ANALYSIS OF RUSSIA'S INFORMATION CAMPAIGN AGAINST UKRAINE

The report examines non-military aspects of the crisis in Ukraine from a strategic communications perspective, focusing on Russia's information campaign, and provides lessons for the NATO Allies.

Attributions

The report has been prepared by the NATO StratCom Centre of Excellence (COE) analysing open-source information and using expert contributions from discussions held on 8 May and 17 June 2014 with, in particular (in alphabetical order) Jānis Bērziņš, Aivar Jaeski, Mark Laity, Nerijus Maliukevicius, Aurimas Navys, Gerry Osborne, Robert Pszczel and Stephen Tatham, as well as from the findings of two of the COE's research initiatives: The thematic frame analysis of three main Russian TV channels, conducted in cooperation with the Centre for East European Policy Studies (http://eng.appc.lv/) and the Twitter sentiment analysis conducted in cooperation with the Latvian Information Agency LETA (http://www.leta.lv/eng).

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Executive Summary

The report analyses Russia's information campaign against Ukraine, covering the period from the 3rd Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius (28-29 November 2013) until the annexation of Crimea (16 March 2014). It refers also to some more recent, important examples of the information campaign relating to events such as the MH17 air tragedy.

Over the years, Russia has been drawing lessons from different Allied operations and has worked on adapting its military planning to the realities of a modern conflict. It tested these lessons in the recent August 2008 war with Georgia[1] which marked the first use of cyber warfare and information operations in conjunction with a conventional military operation. Russia has also shown a willingness to modernize Soviet-era tools and adapt them to today's complex information environment. Critically, it has been willing to afford information-based activities primacy in operations, using more conventional military forces in a supporting role.

Russia's information campaign has to be analysed in the context of the strategic narrative of the Russian government, reflected in policy documents like the Foreign Policy Review of 2007 and the State Security Review of 2009, and supported by legislative initiatives like the Federal Law on the Russian Federation's State Policy on Compatriots Living Abroad. The notion of compatriots deserves particular attention as it allows Russia to legitimize the state's duty to defend its compatriots abroad from any kind of threat to their rights or physical well-being. It also leads to t he explanation of the need to sustain the so-called Russian World which implies maintenance of a unified Russian-language information sphere beyond the borders of the Russian Federation (mainly targeting the territory of the former USSR).

The Russian government's long-developed control over the mass media has been an important factor in the effective implementation of the information campaign against Ukraine. Russia's narrative was instrumentalized with the help of concurrent messaging. For example, the main Russian TV channels were actively involved in framing opinions about the situation in Ukraine from the very beginning of the crisis. Control is exerted directly by the Presidential Administration, including also government-controlled internet 'trolling' which is a growing, under-researched phenomenon used to support the Russian government's narrative[2]. This control over the media has made it difficult for democratic states with free media to compete with the forceful, synchronized messaging of the Russian government.

The Russian narrative includes several dominant themes: positioning Russian Slavic Orthodox Civilization in opposition

1 For a further reference on Russian military performance during the Russia-Georgia war of 2008, please see the research paper "The Russian Military and the Georgia War: Lessons and Implications" by A. Cohen and R.E. Hamilton: http://1.usa.gov/Zpdf1m

2 The findings of research conducted by the NATO StratCom COE in cooperation with the Centre for East European Policy Studies provide facts supporting this statement.

to "decadent" Europe; positioning Ukraine as integral to Eurasianism and the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union; promoting the Russian World which unites Eastern Slavs, implies that Russians and Ukrainians are one nation, and recognizes the natural supremacy of Russia; portraying Ukrainians as a pseudo-nation who are unable to administer their own country and sustain their statehood; referring to the Great Patriotic War thus bringing out the hatred of Nazism and relating it to the Euromaidan protesters who are labelled as nationalists, Nazis and fascists posing a threat to the ethnically Russian part of Ukraine's population; dividing the West by utilising the differing interests of EU member states and positioning the USA in opposition to the EU; and using legal and historic justifications to legitimize Russia's actions in Ukraine (including the Crimea Referendum).

The report identifies that Russia's information campaign was central to Russia's operations in Ukraine. The information campaign and related military action by Russia corresponds to the characteristics of a new form of warfare where the lines between peace and war, foreign military force and local self-defence groups are blurred and the main battle space has moved from physical ground to the hearts and minds of the populations in question. Crimea may be considered a test-case for Russia in trying out this new form of warfare where hybrid, asymmetric warfare, combining an intensive information campaign, cyber warfare and the use of highly trained Special Operation Forces, plays a key role.

The crisis in Ukraine has provided valuable lessons for the Ukrainian government, the countries neighbouring Russia (whose Russian-speaking communities were enlarged as a result of Soviet-era policy), and NATO and the EU as organisations.

The following are the general conclusions of the report:

• **Russia was prepared to conduct a new form of warfare in Ukraine where an information campaign played a central role.** The characteristics of the new form of warfare which were implemented in Crimea were outlined by General Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the Russian General Staff, nearly a year before the crisis in Ukraine. Analysis of the Ukraine conflict suggests that NATO and the EU must adapt to the new reality where information superiority, as opposed to military power, is becoming increasingly important.

• **Russia's narrative is largely based on historical memory.** Russia's thorough understanding of its own audiences – including compatriots abroad – was able to leverage historical memory: the Great Russian Empire, World War II and Nazi atrocities, and the might and collapse of the USSR.

• **Crisis in Ukraine is a result of Russia's long term strategy.** Learning from the Russian information campaign in Ukraine, it is clear that early detection and analysis of those elements within the Russian narrative signalling potential aggressive behaviour is critical. The report also demonstrates that Russia's state policy documents contain such indications.

• **The role of Compatriots Abroad is critical and should be considered carefully in the the future. The security implications for countries neighbouring Russia are particularly serious.** The kind of strategy that Russia has employed in Ukraine is likely to work best in areas where there are larger communities of Russia's Compatriots Abroad. They are the targets of Russia's information campaign and potentially may be ready to provide local support in cases of Russian aggression. The Ukraine and Georgian cases demonstrate that such information campaigns, backed by military means, are easier to carry out in territories bordering Russia – in particular, in those countries which are not members of NATO and therefore not party to the Washington Treaty.

• **Audience Analysis is critical to operational success.** Russia has demonstrated that understanding audiences and what motivates them is critical to operational success that is enduring.

• **There is "another side of the coin" to Russia's information campaign.** Although Russia's information campaign has been successful in influencing its audiences (the Russian population and compatriots abroad), it also bears a degree of counter-productivity as it has radicalized and alienated other audiences – West Ukraine and Kyiv, the populations of NATO and EU countries and the USA.

• **Deception is used by Russia as a tactic to distract and delay.** Investigating and disproving the false information, different versions of events and even conspiracy theories rapidly disseminated by Russia requires a lot of time, effort and resources on the part of international organisations like NATO, the Ukrainian government, independent media, experts and even ordinary citizens.

• **Disinformation campaigns erode over time.** The evolution of the crisis in Ukraine beyond Crimea demonstrates that disinformation campaigns erode over time as more and more factual evidence is revealed to negate lies and falsification.

The lessons for NATO include:

• **NATO needs to increase the utilisation of StratCom to effectively participate in this new form of warfare.** There is a need to invest further in StratCom capability and ensure continued coherence at political and military, as well as strategic, operational and tactical levels. NATO should continue integrating the StratCom mindset, giving it appropriate importance within its operations. Likewise, StratCom should become an integral part of Allied military exercises and training.

• **The crisis in Ukraine has changed the relationship between NATO and Russia.** The StratCom implications for the policy shift need to be assessed but are likely to be considerable. **The impact of new hybrid warfare on Article V needs reflection.** It is becoming increasingly difficult to determine with certainty whether internal conflict within a country is occurring genuinely or is being triggered and fuelled by an outside force. The Alliance should model possible scenarios for invoking

Article V in similar cases to the crisis in Ukraine should there be an attempt against one of the Allied nations where, by using non-conventional forms of warfare, military rebellion within a country is triggered and fuelled by an adversary.

- **Considering the expressed will of the Alliance to provide practical assistance to Ukraine in the form of capacity building, StratCom is an area of particular value.** Improving Ukraine's capability to counter aggression in the information domain is a much needed and desired area of assistance.

- **NATO needs to examine cooperation mechanisms with allies and partners so as to develop a unified response.** Russian information wars can only be tackled collectively.

- **NATO should focus on developing its own narratives and include Russian-speakers as part of its audience.**

- **More resources should be invested in exploring the opportunities and challenges social media bring to StratCom.**

The analysis of the crisis in Ukraine should be continued from the information-warfare perspective as developments in the Eastern part of Ukraine seem to be diverging from the Crimea scenario.

Introduction

This report examines the information aspect of Russia's strategy against Ukraine. In achieving its political and military objectives, Russia has proven adept at using asymmetric and information activities to achieve its goals. These have included deception, information and psychological operations, social media, English- and Russian-language satellite TV-based propaganda and older Soviet-style techniques such as active measures[3] and reflexive control[4]. Over the years, Russia has been drawing lessons from different Allied operations and worked on adapting its military planning to the realities of a modern conflict. Russia has also shown a willingness to modernize Soviet-era tools and adapt them to today's complex information environment. Critically, it has been willing to afford information-based activities primacy in operations, using more conventional military forces in a supporting role.

President Vladimir Putin's accession to power in 1999 marks the beginning of a period that might be characterised as the "recovery of lost pride" by Russia after the collapse of the USSR. It soon became clear that Russia has set out to re-define itself vis-à-vis its former territories of influence and the West, following "the greatest geopolitical

3 For a reference on "active measures", see Annex 1.

4 For a reference on reflexive control and its application in the Ukrainian crisis, see Annex 2.

catastrophe of the century – the collapse of the Soviet Union"[5]. The way the Russian leadership has chosen to increase the country's influence and regain its former might is closely associated with the establishment of a strong power vertical enabling Russia's political leadership to ensure that its strategic decisions are followed without question. This has been backed up by systematic, long-term investment in the development of Special Forces, investment in government-controlled businesses, mass media and other resources which can be conveniently used as peacetime, soft-power tools or to make an impact in crisis. The idea of Russia's rebirth, as shown by the discourse of the Russian political elite, goes hand-in-hand with historic imperial ambitions embracing the achievements of Peter I (Peter the Great), glorifying Joseph Stalin[6] and promoting the idea of the Slavic Civilization.[7]

[Although the origins of the power vertical can be traced to the early 1990s, it is mostly associated with President Putin's presidential approach and his establishment of a vertical chain of hierarchical authority. It also includes calculated staff appointments to create a loyal support group throughout the Russian business and bureaucratic elite. The research conducted by the NATO StratCom COE in cooperation with the Centre for East European Policy Studies shows how the power vertical also applies to the communication and information sector]

This report examines the geo-political strategies of successive governments of the Russian Federation, reflected in official policy documents and consequently made operational through specific actions on the ground. The report focuses on the information-campaign component.

According to the Russian perception of the world, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus are the three pillars of the Slavic Orthodox civilisation, having shared values, culture and history, and – importantly – recognized historic Russian supremacy. The ability to keep the two Slavic countries of Ukraine and Belarus under Russia's direct sphere of influence seems to be viewed by Russian policy makers as a critical sign of Russia's ability to exert global geopolitical influence and prevail over the West in the latter's attempts to lure the former Soviet republics into a closer relationship with the EU. President Putin has stated that the West has crossed the line in relation to Ukraine

5 Quotation from President Putin's annual state of the nation address delivered on 25 April 2005, to be found at the following URL: http://bit.ly/1yfnHbi

6 A recent example was President Putin's affirmation expressed during the D-Day memorial in Normandy (2014) that, should the people of Volgograd want to change the name of their city back to Stalingrad, their choice would be respected. The city adopted the name Stalingrad in 1925 to honour Soviet leader Josef Stalin.

7 Lucy Ash of the BBC World Service gives a good overview of how President Putin's politics are inspired by history. The article can be found at the following URL: http://bbc.in/1wCaXcW The research conducted by the NATO StratCom COE in cooperation with the the Centre for East European Policy Studies also affirms this reasoning.

[President Putin, in his speech following annexation of Crimea, says about the West "They are constantly trying to sweep us into a corner because we have an independent position, because we maintain it and because we call things like they are and do not engage in hypocrisy. But there is a limit to everything. And with Ukraine, our western partners have crossed the line, playing the bear and acting irresponsibly and unprofessionally."; the speech in English can be found at the following URL: http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6889].

Hence the 2013 Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius became a critical turning point in the events which resulted in the crisis in Ukraine as we know it. Ukraine choosing the European vector would seriously undermine the concept of the "Slavic World" and the idea of Ancient Rus (Древняя Русь)[8] as the source of the natural co-existence of Russia and Ukraine.

The wish to control Ukraine and make it inseparable from Russia extends to President Putin's vision of setting up a Eurasian Union that would replace the Commonwealth of Independent States. Ukraine plays a vital role in this project which resonates with the idea that, in order for the „Heartland" (Russia) to exist safely, it needs to control the "inner crescent" known also as the "Rimland" (Ukraine, along with the rest of Eastern Europe)[9]. Analysis of the narrative suggests that Russia's information campaign is oriented not only towards regaining influence over post-Soviet territories like Ukraine, but also towards creating a multi-polar world. The latter was illustrated by President Putin in his Munich Security Conference speech[10], according to which the USA's attempts to maintain the unipolar world order and NATO expansion threaten Russia rather than ensure security in Europe.

The speech President Putin gave on 18 March 2014 following the annexation of Crimea[11] sums up the afore-mentioned key points: the historic, spiritual and cultural unity of Russia and Ukraine, mourning for the collapse of the USSR, and the historic injustice of giving away Crimea to Ukraine, alleged abuse of the human rights of Russian citizens and Russian speakers in Crimea, labelling of the Euromaidan[12] as a coup executed by Nationalists, neo-Nazis, Russophobes and anti-Semites, and NATO posing a threat by potentially placing its navy "right there in this city of Russian military glory, and this would create not an illusory but a perfectly real threat to the whole of southern Russia". He positioned the regaining of Crimea as a matter of affirming Russia's power and ability to defend its geo-political

8 The term Ancient Rus is used to refer to the first East-Slavic state in the Middle Ages (9th to mid-13th century), often referred to as Kivean Rus (Київська Русь) and considered the ancestor of what we know today as Russia, Belarus and Ukraine.

9 Reflected in the article "The Geographical Pivot of History" by Halford John Mackinder (1904).

10 The speech in English can be found at this URL: http://bit.ly/1m9Qdpu

11 The speech in English can be found at the following URL: http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6889

12 This report considers the Euromaidan to be a Ukraine-wide movement with its epicentre the protest camp in the heart of Kyiv.

interests despite threats of sanctions from the EU and USA by stating "Are we ready to consistently defend our national interests, or will we forever give in, retreat to who knows where? (…) We consider such statements irresponsible and clearly aggressive in tone, and we will respond to them accordingly."

The report explores the preconditions for the implementation of Russia's information campaign (national policy documents and media-control mechanisms), analyses the narratives and strategic frames used by Russia (starting around the 3rd Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius), provides examples of the application of new hybrid warfare against Ukraine, and draws a series of lessons which the NATO countries, in particular, may wish to consider as the Alliance evaluates future challenges.

[Launched in 2009, the EU's Eastern Partnership seeks to bolster political and economic relations with the former Soviet Republics of Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus and Georgia. The 3rd Eastern Partnership Summit, which took place in Vilnius on 28-29 November 2013, was supposed to be a historic moment for Ukraine in signing the Association Agreement with the EU. However, despite rather promising negotiations and previously expressed commitment to sign the agreement, the (then) President Yanukovich declined to sign it at the last minute. Ukraine's refusal to sign the Agreement was perceived by the EU as a critical turning point for Ukraine to fall fully under Russia's economic and political influence. The active, pro-European part of Ukraine's population believed that President Yanukovich was not acting in Ukraine's true interests and took the decision under the influence of the Kremlin]

Setting the Scene

It is important to consider two factors which contributed to the preparation and execution of the information campaign: Russian national policy documents and the mechanisms with which the Russian state controls the media and the narrative.

National policy documents which help "set the scene"

The strategic narrative Russia used for its information campaign against Ukraine is encompassed in the Russian *Foreign Policy Review of 2007*[13] and the Russian *State Security Strategy of 2009*[14]. These two strategic documents are believed to mark a significant change in the way Russia positioned itself in the modern world. The same ideas have been largely reflected also in the *Foreign Policy Concept of 2013.*[15]

13 TThe document can be found at the following URL: http://bit.ly/1r7MIAf

14 The document in English can be found at the following URL: http://bit.ly/1oZkfYy

15 The document in English can be found at the following click here.

The Humanitarian Direction of Foreign Policy

The Russian Foreign Policy Review of 2007 contains a chapter on "The Humanitarian Direction of Foreign Policy" which explains the notion of Compatriots Abroad and defines the need to protect their interests. It is important to note that this concept has also been legitimized by a Law (see footnote) that has been amended several times to accommodate desired changes in the Russian Federation's policy which encourages the instrumentalization of compatriots abroad.

[Compatriots are defined by the Federal Law on the Russian Federation's State Policy toward Compatriots Living Abroad. The law also includes a procedure for being recognised as a compatriot, based on the principle of self-identification]

In the "The Humanitarian Direction of Foreign Policy" chapter of the Foreign Policy Review, the section on "Human Rights Problems" speaks about the need for Russia to take an aggressive stand on particularly important issues such as the defence of compatriots' human rights. Compatriots are considered to be the "tens of millions of our people" artificially separated from their historic Homeland (Russia) after the collapse of the USSR. The creation of the "Russian World" is therefore seen as a "unique element of human civilization", supporting the idea of uniting compatriots abroad, maintaining their strong links with the Homeland, encouraging their loyalty to Russia, its government and policies, thus enabling them to "act in the capacity of an authoritative intellectual, economic and cultural-spiritual partner of Russia in world politics". The remaining two sections on "Consular Work" and "Cooperation in Culture and Science" contain elements supporting the execution of the Compatriots' Policy.

Who are these Russian speakers and Russia's compatriots?

The compatriot diasporas are regarded as a potential supporting force for Russia's foreign policy. On 2 July 2014, speaking at the Conference of Russian Federation Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives on Protecting Russia's National Interests[16], President Putin emphasized that when he speaks of Russians and Russian-speaking citizens, he is "referring to those people who consider themselves part of the broad Russian community, they may not necessarily be ethnic Russians, but they consider themselves Russian people". "Russian speakers" is mainly used as a term for persons whose first language is Russian.

[In particular cases, when analysing the influence of mass media or information campaigns, the term can be applicable also to communities for whom the Russian language is not the first language of daily communication but is the dominant language for acquiring information from TV, the internet and other media. For example, part of the Armenian community in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region of Georgia widely consumes Russian media because of its lack of the Georgian language. In any case, their knowledge of the Russian language and habit of consuming Russian mass media are rooted in the Soviet policy of Russification]

These can be ethnic Russians or those ethnic groups who underwent enforced Russification during the Soviet period (USSR government policy promoted Russian as the language of communication and treated native languages as less important and purposefully enforced teaching at schools or universities in Russian instead of the native tongue. Other methods were lso used to support the Russification of Ukrainians, Belarussians, Kazakhs and other ethnic groups, including the large-scale migration of ethnic Russians to other Soviet Republics).

"The information sphere harbours threats to Russia's security"

Objectives that were defined in the Russian Foreign Policy Review of 2007 namely "Russia's main task is to create effective information campaigns everywhere we detect real challenges to Russia's interests, by maintaining a wide public consensus about the direction of Russia's Foreign Policy" have been reaffirmed in the Foreign Policy Concept of 2013. One cannot underestimate the role of the mass media in executing Russia's foreign policy goals. The Concept states that Russia "will develop its own effective means of information influence on public opinion abroad, strengthen the role of Russian media in the international information environment providing them with essential state support" and "take necessare measures to counteract information threats to its souvereignity and security". As far back as Russia's National Security Concept of 2000, it was emphasized that "There is an increasing threat to national security in the information sphere. The

16 The speech in English can be found at the following URL: http://bit.ly/1uc8Rf6

striving of a number of countries to dominate the global information space and oust Russia from the external and internal information market poses a serious danger". The Russian Foreign Policy Review of 2007 recommends embarking on increasing the amounts of foreign broadcasting of Russian state news agencies and expanding their offices abroad (example: RT TV channel, formerly known as Russia Today).

Creating a common Russian information sphere

In 2009, Russia adopted a new State Security Strategy which resonates with the Foreign Policy Review of 2007 and, to a certain extent, influenced the crisis in Ukraine. The Russian State Security Strategy of 2009 includes a chapter on Culture which talks of one common information sphere which includes Russia, the Commonwealth of Independent States and neighbouring regions. This common information sphere of Russian-speaking communities is maintained and enhanced by applying the Compatriots' Policy which is viewed as a way of exerting soft power on neighbouring countries. It is important to note that this policy serves as an efficient tool for geopolitical influence in the post-Soviet sphere, helping Russia attain specific foreign and security policy goals.

NATO is a threat

The State Security Strategy also declares that NATO poses a threat to international security and Russia's interests: "The inadequacy of the current global and regional architecture, oriented (particularly in the Euro-Atlantic region) towards NATO, and likewise the imperfect nature of legal instruments and mechanisms, create an ever-increasing threat to international security. (…) A determining aspect of relations with NATO remains the fact that plans to extend the alliance's military infrastructure to Russia's borders, and attempts to endow NATO with global functions that are counter to the norms of international law, are unacceptable to Russia."[17] This means that Ukraine's closer integration with NATO (or the EU, for that matter) structures contradicts Russia's strategic security interests and must be prevented. This is a means for the Russian government to justify pressure on or even open hostility to Ukraine's choice of Euro-Atlantic integration.

The idea of the "Russian World"

The concept of the "Russian World" allows Russia to utilize its compatriots as a channel of communication with Russian-speaking communities, making them multipliers of desired information, attitudes and behaviour. The idea of the "Russian World" is based on the historical and cultural commonality of the Russian-speaking communities and is successfully executed via the network of Russian diplomatic representations abroad which provide coordination and financial-support distribution functions by locally engaging

17 The document in English can be found at the following URL: http://bit.ly/1r1jgvp

NGOs and other actors. The "Russian World" (derived from "Slavic World") promotes the idea of different civilizations – namely, the Russian-speaking Orthodox civilization in opposition to Western civilization. The concept of the "Russian World" justifies Russia's capability and rights to build its own human rights system, legal norms, and its interpretation of history and the justice system. However, the main point of this philosophy is that the "Russian World" must be united by different means. This concept is also actively promoted via Russian mass media channels. The existence of a common sphere of information is topical in the context of events in Ukraine. It is also important to note that Russian media dominate in the Russian-speaking communities of Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, the Baltic States and also the former USSR republics of Central Asia. The Latvian and Lithuanian experience in the context of the crisis in Ukraine shows that it is complicated to tackle hostile Russian propaganda channels and offer alternative, quality sources of information for the local Russian-speaking populations.[18]

Instrumentalizing and sustaining narratives through controlled media

The other important factor in the effective implementation of the information campaign against Ukraine has been the Russian government's powerful control over the mass media. As the NATO StratCom COE's research shows, Russian mass media (especially TV channels) have played an important, instrumental role in bringing to life the key narratives, thematic frames and messages outlined in the strategic policy documents of the Russian Federation (or channelled via the political elite or Kremlin-affiliated experts). Messages such as "brother nations", common history, the Orthodox religion and common culture have been used to encourage the inhabitants of East and South Ukraine to think about a joint future destiny with Russia. If at some point during recent history, one might find different marginal ideas expressed by Russian academics or radical politicians, it can now be clearly seen that these authorized narratives are being communicated in a very coherent way by the leading elite, including the President, and the Russian mass media. Ideas such as Crimea belonging to Russia, Ukraine uniting with Russia or becoming a federalized state, the historic injustices done against Russia or the need to fight the "neo-Nazi threat" are not new. These narratives have been actively developed and maintained for many years to prepare the ground for the actions we witnessed in Ukraine. One could argue that Russian strategic policy documents are derived from the afore-mentioned narratives and that, at the same time, it is the task of these documents to instrumentalize and sustain these narratives. The Russian government's powerful control over the Russian mass media deserves special mention, as without it Russia would not be able to accomplish its influence operations so successfully.

18 For further references to the Latvian and Lithuanian experience, see Annex 3.

State-controlled Russian TV as an active opinion shaper?

Since the very beginning of the crisis in Ukraine, the main Russian TV channels have been actively involved in forming opinion about the situation in Ukraine. They have used a wide range of tools to influence public opinion about important events such as the signing of the Association Agreement with the EU, the Euromaidan protests and the subsequent change of power in Kyiv, and the Russian annexation of Crimea. The focus has been on self-reinforcement, as the result of the masterful understanding of different audiences. Because of the synchronous execution of messaging on different media channels, it can be assumed that the news reports were prepared by political technologists – a profession inherited from the Soviet period.

Visualisations to be found at the following URL: http://www.tapinas.lt/2014/08/in-bed-with-kremlin/

[Political technologist is a term used for persons empowered by the ruling elite to help retain power and influence opinion in favour of the elite's policies by means of manipulation. Unlike spin-doctors, political technologists play a broader role, serving as political meta - programmers, system designers, decision-makers, and political controllers all in one, applying whatever technology they can to the construction of politics as a whole]

It is obvious that a common and robust editorial policy was constructed, supporting the actions of the Russian government, and deployed across multiple media outlets which leads to the premise that it was centrally derived.

Deliberate falsification as a method

Whilst reporting on Ukraine events, journalists of the Russian state controlled media have methodically manipulated video and photo materials in order to produce material visually supporting the prevailing narrative. This includes the use of photographs from the Syria, Kosovo and Chechnya wars, as if they had been taken in East Ukraine, and has proven particularly effective on social networks.

[A noteworthy move against the falsification of facts by the Russian media has been the website www.stopfake.org]

Another falsification trend has been the same person being filmed by Russian TV in different roles and situations. For example, the same woman was used to play the roles of "Crimean activist", "resident of Kyiv", "soldier's mother", "resident of Odessa", "resident of Kharkiv", "participant of Antimaidan", and "refugee from Donetsk". [19]It is important to note that in all those roles she conveyed messages supporting a particular narrative line. For example, in her latest appearance as a "Crimean activist" she touches on the following points: the EU and USA are weak and aggressive, Crimea is a historic Russian land, Russia is a holy Orthodox civilization. [20]Such methods of communication have notably strengthened the execution of the main task of the Russian news reports – to radicalize political opposition and to discredit the West (USA and EU).

The role of the Presidential Administration in controlling the media

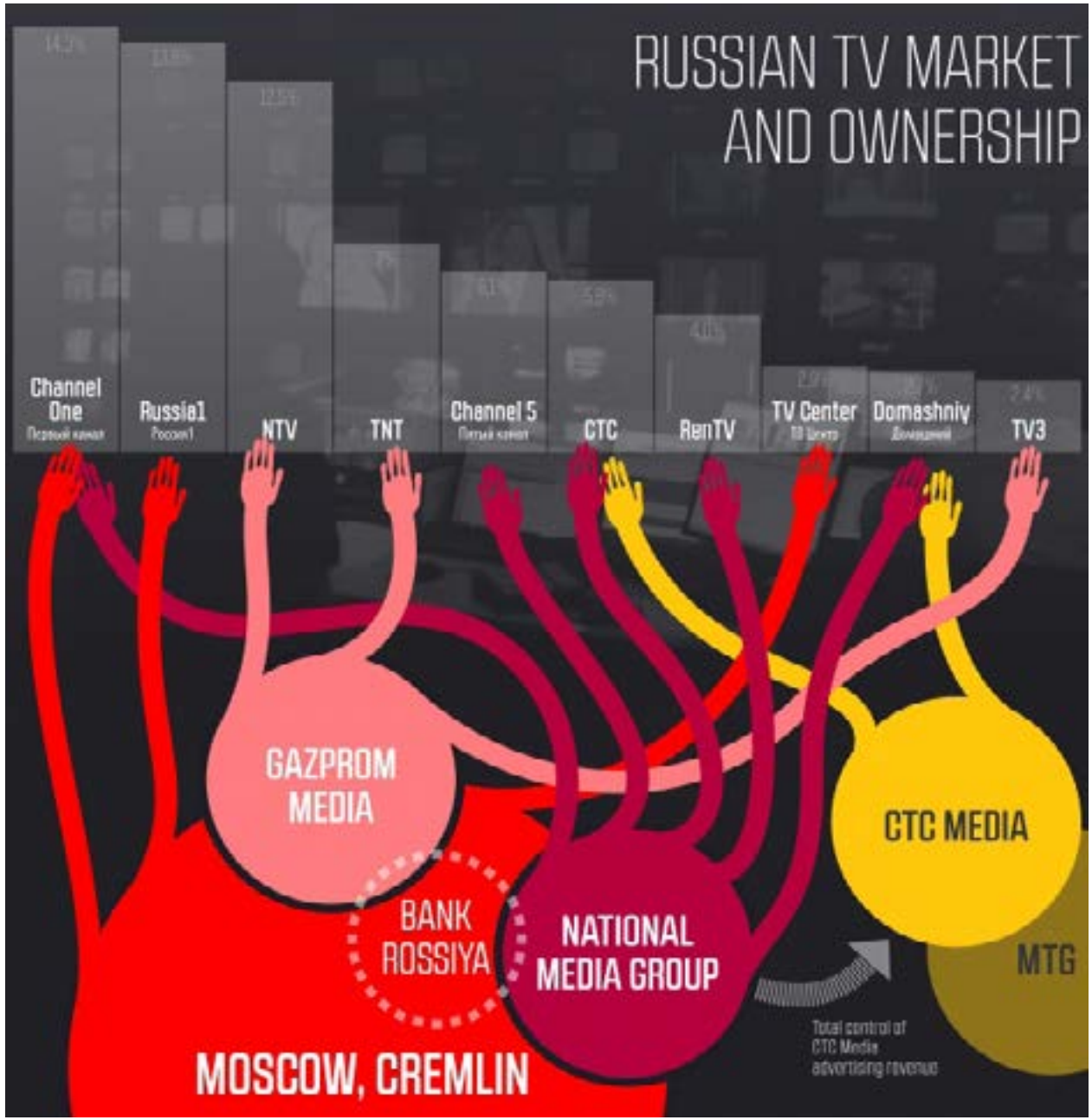
The Russian Presidential Administration exercises coordinated control over media advertising budgets and editorial content[21] whilst maintaining an illusion of media freedom by letting a small number of minor independent media outlets operate.[22] Those Russian media outlets conforming to the Kremlin's propaganda line were officially recognized by President Putin following the annexation of Crimea. On 22 April 2014, President Putin signed an executive order awarding medals of the Order of Service to the Fatherland to 300 journalists including several editors, directors and television hosts known for their Kremlin-friendly coverage. The awards were handed out by President Putin himself, just a few days after the annexation of Crimea, underlining the important role the mass media had played in the information campaign against Ukraine and proving that the annexation had been planned well in advance.

19 The list of different roles and video reports where the woman appeared to be found at the following URL: http://bit.ly/1uSMe01

20 Her speech with English subtitles is available to watch at the following URL: http://bit.ly/1r3493j

21 For a reference on media control in Russia, see Annex 4.

22 It must be noted that in the context of the information campaign against Ukraine, additional control measures were implemented against independent media or media who tried to maintain an objective line of reporting (examples of Dozhd TV, Lenta.ru and the website of Ekho Moskvy radio).



Visualisations to be found at the following URL: http://www.tapinas.lt/2014/08/in-bed-with-kremlin/

Implementing media control in Crimea

Strict media control was exercised not only within Russia, but also in Crimea. Shortly after the appearance of armed groups in Crimean towns, the unfolding events demonstrated the special role of the Russian TV channels. On 6 March 2014, ten days before the Crimean referendum, armed men broke into the building of the Simferopol Radio and TV Broadcasting Station. Consequently, the broadcasting of various Ukrainian TV channels was suspended. They were substituted by Russian TV channels – Inter was replaced by NTV, the 1+1 channel by First Channel. A Molotov cocktail was thrown in the window of Black Sea TV, the only channel covering the whole Crimea region, while the webpage of the channel suffered from a DDoS (distributed denial-of-service) attack. Overall, broadcasts of Ukrainian TV stations were replaced by seven Russian TV channels. The self-proclaimed Minister for Regional Information, Dmitriy Polonskiy, explained the suspension of the Ukrainian channels by citing moral and legal reasons:

"We believe that we have a right to defend the inhabitants of Crimea from the increase of violence, lies and the false information flowing from their TV screens"[23]. The state-controlled message also helped turn Crimea's inhabitants against Ukrainian and foreign media crews. Aksyonov, the pro-Russian leader, was shown on television describing Western media as working for spy services to foment revolution.

Influence of Russian TV in Ukraine

Although a popularity review of various TV channels in Ukraine shows that the Ukrainian national channels hold the highest ratings[24], it does not automatically mean that Russian TV has a less important role to play in Ukraine, especially among the Russian-speaking part of the population residing in East Ukraine. Television is the dominant news medium in Ukraine. Almost all Ukrainians (96.8%) watch TV for news at least weekly, including 95.7% of Crimeans.[25] The GALLUP research of April 2014 showed that the most important sources of news and information for Crimeans were four TV channels owned by the Russian state: Russia 24, NTV, ORT (Channel One), and RTR (Russia-1) as well as the Russian social media giant VKontakte. This marks an important change since the 2012 survey, when the top five news sources for Crimeans were all Ukrainian TV stations.

The events in Crimea and the Eastern regions of Ukraine have demonstrated that even a small number of people who receive wide military and informative support can pose a significant threat to the security and stability of a state. Also the rapid replacement of Ukrainian TV channels with Russian ones in the occupied territory illustrates the fact that TV is purposefully used as a political instrument. It should also be noted that the videos broadcast by TV channels also get published on social media, thus amplifying their effect.

Applying the lessons learned

Before Russia got to implement its information campaign against Ukraine, it learned lessons from its own mistakes during previous years. The first Chechnya war (1994-1996), the second Chechnya war (1999-2009), the sinking of the Kursk submarine in 2000, the Beslan hostage crisis in 2004 and the Georgia-Russia war of 2008 were some of the important events which formed the Russian power elite's understanding of how information campaigns should be organised.[26]

The internal and external dimensions of state-controlled Russian TV

In the context of Ukraine events, Russian TV worked in two dimensions. The internal

23 The quotation was provided by the Moscow Times at the following URL: http://bit.ly/1oZkHG9, Additional information on Polonskiy's actions and opinions can be found in the report by The Telegraph: http://bit.ly/1pj0drh

24 In accordance with data provided by GFK Ukraine and AC Nielsen, the most popular TV channels in December 2013 were: STV, Inter, 1+1, Ukraina, ICTV.

25 See more details in the GALLUP research to be found at the following URL: http://1.usa.gov/ZpdJ7I

26 For a reference on the lessons learned, see Annex 5.

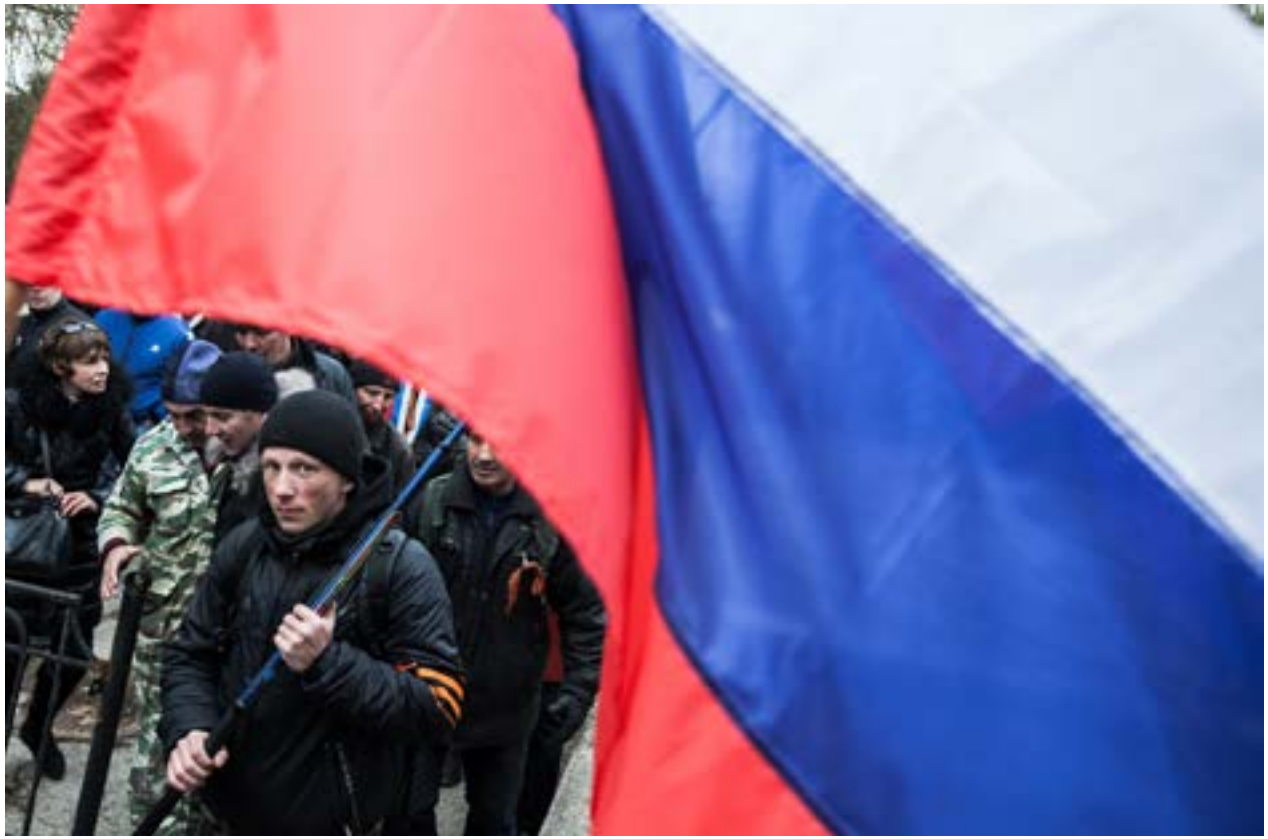
dimension was oriented towards the Russian domestic audience to facilitate "political-military upbringing" (as specified in Russia's State Security Strategy) and to ensure information support to Russia's foreign policy. The external dimension of Russian TV relates to the mobilization of compatriots abroad and information support to Russian state policies (for example, during the Crimea operation).

Strategic Narratives

The key directions of the Russian strategic narrative are clearly reflected in their national policy documents. Control of the media by the Russian power elite has ensured systematic control of narratives[27]. Narrative control can only be successful as a part of an influence operation which requires serious advance planning. In order to implement an influence operation (or any information campaign for that matter), there must be good coordination among the actors involved. Russia's *Foreign Policy Review of 2007* recommends coordinating not only the work of state agencies but also private businesses and non-government organisations for the implementation of information campaigns.

The unfinished or mobilizing narrative

In the course of a real influence operation, the narrative is usually based on an unfinished story or unsolved problem. Such narratives mobilize the audience and "demand" a solution. In Russia's information campaign against Ukraine, the unfinished narrative is based on the fact that "fascism has not been extinguished" and the audience is called upon to "destroy fascists and Bandera-followers *(banderovtsi)*". Stepan Bandera *(Степан Бандера)* was a Ukrainian political activist and a leader of the Ukrainian nationalist movement in Western Ukraine which fought for Ukrainian independence from the USSR in the 1930s and early 1940s. In their fight against the Soviets, the movement saw a possible ally in the Nazis. It is believed that the Soviet authorities ordered the KGB to kill Bandera in 1959.



27 For a reference on narrative control, see Annex 6.

Bandera has become a symbol for those fighting for the Ukrainian national cause and a "bogeyman" Nazi collaborator for the official Moscow view, which refers to Ukrainian nationalists as banderovtsi. The Bandera notion was used by the Russian government in the context of *Euromaidan* in an attempt to denigrate the idea of the *Euromaidan* as an expression of nationalism and neo-Nazism, simultaneously causing fears in particular audiences of the potential abuse of the rights of non-Ukrainians.

Cultivating anxiety and fear

Analysis of the Russian narrative leads to the conclusion that the Russian media has systematically cultivated a feeling of fear and anxiety in the ethnically Russian and non-Ukrainian populations of Ukraine. During the initial phase of the conflict, the whole of Ukrainian society was encouraged to feel insecure about its future and to fear Ukraine's economic instability. Closer association with the EU would mean less economic cooperation with Russia and the Kremlin repeatedly hinted that the EU was trying to lead Ukraine into a self-seeking (for the EU) deal instead of genuinely planning to help advance Ukraine's economy. As the events on *Euromaidan* escalated, the narrative was adapted to cultivate fear specifically in the Russian-speaking part of East Ukraine: nationalist radicals were brought to the front of news reports thus emphasising the possible physical threat (Eastern Ukraine will be attacked, properties will be confiscated, the Russian language will be prohibited, etc). It also helped consolidate the support of the Russian Federation's population for the government's policy towards Ukraine and *Euromaidan.*

Dominant themes of the Russian narrative

"Clash of Civilisations". When analysing the narratives brought out by Russian propaganda, it is important to take into account that this process started well before 2014. The theory of the clash of civilizations proposed by Samuel Huntington became very handy for the Russian elite as a way to draw a virtual line of cultural differences between the West and the Orthodox civilization of the East. The concept of the clash of civilizations and the dialogue between civilizations appeared often in the speeches of the Russian power elite and its collaborating experts in the period 2004-2007. The culmination of this discourse is the speech by President Putin delivered in 2007 at the Munich Security Conference where he criticized the USA for maintaining a unipolar world order. The Orthodox civilization would look incomplete without Ukraine. Kremlin-affiliated political scientist Vyacheslav Nikonov (head of the *Russian World Foundation* and member of the Russian State Duma) reminded viewers about the concept of Ukraine and Russia as the centre of a common civilization on the *National Interest* TV programme. This concept is widely supported by the Russian Orthodox Church. This narrative is complemented by the anti-European

narrative which attempts to either distort European values (for example, identifying tolerance of sexual diversity as a sign of decadence) or threatens potential economic collapse through closer association with the EU.

"Ukraine is central to Eurasia". In the context of forming the Eurasian Economic Union, the concept of Eurasianism is experiencing a re-birth. Similarly to the Orthodox civilization and the *Russian World*, the Eurasian Union also wants to see Ukraine as an integral part. The most prominent promoter of Eurasianism is Aleksandr Dugin who has adapted the classical ideas of Eurasianism to contemporary realities. If the Eurasianists of the 1920s believed that "individualistic and egoistic Europe" was the source of all evil, then today Dugin assigns this role to the USA and Transatlanticists. According to the Eurasianists, Ukraine is a "battlefield of titans" where good and evil struggle for influence. The Eastern Partnership initiative is viewed as a means for the Transatlanticists (NATO, USA, EU) to steal Ukraine from Eurasia.

[Eurasianism (in Russian: Евразийство) is a political movement in Russia. It started among the Russian emigrant community in 1920s. Eurasianists argue that Russia has a unique identity and should thus embark on a development course apart from the West. Inherent in Eurasianist thinking are notions of benevolent imperialism, Orthodox messianic qualities and a belief that a "third way" of economic development is possible – a path between capitalism and communism. In addition, there is a vital geographical component to Eurasianism, dictating that Russia should control the Eurasian Heartland, including Central Asia and the Caucasus]

„Ukrainians and Russians – one nation, united under the *Russian World*". Along with other Russian propagandists, Aleksandr Dugin speaks about the unity of Eastern Slavs. He refers to *belorusi* ("Belarusians"") and Ukrainians as *malorusi* ("Little Russians"), and Russians as *velyikorusi* ("Great Russians").

A similarly patronizing, "paternal" attitude towards Ukraine can be observed in the speeches of Russian politicians and political commentators. "The *Russian World*, which was geographically united in the past, is currently divided by the borders of different countries. The nations which live on the territory of the historic Russian land must feel that they belong to a common civilization and perceive the *Russian World* as a Project beyond borders." These are the words of Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill at the opening of the 3rd Assembly of the *Russian World* in Moscow in 2009. He also suggested using the term "countries of the *Russian World*" implying those countries which have historically been part of Russia. Kirill specified that the common usage of the Russian language, common culture and historical memory unites these countries. In this context, Ukraine becomes particularly topical for the *Russian World*. Similarly to the Orthodox civilization, also the Russian World cannot be considered a serious Project without the inclusion of Ukraine.

"Ukrainians are not an independent nation". Although Russian politicians often use the term "brother nations", in the practice of Russian foreign policy this brotherhood means a strict hierarchy where the rights of Ukrainians to self-determination are ignored. In the Russian state-controlled media, one can often encounter demeaning remarks about Ukrainian statehood and its wish to integrate with the West. Even entertainment programmes portray Ukrainians as an inferior nation who speak a quaint Russian dialect. So as to disregard Ukrainian language as the origin of modern Slavic languages and Ukrainians as the creators of their statehood, the Russian media intentionally ignores the truth about the ancient roots of the Slavic language preserved in modern Ukrainian and historic facts about the origin of the *Ancient Rus* state with Kyiv at its centre. Thus, Russian propaganda continues to cultivate an inferiority complex among Ukrainians (already developed under the Soviet regime), when Ukrainian was associated with rural, peasants' language (undeveloped) and Russian branded as the language of culture and intelligence.

"The Great Patriotic War continues, the fascists in Ukraine have not been eliminated yet". In recent years, the 9 May Victory Day celebrations have taken a central role in the ideology of the Russian state. The leading Russian TV channels are involved in producing different programmes and reports on this topic which they broadcast well in advance of the commemorations. The state also provides financial support for the production of feature films on historic events. These films support old myths glorifying Russia and help create new ones. In this context, the inhabitants of Western Ukraine are portrayed as Bandera-followers who, unfortunately, were not destroyed to the last man *(nedobitije banderovtsi)*. Russia has applied a linear strategy in constructing its narrative, going back to the Peter the Great, with historical emphasis on the Great Patriotic War to ignite the *pathos* associated with Nazi elements. The application of a "war mentality" is not coincidental as it is related to living memory and genuine issues surrounding the Great Patriotic War. The appeal to Russian-speaking populations' affections has been made through the fabrication of information, historical narrative feeding into certain cultural pre-dispositions and then inciting certain actions. This has eased the task of labelling *Euromaidan* activists as Nazis, Fascists and anti-Semites as well as creating fears in the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine that the new "Fascist" government will confiscate properties, resort to violence and prohibit the Russian language – all of this explained emotionally on the TV screens of Russian channels by "real people".

"The West is divided". The attempt to divide the West (including NATO and its Partners) by the Russian narrative deserves particular attention. The attempt focuses on making the West impotent and risk-averse when encountering the dishonest Russian narrative. For example, the Kremlin is attempting to divide Germany and the EU by threatening to

damage the former's economy, dependent as it is on imports of Russian gas, and by reminding Germans of recent history. In his public speech following the annexation of Crimea, President Putin said "I believe that the Europeans, first and foremost, the Germans, will also understand me". He is playing on the difference in views between New (Eastern) Europe and Old Europe, going on to remind European leaders about uncomfortable historical facts and appealing to a strange logic, claiming that since Russia fully supported the reunification of East and West Germany, Germany should now support Russia in its reunification with Crimea. President Putin is well aware of the different interests EU countries have when it comes to cooperation with Russia, including economic interests, and also the difficulty the European states have in finding a firm common position. Apart from different national interests, the EU is still facing some historic ghosts, including Eastern Europe's sense of betrayal following the 1945 Yalta Conference. All of this leaves plenty of narrative lines to utilize in the attempt to split the West. Russia's narrative also attempts to break up the transatlantic link and position the USA in opposition to Europe. The narrative where the USA and the EU are discredited and weakened appeals to the BRIC[28] group and other emerging economies. It doesn't necessarily result in them actively supporting Russian actions, but is effective in maintaining their neutrality which works well enough for Russia.

"Russia's actions are legitimate". The Russian strategy implies instrumentalizing law as a means of legitimizing all its actions. This also links back to the idea of Russian civilization with its own legal norms and interpretation of international law. The aspect of legitimacy is very important in supporting the Russian narrative. It helps Russia to appeal to its internal audience, to its compatriots abroad, and even to the international community by demonstrating that Russia is law-abiding and "doing the right thing". It was important for Russia to instigate "legal" self-determination in Crimea and also to encourage similar self-determination referendums in East Ukraine, thus putting a veil of "legitimacy" on the annexation of Crimea. It was also very important that the self-proclaimed leadership of Crimea (and later that in East Ukraine) formally requested Russia's help, intervention or even annexation. This provided "legal" grounds for the protection of compatriots and the protection of human rights, in accordance with the Russian *Foreign Policy Review of 2007* and the Russian *State Security Strategy of 2009*. In addition, the Kremlin quickly made legal arrangements to provide for the easy and quick incorporation of Crimea into the Russian Federation.

The supporting Russian information campaign focused on attempts to draw parallels with the case of Kosovo and appealed to the historic injustice committed in 1954, when Crimea was given to Ukraine by the USSR leadership. In his address of 18 March 2014, following

28 BRIC refers to Brazil, Russia, India and China which are considered the strongest emerging world economies.

the Crimea Referendum, President Putin listed a whole spectrum of "legitimate" reasons for what had happened: the UN Charter which speaks of the right of nations to self-determination, the well-known Kosovo precedent, the outrageous historic injustices committed against Russia (including the collapse of the USSR and West-instigated Colour Revolutions) and the need to protect compatriots abroad from the Ukrainian government's attempts to "deprive Russians of their historical memory, even their language and to subject them to forced assimilation". The policy on the protection of compatriots may also provide sufficiently legitimate reasons for Russia to intervene on Ukrainian territory should any proof of humanitarian crisis be identified. There is a continuous narrative line which cultivates stories of human rights' abuse, war crimes and a worsening humanitarian situation. The narrative against the Colour Revolutions also appeals to other authoritarian governments who are willing to support Russia's line in this regard.

Part of the narrative comprises continuous attempts to accuse NATO and the West of breaking all sorts of laws and listing interventions in Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya as obvious examples. Russia also accuses NATO of breaking a promise, supposedly made to Russia in 1990, that the Alliance would not expand into Eastern and Central Europe, build military infrastructure near Russia's borders or permanently deploy troops there. In the information campaign, Russia is projected as sincere and just, and the West is portrayed as adhering to double standards, being cynical about abuse of human rights and preferring the "rule of the gun" to international law.

The Ukrainian government is also being accused of breaking the 21 February deal made between former President Yanukovich and some of the opposition representatives, mediated by EU Foreign Ministers. This was seen by Russia as a good enough reason to proclaim the Ukrainian authorities as illegitimate and the Parliament's vote to remove Yanukovich from power as an attempted *coup d'état.* There are also similarities with the Russian-Georgian military conflict (2008) which can be observed in Ukraine: attempts to discredit and criminalize the Georgian government, label Georgian military operations as genocide and artificially create a diaspora of Russian citizens in the disputed territories by encouraging, and in some instances forcing, citizens of the target nation to relinquish their national citizenship in favour of Russian citizenship (so-called "passportisation").

Through its information campaign, Russia is trying to prove that its intent is to support the will of the local people, the self-defence groups in Ukraine. One important aspect of the Russian narrative is the notion of the "historic Russian presence" which is used in an attempt to legitimize Russian interests and activity in the territories where Russians have been (or still are) historically present for whatever geo-political reason. Crimea is called a historically Russian land and Sevastopol is called a Russian city. In his

aforementioned public address, President Putin asserted that "In [the Russian] people's hearts and minds, Crimea has always been an inseparable part of Russia. This firm conviction is based on truth and justice and was passed on from generation to generation. (…)".

The aforementioned directions in the Russian narrative were summarized in President Putin's address of 2 July 2014 to Russian ambassadors: if Russia had left the people of Crimea – "the land of Russian military glory" – at the mercy of Ukrainian "nationalist and radical militants" and permitted eventual NATO domination of the peninsula and a change in the balance of forces in the Black Sea, he said that this would have amounted to "giving up practically everything that Russia had fought for since the times of Peter the Great."[29]

29 The text of the speech in English can be found at the following URL http://bit.ly/1r34kMd

Communication Themes Constructing Perception

Narratives are supported by utilising so-called thematic communication frames. The thematic frames are a way of associating a particular impression or opinion with an object or subject. The characteristics of thematic frameas are their close relationships within a particular context and interpretation. Thematic framing can be applied to an individual (for example, naming Ukrainian President Poroshenko the "King of Chocolate"), to a group of people (the inhabitants of Western Ukraine are followers of Bandera and neo-Nazis), or to a process, event or particular place in time and space (Euromaidan equals chaos). The creation of thematic frames is related to the human desire to simplify the outside world and to easily distinguish friends from foes. Unfortunately, thematic framing can also be used to manipulate audiences.

The key thematic frames used during the Russian information campaign were:

- **socio-economic problems**, dependency on Russia and the inability of the Ukrainian state to provide for its citizens/inhabitants;
- **radicalization of the opposition** by positioning it either as a producer of opinions which may cause fear and panic within the community or as a laughing stock;
- **lack of social order and security** used as a reason to justify *Berkut's* actions or the formation of the pro-Russian self-defence groups in East Ukraine;

[The Berkut (in Ukrainian: Бéркут) was the system of special police under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, successor to the Soviet OMON. The Berkut was used by President Yanukovich in an attempt to suppress Euromaidan protests. Journalists documented acts of violence by Berkut towards Euromaidan protesters, including attempt to forcefully disperse Euromaidan in the early hours of 30 November. Following the annexation of Crimea, its Berkut unit was incorporated into the forces of the Russian Interior Ministry]

• **Euromaidan is a US/EU satellite** and its supporters are traitors;

• **the West is "evil"** as it doesn't want to/can't save Ukraine from economic problems, is influencing the Ukrainian authorities in order to execute some conspiracy, inspires violence (like it does elsewhere in the world), is preparing extremists to cause public disorder in Ukraine (in particular, Lithuania and Poland are accused), promotes moral decadence;

• **Russia is familiar** to Ukraine but **Western democracies are strangers**;

• **The common history** of Russia and Ukraine, the **Orthodox religion** as a uniting element.

Increasing Significance of Social Media

Social media has become a popular tool for information campaigns and other online activities such as information collection for intelligence purposes, propaganda, disinformation, deception, as well as recruitment and fundraising for particular activities. Social media is also a convenient tool for the rapid distribution of interlinked texts and images supporting a certain narrative, and their easy, cost-free multiplication.

There have been several examples[30] of Russian state trying to control the social media in relation to the crisis in Ukraine. For example, there have been attempts to block access to pro-Ukrainian sources and to request information from the social networking website *VKontakte* on *Euromaidan* supporters. There were the cases of firing the editor of the popular Russian Internet news website *Lenta.ru* and the director of *VKontakte* and replacing them with Cremlin-affiliated persons. Although Russian state continues making steps towards restricting media freedom and freedom of speech on the Internet, they have not been completely successful in fighting individuals, independent organisations or media outlets in Russia which continue providing alternative opinion. Likewise, the increased control has not saved Russia from the mistakes of individuals who (most likely unintentionally) have published information which reveals Russia's direct nvolvement in the crisis in Ukraine[31]. Last but not least, the social media is a particular phenomenon of the 21st century where a single posting by an individual can become equally powerful and even more wide-spread than the information released by a state-controlled channel.

Russian-controlled internet trolling

The Russian governing elite cultivates a large number of bloggers and trolls in the social media through the Presidential Administration in order to spread information supporting Russia's narrative and to silence opponents.[32] For example, in 2012 *The Guardian* newspaper reported that "a pro-Kremlin group runs a network of internet trolls, seeks to buy flattering coverage of President Vladimir Putin and hatches plans to discredit opposition activists and media." During the crisis in Ukraine, *The Guardian* reports experiencing increased activity by pro-Kremlin trolls, most of them registered in February 2014. Russia's independent investigative newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*

30 More information on some of the particular cases can be found at the following URLs: http://on.mash.to/1uFOEkd (blocking of pro-Ukrainian groups on social network), http://on.mash.to/1r7NHjT (requesting personal information about Euromaidan supporters), http://bbc.in/1wCbEmG (firing Lenta.ru editor), http://reut.rs/1wCbITm (about dismissal of the director of VKontakte)

31 The case of Russian soldier Sanya Sotkin is one such illustration – referred to in the "Lessons Learned" section of this paper.

32 For a further reference on controlled trolling, see Annex 7.

reported on the work of the so-called "troll farm" in September 2013. According to them, the mass recruitment of trolls had started in August of that year. It was explained to the correspondent who pretended to be applying for a job as a troll that the expectation was to post 100 internet comments per day. Trolling also involves maintaining multiple Facebook and Twitter accounts, gaining new followers, participating in discussions.

[An internet troll is a person who foments discord online by starting arguments or upsetting people, by posting inflammatory, extraneous, or off-topic messages in an online community with the deliberate intent of provoking readers into an emotional response or of otherwise disrupting normal on-topic discussion. Trolls often use fake or anonymous profiles. Sponsored trolls who act on behalf of a grouping, organisation, or a state usually maintain multiple fake profiles and follow specific guidelines for trolling]

Pro-Russian accounts have been increasingly visible on social networks since late February 2014 as the crisis in Ukraine escalated with the occupation of Crimea. One particular campaign – "Polite People" – promoted the invasion with pictures of Russian troops posing alongside young girls, mothers with children, the elderly, and pets. The trolls are mainly busy with disinformation, spreading rumours or falsified facts (photos, stories), entering into discussions and flooding topic-related web spaces (event pages on Facebook, discussion forums, hashtags) with their own messages or simply abuse. Social media has also been used for the recruitment of pro-Russian fighters to be sent to East Ukraine (for example, on 13 July 2014, *RFE/RL* published an interview with 24-year-old Artur Gasparyan of Armenia who was recruited via the Russian-language social networking site *Vkontakte*).

Social media used for deception

There are several prominent cases which provide examples of deliberate falsification of information, usage of false identities and spreading of rumours with the purpose of creating either fear or hatred.

The "Doctor from Odessa" fabrication.

RFE/RL reported on this case of a troll using a false Facebook account following the tragic fire in the trade union building in Odessa.[33] The Facebook post was supposedly created by medical doctor Igor Rozovskiy, who tried to enter the burning building to render aid, but pro-Ukrainian extremists allegedly denied him entry and abused him.

[The English translation of the post reads: "Hello. My name is Igor Rosovskiy. I am 39 years old. I live in the city of Odessa. I have worked as an emergency physician for 15 years. Yesterday, as you know, there was a terrible tragedy in our city, some people killed other people.

33 The full report on the case by RFE/RL to be found at the following URL: http://bit.ly/1uFOSrK

They killed them in a brutal way by burning them alive, not in a drunken stupor, not to get their grandmother's inheritance, but because they share the political views of nationalists. First they brutally beat their victims, then burned them alive. As a doctor, I rushed to help those whom I could save, but the fighters stopped me. They didn't let me go to the wounded. One rudely pushed me, promising that I and other Jews would suffer a similar fate. I saw a young man I could have saved if I could have taken him to the hospital, but my attempts at persuasion were met with a blow to the face and lost glasses. In fifteen years I have seen much, but yesterday I wanted to cry, not from the blows and humiliation, but from my helplessness in being unable to do anything. In my city, such things did not happen even during the worst times of Nazi occupation. I wonder why the world is silent."]

The Russian-language social networking website Vkontakte gathered more than 5000 shares of this post in the first day after its appearance. Rosovskiy's post was promptly translated into English, German, and Bulgarian. Bloggers, who investigated the doctor's Facebook story, discovered that Dr. Rozovskiy's profile picture is a photo of a North Caucasus dentist used in the advertising brochure of the *Ust Dzhegmiska Dental Clinic*. Shortly after *RFE/RL's* discovery, Rozovskiy's Facebook account suddenly carried the announcement that "this content is no longer available."

The strangled pregnant woman in the Odessa trade union building. The photo of a pregnant woman supposedly strangled by pro-Ukrainian extremists on the site of the tragedy in Odessa was being widely circulated in the social media until *KyivPost* published an investigation into the matter proving its falsification.[34] A media reviewer from Moscow, Elena Rybkovtseva, questioned in her investigation why there was no official record of a deceased pregnant woman or outrage on the part of her relatives. A hospital doctor commented on the photo saying that it was clearly an elderly woman, who was photographed, for some reason, in such a pose, likely in order to create the needed effect. The doctor called higher medical authorities, who confirmed there was no pregnant woman among the dead.

Atrocities by Ukrainian extremists in East Ukraine. Social media was flooded with rumours about atrocities planned by pro-Ukrainian extremists: stories about poisoned water supplies, concentration camps being built outside Donetsk, fascist gunmen lurking in the woods and pro-Ukrainian circulars with poison absorbed by touch. The most recent story, which was originally produced by the Russian state-run TV *Channel One*, showed what was purported to be an eyewitness account of a 3-year-old boy having been tortured and crucified by the Ukrainian military in a public square in Slovyansk.[35] In the report, a woman named Galina Pyshnyak claimed to have witnessed the atrocity along with the rest of inhabitants of Slovyansk who were forcefully brought to the central square by Ukrainian military personnel to witness the public execution. At the time, she was

34 The full report by the KyivPost to be found at the following URL: http://bit.ly/ZpdVnh

35 The full report by Channel One TV in Russian to be found at the following URL: http://bit.ly/1r0mKgm

speaking with *Channel One* from a refugee camp in Russia's Rostov region. The video was widely disseminated on social media and was quickly followed by counter-information from investigative journalists (including Russia's independent TV *Dozhd*) challenging the report or proving it to be false. Russian journalist Yevgeny Feldman of the *Novaya Gazeta* newspaper went to the scene of the purported incident to ask residents whether they had witnessed or heard of such an atrocity. In the nine-minute video posted on YouTube, local Slovyansk residents consistently denied knowledge of any such incident.[36]

Twitter-sentiment analysis of the crisis

Taking into account the global reach and popularity of Twitter in Eastern Europe the NATO StratCom COE has analysed the prevailing sentiments on this platform about the situation in Ukraine for the period 15 April to 15 July 2014. More than 26 254 tweets in the Russian language were analysed, covering Ukraine (Crimea in particular) and Russia.

[Methodology: The tweets were selected on the basis of specific key words relating to the crisis in Ukraine, utilising automatic social-media monitoring tool WebRadar. The analysis was focused on tweets in the Russian language originating from Ukraine and Russia, as well as any other country, if the tweet was in the Russian language (for example, Belarus, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Latvia, etc.). It must be admitted that statistics on the country of origin were based on information provided by Twitter users in their accounts, which does not necessary reflect the real situation. Furthermore, a considerable proportion of Twitter users do not specify their country of origin, hence tweets could be placed by anyone who can communicate in Russian]

The pilot research demonstrated that, although the number of neutral sentiment tweets is quite high, tweets show increasing polarisation between pro-Ukraine and pro-Russia Twitter users. The emotional tension in the Twitter environment increased, especially after the tragic events in Odessa[37] and as military action escalated.

Of all the tweets analysed, 12.2% were identified as aggressive. Furthermore, aggressive and provocative comments tended to increase over the period of the analysis, mostly dominated by pro-Russian stances. The most aggressive reaction was caused by reports of human casualties, usage of stigmatising appellations like "fascist - ruscist[38]", specific military actions and conflict escalation. It is possible that some of the aggressive tweets have been deliberately released to provoke hatred.

Pro-Russian Twitter users have a dominant influence in the Twitter environment for the following reasons:

1) Russia actively involves the Twitter

36 The full video report in Russian to be found at the following URL: http://bit.ly/1qewj7J

37 On 2 May 2014, following a clash between the pro-Ukraine unity and pro-Russian separatist camps, the trade union building where pro-Russians were based caught fire, resulting in 40 people being burned alive. More information to be found at the following URL: http://econ.st/XfQdYZ

38 "Ruscist" is an invented word with an offensive meaning, created from a combination of the words "Russian" and "fascist".

accounts of mass media to disseminate information about the crisis in Ukraine. The followers of these accounts use this information in further references and this allows the selective distribution of anti-Ukraine information. It is important to note that the Twitter accounts of public figures – TV anchors, actors, journalists, opposition leaders – can also be very influential, having high numbers of followers and being used to spread information and opinions.

2) The Russian Twitter information environment shows more homogenous opinions and is dominated by supporters of President Putin's policy which can be partially explained by the Russian state's ability to limit the activity of the opposition and independent media. The opinions originating from Ukraine show more division into supporters of Ukrainian territorial integrity and supporters of the separatists;

3) The influence of pro-Russian state institutions, non-government organisations and particular public figures is much stronger than the that of equivalent pro-Ukrainian parties.

4) Exceptions are representatives of the *Euromaidan* movement whose tweets have noticeable influence in terms of re-tweets and followers;

5) Pro-Russian Twitter users more often use active forms of tweeting – sharing opinions, commenting, calling for action, using propaganda, getting involved in discussions. They more often have the last say in discussions. However, the last month of the analysis shows that pro-Ukrainian users have become stronger in countering the pro-Russian messaging by creating new information channels with considerable Twitter influence (for example, *Stop Fake*) and expressing opinions more actively and convincingly.

Russian public figures receive higher media support and hence have larger influence on Twitter. Of Ukrainian public figures, the only ones with notable positive appraisal are A. Yatsenyuk and A. Avakov. Of foreign political figures, the only notable ones have been B. Obama and J. Kerry, while the presence of European politicians is hardly noticeable.

Analysis has led to the conclusion that a number of fake accounts have been created by a group of users, each of them having an insignificant amount of followers, but all spreading the same message. It has also identified the networks of Twitter users with rather high Twitter influence who re-tweet and comment on each other's tweets in order to increase visibility. One such group is formed by anti-Ukrainian users ("swarog09", "tohub", "simonovkon") who are possibly creating a fictional discussion in order to produce more tweets.

The pilot research has identified a correlation among the ideological base, use of traditional media and a developed network of Twitter users. The successful coordination between these three elements is the key factor to gaining influence in the Twitter environment. More in-depth analysis is needed to identify and analyse how these coordination mechanisms are created and how they work in social media.

A New Form of Warfare

During the crisis in Ukraine, we have witnessed the application of a new type of warfare where dominance in the information field and hybrid, asymmetric warfare are the key elements.

Crimea as a test case

The strategy and tactics that were employed in Ukraine represent an implementation of the ideas developed by Russian military analysts and outlined by General Valery Gerasimov, the Chief of Russia's General Staff, nearly a year before the crisis in Ukraine.[39] General Gerasimov defined the elements of a new kind of 21st century war where the lines between war and peace, uniformed personnel and covert operatives are blurred and the main battle space has moved from the physical ground to the hearts and minds of the populations in question. Looking at the execution of the Crimea operation, it can be concluded that Russia has been preparing to conduct a modern type of warfare where media and other information channels are an important part of the war theatre, and Crimea (followed by the East Ukraine) – an important test case. It proved that by applying the elements of the new type of warfare, victory can be ensured without open military conflict and deployment of large amounts of hard military power to the conflict area.

39 For a further reference on the new form of warfare, see Bērziņš, J. (2014). Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defence Policy. Riga: DSPC, Policy Paper No 2, April 2014 and Annex 8.

Characteristics of the new form of warfare

The new form of warfare in Ukraine was implemented with the following key characteristics: escalation, dominance, speed, momentum and deception. The fear of potential threat lead to escalated military action by increasing numbers of Russian troops in Crimea. The Russian force was dominating the information field as well as the situation on the ground by having check-points everywhere, demonstrating new equipment and strength in numbers. The whole operation was implemented at great speed, using the momentum of local support boosted by an intensive information campaign, and the government change in Kyiv combined with the lack of willingness to respond to Russia's provocations with military action.

Information campaign – central to the new form of warfare

Russia's information campaign has played a very important role in preparing the ground for the Crimea operation and further action in East Ukraine. It features several characteristics: thorough Target Audience Analysis; dominance in the information field by speedy production of large quantities of information and its effective distribution; blockage or disruption of hostile information channels; using an asymmetric approach to rebuff the effect of a stronger information subject; effective multi-conduit message distribution; applying concealed management processes to the target country with social, political, economic and mental changes being achieved through manipulation; gaining the prerogative by surprise attacks; developing one's own information resources to the required level to be able to compete with other countries in the information field (for example – *RT* TV channel, formerly known as *Russia Today*); and abusing the lack of clear definitions and restrictions on international peacetime information influencing activities. The information campaign, however, would not have been as successful and have brought such quick results without the well-prepared Russian Special Operations Forces (so-called "polite men") on the ground who acted in accordance with the strategy to minimize bloodshed and apply strategic communication intent.

Deception as a tactic to delay and distract

Deception and "smokescreens" have been important instruments in the Russian campaign to confuse the central government in Kyiv, delay response actions, and, by disseminating an abundance of falsified facts and different theories, provoking the Ukrainian government, its allies and independent media into spending large amounts of time and effort refuting the Kremlin's propaganda. An interesting

case to illustrate this deception tactic is the recent Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 tragedy. On 17 July 2014, the passenger aircraft was shot down in the skies over the pro-Russian separatist controlled region of Donetsk, killing all 283 passengers and 15 crew members. Suspicion on who downed the aircraft fell on pro-Russian separatists as some evidence emerged immediately after the incident. The Ukrainian intelligence service published intercepted phone conversations between separatists which confirmed that the aircraft was shot down because it was mistaken for a Ukrainian military air carrier. In addition, less than 20 minutes after the crash, Igor Girkin (a.k.a. Strelkov), leader of the Donbass separatists, was reported to have posted on social media network *VKontakte*, taking credit for downing a Ukrainian military aircraft. The post was quickly removed as events unfolded and it became obvious that the separatists had committed a grave error.[40] The Russian mass media reacted quickly

[Within hours of the crash, Russia's second largest news agency, RIA Novosti, announced that the Boeing 777 was shot down by the Ukrainian military. Citing the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic press service as their source, RIA informed that "eyewitnesses reported that the Malaysian jet was attacked by a Ukrainian fighter plane, after which the plane broke into two sections in mid-air and crashed on the territory of the Donetsk People's Republic. After the attack the Ukrainian fighter jet was shot down and crashed". More information to be found at the following URL: http://bit.ly/1qexc06]

by putting out several versions of what had happened, blaming the Ukrainian side as well as speculating on a US conspiracy against Russia. The *Moscow Times* published an article on the subject called "'Putin's Media Lives in an Alternate Reality"[41] which gives a comprehensive overview of the most popular versions promoted by the Russian media: the aircraft was not shot down but crashed of its own accord; a bomb exploded aboard the aircraft; the aircraft was hit by a Ukrainian missile fired from the ground; a Ukrainian air force fighter pursued and then attacked the plane; the US shot down the aircraft in order to damage Russia's reputation; Ukrainian forces shot down the plane in an assassination attempt as they mistook it for the plane used by President Putin; no living people were aboard the plane as it flew on autopilot from Amsterdam where it had been pre-loaded with rotting corpses. These versions of events flooded the information space, including the English language *RT* TV channel and social media, and created extra work for independent media outlets, experts, the Ukrainian government and its allies to prove these versions fake or absurd. However, as the recent opinion

40 Yulia Latinina of Echo Moskvi lists facts and provides a detailed analysis on the topic a few days after the tragedy (in Russian): http://bit.ly/1m9S1ij

41 The article in English can be found at the following URL: http://bit.ly/1qexc06

poll by the *Levada Centre*[42] shows, 82% of Russians blame Ukrainian forces for downing the plane which shows that the media propaganda in Russia has been very successful.

Psychological pressure

The war in Crimea was never announced. During what was officially peacetime, military action, started by groups of Russian troops swiftly occupying Crimea, eventually forced the Ukrainian army either to switch sides or leave their posts.

[The silent, polite, unidentified men, wearing fresh unmarked uniforms and armed with sophisticated weapons first appeared at Simferopol airport in the early hours of 28 February. By the end of the next day, they had already surrounded the key government buildings in the city centre, had blockaded Ukrainian border troops at Balaklava Bay and Belbek airport near Sebastopol, and established checkpoints on roads across the Crimea. Journalists' interest in the origins of the armed men was high and they even got some of them talking on camera. The message from all of them was surprisingly coordinated: we are here to protect, to help, to guard, to prevent violence. Their guns were the same as those used by the Russian army, their trucks had Russian number plates and they spoke Russian without accent, admitting that they had arrived from Russia and held Russian citizenship. By mid-March, most of the Ukrainian government and military installations had either been seized or blockaded with little resistance from the Ukrainian side. During the operation, President Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov denied any relationship between these non-uniformed, armed men and the Russian army. Although a month after the annexation of Crimea, President Putin admitted that Russian forces had indeed been deployed to Crimea to support local self-defence groups, it already didn't matter. The term "polite men", invented by Kremlin spin-doctors, remains a way of referring to the Russian army's intervention in Crimea]

It is important to note that there were no clashes between Russian and Ukrainian military forces. The Russian troops (more specifically – Special Forces) exerted psychological pressure on the Ukrainian army by besieging military posts, holding Ukrainian soldiers hostage without proper access to information, and relying on directions from the fragile interim government in Kyiv. Additional pressure on Ukraine was exerted by the short-notice military exercises by Russian armed forces near the Ukrainian border and their combat-readiness checks.

Use of armed civilians

The use of armed civilians in the conflict was achieved by forming self-defence groups in Crimea to support Russian troops in military action. Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov divulged false information that the Russian military personnel of the Black Sea Fleet were in their deployment sites, implying that the armed men in uniforms without insignia were members of Crimean

42 More information on the opinion poll can be found at the following URL: http://bit.ly/YRkWgS

elf-defence units, i.e. local civilians.[43] The ability to mobilize and effectively use civilians was crucial to achieving Russia's goals in Crimea and later on in East Ukraine. Although mercenaries were widely used for the formation of self-defence groups (especially in the East Ukraine), Russia's pro-active information campaign has also made it possible to draw on the support and active involvement of certain groups within society susceptible to Russian propaganda, including former members of law-enforcement or military bodies (both local to Ukraine and from Russia and the former USSR where Russian-speaking information channels are widely consumed).

43 Latvia's Ambassador to Ukraine, H.E. Argita Daudze personally approached several of the men in unmarked uniforms and received verbal confirmation that they were Russian soldiers from the base in Sevastopol. Ukrainian journalists also did many on-the- spot interviews with the unmarked armed men, receiving confirmation that they were Russian soldiers. One such video with English subtitles to be found at the following URL: http://bit.ly/1pj0Cdp

The role of the Special Operations Forces

The Crimea operation showed that the nature of the Russian Special Operations Forces (SPETSNAZ; in Russian: *спецназ* is abbreviated from *Войска специального назначения*) has significantly changed over the last years. Compared to the wars in Chechnya and Georgia, there has been a noticeable improvement in their performance as well as equipment. In Crimea, they conducted subversive actions in a silent and speedy manner, supporting the propaganda-driven partition of the community and the disruption of central government in a well-coordinated manner. The SPETSNAZ also excelled in their cooperation with the local pro-Russian population to smuggle arms, create separatist formations and conduct a sophisticated Information Operations campaign. They engaged in urban warfare which was defined by guerrilla and covert operations on the enemy's territory. The operations were conducted using irregular forces in support of the separatist movement, insurgency and also conventional military force.

The cyber domain as part of the new form of warfare

It is worth discussing what happened in the cyber domain as part of the utilisation of asymmetric or indirect methods to complement actions in the information battle field or military actions on the ground. Experts and media correspondents have stated that the crisis in Ukraine was the largest cyber-war battlefield since Russia's cyber-attacks on Estonia in 2007 and Georgia in 2008.[44] Such actions as the leak of the recorded phone conversations between US State Department official Victoria Nuland and the US ambassador to Ukraine and EU foreign affairs chief Catherine Ashton and Estonian foreign minister Urmas Paet were attempts not only to prove the weak security of the Western governmental communication lines, but also to discredit Western leaders and divide them. Additionally, the provision of confusing information is an

44 For a further reference, see the article in Defence Update at http://bit.ly/1u5ZXzL and Channel 4 report at http://bit.ly/1wCcyQ7

example of reflexive control.

In preparing to take over Crimea, Russia had managed to hit almost all Ukrainian government websites and to disrupt important communication systems of the Ukrainian forces based in Crimea. Some attacks also harmed news-outlet and social-network websites. Ukraine's Security Service reported an attack on the mobile communication systems of Ukrainian government members with the purpose of disrupting communication between government agencies. Numerous cyber-attacks against Ukrainian military groups have also been reported, meant to discredit their actions and create tensions between cooperation partners. Ukrainian company *Ukrtelecom* announced that unmarked gunmen had penetrated its infrastructure facilities causing the collapse of all communication. In combination with the disruption of broadcasts by the Ukrainian mass media in Crimea, this laid out a comfortable environment for taking over the territory.

The so-called *Cyber Berkut* (КиберБеркут) was an important player in the cyber war during the crisis in Ukraine.

[This voluntary anonymous group appeared after the dissolution of the infamous Berkut security force in Ukraine at the end of February. The targets of the group are not only the Ukrainian government but also foreign governments supporting it. Hence it was Cyber Berkut who published the phone discussion between Ms. Ashton and Mr. Paet and also attacked the websites of the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (NATO CCDCOE) and NATO itself. The Cyber Berkut has an opponent – the Cyber Hundred (Киберсотня) which is a pro-Ukrainian group whose main task was to fight the information war to protect the interests of Euromaidan. Its best-known activities have been hacking the website of the RT TV channel (formerly known as Russia Today) and the government newspaper Russkaya Gazeta]

The group declared that it would fight against the current government of Ukraine which – as they stated, matching the Russian narrative – glorified neo-fascism and nationalism. The attack on the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence by *Cyber Berkut* is particularly interesting. The *Cyber Berkut* had declared that the Centre was helping the Ukrainian government to "exert active propaganda on the population via mass media and social networks, block objective sources of information, and cover up the criminal actions of the government". This also supports the wider Russian narrative that the West and NATO are plotting against Russia and developing various capabilities like the Centres of Excellence to attack and harm Russia.

What plays to the Russian advantage is the fact that there are few international legal constraints that regulate information interventions, information or cyber warfare used to penetrate and destroy information systems, financial and military institutions and civil society assets.

Importance of Audience Analysis

Russia's success in reaching out to the population of East Ukraine has proved a need for a clear Ukrainian government policy on the country's East, including strategic communication to reach out to its population. Significant work needs to be undertaken by the international community to boost the Ukrainian government's capacity in this regard. The ability to conduct proper audience analysis is key to designing any information campaign.

The new government in Kyiv facing Russian aggression

The new government in Ukraine faced a very difficult task, in a time of crisis, to operate with speed, decisiveness and high level of professionalism whilst facing economic pressure, the flow of new staff into government structures (including disorganised law-enforcement bodies), a new majority in Parliament and the state being headed by an acting president with limited powers. Apart from facing external aggression, the government had to prepare for a Presidential election and demonstrate willingness to implement urgent reforms.

Ukraine's government, fearing Russian military invasion from the South-East where Russia had stationed large numbers of troops on the border, thus exerting significant psychological pressure, did not order armed resistance in Crimea. However, the failure to withdraw Ukrainian military equipment and issue troops with clear orders gave Russian troops in Crimea

the upper hand to exert psychological pressure.

It was very difficult for the unprepared Ukrainian government to counter the well-prepared Russian operation in Crimea in an effective manner. It was not possible to control the situation on the peninsula or, for that matter, the situation in the Eastern regions. The large-scale disinformation spread by Russia worsened the situation and resulted in an overload of conflicting information for local populations and the Ukrainian government itself. Russia's consistent efforts to portray the new Ukrainian government as "far-right Nazi" to the inhabitants of Eastern Ukraine resulted in increased distrust and alienation from the central government.

Advantages of comprehensive Target Audience Analysis (TAA)

The Ukrainian case clearly demonstrates the advantages of comprehensive TAA skills and capabilities.

[The UK StratCom community defines Target Audience Analysis (TAA) as the process of profiling an audience to understand what motivates it & assess under what circumstances it will exhibit a specific behaviour. In its most detailed form TAA is a multi-source, scientifically verified, diagnostic methodology undertaken in-country and in the host language used to identify specific motivations for behaviour. Its output information is deduced from methodically gathered data and tested against a scientifically derived hypothesis]

Knowledge of people's beliefs and the ability to predict their actions has been critical to the success of Russia's information campaign on the one hand and Ukraine's failure on the other. Russia was able to get the support for its actions within the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine because it knew its target audience, was able to predict its likely behaviour and use the right channels to trigger it.

East Ukrainians' wish for stability

The deployment of a specialist assessment team identified the need for a comprehensive TAA which was conducted in parts of the East Ukraine in June 2014.[45] As is so often the case, the TAA revealed counter-intuitive facts. The prevailing view amongst many western governments was that the entire region was pro-Moscow, or at least pro-separatist. The TAA indicated that whilst the central (Kyiv) government's credibility was low, this did not universally translate to pro-Moscow, separatist support. The TAA, which was focused not on people's attitudes or perceptions but instead upon actual behaviours, identified many different groupings of interests. One of the common strands across all groups was a desire for stability and peace, irrespective of political orientation. Financial stability and job security were important behavioural motivators. Informal power structures –

45 The TAA was undertaken in eastern Ukraine by a contracted in-country project involving research teams deployed in the field.

business networks – were rated as being highly influential because they related directly to job security. The key pro-stability social groups are: Afghanistan veterans, pensioners, miners, public servants and senior factory workers. They seek stability in terms of jobs, income and non-violence. In their view, military action by the Ukrainian government does not facilitate stability.

Locally attuned information campaigns may bring results

One of the difficulties in communicating with the country's East is the fact that Ukrainian TV has low credibility and a very limited audience. If the new Ukrainian government wanted to reach out to local populations in the East, their campaigns would have to be very heavily attuned to local issues. A country-wide, one-size-fits-all campaign (which is what would probably have been commissioned) would have had no traction with the profiled groups. The TAA further revealed that influence efforts could be enhanced by communicating locally in a style which emphasized preservation of local stability avoiding all suggestion of the centrality of the Kyiv government and certainly keeping well away from any attitudinal communications attempting to enhance the appeal of the EU. Simultaneously, the TAA indicated that the Ukrainian government should challenge the successfully accrued legitimacy of the separatists and where possible attempt to overstretch their ability to govern. Overall, the TAA revealed that the Kyiv government's ability to influence the population was weak and conventional communication campaigns were unlikely to succeed. Much more personal engagement would be better – person-to-person contacts would prove more effective and allow audiences to engage in discussion of their fears and aspirations.

Lessons Learned

The crisis in Ukraine has provided valuable lessons for the Ukrainian government, the countries neighbouring Russia (who became home to larger Russian-speaking communities during the Soviet era), and NATO and the EU as organisations.

General conclusions

Information is a powerful tool of influence. Analysis of the Ukraine conflict suggests that NATO and the EU must adapt to the new reality where information superiority, in relation to military power, is becoming increasingly important. Russia has demonstrated that in the current and continually evolving information environment, power and control can easily be gained by manipulating information to affect not only financial markets, business practices and public policy, but also influence societal perceptions, attitudes and behaviours. While information itself has tremendous value, how it is presented transforms it into an important strategic tool. The calculated use, and misuse, of information has the potential to shape personal values to influence societal norms and also behaviours.

The information campaign was central to Russia's operation in Ukraine. Taking over Crimea without any military confrontation demonstrated that the concept of well-constructed influence operations is a very essential part of Russian operational planning and that Russian military forces have a strategic communications mind-set applied down to the tactical level. Information and communications played the central role in the Russian operations, the military component supporting it.

Russia was prepared to conduct a new form of warfare where an information campaign plays a central role. Analysis of the crisis in Ukraine has shown that the Russian military has been systematically developed over the past 10 years and become able to skilfully employ 21st-century tactics that combine intense information campaigns, cyber warfare and the use of highly trained Special Operations Forces. Russia has responded to the new information challenge with a high degree of professionalism and imagination. Russian professionalism has to be acknowledged even if we condemn the uses to which it is being applied. In terms of messaging, Russia has demonstrated initiative, strict message discipline, multi-level complexity and vertical coherence. Something worth thinking about is the role of Special Operations Forces and information. Traditionally, Special Forces in the West avoid publicity, consistent with their covert operational posture. Russians have incorporated information into what their Special Operations Forces do. The Allies should consider how well their Special Operations Forces participate in information offensives.

Russia's narrative is reflected in its key state policy documents. Analysis of the most popular Russian TV channels proved that the narrative used in the information campaign against Ukraine is supported by

key Russian state policy documents. This can serve as a basis to develop alternative narratives in preparations to counter Russian propaganda in the future. Russia's neighbouring countries with larger Russian-speaking communities should particularly focus on ways and means to balance Russia's narratives targeted at Russia's compatriots abroad.

Russia's narrative is largely based on historical memory. Concurrently, Russia's thorough understanding of its own audiences – including compatriots abroad – was able to leverage historical memory: the Great Russian Empire, World War II and Nazi atrocities, and the might and collapse of the USSR. Russia's information campaign brought out the lingering fear and hatred of Nazism, the embarrassment and shame over the collapse of the once-great Soviet Union, and simultaneously reminded its audience about feelings of greatness and pride related to these moments in history which can now be applied to the idea of a great nation or even civilization re-emerging. It is this appeal to human emotion, this hope, and perhaps even this promise of renewed pride and glory that has made the Russian narrative so compelling to its people.

Crisis in Ukraine is a result of Russia's long term strategy. Learning from the Russian information campaign in Ukraine, it is clear that early detection and analysis of elements within the Russian narrative which signal potentially aggressive behaviour are critical. Russia's state policy documents contain indications which should be further analysed so as to develop potential future scenarios of Russia's actions and Allied responses to those. It is also obvious that, prior to taking aggressive action on the ground, the Russian government works intensively with the public information space to prepare public opinion for the steps to be taken. Similar activities in the information space also took place before the 2nd Chechen War and the 2008 war with Georgia.

The role of Compatriots Abroad is critical and should be considered carefully for the future. The security implications for countries neighbouring Russia are particularly serious. The kind of strategy that Russia has employed in Ukraine is likely to work best in areas which have larger communities of Russia's Compatriots Abroad who are targets of Russia's information campaigns and potentially may be ready to provide local support in cases of Russian aggression against the respective country. The Ukraine case, along with the case of Georgia, demonstrate that such information campaigns supported by military means are easier to carry out in territories close to Russia, allowing intimidation tactics through the drawing up of large military forces near respective country's border and also providing for the easy supply of equipment and other resources to the Special Operations Forces and recruits who have already crossed that border. This is particularly applicable to the countries which are not members of NATO and therefore not parties to the Washington Treaty.

Audience analysis is critical to operational success. Russia has demonstrated that understanding audiences and what motivates them is critical to operational success that is enduring – an important lesson for the Alliance and one for which the basic tenets of StratCom can provide solutions if properly resourced, integrated into all responses – words and actions alike – and implemented consistently.

There is "another side of the coin" to Russia's information campaign. Although Russia's information campaign has been successful in influencing its audiences, it also bears a degree of counter-productivity as it has radicalized and alienated other audiences – West Ukraine and Kyiv, the populations of NATO and EU countries, and the USA. It remains to be seen whether Russia has gained a long-term enemy on the part of Western Ukrainians. It can be assumed with a degree of certainty that as a result of the current conflict, the Kyiv government will completely discard the idea of participating in the Eurasian Economic Union or other Russian political, economic or even cultural projects.

Deception is used by Russia as a tactic to distract and delay. It will always be difficult to counter Russia's propaganda machine. Countering misrepresentation and sometimes outright fabrication by Russia, with reference to their current campaign against Ukraine, was problematic. Whereas the Alliance is bound by the requirement to speak and act with transparency and truth, there is no such requirement compelling Russia to do the same. Investigating and disproving the false information, different versions of events and even conspiracy theories rapidly disseminated by Russia requires a lot of time, effort and resources on the part of international organisations like NATO, the Ukrainian government, independent media, experts and even ordinary citizens.

Disinformation campaigns erode over time. The evolution of the crisis in Ukraine beyond Crimea demonstrates that disinformation campaigns erode over time as more and more evidence is revealed to negate lies and falsifications, hidden information is discovered, anecdotal mistakes are made by the less wary (the cases of Russian soldiers' photos on social media were a recent illustration of how "best kept secrets" can become known to the world in extremely short periods of time[46]).

Lessons for NATO

NATO should increase the utilisation of StratCom to participate effectively in the new form of warfare. The Crimea operation involved, and in a way tested, many components of this new form of warfare. It was obvious that the information campaign had primacy and was supported by the military component. This is a 180-degree change in thinking from classic military operations where communication was in support of military operations. The effect is as immediate

46 Russian soldier Sanya Sotkin posted several images to his Instagram account which automatically put geographical tags on the photos and showed him to be on active duty within rebel-controlled areas inside the Ukrainian border. Detailed information on this and other cases can be found at the following URL: http://bzfd.it/1m9RJIi

and, according to the characteristics of the new type of warfare, often more enduring than military operations. The Alliance needs to revisit how StratCom is organized and applied. One recommendation for the Alliance is to consider closer integration of StratCom with operational planning – if not totally embedding it within the planning function. Likewise, StratCom should become an integral part of Allied military exercises and training.

The importance of StratCom to NATO operations should be recognized. To date, StratCom has not gained sufficient traction within NATO operations. NATO StratCom policy dates back to 2009 and considerable progress has been made. Nevertheless, the Alliance has not fully leveraged the potential of StratCom by applying it homogenously to information and influence campaigns. Whereas Russia, with its near absolute control of its institutions and media, was able to develop its narrative and accompanying themes and messages to tremendous effect, the absence of control in NATO nations, each of which will act in its own national interest, has the effect of fracturing the message. This lack of consistent and powerful messaging based on human rights' values – what could be called the 'drumbeat effect' illustrates why it is nearly impossible for NATO to counter narratives or indeed, conduct as effective information campaigns as that which Russian is currently demonstrating.

The impact of new hybrid warfare on Article V needs reflection. When the Washington Treaty was written, the Transatlantic community was referring to an open military conflict and a system of collective defence. Today, we are additionally witnessing the utilisation of new forms of unconventional and asymmetric warfare, including in cyberspace. It is becoming increasingly difficult to determine with certainty whether internal conflict within a country is occuring genuinely or is being triggered and fuelled by an outside force. The crisis in Ukraine showed that there was a deliberate attempt by the aggressor to disguise the attack as an internal conflict by using non-uniformed troops, mixing Special Operations Forces with armed civilian groups, secretly supplying rebel forces by smuggling armaments and also waging cyber-attacks. The Alliance should analyse and assess these developments in the context of Article V.

The crisis in Ukraine has changed the relationship between NATO and Russia. The StratCom implications for the policy shift need to be assessed but are likely to be considerable. In April, the NATO Foreign Ministers decided to suspend all cooperation between NATO and Russia. NATO continues to call on Russia to return to compliance with international law and its international obligations, to take genuine and effective measures to stop destabilising Ukraine, and to end its support for armed separatist groups. Although the political dialogue under the NATO-Russia Council can continue as necessary, the Alliance has to acknowledge that this relationship has changed considerably. In his speech at Tallinn University in Estonia on 9 May 2014 NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh

Rasmussen deeply regretted that Russia seemed to view NATO as an adversary rather than as a partner. He said: "This is not an approach we favour. But we are ready to meet the challenge." As a result, NATO has engaged in identifying new approaches to its relationship with Russia.

There is a need to invest further in StratCom capability and ensure continued coherence at political and military, as well as strategic, operational and tactical levels. Though there remains much to learn about Russia's activities in the Ukraine, including how the information campaign was organised, structured, manned and implemented, it is already clear that NATO and the NATO nations need to increase investment in developing StratCom capability so as to combat instability within NATO's areaof interest. Only with a robust StratCom capability can NATO both understand and counter narratives whose appeal is ascending in particular audiences, to the detriment of regional and perhaps world stability. The Ukrainian case shows in practice how information, communication and influence operations have become central tools in current and future security environments. NATO is compelled therefore, to ensure that the StratCom mindset is integrated within operations with appropriate importance.

Considering the will expressed by the Alliance to provide practical assistance in form of capacity building to Ukraine,

["One particular priority will be capacity-building in Ukraine and other eastern partners. This covers defence and security sector reform, where NATO has a lot to offer. We can build on the long-standing partnership in this area between NATO and Ukraine, and excellent military to military relations." From remarks by NATO Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow at the SDA Conference: "Overhauling Transatlantic Security Thinking" on 9 June 2014]

StratCom is an area of particular value. Given that the information campaign against Ukraine has been agressive, support provided to Ukraine in the area of strategic communication capacity building would provide considerable help. The Ukrainian government faces several challenges: lack of skilled personnel, appropriate state structures, and technical capabilities.

NATO needs to examine cooperation mechanisms with its allies and partners to develop a unified response. There is an obvious need to develop mechanisms to counter Russian propaganda. Russian information wars can only be tackled collectively. The Russian abuse of media freedom goes against democratic values and is a particular challenge which requires further study to identify legal mechanisms to protect freedom of speech but also tackle the problem of propaganda outlets masquearading as independent media.

NATO should focus on developing its own narratives and involve Russian-speakers as part of its audience. NATO needs to increase its ability to reach out to Russian-speaking audiences and to understand them, as well as offer narratives that these audiences can identify with. Analyzing the

Russian-speaking audiences will therefore offer a comprehenisve understanding of their motivation for behaviour and allow development of corresponding narratives. In this context, leveraging NATO nations with significant Russian language capability should be considered.

More resources should be invested in exploring the opportunities and challenges the social media can bring to StratCom. Social media has been one of Russia's new platforms where information warfare is being actively executed. The NATO Allies have to review how we look at and how we use social media. The Ukrainian case shows that social media can become a tool for authority and is very vulnerable to manipulation. The Allies have to invest resources in the analysis of their audiences in social media, including, for example, addressing the phenomenon of controlled trolling.

Conclusion

Russia's information campaign against Ukraine is a complex case study from which NATO can learn much about effective strategic communication. An examination of the root causes from lingering issues of national pride to much older historical teachings which speak to Russian ambition, in retrospect signalled the aspirations of this nation to rise again to its former perceived status and glory. Russia's demonstrated understanding of all its audiences, including an understanding of how these audiences would likely respond to their aggression, gave them a reasonable probability in anticipating a successful outcome. This demonstrates a sophistication of strategic communication which, from a NATO perspective, should be appreciated for its potential to deliver results. The completeness, especially in the earliest phases of this aggression where, through presence and messaging alone, Russia was able to annex such a critically geopolitical region as Crimea, offers irrefutable proof that StratCom, in many conflict situations, may offer a response option that expends neither blood nor resources.

The analysis of the crisis in Ukraine should be continued from the information warfare perspective as developments in the Eastern part of Ukraine seem to be diverging from the Crimea scenario.

List of Annexes

Annex 1: "Active Measures"

So-called "active measures" was a term referring to deceptive operations conducted in **support of Soviet foreign policy.** The goal of "active measures" is **to influence** the opinions and actions of individuals, governments and societies. **Deception is the essence of "active measures**". In the Soviet Union, the implementation of "active measures" was the responsibility of the KGB (Committee for State Security, in Russian - Комите́т госуда́рственной безопа́сности) and all Soviet agencies and representatives abroad were available to support or participate in these campaigns. Techniques included the following: **disinformation and forgery** (deliberate attempts to deceive public or government opinion by forging facts or documents); front groups and **friendship societies** (coordinated activities in non-government, non-political organisations engaged in promoting certain goals – for example, the World Peace Council, the Christian Peace Conference); **non-ruling Communist and Leftist parties** (liaison with the parties to engage them in specific political action or propaganda campaigns on the behalf of the USSR); **political influence operations** (disguised KGB agents take active roles in the respective nation's government, political, press, business or academic affairs). Additionally, the **Russian Orthodox Church** was integrated financially as well as structurally into the Soviet foreign propaganda apparatus to support the implementation of "active measures".

One source for further reading on active measures is the research paper "Deception, Disinformation and Strategic Communications: How One Interagency Group Made a Major Difference" by F. Schoen and Ch. J. Lamb at http://bit.ly/1u0ehgX

Annex 2: Reflexive Control

To analyse Russia's information campaign against Ukraine, one has to go back to the notion of reflexive control – a subject that has been studied in the Soviet Union and Russia for nearly 50 years. The concept is close in meaning to the concept of psychological influence. Reflexive control implies interference with the decision-making process by using a means of conveying to a partner or an opponent specially prepared information to incline him to **voluntarily make the predetermined decision** desired by the initiator of the action.

The advancement of reflexive control as a s**trategic tool applicable in international politics** goes in line with the Russian belief that the emerging global information space can be exploited to alter the global balance of power.

It can be argued that Russia's information campaign against Ukraine, well aligned with the actions on the ground, was

a manifestation of reflexive control. Similarities can be drawn with Russian actions prior to and during the war with Georgia in 2008. As part of reflexive control, Russia applied **continuous, mounting pressure** on the Georgian government and population, at the same time conducting **close analysis of the psychological profile** of the President to be able to provoke the Government into the desired decisions and actions.

During the Ukraine campaign, Russia exercised extremely successful control over the mass media and used the weakness of the government in Kyiv and its inability to reach out to the inhabitants of Crimea and the Eastern regions. This complemented the Russian effort to **discredit the Ukrainian government as part of its reflexive control plan.**

One source for further reading on reflexive control is the research paper "Russia's Reflexive Control Theory and the Military" by T. L. Thomas at http://bit.ly/1oZnu2a

Annex 3: The experience of limiting Russian TV propaganda in Latvia and Lithuania

On 21 March 2014, the Lithuanian Radio and Television Commission restricted the re-broadcasting of Russian TV channel *NTV-Mir* within Lithuania for a period of three months. On the eve of Lithuanian Independence Day, *NTV-Mir* broadcast a programme claiming that during the "Ukrainian nationalist *coup d'état"*, the same scenario used by the "Lithuanian separatists" in 1991 was applied. The Commission found that the programme disseminated false information in order to discredit Lithuanian statehood and the restoration of independence. The Commission also restricted the re-transmissions of the *RTR Planeta* TV channel.

On 8 April 2014, the Latvian National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEMMC) restricted the re-broadcasting of Russian TV channel *Rossiya RTR* in Latvia for a period of three months. The statement released by the Council reads that "NEMMC believes a number of Russian television channels controlled by the Russian government have been distributing misleading and hateful information in regard to Latvia for a long time. This is viewed as targetted information aggression within Latvia's information space. The Council asks responsible Latvian institutions to immediately carry out all the measures necessary to end such activities, which are unacceptable to Latvia's national interests." Latvian law prohibits mass media from disseminating false information, invoking hatred, calling for acts of war or causing military conflict.

The restriction of these channels also lead to the conclusion that current EU legislation does not enable individual member states to protect their information space from similar types of aggression and illegal activity should the broadcaster be registered in another country.

These events were accompanied by a debate on the need to establish a joint

Russian-language channel in the Baltic States as an alternative to the channels being re-broadcast from Russia[47]. However, financial constraints have prevented this idea from moving forward at this time.

Recently, current and former media leaders in the Baltics and Finland have sent a joint letter to the European Commission asking that body to consider establishing a Russian-language TV channel in Europe, which would be called *Golos Evropy* (Voice of Europe). According to the authors, individual countries lack the resources to establish and maintain such channels.

Annex 4: Media control in Russia (incl. reference to trolling)

Every week, the Presidential Administration holds a meeting with representatives of the three largest TV channels – *First Channel (ORT)*, *Rossija* and *NTV*. The Director-General or his deputy of all of three channels attends these meetings. Alexei Gromov, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidential Administration of Russia usually attends these meetings on behalf of the Presidential Administration. Sometimes, the administration is represented by staff from domestic policy administration. Gromov regularly communicates with TV channel management by telephone, sometimes asking them to remove one or another story from broadcasts. This means that we can consider Gromov to be one of Russia's leading controllers of TV channel content. Control over every single message in the media is also ensured by an associate of President Putin – Yuri Kovalchuk. Y. Kovalchuk owns controlling shareholdings in *First Channel* and *STS TV*, as well as majority shareholdings in *NTV, Ren-TV, Fifth Channel*, also *Izvestia* and *Life News.* In addition to this, Kovalchuk owns the *Video International company* which produces advertising for the leading Russian TV channels. Another acquaintance of President Putin – Arkady Rotenberg – influences the operations of *First Channel* – he owns a company Krasnij Kvadrat, which produces TV programmes for it. One of the mechanisms of media control is allocating the advertising budgets of the major state-owned companies to the media. There is a condition attached: no negative messages about any state-owned companies. State-owned companies pay the media not only for advertisements, but also for the placement of articles, which are never identified as advertising.

Control over the print media is implemented with the support of Vyacheslav Volodin, First Deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidential Administration of Russia. V. Volodin takes part in the creation of press materials for certain media campaigns. News that is directly related to President Putin is controlled by the Press Attaché for the President of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Peskov. Synchronized dissemination of propaganda materials (in Russian – *vbros*) to the media usually happens via the large newspapers – *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and *Izvestija* – and in loyal internet portals, for example, *Life News*. If propaganda campaigns require

47 For additional information to be found at the following URL: http://bit.ly/1yfqdy0

a larger scale, TV channel news and current affairs programmes are utilised. Loyal political scientists play a key role in information campaigns organized by the Russian authorities. They "correctly" interpret political events in Russia and abroad. The political scientists and political commentators who regularly communicate with the Presidential Administration include Sergey Markov, Dmitry Orlov, Vyacheslav Nikonov, Sergey Kurginjan, Michail Loeontyev and Alexey Pushkov. Significantly, the necessity for using this method was described in Russia's foreign policy review in 2007. From this we can conclude that the leading Russian TV channels – *First Channel, Rossija* and *NTV*, when reflecting events in Russia and abroad, do not work on their own. News, analytical guidelines and editorial content are controlled.

Annex 5: Lessons President Putin learned from the two Chechen wars, the Kursk tragedy, and the Georgia war

After the collapse of the USSR, Chechnya took bold steps towards national self-determination which was unacceptable to Moscow. The Western democracies would also have rather supported a peaceful solution to the conflict through political dialogue than separation of the Republic of Ichkeria from the Russian Federation. The first Chechen war revealed that Russia failed to implement communication that would help gain mass support from a wide range of audiences within the country and beyond.

In the first half of the 1990s, Russia had independent media, including the *NTV* TV channel, which actively criticized the Kremlin's policy in Chechnya. In Western countries and parts of Russian society, Chechen activities were perceived sympathetically, as a continuation of the collapse of the USSR and the fight for self-determination by nations enslaved by the USSR. During Boris Yeltsin's presidency, the Kremlin did not have a particularly good relationship with the armed forces and security services. Despite the resolution of the political crisis of 1993, cooperation between the Presidential Administration and the State Duma was not good. The implementation of effective information campaigns was not possible in such circumstances. Communication by and decisions of the Presidential Administration and the State Duma were not synchronized. In addition, the army did not have sufficient resources to conduct information operations either internally or in state or independent media. For their part, the Chechens were quite active through their own or the major Russian media. Thus, *NTV* journalists were giving Chechen militants opportunities to give interviews and explain the goals of the freedom fighters to a wide audience.

The second Chechen war, which started in 1999 after bombings of residential targets in Russia (the Chechen rebels never claimed responsibility for this), was radically

different in terms of state communication. In 2000, Vladimir Putin became President and started the centralization of power in Russia. President Putin improved relations between the Presidential Administration, the army and security services. This helped with the implementation of the information component during the military operations. President Putin's former roles in the KGB and FSB (Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation, in Russian - Федера́льная слу́жба безопа́сности Росси́йской Федера́ции) influenced the overall attitude of state institutions on the utilisation of information tools in the implementation of domestic and foreign policies. This approach was based on the concept that anything and everything could be controlled by the elite. Some of the tools that help to achieve this are the so-called political technologies, which include public relations, propaganda and misinformation. President Putin and his allies placed a lot of attention on the control of economic and media resources. Control over *Gazprom's* finances was practiced by inserting "our people" in leading positions within the company. Implementation of media control started with the takeover of the largest TV channels, placing them under the direct or indirect charge of the Presidential Administration, through media owners who are close to President Putin or to Gazprom. Initially, President Putin's motivation to gain control over the major TV channels was linked to his election campaign. In 1999, when President Putin became Prime Minister, there were around ten media holdings. Some of the most influential media affecting elections were Vladimir Gusinsky's NTV, Boris Berezovsky's TV6 and Yuri Luzhkov's TVC. Mayor of Moscow Yuri Luzhkov was turned from an opponent of President Putin's into an ally through the process of party consolidation, giving him an opportunity to become one of the leading politicians in the United Russia party. Russian media magnate V. Gusinsky was forced to sell his media channels, including *NTV*, to *Gazprom*. B. Berezovsky was forced to emigrate. In this way, the Kremlin neutralized its three main opponents in the presentation of the war in Chechnya and other events. In addition, S. Jastrzembski, a specialist in spin-doctoring, was appointed presidential adviser and attempted to control anything that appeared in the Russian media about the war in Chechnya. After the 2001 terrorist attacks in the USA, Russia made good use of the opportunity and began to explain to the international community that the military actions against Chechen fighters were part of the "global war on terror". Additionally, the "fighters" became "terrorists". It was no longer a nation's fight for freedom, but "terrorist attacks" by radical Islamists with one aim – to destabilize Russia. The "Federal group" (Russian – *federaljnaya grupirovka*) was standing up against "groups of bandits" (Russian – *bandformirovaniye*). In the second Chechen war, unlike the first, many more special OMON police units were involved, not regular army soldiers. This calmed down the protests by committees of mothers of young soldiers which had resonated through the public during the first war. The Kremlin not only made its message clearer, but also limited the

Chechens' opportunities to express their views. State control of the leading TV channels prevented Chechen militants from addressing wide Russian and foreign audiences. Despite the fact that the two Chechen wars did not see a change in the location or practice of war, their narratives and thematic frameworks were significantly different and this affected the international position of the two parties involved.

In 2000, the international and domestic reaction to the sinking of the *Kursk* submarine and the authorities' failure to act, substantially undermined President Putin's reputation. President Putin's indecision about postponing his vacation and making a public announcement created outrage in the victims' families. In the days before divers finally reached the submarine, Russian state representatives changed the message on the causes of the accident and the condition of the crew several times.

The war with Georgia in 2008 showed that Russia had taken into account previous military operations and was willing to participate in information warfare. To justify its military action to the international community, Russia implemented so-called *passportisation* in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, granting Russian citizenship under simplified conditions. To be able to describe this military operation as "protective", Russia needed there to be more Russian citizens in South Ossetia. Russian TV channels, when broadcasting news about the war in South Ossetia, explained that a solution had to be found for a "humanitarian crisis" that had been caused by the invasion of the Georgian army. The audience was misled by stories about civil casualties whose numbers were growing every hour. Later, independent international organizations did not confirm the numbers of casualties that had been previously reported by the Russian media. Although in Western democracies, the Russian activities were not considered justified, the Kremlin demonstrated to all the post-Soviet countries that NATO and other international organizations will not be able to keep Russia from acting in its own interests.

All these examples show that Kremlin officials have changed their opinion about the importance of the information component in politics and in military operations. The centralization of state power and control over media content has given Russia the opportunity to implement targeted communication projects.
The differences in the media coverage of the two Chechen wars were connected to the changes in effective narratives and frames, and the exclusion of the Chechens from the communication process. This demonstrates the nature of the Russian state's control over communication – any media competitors will be neutralized by any means possible.

Annex 6: Narrative Control

To understand the narratives and thematic communication frames in the context of the Ukraine crisis, it is important to consider narrative control. A narrative can be considered an oral or written story setting out the author's ideas about an object, person or process in a specific order. Narratives induce people to evaluate things in a particular context, through a prism of specific values or myths. Narratives usually offer a clear distinction between the good and the bad. If individual narratives are a way in which a person communicates their personal experience, collective narratives are based on collective experience and values and one of their tasks is to strengthen the collective identity. Thus collective narratives are always seen as a resource for political communication, which has to be controlled. Narratives are controlled through the creation of myths and manipulation of the current elements of identity. This is a detail also common in the use of propaganda, which is created in line with one or several elements of the target group's identity. In the framework of narrative control, it is possible to "insert" a particular political or military leader, the government of some country, or the country itself in a positive or negative context. Control of narratives is seen as a more powerful tool than setting the media agenda, because recipients of the information reject those stories that contradict their "base narrative" or "strategic narrative". Narrative control means control over the process of interpreting information. If an authoritarian state practices narrative control long enough, the proportion of its society that does not think critically perceives information in a hyperbolic form and uses a specific interpretation even if this does not correspond to real events.

Annex 7: Controlled internet trolling

Although the Internet environment in Russia is much more open than that of TV, the state administration is also trying to influence processes in the World Wide Web. As the Russian analytical portal *The Insider* points out, the Domestic Policy Department of the Presidential Administration controls the work of so-called trolls and bloggers, who have three tasks:

1) publication and distribution of ordered materials;

2) creation of fake accounts on social networks and distributing the ordered information on these accounts;

3) sending out of *spam* messages, persecution of opponents on the Internet. Many people are involved in the organization of these activities; one of the most important could be the director of the *Konkord* holding Evgeny Prihozhin, who is personally acquainted with President Putin. Prihozin has his own propaganda offices in Ukraine, for example, the *Kharkiv news agency*.

Annex 8: A new type of warfare

The specific elements of the new type of warfare, as listed by General Valery Gerasimov are:

- Military action is started by groups of troops during peacetime (war is never declared);
- Non-contact clashes between highly manoeuvrable, mixed-specialty fighting groups;
- Elimination of the enemy's military and economic power by short-time precise strikes on strategic military and civilian infrastructure;
- Massive use of high-precision weapons and special operations, robotics and weapons that use new physical principles (direct-energy weapons – lasers, shortwave radiation, etc.);
- Use of armed civilians (4 civilians to 1 military);
- Simultaneous strikes on the enemy's units and facilities throughout its territory;
- Simultaneous battles on land, air, sea, and in the information space;
- Use of asymmetric and indirect methods;
- Management of troops in a unified information sphere.

The new type of warfare and its implications for Latvia have been discussed in the policy paper by J. Bērziņš "Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defense Policy" at http://bit.ly/1r7Pohh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