four categories. The first relates to domestic and regional policies (specifically the relations between Moldova, the EU and the U. S., relations with Romania, Ukraine, etc.). The second is to the Soviet past (mostly aspects related to what he calls "nostalgia"). The third category concerns the national past. The fourth is about foreign policy enemies (mainly the United States) and creating a positive image for local and international politicians.

Analyzing the micro-level (not the international politics level), M. Taritse argues that "Certain topics that should be reflected in a neutral light are presented using terms that allegedly give the information an ironic tinge, are *de facto* attempts at discreditation." The example found in

the article "Chisinau Lyceum: Unfaithful Not in [Water] Closets, but in Mirrors!" published on April 7, 2016 in the newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda in Moldova*. [38] The author argues that the intentional conflation of the words "[water] closets" and "mirrors" achieves the effect of discreditation.

As for the international news articles, M. Taritse [39], gives the example of articles about the United States. He says, that "among the countries that are either said to be suppressed, or are constantly being expressed in a negative way, the U. S. A. can be mentioned first above all. As a rule, this tendency is seen in the original version of the materials distributed by Russian newspapers and published in Chisinau." Taritse cites the example of an article titled "The U. S. ordered 'Panamagate' [39], whose author's aim was to distract the reader's attention from the international investigation of the "Panama Papers" while spreading the idea that the disclosure of information was allegedly planned in advance, thus applying a "negative" connotation and blame on the U. S. government. [37]

Character assassination itself is close to the concept of negative campaigning. Negative campaigning, also known as "mudslinging," is the practice of "trying to win an advantage by referring to negative aspects of an opponent or of a policy, emphasizing negative attributes or damaging policies." [30]

Techniques used in negative campaigning are numerous. Those fundamental techniques used in public relations identify the target audience and tailor messages to be relevant to each audience. Among the most effective tactics are running advertisements attacking an opponent's personality, opinion or record. The means of doing this are done by one of two techniques, either via attack, or by contrast.

Attack ads focus exclusively on the negative aspects of the opponent. There is no positive content in an attack advertisement's (a.k.a. "attack ads") victim, the opponent. Attack advertisements usually identify the risks, which can be associated with the opponent, often exploiting people's fears to manipulate and lower the impression voters have of the opponent.

Unlike attack ads, in contrast ads the information about the attacking candidate is positive, while the information about the opposing candidate is "negative" and the ad creates a contrast in terms of "good" versus "evil." Contrast ads compare the candidate with their opponent, juxtaposing the positive information about the candidate with the "cold" information about the opponent.

As attack ads have no positive content at all, they have the potential to be more influential

than contrast ads in shaping voters' views of the attacked candidate; whereas contrast ads contain some positive information, they are seen as less damaging to the overall political process. [35]

A target (individual, organization etc.) of attack is called a "victim." Subjects involved in the attack and its executioners are called "character assassins" or "attackers." Methods of attack vary and can include published or written articles and statements, interviews, books, cartoons, rumors and the spreading of other forms of real or fake information.

Character assassination typically is not focused on victim's professional or political status, but rather focuses on the victim's personality and behavior, once again demonstrating that this concept is quite close to the *ad personam argumentum*, rather than a general *ad hominem* attack. Attacks have a clear aim as C. Schultz and M. Pancer state that "for example, political candidates in the United States informally accused of sexual or financial misconduct or labeled as having — undesirable traits such as indecisiveness or weakness, tend to be perceived more negatively by the public and usually spend considerable energy and resources defending themselves against such attacks even if the accusations are untrue." [7]

Such attacks have become an important topic in Post-Soviet space, especially in Moldova. Propagandistic attacks on the opposition, its defamation, attempts to intimidate its leaders through administrative levers have become commonplace in the Republic of Moldova, leading all-European institutions to call on the Moldovan authorities to observe democratic standards. [40]

E. Shiraev wrote that "the victim or the individual whose character and behavior are targeted has to be 'qualified' as a potential victim of such assassination attempts." That is, not every person who attacks someone else is engaged in character assassination, E. Shiraev states that there must be "specific attributes" if someone is to be considered a "victim" of character assassination:

Specifically, E. Shiraev argues that the victim must [41]:

1. This person has to be engaged in a political or any type of competition involving the necessity to seek support or approval. It could be an election, pageant, or any type of selection or nomination process in which several candidates compete for a position, title, award, recognition, and so forth. Character assassination is used to discredit the reputation of this candidate with an ultimate goal of diminishing his or her immediate chances for success in the eyes of the public.

2. The victim of attacks is an individual who has already achieved a social status or an important social position of power or reputation: this could be a government post, a relatively high position in social hierarchy, or simply high-profile status. Character assassination can be used to

bring this individual down from the position of status or reputation. Attacks on President Clinton as a “liar” were relentless in the 1990s during the time of his infamous sex scandal involving a White House intern serve as an example of this point.

3. A victim of character assassination is successful in a certain field such as business, government, science, or an artistic arena. Again, the attacks usually have little to do with these specific activities but rather with an individual’s personal qualifications, background, missteps, fumbles or anything else that could damage this person’s reputation as a scientist or artist. For example, Barak Obama was repeatedly rumored to be a Muslim; Hillary Clinton was hinted about being a lesbian during her 2008 presidential campaign; and John McCain in the same year was said to have fathered a black baby.

4. The victim represents a powerful ideology, theory, social or political cause, party, or movement. In these cases, the attackers attempt to weaken anything that the victim stands for. Another goal is to diminish support of potential followers. For example, anti-communists have long maintained that Vladimir Lenin, leader of the Communist revolution in Russia, had syphilis.

E. Shiraev also emphasizes, that character assassinations differ (Appendix 1.1) in terms of their scope, timing and momentum [41]:

As for the scope, collective character assassination is a form of summary punishment. In the Soviet Union in the 1930s, in China in the 1940s and Vietnam in the 1950s, the ruling Communist Parties “conducted the unprecedented campaigns of accusations, lies, and distortions targeting a summary character of so-called rich peasants”. They were routinely portrayed as “greedy, mean, arrogant, and uncaring.” Songs and literature were sponsored to inflict further damage. In doing so, the governments attempted to “justify political violence against the well-to-do peasantry and to clean up the way toward total collectivization of agriculture in these countries.”

During the 1930s, in Nazi Germany, the state propaganda machine was launched to “...discredit the Jewish population, cause hostility among Germans against ethnic minorities, plant the seeds of violent antagonism, and then justify physical violence against the Jews and other social groups.” [41, p.3-4]

In terms of time, victims of character assassination could be “living and breathing” individuals as well as the deceased. Personal damage after an attack could “occur at critical points of an individual’s career: character assassins try to kill because their slander is often the only weapon they have.” Attacks against deceased people are “conducted to discredit a cause, an idea, theory, or

ideology that these individuals represented or stood for.” For example, the biographies of Stalin in Russia, FDR, Reagan and Nixon in the United States, Gandhi in India, and scores of others continue to be scrutinized today with the purpose to discredit their legacy. [41, p.3-4]

During a political campaign, there is a fast momentum and so instantaneous, or “drive-by” assassinations, usually take place. Quick character attacks are usually opportunistic. On the other hand, the slow pace of character-poisoning is based on long-term hopes. Since the 1960s, Russian author and dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn was “accused of being a Jew, a traitor, a Nazi collaborator, a prison snitch, and a paid agent of foreign intelligence.” His letters to his former wife were published and several quotes deliberately spread to worsen his image. According to the attackers, Solzhenitsyn was a “selfish, histrionic individual caring only about his fame and drawing attention to self. He was accused of sadistic attempts to destroy the otherwise great reputation of the Soviet Union.” Such attacks continued after his death. [41, p.3-4]

A. Phelps tried to explain that “individual whose character has been assassinated suffers from a cognitive “blind spot,” which affects his habits significantly and leads to distrustful relations with other people,” and that “the discrimination of the audience in esteeming the victim delimits the effect of the setting. The manipulations of the agent, the proneness of the audience to lower its esteem when influenced, and the helplessness of the victim to fight back are all conditional upon this.” He has also argued that “the attacker conducts a slander campaign, which involves a distortion of the truth. The esteeming of the victim by the audience, the “favorable opinion, founded on supposed worth establishes a reputation.” Phelps argues that the “stigma” attached to the victim represents the way in which they accommodate to the fact of the character assassination. [33]

Character assassination is a cross-cultural and multi-sphered concept. It manifests itself in different forms and methods both in political and social environments. The number of mentions of and amount of research into character assassination is relatively low, but can be found in the fields of social psychology, political science, communication theory and history. As S. Samoilenko et al. remind us, character assassination “is often explained by the organizing concepts of rationality and intentionality, source credibility, political and societal image, public opinion, social norms, and cultural values,” and that “the phenomenon of character assassination should also be addressed from the four different perspectives of the attacker, the victim, the media and the public.” [29]

From the attacker’s point of view, a character assassination is frequently motivated by the desire to destroy the victim’s image, to “kill” victim psychologically or to lower their chances of

succeeding in a political campaign by lowering the victim's support. Examples include the desire to sway undecided voters, create uncertainty with tentative voters, or prevent the defection of supporters. When used, attacks become an effective means of manipulating voters' minds and create responses advantageous to the attacker. Classical prerequisites of such character assassination put forward by Adorno, et al. provide some insights into leadership styles and trends, focusing on "the authoritarian syndrome" and also fascist trends. [42, p.228] In addition, Allport's studies of victimization and scapegoating [43], Brown's research about lynching [44], and Zimbardo's works about victim adaptation and outlook [45] should be mentioned.

According to S. Samoilenko et al. "the extensive scholarship on *ad hominem* attacks investigates the interrelation of logic (logos), credibility (ethos), and the emotional impact of character assassination (pathos). Attacks may include derogatory statements about personal characteristics, a condemnation of the person's behavior, or speculation about the individual's motives or special interests. Frequently, abusive *ad hominem* occurs in a form of a preemptive assault against someone's position, or defending oneself from other person's attack." These attacks can appear in the forms of "outrageous name-calling, or ridiculing, or demonizing, inflammatory language used to shock and overwhelm the targeted victim." [29] *Ad hominem* refers to an attempt to discredit a person for not having followed their own advice. For example, to criticize an overweight doctor who prescribes weight loss because that doctor is himself overweight. Another case is guilt by association, which happens when a person is attacked (by argument) because of the similarity of attacker's and an opponent's views on the same situation. One example of this faulty logic is linking a conservative politician's opposition to same-sex marriage with the Nazis' persecution of homosexuals.

Walton suggests that *ad hominem* may be validated if claims made about a victim's actions or personality are relevant to the given conclusions [46]: "A supporter might argue that a politician's private life is not directly relevant to his ability to govern. At the same time, a politician's ability to adhere to the truth when his/her morality is questioned and willingness to lie on an occasion could call into question the veracity of his remarks on other subjects." [29]

There is a need to study character assassination focusing on public opinion, reputation and image management. Whenever individuals and organizations are in a crisis situation, they are especially defenseless against attacks that may hurt their status, legitimacy (as an organization) or social responsibility. As reputation lies in the field of social norms and judgment, it consists of a

blend of public standards, including morals, social and political qualities, cultural or religious convictions. For example, American scholar and writer W. Lippmann investigated the impact of stereotypes and self-interest on public opinion. He concluded that individuals regularly seek to conceal their stereotypes in order to protect their positions, reputation, and respect in the public eye. Morals, social codes and political fomentations add to the stereotypes that shape people's observations. Individuals see and use facts that fit their ethical rationale, bolster their stereotypes, and compliment their variable advantages. [47]

Pew Research Center conducted a study and confirmed that people's moral norms depend on their location. This means that whether candidate is accepted or rejected has great deal to do with existing image components in a specific society. Even a character attack on image, brand or reputation always depends on "relevant audiences' perceptions." [29] M. Icks and E. Shiraev say that an audience pays attention and is selective of what is "believable" information for them, and an audience prefers to accept what is most congruent with existing expectations or actions. [54]

As was highlighted earlier in this subchapter, character attacks can be used to sway undecided voters. This manipulative strategy can be understood with W. H. Riker's model of negative campaigning, where one of examples used explains "why the Federalists and the Antifederalists in the 19th century's United States attacked one another over ratifying the Constitution." [48] Shiraev explains that "both sides, W. H. Riker assumes, consisted of rational actors who believed the public could make rational decisions too. Both sides saw no point in trying to change minds that were already made up. Rationally, they concentrated on trying to sway undecided citizens. The best way to do this was to convince the undecided that if the other side won, something terrible might happen." [41]

The same conclusion can be found in M. L. Davis and M. Ferrantino's article. [49] In their model, subjects of political processes increase their effectiveness by making claims about the advantages that voters will enjoy if they win, and by misrepresenting the terrible outcomes that will befall society if they lose. By applying this approach, character assassination could turn into a successful means to frighten voters and sway them in the preferred direction. Politicians are in less danger of being caught in a lie in the event that they attack: "if candidate A wins and candidate B loses, voters can use A's subsequent performance in office to test the candidate's positive campaign pledges, but winning renders un-testable A's negative claims about what B would do if elected." [50]

The other possible use for character assassination is to prevent defections. According to this model [51], where the candidates are surrounded by a specific social and cultural space, their ideology, proclaimed values, and political views matter. As E. Shiraev writes, “Whereas favorable self-presentation is intended to strengthen the loyalty of X's supporters, the purpose of character assassination and other attacks is to bring uncommitted voters into the fold by leading them to see other, rival candidates or individuals as a threat. Attacking requires careful targeting: you have to attack those who may eventually “steal” your own supporters. The selective attack in this case fulfills two functions: it may make the other person unattractive to potential deserters from your “camp” and it may affect floating voters of other parties or candidates to come to your support. In simple terms, —one shakes the closest tree with the most apples so that they will fall next to him” [51, p.221].

That is, the “resources that X applies to attacking any Y are determined by the current level of support for each individual, but also by the ideological —gap between the candidates. The greater the distance between X and Y, the less likely it becomes that an attack by X can persuade those who had been leaning toward Y to vote for X instead. Of course, even if Y is X's nearest ideological neighbor, X will have little to gain from attacking Y if Y is unpopular. Thus, each side concentrates its attacks on the largest rival within its own "political market" rather than attacking the rival who stands highest in the polls” [51, p.221].

Another purpose of a character attack is to create uncertainty. S. Skaperdas and B. Grofman suggest that “the attacks depend of the composition of a competition field.” [52] As explained by Shiraev [41]:

In the two-candidate variant of the model, the “initial distribution of support for each candidate is known, as is the proportion of undecided voters. When X and Y wage equally positive campaigns, they split the undecided vote evenly. In this situation, X and Y encounter a problem of diminishing returns: the more positive their campaigns, the less extra support each win from the shrinking pool of previously undecided voters. Alternatively, if X attacks Y this could move Y's current supporters into the undecided column. Character attacks thus determine the support to be subtracted from each candidate, with lost voters joining the ranks of the undecided or uncommitted. The extent to which X or Y engages in attacks hinges on their relative standing in the "horse race." Able to win without converting those who support the opposition, the front-runner engages in ‘more positive, and less negative, campaigning than his opponent’” [52, p.52]. On the other hand, if the

race is relatively close, the “front-runner will be motivated to try to convert the rival's supporters. In the three-candidate variant of the model, the optimal strategy is to attack the stronger opponent. Because no candidate will attack the weaker rival, attacks should be directed against the front-runner or will come from the front-runner” [52, p.50].

The listed models are useful in illustrating the practical purposes of character assassination during the electoral process. Still, the perceptions of character assassination attempts differ depending on the audience and its members, and scholars cannot consider only ads and media as measures of the campaign’s negativity. [53] Researchers also ought to swing to the general population who witness character assassination attempts and make their conclusions of such endeavors. For instance, the way in which character assaults are seen by the general population relies heavily upon whether the candidate is the same gender as the individual evaluating them. C. Schultz and M. Pancer assume that men tend to see female competitors who attacked their "rivals" less positively than female candidates who did not attack their opponents. [7]

Several hypotheses have been formulated by political psychologists clarifying how individuals build up their dispositions toward politicians or candidates. In spite of the fact that these hypotheses do not fall completely in-line with the dominate theories of character assassination, they give significant insight into why individual attacks are powerful and have impact, and under which conditions.

For example, the current Ukrainian crisis situation showed the propensity of the Western media to develop a Cold War narrative by reinforcing the script of Russia as the “bad guy” acting in opposition to global principles and standards. Moreover, they demonized Putin as a risk to Europe and the rest of the world. Eric Shiraev writes that "the research of S. Samoilenko et al. in 2015 discovered that both Russian and U. S. media utilized character death strategies in their news scope. These discoveries give an important understanding into the point of specific judgment and partisanship in the cutting-edge media. The examination of the Ukrainian emergency bolsters past research that forceful open conduct shown by statesmen amid universal clashes, for example, saber rattling and open dangers taken after by media free for all, is frequently grounded in self-intrigue and can build local open support and reelection." [41]

In their book, M. Icks and E. Shiraev introduce a classificatory study of character assassination types. They argue that character assassination cases can be categorized by the methods used in the attack, distinguishing seven-character assassination methods (Appendix 1.2) [54]:

Anonymous lies may include falsifications of a person's "early biography or inappropriate sexual behavior or sexual deviance or contain forged evidence about an individual's inappropriate social ties" or political associations. [54, p.20]

Misquoting is the character assassination method of two amalgam practices: omitting significant details from a quote and/or quoting out of context. This method can also refer to "manipulatively selecting unfortunate or poor photographs taken in awkward situations" which are then ridiculed. In the age of "photoshopped reality" in social media the danger of visual distortion of political events in the news becomes very real. For example, inopportune photos that are deliberately used by journalists to show a "politician from their least impressive side, such as President Bush holding a crying baby." [54, p.20]

Silencing is a long-term character assassination method and often occurs post-mortem. History distortion, as discussed above, is an example of silencing. Memory erasing refers to avoiding any references to individuals and their work by the attacker who attempts to erase their public record from collective memory. Even in antiquity, "the Egyptians, the Romans, and other cultures applied memory sanctions against rulers and public figures who were in disgrace, such as Pharaoh Akhenaten and the Roman Emperors Caligula and Nero." Their images were destroyed and their names erased. However, the art of memory erasure and history distortion was taken to a new level in the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century. Among the most notorious examples is "Stalin's Russia, where Trotsky, Yezhov, and other prominent political and military figures disappeared from pictures and history books." [54, p.20-21]

Acts of vandalism are based on the symbols representing an individual or a group frequently become targets of violent acts by individuals motivated by a combination of jealousy, prejudice, or a desire for retribution. In ancient Rome, acts of vandalism were expressed in a form of dishonor that could be passed by the Roman Senate upon traitors or others who brought discredit to the Roman State. The intent was to declare that the person had fallen into disgrace and was disqualified as a true Roman. At that time, it served as a form of severe punishment for the condemned individual who was remembered in "cold" terms, resulting in eternal shame. For a more recent example, in January 2014 statues of the Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin fell victim to a string of assaults in Ukraine that had left them missing limbs, splattered with paint, covered in insults and swastikas, bullet-riddled, and even smeared with excrement. This rise in vandalism against Lenin monuments was explained by experts as a direct result of the ongoing pro-European protests against President Viktor

Yanukovych's decision to shelve a landmark association pact with the European Union. [54, p.21]

Name-calling usually appears in a form of a “quick, short insult, ridicule or application of specific, demonizing labels.” In politics, ideological labels such as “communist,” “fascist,” “Nazi,” “capitalist,” “imperialist,” or “terrorist,” etc., are quickly attached to political leaders and officials. Ridicule is a purposeful and contemptuous exaggeration or distortion in a comical context. Its humorous nature helps “attackers portray their victims as weak, lightweight, dumb, unbalanced, irrational, or hypocritical.” The result is to slant a candidate and his/her policies so they appear less meaningful or important than they actually are. Incompetence and ignorance are favorite themes of ridiculing. [54, p.21]

Allegations of an individual having in the past experienced or currently experiencing *mental illness* is a common character assassination method due to an “attached the strong social stigma attached to psychological disorders.” This label is frequently associated with” notions of insanity, madness, lack of rationality, instability, and irrationality.” As the Ukrainian civil conflict heated up in summer 2014, a number of articles began appearing claiming that Putin was “erratic,” “unstable,” etc. Different authors discussed scattered observations rumors that “Putin has become increasingly withdrawn and isolated” and “is appearing live on television less frequently.” [54, p.21-22]

Accusations of “immoral” *sexual deviance* are a common weapon in arsenal of character assassination and can influence of public opinion. Any amoral deviations, especially in regard to sexual conduct, can open an individual to character attacks. Short-term character assassination attempts are “frequently based on alleged inappropriate acts, such as having an extramarital affair.” Long-term character attacks require allegations about a person’s persistent pattern of “deviant” behavior. [54, p.21-22]

Listed methods represent the rhetoric of character assassination. D. M. Shea and A. Sprovenia suggest that occasionally political actors may use hostile rhetoric for the support of “greater issues” which can include “the role of the national government, war, industrialization, sweeping policy changes, threats of communism, and civil rights. [55] The purpose of such campaigns is to discourage or weaken the support base of the victim. Another purpose is to force the victim to respond in terms of time, energy, and resources.” [41]

Thus, in politics, character assassination is generally a part of smear campaigns that are deliberate efforts of undermining a political subject’s (individual, group or organization) credibility and reputation. A study by M. P. Wattenberg highlights the impact that decreasing the relevance of

political parties has on politics dealing with presidency. As the ability of parties to contrast public opinion became weaker and the electorate was set loose, the candidates had to fill the positional vacuum. The interesting fact is that as the candidates became more eminent, their popularity decreased. [3]

Smears commonly include *ad hominem* and *ad personam* attacks, but their final form can differ from distortions to even outright lies. Victims may be accused by doublespeak, insinuations, or misinformation spread to others about the opponent's actions and morals. Still, it can contain technically true information presented in a misleading manner or without context, thus creating the "negative" effect. Even if the "smear information" lacks the confirmation of its origin or the trustworthiness of facts, such strategies are often effective because the victim's reputation has nevertheless become spotted. Shiraev point out that "smears are also effective in diverting attention away from the matter in question. The target of the smear has to address the additional issue of correcting the false information in addition to, or rather than, responding to the original issue." [41]

Political rumors are very similar to the concept of character attacks. Rumors may include the presentation of an opponent as a criminal, dishonest person, corrupted one, or even as a danger to the nation and the whole world, etc. People are more willing to believe the negative rumors about a candidate from the opposing party. [54]

Another concept close to character assassination is "black public relations" or negative (black) PR, which is a process of destroying someone's reputation and corporate identity. Unlike the regular services in Public Relations, black PR relies on the development of IT security, industrial espionage, and social engineering. The main objective of black PR agents is finding the secrets of their target and turning them against their own holder. black PR was introduced in Russia (in CIS world) in the mid-1990s as one of the most potent smear campaign tools. Unlike negative campaigning, "black PR" is mostly known for using *kompromat* (compromising materials) about politicians and other public figures. This term is often referred to as "dirty advertising technologies" and "defamation" but in fact the latter is by nature different. Defamation is a type of communicative distortion; it is the "public dissemination of information discrediting someone," [78] while the *discreditation* is the "deliberate actions aimed at undermining authority, image and trust." [79]

Character assassination strategies and tools can be a part of warfare, even if those wars are informational. They involve the use of information in order to gain advantages over an opponent. Character assassination may include negative propaganda or disinformation to cripple the "rival" by

manipulating public opinion, thereby undermining the credibility of information and lowering the chances of success by the opponent. Disinformation is intended to manipulate people at the "objective level" by support of discrediting information or making false conclusions. A typical disinformation strategy is to blend some observable truth with false conclusions and untruths. It can be done through distortions that include embellishment, deceiving or misleading statements, or manipulation of the facts and contexts to create an untrue representation of the opponent. [36]

It is with this understanding that we must examine character assassination practices in the scope of international relation's theories. Thus, when analyzing states' actions from a neo-realism paradigm – character assassination as a tool is likely to be used, especially if tensions and crisis appear. However, when states, such as the European Union (EU) are observed using a neo-constructivist paradigm, it is not likely that character assassination will be used as a tactic given that the European Union operates as a cooperative community of states. History demonstrates that the tensions between the Russian Federation and the U. S. have always included character attacks (as described in Chapter 3), so in this case, the neo-realism paradigm is most apropos. It is also important to underline that character assassination, especially during “cold” period of states relationship (not only Russia-US, but also in the cases of U. S. - Iran, U. S. - North Korea, and Russian-Ukraine) appears as a tool of psychological warfare, which could be used within the execution of hybrid warfare.

Political communication becomes a competition for credibility of the information and a battle for the good public image of the candidate and bad public image of opponent. Well-created and well-thought out propaganda is designed to manipulate the target audience. Over the 20th and 21st centuries, the increase of media platforms has given politics an increase of character assassination techniques and has given politicians new methods and opportunities to “play dirty.” That is why in this dissertation we seek to examine the re-adaption of the character assassination concept to the international politics sphere, specifically by evaluating the degree to which either country uses character attacks against the other country's leadership in the context of contemporary international relations, specifically U. S. - Russian relations, during the determined time period.

1.3. Conclusions to Chapter 1

The historiographical analysis and the theoretical literature study made it possible to reach the following conclusions:

1. The term “Character assassination” was coined in 1822 and the academic study of it in political science began in the middle of 20th century, though the examples of it can be found throughout ancient and modern history. Character assassination can be defined as “a deliberate and sustained effort to damage the reputation or credibility of an individual.” This term can also “be selectively applied to social groups, institutions, and corporations, which could all experience loss of reputation due to character assassination.” In order to execute a character assassination, there must be the presence of three actors: the agent (“assassin”) who is interested in destroying someone’s reputation, the target (“victim”) who suffers from an attack and the public (“audience”) whose assessment of the victim must have been changed by the attack.
2. The concept of character assassination as a separate subject of study derived from the concept of negative campaigning. There are two types: attack ads, which focus only on the negative attributes of the opponent and lack “warm” content, and contrast ads, which give the “warm” information about the agent in the contrast to negative information about the victim. Character assassinations differ in terms of their scope, timing and momentum. Scope refers to the level of character attack application and can be against an individual, or a collective. As for timing, this can take place against both the living, or the deceased “victims.” In terms of momentum, character attacks can be planned, or spontaneous.
3. The classification of methods of character attacks include seven main types, including anonymous lies (falsifications of biography facts), misquoting (omitting details from the opponent’s quote context), silencing (“erasing” an opponent from the collective memory), acts of vandalism (performed on the objects symbolizing the victim), name-calling (application of short negative labels), appellation to mental illnesses (stigmatization about psychological disorders) or to sexual deviance (accusation in inappropriate sexual behavior).
4. As the literature review demonstrates, such terms as “libel,” “slander,” and “black PR” are analogous to the concept of character assassination but have key differences. The difference between “slander” and “libel” lies in the form in which the attack is delivered: libel is done by some written form (i.e. newspaper, internet, magazine, etc.) and slander is spread by spoken

word (i.e. in-person, over the radio, or via television broadcast). Black PR is the creation and dissemination of information aimed at creating a “cold” attitude of the audience towards certain phenomena, events, processes, products, etc. It is any attack or even the whole process of “information war” aimed at destroying the image of the subject of the attack - such as a movement, a company, or a nation. Character assassination itself refers to both the process and result of it and its realization via character attacks. Character assassination throughout the history has already been described and analyzed. Intrastate attacks on public figures are a normal part of a society’s political discourse throughout most of recorded human history.

5. The problem of character assassination in the modern world not only remains, but became more evident, especially on the international political level, so it requires greater analysis and study, thus in this dissertation we seek to examine the *re-adaption of the character assassination concept to the international politics sphere, specifically by evaluating the degree to which either country uses character attacks against the other country’s leadership in the context of contemporary international relations, specifically U. S. - Russian relations, during the determined time period.* The comparative and systemic research and evaluation form the theoretical basis of the nature of character attacks, their role, and as instruments in international relations, thus evaluating the effect and degree of intentional character attacks launched against Russian and American presidential leadership in 21st century.

2. CHARACTER ASSASSINATION IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS: EVOLUTION OF APPROACHES IN RUSSIAN AND AMERICAN HISTORY

This chapter is a comparative investigation carried out by studying the phenomenon of character assassination and as an analytical explanation of its attributes. This will focus mainly on identifying the difference in the character attacks traditions of Russia and of the U. S.

The first subchapter is focused on defining the analytical methodology applied to the study conducted by the author. This includes a set of methods aimed at analyzing, interpreting and explaining the evolution, new trends and prospects of character assassination in international politics. This subchapter analyzes and selects feasible methods of research according to the subject and context. Different methods are applied to determine the academic thinking of different scholars - representatives of the main schools of international relations theory, thinking of researchers, experts and politicians at different stages of development of international relations theory discussing character assassination in different eras. At the same time, it lays out existing paradigms of international relations theory, addressing the methodology and methods selected as the context of the given research subject. A methodological framework for the study of character attacks is created, allowing the discovery the particularities of the object for conducting comprehensive research on the hypothesis.

In the second subchapter, the methodology and selected methods are applied to a historical comparative and descriptive study of the use of character assassination throughout Russian history. In the intrastate cases' comparison, there were several major patterns that were identified in attempted character assassinations. Some of the most prevalent attacks analyzed are those that question the loyalty of the leader to the country and attacks about the person's sexual behavior, which seem culturally universal in this context. Historical research shows that there are many similarities between the attacks against Tsarina Catherine the Great, Grigorii Rasputin, Lev Tolstoy, Mikhail Gorbachev and Vladimir Putin. Many of these attacks followed along the traditional lines of character attacks: sex in the case of the Tsarina and Rasputin, and foreignness as a point of attack against many of them. There are also some major differences: The attacks against Rasputin lead to him being mortally assassinated and being remembered as "the mad monk;" Catherine, on the other hand, lived into old age and now is known as Catherine "the Great." Trotsky, likewise, was attacked for his "foreignness" and was assassinated like Rasputin, but the attacks against him are largely

forgotten today. Similarly, Gorbachev is currently blamed by Russian society for the collapse of the U. S. S. R. and allegations that he was serving the United States' interest are still a popular subject of attack against him. The prevalence of conspiracy theories, though outside the scope of this research, are one of the surprising findings of this research's historical section.

In the third subchapter the historical descriptive study is continued by examining cases from the American side. Analyzed are the cases of George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, George W. Bush and Barack Obama. This examination concludes with the comparison of Russian and American traditions of character assassination practices and the examination of differences between them.

2.1. The Dissertation's Methodology of Researching Character Assassination in International Politics

The methodology of the paper research will be based on *the unity of several scientific principles*. The principles of *the comparative and systemic analysis* of the character assassination concept, carried out through the *structural and functional approach* to the Russian – U. S. political relationship in the paradigmatic context of international communication and international relations will facilitate the proper exposure of the phenomena studied according to scientific theoretical and conceptual basis. This vision will illuminate and correlate the context of contemporary international relations, caused by the criteria of the paradigm at the chosen time periods, between the Russian Federation and the United States of America. *The objectivity principle* allows a normative and critical analysis of the situation and *the principle of continuity* lies at the basis of the analysis of the character assassination throughout the history.

The study will be conducted through the structure of international relations and specific actors, meaning the analysis will cover macro (i.e. global) and individual levels of research of the object and the context of studies thus that can be classified as a *systemic approach*.

Along with designated approaches, other general scientific methods also have their place in this dissertation. *The dialectical method* allows a dynamic investigation of the conditions and structure of the use of character assassination between countries and their leaderships through the principle of determinism and construction of a normative theoretical framework.

The descriptive method is used to demonstrate the correlation between a given period of time

and the change in relationships between states under the influence of character attacks. *The historical method* allows the evolution of the concept to be studied particularly in Russia and in the U. S.A. *The counterfactual method* allows the re-building and re-modeling of situations around countries' relationships to test the dialectical conclusions about the origin and causes of the changes, as well as the hypothetical historical character assassinations impact on them.

The paradigmatic method allows analysis of the nature of character assassination, where the subject of study is the phenomenon of states' relations, through the different concepts of the main schools of the theory of international relations and political communication along with social psychology theories. This method also allows modeling and analysis of the interaction and impact of countries' media in testing the hypotheses. *The structural-functional method* allows the structure and functions of the concept of character assassination to be defined. This method contributes to the full description of the interaction of the U.S and Russia within the communicative context. *The institutional method* contributes inductively to the analysis of the nature and status of states during the specific time periods. This method demonstrates the causes, structure, organization and functionality of the policy during "warm" and "cold" times.

The comparative method analyzes and identifies the similarities and divergences within the Russian and American traditions of character assassination usage in order to systematize the causes and tendencies. *The behaviorist method* studies how decisions are taken at the national level in relation to a state's policy of international communication, as well as other internal decisions on the promotion and demotion of the other state's leader.

In order to facilitate and capitalize on selected methods, a set of logical processes such as *induction* and *deduction* are also used. On the basis of the above, the applied research methodology provides the scientific issue for research - character assassination as an important phenomenon in international relations. In this context, it is necessary to highlight the advantages and disadvantages in the use of character assassination as a tool in international politics. Similarly, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the use of character assassination as a tactic is a running theme in the course of this study. Identifying to what degree the status of the relationship impacts mass media character attacks on the rival country's leadership will contribute to the modification of the hypotheses of the dissertation.

This dissertation uses a mix of *institutional* (governmental institutes and media) and *interactionist* approaches (the relationship between different levels). The interactionist paradigm is

used on the different levels of analysis, starting from *micro*- (as of relationships between Presidents themselves) to *macro* and *global* levels (relations between states). The wide array of methods and theory-based approaches brings the experimental part of dissertation to a comparative case study of western (the U. S. A.) and eastern (Russian Federation) practices of character assassination.

Interdisciplinary study is realized by including the *selective case study of events and content analysis of Internet (media)* reactions to them expressed by different sources. The interdisciplinary character of the study allows for the research methodology different sciences methods to be applied. *Sociological methods* are applied in order to obtain objectivity through media opinion testing, which influences policy and public opinion about the persona of president and the whole country's reputation. The empirical part of the research will be fulfilled by the use of *content analysis* of online sources via searching keywords (also used by the author and Eric Shiraev in their research [21]) with the help of selective approaches to discourse analysis and ethnographic content analysis.

Using online content analysis via Google's Advanced Search feature, it is possible to manipulate the variables while conducting a search. These variables include "all these words," "any of these words," "any of these words," "none of these words," "numbers ranging from/to." It can then further refine results by language, region, last updated, site or domain, terms appearing, limiting pornography, file type and usage rights. [123] Through this complex array of possibilities and variables available, it is possible to get highly specific and technical results.

In addition to the Advanced Search feature, Google allows users to search through news in any language. News options can be filtered, "via search tools," for only news, or also blogs; what time frame or specific dates need to be queried; and by order of relevance, or by order of how recently they occurred. Using this research technology, it is possible to analyze exactly how popular various themes were during any point in history.

This allows for researchers to create an experiment to test what the main abusive topics in Russian and American media are during "warm periods," versus during "cool periods" of the countries' relations. The experiment requires the usage of statistical quantitative methods, which allow showing and explaining the correlations between the period examined and the number of character attacks listed.

Discourse analysis is a complex sociolinguistic approach, the purpose of which is to study discourse. According to Jonathan Potter, discourse analysis pays particular attention to ways of organizing versions of the surrounding world, society, events and inner psychological worlds

produced in discourse. [124]

Discourse is the assignment of specific values. Discourse plays a key role in building the image of this world in many ways. The way people talk about things (e.g. phrases, accents) causes certain feelings in other people. In doing so, people influence the perception and understanding of others, and thus, on their and our reality, on the reflection of the social world in consciousness (on the creation of discourse). In a general sense, discourse analysis is a structural-semiotic study of texts and reactions to them by listeners/readers. Action/reaction scheme is analyzed by this method. The hidden values of the text, the context of its creation, and the probable interpretations by the readers/listeners are examined.

There is no single version of discourse analysis. It can be applied to both naturally occurring events and to texts and specially organized forms of conversations. As common with sociolinguistic methods, discourse analysis does not have clear criteria and measurement procedures. The researchers themselves are the main "measuring instrument" in such a study. Their work is sometimes compared to a detective's work, trying to find and explain the hidden (implicit or latent) meaning, and sometimes the explicit meaning of textual fragments. [125]

Therefore, the historical analysis of events will contain discourse analysis elements, such as the analysis of publication style, auditory characteristics, criticism, genre and stylistic attributes of message, etc. David L. Altheide, the founder of ethnographic content analysis, describes [126, p.68-69] it as a method, "used to document and understand the communication of meaning, as well as to verify theoretical relationships. Its distinctive characteristic is the reflexive and highly interactive nature of the investigator, concepts, data collection and analysis." [126, p.68-69]

Unlike *qualitative content analysis* (QCA) in which the protocol is the instrument, in *ethnographic content analysis* (ECA) the investigator is continually central, although protocols may be used in later phases of the research. Like all ethnographic research, the meaning of a message is assumed to be reflected in various modes of information exchange, format, rhythm and style, e.g., aural and visual style, as well as in the context of the report itself, and other nuances. [126, p.68-69]

ECA consists of reflexive movement between concept development, sampling, data collection, data coding, data analysis, and interpretation. The aim is to be systematic and analytic, but not rigid. Although categories and "variables" initially guide the study, others are allowed and expected to emerge throughout the study. Thus, ECA is embedded in constant discovery and constant comparison of relevant situations, settings, styles, images, meanings and nuances. [127] To

this end, ECA draws on and collects numerical and narrative data, rather than forcing the latter into predefined categories of the former as is done in QCA. ECA is oriented to check, supplement, and supplant prior theoretical claims by simultaneously obtaining categorical and unique data for every case studied in order to develop analytical constructs appropriate for several investigations. [128] Further, data are often coded conceptually so that one item may be relevant for several purposes. In short, while items and topics can still be counted and put in emergent categories, ECA also provides good descriptive information.

Such an ethnographically-based approach to analysis allows the process of character assassination to be described according to cultural specifics, which are closely examined in the following subchapters, putting character assassination into the realm of cultural concepts (e.g. in terms of “west” and “east”).

A comprehensive analysis of character attacks against Russian and U. S. presidents is beyond the modest goals of this dissertation. Accordingly, the various types of character attacks that have emerged over the years according to Shiraev were enumerated. They differ in terms of their initial intention, the scope and variety of the methods used, and the anticipated effect, which were discussed earlier. However, “there is no clear demarcation line between these methods and we believe this typology can be expanded,” but this classification will help to understand the different communicative attitudes of character attacks.

Dictionaries give us different understandings of how the term “character assassination” is to be applied. Having conducted the literature review of extant political science literature, we will review how dictionaries define these operative terms so that we understand the popular understanding of them. It is important to note that academic study of the terms seems to differ from the conventional and popular usage of them. Because character attacks are inherently social and undertaken for public consumption, we must outline how these terms are understood by the public.

We begin with *The British Cambridge Dictionary*, which defines “character assassination” as being the “intentional attempt to spoil the reputation of a person by criticizing them severely, especially unfairly, in the newspapers or on television.” [57] Interestingly, it does not define what is “unfair.” Example: Is reporting on the arrest of a candidate for office an “unfair”? How about reporting on the arrest of their daughter? Equally, this definition does not explain how we are to understand attacks that are done “fairly.”

This differs slightly from the *British Dictionary*, which defines it as “the act of deliberately

attempting to destroy a person's reputation by defamatory remarks.” [58] This definition is also loose in that it does not state what kind of remarks are typically used and how in nature they are defamatory. In both cases, it is defined as being done with the intention of somehow maliciously damaging the reputation of someone else. The difference lies in the *British Cambridge's* insistence that it must be broadcast via television or in newspapers, which precludes simple speeches, internet stories, leaflets or billboards on highways as being the tools of committing character assassination. However, it is possible that this is a product of an aged definition which has yet to be updated for the 21st century or simply not exhaustive in defining the means of dissemination of the attack.

The Collins English Dictionary also simply states that it is “the act of deliberately attempting to destroy a person's reputation by defamatory remarks.” [62] This definition completely ignores whether the person assassinated was of political or public stature. Equally, it does not raise the question as to the method used to disseminate the attack.

Though not exhaustive, a study of several legal resources tended to redirect the reader searching for information on “character assassination” to articles on “slander” and “libel.” The difference between the two lies in the form in which the attack is delivered: libel is done by some written form (i.e. newspaper, internet, magazine, etc.) and slander is spread by spoken word (i.e. in-person, over the radio, or via television broadcast). Moreover, *Burton's Legal Thesaurus* gives synonyms for “slander” as “abusive language, accusation, calumny, calumny, censure, character assassination, damaging report, *defamation*, defamatory words, denigration, denunciation, execration, false report, imprecation, insinuation, *libel*, malicious report, obloquy, reproach, revilement, scandal, scurrility, slur, smear, stricture, traducement, vilification.” It offers that similar to slander are the “concepts: malice, publication, slander of title, slander per quod, slander per se.” [63]

“Slander” is defined in a similar way to character assassination, in that it is described as “oral defamation, in which someone tells one or more persons an untruth about another which untruth will harm the reputation of the person defamed,” and that “statements such as an untrue accusation of having committed a crime, having a loathsome disease, or being unable to perform one's occupation are treated as slander per se since the harm and malice are obvious...” The dictionary emphasizes that “Words spoken over the air on television or radio are treated as *libel* (written defamation) and not slander on the theory that broadcasting reaches a large audience as much if not more than printed publications.” [64] For instance in Russian Ozhegov's Dictionary, slander is defined as “lies,

defaming someone/something” [65], while defamation can be found in Mikhelson's big explanatory-phraseological dictionary as “libelous disgrace” [66] and in Kuznetsov’s Explanatory Dictionary as “dissemination of information defaming someone” and also as “disinformation”, implicating the context of misinformation. [67] Character assassination is an uncommon phrasing for Russian, mostly displaced by defamation, libel, or slander.

In the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopedic Dictionary, a comprehensive multi-volume encyclopedia (written in Russian), the word *kleveta* is used, which is a common Russian term for false accusations or, simply, slander. The authors emphasize that *kleveta* (slander) is directed primarily against the absent characteristics and is expressed in the message with “attributing to the victim such actions that are incompatible with the dignity of an honest citizen.” *Kleveta* (slander) seeks to drop the honor of victim in the eyes of others and “in the sources of medieval German law this was often denoted by the words “theft of honor.” There is also stated, that “*kleveta* (slander) differs from defamation, since the latter does not need the falsity of disclosed facts, whereas for slander, deliberate falsity is the main feature.” [121]

For our purposes, we will use the definitions provided by *Black’s Law Dictionary*, giving the definition of “slander” as an “oral defamation; the speaking of false and malicious words concerning another, whereby injury results to his reputation,” [70] and that “libel” exists when a “defamatory statement is published through any manner or media. If intended to simply bring contempt, disrespect, hatred, or ridicule to a person or entity it is likely a civil breach of law. However, if it causes mayhem or breach of peace, it can be a criminal breach of law. Yet, again, if the statement is newsworthy, even if defamatory, proof of benefit to the public is required to avoid criminal complaint.” [71]

Because character assassination is a means of changing public opinion about someone, we will look at how non-academic, user-edited resources define the term “character assassination.” this will help us understand how common people (who are the ones who the assassins are trying to convince) understand the concept of character attacks. *Urban Dictionary*, a website that allows users to define new, uncommon, popular terms, defines “character assassination” as being the “the act of attempting to influence the portrayal or reputation of a particular person, causing others to develop an extremely negative perception of him/her.” Moreover, “by its nature, it involves deliberate exaggeration or manipulation of facts to present an untrue picture of the targeted person. The definition goes on to state that it is “basically, it is spreading rumors and talking bad

about somebody, to make people hate them.” As an example, in common usage it offers, “I’m just another victim of Character assassination,” and “The media and politicians are Character Assassins.” [72]

An effective analysis requires definitions of different possible types of character attacks; as supplied by J. J. Smart and E. Shiarev (Appendix 2.1) they are [21]:

Cheap shots focus on an episode, an action, or statement of a candidate that may raise questions about this person’s credibility, honesty, integrity, generosity, or decency. In this type of attack the attackers’ goals are to annoy and distract their opponents so that the attacks create cumulative damage or push the victim to overreact, forcing defenders to decide to ignore or address the cheap shots. There are two undesirable outcomes: appearing weak and overreacting. [21, p.220]

Falsifications are based on lies, which as they spread become difficult to distinguish from real facts. Attackers attempt to deliberately associate the opponent’s political message with his or her alleged immoral acts or other serious character flaws. Ignoring the attack may appear to be acceptance of the falsifications. Rebuttal takes time and resources and may cause speculation. [21, p.220]

Character assassination *attempts* are serious and direct accusations, claims, charges, statements or other information based on known facts. Attacks should result in a moral damage and unavoidable political defeat of their opponent. The main question the target faces is how to defend without appearing defensive, apologetic, or shielding the victim of the attacks. [21, p.220]

The authors describe the types of these attacks in more detail (Appendix 2.2), so the definitions with examples have been converted into a table for further information. Direct *character attacks* involve direct accusations about a person’s character flaws that are based on known facts. Direct attacks are different from falsifications because the former use at least some reliable evidence. Direct character attacks typically exaggerate this evidence in order to harm a victim as much as possible. Such attacks tend to be planned and coordinated. The defenders have to find the right balance in their responses: denying the attackers’ damaging information is no longer possible; yet to unconditionally defend the victim of the character assassination may no longer be appropriate. For example, the most common tactics are attacks on religious identity, sexual misconduct, deceitful behavior and mental capacity. [21]

Shiaraev says that, with a few exceptions, character attacks are generally driven by the zero-sum logic of politics: to win, you have to defeat your opponent. The attackers strike on behalf of

political parties or special interests and simultaneously target two opposite groups of people. One group, the supporters of the victim of an attack, is expected to be discouraged and weakened. A successful attack should damage the reputation of a person (such as a president or a presidential candidate) by distracting, annoying, angering, and essentially weakening his or her as a competitive political figure. It should also take the victim's time, energy, and resources to respond, to decide about whether or not to launch a response, and if yes, which response should be given, when and how. The attackers or those acting on their behalf are supposed to be encouraged and strengthened because of the negative impact of a character attack on the victim, who is their opponent. [21]

This classification gives the option of looking closely at different types of possible attacks and understanding that the focus, directed to the general understanding of character assassination, can vary. This brings us to the necessity of distinguishing the main categorical apparatus. For the purposes of this dissertation, all technical definitions offered by the Character assassination *and Reputation Politics' Glossary of Terms Related to* Character assassination will be the authoritative definitions used.

Unlike character assassination, the term *character attack* was not found in any of the dictionaries or other resources consulted. This is surprising as Icks and Shiraevs' Character assassination *throughout the Ages* defines "character attacks" as being the broad-sweeping, overarching term for all types of attacks, and "character assassination" as being a specific type of attack. That is, character attacks are akin to a "genus," while character assassination attempts, cheap shots, falsifications and other tactics are the "species;" all fall under the broad banner of character attacks and can be broken down according to their nature. For the purposes of this dissertation, we will operationalize the term character attacks as the authors of the CARP Glossary do, defining it as "a deliberate assault on an individual's reputation. Character attacks can be verbal (e.g. speeches, insults) or non-verbal (e.g. cartoons). Contrary to *insults*, character attacks are by definition public in nature. They can be launched for a variety of reasons, including the removal of a political rival or the discrediting of a political or religious ideology. When character attacks are successful, they result in character assassination." [122]

Character assassination is the worst kind of character attack, according to Shiraev, as it forever "kills" the person's reputation. These attacks are direct and serious and the "accusations, claims, charges, statements, or other information that is based on certain known facts." [21, p.215-219] These kinds of allegations are so strong that the person is unable to continue in his profession

or life as he had before as his good name and public standing were defamed. A key component is that the attack “does ‘immanent moral damage and unavoidable political defeat of the opponent.’” [21, p.216] Thus, we will operationalize character assassination as per the definition in *The Lab for Character assassination and Reputation Politics’ Glossary of terms related to Character assassination* to mean “the deliberate destruction of an individual’s reputation. Character assassination is the result of successful *character attacks*. The word can also be used to refer to the *process* of reputation-destruction.” [122]

Attempted character assassination is found in neither the *Glossary*, nor in the work of Icks and Shiraev. Given that it is an effort to commit a character assassination that does not succeed, we will adapt the operationalization of the term character assassination - that the failed attack, had it succeeded, would have caused “immanent moral damage and unavoidable political defeat of the opponent,” moreover, it would have been the “deliberate destruction of an individual’s reputation.” [122]

Cheap shots will be defined, as per the *Glossary*, as the “brief and apparently spontaneous character attack that chiefly aims to annoy and distract the victim.” [122] Icks and Shiraev found that these are frequently focused “on an episode, an action, or statement of a candidate that may raise questions about this person’s credibility, honesty, integrity, generosity, or decency and the attacker has the goal of annoying and distracting opponents and their supporters so that the attacks can cause cumulative damage or push the victim to overreact.” [21, p.216] There is a clear intent to damage the person, but it does not succeed in killing their reputation, perhaps only injuring them. The targeted person must choose between responding to the attack – without overreacting – or simply ignoring the attack.

Labelling differs, according to the CARP Glossary, in that it is “the practice of associating an individual with a negative label, in the hope that this label will become permanently attached to the victim in the public sphere.” [122] This is different than name-calling or cheap shots in that the intended consequence is to change the way that the population views the victim.

Falsifications are not defined in the CARP *Glossary*, so the definition found in Icks and Shiraev will be used. The character attacks known as falsifications will therefore be operationalized as those “based on lies, which by the time they are spread are difficult to distinguish from facts.” The attacker’s motive in this is to “deliberately associate an opponent’s political message with his or her alleged immoral acts or other serious character flaws.” This is tricky as if the attacked person

ignores the allegations, as it may cause some people to think they are true. At the same time, by speaking up, the target brings more attention to the attack and creates further interest in the news story. [21, p.216-217]

An *ad hominem* attack is, per the *Glossary's* definition, is a “rhetorical assault that targets an opponent’s personality, appearance or other personal attributes rather than addressing the argument he or she is advocating. Ad hominem attacks always occur in the context of a debate. There are multiple types of ad hominem attacks: 1) abusive-attacking someone’s character; 2) circumstantial-charging inconsistency between behaviors and professed ideals; 3) bias-pointing out vested interest in outcome; 4) poisoning the well-contaminating judgment in advance; 5) *tu quoque* – ‘you too have done these bad things that you accuse me of’; 6) guilt by association-asserting similarity between the opponent and someone widely hated.” [122]

Libel will be operationalized as per the definition found in the *CARP Glossary* as “*Calumny* in the form of printed words or images. Under common law, libel is a punishable offense, but if the libelous words are true, it is not often punished.” [122] Libel, like slander, has legal ramifications for the people who commit said crime. It will not be used except to denote an attack that had legal consequences.

Slander will be defined as per the *Glossary*; “in colloquial language, ‘slander’ is often used to refer to defamatory speech in general, regardless of whether or not it is true. Legally, slander refers to *calumny* in the form of spoken words. Under common law, slander is a punishable offense. However, a common defense against prosecution for slander is that the words were true.” [122] Like libel, the term slander will not be used in this dissertation except to denote an attack that had legal consequences.

Simply put, *comparative advertising* is the type of advertising which compares the records of and facts about clients. It does not have the overt intent of defaming the opponent or of sully his name. It simply allows the reader to reach his own conclusions as to which person or product is most suitable to him. If the advertising is based on true facts, not construed or “spun” to make the person’s record or personage look worse than he truly is, then it is a factual account and so is not a type of character attack. Importantly, it does not necessarily harm someone’s reputation to have negative advertising against them. Hence, it will be defined as “the objective or sincere comparison between a candidate’s, or a politician’s, or a country’s records.”

Negative advertising will be operationalized as “the intentional dissemination of information

that works to damage the popularity or image of a public official.” Key to this definition is that only public people can be affected directly by negative advertising. The advertising must also be based on some slant of the facts, or bias added, in order to assure that the reader is left with a negative impression not earlier held of the person who is being attacked in the advertisement.

Neither case is inherently a form of character assassination, though negative advertising *de facto* has a great deal of elements of character attack. Although negative advertising is varied, the intention of the person doing the ad is always to change the way that the public perceives the person being attacked. For example, an advertisement about a politician who raised taxes is not a character attack – as it is an accurate reflection of a policy position executed by the politician and has nothing to do with him personally or his character.

Alternatively, a negative advertisement about a politician that for instance broadcasts his earlier arrest record or alcoholism is aimed at changing the way that the population views the politician as a person. They are not questioning anything about his job performance or public policy positions as is done in comparative pieces. In this scenario, the person who is creating the ad hopes that the reader will no longer hold the politician in the same “warm” light as before, due to some personal failing.

For our purposes, we will use the definitions provided by *Black’s Law Dictionary*, giving the definition of “slander” as an “oral defamation; the speaking of false and malicious words concerning another, whereby injury results to his reputation,” [70] and that “libel” exists when a “defamatory statement is published through any manner or media. If intended to simply bring contempt, disrespect, hatred, or ridicule to a person or entity it is likely a civil breach of law. However, if it causes mayhem or breach of peace, it can be a criminal breach of law. Yet, again, if the statement is newsworthy, even if defamatory, proof of benefit to the public is required to avoid criminal complaint.” [71]

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deliberate exaggeration or manipulation of facts to present an untrue picture of the targeted person. The definition goes on to state that it is “basically, it is spreading rumors and talking bad about somebody, to make people hate them.” As an example, in common usage it offers, “I’m just another victim of Character assassination,” and “The media and politicians are Character Assassins.” [72]

Though, in this dissertation, the term “character assassination” was operationalized by author as per the definition in The Lab for Character assassination and Reputation Politics’ (CARP), where the author is a part of research team, *Glossary of terms related to Character assassination* as meaning the “deliberate destruction of an individual’s reputation. Character assassination is the result of successful character attacks. The word can also be used to refer to the process of reputation-destruction.” [122]

The problematic of dissertation analytical research includes the study of following subjects: the nature, role and tools of character assassination in bilateral relationships between countries, analysis of the national roots and contemporary specific of the character assassination approaches in USA and Russian Federation relations, the role of mass-media in promotion of attacks against leaders and understanding of the today typology of character attacks, a possibility to make prognoses onto states’ relations according to the usage of such practices, and in what contexts they are made, as the type of attack made varies according to the state of bilateral relations.

According to author hypothesis the main scientific results submitted for defense are:

- Throughout history, character assassination has witnessed a significant evolution from a mechanism mainly used inside the country, to becoming a complex strategy that has overcome the sovereign state's borders, being widely used in international relations;

- Significant relationship exists between the worsening of countries’ diplomatic relations and the intentional attacking of the other country’s leadership by means of official government organs, or the government-backed press;

- Though both countries engage in character attacks, the United States and Russia typically attack each other’s’ leaders on different issues and as a rule, each state has its own specificity in implementing character assassination as a political strategy.

2.2. The Russian Tradition of Character Assassination in Internal and Foreign Politics

One frequently hears that politics is nastier and rougher today than in earlier eras, that somehow today's politics has taken a turn for the worse and plays out in the daily drama of news reports of sexual dalliances committed by "rising political stars," or the financial impropriety of leaders, or of the questionable comments made by some inattentive candidate. As we will see, accusations of an opponent's lack merit by those who wish to destroy them appear frequently in history. Though people do in fact make "stupid decisions" and "bad mistakes," often what we are really seeing is the work of character assassins who are trying to find a thread they can pull on to unravel an enemy's potential success.

Today, as in all previous ages, attacks against individuals to influence the public discussion remains a common tool of those seeking power. As *Ecclesiastes 1:9* says *nihil sub sole novum* - "there is nothing new under the sun." It should not be surprising that Russian and American history is no exception to this rule and both have a long tradition of character attacks and successful character assassinations. A deeper understanding of how and why attacks and assassinations were used will allow us to understand the previous rulers of both countries in a new light.

Russian history offers a particularly exciting subject of study. Unlike the United States, which has operated as some form of democratic republic for 240 years, Russian history has been substantially more turbulent, having ranged from despotic tsars, to dictatorial communism, to democracy, to an oligarchy with only the trappings of a legitimate democracy. Both countries have suffered, but in different ways. Comparing the American Revolution to Russia's Red Revolution, or the U. S. Civil War to the Russian Civil War, or the curtailment of civil liberties by Joseph Stalin during the Terror to the McCarthy period is absurd.

The types of character attacks applied in each country vary greatly, though there are several that can be identified as common to both nations. A successful assassin chooses his attack carefully in order to be sure that it best connects with not only the perceived character of the person being attacked but that it is also believable to the general population. It must be of a nature which induces the spectators (be it the general population, the royal court, or a court of law) to view the victim in a unfavorable light.

By understanding both countries' intricate histories of this dark craft we can gain an understanding of the current state of its use in their political systems and why the attacks are

executed the way that they are. Was President Bush's media scrutiny similar to George Washington before him? How about Vladimir Putin - is he the target of attacks similar to those faced by Grigorii Rasputin? It is fundamental that we thoroughly understand the histories of character assassination in both countries if we wish to understand the current state of the political situation between the countries.

To study these questions, we will conduct a brief case study of several high-profile figures from different eras, from both countries, to show that character assassination existed before its modern re-emerging in different forms, starting from cheap attacks and up to severe character assassination through bringing up the sexual misbehavior. Then we will compare and contrast the American and Russian cases to analyze their similarities and differences and what can be inferred from varying moments in history. Though character attacks have a deeply personal nature, and attacks are typically tailored to the individual target, we will see that there are some generic types of attacks that are used routinely, over-and-over, across cultures and time.

One must note what the outcome of the character attacks were and why they had the impact that they did. Why do assertions of sexual impropriety destroy one man's career, but another's misbehaviors are dismissed as being simply "indiscretions," or a simple tidbit of gossip, not having any significant negative impact on the accused? By knowing what results we can expect from each countries' intra-political attacks, we can understand why the press in the modern era fixates on different questions about foreign leaders. We can also understand why certain attacks are deployed at different times and what lessons can be learned for today's student of character attacks.

One of the most famous examples of character assassinations in Russia is the case of the illiterate Grigorii Efimovich Rasputin, born on January 10, 1869 in rural Pokrovskoe, Siberia, to a poor peasant family. His rise to international infamy began when Tsar Nikolai's wife, Tsarina Alexandra, believed Rasputin had saved her son, Prince Alexei, suffering from hemophilia, following a near fatal falling incident. Though not truly ordained as a monk or priest in the Orthodox Church, he posed as a monk with healing powers, and as a result of his "miraculous" recovery, the Tsarina became a devoted and fervent follower of Rasputin's, which in turn led to his becoming more involved in the royal household. [129] Given the rising unpopularity of the Romanovs, Rasputin's reputation for depravity led many to view him as a fundamental threat to the survival of the monarchy and of the Empire. This perceived threat led to his eventual physical assassination at the hands of conspirators during the winter of 1916. [130;131]

As the *Independent* writes about Rasputin, “When it comes to lechery, he is in the premier division, a beast among beasts. Stories of Rasputin's drunken and orgiastic exploits lodge themselves in the imagination with a vividness that outshines even the most squalid rumor to waft out of the White House.” [132] Grigorii Rasputin, also known as the “mad monk,” [133] was a frequent target of character attacks that have been passed down for over a century. These attacks were initiated by members of Russian society who sought to destroy Rasputin’s reputation in order to lessen his influence over the royals. The nature of the attacks varied, but his supposed immorality, debauchery and blasphemy were the most common flaws utilized by those who wished to destroy him. Like most character attacks, once a rumor is repeated enough that people believe it, it becomes easier to pin further such rumors on the accused with less evidence.

However, even before his days in the Tsar’s Court, the attacks against Rasputin had already begun. In 1907 the first attacks against Rasputin began in rural Siberia with accusations of supporting a heretical sect, and of having kissed and bathed with some of his female followers. An Orthodox tribunal investigated and found that the accusations lacked merit, and so Rasputin was spared any punishment. [134] *Sputnik News* reports that, “The case was fabricated so clumsily that it ‘works’ only against its own authors. No wonder the documents were never published. Nothing but allusions were made to its existence.”

According to the same *Sputnik* article, the local members of the clergy had an axe to grind with Rasputin’s unorthodox Orthodox preaching. Specifically, the argument was “...of a most principled nature. Rasputin believed that once someone had become a man of the Church, that person had to give all of his soul to serving God. Rasputin vehemently renounced a purely mechanical, formal service of God. So, exacting an attitude couldn’t but set against him those clergymen, who tended to regard the Church as no more than an organization providing them with employment and a steady income.” [134]

Given that the rumors about Rasputin began as a result not of his actual actions and misdeeds, but as a means to destroy his reputation because of his differing theological views, these attacks are clearly an attempt at character assassination, as the intent of the rumor was purely to defame the target as a means of “killing the messenger” who was bearing differing theological viewpoints. Unfortunately for Rasputin, rumors about him only became more elaborate and painful.

By the time that Rasputin had found his way out of Siberia and into the Russian capital of St. Petersburg, there is evidence to suggest that impersonators were hired to go in public, cause a

ruckus, and cause the royal family embarrassment. The objective of this was to so soil Rasputin's image and reputation that the royal family would be forced to cut ties with him. The most famous of these incidents was took place at the Yar Restaurant, where Rasputin, in a drunken excitement, exposed his penis to the wealthy and powerful patrons. [135]

Was this really Rasputin? *Sputnik News* casts doubt on this incident and others like it by observing that, "Rasputin look-alikes were used as a trump-card in this smear-campaign." Though this initially sounds too fantastical to be true, it is supported by the official records of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Imperial Russia, the then-domestic security apparatus of the government, which records that the meeting occurred in the city of Kharkov, Ukraine, Russian Empire in 1912. The misbehavior of the look-alikes was consistent with the rumors that were circulating of the behavior Rasputin was engaging in. Reportedly, "the hired actors organized drunken brawls in restaurants and taverns, called on prostitutes, bragged about their proximity to the Royal family, etc." [134]

Whether impersonators were involved is debatable, but what is not debatable is that, as with many other leaders in history, images were also used to defame him. There were pictures showing the sinister monk caressing the breast of the Tsarina, [136] implying that their relationship was more than that of spiritual discernment and direction. Different images played on the idea that Rasputin acted as a decision maker to whose command the Tsar danced, [137] another showed Rasputin between the Tsar and Tsarina with the quote "three heads think better than one." [138] The attack implied that Rasputin's influence was far greater than simply that of a spiritual adviser, that in fact he was calling the shots.

The worst of the attacks – which were very similar to the attacks made against Tsarina Alexandra Fedorovna – was that Rasputin was in cahoots with the enemies of Russia and was causing the country to lose in the First World War. Allegations about Rasputin varied from accusations that he was a member of the Green Hand, a radical Austrian nationalist group, and so he was causing the high Romanian losses. All of the rumors indicated that Rasputin was a "double agent," serving the interests of the foreign enemy.

John Scale, a British intelligence officer working Petrograd at the time, wrote that the "German intrigue was becoming more intense daily. Enemy agents were busy whispering of peace and hinting how to get it by creating disorder, rioting, etc. Things looked very black. Romania was collapsing, and Russia herself seemed weakening. The failure in communications, the shortness of foods, the sinister influence which seemed to be clogging the war machine, Rasputin the drunken

debaucher influencing Russia's policy, what was to be the end of it all?" [139]

These attacks on Rasputin's apparent influence over the royal family, saying he was pushing them to pursue military and national strategies detrimental to the war effort, were the most damaging. Though being a debauched charlatan was bad – much worse was that he was misappropriating his position of trust to steer the Tsar to catastrophe during the World War I and in face of increasing protests throughout the Empire. The idea that Rasputin was a German spy, essentially a charge of treason, remains a topic of debate today. [140] In all, this would have been the final stroke in destroying Rasputin's credibility in the public's eye.

The rumors of his disloyalty were so widespread and successful that the British military began to believe in them. *Spartacus Educational* cites a number of British sources to collaborate this. "Michael Smith, the author of *Six: A History of Britain's Secret Intelligence Service*, has argued that MI6 officers based in Russia, were involved in developing a plot to assassinate Rasputin. Giles Milton, argues in *Russian Roulette: How British Spies Thwarted Lenin's Global Plot*, that the original idea came from Samuel Hoare, the head of the British Secret Intelligence Service in Petrograd. Hoare believed that Rasputin was sabotaging the Russian war effort and if he was murdered 'the country would be freed from the sinister influence that was striking down its natural leaders and endangering the success of its armies in the field.' Richard Cullen, the author of *Rasputin: The Role of Britain's Secret Service in his Torture and Murder*, claims that agents Oswald Rayner, John Scale and Stephen Alley were involved in the plot." [139]

In the end, the rumors of Rasputin's treasonous disloyalty and negative influence on the royal family cost him his life. Rasputin was assassinated in the Yusupov Palace on the Moika River in St Petersburg on December 30, 1916. [141] Sources who participated in the assassination, chief among them Prince Felix Yusupov – the man who supposedly pulled the trigger to kill Rasputin – indicate that Rasputin was poisoned, then shot, then tossed into a hole in the ice of the Neva River. [142] Others indicate that he was tortured and questioned to the point that they "squeezed his testicles flat." [143] J. Loescher's *The Bolsheviks: How the Soviets Seized Power* gives an alternative view that "Rasputin's penis and scrotum" were severed "from his body in a single snip." [144] Rasputin's death came violently, but the attacks against him lasted over a decade and guaranteed a successful character assassination against him as even today he is associated with licentiousness and perverseness.

Another important example to pay attention to is the case of Tsarina Catherine. Attacks

against Catherine the Great were common both during and after her reign. Many of these attacks suggest that the Empress was oversexed and engaged in atypical behaviors that contrasted greatly to the conservative morals of Orthodox Russia. Undoubtedly, Catherine assisted in creating these rumors through her rather licentious behavior with a wide number of partners throughout her 34-year reign.

Catherine, a lesser German princess, was brought to Russia to marry and become the consort of Grand Duke Peter of Holstein, later Peter III [145]. Catherine faced attacks based on the fact that she was foreign. Catherine wisely fought back against these rumors by learning Russian fluently and converting to the Orthodox faith from Lutheranism. [145] A rumor began that Peter and Catherine's only son, Paul I, was in fact the offspring of an illicit affair that the Empress had engaged in with Sergei Saltykov. This rumor was fanned by Catherine herself whose memoirs leave the reader with the impression that she thought that Saltykov may have been the boy's father. [146] Some argue that she spread this rumor more as a means of creating discord between her son and her husband, who she clearly did not like, rather than as a true question about her son's parentage. [147] Things were not helped by the fact that her husband also doubted the legitimacy of their children. It is now commonly believed that during her marriage to Peter III, Catherine, engaged in at least three extramarital affairs [148] and kept several lovers after her husband's murder. [149] Where the stories of Catherine's sexual appetite turn from rumors of giving in to lust into those of character assassination, is when her behavior was characterized as deviant.

Following her death in 1796, rumors began that she died while trying to copulate with a stallion. Such an incredible sexual aberration falls well outside of the norms of sexual behavior and, depending on the intent of the source of the rumor, could likely be an attempt at character assassination. Though it is not precisely clear the source of the rumor, it is reported that French Republicans, displeased with her support for the monarchy during the Revolution, began the rumor as a means to discredit her. Others have argued that Poles, upset by her annexation of large sections of their country, spread the rumors following her death. [150]

As Jennifer Drapkin writes "the horse myth probably emerged from the French upper class as a way to mar her legend." The author quotes Michael Farquhar as having said "She was a woman in power with a promiscuous sex life... Her contemporaries were never comfortable with that." *Psychology Today* continues with the analysis that "The salaciousness of a rumor often helps it survive. People repeat shocking stories if only to see whether they can be confirmed and the very act

of repetition adds credibility to the story. Since bestiality has remained socially unacceptable, the myth about the ruler and her horse never lost its power to outrage. Many rumors survive on shock value combined with a nugget of truth.” [151]

The article aptly notes that rumors combined with an element of truth can be very effective. Given Catherine’s self-created notoriety as a voracious lover of men during her lifetime, it was easier for her opponents, the French Republicans, or the Polish, to paint her as having died a death less than becoming of a monarch – soiling her reputation as a monarch worthy of the honorific title “the Great”. If the rumor really did originate with her foreign opponents, then it would certainly be a case of attempted assassination of her character, and an excellent example of how when relations deteriorate between countries a sleazy rumor can make incredible inroads and forever defame the leader.

Another example of a falsification type of character attack from Catherine’s life [54], also regarding how she supposedly “really” died, is less dramatic, but also embarrassing to her memory. Though historians state that Catherine the Great died from a stroke [153] at the age of 67, after collapsing in her bedroom, [154, p.325] myths began to arise that she died whilst sitting on the commode in her bedroom chamber. These rumors likely origin is in the interpretation of her servant, Zakar Zotov’s, account of having discovered her in the “closet,” which some have interpreted as being a euphemism for the “water closet”, or “toilet.” [155] To imagine that “the Great” leader of the Russian Empire died from a stroke while “straining on the toilet,” [150] is a good deal less glorious than death on the battlefield.

The great Russian poet, Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin, wrote “Наказ писала, флоты жгла, / И умерла, сядясь на судно.” Literally translated, “The order was written, the fleet was torched / and she died whilst sitting on the ship.” Colloquially, the word “судно” also means “bedpan”, rendering the translation that “she died while on the toilet.” [156, p.499] Given Pushkin’s tremendous global popularity, this only further perpetuated the cheap shot which had started years before.

The actual cheap shots against her continue with the rumor that not only had she died while on the toilet, but that she had broken the commode with her great weight and the shattered porcelain had cut her to death. [156] The story that Catherine was so obese that she broke the commode was repeated by her contemporary enemies who were quick to diminish her historical memory as best as they could. [158]

The truth is, as Barbara Marazani writes, that “Though her enemies would have hoped for a scandalous end, the simple truth is that Catherine suffered a stroke and died quietly in her bed the following day.” [145] Therefore, we can conclude that these attacks against Catherine were largely post-mortem, that is “a character attack against a deceased victim. Post-mortem attacks are often aimed to damage someone’s reputation in the historic record, i.e. for centuries to come.” [122]

Another person to mention is Leon Trotsky. This case offers an interesting comparison for several reasons: Unlike Rasputin and Catherine the Great who were separated by more than a hundred years; Trotsky and Rasputin were contemporaries and born only a decade apart. They were also on the opposite sides of the country’s Soviet Revolution: while Rasputin served the Tsar, Trotsky actively sought to overthrow the autocrat. Another interesting aspect of the example of Trotsky was how positively he was viewed by the Soviet leadership and Soviet society, until events took a turn for the worse for him and he became one of the chief villains in Bolshevik propaganda. Even more interesting are the relentless attacks against Trotsky by the leadership of the White Army who opposed the Bolsheviks during Russia’s Civil War.

Leon Trotsky was known as one of the great leaders in the early days of the Soviet Union who was “second only to Vladimir Lenin...” [159] As a great idealist, writer, and leader in political and military endeavors, he was tremendously valued. Unfortunately, he fell out of favor following Vladimir Lenin’s death and lost the subsequent power struggle to the rising star of Joseph Stalin. This eventually led to his being assassinated in his home, while in exile in Mexico, by an agent sent by Stalin. His literal assassination came after decades of facing aggressive character attacks that greatly damaged his reputation within the Soviet Union.

One of the distinguishing features of the attacks against Trotsky, versus the attacks against Rasputin and the Tsarina, is that they are generally anti-Semitic in nature. There were virtually no attacks against Trotsky’s financial improprieties, sexual interests, imprudent personal behaviors, or other common fodder for attacks. The reasoning for this lies in the fact that anti-Semitism has been a continual problem and source of conflict in Russia for centuries. By using this well-worn tool of hatred that Russians were familiar and open to, it was easier to gain traction for the White Army’s argument that the country did not need the wares being offered by Trotsky – or his Bolshevik confederates.

The White Army made extensive use of the notorious fraud “guidebook” for Jewish worldwide domination, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which had actually been produced by

the Tsarist secret police specifically to stir-up existent anti-Semitic feelings within the Russian population. [160] This matches well with what A. Fink, a scholar on historical conspiracy theories, defines as conspiracy theories. According to A. Fink, a conspiracy theory is “the belief that a clandestine organization has significant secret control over world events over decades or centuries, including the infiltration and close manipulation of multiple supposedly ‘competing’ groups.” [163]

According to the *Jewish Virtual Library*, “following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the reactionary White Armies made extensive use of the *Protocols [of the Elders of Zion]* to incite widespread slaughters of Jews.” [161] The objective of attacking Trotsky’s Jewishness served more than to simply discredit him as not being “truly Russian,” and as an agent of Satan, but also as part of the global conspiracy against the gentiles. Thereby, those gentiles who were collaborating to abet the Bolshevik cause were not only fighting against the Church, but even against their own people, as useful idiots who were serving the Jewish overlord.

This is also a perfect example of the enemy image which is defined by *Glossary of Terms Related to Character assassination* as “the depiction of an entire nation or ethnic group in hostile terms. Enemy images are often created and employed in war propaganda and serve to identify an ‘enemy’ whose values and interests are diametrically opposed to those of the target audience.” [122]

Trotsky’s 1879 birth to a Jewish family was uneventful but would remain the constant point of attack against him throughout his life. While Trotsky led the Red Army, drawings and caricatures of him depicted as a “diabolical Jew” who was seeking to corrupt otherwise pure Russia were frequently disseminated. In one such depiction by the White Army, Trotsky is shown with Vladimir Lenin; Lenin, using a skeletonized hand as a scepter and an orb of the world, they both are shown with Stars of David above their heads. [162] Other images follow a similar path and emphasize either the godlessness of the atheistic Trotsky or showing the path that he opens leading to hunger, rape and death, others show him as attacking Russian women. Another cartoon depicts Trotsky with Lenin, Kamenev and other revolutionaries making a human sacrifice on the altar of “international;” with the human being offered up for this cause dressed in white and is wearing a head covering with the imperial crest. [164]

In another drawing, we see Trotsky shown as a spider with over-emphasized stereotypical Jewish features, knitting a web into Siberia. Trotsky’s military incursion into central Russia refers to his successful military attacks there where he ruthlessly crushed anti-socialist elements. Significantly, the poster also refers to Trotsky’s rumored legal name, Leiba Bronstein.

This attack on Trotsky's surname originates with the supposed ambiguity about it. Though known throughout his professional life by the Russian name de plume of "Lev Trotsky" ("Lev" is "Leon" in English), it is a known fact that he was actually born as Lev Bronstein, with the patronymic of Davidovich, meaning that his father's first name was David, rendering the full name of Lev Davidovich Bronstein. Both David and Bronstein are names that would have strongly connoted that Trotsky was ethnically Jewish, not Russian, to a native Russian speaker's ears. Given the rabid anti-Semitism in Russia at that time, insinuating a Jewish origin is tantamount to an attack against Trotsky.

Some people, including Robert Service and Juri Lina, have insisted that Trotsky's birth name was actually "Leiba Bronstein." [165] "Leiba" being a name of Hebrew origin meaning "Heart," [166] would have certainly struck the common Russian as being further evidence that Trotsky was "not one of them", by erasing even his common Russian first name "Lev", and replacing it by a "foreign, Jewish" name. These are all attempts to further discredit the work that Trotsky was doing, as this fits into the larger narrative of the White Army about those seeking to destroy "Holy Rus" are outsiders, such as Masons, Jews and the Devil. [167]

As Schultz and Pancer noted, people like political messaging more if they feel it is coming from someone to whom they are similar. If they do not feel similar to the speaker, then they are less likely to accept or adopt the ideas outlined by the person. Hence, for the White Army, it was something easy to latch onto as they could define their enemy as being not only a dangerously evil enemy of Russia, but also as being literally of the devil trying to drive out Christianity and traditional Russian values. As we see in many other attacks, creating a separation between someone by making him "foreign," or "not really one of us," is often a solid strategy.

Another common theme is that of "Trotsky the murderer." Trotsky is depicted in Soviet art as a devil-like man, with stereotypical Jewish features, wearing a gold chain with a large Star of David, observing the numerous skulls at his feet with churches in the background whose crosses have been broken, or replaced with communist slogans. [168] Another Polish war poster shows Trotsky sitting atop a mound of skulls, staring out as his troops massacre people, holding a handgun in one hand a bloody dagger in the other. [169] Portraying him as a bloodthirsty murderer is clearly an attack on his character. This contrasts greatly to the "warm" propaganda that the Bolsheviks produced portraying him as a hero – or like St George defeating the demonic snake of counterrevolution. [170]

The attacks against Trotsky offer an excellent example of how visual cues and art can be used to attack someone. It would seem that though grotesque, the work done against Trotsky by the White Army was not an example of a successful character assassination, but rather examples of character attacks. Trotsky's final downfall came not at the hands of White Russians – or their propaganda – but from Joseph Stalin.

H. Sachar's *A History of the Jews in the Modern World* recounts that during the fifteenth Party Congress in 1926, Stalin denounced Trotsky as being "a traitor to Leninism." Despite his efforts to defend himself, the audience only responded with yells that he was a "traitor," "deviationist" and a "Jew." Thereafter he was expelled from the Communist Party for "counterrevolutionary insurrectionism." Trotsky was then forced into internal exile in Kazakhstan before finally being expelled from the Soviet Union. [171]

Within the context of the Soviet Union we could describe the attacks against Trotsky by his Bolshevik allies as being examples of successful character assassination. The character attacks and cheap shots regarding his Jewishness were not what finally destroyed him. The accusation, which served Stalin's interest of eliminating him as a threat, of being a traitor, is what finally ended his career. Not being soft on his enemies, Stalin's eventual order to have Trotsky murdered was the supreme act to end the threat of his former colleague.

Closer to modern time, the case of Mikhail Gorbachev has to be mentioned. Today he is generally remembered fondly by Americans due to his contribution to the dismantling the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U. S. S. R.). This has not always been the case. Gorbachev at one time was frequently attacked for his aggressive foreign/domestic policy. Specifically, his opposition to German reunification and letting the ethnic Soviet Republics leave the Union if they wanted was frequently the source of attacks against him. His opposition to a multi-party democracy and human rights were often depicted in Western political cartoons about the last Soviet Premier. Not all was always terrible for Gorbachev as he was also frequently the source of "warm" political cartoons as he sought to forever change and liberalize the Soviet system of governance. [172]

Likely due to the restrictive nature of the Soviet Union, there exists a dearth of Soviet attack ads or cartoons about Gorbachev while he was the premier of the country – only those from later periods of time once the country had opened up under his programs of *Perestroika* and *Glasnost*'. Unlike Trotsky, Gorbachev hasn't officially fell out of official favor with the country's leadership, and so he wasn't targeted for government sanctioned character attacks to destroy his reputation.

Instead, most of those attacks came after the Union's fall and the rise of Yeltsin (or later).

Many cartoons depict Gorbachev not simply as having dissolved the Soviet Union, but as having completely exploded it into anarchy as things got out of his control. Some of these cartoons show shattering hammer and sickles, or a crumbling Vladimir Lenin, others showed him at the helm of a sinking ship, some showed him as the man behind a very broken system that no longer functioned – comparing it to a store without anything “democracy” in stock. Still others depict him as having ended the Cold War but having replaced it with tremendous corruption and both political and economic instability. The topic of his conflict for power with other Soviet leaders, namely Boris Yeltsin, was a common theme. [172]

Modern cartoons about Gorbachev generally are along the lines that he is a traitor to the “fatherland,” and some call for him to not be forgiven and to be put on trial for the Soviet Union's demise. [173] Many of these depictions poke fun at the infamous birthmark on his forehead by either stamping the word “traitor” or “foreign agent” [174] across it. A more recent play on this theme is the rise of stamping a map of Crimea across his head. [175] Another map that can be found emblazoned across his head is that of the United States, as there is also plenty of text arguing that he was working for American interests. [176] Likewise, a common joke found now on the internet goes along the lines of “Why is Gorbachev still alive?” Response: “Because the Devil is afraid he would break-up hell if he comes.”

It is worth noting that the attacks against Mikhail Gorbachev in regards to his human rights record, the sovereignty of the countries that neighbor Russia, domestic political instability, the poor domestic economy, the out of control corruption, and opposition to democracy, are along the same lines of attack used against Russian President Putin today. These things form the basis of some the greatest sticking points in past and present United States – Soviet/Russian relations. That is, despite the passage of more than a quarter of a century since the collapse of communism in Russia, the attacks against its leadership have arguably changed very little. Russia's political leaders have remained a frequent source of U. S. attacks for decades, but the material for these changes does not change much.

In summary, there are many similarities between the attacks against Tsaritsa Catherine the Great, Grigorii Rasputin, Lev Tolstoy and modern epoch leaders such as Mikhail Gorbachev, Vladimir Putin, Dmitrii Medvedev etc. Many of these attacks followed along the traditional lines of character attacks: sex in the case of the Tsarina and Rasputin, and foreignness as a point of attack

against many of them. There are also some major differences: The attacks against Rasputin lead to him being mortally assassinated and being remembered as “the mad monk;” Catherine, on the other hand, lived into old age and now is known as Catherine “the Great.” Trotsky, likewise, was attacked for his “foreignness” (i.e. not “really” being Russian), and was assassinated like Rasputin, but the attacks against him are largely forgotten today. Similarly, Gorbachev is currently blamed by Russian society for the collapse of the U. S. S. R. and allegations that he was serving the United States’ interest are still a popular subject of attack against him.

Starting with the allegations of a sexual nature, we see that the results differ in every case where that was a large facet of the attacks against the leader. The attacks against Rasputin included all types of heterosexual behavior: from sleeping with his followers, to bedding the Tsarina. Why does this have a particularly strong shock value? It is because Rasputin was supposed to be an Orthodox man of God, and should have been living a life of moderation, purity and devotion. If he was engaging in licentious behavior and sleeping with scores of women - or promising them a neo-religious experience by doing so – it is in contradiction with what people would expect from the monk. Moreover, importantly, it invalidates his role as a religious leader – how can he possibly be giving sound moral advice to the royals if he is a depraved pervert? His interest is supposed to be God – not carnal lust and serving one should disqualify the other in the Orthodox understanding of sinfulness.

Continuing in that vein, if one accepts the premise that he is a charlatan of sewer depravity who is dispensing fake religious counsel, it is not a large leap in faith to believe that he may be giving the Tsarina poor, misinformed advice that hurts the war effort of Russia. If someone has already accepted that he is a man without morals, it does not take much to convince a primed audience to believe that he is moreover also a traitor against the state – if he betrays his vows to God, why not betray his country? The road to a successful character attack, as earlier mentioned, is that it has seeds of truth that are first accepted, then built upon in order to destroy the target of the attack.

Attacks against Rasputin were frequent and harsh. The key to the attacks successfully sticking was that they were repeated widely in the upper echelons of society and so there was already inclination to believe them. The expression “where there is smoke, there’s fire” is a fairly good explanation of how people react to seeing the same rumors repeated a multitude of times from a broad number of sources.

The attacks against the Tsarina are also shocking – especially in regards to the horse. But what is the purpose of this? What is the worst that can come of an attack against the Tsarina? The reality is that little can come of it other than damaging society’s memory of her. The attacks could have supported Republicans’ fight against the monarchy as being both morally corrupted and out of touch with common people. It would also please all of her domestic enemies to see her name dragged through the mud. Especially given that the attacks against her tended to appear after her death, it seems most probable that the source of the rumor was either gossip, or the desire to tarnish her memory. The horse story should be considered an effective character attack as we are still discussing it two hundred years after her death. However, it failed as a character assassination as we also still refer to her as “the Great” – an honorific title that one gets only after they have died.

That being said, the difference between the sexual scandals of the two was the intended outcome and the realistic outcome. The intended outcome in both was to tarnish them: But for Rasputin, a monk, this would defame him to the point of no longer being able to serve as a monk. For the Tsarina it would have simply been embarrassing. Likewise, the actual outcome was similar: The Queen was perhaps gossiped about, but she was able to continue with her work. In the case of Rasputin, it created a stir in the royal palace and it caused his employers to worry about his misbehavior. Today, both are remembered for their sexual scandals, but only one of them suffered for these gossips during their own lifetime.

Interestingly, the attacks for generic sexual misconduct are in decline in Russia today. Unlike the days of Rasputin and the Tsarina, there have been rumors for years that the then married President Putin was dating United Russia Member of Parliament and former Olympian gymnast Alina Kabaeva – and even that they had a child together. [181] Despite these allegations being denied by both parties they are likely not character attacks, but simply a source of gossip for those interested in Russia’s happenings as the Western press even carried stories and speculation as to the nature of their relationship. [182] However, these articles were not critical of Putin’s private life, nor do they seem to have an objective of destroying Putin’s reputation – but are simply relaying the latest pieces of gossip to their readers.

A more concrete and dangerous area for attack is that of perceived (or real) foreignness: Where do the victim’s loyalties lie, to the homeland, or to some foreign state? For the Tsarina, this took the form of gossip and non-seriousness. The Russian empire expanded and increased during her rule. The German-born Queen was able to lead the country to new heights – whereas the

government which was advised by Rasputin suffered greatly and eventually, disgracefully, quit the War under the Bolshevik leadership which had swept the Tsar from power. Also, the anti-government, anti-religious, and communist activities of Trotsky were in contradiction with traditional Russian society, and so by calling out the fact that he “isn’t one of us,” his opponents were able to diminish his standing within the larger Russian society. Likewise, in the case of Gorbachev, understanding him as not being a real Russian (or Soviet), but as a foreign agent, explains how and why the Soviet Union came crashing down under his watch.

The outcome in terms of attacks of foreignness between our case studies was also far different: The foreignness of the Tsarina may have been funny, in terms of her linguistic abilities or her personality, but she remained the queen who was actively expanding Russia. Cheap shots at her did not succeed and the mocking she faced because she was “not really Russian” did no long-term harm and did not hamper her quest to build the Russian empire. On the other hand, attacks against Rasputin’s character were successful as he was eventually viewed as such a grave threat to the nation and monarchy that aristocrats bodily assassinated him to remove his perceived corrupting influence from the royal family.

Unlike Rasputin, attacks against Trotsky did not affect his ability to maintain positions of serious prestige and importance within the Soviet’s bureaucratic structure but were only points of disparagement by his enemies to (unsuccessfully) discredit him as an opponent. The assertions that Putin was not really Russian, or was serving a foreign leader, sound far-fetched to a Russian ear. Though they are repeated frequently on various predominantly radical websites there is no widespread belief in this. Likewise, it is unlikely, given the few sites that it appears on, that a wide number of people in Russia believe that Gorbachev was really serving the Central Intelligence Agency, and not that he simply was unable to maintain control of the country and with poor management, the Soviet Union ceased to exist.

Similar to these attacks, are the recent increase of Russian attacks referring to someone as a “fascist.” Why this term has grown in popularity is debatable, but as above, it is likely related to the increased media coverage on fascist plots against Russia today. Also, like in the case of name-calling Putin or Medvedev a “moron,” it would be unlikely that those saying this actually believe the gentlemen to be daft. More than likely, it is a cheap shot whose connotation is immediately understood by those present and is treated as a cheap shot applying any other insulting term. Likewise, the same phenomena can probably be identified in the attacks against Putin and

Medvedev as “pedophiles,” which in Russian society is likely the most offensive term for someone. Rumors that either man maintains a pedophilic interest is certainly not widespread. But, like being a “moron,” it is an offensive cheap shot against the person being referenced that everyone who hears it will immediately understand. Equally, it is a reputational attack that if it catches on, is hard to extinguish.

Russia offers a wide number of examples of character attacks spanning hundreds of years. In all cases it is imperative to separate between those that are actual attacks against someone’s character versus those that are simply loose banter and gossip. People may gossip at any moment about the latest tabloid story or what they suppose the neighbor may be doing – but this does not mean that their objective is to wreck the other person and to remove them as a future threat. As stated earlier, it is vital that the objective of the allegations is understood in order to determine whether it is a legitimate character assassination.

2.3. Contradictions within American Approaches to Character Assassination in Politics

The specific of the practice of character assassination in United States politics became more visible after the comparative content analysis of the understanding of the aim and instruments of this approaches applied to social and political actions. According to the American *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines “character assassination” as being either “the act of saying false things about a person usually in order to make the public stop liking or trusting that person,” or as being “the slandering of a person usually with the intention of destroying public confidence in that person.” [59] In both cases, *Merriam-Webster* is careful to note the role that the larger society plays in the nature of character assassination: the public is the key factor, as they are the ones receiving the information disseminated during the attack and they are actors as they can choose to accept or reject the information.

Similarly, *The American Heritage Dictionary* lists “character assassination” as being the “malicious denunciation or slandering of another person, especially as part of an effort to ruin the reputation of a public figure.” [60] The *Random House Kernerman Webster’s College Dictionary*, writes that it is “a slandering attack, esp. intended to damage the reputation of a public or political figure.” [61] In both cases, it is noted that the person is typically a public personage. This also relates back to the idea that the public is not divorced from the attack, as the person being attacked is

someone whom they know. Moreover, the entire purpose of the attack is to sway the public's opinion about the attacked person.

A not legal, but scholarly, definition is provided by the *Political Research Quarterly's* report of the 1963 conference in San Diego, California. Bruce Felknor, formerly the Executive Director of the Fair Campaign Practices Committee and Chairman of the academic group Political Slander in Election Campaigns said in debating how to refer to smear tactics in campaigns, "dynamiting is a more explicit title than slander.... 'Slander' is inexact, for the most troublesome matter in our area is hard to deal with exactly because it is not slander or libel. 'Defamation' is too general. 'Innuendo' is too limited. 'Character assassination' is only older, no more scholarly or precise per se. You could say 'The destruction of political careers by sudden strategically timed publication of carefully researched, damaging, difficult-to-answer charges based upon selected excerpts from the truth'" [22, p.15]

The website *U. S. Legal* differs in how it defines character assassination in that it states that it is the "slandering or vicious personal verbal attack on a person with the intention of destroying or damaging that person's reputation or confidence." It contains, "malicious verbal assaults designed to damage or tarnish the reputation of a person," the effects of which "are often difficult to reverse or rectify. Therefore, it is likened to a literal assassination of a human life. The damage sustained can last a lifetime or, for historical figures and important personalities, for many centuries after their death."

U. S. Legal relates that most typically it is accomplished by "criticizing them in an unfair and dishonest way when they are not present. It can also involve exaggeration or manipulation of facts to present an untrue picture of the targeted person, double speak, spreading of rumors, innuendo or deliberate misinformation on topics relating to the subject's morals, integrity, and reputation. It is a form of defamation." [68]

In *A Law Dictionary: adapted to the Constitution and laws of the United States*, John Bouvier writes that it is slander if it is "defaming a man in his reputation by speaking or writing words which affect his life, office, or trade, or which tend to his loss of preferment in marriage or service, or in his inheritance, or which occasion any other particular damage." Bouvier notes that "in England, if slander be spoken of a peer, or other great man, it is called *Scandalum agnatum*," and that it is not slander, but rather "libel" if it is printed or otherwise written. Bouvier proposes that in determining if slander was committed, one must consider five factors, "1st. The nature of the

accusation. 2d. The falsity of the charge. 3d. The mode of publication. 4th. The occasion; and 5th. The malice or motive of the slander.” [69]

Overall, the definitions have more in common than not: dictionary definitions of “character assassination” almost universally have three components: 1. It is an attack of some kind of defamation, 2. It is intentional, 3. The intent is to damage the reputation of the person who is attacked. There is also a tendency to note that the person attacked is typically a public or political persona who is attacked before the public arena. [62]

That it is undertaken in the public arena, though not universally found in the definitions, is important as it cannot be defined as a legitimate character attack unless the population learns about it and is swayed by it. The result of a successful character attack is to ruin the reputation of the individual; not to offend that person personally, but rather to change the society’s view of him. It is not enough that the person attacked is offended, it is only a character assassination when the public reconsiders how it views this person.

Like Russia, character attacks as a means of reaching a political objective stretch back to the very foundation of the United States of America. Americans, like any other country with a competitive electoral system, fight with gusto to win their seats of power. As was cited earlier, the rise of political consultants in American political life have undoubtedly influenced the further spread and popularity of negative ads, comparison ads and character attacks: But how much of this is new? And how much of this goes back to the “good ole days” when American politics were “so much cleaner than today?” When did character attacks become a major instrument in American political life?

Character attacks go back to the very beginning of the country. As Eric Shiraev and Jason Smart write in *Character assassination throughout the Ages*, even America’s first President, General George Washington, was subjected to attacks against him using false statements created by the British. In what is likely one the first major example of character attacks being used against an American leader by a foreign adversary, Washington’s servant was captured by the British soldiers while supposedly in possession of a number of “personal letters” of George Washington where he explained his sorrow for having started a war against the great British king and saying that he felt there was no hope for a colonial victory.

The reality was that these letters were produced by enemies of Washington embarrass him. The objective of his opponents was to paint Washington as being cowardly and uncommitted to the

revolutionary cause. The hope in doing this was that it would create disarray and panic among the fledgling American cause. Though it quickly became clear that the letters were completely fabricated, the British disseminated them to a wide audience in order to increase the damage done to their nemesis.

The attacks against George Washington did not end with the British, but rather got even worse with attacks made against him by his fellow Americans. In 1795, the now President Washington was seeking to cut a deal with the British in order to improve relations between the two countries. The treaty being sought by Washington was very unpopular in some American circles and those who opposed it turned to character attacks against the President in order to fend-off the continuation of the treaty talks.

There were a wide number of tactics applied to making the attacks against Washington stick, and they eventually took their toll on him. As Shiraev and the author write, some of the attackers “turned to character attacks using newspapers and pamphlets in which they were calling Washington arrogant, self-loving, aloof, and selfish.” [21] Regarding him personally, they said that his character was “fraudulent”. They sought to drag him down personally in order to achieve their political objectives. We could argue that these were all character attacks, but not examples of successful character assassinations as few Americans today would think to call Washington “arrogant,” or “aloof.” Instead, he is revered as the “father of the country” who did a great deal to gain America’s independence from their British rulers. However, it is unclear to what degree these attacks effected Washington within his own lifetime.

Accusations that General Washington was pro-British began to circulate again once the recycled British forgeries from the Revolutionary War were widely republished. This was coupled with them referring to Washington as “a British sympathizer.” These are classic examples of the “divided loyalties” strategy where someone’s true interest and intent is questioned as it cannot be sure that he is a patriot to the mutual cause, or if he is serving some other master. By doing this, Washington was in a much harder position to argue for a treaty with the British as people had begun to hear and think that perhaps this was not in the United States’ interest but was a ploy to actually serve British interests. [21]

In the end, these attacks were effective in not destroying Washington, or stopping the treaty negotiations from proceeding, but they did greatly upset the President. As Shiraev writes, “The president tried to ignore this slanderous assault as he had done twenty years earlier. This time he

couldn't. Historians admit that as a victim of character attack, he felt increasingly helpless, angry, and embittered." [21] Fortunately for Washington, the attacks against him are now largely esoteric history and are left out of modern American school textbooks. Instead of being remembered as a traitor, Washington is commemorated as being America's first, and one of the finest, Presidents in the nation's history.

General Washington was faced with a decision that many political leaders have been forced to make over the millennia: By reacting to a character attack, will the leader in fact make his own situation worse, or will he regain his good name? How does he do it in an effective way that does not look contrived, and does not make the listener in fact begin to believe the rumors more? Moreover, how does someone know that the rumor about him is being widely believed by the public, and thus he must seek out a new, perhaps even radical, means of defending his reputation from further tarnishing?

Another risk when responding to an attack is that you could actually spread a rumor that most people are not aware of, to a larger audience. That is, if the public is unaware of the attack that has taken place and a leader comes out and defends himself, he is then introducing the general public to negative and potentially damaging information about himself unnecessarily. The irony is that though the leader is seeking to whitening his image and to clear his name, he is in fact self-inflicting a character attack on himself. Thus, a leader must be cognizant of how prevalent rumors resulting from an attack are in the public, among voters and not just the elite, before he seeks to "set the record straight."

In the same era as General George Washington, other American founding fathers, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson (the second and third presidents of the country, respectively), had a notoriously stormy relationship. This did not improve during their re-match during the 1800 Presidential campaign between Adams and Jefferson. Adams had already served for four years as the American President and was challenged (for a second time) by Thomas Jefferson. This time, Thomas Jefferson was absolutely determined to beat Adams, no matter what the cost. Jefferson went to such lengths to attack his opponent that still today it is cited as one of the most brutal contests for the presidency that the United States has ever faced.

Famously, as Shiraev and the author wrote, Jefferson hired (perhaps the first) American political attack dog – James Callender. Callender had risen to fame as a publisher of political tracts and other pieces of persuasion. Jefferson explained to Callender that this time he needed to win and

would finance a negative campaign against Adams based on dubious, if not outright lies, using the common tactic of name-calling. That is, the person who wrote the Declaration of Independence and would eventually become the President, paid someone to deliberately mock and insult the sitting President in order to lower his popularity with the public.

James Callender's publications were quite mean spirited and wasted no time in attacking the President. One of the publications referred to the President as a "hideous hermaphroditical character, which has neither the force nor firmness of a man, nor the gentleness and sensibility of a woman." Moreover, Callender continued his attacks and called Adams "...a fool, a hypocrite, a criminal, and a tyrant." The very personal nature of the salacious attacks would have been large news stories for the intrigued public.

President Adams did not take well to this and decided to refer to Jefferson as a "a weakling, an atheist, a libertine, and a coward," at another juncture Adams' team said that Jefferson was a "liar" and "an anarchist." Jefferson was also referred to as "mean-spirited, low-lived fellow, the son of a half-breed Indian squaw, sired by a Virginia mulatto father." An opposition newspaper proclaimed that if Jefferson were to become the next president, then certainly "Murder, robbery, rape, adultery, and incest will be openly taught and practiced, the air will be rent with the cries of the distressed, the soil will be soaked with blood, and the nation black with crimes."

Attacking Jefferson's mother, father, character, religious persuasion, ethnic origin and disposition was just part of Adams' attempt to tear down his opponent in order to secure another four-year term as the nation's chief executive officer. Unfortunately for President Adams, despite his unrestrained effort to destroy his adversary, he lost the election to the third President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson.

President Adams likely lost re-election for a number of reasons, and not only because of the attacks on him organized by his successor to the nation's highest office. However, this well illustrates the historically important role that character assassination and character attacks have played in American politics for hundreds of years. As this is a common (though few would say "accepted") part of the American political discourse, we must ask to what degree it has conditioned the American public, especially voters, into thinking that there is always a darker side to every candidate and that instead of debating ideas, it is tolerable that candidates simply seek to destroy each other's reputation on a personal level.

Before analyzing how a foreign press attacks a foreign country's leadership, we should have

a clear understanding of what kinds of attacks were most common against that leader by his own nation's press. The most popular tactics are cheap shots which represents as it was mentioned before a relatively simple yet potentially harmful form of attack which raises an episode, an action, a statement, or a biographical fact in the life of a politician that alludes to the person's individual features including but not limited to his or her credibility, honesty, integrity, generosity, or decency. Such attacks can be either deliberate or spontaneous. Cheap shots occur in the context of certain political, social, or economic circumstances, but for the attackers their target is the opponent's character. "Character defenders" face a difficult dilemma: to ignore the cheap shots or address them. A reasonable course of action would be to simply ignore them, especially if they are untrue. Yet defenders who do not pay attention to the attacks may appear weak or frightened to respond. They also may look as if they are hiding something. Those launching cheap shots are trying to annoy and distract their opponents, and perhaps cause them to overreact. To illustrate, negative rumors were circulating in 1987 about presidential candidate Michael Dukakis's alleged mental health problems. In 1991, presidential candidate Bill Clinton was openly mocked for his adulterous past. Both candidates had to spend significant time defending themselves against the rumors. This took significant time away from campaigning. Cheap shots are usually brief and often appear spontaneous (which they may or may not be). They include critical remarks like name-calling, insulting, ridiculing, and spreading rumors. [21]

Another example is when Hillary Clinton was the first lady in the 1990s, rumors circulated about her promiscuous yet deadly management style: she was rumored to have a male lover, Vincent Foster, who had been a White House council and—also allegedly—had been murdered under her orders. These rumors were *falsifications*. These types of attacks are usually planned and tend to be more sophisticated than cheap shots. Falsifications are lies. Yet because they often difficult to immediately distinguish from facts, falsifications are often a potent weapon for character assassins. They use falsifications to associate the victim's character with certain alleged immoral or inappropriate acts. Character attackers often use falsifications about presidents or candidates having inappropriate connections or ties with certain "undesirable" political groups or countries. For example, in the past an alleged association with communists ruined many people's professional careers in the United States. In 1944 supporters of presidential candidate Thomas Dewey attempted to associate Vice President Harry Truman with Sidney Hillman, a labor leader and an alleged agent of the Communist Party. By making such accusations, Dewey's supporters hoped to provoke

popular dismay and disappointment among voters towards Truman. [21]

Thereafter, we can analyze the attacks against different American leaders in light of the gravity of the attacks made against him by his own people. To do this, we will look at the attacks made against George W. Bush and Barack Obama, as we have already looked at the attacks against Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev.

Attacks made against George W. Bush, cheap shots during the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections were frequent. Many aspects of his life were brought into question and old rumors about him were recycled. Specifically, attacks about his alcohol dependency, [183] and even assertions that he had forced an underage lover to have an abortion [184] were made into news stories by those who opposed his candidacy. His arrest nearly a quarter-of-a-century before for a drunk driving charge was also dug-up and released to the press just days before the elections. [185] His less-than-stellar performance in school and university [186] was also brought to the public's attention as were assertions that he had only gotten into good undergraduate and graduate universities due to familial connections. [187] This is worth noting as a frequent attack (seen later in this dissertation) by both the Russian and American press was in questioning how intelligent President Bush is and whether he had the intellectual capacity to lead the country.

The mental capabilities of George W Bush were a particularly common source of attack (and humor) during his entire time in the White House. *Urban Dictionary*, a user edited dictionary of slang terms, defines George W. Bush as “One of the most retarded presidents in American history. Went to school and tried to become a master locksmith but was too stupid and his dad paid off his teachers.” [188] Cartoons depicting Bush as a clueless monkey accompanied the very common attacks on his supposed lack of intelligence or dimwittedness. His public misspeaking gave rise to not only jokes but lists of misquotes that were frequently quoted as evidence to his lack of intelligence. [189] Some went so far as to say his stupidity was part of the larger 9/11 conspiracy as only such a moron could have the whole disaster occur and not pick-up on it. [190] Some even joked that his own family would acknowledge that he was “an idiot.” [191]

During the Vietnam War, President George W. Bush avoided being drafted in the military by joining the Texas Air National Guard. This proved to be controversial as not only had he not met all the requirements needed for this post but had also seemingly gone absent without leave (AWOL) from military drill training. As the United States moved to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, Bush was routinely mocked for his own lack of military service and “readiness” to send young men off to die

whereas he had dodged the draft; this was popularly called being a “chickenhawk.” Dozens of images came out mocking Bush and the hawkish senior members of his cabinet’s support for the invasion of the country. [192]

One of the images shows George W. Bush’s head on a chicken’s body with oil rigs and cocaine in the background; surrounding the image are texts describing Bush’s “cocaine addiction,” “AWOL, draft dodger status, “crook,” and “lying drunk driver.” [193] Another showed him before the White House with a can of “white meat: Chicken hawk” before him. [194] Two others play on the title of movies, one as “Chickenhawk down: He likes to play soldier,” [195] a play on the title of the movie “Black Hawk Down”, the other of "We had other priorities: George W. Bush and Dick Cheney", in "We weren't soldiers: Waging war for oil worldwide in 2002", playing on the film “We were soldiers then.” [196]

These attacks on President Bush’s former military service, like other attacks on a person’s loyalty, are quite effective as its intent is not to simply mock the President, but to raise doubts in the minds of voters as to whether someone who himself skipped the draft has the moral authority to send other people’s sons off to war in foreign lands. It is very difficult for a politician facing this kind of attack to argue that he “always has the best interest of the nation in his heart” when he himself chose the easier path and evaded doing his duty for the nation. Moreover, a politician seeking to defend himself from these kinds of attacks faces a very serious risk of opening himself to further attacks of being a “hypocrite” for saying one thing is good for others (go to the military), whereas he does something else (dodges the draft).

The attacks against President George W. Bush’s military service reached a fevered pitch during his reelection campaign in 2004 when CBS’ *60 Minutes II*’s Dan Rather ran a story contending that George W. Bush had not fulfilled his duty to the Texas Air National Guard. Specifically, the documents alleged that Bush had failed to report to military service and had used the power of his influential family to edit his military records in order to put his lack of service in a better light. Despite the initial brouhaha that there was now clear proof that the President had poorly served his country in the National Guard, within a short period of time it became clear that the documents were forgeries. CBS News ended-up investigating then terminating some of the journalists involved in not fact-checking the documents. [197;198]

Though the attack failed, had it worked it would have been a massive blow to George W. Bush. As such, it was a very well-done character assassination attempt, similar to the one against

George Washington which also sought to sow doubts over his patriotism and to bring him down. However, in this case as in the Washington case, the truth won and the forged documents were discovered, saving the leader from shame. Had the Bush documents not been uncovered as forgeries and had succeeded, it would have certainly been a classic form of character assassination by a political opponent as the intent was his downfall (not mere gossip), it was planned in advance and the likely impact would have been grave for Bush's chance of reelection.

From another side, attacks against President Barack Obama began before his first day in the White House. Every aspect of Obama's life was open to attacks, no matter how personal – especially against his mother and father. According to Shiraev, Obama's father – a Kenyan national who had studied at Harvard – was attacked as being a terrorist and as a communist. The fact that the father was an African (and an outsider) was frequently brought to the public's attention. Barack's photos from his trip to his father's native Kenya, dressed in traditional clothing, was used to suggest that he was really a Muslim. Even Obama's decision to not wear an American flag pin was brought up as an example that he did not really love America. Incredibly, a wide number of stories circulated purporting that Obama was in fact born in Kenya, not the U. S., which would have made him ineligible to serve as the nation's President as he would not have been a “naturally born citizen” as required by the U. S. Constitution. [199] As we have seen before, the “foreignness” factor is large component of character attacks. Convincing supporters that their candidate is “not one of ours” is a common tactic.

His mother was attacked via name-calling as being a communist and a hippie; and accusations were leveled that she had posed for pornography and had fathered Obama with another man. [200] Her upbringing of Obama in several different countries, unusual for most Americans, was brought under the microscope and his Indonesian step-father's Muslim religiosity was a source of attack and conversation as people debated whether Obama had been raised as a Muslim. [201] Everything about Obama's background was scrutinized through the prism of being “different” and “foreign” from “normal” Americans. It did not help that the alleged association that Obama's father and mother had with the far left, which had not been popular in the United States, was a constant source of attack against Obama.

As Shiraev and Smart write:

“Obama appeared as a “communist” or a “socialist” or a “leftist”. Caricatures and profiles of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao and Obama together were commonplace. The captions such as

“spreading wealth since 1917” pointed at him as a socialist (and referring to the Russian revolution of that year). There were pictures of Obama as a Soviet General in Red Square [202] or as a Soviet propagandist. Obama dressed in the Nazi uniform shouldn’t be surprising (his predecessor Bush was customary labeled this way). Depictions appeared of Obama as an SS Officer, Obama associated with Hitler, as a Brown Shirt, as a Brown Shirt leader and as Hitler himself. A Google search for Barack Obama gets 12,100,000 hits for “Barack Obama is a fascist” and 1,250,000 hits for “Barack Obama is a communist.” [21]

While Obama’s popularity skyrocketed and the intense support that he gained nationally intensified, mocking how “great” Obama was a common source of attack. Shiraev and Smart’s experiment using Google search results found that for the sequence “Obama + *messiah*,” there were almost 23 million references. To put this into context, doing the exact same search for “Clinton + *Messiah*” registered only two-and-a-half million hits. Obama was attacked on all sides for an incredible number of reasons. Aside from the attacks against his family, he was accused of being both an atheist and a Muslim; as being communist and a fascist; and as being too arrogant as well as not qualified.

A common part of campaign strategy is to look at any positive that one’s opponent has and to try to turn it into a negative. As was earlier mentioned, in the case of Obama this was done by mocking how popular he was and by saying that he was godlike. Likewise, the case of US Senator John Kerry faced a similar fate in 2004 when his military record – a crucial part of his background that differed him from President George W Bush – was called into question and he was attacked as having been self-serving, dishonest and a general fraud during his time as a military officer in the Vietnam War more than thirty years before.

Despite all of these charges, one of the most successful attempted character assassinations of Barack Obama was the “birther” allegation in 2008. The birther conspiracy was a rumor that Obama had not been born in the United States, and thereby ineligible to run for President as the Constitution stipulates that the President must be a “natural born citizen” – which many (erroneously) understand to mean “physically born in the territory of the United States.” These allegations largely fell to the wayside after Obama was able to produce a birth certificate showing that he had been born in Hawaii, not his father’s native Kenya. [203] Had Obama not been able to dissuade people from this conspiracy, it posed a very serious risk of character assassination as not being born in the U. S. would not only sidetrack Obama’s quest for the White House, but would permanently disqualify him

from seeking the office.

In the case of the then American President, Barack Obama, we see that the intensity of attacks against public leaders has greatly increased. This is probably for several reasons, including that given the rise of electronic communication it is readily possible for most anyone to disseminate their views and beliefs, no matter how uncommon or radical. Obama had been, at the time of his election, likely the most defamed and attacked person to ever assume the presidency, but as we have seen, he is certainly not going to be the last politician to face such scrutiny. One should understand that when entering the public arena – or seeking to fight for power – there are few limits on what people will do to make sure that they lose.

In all five cases of American presidents – George Washington, Thomas Jefferson vs. John Adams, George W. Bush and Barack Obama – we see strong similarities, but also large differences. In all three cases charges regarding the actual character of the man was brought into question: Is he a “real man”, or cowardly and weak? Is he honest, or not? These kinds of charges are very common in political attacks and are some of the most basic. Interestingly, sexual misconduct was alleged only in the case of Thomas Jefferson who was accused as having slept with one of his female slaves. The religiosity of both Obama and Jefferson was brought into question by opponents as to his sincerity, and whether he was Christian.

Another common feature between the attacks are those about the perceived “Americanness” of the men. In the case of Jefferson, it was subtler, but for Obama and Washington it was particularly clear and overt. General Washington had false evidence planted about him that he was serving the British. The objective of his attackers was very clear: To cause those around him to lose faith in him and to encourage his followers to become disheartened. The first time that the attacks arose, during the Revolutionary War, had the attacks succeeded, they would have dealt a spectacular blow to the fledgling nation. This is an excellent example of a carefully plotted and organized character assassination attempt that failed, but was successful as a character attack, as it caused a great deal of problems for Washington during that period of time.

Commentary about President Obama being raised in foreign countries and having relatives who are not from the United States, contributed to questions on how “American” he was – topped off by the scandal surrounding whether he was even born in the United States. In the case of Jefferson, this took the form of accusations of being mixed race, which for the late 1700s upper-class whites would have been tantamount to being foreign and “not one of them.” These attacks are

a common theme that frequently repeat themselves throughout US history – and as this dissertation discusses – throughout the course of Russian history, too.

The actual “Americanness” of George W. Bush is very hard to call into question given his lineage that includes a former Senator and President, but as the President of a country at war, casting doubt his patriotism and bravery in defending America is a serious charge. President Bush was sending Americans to die for their country and if it was shown that he himself was not willing to die for his country – what moral position did he have to lead others? This was an attempt at character attack that at least partially worked given the tremendous amount of “chicken-hawk” material produced about him. He is an outlier among these examples as he is the only one who has been attacked for this specific charge, though it was a very similar story as to the claims made about President Bill Clinton’s military service.

The difference, as earlier mentioned, is in the intensity of the attacks. Though today’s attacks are more ferocious, and constant, it is likely a factor of the rise of digital technologies, especially internet, that allow most anyone to have a platform to voice their views and to start scandals. The use of state medias in the U. S. cases is nonexistent (as the U. S. does not have widespread state-owned television networks). But the use of private attack dogs, who are willing to destroy a common opponent, has been widespread in American society since the very beginning of the country – and it seems it will remain for a long time coming.

The Russian and American examples of character attacks and attempted character assassinations both offer interesting insights into the social psyche of the countries: What issues are the most “hot button” and likely to create an explosion within politics? Why choose one issue over another? How does one know what issues are likely to be the most effective in changing the population’s views? These questions are carefully weighed by those who launch an effective character attack. Those who haphazardly throughout accusations are unlikely to destroy their opponent – and may in fact end up hurting themselves by being exposed.

The Russian and American examples both show that, with national political leaders, questioning their allegiance to the country, or how “national” vs. “foreign” they are is important. People do not want leaders who are not fully invested in the country’s future. Citizens want leaders who are going to uphold the best interests of the nation without divided loyalties. Hence, when the draft records of people (i.e. George W Bush and Bill Clinton) are examined, the larger question is not simply “Did they dodge the draft?” it is “How committed are they to our country, if they are not

even willing to serve in its armed services?”

Interesting to note is that in the successful character attacks there was some preconceived “element of truth.” In the case of the Tsaritsa, her sexual promiscuity is documented; so, if she has had several lovers, it is easier to believe that she may have adopted another or had become fully sex-crazed and copulated with horses. Likewise, in the case of Washington, though fake, letters existed which may have acted as “proof” to convince those who already were open to believing that he was working against his own Army – or that there really was no hope for independence and it was better to quit. Likewise, when reading the background of Obama’s parents, they were factually oriented towards the political left, and his biological father had been raised Muslim and his Indonesian step-father had been a practicing Muslim, so would it have been so unusual that they raised their son in the things that they held to be important - namely Islam and far left beliefs?

This is called “priming” of the population for a character attack. [204] That is, the population usually must be open to an idea in order for it to be considered. For this reason, someone who has had routine accusations leveled against him is more likely to fall in a scandal than someone whose image is completely clean. This is clear in the case of George W. Bush’s military record which had already been discussed for four years: documents “finally” arriving that “proved” his lack of service was something that the journalists were primed to expect to find. Likewise, the historically strong Russian open-mindedness to conspiracy theories allows for assertions that Putin is serving some secondary interest to fester.

Likewise, it is a conspiracy theory - which might also hold elements of a character attack or be part of a character assassination plot - if there is reference to an international, centuries old plot that is secretly controlling world events. It would not be a conspiracy theory that Obama was born in Kenya, as it does not meet the definition of being centuries old. Likewise, Rasputin’s alleged love of debauchery does not constitute him being part of a global conspiracy. Equally, accusations of George Washington’s treachery do not demonstrate that he is somehow in league with multiple actors working to protect the interests of a small few over generations. However, Trotsky or Putin being accused of being part of the multigenerational, secretive plot of Jewish leaders controlling world events is part of a conspiracy theory that also attacks their character as they cannot be impartial national leaders of the if their actual purpose is to not lead the country, but rather to fulfill their assigned duties to their co-conspirators.

Therefore, the case against Leon Trotsky was an outlier as he was attacked so savagely for

being Jewish, which fit into the larger narrative of many in the White Army that there was some sort of Jewish conspiracy against their monarchical, Orthodox country. The same can be said about the anti-Semitic attacks against Vladimir Putin. Nonetheless, the actual tactics used to attack both men were the same as with everyone else: Rumors, images/graphics and other things that the common man could understand.

An aspect of character assassinations in the United States and around the world is that the attack must be not only understandable to the average “man on the street,” but must also be interesting for him. No matter how truthfully based an attack is, if it is boring, or not easily comprehensible for the masses, then the attack will fail. This is likely the reason that attackers typically fall back on the same few themes (e.g. loyalty, sex, corruption, etc.) as they are things that even the most out-of-touch voter can readily understand and despise. As was operationalized earlier in this dissertation, attacks must have not only an attacker and a victim, but also an audience. The audience must understand the show if the show is going to be a success.

That is why a character assassination can still be successful if it is highly complex, but for a specific audience. An example might be palace intrigues at the White House where one employee concocts an attempt to character assassinate their colleague by spreading rumors that she created a conflict of interest by sleeping with someone else at the office – thus jeopardizing the stability of the office. Though this story would not be of interest to the general US public, it could in fact be of interest to the security at the White House who could decide to revoke her security clearances or to allow her to continue her job. Thus, a character attack must always keep in mind what the objective of the attacker is and for which audience he is playing.

The United States and Russia have long histories of character attacks, cheap shots, name-calling and attempted character assassinations. In both cases, we will see that the national populations are open to hearing new allegations about foreign leaders and are willing to try to destroy their opponents via character attacks when it is politically expedient. Importantly, we will see that character assassination is a means for a country to sway both its own and foreign citizens’ views.

2.4. Conclusions to Chapter 2

Conclusions on how character assassination has evolved in the American and Russian traditions:

1. The application of the research's methodology to the phenomena of character assassination helped to compare both Russian and American traditions of character attacks, and gave the prerequisites to the analytic study of the "modern" character assassination, which will be described with the use of elements of such methods as discourse analysis and ethnographic content analysis. It also has been shown that the typology of character attacks consists of three main types: cheap shots, falsifications and direct character assassination attempts.

2. Specific to the context of Russia in this chapter, it is interesting that despite a strong history of using generic, heterosexual misconduct as a means to attack someone, these types of attack are now in decline today in Russia. Though, historically and today, the more concrete and dangerous area for attack is that of foreignness. The outcome in terms of attacks of foreignness between our case studies was also far different: the foreignness of the Tsarina may have been funny, in terms of her linguistic abilities or her personality, but she remained the Tsarina who was actively expanding Russia. Cheap shots at her did not succeed and the mocking she faced because she was "not really Russian" did no long-term harm and did not hamper her quest to build the Russian empire. On the other hand, attacks against Rasputin's character were successful as not only was he perceived as so diabolical that a posse mustered to murder him, but that today rumors about his licentiousness still continue to swirl whenever his name comes into conversation.

3. Traditional forms of Russian character assassination is contrasted to the American forms over the cases of five American presidents – George Washington, Thomas Jefferson vs John Adams, George W. Bush and Barack Obama – we see strong similarities, but also large differences. In all three cases charges regarding the actual character of the man involved, and questions of whether he was a "real man," or cowardly and weak; honest, or not. These kinds of charges are very common in political attacks and are some of the most basic. Interestingly, sexual misconduct was alleged only found in the case of Thomas Jefferson. However, opponents of Obama and Jefferson attacked their religiosity multiple during their careers.

Another common feature between the attacks are those about the perceived "Americanness" of the men. For example, in the case of Jefferson, it was subtler, but for Obama and Washington it

was particularly clear and overt. The objective of his attackers was obvious to any audience: To cause those around him to lose faith in him and to drive his followers to becoming disheartened.

4. The contrast of the Russian and American examples show that with national political leaders, questioning their allegiance to the country, or how “national” vs. “foreign” they are is an important form of attack as people do not want leaders who are not fully invested in the country’s future: Citizens want leaders who are going to uphold the best interests of the nation without divided loyalties. Likewise, it is a conspiracy theory - which might also hold elements of a character attack or be part of a character assassination plot - if there is reference to an international, centuries old plot that is secretly controlling world events, so this concept should also be closely examined while studying the character assassination topics.

The United States and Russia have long histories of character attacks, cheap shots, name-calling and attempted character assassinations. In both cases, that the national populations are open to hearing new allegations about foreign leaders and are willing to try to destroy their opponents via character attacks when it is politically expedient. Importantly, as a conclusion, character assassination is a means for a country to sway both its own and foreign citizens’ views.

3. CHARACTER ASSASSINATION STRATEGIES AND INSTRUMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

Character assassination was and remains a tool in intrastate politics, but in 21 century it has become a common, and perhaps even necessary, method of competition on the international political level. This chapter provides examples of character attack applications between countries and their leadership and what precipitated these attacks.

By performing a comparative case-study, along with the use of different quantitative and qualitative methods, this chapter is the analytical and prognostic application for testing the hypothesis, namely the there is a relationship between the worsening of political relations between country and an increase of attacks against the reputation of the other government's leaders. Character assassination is also regarded in the scope of new trends, thus regarding it in mass media and nongovernmental actions that effect public beliefs and behavior.

In the first subchapter explores the similarities, differences and current trends in character assassination. The purpose of this subchapter is to conduct a methodological analysis of the main problems of the study, and to identify the systemic causes for them, and to reach conclusions that will be tested against the dissertation's hypothesis. The methodology is carried out during both warm and cool periods in U. S. – Russian relations. Character attacks are analyzed in both the “warm” and “cool” periods of bilateral relations using examples of attacks on each country's leaders' personas to see the degree that character attacks were present. This analysis covers each period of time with the intent of understanding what preceded and succeeded the attacks.

The second subchapter analyzes the evolution of character assassination from intrastate politics to the interstate level. This subchapter is amended by case studies of character attacks on Russian and American presidents overall and during the determined time periods with the help of content analysis of online sources (Google Analytics) and elements of discourse and ethnographical content analysis in order to show the difference between the frequency and content of attacks in times of “warm” and “cool” relationships between countries.

The third subchapter describes the media nature of the phenomenon of character assassination, supplied by the analysis of differences of the presentation of character attacks in Russian and American press, thereby analyzing resources and instruments of the character assassination.

3.1. Character Assassination in the Foreign Policy of the U. S. A. and the Russian Federation

The relationship between the United States of America and Russian Federation has a long history of ups and downs. All of the successes and failures of almost three decades, from the collapse of U. S. S. R. and on, were carefully analyzed and demonstrated in a graph (see Appendix 3.1). There were several long-term “warm” and “cool” periods in the two countries’ relations. For this dissertation the periods from 2001 to 2003 was defined as a “warm” period, and 2003 to 2005 was determined to be a “cool” period.

There were several reasons why these time periods were selected: Firstly, the “warm” and “cool” periods happened successively, which can give more causal conclusions. Secondly, the 2003-2008 period is the first long-term “cool” period since the collapse of the U. S. S. R. Thirdly, during the presidencies of George H. W. Bush, Boris Yeltsin and Bill Clinton, most of the governmental decisions and actions were regarded as “warm” or neutral, and the period of the presidencies of George Bush, Jr. and Vladimir V. Putin has a strong contrast between the beginning, middle and end. Fourthly, the chosen periods cover the first elections of both G. W. Bush and V. V. Putin, and their presidencies almost coincided. Fifthly, information about the states’ relationship and the attitudes toward presidents after the 2000 can be found on the Internet more easily, than, for example, for the period of 1990s. Sixth, enough time has passed from the analyzed periods to make conclusions and not to be influenced by recent situational discourse, helping the research be more objective.

The main goal of this dissertation is to comparatively and systematically investigate the theoretical basis of the character attacks’ nature, role and instruments in international relations, thus evaluating the effects and degree of intentional character assassination attempts launched against the other country’s leadership in the 20th century in order evaluate the degree to which each country uses character attacks against the other country’s leadership in the context of contemporary U. S.-Russian relationship.

The communication and overall relationship of President George Walker Bush and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin was built on personal warmth and comfort with each other. This even became a point of ridicule as the two were so apparently close. During their eight years of working together, this eventually changed. Their relationship eventually became one noted for its difficulty

and misunderstandings of each other. What has not yet been studied is the role the media played in building up this relationship, and then on pulling it down. This research asks if there was an attempt to attack the opposing president by foreign press whilst relations between the two men tumbled?

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, there has been the perception of competition between the United States and Russia over control of the post-Socialist Eastern Europe. Much of this relates back to the issue of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) expansion [211] (the full list of sources analyzed in Chapter 3 can be seen in Appendix 3.14) and to missile defense shields in Romania and Poland. [212] The current situation between the countries is particularly acute due to the Russian-backed attacks and invasion of Ukraine, including the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014. [213] Despite these “cold” moments, not all of the past quarter-century has been so tumultuous. This paper will examine the period of time between 2001 and early 2003 when Presidents Bush and Putin enjoyed a close working relationship.

Time Magazine wrote that following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, at President Bush’s behest, Putin helped to create “a bond unlike any the U. S. and Russia had built since World War II.” [214] On the one-year anniversary of the attacks, on September 11, 2002, President Putin called President Bush to commemorate the tragedy. The Kremlin summarized this phone call by noting Putin’s view that “On this day I wish to say words of condolence to you, to express not only sympathy, but also the support of the Russian people for the American people.”

The press release continued that “Mr. Bush stressed that Mr. Putin was the first head of state to telephone him on the tragic day a year before. Mr. Bush said it was significant that today, too, on the day of remembrance, the Russian leader was again the first to convey words of sympathy and support to the American people.” [215]

This was not the first time that Russia had reached out an olive branch to the American people in relation to 9-11. Immediately after the attack, as White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card said, “One of the president’s first thoughts, [on the emergency evacuation flight on Air Force One] from Sarasota to Barksdale, was Vladimir Putin.” [228] The question in terms of Putin was whether he may perceive the United States’ intensification of military alertness as the beginning of a military strategy against Russia.

Ari Fleischer, then White House Press Secretary for President George W. Bush said, “Putin was fantastic that day. He was a different Vladimir Putin in 2001. America could have had no better ally on September 11th than Russia and Putin.” [228]

This sentiment was echoed by Assistant White House Press Secretary Gordon Johndroe. “[Putin] was important—all these military systems were all put in place for nuclear alerts. If we went on alert, we needed Putin to know that we weren’t readying an attack on Russia. He was great—he said immediately that Russia wouldn’t respond, Russia would stand down, that he understood we were under attack and needed to be on alert.” [228]

To the relief of the Americans, within an hour and a half of the beginning of the September 11, 2001 attack against the United States, Russia called off all its military exercises planned for the Pacific, Artic Sea and North Atlantic. [216]

Russia went on to take the unprecedented action of supporting the United States’ movement of bases into the former Soviet territory, specifically in Central Asia. To boot, Russia allowed for the transit of materials to support the American coalition’s war efforts in Afghanistan. [214]

However, it remains debatable as if September 11, 2001 was actually a “turning point” for Russia, or if Putin was cynically, opportunistically using the occasion to promote his self-interest. Dmitri Trenin of the Moscow Carnegie Center stated that "I think what [Putin] did was a revolution in terms of Russia's foreign policy... But that revolution did not happen overnight and it did not happen because of September 11. He used, he seized upon September 11 as an opportunity to leapfrog in his foreign policy, the outlines of which by that time had been complete... It's not that he wants to be friends with the U. S. for friendship's sake, he does it for Russia's sake -- as he sees it..." [217]

Alternatively, Dr. Michael McFaul, leading American expert on Russia, then Professor at Stanford University and later U. S. Ambassador to Moscow under President Barack Obama certainly viewed this era with great optimism. McFaul notes that on September 24, 2001, President Putin outlined a five-point plan of how Russia and the United States could collaborate in this new era. Putin’s five points were “(1) share intelligence with their American counterparts, (2) open Russian airspace for flights providing humanitarian assistance (3) cooperate with Russia's Central Asian allies to provide similar kinds of airspace access to American flights, (4) participate in international search and rescue efforts, and (5) increase direct assistance -humanitarian as well as military assistance -- to the Northern Alliance and the Rabbani government in Afghanistan.” [218]

M. McFaul continues that the Bush White House reciprocated the favor by publicly acknowledging what the Bill Clinton White House had done earlier: That Islamic Chechen separatist groups had ties to Al Qaeda and other radical organizations. [218] Some made the

argument that Russia's definition of terrorism was different from the United States, as the terror typically related to Russia's ongoing headache of Chechnya and the conflict there. [219]

The defrosting of relations extended not only to the official level, but seemingly also the personal level. The official press release from the Kremlin, dated November 15, 2001, in regards to the time spent together by President Bush and President Putin at the American President's Prairie Chapel Ranch in Crawford, Texas is surprisingly intimate. It is clear from the text that the Kremlin was intentionally pointing out that the two men were close friends. The colloquial English used in the text is unique for such an official means of communication – but it is undoubtedly also part of the effort to show how warm, friendly and “neighborly” the relationship had become. The press release reads in those parts:

“After breakfast at the Prairie Chapel Ranch, the Presidents had a morning stroll and a private talk... When answering students' questions, George Bush said that the better the Presidents got to know each other, the more he was convinced that their joint work could be extremely positive. Their personal friendship and contribution to the development of Russian-American relations would live longer than their terms in office.” [220]

“George Bush also said that he had accepted Vladimir Putin's invitation to visit Russia. He added that the exact date for the visit had not yet been fixed but he believed it would be a very important visit.” [220]

“Vladimir Putin asked American students whether they wanted George Bush to visit Russia and they answered “Yes” in unison.” [220]

Later during the same state visit, Putin and Bush flew to New York to honor the victims of September 11, 2001. Again, it was unlikely a coincidence that the official press release of the Kremlin was so abundantly warm and positive towards U. S. – Russian relations and showed Putin as a man so personally close and concerned for the well-being of the United States. The press release reads:

“Mr. Putin laid a wreath of red, blue and white flowers — the colours of the Russian and U. S. flags—and wrote on the wall: “I bow to the victims' memory, and admire New Yorkers' courage. The great city and the great American nation will win!!! Vladimir Putin, November 15, 2001.” [221]

The Economist noted that “America's relations with Russia are now better than at any time since the end of the second world war and are improving,” and continued that, “Mr. Bush's warmer

feelings for Mr. Putin cannot be explained solely by Russia's exemplary behavior after September 11th. Mr. Putin certainly won points by refusing to kick up a fuss about either American bases in Central Asia, or Mr. Bush's withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty.” [222] *The Economist* argues that the relationship's improvement was due to a number of factors, but that the Americans were the ones responsible for deciding to be more open and warmer with the Russian; whereas during this same time American – European relations were not doing nearly as well.

To top-off the closeness of the personal relationship apparently felt between the two men, the Guardian wrote on May 20, 2002, in an article titled “Bush's love of Pootie-Poot Putin” that, “At a historic summit in Moscow this week, President George Bush will mark what he claims is the final putting to rest of the cold war, by shaking hands with his new best friend, Pootie-Poot [Vladimir Putin].” [223] The press was not inherently pro-Bush, nor pro-Putin, but there was clearly a sense that their relationship was intensely warm. Citing the American President's “pet name” for Mr. Putin is indicative that Mr. Bush felt that their relationship was “ready for that level of intimacy.”

By October 2004, George W. Bush was facing a challenging election against then U. S. Senator, and later Secretary of State, John Kerry. The U. S. invasion of Iraq the year before was a central point of focus during the elections. It was also a major point of contention as friends of the United States, such as France and Russia, opposed the war. [224]

President Putin stated publicly in 2004 that, “The use of force abroad, according to existing international laws, can only be sanctioned by the United Nations. This is the international law. Everything that is done without the UN Security Council's sanction cannot be recognized as fair or justified.” Putin continued that, “We do not want the United States to lose their war on terrorism. We are U. S. partners in the fight against terrorism. But as for Iraq, this is a separate matter. There were no international terrorists under Hussein. This is a separate problem...” [225]

Moreover, during a visit to Kazakhstan in mid-June 2004, Putin made the startling assertion that the Russian Federation had warned the United States of potential terror attacks before the September 11 attacks. [225] Nonetheless, Vladimir Putin expressed support for President Bush and wished him well in the elections. Putin in reference to a major terror attack that had occurred the day before in Iraq, stated “I can confirm that after the events of September 11, 2001, and up to the military operation in Iraq, Russian special services and Russian intelligence several times received ... information that official organs of Saddam's regime were preparing terrorist acts on the territory

of the United States and beyond its borders, at U. S. military and civilian locations... Any unbiased observer understands that attacks of international terrorist organizations in Iraq, especially nowadays, are targeted not only and not so much against the international coalition as against President Bush..." [226]

The lead-up and launch of the war brought an end to the close Bush – Putin friendship. There were few high-points to come in future Russian - American collaboration after the start of the 2004 invasion of Iraq. From then on Russia adopted a much harsher tone towards the United States, and the United States became a more frequent critic of Russia, specifically in the spheres of human rights and democracy.

But the relationship between the two presidents did not have “staying power” and eventually declined. In the anticipation of the Iraq-American war in 2003 the press started to cover events relevant to diplomatic relations actively. After the statements about Russian military supplies for Iraq, which came from the U. S. side, the President of Russian Federation Vladimir Putin stated that those are “public and unsubstantiated allegations that can only damage relations between the two countries,” [229] foreshadowing the decline in Russian-American relations.

Jack Lule, in his article “War and its metaphors: news language and the prelude to war in Iraq, 2003” [230] said that as the war was inevitable, the U. S. had to prepare for it both militarily and in the media, creating specific metaphors and agenda – as per the “agenda-setting theory” of Cohen [231]) for highlighting news. Elena Osokina wrote that the “Terroristic acts of 2001 facilitated the mobilization of public opinion,” which lead to creating the public discourse wherein “U. S. A. government created and supported a special informational, emotionally-psychological context of highlighting the events” about Iraq. [232]

Russia, in its turn, did the same in their press. The Kremlin is the official Russian government source for events involving President remained neutral and sometimes even “positive” in their news articles. Despite posting a “sharp” reply about Iraq, as *Izvestia* [233]) put it, most of the later news stories still pointed to the Bush and Putin friendship even during the beginning and continuation of Iraq war. For instance, there was a claim that “Russia is developing cooperation with the United States in all areas. U. S.-Russian strategic partnership meets the interests of the entire international community, because it really works for the good of global stability and security. The relations between Russia and the United States, according to the head of state, have "much more substance, which unites us, rather than the issues on which differences remain." [234]

In June 2003 President of the United States George W. Bush visited Russia, and the Kremlin posted the transcript of the press-conference. Putin said that their “conversation was very frank and informatively saturated enough.” He thanked President Bush for coming to Russia, saying he arrived in St. Petersburg during the celebration of the tercentenary of the city which was a special sign for him. George Bush highly appreciated that and was glad he had a “friendly relationship” with Mr. Putin. [235] Friendship has been brought up few more times in more posts, such as Putin’s statement: “We have established a relationship in which we can directly into each other’s eyes, to express their opinions without any diplomacy. Sometimes we do not like what we say to each other. But we listen to each other, listen and look for solutions. President Bush is a good partner, he is an open, decent person, it is a pleasure to work with him,” [236] and Bush’s interview, where he said that “[Putin] is a good person with whom you can spend your time productively” [237], and a note saying “Despite all that was happening around Iraq, Russian and U. S. presidents managed to preserve not only the individual but also inter-state relations”, [238] indicating not only the friendship between two Presidents as people, but also the friendship between two countries (at least on the official level).

Russian media sources utilized a unique strategy of presenting the news during this period. For neutral or “warm” news, they would simply report what had happened. For blatantly “cold” news about the American President, they would usually refer to an outside expert. Some articles even had a note that the “thoughts of the editorial board may differ from opinions expressed in this article.” In March 2003 *Argumenty i Fakty* published an interview with the Deputy Director of Institute for U. S. and Canadian Studies Viktor Kremenyuk, who alleged that “inferiority complex prevails over Bush,” because he “almost lost the election in 1999” and wants to be a “real president,” and that is why he has bet on a fight against terrorism. [239] Arnaud Dubien, an expert on Russia and the CIS at the Institute for International and Strategic Relations announced that “euphoria in Russian-American relations is over.” [240] *Kommersant* posted a fragment of conversation with celebrity lawyer Pavel Astakhov who answered the question “To whom you would give an Oscar?” as to “George Bush, Jr. in the category of ‘Best Producer’ for the tragedy World War III”. [241] Also, *Izvestia* published the description of Russia TV show “Fantasies on Eastern Topics” where the host asked Mikhail Zadornov, a Russian comic known for his strong anti-American views, questions to be answered. Instead of playing along with his typical anti-Americanism, *Izvestia* blamed his negativity against George W. Bush, as Zadornov said “Bush acts

like an authority abused in jail.” [242] They also expressed dislike of the wave of anti-Americanism that swept the country [243]:

“On the air of the main Russian TV channels, the analogies between Bush and Hitler, between the Holocaust and the "mass extermination of peaceful Iraqis" by Allied forces are being persistently pushed forward. Analogies as incorrect, even sacrilegious, are dangerous. Doubly dangerous if they are a reflection of the official point of view of our state. Meanwhile, neither President Putin, nor Foreign Minister Ivanov, nor any other Russian state officials anywhere has ever admitted such statements.” [244]

But not all the newspapers were so supportive. For example, *Argumenty i Fakty* had an article openly discussing “Bushofrenia,” a new branch of political science, where one of the symptoms listed is “being cunning,” and also said that Bush “imagines himself as a viceroy of God.” [245]

Though in the majority of other articles in newspapers of “cold” things written about George W. Bush are minor, mostly neutral, such as the incident of Bush’s twin daughters attending a 21+ party despite being under age [246], mixing-up the place of where he was to attend a meeting [247] and even the analysis of cattle names in Russian villages, where Bush is a common name for a stupid bull, while Clinton is a common name for a bull-inseminator. [248] Those “minor” articles and some others do often have a comparison between Vladimir Putin and George W. Bush, and in most of them Putin is presented as an “adult” and Bush as a “kid,” referring to Bush’s perceived childish behavior at a summit (comparing the color of his shirt to other politicians) [249], and sometimes presenting Putin as a superior figure, and Bush as his imitator [250;251] and not the “the most important person in the world” because Russian journalists can speak to him in a depreciating way. [252]

Most newspapers during this time wrote surprisingly “warm” news about relationship between the presidents. Even *Argumenty i Fakty* posted Bush’s statement: “I love [Putin]. He is a good person with whom you can spend quality time.” [253]

Izvestia tried to debunk the myth about Bush’s IQ level, writing that “maybe Bush cannot speak as well as Clinton, but he is clever.” [254] A lot of articles pointed the friendship between the presidents, quoting Bush: “friends can sometimes disagree” [255], and the Iraq experience had only strengthened the relationship. But, despite all those good publications it was noted there that “on the background of the friendship between presidents, anti-American sentiments in Russia have grown

very much. So, President [Putin] having a friendship with Bush, from the point of view of the public, seems to have been a mistake.” [256]

The skeptical point of view and the difference between the official position of Russia and public opinion has been confirmed several times. In one of the articles the transcript of a “kitchen conversation” (“Probably, this variant of mutual revelations that is most prevalent in Russian families now”) between family members has been provided, containing the phrase “Bush is bad” and ending with words: “Russia is against U. S. policy, Russia is against Bush. Just like me.” [257] Another example is a resident of the village Shelekhmet who walked over the Volga spring ice to get to Samara to send her message against the War in Iraq to President Bush. In the message, she compares the current U. S. president with Truman, who dropped the atomic bomb on Japan. The woman suggested her associates around the world to turn off the electricity for one minute in protest. [258]

One more example is an article about a rally at the end of which “students of the Moscow State Technical University began to burn an effigy of Bush and dollar bills,” [259] however the police reacted calmly to the incident.

In this we see that the protest mood came mostly from the public, not from politicians, except one major persona who he claims to represent “Russians and the poor.” Russian politician Vladimir V. Zhirinovsky, Deputy Chairman of the State Duma since 2003, and founder and Chairman of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia. *Izvestia* raised the scandal story about Zhirinovsky’s message to President George Bush [260] in which he called Bush “a cowboy” and expressed a great deal of unpleasantness towards the U. S. A.. He sharply condemned the War in Iraq and expressed his attitude towards Bush and people associated with him and America (Condoleezza Rice, Bill Clinton, Monica Lewinsky), using profanity. [261] He later claimed that the video was fake [262], but after some time admitted that the speech was only for close people, thus accepting the authenticity of the video. [263]

Later in 2006, he said Condoleezza Rice’s sexual problems meant she could not do her job properly (an example of a direct attempt at character assassination). [264] When experts call Zhirinovsky a “mouthpiece of Kremlin” [265], a political cliché, they mean it as a synonym for “Russian government-backed propaganda,” as is done via organizations, political parties, the media, and individuals that are unconditionally supportive of, and strongly campaign for internal and external policy pursued by the Russian leadership in general, and Administration of the Russian

President in particular.

It is believed that the task of "the mouthpiece of the Kremlin" - with "instructions from above" or not - is to proclaim the views of the Kremlin that the Kremlin cannot do itself as it is too radical. [266] Zhirinovsky's party is believed to be pro-Kremlin, but officially it creates the image of being opposition, [267] though Zhirinovsky is directly linked to Kremlin. [268]

Alexander Tsipko and Thomas J. Mathew in their article call Zhirinovsky a "phenomenon of Russian politics," stating that "a politician like Zhirinovsky, who arrives at his own press conference before the elite of the mass media in tails and a gold belt, is considered the spokesman of state and society. This has become possible only because the party ruling Russia today has not found and has not sought out a "translator", i.e. a leader, who is capable of translating the goals of the new class into the collective language of the people," pointing out that Zhirinovsky is the "translator" of the government's ideas for people. [270]

If we accept the interpretation of A. Tsipko and T. Mathew that Zhirinovsky is a *de facto* spokesman of the Kremlin's ideas, then we can readily find examples character attack against America's leadership. In just one, apparently drunken, rant by Zhirinovsky on January 28, 2003, he appealed to US President Bush to not launch an invasion of Iraq. Zhirinovsky stated that, "Do not joke with the war... George, your soldiers here will be torn apart. There are 250,000 elite soldiers of Iraq! They will pass through the whole desert in one hour! They will blow up all your destroyers, all your journalists, diplomats. George, you're a cowboy. You stop. You stop damnit. You hide the cartridges away to the warehouse and forget about your dad... Think about the future of America. She perishes, perishes! Your youth is fleeing your country. There, no one wants to live in America; no one! This flea market, damnit, dollar, dollar, dollar... This dirty green piece of paper! Not a soul, damnit, there is no music, damnit, you have no writers. The whole world listens to Tchaikovsky, Dostoevsky... And here, in Iraq. Here they love the president, and they despise you, despise!" [271]

MP Zhirinovsky continued his address to President Bush by saying, "Your predecessor, damnit, Clinton, damnit, his pants were pulled off right in his office. He surprised everyone! In the office of the head of state he got [oral sex]! Is that America, damnit? What are you doing? Monica, damnit! What the hell sort of president? What [loser]!" He continued, "George! George! Watch cowboy movies! How many corpses, how much blood! And there they killed, and here they killed!"

Zhirinovsky related the official Kremlin line about how the impending US invasion of Iraq was viewed by Moscow, "You bomb [Iraq] every day, you kill children, and the soldiers of Iraq are

sitting ready for battle. You are afraid to send your soldiers here. And you were afraid a few years ago, your father was afraid too. And the apple does not fall far from the tree. You will never win. This is your last defeat. Napoleon lost to Waterloo, Hitler lost the battle of Berlin. You will lose Baghdad. Baghdad is your grave. Do you understand, George, you damn cowboy?" Moreover, he stated that, "Moscow does not want this war, and our president is clear to you, in Russian, he said: 'Do not dare to shoot at Baghdad.' Better together to bomb Tbilisi. Or Baku. Or other cities. We will find targets on this earth!" [271]

The monologue played on several themes common in character attacks: sexual deviance, questioning the intellect of the attack victim, and a wide selection of cheap shots and name-calling. Though it was an "address to President Bush," it would seem that its intended audience was the Russian population as a whole: Zhirinovsky was using character attacks to back the official Kremlin line that the war in Iraq was unnecessary and dangerous for the United States. The way that Zhirinovsky delivered this talk was interesting enough that it was viewed by millions of people on the internet – thus spreading its effectiveness and scope of audience.

By 2005, the Russian-U. S. relationship was quite cool and Russian new sources wrote of an impending Bush-Putin meeting asking "whether it is still possible to save 'the marriage' of Vladimir Putin and George W. Bush. Analyzing the latest meeting of the Russian and U. S. leaders in Bratislava (Slovakia) on February 24, 2005, *The New York Times* pointed to a certain iciness in relations between the two presidents since their first date in 2001." The article continued, "The first term now seems like ancient history. Those were the days of romance that bloomed with the first date in June 2001, when Mr. Bush said that he had looked Mr. Putin in the eye and gotten a sense of his soul." [269]

The American magazine *Foreign Policy* ran an article authored by the *New York Time's* longtime correspondent assigned to the White House, Peter Baker, titled "The Seduction of George W. Bush" that carefully details the relationship between Putin and Bush. In the article, the author writes of how a journalist chosen by Putin intentionally gave hard questions to President Bush.

Baker reports that unlike earlier times when Putin tried to shield and defend Bush, Putin now abandoned Bush and in-fact made his term harder. Baker relates that during a private one-on-one with Putin, Bush encouraged the expansion of the free press in Russia. Putin responded that the American free press was equally as pressured by the government. Bush was amazed to learn that Putin seriously believed that the U. S. President had anti-Bush reporters fired. But as the author

states “Putin understood his own system. When the two leaders emerged for a joint news conference, a Russian reporter handpicked by the Kremlin challenged Bush on the same grounds Putin had just been citing in private.” [227]

This shows two interesting things: One, that the Russian President sincerely believed that he “understood his system:” The idea that the U. S. press was truly free to run whatever stories it wanted – and that the government did not order the firing of journalists – was untrue and ridiculous to him. From then on, the relationship was nearly destroyed, and its zeal and warmth did not come back, as is discussed later in this research by doing a careful analytic study using content analysis of contemporary news reports (with the continuation of usage of mixed methodology of approaches taken from both discourse analysis and ethnographic content analysis) and the advanced search tools of Google.

Closer to modern time, the case of Mikhail Gorbachev has to be mentioned. Today he is generally remembered fondly by Americans due to his contribution to the dismantling the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U. S. S. R.). This has not always been the case. Gorbachev at one time was frequently attacked for his aggressive foreign/domestic policy. Specifically, his opposition to German reunification and letting the ethnic Soviet Republics leave the Union if they wanted was frequently the source of attacks against him. His opposition to a multi-party democracy and human rights were often depicted in Western political cartoons about the last Soviet Premier. Not all was always terrible for Gorbachev as he was also frequently the source of “warm” political cartoons as he sought to forever change and liberalize the Soviet system of governance. [172]

Likely due to the restrictive nature of the Soviet Union, there exists a dearth of Soviet attack ads or cartoons about Gorbachev while he was the premier of the country – only those from later periods of time once the country had opened up under his programs of *Perestroika* and *Glasnost*. Unlike Trotsky, Gorbachev hasn’t officially fell out of official favor with the country’s leadership, and so he wasn’t targeted for government sanctioned character attacks to destroy his reputation. Instead, most of those attacks came after the Union’s fall and the rise of Yeltsin (or later).

Many cartoons depict Gorbachev not simply as having dissolved the Soviet Union, but as having completely exploded it into anarchy as things got out of his control. Some of these cartoons show shattering hammer and sickles, or a crumbling Vladimir Lenin, others showed him at the helm of a sinking ship, some showed him as the man behind a very broken system that no longer functioned – comparing it to a store without anything “democracy” in stock. Still others depict him

as having ended the Cold War but having replaced it with tremendous corruption and both political and economic instability. The topic of his conflict for power with other Soviet leaders, namely Boris Yeltsin, was a common theme. [172]

Modern cartoons about Gorbachev generally are along the lines that he is a traitor to the “fatherland,” and some call for him to not be forgiven and to be put on trial for the Soviet Union’s demise. [173] Many of these depictions poke fun at the infamous birthmark on his forehead by either stamping the word “traitor” or “foreign agent” [174] across it. A more recent play on this theme is the rise of stamping a map of Crimea across his head. [175] Another map that can be found emblazoned across his head is that of the United States, as there is also plenty of text arguing that he was working for American interests. [176] Likewise, a common joke found now on the internet goes along the lines of “Why is Gorbachev still alive?” Response: “Because the Devil is afraid he would break-up hell if he comes.”

It is worth noting that the attacks against Mikhail Gorbachev in regards to his human rights record, the sovereignty of the countries that neighbor Russia, domestic political instability, the poor domestic economy, the out of control corruption, and opposition to democracy, are along the same lines of attack used against Russian President Putin today. These things form the basis of some the greatest sticking points in past and present United States – Soviet/Russian relations. That is, despite the passage of more than a quarter of a century since the collapse of communism in Russia, the attacks against its leadership have arguably changed very little. Russia’s political leaders have remained a frequent source of U. S. attacks for decades, but the material for these changes does not change much.

Before we analyze the cross-cultural attacks against current Russian President Vladimir Putin by western press and leaders, we must first understand how his own people attack him. We can then see what areas of discussion are the most common inside of Russia and contrast them to how the foreign press and governments portray Putin. These attacks will be contrasted to the only other Russian President since 1999, Dmitry Medvedev, who was handpicked to serve for President during the one-term break between President Putin’s third and current, fourth term [177] and against the attacks applied to Mikhail Gorbachev.

3.2. Character Assassination as a Tool in US State Strategies and the Russian Federation's Foreign Policy

Content analysis of online sources was performed via the Google search feature. Google search queries are executed using mathematical algorithms. As Google explains, "For a typical query, there are thousands, if not millions, of webpages with helpful information. Algorithms are the computer processes and formulas that take your questions and turn them into answers. Today Google's algorithms rely on more than 200 unique signals or 'clues' that make it possible to guess what you might really be looking for. These signals include things like the terms on websites, the freshness of content, your region and PageRank." [272] Google search results can also show what topics are the most popular and trending for a period of time. [273]

Using Google's Advanced Search feature, it is possible to manipulate the variables while conducting a search. These variables include "all these words," "any of these words," "any of these words," "none of these words," "numbers ranging from/to." It can then further narrow results by language, region, last updated, site or domain, terms appearing, limiting pornography, file type and usage rights. [274] Through this complex array of possibilities and variables available, it is possible to get highly specific and technical results.

This allows for researchers to create an experiment to test whether the United States press corps wrote less about human rights abuses in Russia during the "warm relationship period" between George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin, versus during the "winter months" of their relationship.

The first experiment was begun by entering the parameters of January 1, 2002 to December 31, 2003. A search of "'Russia' 'human rights'" produces only six pages of results (not listing duplicate articles) with 55 "news" stories. That is, during this entire segment of two years, only 55 English articles categorized in Google dealt with the issues of human rights within Russia. [275] A review of these articles finds that many of them are not directly in regards to Russia.

Some of the articles reference the United Nations' Human Rights Commission's work, which cites Russia as a UN member, [276] another talks about human rights in Uzbekistan and makes a passing reference to Russia, [277] a separate article discusses the need for America to reevaluate its policies towards China, [278] and another discusses the completely unrelated matter of the African nation of Ghana. [279]

The articles directly relating to Russia have a couple of main categories. Most of the articles deal with Mikhail Khodorkovsky's trial and whether it will meet international standards and upholds his human rights, [280] others are critical of Russia's "managed democracy," [281] another observes that Putin's government is targeting "another Jewish oligarch," [282] and others that are of concern for people interested in the state of human rights violations occurring within the Russian Federation. One also notices that many of the articles are either academic in nature (i.e. from a think tank) or are from tertiary news sources that are unpopular and do not have a substantive readership.

When the experiment is repeated, only changing the independent variable of the dates of the search to January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2007, we see a huge change in the scale of Western reaction to human rights abuses in Russia. This time there are over 50 pages of results, with over 500 news articles appearing. These articles tended to be much more Russia specific and less sporadically covering third countries.

Articles detailing the illegal use of psychiatric hospitals on political prisoners, [283] others detail the "widespread and systematic use of torture within Chechnya, [284] some talk about the way that drug addicts are treated in Russia, [285] and likewise how the Russian prison system is broken and needing reform, [286] and some denoting Russia as being on the list of the most "repressive countries" in the world. [287]

The question arises: what changed between the two different time periods of 2002 - 2003 and 2006 - 2007. One of the largest changes, as explained earlier, was the decline of U. S. - Russian relations. Moreover, the very personal relationship between Putin and Bush had changed in dynamics. The United States had become a frequent critic of Putin's regime and specifically of the authoritarian turn it had taken - as Russia experienced further backsliding from democracy. [288] How did the press so quickly change its perception in regards to the situation in Russia?

The hypothetical explanation is that Russia was not tremendously more democratic or freedom oriented in the early 2000s, as it was in the late 2000s. Rather, the press was no longer running stories talking about the endearing nickname that Bush used for Putin, nor was it discussing their recent fishing trip or how they seemed to be having a romantic relationship. Now the press was interested in covering a story of a new type: That of problems in the country that had become a frequent critic of U. S. foreign policy.

Evidence would support the argument that the 2002 - 2003 period was one of unusual

closeness between the Russian and American governments, in sharp contrast to the 2006 – 2007 period, which saw the rise of a much stronger “critical-of-Russia” paradigm. This paradigm shift represents a serious change as to how the East and the West interacted with each other from then on. As for the first experiment, the periods were taken approximately, for the continuation of analysis, as it was explained in the previous subchapter, 2001 and 2003 and the nearest periods for these contrast years (for the Russian – American relationship) were taken. Still, the necessity of “general” description of the attitudes toward Presidents (Bush and Putin) remained.

First, as for the Putin cases, cheap shots and name-calling directed at the Russian President are plentiful. “Putin + *moron*” (using the Russian word *debil*) has 429,000 results, while “Putin + *idiot*” returns 549,000 sites. Likewise, searches for “Putin + *pedophile*” (using the Russian slur *pidor*) return 261,000 results and multiple images. The images vary from a simple photo of the Patriarch with the words “Putin is a pedophile”, [289] to one of a smiling Putin with the words, “You’re a pedophile from the Kremlin. Piece of shit,” [290] to the elaborately photo-shopped “screenshot” of Russian channel NTV from the night of Putin’s reelection, with a penis for Putin’s nose. [291] In all cases, these are cheap shots that are not based on any factual background, but simply a means of mocking the Russian President in not particularly original ways.

Both of Putin’s parents were ethnic Russians and he is Orthodox. However, Google search for “Putin + *Jewish roots*” turns up 28,500 sites; while “Putin + *Jew*” (using the derogatory Russian word for *Jew* - *zhid*) gives us 236,000 results. Search results for “Putin + *Mason*” deliver only 76,400 results. Likewise, a search for “Putin + *Illuminati*” gives some 64,300 results, but dozens of images “showing” that Putin has some connection to the secret organization are available.

World War II for Russia (or the Great Patriotic War as it is more frequently called there) was tremendously painful. Soviet Union casualties are not known to any degree of precision and estimates of the total civilian plus military death toll hover around 20,000,000 [292] to 25,000,000. [293] The catastrophic loss also dealt a withering blow to the economy which had been programmed for total war against the invading Fascist German Army. Until today, the losses of World War II are a very live and real collective memory of the Russian population as May 9, Victory Day, is still commemorated as a national holiday and veterans of the War are treated as national heroes who march in parades and are given flowers by the population. [294]

Since World War II, Russia has frequently cited “fascism” as being a major threat to its national security. Russian propaganda in the past couple of years has referred to the creation of

Ukraine's post-2014 Maidan government as being a fascist take-over of the country [295] that has given rise to a *junta* that is being financed by the United States. [296] The actual definition of what constitutes fascism is loose, but according to the fourteen-point scale devised by Dr. Lawrence Britt it is impossible for an impartial observer to conclude that Ukraine seriously meets the criteria to be considered a "fascist government." [297] However, when one types, in Russian, "fascist" into Google with a Moscow IPN, the suggest words to complete the search are "fascists in Russia," "fascists in Ukraine," "fascists in the Ukraine," "fascists in Kyiv."

More likely, we are seeing the conflation of two things: Firstly, we are seeing Russia tap into its 70 years of built up and stoked public hatred for fascism in order to attack their historical common national enemy. Secondly, the cheap shot of the word "fascist" being applied to any enemy, means only that they wish to insult the other person. Or, as Dr. Roger Griffin of Oxford states that "'fascist' can be a simple way of insulting somebody, of saying that they are horrible, nasty, that they should go away." [298] That is, a fascist is viewed so negatively in Russian society that it is on par with other derogatory terms.

Therefore, we have some understanding for why a search for "Putin + *Hitler*" gives us 609,000 websites and well over 100 images that depict the two men as equivalent. "Putin + *Fascist*" has only 377,000 results but produces an incredibly wide array of images of Putin, mostly dressed as a Nazi, with Swastikas, or resembling Adolf Hitler. The automated Google suggestion for the next search is "Putin + *Hitler* + *Comparison*." The comparison produces only 125,000 results, but dozens of images depicting Putin to the German leader in a very "cold" light (i.e. not pro-neo Nazi). Likewise, "Putin + Stalin" has over 484,000 results, and over a hundred photographs and images comparing the two dictatorial men.

More historically placed attacks return substantially more hits. "Putin + *dictator*" return an impressive 565,000 results. The images associated with this search are spectacular. From those of Putin dressed as a police man dragging away a protestor with the line "Dictator Putin and Russia: BDSM. If he beats you means he loves you, or is it, the harder he beats you the more he loves you." [299] Another commonly recurring theme globally in attacks are those based on movie posters, such as the one showing Putin bearded and dressed like the lead character of the 2012 comedy film *The Dictator*; [300] another shows a dark, grey-suited Putin before a mass of riot police with the simple text "the Dictator: On screens of the country since 1999." [301]

The dictator results are a fraction of the 2,900,000 hits for "Putin + *human rights*." In the

human rights search, the array of images is impressive: from simple photos of the leader stating “I am the law;” [302] to the mimicry of superimposing the leader’s photograph onto a Soviet anti-alcohol poster: where the original poster showed a Soviet man refusing a glass of vodka, this new rendition shows Putin refusing to accept a book on human rights. [303] However, the number of images that are found in these searches is a paltry sum compared to the incredible number of results found when tying Putin to Stalin or Hitler. This is not surprising given the nature of cheap shots as they tend to be more simplistic and to the point.

The same experiment was conducted to see the Russian position towards George W. Bush. Therefore, inquiries were entered in Russian and also analyzed in Russian (so most of the inquiries and results will be translated and adapted to English).

Bush was rumored to be “not clever,” which is why the first searched keywords were “Bush” + “idiot” (using the Russian word *idiot*) which gave 129,000 hits, the first of which was the 2008 user edited video titled “Bush is a mentally retarded idiot” where Bush struggles to pronounce a word. [304] and an article with photos and video of famous story from the 2016 “Enchanting idiot: George Bush disgraced, dancing at the funeral ceremony of a dead policemen.” [305]

“Bush” + “fool” (using the Russian word *durak*) resulted in 146,000 hits among which were links to Absurdopedia [306], user-created questions like “Do you think George Bush is a fool?” on the “ask” site otvet.mail.ru [307] and some “Bush is a fool” videos. [308]

George Bush has been also accused in tough methods of politics, thus being a terrorist himself, so another request was done as “Bush” + “terrorist” (using the Russian word *terrorist*). It ended with 137,000 results. Articles with the words of A. Lukashenko, the President of Belarus, who said that “G. Bush is the first terrorist on the planet” [309] and words of N. Maduro, the President of Venezuela, stating that “Bush Jr. is a terrorist” and is “banned from entering Venezuela” [310] were found.

The most numerous results were given on the request “Bush” + “murderer” (using the Russian word *ubiitsa*), the search was returned with 609,000 hits. Among the most impressive of them is the 2008 speech by Russian political figure Maxim Mischenko, titled “George Bush – a murderer,” [311] that was given at the meeting in Moscow during the war in South Ossetia and his article on KavkazCenter about the war in Iraq. [312]

Google's Advanced Search function allows analysis of the attitude of the Russian press and Russian citizens to President George W. Bush during chosen periods of time (2001 and 2003,

simultaneously). Still, the numbers of results found by years are comparably low (from one to around 300) as for the overall results, measured by dozens and even hundreds of thousands, so the received information will be presented as more descriptive and discursive by its nature.

Again, Bush's personal characteristics were analyzed to see if many attacks originated on the president's perceived lack of education and overall "low intelligence." The experiment was aimed to find the phrase "Bush" + "*idiot*" (using the Russian word *idiot*). Among the results from 2001, not many of them were related directly to George W. Bush: such as one that included a novel, which featured the name "Bush," [313] and was a website of jokes. [314] Though a detailed analysis of jokes and anecdotes fall outside of the scope of this research, Tuula-Riitta Lebedinsky's research found that anecdotes act a "mirror" of politics and society, based on her study of jokes and anecdotes in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia. [315]

Among the anecdotes found in this period some have been relevant to our study: for instance, an anecdote about a tie, where Saakashvili's chewing the ends, and Bush says that "the knots are the most delicious part" [316] and an anecdote where mosquitoes bite Bush, and do not bite Putin because they are "not supposed to" do it. [317] Although these stories do not directly relate to the search term of "idiot," they do at the same time show a pronounced "cold" attitude toward Bush, by showcasing the so-called facts of history (chewing a tie) and the vision of the Russian president as the master of the Russian territories. Moreover, one of the articles states that Bush is not an idiot, but perhaps not well. [318] Only one reference has specifically "cold" characterization: it is an option in user-created online test, "Who would you vote for in the U. S. election?" Response that was the most popular was "For Bush - he's an idiot, that is why Americans will be [feel] bad." [319]

Searching within the year 2003 produces about 80 results, which again include sites with anecdotes [320;321] not related to George W. Bush; also the comments from other visitors of the site, comparing Putin and Bush, "Putin is not likely an idiot. He just thinks that he. [sic] idiot - Bush" [322]; the description of the concert of the famous artist Moby, who apologizes and says that he "learned only one phrase in Russian - George Bush is an idiot! Which translated into English means – "George Bush is fucking idiot - I apologize for my English!". [323] The important fact is that "harmless" anecdote about ties occurs again, only now it is placed on a resource that is called "U. S. A. is shit." [324] Also, among the featured results is an article by Richard Kohen of the Washington Post "George Bush – 'useful idiot'? That's how he would be called by Lenin," which was published on Russian web resources. [325]

Continuing the experiment, the phrase "Bush" + "*dumb*" (using the Russian word *tupoi*), which is similar in meaning, was analyzed. In 2001, 75 results were found, but none of them was particularly about Bush, except the one that was published in 2006, but the search returned it as from 2001. It was a joke that upon greater reflection likely does not indicate the folly of the U. S. President, but instead focuses on the linguistic differences. [326]

On December 26, 2002 an article titled "Clinton - the most corrupt; Bush - the stupidest" was published. [327] There was information about the "IQ level among American presidents, from which it became clear that the dumbest head of state in the entire post-war history is George W. Bush." It is important to note that the IQ of Bush remained a popular theme even later (in 2008, for example) but at the same time, quite contradictorily, different figures are indicated in different sources: on one site it is said that "President Bush has an IQ of only around 85. Nevertheless, he became president twice as much!" [328], on the site where it is possible to measure the IQ in the "IQ of celebrities" section, Bush is presented with a result of 95. [329]

However, the factual information collates to the fact that by «SAT test results (American counterpart of [Russian] ЕГЭ [Unified State Exam – J.J.S.]), which George W. Bush got 1206 points is indicative of the fact that he has an IQ in the range of 125 and 130, which exceeds the level of 95% of the U. S. population, as well as the IQ of many university professors. By comparison, the IQ of Abraham Lincoln, Rousseau and Thackeray is about 128 [330] and that false information about supposed low IQ of Bush was distributed in anti-Bush e-mails. [331] The search also provides "thematic" videos with the hesitations and mistakes of Bush [332], photos [333] and footage from the film "Fahrenheit 9/11" by Michael Moore titled "Глупый Буш (stupid Bush)». [333]

In a similar previous request "Bush" + "*fool*" (using the Russian word *durak*) for 2001 and 2003 respectively, were found around 280 and 139 results, this still doesn't describe the real attitude change. For example, an anecdote can be distinguished from 2003: "The famous American question, saying, 'Are you a fool, or from Texas?'" has been a little changed. Now it sounds like this: 'Are you a fool, or Bush?'. [335] But most of the results do not have nothing to do with George W. Bush, so the words for a search request have been consolidated in a single phrase, "Bush fool" (which is an appropriate form for "Bush is a fool" in Russian) to narrow the range of outcomes (in Russian, it is not necessarily the presence of an auxiliary verb between the noun and the other noun / adjective, and can be replaced with a dash). Such a request gave 0 results for 2001 and 1 for 2003, which describes the experience of listening to radio "Hyde Park": "Naive callers, mostly elderly, are

asked to carry out the transfer often to be able to speak out, and do not realize that with the same success they can go to Red Square and shout, “Bush is a fool!” [336]

Upon request, "Bush" + "lazy" (using the Russian word *linevii*) among 39 results in 2001, none was specifically relevant to George W. Bush. In 2003, there was an interesting link, though not entirely suitable for the context of the query, but it fits into the overall idea as it says "George Bush - an almost perfect object of ridicule. Only the lazy doesn't get a laugh out of him. The Spanish newspaper *El Mundo* writes: 'Do not take Bush seriously.' Bush's IQ development is only at 91 points," reports *Bild*. On the Internet there are several websites that collect "*bushisms*"- the freshest and the most absurd utterances of the American president. In addition, Bush has a very expressive face with mobile facial expressions, making almost every photograph bear inescapable comic print"- respectively, as "bushisms" were mentioned again next to attached photos of “monkeyficated” Bush.

"Bush" + "arrogant" (using the Russian word *vysokimernii*) gave only 8 results and they were not concerning Bush in 2001, in fact one was actually calling Jimmy Carter arrogant. [337] One article writes that Bush was analyzed from the perspective of astrology and was considered to be "a bit arrogant," but the rest of the evaluation was generally “positive” about him. [338] Again in 2003, there were only 8 results, one of which George W. Bush was given as the definition of the word "arrogant." Another author writes that "This arrogant Bush even now considers himself a humble, humane, full of compassion for other people's troubles." [339]

Since George W. Bush was repeatedly accused of lying, the experiment was continued using the query "Bush" + "liar" (using the Russian word *lzhets*). In 2001, 28 results have been found, one of which redirected to a record in the popular Russian social network V Kontakte called "Our great goal is the recovery of our empire!" The record was dated 2016, but Google has given it as from 2001, since the article was about the events of September 11, 2001. It stated that "United States is a liar and a deceiver country (what is worth their scam "landing on the moon" and "planned demolition" of "Twin Towers" alone - September 11, 2001, which served as a cause of so-called "war on terrorism", which is only a capture of oil countries with the occupation of Arab countries (Israel's enemies)". [340] Thus, for 2001, there were no suitable results, as well as among the 12 in 2002. Among the 10 results in 2003, a flashmob in Los Angeles was mentioned, where a hundred participants wearing masks resembling the face of Bush shouted “Bush is a liar!” for seven minutes. [341]

According to the search "Bush" + "executioner" (using the Russian word *palach*) 23 results

were found in 2001, although they are not directly related to the President; and 20 results for 2003, which had no relation to George W. Bush.

The synonymous request of "Bush" + "*torturer*" (using the Russian word *kat*) did not provide any interesting results; likewise, for "Bush" + "*Inquisitor*" (using the Russian word *inkvizitor*) – none of the 12 results in 2001 and 3 in 2003, respectively, were related to the U. S. President.

On the other hand, "Bush" + "*imperialist*" (*imperialist*, including "Bush" + "*imperialism*" - *imperialism*) gave a greater number of relevant pages. Though in 2001, where there were about 20 results, Bush's imperialism was not discussed (although "the U. S. dollar's imperialism" was [342]), search gave 25 references in 2003, where the facts of rightness and wrongness of the mosque were discussed, as it "condemned the Israeli settler state," but it was not right to "portray George W. Bush and U. S. imperialism as they do not know what they do, being puppets of Israeli Zionism, and not vice versa." [343] Among other results a mention appeared about the presence of imperialism in Russia. [344] As well as the fact that Bush is the descendant of the Rurik, which is not relevant to this study. [345]

The search words "Bush" + "*terrorist*" on Google returned about 115-130 results (without repetitions). In 2001, a great deal of the results was not related to the subject: an article in the news magazine *Korrespondent* stated that the Taliban considers George W. Bush's order to the CIA about the physical elimination of Osama bin Laden to be an act of terrorism. [346] In 2003 as it gets closer to the armed conflict in Iraq, the number of hits mentioning that Bush is a "terrorist" increase. One of the search results describes the event where the front of the U. S. embassy building young Austrians trampled on the U. S. flags and chanted anti-American slogans: "No to war in Iraq," "Bush is a terrorist worse than Bin Laden!" "Give peace a chance!" and "War is not the answer of a civilized nation!" [347] Also found was the link to an article about the pupil of an American school in Dearborn, Michigan who came to school in a shirt with a photo of George W. Bush framed with the words "international terrorist." International terrorism was also mentioned in another post:

"International terrorism is the flip side, the wrong side of world imperialism - a product, a direct continuation and an integral part of the "new world order" of imperialist globalization. "Civilized humanity", the "international community" and other stupidities - it is no more than the pseudonym of imperialism headed by the United States now. Yes, terrorism is a terrible threat to mankind. But imperialism is a threat no less horrible. Moreover, it is the primary threat. The main international terrorist today is the United States. Openly rife examples of U. S. terroristic actions are

numerous.” [348]

Also, the USAgovno site appeared again, where it stated that the "U. S. A. is a terrorist-state with a democratic face." [324]

In the queries about terrorism (as well as in the "executioner" and "torturer"), references for torture were found often, so the search was performed using the keywords "Bush" + "*tortures*" (using the Russian word *pytki*). It gave 67 results in 2001, many of which did not fit, some reported torture at the U. S. detention facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba [349] and there were some results regarding a movie called "The Untold History of the United States" which tells the tale of secret prisons and "harsh interrogation techniques." [350]

This result and movie must be removed from this study as it is dated to 2012. In 2003, the emphasis also falls on Saddam Hussein, who according to an article from the period, "unlike many other despots, never denied that the country has adopted public executions and torture as a natural consequence of his work" [351]; and his sons, who "were responsible for the torture, mutilation and murder of countless Iraqis" and therefore it is argued that George Bush believes that by "killing Hussein's sons without a trial, he pushed Iraq into the future." [352]

The experiment continued with the request of "Bush" + "*human rights*." In 2001, about 170 results were found, but only a few of them touched the topic of Bush's policies, such as situation in Afghanistan, which was reinforced by his own statement: "Afghanistan is just the beginning, we will continue to destroy the terrorists, wherever they are." [353] Some links contained irrelevant information, like essays on democratization [354] or information about violation of human rights in China. [355] The following phrase was written in one of the resources, "As usual, Americans use torture on the prisoners of war, spitting on the 'human rights' in which they are so concerned when it comes to Chechnya," but this information dealt with 2004 and 2005, and the site it was posted on is called "The Dark Side of America" and was created in 2007, also appearing in the request for 2002. In 2003, the words "Bush" + "*human rights*," gained a "colder" connotation. The results mention the possibility of the U. S. withdrawal from the United Nations [356], A. Zinoviev's article "A Sinister Episode of WWII" stated that Bush had unlimited opportunities "to wage a 'hot war' anywhere in the world where he wants to make large sums of money allocated for the war and the right to destroy political opponents in any country" [357], a mention that a demonstration in support of Bush's policies collected much smaller numbers of participants in the United States than the anti-war protests. [358]

One of the comments on the *Studopedia* site said that "human rights is an abstraction devoid of historical roots, as opposed to the specific rights of the English or French (i.e. the "historical rights"), and the individual should not oppose themselves to the society as a whole (organicism)," and called Bush a "neoconservative." [359] But some of the results have a different nature: in one of them it was said that America "began the war for human rights; thus, it is, contrary to other malicious statements, helping to restore the efficacy of international law at the point that really is crucial at this moment." [360] And some comments on *LoveHate* say that in Iraq (and in the Muslim world), human rights simply do not exist as a concept. [361]

In the course of the analysis it was clear that in comparison with 2001 (the so-called, "warm period"), in 2003 (the beginning of the "cool period and the War in Iraq) clearly saw a "cold" shift towards the United States and specifically toward George W. Bush. Many of the results with the "cold" assessments about President Bush, especially in 2001, were not originating from that time, but were just being discussed 2001 (often about the September 11 attacks). In the "warm times" Bush rarely appeared in a "cold" light, even among the comments of users of sites, because the press almost always refrained from making "cold" assessments. But on those rare occasions when the media let-loose with defamatory statements, it most often occurred during the moments of the "cool period," in this case like in 2003. It was only in 2003 that the term "bushisms" was coined and began appearing throughout other news sources.

As for the attacks against Vladimir V. Putin during the same periods of time, the decision was made to start with the examples already discussed in the beginning of this chapter. In 2001, "Putin" + "*human rights*" request returned 2,600 results, which weren't really "cold". For instance, in one of them it stated that "those who worked with Putin in St. Petersburg say that he was a very effective manager and he was the one who was capable, unlike many others, to make decisions. ... Putin has a reputation of being an honest guy--something very rare for one who made a career inside the Russian bureaucracy". [362] Despite a lot of neutral and "warm" articles about Putin, a piece titled "Russia's Secret Police: Powerful Tool for Totalitarianism," where it outlines that Putin is believed to have "plans to restore Russia's international influence and to challenge the U. S. leadership of the so-called unipolar world." [363]

Both cases shown that criticism of "human rights" were not addressed directly towards the Russian President. The number of results increased in 2003 to 3560 hits where on the Human Rights Watch site says that "in Russia, where I witness the continual violence in Chechnya and now in

neighboring Ingushetia too, I struggle to understand how this could possibly be called ‘normalization,’ but also that they don’t understand why America is so indecisive in this human rights abuse case. [364] Michael McFaul’s article “Vladimir Putin's Grand Strategy... for anti-democratic regime change in Russia” was also found among these results. [365]

For the “Putin” + “*anti-Semitic*” entry, 332 results were found during the 2001 period, but Putin is not directly referred to as anti-Semitic there. A big shift was experienced in 2003 as the number of results increased to 1,980, among them an article titled “It is still not a good thing to be a successful Jew in historically anti-Semitic Russia” [366], and “Putin displayed a tolerance for Jews that was unusual in the KGB.” [367]

“Putin” + “*crazy*” gave 2,800 and 3,240 results for 2001 and 2003, respectively. During 2001, most of the articles were not relevant, though in 2003 Telegraph topics like “Putin - the spy who was obsessed with the West” [368] and Putin's vulgar use of the vernacular [368] were also found.

Vladimir Putin’s connections with Russian mob was a topic of discussion, and so an experiment was performed using the phrase “Putin” + “*mafia*.” “There have been no materials in the mass media until recently about Putin’s relationships with organized crime,” said one article from 2001 [371] and another was titled “Putin linked to Cali Cocaine Cartel,” [372] though both were from user-edited sources. In 2003, *The Moscow Times* published a text about a “New Book Links Putin to Underworld,” [373] and the number of hits slightly increased from 1,710 to 1,770.

Another adjacent inquiry, “Putin” + “*murderer*” gave 523 results in 2001, where one of the hits throws us back to the “anti-Semitic” search, due to an article stating that “Russian President Vladimir Putin exposes Jews as the greatest mass murderers.” Still, this article was found on a user-edited site, but not an official media source. A lot of other links lead to text that is not directly relevant. Among the results for 2003 were 659 hits including a book which “links Putin to underworld.” [373]

“Cold” discussions akin to the accusations of Bush being terrorist himself appeared also for the Russian President. “Putin” + “*terrorist*” returned 3,030 results in 2001, but a lot of them were not about Putin’s persona but about the September 11 tragedy. For 2003, among 3620 results, titles like “Putin on sadist ja terrorist” (“Putin is sadist and terrorist”, an article about Chechnya’s President Aslan Mashadov) [374] and “Terrorist Acts Organized By Russian Secret Services” [375] appeared.

Again, the count of results by year is comparably low to the overall results found, but some conclusion can still be made by inspecting the contents of the results. The difference between the numbers of results when searching in English and Russian is apparent, with the possible explanation of the population of speakers and Internet-communication issues in different parts of the world. There is also the need to remember that 2001-2003 period was just the beginning of the “Internetization” – something that grew much faster in the United States than in Russia.

Notably, more attention in this subchapter has been given to the persona of George W. Bush, because the next subchapter will mostly consist of cases and attacks done from the U. S. side. Still, the difference in content of the analyzed attacks is evident. As the relationship worsen, the attacks became harsher. Another major difference is the source of the attacks. A lot of sources from the Russian side were just “individuals” (blogs, user sites and “official” media sources remained silent and didn’t show direct negativity towards the American President), but from the American side, the large numbers of search results shown consisted of newspapers articles. The structures of the attacks differ both in political and social layers for both the U. S. and Russian attempts of character assassinations (see Appendix 3.2).

More of information has been retrieved and analyzed, but due to the format of this dissertation not all of it can be described and explained here (the “full graphs” and “count tables” can be found in Appendices 3.3-3.13). This research will continue and the results will be described in the author’s upcoming articles.

3.3. Resources of Character Assassination in Mass Media Attacks

Contemporary mass media is a tremendously important tool in today’s political systems, and is critical in understanding the current applications of character assassination. The great potential of mass media power is demonstrated famous American companies against President D. Trump starting from the very beginning of his electoral campaign and during his whole presidency. Openness for critiques, regardless of personalities and positions, is a typical characteristic for American democratic systems. However, such approaches in the Russian political context represents a relatively new phenomenon, and is characteristic of opposition publications and, to a large extent, electronic media.

Before we analyze the cross-cultural attacks against current Russian President Vladimir Putin

by western press and leaders, we must first understand how his own people attack him. We can then see what areas of discussion are the most common inside of Russia and contrast them to how the foreign press and governments portray Putin. These attacks will be contrasted to the only other Russian President since 1999, Dmitry Medvedev, who was handpicked to serve for President during the one-term break between President Putin's third and current, fourth term [177].

The analysis of Google sources demonstrates specific of character attacks in conditions of contemporary Russian democracy. Despite the high rating of the Russian president, the attacks against Russian President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, done by Russians, usually follow one of a few specific paths. One of these is the old route of cheap shots and name-calling. The other path, which is more particular to Russia, is the assertion that he has sold-out the Russian population for another cause or country – usually based on a conspiracy theory premise. The third path, and also a type of name-calling, but with a Russian accent, is that he is a “fascist” or a “Nazi.” In all cases, the web offers us numerous examples of websites and graphics dedicated to both themes and they will be closely analyzed in the next chapter.

A second area for attacks against the President Putin are those insinuating that he has somehow sold-out Russia, or that he is either not really Russian, or part of a cabal serving some sinister purpose other than Russia's national interest. As cited during the case of Trotsky, conspiracy theories are plentiful in Russia and its people can be swayed by them. [178] Rabidly antiemitic websites and pictures frequently taken from public events that the President had attended with Jewish leaders, often wearing a yarmulke, state that he is meeting with his overlords or is himself actually Jewish.

These are largely not character attacks, but rather conspiracy theories, as the person disseminating them believes that there is a secret organization or body of people manipulating world events in their favor. In the scale of all attacks made against Putin, these pale in comparison to the number of attacks made against him that refer to him as a “fascist” or “dictator” – which certainly more mainstream character attacks against the President are as it calls into question the permissibility of him leading the country without insinuating that he is a pariah working for another master.

A fascinating comparison can be drawn between the attacks against Mikhail Gorbachev and Vladimir Putin: A search for “Gorbachev + *fascist*” or “Gorbachev + *dictator*” literally do not return a single photo of Gorbachev dressed as a Nazi. Likewise, a search for “Gorbachev + *Stalin*” do not

have any images of him superimposed on an image of Stalin, though there are several memes comparing why Stalin was a better national leader than Gorbachev. So why the disparity between how the two leaders are attacked – especially given that Putin is vastly more popular in modern Russia than is Gorbachev?

It is likely related to the Russian government's increased use of Soviet terminology, such as "fascist," or "foreign agent," in the past decade. The transformation of World War II from a past, historic event into a present, current problem for Russia is a tactic to maintain control within the country. That is, during the Gorbachev era these names were not as commonly used to disparage people and so were not the first insults that would come to mind. As they are ever more present in the public conscience, the likelihood of someone applying it to their current political leaders increases.

Compared to both Gorbachev and Putin, a search for former Russian President and current Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev shows very few results. In fact, a search for "Medvedev + *fascist*" returns only one image of the Prime Minister with a fascist leader, and even then, it is not character assassination but a website dedicated to comparing what celebrities look similar to each other. [179] Likewise, a search for "Medvedev + *dictator*" has not one meme, but 496,000 websites (compared to "Putin's" 664,000). The classic Russian cheap shots of "Medvedev + *moron*" provides an impressive 160,000 websites (and 597,000 for "Putin + *moron*") and a wide number of photos mocking him as being stupid. Searching for "Medvedev + *pedophile*" only provides 75,200 hits (and 817,000 results for the same search for "Putin") and several different images. A search for "Medvedev + *agent*" (using the Russian word *agent* which carries the connotation of "foreign agent") only displays one graphic of Medvedev, wearing a children's bib with a map of Russia, eating hamburgers and accepting an iPhone with the text on the borders of the image reading "Medvedev is a patriot of Russia: but an opposition agent of the U. S. A." [180]

The reason for the gaping disparity between the number of website hits for character attacks against Putin vs. attacks against Medvedev is not known; nor is it within the scope of this research. However, it may relate to the fact that Medvedev is viewed by some as being the doer of Putin's bidding, and not as a free agent. Alternatively, it could be related to the fact that Medvedev served only a singular, relatively peaceful and uneventful term as President and many understood that he would return the Presidency back to Putin once it was over. For whatever the reason, the quantity of attacks in the Russian cyberspace against Putin is substantially more than the attacks made against

Dmitry Medvedev.

The state oriented and loyal Russian mass media demonstrates a complex of instruments of character attacks against opposition, the most evident example – the case of Pussy Riot. The divergent views between the East and the West on the arrest and prosecution of Pussy Riot band members in 2012 offers fascinating insight into how domestic political scandals can be used by foreign governments as a media tool in order to character attack the leader of the country in which the domestic scandal occurred.

The Pussy Riot case became a classical example of modern character assassination as these events show the tremendous difference in cultural and political mentality in how the events are perceived, processed and analyzed by the countries' news sources and populations. This subchapter will limit its scope to analyzing the differences between how Russia and the United States of America interpreted the 2012 arrest of Pussy Riot Band members in Moscow, as it serves a good example of understanding the resource base of character assassination in mass media attacks.

Interestingly, a review of the literature regarding to Pussy Riot finds that academic and scholarly literature relating to the punk rock band is much more represented in western sources than in eastern. Ilya Yablokov writes that the narrative about Pussy Riot in the Russian press was built around the larger conspiracy theories that dominate the Russian news and reality. [376, p.622-636] E.V. Kablukov also argues that the Russian social construct around Pussy Riot was analogous to that of deeming them as “enemies of the people” who were working against the government's interest. [377, p.69-79]

Other Russian writers looked at this in the context of the rise of the Russian Orthodox Church and the influence that it had in society. [378] A.N. Sergeev examined the Pussy Riot case in the context of Russian government and the Orthodox Church as a political tool in public relations in which act as mutually supporting actors. [379, p.171-174]

Alternatively, American academic and popular sources both record Pussy Riot as having been part of a great movement. Masha Gessen, a leftist feminist author, wrote an overwhelmingly positive review about Pussy Riot in *Words Will Break Cement: The Passion of Pussy Riot*. [380] Gessen seeks to understand what the underlying motivations and ideology of the Pussy Riot members and why they decided to live a life of constant protest – one that eventually landed them in jail and separated from their families, in harsh conditions. Having spent time with not only members of Pussy Riot, but also their families, Gessen concludes that the women are providing an

authentic form of protest in an otherwise closed Putin's Russia. Geseen interestingly notes that the members' prosecution brought them far more international and national media attention than they would have ever received if they had been left to their own devices. Overall, Gessen is

This chapter's research further examines the differences between how the east and west understood the arrest and prosecution of the Pussy Riot members. As will be demonstrated below, there is a clear delineation in how the public understood this case with academics leaning more in favor of Pussy Riot, then against them.

In October-November 2011 Pussy Riot first declared themselves by staging a noisy demonstration of spreading feathers in the Moscow subway station. A month after the action on the subway they decided to demonstrate their attitude towards glamour. The result was a two-day trip to Moscow: group members stole clothes from the boutique, thwarted a fashion show and burnt the podium, danced on the roof of the boutique, accompanied by smoke blanketing the surrounding area with the help of the clouds from fire extinguishers. Noticeably, there was no police reaction to their deeds. On December 14, 2011 Pussy Riot decided to support the Chistye Prudy protesters and thus sang on the roof of the Detention Center #1.

On January 20, 2012 the band had problems with police for the first time, but they escaped with a fine of 1,000 rubles and were released to their homes. [411] Their first performance directly addressed to Putin was accomplished by singing a little ditty called "Putin pissed his pants" on the Red Square in Moscow. [412]

There moment of great notoriety however came on March 2, 2012, when three of the members of Russia's Pussy Riot, the all-female Russian musical group concerned with various social causes with a particular accent on leftist and anti-government idealism, [381] illegally began a performance/concert in the Russian Orthodox Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow. Video of the performance shows a group of women wearing ski masks and summer-time clothing entering the area before the central iconostasis. The video continues as the women begin to shout and jump up and down. The women are heard yelling obscenities during this time and violently resisting efforts to have them removed. Guards are seen speaking to the women and physically trying to restrain them. In both cases the women refuse to cooperate and do not exit the Cathedral, despite multiple attempts to persuade them. Women with headscarves are seen shuffling visitors and the Pussy Riot cameraman out of the Cathedral. The women persist to shout and to kneel and cross themselves, in a way that one would not perceive – given the context – as a sincere act of religious

devotion. [382]

One should note that Orthodox tradition regards churches – and moreover cathedrals – as holy places where behavior is to be solemn and serious. [383] Among the violations of “church protocol” one can see in this video are: 1. The use of obscenities in Church, 2. Mocking Orthodoxy by referring to their song as a “prayer,” 3. Invoking God’s name for their political purposes, 4. Trespassing, 5. Refusing requests by authorities to exit from the Cathedral, 6. Grave disrespect for Orthodox believers who had been silently praying up until that point, 7. Their attire did not fit within norms of women having their shoulders covered and wearing a headscarf. [384]

Within the following weeks some of the group’s members were charged and prosecutors decided to try three of the members – Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, Maria Alyokhina, and Yekaterina Samutsevich - on “hooliganism” charges. Ben Johnson of *Slate* magazine reports that the Russian Criminal code defines “hooliganism” in “Article 213, where it’s defined as ‘The flagrant violation of public order expressed by a clear disrespect for society.’ There are two different categories: hooliganism committed with a weapon, and hooliganism committed for reasons of politics, ideology, racism, nationalism, religious hatred, or enmity with respect to any social group. In the four separate levels of crime in Russia—which can be translated as petty, average gravity, grave, and especially grave—hooliganism generally falls in the second category.” [385]

The law stipulates that offenders “shall be punished with fine from three hundred thousand to five hundred thousand rubles or the salary or other income for a period of two to three years, or by compulsory works for a term of up to four hundred and eighty hours, or correctional labor for a term of one to two years, or community service for up to five years, or imprisonment for the same term.” [406]

In the end, two of the charged women were sentenced to two years in prison, and the other was released upon winning an appeal. [386] During their incarceration, both women made claims of maltreatment by prison authorities, physical and verbal threats, slave labor [387] and near-daily gynecological exams in the motive of humiliating the prisoner. [388] Both of the women who had two-year sentences were released on December 23, 2013, two months shy of their full sentence, as part of a broad amnesty passed by the Russian Duma and approved by President Putin. [389] Pussy Riot members said the amnesty was not really in celebration of the anniversary of the passing of the national constitution, as the public was told, but to take pressure off of Russia as it prepared to host the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia. Jailed Pussy Riot member Maria Alkhina told

Russia's Dozhd TV that, "If I had a chance to turn it down, I would have done it, no doubt about that... This is not an amnesty. This is a hoax and a PR move." [390]

The *TASS News Agency*, an official Russian government organ, related that Patriarch Kirill of Moscow referred to the Pussy Riot performance as "Blasphemy... [and the] desecration of shrines..." The Patriarch related that "there are people who approve this blasphemy, minimize it and try to present it as a funny joke." He continued "I am sorry these people include those who consider themselves orthodox believers... I am adamant not a single believer should claim it is not his or her business or concern... This cannot leave every believer unaffected. As we do not have future if we start desecrating great shrines and if somebody approves this desecration... as some political protest, as some appropriate action of as an innocent joke." [391]

The Inter-Religious Council of Russia, after meeting at a Jewish Synagogue in Moscow, on March, 22 2014, released an official statement that "We share the view that desecration of a church or a mosque, synagogue or *datsan* affects equally all believers of traditional religions... The deed of those people is not an act of hooliganism, their purpose is to rouse national hatred in the society... We consider as correct the condemnation of this crime as of one aimed at split of the society, which rouses discord between believers and those who do not believe in God. We are sure: it is necessary to reveal organizers, participants and possible clients of the mentioned deed. We hope the society and the country will be able to offer adequate measures of re-education." [391]

The Grand Mufti of Russia, the most senior Islamic cleric in the country, sent a separate letter to the trial judge stating his opposition to what Pussy Riot had done in the Orthodox church and that it was offensive to Islam. [392] It was observed by some that had Pussy Riot created such a performance inside of an Islamic mosque, instead of a Christian church, the outcome could have been much worse for them. [393]

Given that the concert/protest in the cathedral was in protest against Russian President Vladimir Putin and his running of the country, it was interesting that the British Telegraph reported that Putin's own assessment was that there was "nothing good" about how the band had behaved and conducted itself, but "nonetheless, I don't think that they should be judged so harshly for this." Though "the punishment should be adequate to the crime. And the state must protect the feelings of believers", [413] and that, "I hope the court will come out with the right decision, a well-founded one..." [394]

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev stated that though this own opinion about the

women was that "They are unpleasant figures, both on the outside and on the inside... They provoke extremely negative emotions in me, so unpleasant that I don't even like to talk about it." However, he continued that "...if I was a judge I wouldn't have sent them to prison. Just because I don't consider it correct that their punishment was in the form of a custodial sentence. They'd already been [in pre-trial detention], and that was enough. Therefore, the prolongation of detention in prison seems to me unproductive." [414]

Surprisingly, *Business Insider's* Adam Taylor's article "Why Russian Punks Pussy Riot Aren't Heroes" argues that though "international opinion may be heaping praise on the girls, it doesn't seem like many in the Russian opposition would argue that Pussy Riot are heroes for their performance. Alexei Navalny, one of the most prominent member Russia's opposition movement, has stopped short of defending their actions and called them 'silly girls.' Jailed oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky called their actions 'the mistakes of youthful radicalism.'" [390]

Russia's elites roundly condemned the actions of the Pussy Riot members. This was not limited to the leader of the Russia Orthodox Church, or the President whom they were protesting against, but also opposition leaders who equally despise Putin. Despite the lackluster support found within Russia, the Pussy Riot members were able to stir up particularly strong support in the United States.

The poll by Interfax-Religion showed that the "Pussy Riot action in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior was criticized by 70% of Russians, every third demands a prison sentence [for the women]". [415] FOM's poll confirmed the results. [416]

The U. S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power argued that the women of Pussy Riot were "brave 'troublemakers.'" Power continued by harassing the Russian Federation's Ambassador to the United Nations, Vitaly Churkin, with tweets on Twitter that she would "be honored to go on tour with #PussyRiot -- a group of girls who speak up & stand for human rights. Will you join us?" Ambassador Power was asked by Churkin if she wished to sing with Pussy Riot, to which she responded "I can't sing, but if #PussyRiot will have me, AmbChurkin, I say our 1st concert is for Russia's pol. prisoners. #LiveFromMatrosskayaTishina." [395]

In an interview with *Vanity Fair*, Power reported that there was no response from Churkin to this remark, and she considered herself the winner in the dispute. In his turn, the Russian diplomat on the official page of the Russian Federation's permanent mission in Facebook noted that the statement of the American woman was not true. "In fact, I answered her. I called Samantha and

explained that there are no political prisoners in Russia. She seemed to be stunned and promised to contact me again on this matter. She did not. She however, reluctantly, admitted that I had the upper hand in this squabble, because my answer was spontaneous, and her – no. I will not declare this my "little victory." Let those who like such anecdotes judge this," concluded the diplomat. [417]

When Pussy Riot was sentenced to jail time, Josh Earnest, President Obama's Spokesman, stated "The United States is disappointed by the verdict, including the disproportionate sentences that were granted...While we understand the group's behavior was offensive to some, we have serious concerns about the way these young women — about the way that these young women have been treated by the Russian judicial system." [396]

Victoria Nuland, then Spokesman for the State Department, released an official statement from her office that, "The United States is concerned about both the verdict and the disproportionate sentences handed down by a Moscow court in the case against the members of the band Pussy Riot and the negative impact on freedom of expression in Russia. We urge Russian authorities to review this case and ensure that the right to freedom of expression is upheld." [397]

After their release, in May 2014, the United States Congress went so far as to invite two of the bandmates of Pussy Riot to visit Congress. Praise for them was tremendously strong, as CNS News reported, Rep. Steve Cohen stated that "These women are indeed heroes to our people around the globe; they've stood in the face of danger." He continued that "they've lost their liberty, and their lives I think are still imperiled..."

Sen. Jeff Flake of Arizona chose to "commend these two and others they represent for the extraordinary courage that they've shown in Russia and to come abroad and talk about these human rights violations."

Maryland's junior Senator, Ben Cardin, said that "it is my pleasure to welcome to the United States Capitol members of the Pussy Riot..." The Senator continued "we had a chance to talk with them about the conditions today in Russia, the experiences that they had, including the fact that they were arrested and sent to prison, how they had tried to help the citizens of Russia deal with the current deterioration of human rights in Russia."

Senator Richard Blumenthal followed the example of his colleague, Sen. Cardin and raved that the members of Pussy Riot were "speaking truth to power..." and "being here today I think speaks louder than words. This picture is worth a thousand words," he concluded. [398]

From the women's trip to the US Senate not a single example was found of a Senator explaining why the women were imprisoned: Not for speaking truth to power, but because they had violated the laws on protecting religious beliefs. Thus, we could argue that the US Senators were very much engaged in character attacks against the Russian leadership. The senators, in their remarks to the U. S. press, did not disclose nor discuss the actual reason that the women were arrested, and instead filtered their arrest through the issues that the US media would be most critical of (e.g. human rights violations, women's rights, etc.). As we have seen, this is a common means of character attack frequently used by the U. S.: citing human rights abuses in Russia when American – Russian bilateral relations are at a cold point.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reported on the trip to the U. S. Congress and speech before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in an article titled "'Speaking truth to power': Pussy Riot Members tell Congress of rights abuses." The article states that "around 20 reporters" from the top networks waited to meet the women after their testimony before the Committee. The women used their testimony as an opportunity to advocate for the broadening of the Magnitsky Act to include other Russian officials who the Riot Members believe engage in human rights abuses. [399] At the time of this visit to Congress it was reported, as explanation of the Magnitsky Act that, "By law, the United States can freeze assets and ban travel to the U. S. of Russians deemed to be human rights abusers. Currently, 18 Russians are on a public list of people facing such sanctions while an unknown number of others are on a confidential list." [400]

Some at the U. S. government-financed *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* gave more restrained analysis of what had happened in regards to the Pussy Riot case. Brian Whitmore wrote in his article "Pussy Riot: The Punk Band That Isn't and The Concert That Wasn't" more accurately reflects what occurred on February 21, 2014. Whitmore writes that "Pussy Riot isn't really a "punk band" (although they are feminists). And -- contrary to popular belief -- they didn't actually play a "concert" in the cathedral. The Pussy Riot saga, which has been going on ever since their famous "Punk Prayer" video appeared on YouTube five months ago, illustrates the extent to which the Internet has altered perceptions of what we believe to be reality." [401]

In May 2014, Dustin Koenig of the *New York University Law Review* noted that, "While some critics focused on the disproportionate sentences handed down by the court following the band's convictions, or the meaning of justice meted out by an unjust regime, the mainstream reaction was by and large one of disbelief at such an apparently egregious crackdown on free

speech. This Note argues that such criticism largely missed the mark by casting the Pussy Riot affair in terms of free speech, despite the likelihood that the punk rockers would have faced a similar fate even under American free speech law—a tradition of protected speech more robust than any other.” [369]

The *Economist's Democracy in America Blog* wrote on July 26, 2012 that even in New York City, actions such as assembling in a cathedral uninvited and staging a protest would also likely end with you before a judge. [402] *The Economist* then cites a story originally covered by DNA Info, that nonviolent and peaceful freedom of speech in America is not always protected.

DNA Info, in contrasting Russian free speech versus American free speech, wrote that recently in New York City, the police had noted a piece of artwork, approved by the owner of a building, that referred to the police as murders and also depicted grievances against other U. S. government agencies. Two plain clothed gentlemen, who told reporters that they were policemen, came to the venue and painted over the artwork. [403] This strikes as hypocritical, or illogical at best, that the United States is encouraging free speech in other countries, while not allowing for it at home.

CNN stated that though band members “were sentenced to prison today, we won't allow these women to be silenced.” [418] This is quite far from being objective news as to say that the Russian government would not silence the women: They were convicted not for being feminists, but by not following Orthodox guidelines on reverence inside of churches. However, the author of the article posited a narrative that this was more broadly about a “silencing of women” and a women’s rights issue – something that would not be generally agreed upon by the wider population within Russia which viewed it as being just given the women’s lack of respect for their religious sensibilities in the overly Orthodox country.

The Bloomberg news agency criticized Putin, calling the Pussy Riot prosecution an “international symbol of President Vladimir Putin’s intolerance.” [419] However again: Putin did not order the women’s arrest and prosecution. The women were arrested by local police and prosecuted by a local prosecutor. It is not resultant of their political speech that they were sent to jail, it was specifically because the women violated the laws protecting religious believers’ right to not have their religious views insulted.

Adding credence to the Russian government’s position that churches are to be treated differently than other places, and that behaviors that offend the faithful will not be tolerated, Russia

passed a number of new laws in the wake of Pussy Riot case. In 2013 Russia enacted legislation that made insults directed at religious sentiments into a criminal offense. The law, Article 5.26 of the Administrative Code, Part 2, states "the intentional public desecration of religious or liturgical literature and objects of religious veneration, signs or emblems ideological symbolism and paraphernalia (including their destruction or damage). [407] The law allows for two years in prison and fines for violations. Subsequent to that, in June 2013, an amendment was passed to increase the associated punishment for violations of the law on "insulting the feelings of believers." This included an increase in the amount of confinement an offender could face and an increase in the maximum fine. These laws have been enforced by Russian law enforcement bodies since their enactment.

Continuing the experiment with the help of Google Advanced search option and looking at the 2012-2013 period, it must be said that results have seemingly increased, in some particular cases even tripled or quadrupled. Searching for "cold words" connected with Putin confirms the hypothesis of increasing character attacks on his persona during the period of Pussy Riot case, more precise numbers can be seen in the Tables 5.1 and 6.1 (see Appendices 3.5-3.6).

For example, Jeremy Kinsman in CBC News analyzed Putin's activity in an article "Russia's Vladimir Putin, democrat or dictator?" and concluded, that "has been in office too long and is no longer the democrat he once pretended to be." [420] Some of the found articles contained such a headlines as *The Guardian's* "Vladimir Putin: a tyrant at home, a friend of tyrants abroad" [421] or the Telegraph's "Vladimir Putin: 'the godfather of a mafia clan.'" [422] Though the *Daily Texan*, for example, warned that "condemning Putin as an aggressive tyrant is not sufficient, and it creates a self-fulfilling prophecy. Cornered and isolated dictators almost never back down; they usually turn to more threatening policies." [423]

The other way around, searching for Barack Obama + possible "cold" words about him also gave a bigger amount of results compared to 2009, but again, the overall number of results was smaller than for Putin. The experiment was performed with Russian words. The most acute results contained information about Barack's Obama's (real) quote that he was "good at killing people" versus him being a laureate of Nobel Peace Prize, [424] a news article about Saint Petersburg activists, who called Obama a "terrorist #1" [425] and articles about Guantanamo's continuation compared to the ones returned in 2008-2009. Some results compared the President of the United States to Adolf Hitler, such as a *Livejournal* articles [426] and an article about Alexey Navalny,

Russian political activist, with a similar comparison of him to U. S. and Nazi leaders. [427]

The major difference in those results remains the same: most of the “cold” Russian statements are from minor regional unofficial news sites or blogs, with a small number of results appearing in major Russian press outlets, and even there being mostly polite and “soft,” while the U. S. side, a bigger number of “sharp” criticisms are written in major news media sites. In fact, our research found a dearth of criticisms in the American political and news landscape about the Pussy Riot members’ means of protesting their President.

To give context to Russia’s reaction to the Pussy Riot protest/sacrilege in the cathedral, we have the example from September 2016 when a twenty-one-year-old Russian YouTube star named Ruslan Sokolovsky was charged under the new law for having played Pokémon Go inside of a Yekaterinburg church and having posted the video of his antics to YouTube. The YouTube video racked-up over 900,000 views. Sokolovsky was detained for months and faced five years’ imprisonment. [408]

The Orthodox Church’s Spokesman, Vladimir Legyoda, issued an all-encompassing statement via his Facebook page that discussed the nature of the crime and stated that the Church would be happy to help instruct Sokolovsky in the faith. However, the Spokesman stated that Russian press should not treat Sokolovsky as some kind of martyr for his actions. Legyoda wrote, in part that,

“It is clear that Mr. Sokolovsky was not a casual passer-by, who in a fit of passion for the game went into the church, but rather he is a well-known blogger in the city, he works in the style of Charlie Hebdo, that is he seeks deliberate provocation.” [409]

“Of course, the priests can and should talk to him and try to explain what the church is and what it is for. Help the guy. Perhaps, this would-be fighter for the rights who no one infringes, understands that it is in the humanity of Jesus Christ, whom Mr. Sokolovsky called ‘the rarest Pokémon’”. [409]

“As far as I know, Metropolitan Kirill of Yekaterinburg said he was ready to help young people to understand the situation that occurred. Including help in getting better acquainted with the life of the Church - for example, to participate in the diocesan service of charity. That's good. You can look to something that is not Pokémon.” [409]

“Finally, to my reporter colleagues. I beg you, do not try to make each provocateur Nelson Mandela. It’s kind of uncomfortable. Especially before Mandela.” [409]

In 2017, another twenty-one-year-old, this time a woman from Belgorod, Russia, lit a cigarette in a church using a votive candle. Pursuant to the 2013 laws that were passed, she was arrested after having posting a picture of the incident on the internet. She was charged with violating Article 148 and could be “punished with a fine up to 300 thousand Rubles, or compulsory work up to 240 hours, as well as forced labor or imprisonment for up to one year.” [410]

It was later concluded by a *Moscow Times* article, where among these examples, the “I am not the son of God” performance of Oleg Mavromatti and few other facts were mentioned with a final remark: “The church has a powerful lobby in the Russian political elite. And it uses it—despite the fact that the Russian population is not very religious. Only a small part [of Russia] actually participates in religious rites. Cases like Sokolovsky’s are an irritant and stir a feeling of protest in a very large section of society. But, thanks to the state, super-archaic values prevail, which only strengthens the tension between progress and Russian conservatism in its official form.” [428] The point remains contentious: At what point is free speech protected by a society as “free expression,” to be by the population and governments – and at what point should local cultural norms be appreciated for their own specificities? The case of the Pussy Riot band members is certainly one that deeply divided those who were looking east, and those who were looking towards the west. In both cases, one can see the underlying principles that allowed for the actors to make the decisions that they made regarding to what a responsible and acceptable government response was to the scandal.

The difference between the western and eastern narratives regarding the arrest, detention and sentencing of the Pussy Riot activists was stark: One saw Pussy Riot as vulgar, illegal protestors, the other viewed Riot as heroic freedom fighters standing up for free speech in a totalitarian regime. This led the international community to criticize and attack Putin for the arrest of the women. Posters of Putin with lipstick on, with “pussy” scrawled across his forehead appeared. [404] Other works of art also decrying his attack on Pussy Riot appeared. [405] At home Pussy Riot members were jailed and insulted by the Prime Minister, in the United States Senators and Congressmen were excited to meet them and the press thoroughly covered their visit.

Underscoring the eastern view that the Pussy Riot members violated local mores and laws and would have been arrested and sent to prison in Russia for any kind of political or apolitical commotion in a church are the new laws that were proposed, and passed, after the fact to defend the sentiments of religious believers was passed in 2013. We clearly see evidence that the Russian

government reacts to sacrilegious behavior with the full force of the law. It is worth noting in both the Pokémon playing man and the cigarette-smoking woman, that there was no element of politicization nor feminism to their actions. They were both prosecuted for violating the Church's norms of behavior.

This contrast between east and west is profound: How do two countries come to such radically different conclusions? Given that Eurasian narratives typically come in two varieties: Moscow's and Washington's, post-Soviet states must now decide for themselves which narrative they wish to support, and endorse, and which narrative they will reject. It would seem that for those who are seeking closer relations with the West, support for President Putin or the policies of the Russian Federation is not an acceptable alternative. In fact, it would seem that Putin is always "the bad guy."

With the examples of character assassination practices in the U. S. A. and Russia, it is important to underline the current reality of such processes in Post-Soviet world, including the Republic of Moldova. For instance, according to V. Portnikov, the success of Igor Dodon (the pro-Russian President of Moldova from the Party of Socialists) in the presidential election is "part of the Russian political plan to destabilize... Ukraine," where Moldova is "a proving ground" and does not interest the Kremlin itself. This is the place where "technologies are experimented with". For example, according to Portnikov, "the discrediting of pro-European political forces - has already been "successfully implemented in Moldova" and is now beginning to be implemented in Ukraine." [429] This example shows the growing power of mass media in character attacks aimed at specific political parties or candidates, which has become a common tool in international relations not only in the Western culture, but on the Post-Soviet ground, too.

The Pussy Riot case has the trappings of a classic "colorful" example of character assassination by the Americans against the Russians by attacking the Russian Federation's prosecution and sentencing of these women and serves as the powerful example of character assassination as a tool in interstate attacks by use of the mass media.

These examples as last presidential elections in Ukraine (2019) and parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova (2019) analyzed by the author in the last published article states that power of mass-media is bigger in the domain of character attacks regard political parties or candidates, using the character assassination as a political instrument in international relations in order to achieve goals within national space and receive benefits within international context. [430]

3.4 Conclusions to Chapter 3

The use of character attacks by the Russian and American governments is rather predictable there are several conclusions that can be drawn from this research:

1. Strategically, for major scandals that affect both the US and Russia, it seems that an “eastern” and “western” narrative appears as both sides seek out evidence that supports their claims of the opposite country’s leaderships’ failings, as we saw in both the Iraq War invasion and in the Pussy Riot case. The United States is much less likely to raise questions of human rights abuses in Russia when the relationship is in a “cool” phase, and more likely to pay less attention to human rights abuses when the relationship is “warm.”

2. The instruments that are used by the governments of the United States and Russia differ as the US has frequently issued official statements decrying the poor human rights conditions in Russia; However, Russia is less likely to make use of their official organs and instead to rely on Kremlin-backed press to attack the American leader. The Russian attacks are less commonly associated with things like human rights abuses, and instead focus on the personal failings of the President or an over-dramatization of “how bad” the situation is in the US, or world, specifically because of the American President.

3. A change has occurred during the last generation as contemporary attacks tend to be transmitted through things such as viral videos, social media, and other electronic means that did not yet exist when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. Thus, we can say that the speed by which attacks spread is much faster now than it has ever been before. Moreover, attacks today engage the population (e.g. retweeting, posting on and Facebook, etc.) which allows for attacks to reach a larger audience. Historically, the only analogy to was if someone gossiped by repeating a character attack that they had heard.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research results obtained in presented dissertation corresponds to the main aim of this work to investigate the theoretical basis of character attacks in international relations, evaluating the effects and degree of intentional character assassination attempts launched against the other country's leadership in 20th-21st century as well as to study the framework of character assassination in international politics in the context of relations between the U. S. A. and the Russian Federation.

1. *Theoretical study results* are presented by following achievements:

- Re-emerging of the character assassination category as object of multidisciplinary study in theory of international relations and diplomacy research; understanding of the nature, main features and role of character assassination in international politics was reflected in elaboration of the methodology of the case study of the specific of the Russian tradition of character assassination in internal and foreign policy and from evaluation the contrasts between U.S.A. national approaches to character assassination in politics of 20th-21st centuries and realization of comparative study of causes and effects of influence of character assassination policies upon US – Russian Federation bilateral relations.

- The conceptualization of character attacks in large understanding as a political strategy in international relations and in narrow approach as a tool in international politics. From this prospects on the base of literature review were formulated the main fundamentals of character assassination study:

- The character attacks strategy is based on conclusion that there is a correlation between character attacks and worsening or improvement of interstate relations;

- the role of mass-media in the character attacks strategy promotion is to present an opposing leader as a “barometer” of the direction relations between the countries is headed;

- Instruments of character attacks in international relations vary and can include published or written articles and statements, interviews, books, cartoons, rumors and the spreading of other forms of real or fake information. [205]

2. There are following functions of character attacks application in international politics:

- Character assassination was defied as deliberate destruction of an individual's reputation. Character assassination is the result of successful character attacks. The word can also be

used to refer to the process of reputation-destruction. This applies to the international level as states and their leaders can also become victims of character assassination; [205]

- Character assassination strategies and tools can be a part of warfare, even if those wars are informational. They involve the use of information in order to gain advantages over an opponent. Character assassination may include negative propaganda or disinformation to cripple the "rival" by manipulating public opinion, thereby undermining the credibility of information and lowering the chances of success by the opponent. Disinformation is intended to manipulate people at the "objective level" by support of discrediting information or making false conclusion both on governmental and nongovernmental levels; [430]

- The structures of the attacks differ both in political and social layers for both the U.S. and Russian attempts of character assassinations. Speaking of difference, for instance, a lot of sources from the Russian side were just "individuals" (blogs, user sites and "official" media sources remained silent and didn't show direct negativity towards the American President), but from the American side, the large numbers of search results shown consisted of newspapers articles. [206]

3. *The important scientific problem tackled* in the dissertation research is evaluation of the degree to which either country uses national traditional and modern strategies and tools of the character attacks against the other country's leadership in the context of contemporary U. S.- Russia relationships. Character assassination concept in the international politics sphere was evaluated by analyzing the degree to which the United States and Russian Federation used character attacks against the other country's leadership during over periods of time. Given that character assassination has evolved on transnational level, the structure of this phenomenon was defined and closely examined as strong political tool and component of the defamation strategies directed against political leaders aimed against their international and national reputation, image and finally to negative influence on bilateral state relations. [210]

4. *The achieved advantages of the analytical applied study* are argued by realization of the historical review of character attacks as used domestically in Russia and the United States, followed by an in-depth scientific analysis using quantitative data of early twentieth century U. S.- Russian relations, and comparative analytical study of the U. S. A.'s and the Russian Federation's utilization of character attacks as instruments against each country's leadership in 21st century. [208]

5. With reference to results of the study of character attacks done by the Russian Federation and the United States of America, against each other's leadership, the following are noted:

- Different reasons for rhetoric attacks against leaders: American rhetoric more frequently engages in attacks on the human rights violations of the Russian government. Thereafter the American press frequently attacks the leader of the Russian Federation for his barbarism and lack of respect for his citizens' human rights. The Russian Federation's attacks are more focused on attacking American leaders for personal failures and personality related complaints.

- Mass media portrays the foreign leaders during times of warm and of stressed bilateral relations: The rise of open source information gathering, and the incredible resource of the internet, it would be possible, via content analysis, to create algorithms that search for an increase in specific types of attacks in foreign media. By establishing what kinds of attacks typically precede the improvement or worsening of relations between countries, it would be possible for diplomats and leaders to know and act on an impending change in relations, doing as much as possible to improve relations between the countries. [430]

- Instruments and mechanisms used: Attacks against the President of the Russian Federation tend to be done by the upper class, high-brow newspapers and news media, and at times by senior officials appointed by the White House. However, the President of the United States does not directly attack the President of the Russian Federation; Attacks against the President of the United States tend to be done from the Russian side by those from the lower social classes of the society and less by the mainstream media. There were no cases found where President of the Russian Federation directly attacks the President of the United States of America, but Russian Members of Parliament are often aggressive in their expressions. [207]

6. The practical significance of this paper is argued by the fact that its results can be applied in practical policies elaboration, in the form of scientific discussion political material, can be used by political class from different countries, including from Republic of Moldova, seeking to understand announcements made by U.S.A. or Russian Federation Government representatives, and de facto proxies of the government. Last but not at least the achieved results are useful for all academic studies of bilateral U. S.- Russian relations, and for understanding the nature of character attacks in international relations as an independent academic field of study.

7. The importance of proposed study for American Political Science development as well as for international scientific community could be argued by the fact that the study of character assassination within the political science theory is still in its nascent stage. The Lab for Character assassination and Reputation Politics (CARP) housed at George Mason University, Fairfax,

Virginia, U. S. A. and The International Society for the Study of Character assassination (ISSCA), founded by scholars in the U. S. A. and Holland, have lead the way in studying the phenomena of character assassinations in politics. The theoretical approach, methodology and results of the comparative analysis of the methods and types of character attacks between the leaders of state in the U.S.A. and the R. F., study of their impact on bilateral relations in 21st century has allowed for the formulation of principles and directions upon which international character attacks can be further analyzed.

According to the conclusions outlined are proposed following **recommendations**:

- *Ministry of Foreign Policy and European Integration (MFPEI)* of the Republic of Moldova to innogurate national grant for scientific study of the character assassination in the context of international politics and in bilateral relations between states.

- *Academic structures, universities, civic society centers for research* to organize national/international scientific studies, conferences and round tables on relevant important subjects, such as: Character attacks and traditional diplomacy; The role of internet resources and mass media; International dimension of character assassination in the context of Reputation theory; Character attacks against State Image in international politics; Ethic dimension of character assassination in international relations in the context of informational technologies expansion; International Law versus character assassination in international relations in global world etc.

- *Diplomatic Institute of the MFPEI* of the Republic of Moldova in collaboration with Association for Foreign Policy (NGO) to create a network of scholars, civic experts and professional politicians and carrier diplomats for elaboration of the proposals for National and Global Code on International Law rversus using of character assassination as instrument in international politics.

The perspective scientific research of the studied problem have be interdisciplinary, initiated on the national, regional and international levels by academics and civil society associations from the field, aimed to research and expertise different aspects of the subject in the context of the theory of international relations, diplomacy studies, public polities, communication sciences, social psychology for the increased monitoring and tracking of open-source media's within the R. F. and the U. S.A. in order to create algorithms that can more accurately predict the worsening of situation and propose preventive measures to be undertaken for successful development of bilateral relations between the countries. [430]

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(This list continues in Appendix 3.14)

APPENDIXES

Appendix 1.1

Types of character assassination according to Eric Shiraev [41]

Criteria	Type	Description
Scope	Individual	As for the <i>scope</i> , collective character assassination is a form of summary punishment. In the Soviet Union in the 1930s, in China in the 1940s and Vietnam in the 1950s, the ruling Communist Parties conducted the unprecedented campaigns of accusations, lies, and distortions targeting a summary character of so-called rich peasants. They were routinely portrayed as greedy, mean, arrogant, and uncaring. Songs and literature works were sponsored to inflict further damage. In doing so, the governments attempted to justify political violence against the well-to-do peasantry and to clean up the way toward total collectivization of agriculture in these countries. In Nazi Germany, the Nazi Party and then the whole state propaganda machine was launched to discredit the Jewish population, cause hostility among Germans against ethnic minorities, plant the seeds of violent antagonism, and then justify physical violence against the Jews and other social groups.
	Collective	
Time	Live	In terms of <i>time</i> , victims of character assassination could be “living and breathing” individuals as well as the deceased. Personal damage after an attack could occur at critical points of an individual career: character assassins try to —kill because their slander is often the only weapon they have. Attacks against deceased people are conducted to discredit a cause, an idea, theory, or ideology that these individuals represented or stood for. For example, the biographies of Stalin in Russia, FDR, Reagan and Nixon in the United States, Gandhi in India, and scores of others are continued to be scrutinized today with the purpose to discredit their legacy.
	Post-mortem	
Momentum	Planned	The <i>momentum</i> means that during a political campaign, instantaneous or “drive-by” assassination usually take place. Quick character attacks are usually opportunistic. On the other hand, the slow pace of character —poisoning is based on long-term hopes. Since the 1960s, the famous Russian author and dissident, Alexander Solzhenitsyn was accused of being a Jew, a traitor, a Nazi collaborator, a prison snitch, and a paid agent of foreign intelligence. His letters to his former wife were published and several quotes deliberately exposed. According to the attackers, Solzhenitsyn was a selfish, histrionic individual caring only about his fame and drawing attention to self. He was accused of sadistic attempts to destroy the otherwise great reputation of the Soviet Union. Such attacks continued after his death.
	Spontaneous	

Classification of character assassination methods (by M. Icks and E. Shiraev) [54]

Method	Description
Anonymous lies	This method may include falsifications of a person’s early biography or inappropriate sexual behavior or sexual deviance, or contain forged evidence about an individual’s inappropriate social ties or political associations.
Misquoting	It is the character assassination method of two amalgam practices: omitting significant details from a quote and/or quoting out of context. This method can also refer to manipulatively selecting unfortunate or poor photographs taken in awkward situations which then promulgate ridicule. In the age of “photoshopped reality” in social media the danger of visual distortion of political events in the news become real. For example, inopportune photos that are deliberately used by journalists or bloggers to show a politician from their least impressive side, such as President Bush holding a crying baby.
Silencing	This is a long-term character assassination method and often occurs post-mortem. History distortion discussed above is an example of silencing. Memory erasing refers to avoiding any references to individuals and their work by the attacker who attempts to erase their public record from collective memory. Even in antiquity, the Egyptians, the Romans, and other cultures applied memory sanctions against rulers and public figures who were in disgrace, such as Pharaoh Akhenaten and the Roman Emperors Caligula and Nero. Their images were destroyed and their names erased. However, the art of memory erasure and history distortion was taken to a new level in the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century. Among the most notorious examples is Stalin’s Russia, where Trotsky, Yezhov, and other prominent political and military figures disappeared from pictures and history books. The concept of memory hole was introduced by George Orwell’s dystopian novel 1984, where the Party’s Ministry of Truth systematically re-created all potential historical documents, and in effect, re-wrote history to match the often-changing state propaganda
Acts of vandalism	Symbols representing an individual or a group frequently become targets of violent acts by individuals motivated by a combination of jealousy, prejudice, or a desire for retribution. Historically, acts of vandalism were expressed in a form of dishonor that could be passed by the Roman Senate upon traitors or others who brought discredit to the Roman State. The intent was to declare that the person had fallen into disgrace and disqualified as a true Roman. At that time, it served as a form of severe punishment for the condemned individual who was remembered in negative terms, harvesting eternal shame. For example, in January 2014 statues of the Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin have fallen victim to a string of assaults in Ukraine that have left them missing limbs, splattered with paint, covered in insults and swastikas, bullet-riddled, and even smeared with excrement. This rise in vandalism against Lenin monuments was explained by experts as a direct result of the ongoing pro-European protests against President Viktor Yanukovich’s decision to shelve a landmark association pact with the European Union.
Name-calling	This method usually appears in a form of a quick, short insult, ridicule or application of specific, demonizing labels. In politics, ideological labels such as “communist,” “fascist,” “Nazi,” “capitalist,” “imperialist,” or “terrorist,” etc., are quickly attached to political leaders and officials. Ridicule is a purposeful and contemptuous exaggeration or distortion in a comical context. Its humorous nature helps attackers portray their victims as weak, lightweight, dumb, unbalanced, irrational, or hypocritical. The result is to slant a candidate and his/her policies so they appear less meaningful or important than they actually are. Incompetence and ignorance are favorite themes of ridiculing.
Mental illness	Allegations of an individual having in the past experienced or currently experiencing mental illness is a common character assassination method due to an attached the strong social stigma attached to psychological disorders. This label is frequently associated with notions of insanity, madness, lack of rationality, instability, and irrationality. As the Ukrainian civil conflict heated up in summer 2014 a number of articles began appearing claiming that Putin was “erratic,” “unstable” etc. Different authors discussed scattered observations rumors that “Putin has become increasingly withdrawn and isolated” and “is appearing live on television less frequently”.
Sexual deviance	Accusation in sexual deviance becomes a weapon in arsenal of character assassination with the growing influence of public opinion, moral behavior has emerged as a desirable standard. Any deviation, especially in regard to sexual conduct, could open an individual to character attacks. Short-term character assassination attempts are frequently based on alleged inappropriate acts, such as having an extramarital affair. Long-term character attacks require allegations about a person’s persistent pattern of “deviant” behavior. Deviance is defined differently in different times and cultures.

Types of Character Attacks (by J. J. Smart and E. Shiarev) [21]

TYPES	Description	Attackers' goals	Defenders' Challenges
Cheap Shots	Focus on an episode, an action, or statement of a candidate that may raise questions about this person's credibility, honesty, integrity, generosity, or decency.	Annoy and distract their opponents so that the attacks can make a cumulative damage or push the victim to overreact.	To ignore or not to ignore such cheap shots? There are two undesirable outcomes: appearing weak and overreacting.
Falsifications	Based on lies, which by the time they are spread are hard to distinguish from real facts.	To deliberately associate the opponent's political message with his or her alleged immoral acts, or other serious character flaws.	To ignore may appear as acceptance of the falsifications. Rebuttal takes time and resources and may cause speculations.
Character assassination Attempts	Serious and direct accusations, claims, charges, statements or other information that is based on certain known facts.	Attacks should result in an immanent moral damage and unavoidable political defeat of their opponent.	How to defend without appearing defensive, apologetic, or shielding the victim of the attacks.

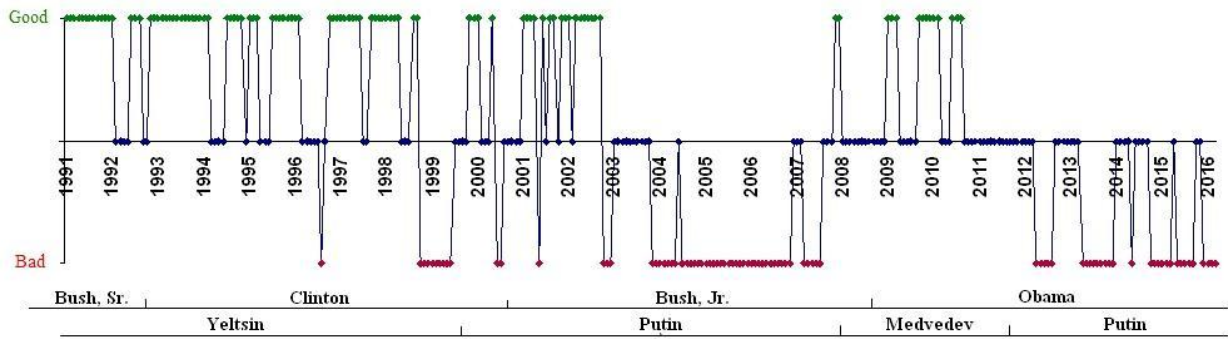
Types of Character Attacks: Description and Examples (by J. J. Smart and E. Shiarev) [21]

Types	Description
Cheap Shots	<p>This is a relatively simple yet potentially hurtful form of an attack, which emphasizes an episode, an action, a statement, or a biographical fact in the life of a politician that alludes to this person’s individual features including but not limited to his or her credibility, honesty, integrity, generosity, or decency. Such attacks can be either deliberate or spontaneous. Cheap shots occur in the context of certain political, social, or economic issues but for the attackers, their eventual target is the opponent’s character. “Character defenders” have to face a difficult dilemma: to ignore such cheap shots or not? A reasonable action would be to simply ignore them, especially if they are untrue. Yet the defenders who are not paying attention to the attacks, may appear weak and scared to respond. They also may look as if they are hiding something. Those who launch cheap shots try to annoy and distract their opponents, and maybe cause them to overreact. To illustrate, negative rumors were circulating in 1987 about presidential candidate Michael Dukakis’s alleged mental health problems. In 1991, presidential candidate Bill Clinton was openly mocked for his adulterous past. Both candidates had to spent significant time defending themselves against the rumors. This took their significant time away from campaigning. Cheap shots are usually brief and often appear spontaneous (which they may or may not be). They include critical remarks including name-calling, insulting, ridiculing, and spreading rumors.</p>
Falsifications	<p>When Hillary Clinton was the first lady in the 1990s, the rumors circulated about her promiscuous yet deadly management style: she was rumored to have a male lover, Vincent Foster, who had been a White House council and—also allegedly—had been murdered under her orders. These rumors were falsifications. These types of attacks are usually planned and tend to be more sophisticated than cheap shots. Falsifications are lies. Yet because they often are hard to immediately distinguish from facts, falsifications are often a potent weapon of character assassins. They use falsifications to associate the victim’s character with certain alleged immoral or inappropriate acts. Character attackers often use falsifications about presidents or candidates having inappropriate connections or ties with certain “undesirable” political groups or countries. For example, in the past, an alleged association with communists could have ruined many peoples’ professional careers in the United States. In 1944, supporters of presidential candidate Thomas Dewey attempted to associate vice president Harry Truman with Sidney Hillman, a labor leader and an alleged agent of the Communist Party. By making such accusations, Dewey’s supporters hoped to provoke a popular dismay and voters’ disappointment with Truman.</p>
Direct Character Attacks	<p>Direct Character Attacks involve direct accusations about a person’s character flaws that are based on known facts. Direct attacks are different from falsifications because the former use apparently reliable evidence. Direct character attacks typically exaggerate this evidence to harm a victim as much as possible. Such attacks tend to be planned and coordinated. The defenders have to find a right balance in their responses: to deny some of the attackers’ damaging information is no longer possible; yet to unconditionally defend the victim of the character assassination may no longer be appropriate. To exemplify, the most common topics are attacks on religious identity, sexual misconduct, deceitful behavior and mental capacity.</p>

Appendix 3.1

Graph of the Russian – U. S. relationship

Fig. 1.1. Graph of the Russian – U. S. relationship

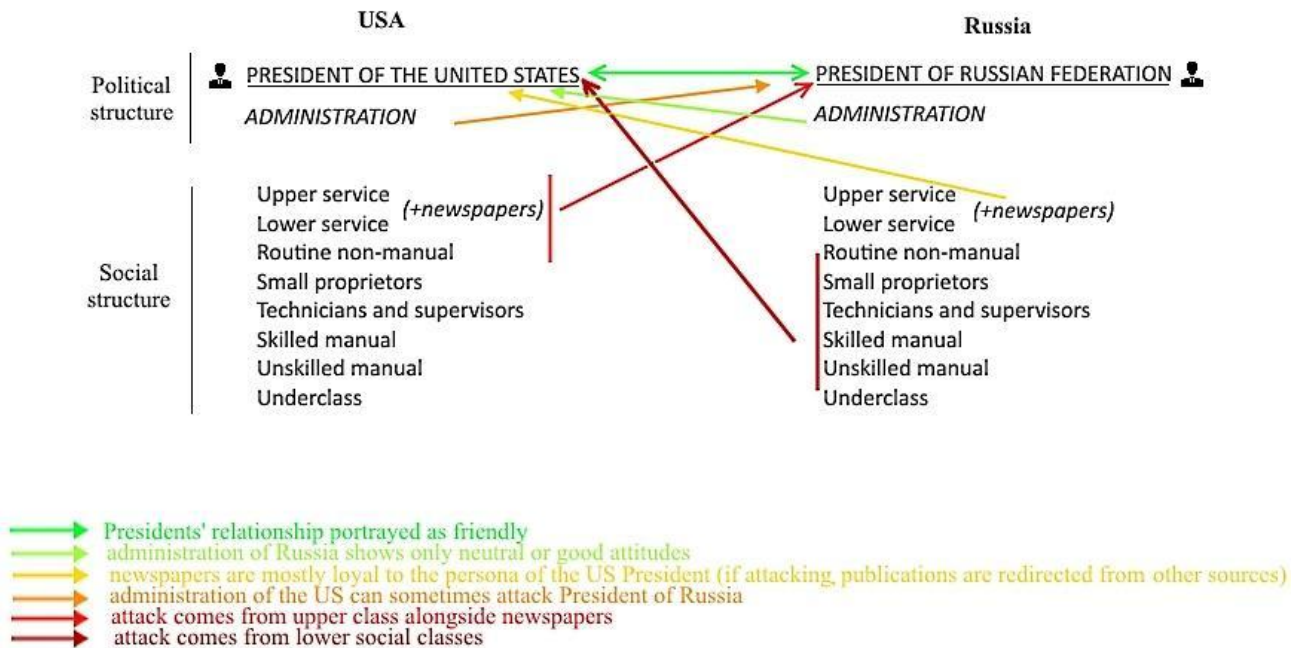


Appendix 3.2

The structure of attacks from Russian and American sides

Fig. 2.1. The structure of attacks from Russian and American sides

Presumable structure of an attack (character assassination)



Content analysis of online sources results data by “cold” words about G. W. Bush

Table 3.1. Content analysis of online sources results data by “cold” words about G. W. Bush

	Overall	2001	2002	2003	2008
"Буш" + "идиот"	123000	211	78	80	509
"Буш" + "тупой"	95100	75	70	48	398
"Буш" + "дурак"	137000	281	127	139	764
<i>("Буш дурак")</i>	1390	0	0	1	12
"Буш" + "ленивый"	109000	39	30	26	119
"Буш" + "высокомерный"	20200	8	5	7	18
"Буш" + "лицемер"	21300	5	1	4	35
"Буш" + "лжец"	69900	28	24	7	64
<i>("Буш" + "империалист")</i>	8410	1	8	2	9
"Буш" + "империализм"	80300	23	57	64	222
"Буш" + "террорист"	135000	151	120	98	235
"Буш" + "права человека"	144000	179	129	127	537
"Буш" + "пытки"	118000	67	86	76	477
"Буш" + "палач"	97500	32	25	21	102
"Буш" + "убийца"	162000	320	833	211	920
<i>("Буш убийца")</i>	1560	3	3	4	5
<i>Additional:</i>					
<i>"Буш" + "кат" (because of usage of "кат." as for "католический")</i>	310000	34	9	43	1560
<i>"Буш" + "инквизитор"</i>	20300	18	6	3	24

Table 4.1. Content analysis of data from online sources; results for “cold” words about V. V. Putin

	Overall	2001	2002	2003	2008	2012	2013
"Putin" "aggressive"	515000	1150	972	915	9560	33100	48800
"Putin" "violent"	570000	2500	1700	1800	13800	46500	72400
"Putin" "dangerous"	10400000	3520	2290	2310	18000	63700	95500
"Putin" "unstable"	429000	508	359	325	1710	5480	8340
"Putin" "dictator"	478000	1010	506	737	4350	21200	30600
"Putin" "tyrant"	290000	279	90	173	726	3480	6890
"Putin" "emperor"	502000	880	485	425	2840	10200	14100
<i>("Putin" "imperialist")</i>	288000	269	185	201	1170	2940	4290
"Putin" "imperialism"	464000	693	455	511	2480	8190	12200
<i>("Putin" "human rights")</i>	10100000	2580	3420	3510	14100	70300	115000
"Putin" "human rights violation"	99400	21	1	3	215	690	581
"Putin" "anti-semitic"	473000	403	1870	1980	1810	9500	14500
"Putin" "crazy"	927000	2800	2380	3240	37500	124000	174000
"Putin" "mafia"	593000	1710	1440	1770	16400	67300	99700
"Putin" "embezzlement"	351000	70	68	86	400	1660	3040
"Putin" "terrorist"	12000000	3030	3950	3620	10400	45100	75700
"Putin" "murderer"	650000	523	482	659	7350	20300	28800
"Putin" "liar"	674000	670	365	558	6980	34500	46700

Table 5.1. Content analysis of online data; results for “cold” words about D.A. Medvedev

	Overall	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<i>("Medvedev" "human rights")</i>	414000	2990	4710	7170	8620	7710
"Medvedev" "human rights violation"	59000	8	10	39	40	50
"Medvedev" "torture"	1230000	1400	2170	3170	3480	3430
"Medvedev" "terrorist"	413000	2410	3610	5380	5780	6380
<i>"Medvedev" "imperialist"</i>	110000	389	380	410	555	457
"Medvedev" "imperialism"	241000	759	1080	1160	1520	1960
"Medvedev" "criminal"	394000	2380	3470	5650	7050	6590
"Medvedev" "mafia"	330000	1060	1100	2600	2300	2380
"Medvedev" "puppet"	112000	703	734	898	1340	1650
"Medvedev" "liar"	184000	259	357	606	709	680
"Medvedev" "aggressive"	280000	1310	1590	2260	2810	2570
"Medvedev" "dangerous"	379000	2510	3250	4640	5250	4780
"Medvedev" "silly"	356000	488	681	1130	1080	1260
"Medvedev" "stupid"	181000	1250	1700	2450	2870	2810
"Medvedev" "weak"	367000	2410	3370	4310	4660	4680

Appendix 3.6

Content analysis of online data sources results data by “cold” words about B. Obama

Table 6.1. Content analysis of online data sources results data by “cold” words about B. Obama

	Overall	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
<i>("Обама" "империалист")</i>	17200	10	61	63	32	54
"Обама" "империализм"	173000	821	952	1430	1680	3030
<i>("Обама" "нелегальная война")</i>	32	x	x	x	x	x
"Обама" "пытки"	432000	2020	2980	4960	6040	10600
"Обама" "террорист"	38900	973	1670	3230	3470	4910
"Обама" "фашист"	152000	286	427	754	792	1470
<i>"Обама" "ИГИЛ"</i>	472000	4100	6450	11900	17400	30200
"Обама" "лжец"	60600	128	262	441	658	2060
<i>("Обама" "обманщик")</i>	51900	69	82	137	149	220
<i>"Обама" "убийца"</i>	530000	4730	6180	8810	12100	21000
"Обама" "палач"	88400	300	518	761	808	1510
<i>("Обама" "высокомерный")</i>	19200	35	44	67	70	118
<i>"Обама" "Гитлер"</i>	1590000	3930	5980	9780	13500	21100
"Обама" "Гуантанамо"	328000	495	506	710	970	1960
"Обама" "наркоман"	188000	761	965	1380	1880	2740

Appendix 3.7

Content analysis of online data for “warm” words about G. W. Bush

Table 7.1. Content analysis of online data for “warm” words about G. W. Bush

		2001	2002	2003	2008
"Буш" "друг" -"друга" -"другу"	348000	480	436	319	1560
"Буш" "дружба"	213000	359	244	226	2060
"Буш" "партнер"	x	190	207	197	585
"Буш" "товарищ"	183000	271	572	175	712
<i>("Буш" "хороший лидер")</i>	844	1	2	0	2
"Буш" "честный"	244000	97	71	44	197
"Буш" "умный"	159000	198	125	128	604
"Буш" "приятный"	99500	71	100	51	215
"Буш" "надежный"	206000	80	43	65	155
"Буш" "сильный"	300000	351	329	229	804
"Буш" "союзник"	196000	39	54	55	124
<i>("Буш" "мир")</i>	538000	2650	3120	2010	8230
<i>("Буш" "рассудительный")</i>	13600	2	5	0	16

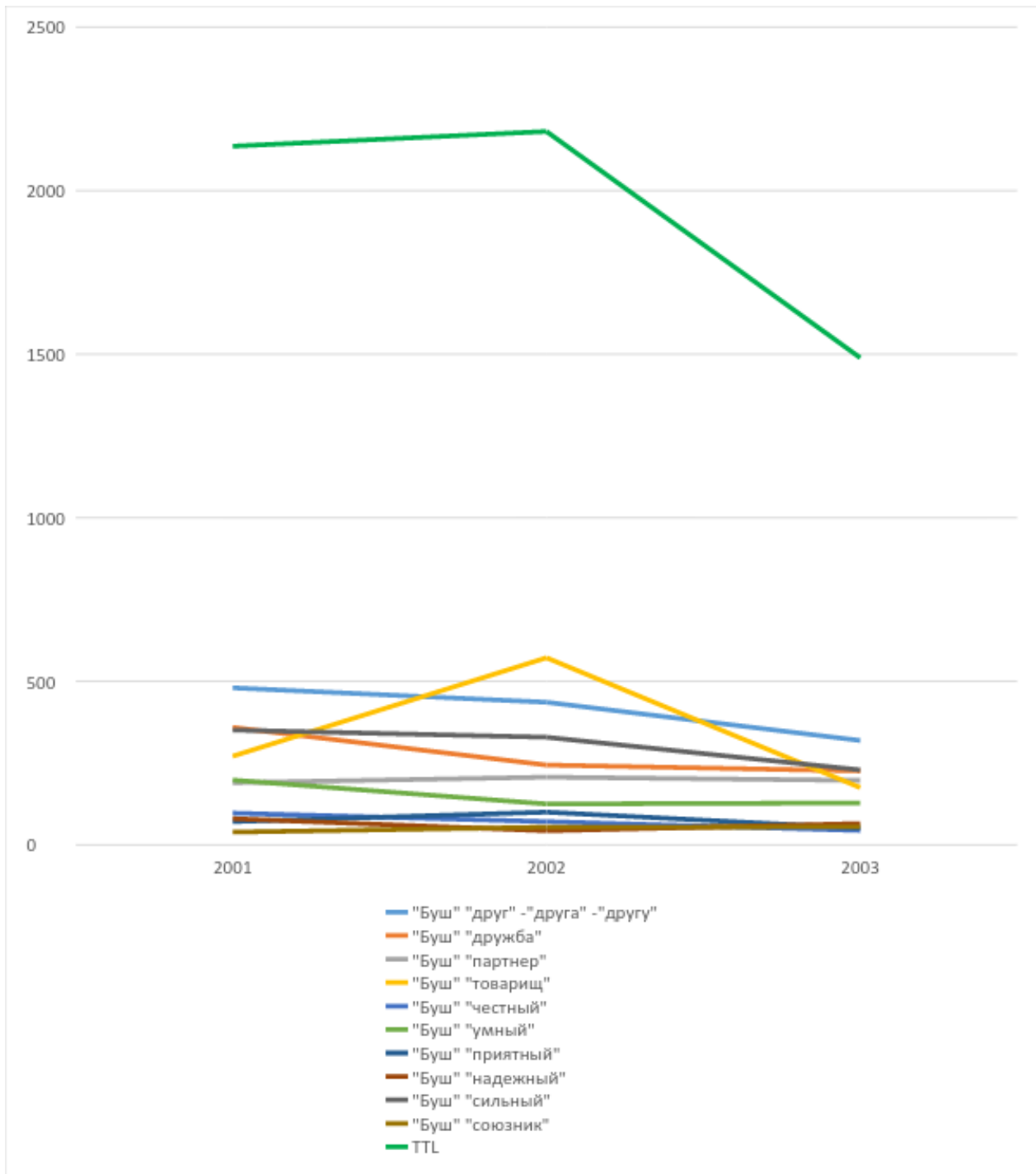
Content analysis of online data results for “warm” words about V. V. Putin

Table 8.1. Content analysis of online data results for “warm” words about V. V. Putin

	Overall	2001	2002	2003	2008	2012	2013
"Putin" "friend"	11700000	5300	3740	4430	32600	112000	185000
"Putin" "friendship"	671000	2220	1030	1200	9020	32300	46300
"Putin" "partner"	10900000	3580	3820	4050	21500	78800	126000
"Putin" "trustworthy"	353000	181	85	119	686	1850	2970
<i>("Putin" "good leader")</i>	59000	26	2	5	50	268	450
"Putin" "honest"	511000	1410	707	686	5510	23300	35000
"Putin" "clever"	472000	805	582	790	6340	18900	25500
"Putin" "pleasant"	457000	691	436	433	2370	9810	13000
"Putin" "reliable"	536000	1060	881	813	4400	15800	23100
"Putin" "strong"	18500000	6350	4430	4860	29900	113000	171000
"Putin" "ally"	507000	1160	889	770	5230	17300	29200
"Putin" "peace"	18100000	8800	6150	6530	23600	93300	145000
"Putin" "reasonable"	532000	1070	725	702	3870	13100	20100

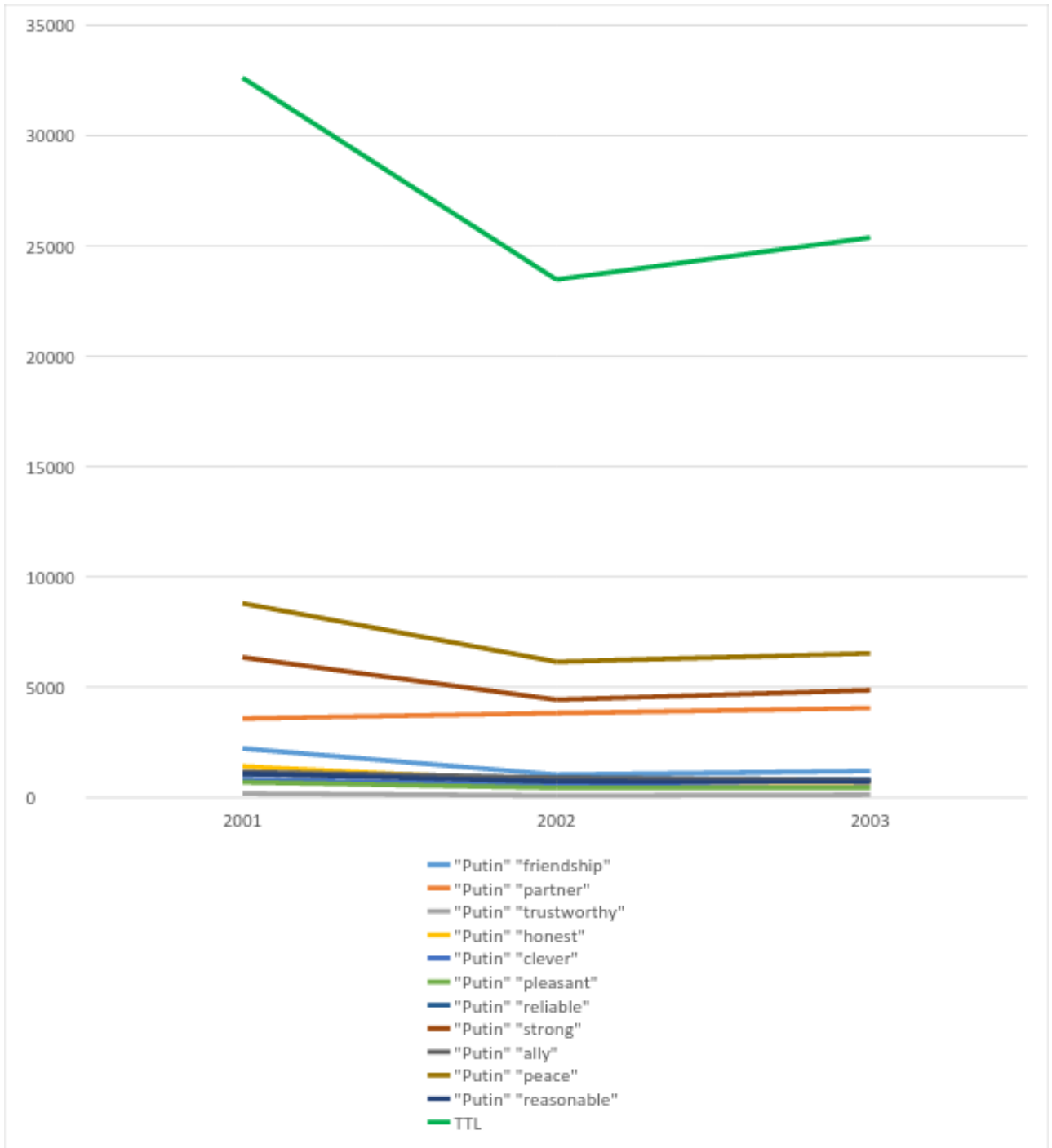
Content analysis of online data for “warm” words about G. W. Bush (2001-2003 period)

Fig 9.1. Content analysis of online data for “warm” words about G. W. Bush (2001-2003 period)



Content analysis of online data for “warm” words about V. V. Putin (2001-2003 period)

Fig 10.1 Content analysis of online data for “warm” words about V. V. Putin (2001-2003 period)



Additional content analysis of online sources by sites method description

Advanced Google search allows searching for the specific words and their forms, by date (which has already been used), by unfinished words, their synonyms or searching without words listed by user. It also allows a researcher to use the function of searching by sites using the command “site:...” The previous research has shown that the inquiry which consist only of the words in quotation marks isn’t proper, because it only shows the results with the requested words, not from the whole Internet. Instead of it, searching by sites including the quoted words is the most appropriate.

As the primary objective of this research is to review how the media performs character attacks on foreign countries’ leaders when diplomatic relationship between those countries is poor, “cold”, “not friendly”, etc., six common periodicals were chosen:

- The Wall Street Journal
- The New York Times
- The New Yorker
- The Washington Post
- New York Post
- U. S. A. Today

These newspapers have wide circulation in the United States and so it was more probable that they would cover a wide number of events, including international relations. Also, each of these newspapers has their own editorial board that promotes a diversity of political views – thus different opinions should be present between these newspapers’ articles.

Previous attempt of research frequently took hits from *any* sites, the number of the real newspapers of which was very little. There were results from forums, discussion topics, authors’ sites, blogs, provocative pages, and social media, but the real media sites were mostly absent in the results lists. This time, the inquiry consisted of specific words in quotation marks (“President’s name” “chosen characteristic word(s)”) and the commands “site:wsj.com OR site:nytimes.com OR site:washingtonpost.com OR site:newyorker.com OR site:usatoday.com OR site:nypost.com,” where “OR” allows to search through all the listed sites.

Following this procedure in the research gives the least number of results, though the quality of sources increases. In all cases articles were taken from the chosen newspapers' sites. This means that every search result is specifically connected to the source news source, and so there is no chance of the page not being found, or not being reliable, etc. All results are authentic as they were found *only* on the described sites.

The experiment was performed by searching for the “cold” words in connection to Vladimir Putin, during his years of presidency for the “warm period” (in 2001 and partly in 2002, when his relationship with the U. S. had just begun) and during “cold periods” (in 2003, when the War in Iraq took place; in 2008 during the Georgian Conflict; and in 2012-2013 due to the Pussy Riot case) as was described in the theoretical part. The chosen search terms were:

- "Putin" "aggressive"
- “Putin” “violent”
- “Putin” “dangerous”
- “Putin” “unstable”
- “Putin” “dictator”
- “Putin” “tyrant”
- “Putin” “emperor”
- “Putin” “imperialist”
- “Putin” “imperialism”
- “Putin” “human rights”
- “Putin” “anti-semitic”
- “Putin” “crazy”
- “Putin” “mafia”
- “Putin” embezzlement”
- “Putin” “terrorist”
- “Putin” “murderer”
- “Putin” “liar”

The results confirmed the hypothesis: the “cold” words were used more often during the worsening of the countries' bilateral relations.

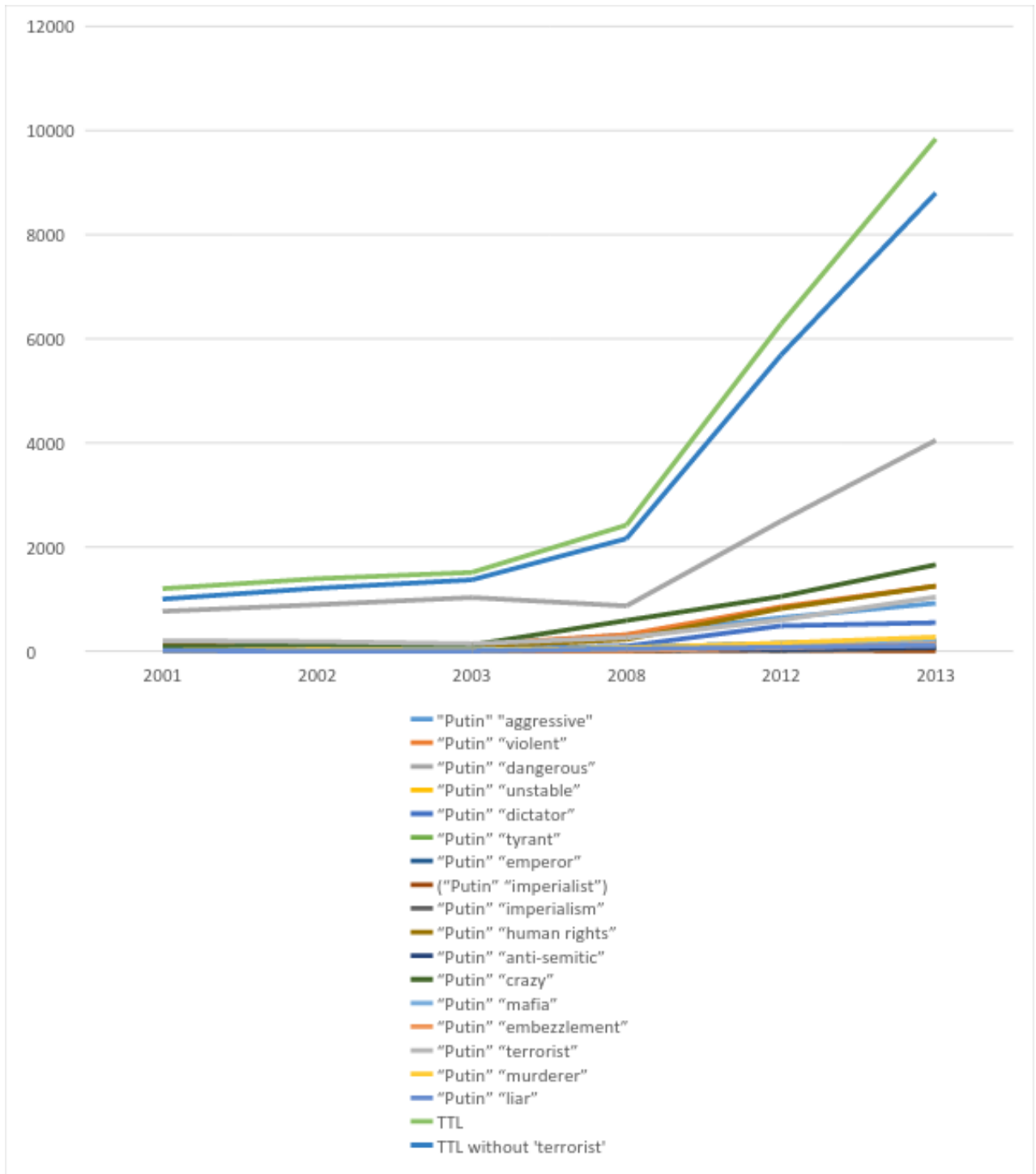
Content analysis of online data for “cold” words about V. V. Putin

Table 12.1. Content analysis of online data for “cold” words about V. V. Putin

	Overall	2001	2002	2003	2008	2012	2013
"Putin" "aggressive"	19300	86	108	103	309	643	920
“Putin” “violent”	27500	102	112	124	316	852	1250
“Putin” “dangerous”	50800	765	893	1030	869	2500	4050
“Putin” “unstable”	3550	10	16	22	52	115	179
“Putin” “dictator”	8660	10	32	38	96	486	547
“ <i>Putin</i> ” “ <i>tyrant</i> ”	1380	2	4	7	7	58	69
“Putin” “emperor”	3890	16	27	18	68	149	191
(“ <i>Putin</i> ” “ <i>imperialist</i> ”)	815	1	3	4	6	23	3
“ <i>Putin</i> ” “ <i>imperialism</i> ”	1720	10	3	7	35	9	64
“Putin” “human rights”	17200	59	55	75	226	819	1250
“ <i>Putin</i> ” “ <i>anti-semitic</i> ”	3480	7	8	6	22	38	77
“Putin” “crazy”	28900	95	109	118	589	1050	1660
“Putin” “mafia”	3820	10	29	32	72	144	200
“Putin” “embezzlement”	2030	4	2	2	8	69	129
“Putin” “terrorist”	21000	201	183	143	260	599	1040
“Putin” “murderer”	4790	7	28	10	64	156	271
“Putin” “liar”	9050	4	0	0	47	74	110
Total		1201	1392	1512	2421	6289	9840
Total without “terrorist”		1000	1209	1369	2161	5690	8800

Content analysis of online data by media sites for “cold” words about V. V. Putin

Fig 13.1. Content analysis of online data by media sites for “cold” words about V. V. Putin



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DECLARATION OF ASSUMING THE RESPONSIBILITY

I, the undersigned, declare under personal responsibility that the materials presented in the doctoral thesis are the result of personal scientific research and development. I understand that if otherwise, I will be held responsible in accordance with applicable law.

Jason Jay Smart

May 20, 2019

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An experienced advisor to a broad network of US and international policy makers and political leaders. A savvy, tri-lingual manager of corporate, political and policy personnel, who charts a data-driven course of action to produce highly effective results. Strong ability to build and manage important relationships, while negotiating favorable solutions for mission critical projects. These skillsets have allowed for great results to be consistently provided to diverse clients worldwide.

Experience

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Since 2013
Position: Principal

Recent projects advising national leaders on effective public relations and corporations on better government relations.

- **Latin America, 2017 - present**, advising a former President in preparing his party for local and national elections to be held within the next two years. Lead efforts to devise a comprehensive strategy, to improve the candidate's legacy, compose messaging, effectively discredit opponents, and to create a nationally competitive political party.
- **Ukraine, 2015 - 2018**, advised a national political party during preparations for local, Parliamentary and Presidential elections. Advising concerned public outreach and on the creation of a national brand, political strategy, press relations, and social research.
- **Europe, 2017 - 2018**, consulted a new politician on party-building and messaging based on social research.
- **Latin America, 2016 - 2017**, advised a Vice-President and his team on actions to be taken to improve his ratings.
- **Georgia, 2015**, conducted public opinion polling for a Parliamentary party and advised on an outreach strategy. Worked closely with local staff to assure that TV and press reports accurately covered the party's message. Discussed how to use the results of the conducted polls to make the party more responsive to voters and how to implement a strong communications strategy. Drafted a detailed strategy for implementing a data science program.
- **United States, 2015**, was contracted by Cambridge Analytica/SCL to advise a US Senator's Presidential campaign, and to direct a cutting-edge team of 23 professionals, including PhD-level data scientists, writers, computer scientists, and others, to create a popular national movement to support the candidate. Lead innovative efforts to generate positive domestic/international press and to improve expatriate vote totals by using social media.
- **Moldova, 2014**, collaborated directly with the Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers and Members of Parliament to advance the Party's message to wider demographics, including to international audiences.

Education

Master of Arts in Political Science

Virginia Tech, 2013

Completed a Graduate Certificate in Security Studies.

Bachelor of Arts in Government & International Politics and Russian Studies

George Mason University, 2007

Academic Publications

Smart J., Shiraev E. Character Attacks and American Presidents. In Character assassination throughout the Ages, eds. Icks, M., Shiraev, E. Palgrave Macmillan U. S., 2014 – pp. 215-235. - URL: <http://www.palgrave.com/us/book/9781137397867>.

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Participation in Scientific Conferences

“Character assassination: The Art of Defamation Throughout the Ages”, international colloquium in Heidenberg, Germany on July 21-23, 2011.

“Post-Soviet States Between Russia and the EU: Analyzing Special Circumstances and Political Tendencies”, Conferința Științifică Internațională in Chisinau, Moldova on September 27, 2016.