

*‘Krym Nash’*:  
An Analysis of Modern Russian Deception Warfare

**‘De Krim is van ons’**

Een analyse van hedendaagse Russische wijze van oorlogvoeren – inmenging door misleiding

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

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# List of abbreviations

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

AJP	- Allied Joint Publication (part of NATO's doctrine)
APC	- Armoured Personnel Carrier
APT	- Advanced Persistent Threat
ASSR	- Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
BBC	- British Broadcasting Cooperation
BC	- Before Christ
BTG	- Battalion Tactical Group
BTR-80	- <i>Bronetransportyor 80</i> (Soviet/Russian type military 8x8 wheeled armoured personnel carrier)
BUK/Buk	- Russian-made family of self-propelled, medium range, surface-to-air missile systems ( <i>Бука</i> or Buk actually means Beech)
CC	- Creative Commons
CCD CoE	- Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence
Cheka	- <i>Vserossiyskaya Chrezvychaynaya Komissiya</i> (All-Russian Extraordinary Commission)
ChVK	- <i>Chastnyye Voyennyye Kompanii</i> (Private Military Company)
CIA	- Central Intelligence Agency (United States Intelligence Service)
CNN	- Cable News Network
CSCE	- Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
DDoS	- Distributed Denial of Service
DSB	- Dutch Safety Board
EU	- European Union
FAPSI	- <i>Federalnaya Agentstvo Pravitel'stvennoy Sviazi i Informatsiy</i> (Federal Agency for Governmental Communications and Information)
FOI	- <i>Totalförsvarets Forskningsinstitut</i> (Swedish Defence Research Agency)
FSB	- <i>Federalnaya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti</i> (Russia's Federal Security Service)
FSK	- <i>Federalnaya Sluzhba Kontrrazvedki</i> (Federal Counter-Intelligence Service)
FSO	- <i>Federalnaya Sluzhba Okrany</i> (Federal Protection Service)
GIS	- Georgian Intelligence Service
GPU	- <i>Gosudartvennoye Politicheskoe Upravlenie</i> (State Political Directorate)
GRU	- <i>Glavnoye Razvedyvatel'noye Upravleniye</i> (Main Intelligence Office, the Soviet and Russian Military Secret Service)
GULAG	- <i>Glavnoye Upravleniye Lagerey</i> (Main Administration of Camps)
HUR	- <i>Holovne Upravlinnaya Rozvidki</i> (General Intelligence Directorate, or Ukraine's Military Intelligence Service)
IIFFMCG	- Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia
IRA	- Internet Research Agency
ISAF	- International Security Assistance Force
JCC	- Joint Control Commission
JIT	- Joint Investigation Team
KGB	- <i>Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti</i> or Committee for State Security
KSO	- <i>Komandovanie sil Spetsial'nalnykh Operatsiy</i> (Russian Special Operation Forces Command)
LSE	- London School of Economics and Political Science
MAP	- Membership Action Plan (of NATO)
MBT	- Main Battle Tank
MGB	- <i>Ministerstvo Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti</i> (Ministry of State Security)

MH17	- Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 (Carrier Code)
MIT	- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
MVD	- <i>Ministerstvo Vnutrennikh Del SSR</i> (Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs)
NATO	- North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NKVD	- <i>Narodnyy Kommissariat Vnutrennikh Del</i> (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs)
NKGD	- <i>Narodniy Kommissariat Gosudartstvennoi Bezopasnosti</i> (People's Commissariat of State Security)
OGPU	- <i>Obyedinennoe Gosudartstvennoye Politicheskoe Upravlenie</i> (Unified State Political Directorate)
OMF	- Opposing Militant Force
OSCE	- Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OSK	- <i>Obeyedinennye Strategicheskoye Komandovaniya</i> (Joint Strategic Command)
PMC	- Private Military Company
QQ	- Tencent QQ (a Chinese instant messenger platform)
RAM	- Rational Actor Model for decision-making
RBN	- Russian Business Network
RIA	- <i>Rossiyskoye Informatsiya Agentstvo</i> (official name: <i>Rossiyskoye Agentstvo mezhdunarodnoy Informatsii</i> or Russian Agency for International Information)
RISI / RISS	- Russian Institute for Strategic Studies
RKKA	- <i>Raboche-krest'yanskaya Krasnaya armiya</i> (Workers' and Peasants' Red Army)
RNLAF	- Royal Netherlands Air Force
Rosgvardia	- <i>Federalnaya Sluzhba Voysk National'noy Gvardii Rossiyskoy Federatsii</i> (Federal Service of the Forces of the National Guard of the Russian Federation)
RPD	- Recognition Primed Decision-making
RT	- Russian media outlet, formerly known as 'Russia Today'
SACEUR	- Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SAM	- Surface to Air Missile
SAS	- Special Air Service (British Special Forces)
SBU	- <i>Sluzhba Bezpeky Ukrainy</i> (Ukrainian Security Service)
SDS	- <i>Sakartvelos Dazveris Samsakhuri</i> (Georgian Intelligence Service)
SMERSH	- <i>Smyert' Shpionam</i> (Death to the Spies, Special Soviet Secret Service during WW-II)
Spetsnaz	- <i>Voyska Spetsialnovo Nazacheniya</i> (Soviet/Russian Special Forces)
SS-4 / SS-5	- NATO codes for Soviet theatre ballistic missiles with the capability to carry a nuclear warhead. Both missile types belong to the R-12 Divna family
Su-25	- Sukhoi 25 jet airplane
SVR	- <i>Sluzhba Vneshnei Rezvedki</i> (Foreign Intelligence Service)
T-14 / T-80 / T-90	- Russian design tanks, whereby the T-14 <i>Armata</i> is the most modern version
TASS	- <i>Telegrafnoye agentstvo Sovetskogo Soyuz</i> (Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union)
TFU	- Task Force Uruzgan (Dutch task force in Afghanistan 2006-2010)
TNO	- <i>Nederlands Organisatie voor Toegepaste Natuurwetenschappelijk Onderzoek</i> (Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research)
TRADOC	- Training and Doctrine Command of the United States Army
TV	- Television
UN	- United Nations
UNSC	- United Nations Security Council
VDV	- <i>Vozdushno-Desantnye Voyska</i> (Russian Airborne Forces)
VPK	- <i>Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer</i> (Military-Industrial Courier)



## Country codes

AUS	- Australia
BEL	- Belgium
CAN	- Canada
CIS	- Commonwealth of Independent States
CRO	- Croatia
EST	- Estonia
FIN	- Finland
FRA	- France
GEO	- Georgia
GER	- Germany
GRE	- Greece
IND	- India
ISR	- Israel
ITA	- Italy
LTV	- Latvia
NLD	- Netherlands
NOR	- Norway
POL	- Poland
RF	- Russian Federation
RUM	- Rumania
SU	- Soviet Union
SWE	- Sweden
SWI	- Switzerland
UK	- United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UKR	- Ukraine
US / USA	- United States of America
USSR	- Union of Soviet Socialists Republics

## American State Codes

CA	- California
CO	- Colorado
CT	- Connecticut
DC	- District of Columbia
FL	- Florida
IL	- Illinois
KS	- Kansas
MA	- Massachusetts
MD	- Maryland
MN	- Maine
MS	- Mississippi
NC	- North Carolina
NJ	- New Jersey
NY	- New York
PA	- Pennsylvania
SC	- South Carolina
TX	- Texas
VA	- Virginia



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# Chapter 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Preamble

In March 2014, *Krym Nash*, or ‘Crimea is Ours’, became a meme<sup>1</sup> that went viral. The Russian population used it as an expression of patriotism during the annexation of Crimea. The meme symbolized national pride; the annexation was considered a demonstration of power of the Russian Federation. Shortly thereafter, the expression ‘Crimea is Ours’ took on a whole different meaning. Many posts on Twitter started showing pictures of poor Russian living conditions and sarcastically hash-tagged ‘#Crimea-is-ours’. These tweets made clear that the Russian Federation was focused on its external image, while Mother Russia’s internal problems continued to proliferate. By contrast, supporters of the annexation tend to write ‘Crimea is Ours’ as a phrase and used capitals to maintain its original and glorious connotation for the Russian Federation.<sup>2</sup> The annexation of Crimea in 2014 forms the concluding part of this analysis of modern Russian deception warfare. Almost six years earlier, in 2008, there was an armed conflict with Georgia, which provided the Russian

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<sup>1</sup> A meme is an amusing or interesting item, such as a captioned picture or video or genre items that is spread widely online, especially through social media. See: Merriam Webster Dictionary, ‘Meme’, Merriam Webster Website (2019). <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/meme>, (31 December 2019). The term ‘meme’ derives from the Greek word *mimema*, signifying something which is imitated. It was introduced by biologist Richard Dawkins in his book ‘The Selfish Gene’ from 1976. Dawkins describes memes as small cultural units of transmission. See: Limor Shifman, ‘Memes in a Digital World: Reconciling with a Conceptual Troublemaker’, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 18 (2013) 3, 363.

<sup>2</sup> Mikhail Suslov, “‘Crimea is Ours!’, Russian Popular Geopolitics in the New Media Age’, *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 55 (2014) 6, 14-15.

authorities with new insights into how modern conflicts can develop. It led to the adjustment of Russian Armed Forces and the Russian security services, as described in detail in section 8.1 'Russian lessons learnt'. Especially in the field of information warfare, including deception warfare, Russian authorities managed to combine tested concepts with new technological insights and experiences from the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in 2008.

The Western world was shocked by the annexation of Crimea in 2014. A total of 100 member states, including all Western nations, supported the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 68/262 on the territorial integrity of Ukraine and condemned Russia's taking over of Crimea.<sup>3</sup> On the western side, there was much misunderstanding about what had happened before and during the annexation of Crimea. It is illustrative that the actions of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich prior to the annexation were readily condemned by the Western world when he refused to sign the Ukraine-European Association Agreement about future political and economic cooperation and sided with the Russian Federation in November 2013. In the United States, Yanukovich's decision to accept the financial Russian offer, a bail-out loan made by President Putin in 2013 further explained in section 8.4 'Historical overview of the annexation', was often interpreted as 'an example of diplomatic stupidity'.<sup>4</sup> This Russian proposal may not have been the all-transcendent deal for the Ukraine, but Yanukovich certainly had economic and diplomatic considerations, his country being a neighbouring state of the Russian Federation, before making the decision to accept the Russian bid. Moreover, the Western world denounced the annexation of Crimea as 'a bold and blatant manoeuvre of Russian neo-imperialism', although it underestimated the strategic importance for Russian authorities of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, based in Sevastopol in Crimea.<sup>5</sup> The Western world also tended to ignore that in 2010 Ukraine and the Russian Federation had signed the so-called 'Kharkiv Pact', or officially the 'Agreement between Ukraine and the Russian Federation on the Black Sea Fleet in Ukraine', approving Russia's lease of the naval facilities in Crimea and allowing Russian authorities to station more Russian troops there than before in exchange for a discounted contract for the delivery of Russian natural gas.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly on 27 March 2014: 68/262. Territorial Integrity of Ukraine*, Sixty-eighth Session, Agenda Item 33 (b), A/RES/68/262, (New York, NY (USA): 1 April 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Matthew Crosston, *Russia Reconsidered: Putin, Power, and Pragmatism*, (Dallas, TX (USA): Brown Books Publishing Group, 2018), 71.

<sup>5</sup> Crosston, *Russia Reconsidered*, 71.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

The annexation of Crimea was not the only exploit of the Russian Federation that struck most Western countries. Since then, the Western world has begun to respond more and more alertly to the international actions of the Russian Federation. Time and again, many people in the West, felt manipulated by Russian authorities, and although they had no hard evidence for these allegations, they were confronted with an accumulation of events and signals. In April 2014, following the annexation of Crimea, a conflict in Ukraine's Donbass region started, whereas Russian authorities denied any involvement.<sup>7</sup> In July 2014, an airplane of Malaysian Airlines with flight number MH17, carrying 283 passengers and 15 crew members, was most likely shot down by a Russian-made BUK missile while flying over eastern Ukraine.<sup>8</sup> All on board were killed, but Russian authorities denied any involvement.<sup>9</sup> On 18 September 2014, the Scottish independence referendum was held and it has been suggested that the Russian Federation undertook influence campaigns.<sup>10</sup> Two years later, there was also a strong suspicion in the United Kingdom about Russian interference in the 'Brexit' referendum campaign during the 2015-2016 period.<sup>11</sup> Not only in Britain was there also a strong misgiving that Russian authorities were involved in the American elections in the autumn of 2016.<sup>12</sup> In addition, in 2017 there were immediate concerns that Russian authorities were

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<sup>7</sup> Alexander Sergunin, 'Russian Perceptions of the Ukrainian Crisis: From Confrontation to Damage Limitation?', in: Gerhard Besier and Katarzyna Stokłosa, *Neighbourhood Perceptions of the Ukraine Crisis: From the Soviet Union into Eurasia?*, (Abingdon (UK): Routledge, 2017), 41-68.

<sup>8</sup> Joint Investigation Team, 'JIT Presentatie Eerste Resultaten Strafrechtelijk Onderzoek' ('JIT Presentation First Results Criminal Investigation'), Openbaar Ministerie Website (Website of Netherlands Prosecution), (28 September 2016). <https://www.om.nl/onderwerpen/mh17-vliegramp/strafrechtelijk-onderzoek-mh17-jit/eerste-resultaten-strafrechtelijk-onderzoek-mh17---28-9-2016>, (27 April 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Dutch Safety Board, *Crash of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17*, Final report, (The Hague (NLD): 13 October 2015), 235. And: Bart Meijer and Toby Sterling, 'Netherlands, Australia Hold Russia Responsible in MH17 Downing', Reuters Website (25 May 2018), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-mh17-cabinet/netherlands-australia-hold-russia-responsible-in-mh17-downing-idUSKCN1IQ0XO>, (30 March 2019).

<sup>10</sup> United Kingdom, Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, *Russia*, Report Presented to Parliament Pursuant to Section 3 of the Justice and Security Act, (London (UK): House of Commons, 21 July 2020), 13.

<sup>11</sup> Georgina Lee, 'Here Is What We Know About Alleged Russian Involvement in Brexit', 4 News, Channel 4 Website, (16 November 2017). <https://www.channel4.com/news/factcheck/heres-what-we-know-about-alleged-russian-involvement-in-brexit>, (29 December 2019). And: Nick Cohen, 'Why Isn't There Greater Outrage about Russia's Involvement in Brexit?', The Guardian Website (17 June 2018).

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jun/17/why-isnt-there-greater-outrage-about-russian-involvement-in-brexit>, (29 December 2019). Also: Brittany Kaiser, *Targeted: The Cambridge Analytica Whistleblower's Inside Story of How Big Data, Trump and Facebook Broke Democracy and How It Can Happen Again*, (New York, NY (USA): HarperCollins Publishers, 2019), 333-353.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Mueller, *Report on the Investigation into Russian Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election*, Volume I of II, (Washington, DC (USA): United States Department of Justice, 2019), 19-35. And: David Sanger and Matthew Rosenberg, 'From the Start, Trump Had Muddled A Clear Message: Putin Interfered', The New York Times Website, (18 July 2018). <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/18/world/europe/trump-intelligence-russian-election-meddling-.html>, (29 December 2019). And: United States Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in the Recent US Elections*, ICA 2017-01D, Declassified Version, (Washington, DC (USA): National Intelligence Council, 6 January 2017). Also: Kaiser, *Targeted*, 333-353.

behind hacking the accounts of French President Emmanuel Macron's *La République En Marche!* ('The Republic That Works!') party during the French election campaign with more than nine gigabytes of stolen emails spreading rapidly over the web.<sup>13</sup>

Again, in May 2018 Russian authorities managed to amaze the world, not only with incidents but also with impressive projects like the opening of the so-called Crimea (or Kerch Strait) Bridge. With a length of 19 kilometres, it is the longest European bridge. It connects the Russian Krasnodar region with Crimea. Russian authorities considered the bridge as the physical reunification of the peninsula with the Russian homeland. Crimea is only linked to Ukraine by land; it has no fixed connection with the Russian mainland.<sup>14</sup> In December 2019 President Putin also opened a railway bridge running parallel to the highway.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, at the end of December 2019, Russian authorities took the rest of the world by surprise with the launch of their military hypersonic<sup>16</sup> glide vehicle, the 'Avangard'. This missile can travel 27 times the speed of sound with a zigzag course, making it almost impossible to intercept, as was revealed by Russian Defence Minister, Sergey Shoigu.<sup>17</sup> President Putin had previously announced that the Russian Federation had launched the serial production of the Avangard hypersonic missile system.<sup>18</sup>

In short, Russian authorities repeatedly managed to frighten and astonish the rest of the world with aggressive statements, projects and practices. But was all of this information accurate and true? For example, on 9 May 2015, during the seventieth World War II victory parade in Moscow, Russia's new main battle tank, the T-14, heralded as the next generation platform, was proudly shown. In 2016 Russian authorities declared that they immediately wanted to start the production of the tank, so that by 2020 the Russian Armed Forces would have 2,300

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<sup>13</sup> Andy Greenberg, 'Don't Pin the Macron Email Hack on Russia Just Yet', Security, Wired Website (5 August 2017). <https://www.wired.com/2017/05/dont-pin-macron-email-hack-russia-just-yet/>, (30 December 2019).

<sup>14</sup> Nathan Hodge, 'Russia's Bridge to Crimea: A Metaphor for the Putin Era', CNN Website, (15 May 2018). <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/15/europe/russia-crimea-bridge-intl/index.html>, (29 December 2019).

<sup>15</sup> Ann Simmons, 'New Rail Bridge to Crimea Strengthens Russia's Hand Against Ukraine', The Wall Street Journal Website, (26 December 2019). <https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-rail-bridge-to-crimea-strengthens-russias-hand-against-ukraine-11577379297>, (29 December 2019).

<sup>16</sup> Hypersonic is in the field of expertise of aerodynamics the kind of speed that greatly exceeds the speed of sound, which is Mach 1, supersonic is the speed between Mach 1 and Mach 5, and hypersonic comprises speeds of Mach 5 and above.

<sup>17</sup> Vladimir Isachenko, 'Russia Says It Is First Nation with Operational New Hypersonic Nuclear Weapon', The Times of Israel Website, (27 December 2019). <https://www.timesofisrael.com/russia-says-it-is-first-nation-with-operational-new-hypersonic-nuclear-weapons/>, (29 December 2019).

<sup>18</sup> ITAR-TASS - Russian News Agency, 'Russia Demonstrates Avangard Hypersonic Missile System to US', TASS Website, (26 November 2019). <https://tass.com/defense/1092885>, (29 December 2019).



operational T-14 tanks at their disposal. Later that year, the total amount of T-14 tanks to be manufactured was reduced to 100 without any further explanation. And in 2018, the initial plan was watered down even further, when Russian authorities announced to buy an experimental batch of 20 T-14 tanks and a couple of modernized T-80 and T-90 tanks.<sup>19</sup> Russian authorities often strike Western leaders and impress them with their verbosity and exaggeration. This way of doing things raises many questions, such as how do Russian authorities manage to evoke such an impressive image of themselves each time?

It gradually becomes a long list of Russian acts and accomplishments that the West is completely surprised by or does not understand. From a war studies perspective, there has been a mismatch between the West and Russia for quite a long time. Even during the Cold War, Western politicians, soldiers, academics and other security experts took little interest in Russian warfare. Although the Soviet and Warsaw Pact orders of battle were known during the Cold War, and many officers and non-commissioned officers of NATO armed forces knew how the operational manoeuvre groups of Warsaw Pact forces would act, there was little understanding of the Russian way of warfare. That is hard to believe, since Russian military thinkers have made a substantial contribution to the progress of warfare since the interwar period. It was in the mid-1970s that so-called operational art, the art of waging war with depth in operation, began to develop in the American Armed Forces, involving the ideas of some Russian military thinkers.<sup>20</sup> Oddly enough, these Russian thinkers did not become well-known in the West as a result.

In the current Western way of warfare, notions such as the operational level and operations in depth are very important aspects. In the new American multi-domain operations concept, for example, the operational level is taken as the starting point to ultimately achieve strategic objectives with attacks in depth.<sup>21</sup> The determination of the operational level and the use of depth had been developed mainly by Soviet military thinkers during the interwar period, such as Tukhachevsky, Triandafillov, Svechin, Varfolomeev and Isserson. They developed

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<sup>19</sup> Christopher Foss, 'Battle Tank Ready for Production', Jane's 360 Defense Website (16 September 2016). <https://www.janes.com/article/63866/battle-tank-ready-for-production-aad16d3>, (29 December 2019). And: Global Security, 'T-14 (Object 149) Armata Main Battle Tank (MBT)', Global Security Website, (10 January 2018). <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/russia/t-14.htm> (29 December 2019).

<sup>20</sup> Robert Leonard, *The Art of Maneuver: Maneuver-Warfare Theory and AirLand Battle*, (Novato, CA (USA): Presidio Press, 1991), 173.

<sup>21</sup> United States Chief of Staff of the Army, *The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028*, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1 (Fort Eustis, VA (USA): United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, 2018), 24-25.

methods of war aimed at opponents to deprive them of the possibility of continuing the battle through deep operations.

It was after the Polish-Soviet War, which lasted from February 1919 till October 1920, and the Russian Civil War, which covered the period from November 1917 to October 1922, that Mikhail Tukhachevsky became the rising star of the Red Army. He was well-known for the application of concentrated attacks against an opponent's open flank to quickly gain and exploit an advantage and, subsequently, to threaten the opponent with envelopment. Stalin did not trust him and regarded Tukhachevsky as his foremost rival, and gave him the nickname *Napoleonchik*, little Napoleon.<sup>22</sup> Tukhachevsky came up with the idea of deep battle, breaking through the first defence lines of the enemy to destroy the enemy's rear and logistics.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile Aleksandr Svechin, a former divisional commander of the Red Army and lecturer at the Academy of the General Staff of the Red Army, formulated the definition of operational warfare as the level of warfare between tactics and strategy.<sup>24</sup>

In the late 1920s Vladimir Triandafillov, also a Soviet military theorist, introduced a doctrine for deep operations with a prominent role for highly mobile formations, the so-called shock armies, to break into the deeper rear of enemy territory, depriving the enemy of the ability to rebuild his defence. Triandafillov's successor at the Soviet Military Academy, Nikolai Varfolomeev, became mesmerized by the mechanics and tactics of the shock armies. He considered the use of shock armies as 'launching an uninterrupted, deep and shattering blow' along the axis of advance.<sup>25</sup> Shock armies needed mobility and fire power for a threefold purpose: (1) to destroy the enemy's tactical defence line, (2) to demolish operational reserves, and (3) to seize geographical areas that were part of the great strategic offensive plan.<sup>26</sup> The

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<sup>22</sup> Simon Sebag Montefiori, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, Originally published in 2003, (London (UK): Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2004), 221-222.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Simpkin, *Deep Battle: The Brainchild of Marshal Tukhachevskii*, In association with John Erickson (London (UK): Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1987), 32-44. And: David Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art: In Pursuit of Deep Battle*, (Abingdon (UK): Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1991), 18-26.

<sup>24</sup> David Stone, 'Misreading Svechin: Attrition, Annihilation, and Historicism', *The Journal of Military History*, 76 (July 2012), 674.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Harrison, *The Russian Way of War: Operational Art, 1904-1940*, (Lawrence, KS (USA): University Press of Kansas, 2001), 196.

<sup>26</sup> Igor Mariyevsky, 'Formation and Development of the Theory of Operational Art (1918-1938)', in: Harold Orenstein (Ed), *Selected Readings in the History of Soviet Operational Art*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS (USA): Soviet Army Studies Office, 1990), 16. And: Charles Thompson, *Miracle on the Vistula: The Red Army's Failure and the Birth of Deep Operations Theory of Annihilation*, A monograph, (Fort Leavenworth, KS (USA): United States Army Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2017), 27. And: Harrison, *The Russian Way of War*, 196-197.

concept of deep operations was initially tested during a large-scale exercise in the Kyiv district in 1935. In the same year, the new field regulation of the Red Army was written under supervision of Tukhachevsky. This regulation regarded the deep operation to be the fundamental component of Soviet operational art.<sup>27</sup> Later, Georgii Isserson, a publicist on military operations, developed Triandafillov's ideas of the deep operation further by creating time-space factors in depth, like recognizing the enemy's tactical, operational and strategic defence zones, and also by organising units in echelons.<sup>28</sup> In short, the Soviets have made a significant contribution to the development of combat operations, and this is often overlooked in the West, where the focus is often on American and British actions or on German operations during World War II.

The Soviets had not only contributed to the development of physical warfighting but to irregular warfare as well. An example of this irregular school of thought is Evgeny Messner, another Russian thinker, who is also relatively unknown in the West. Although Russian, Messner was not a Soviet thinker. He was a Czarist officer during World War I, and fought with the White Army against the Bolsheviks during the Russian Civil War. After the Whites were defeated in 1920, Messner fled to Yugoslavia, and later, after World War II, he emigrated to Argentina, where he established himself as a publicist. Messner's view was initially shaped during the Russian Civil War, experiencing first-hand fighting against an opponent that used irregular methods, terror and propaganda. Later, during World War II, he witnessed guerrilla tactics used by the *Chetniks* in the Balkans and intensively studied partisan operations. In 1971, with his concept of *myatezh voina*, or subversive warfare, Messner soon came to the conclusion that future conflicts would no longer be fought on front lines. He considered psychological operations as an important element of warfare. According to Messner, the human psyche would serve as a fourth dimension alongside the well-known modes of warfare in width, height and depth. Also, a large variety of actors would be engaged in *myatezh voina*, meaning skirmishes and fights with demonstrators, agitators, propagandists, criminals, saboteurs, terrorists, guerrillas, and irregular fighters.<sup>29</sup> The main purpose was to

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<sup>27</sup> Milan Vego, *Joint Operational Warfare: Theory and Practice*, Originally published in 2007, (Annapolis, MD (USA): Naval War College Press, 2009), V-24.

<sup>28</sup> Harrison, *The Russian Way of War*, 185-217. And: Richard Harrison, *Architect of Soviet Victory in World War II: The Life and Theories of G.S. Isserson*, (Jefferson, NC (USA): Mc Farland & Company, 2010), 60-151.

<sup>29</sup> Ofer Fridman, *Russian Hybrid Warfare: Resurgence and Politicisation*, (London (UK): C. Hurst & Co. Publishers Ltd, 2018), 49-74. Also: Oscar Jonsson, *The Russian Understanding of War: Blurring the Lines between War and Peace*, (Washington, DC (USA): Georgetown University Press, 2019), Kindle Edition: Chapter 1. And: Adam Klus, 'Myatezh Voina: The Russian Grandfather of Western Hybrid Warfare', Small

create chaos, but a form of chaos that could be managed. While Messner's publications had been officially banned in the Soviet Union, it came as no surprise that his writings enjoyed a considerable revival during the Putin era. They have been discussed many times since in order to grapple with the challenges of modern war.<sup>30</sup> In 2005, the library of the Russian Military Academy<sup>31</sup> issued a Russian publication, based on the legacy of Messner with the title 'Хочешь мира, победи мятежевойну! Творческое наследие Е. Э. Месснера: Русский путь', or 'If you want peace, defeat the rebellion! The creative heritage of E. E. Messner: the Russian way'.<sup>32</sup>



Figure 1.1 Book about the legacy of Evgeny Messner<sup>33</sup>

Deception was an essential part of the aforementioned deep operations. This was to be expected, because the Russian empire and later the Soviets made extensive use of deception, as will be discussed more in detail in section 2.2 'Maskirovka'. Military theorist Shimon

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Wars Journal Website, (2016). <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/myatezh-voina-the-russian-grandfather-of-western-hybrid-warfare>, (30 December 2019).

<sup>30</sup> Mark Galeotti, *Russian Political War: Moving Beyond the Hybrid*, (Abingdon (UK): Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 34.

<sup>31</sup> The Russian Military University, or officially the 'Military University of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation', is the leading educational and scientific centre of the Russian Armed Forces.

<sup>32</sup> Evgeny Messner and Igor Marchenkov, *Хочешь мира, победи мятежевойну! Творческое наследие Е. Э. Месснера: Русский путь*, (*Khochesh' mira, pobedi myatezhevoynnu! Tvorcheskoye naslediyе Ye. E. Messnera: Russkiy put'* or 'If you want peace, defeat the rebellion! The creative heritage of E. E. Messner: the Russian way'), Russian Military Collection, Issue 21, (Moscow (RF): Russian Military Academy Library, 2005). Website of Russian Military University Library: [http://militera.lib.ru/science/messner\\_ea01/index.html](http://militera.lib.ru/science/messner_ea01/index.html), (30 December 2019).

<sup>33</sup> Website of Russian Military University Library: [http://militera.lib.ru/science/messner\\_ea01/index.html](http://militera.lib.ru/science/messner_ea01/index.html), (30 December 2019).

Naveh, a retired Brigadier General of the Israel Defence Forces, came to the conclusion, after extensive research into Soviet warfare, that deception in deep operations, as Tukhachevsky, Triandaffilov and Isserson intended, had to attain the highest degree of *udar*, or ‘operational shock’. In the wake of World War I (1914-1918), the Polish-Soviet War (1919-1920) and the Russian Civil War (1917-1922), the aforementioned Soviet theorist recognized that military formations and systems could not only be destroyed by physical means. The Soviets started to develop alternative approaches, as part of the deep operations, for effectively defeating an enemy system. Naveh was convinced that the main role of Soviet deception was to create a ‘state of mind’ among the enemy, being a psychological mechanism that led to paralysis of the enemy’s will to fight.<sup>34</sup> Today, Russian authorities still conduct deep operations during armed conflicts, but mainly in the information environment and in line with Evgeny Messner’s ideas of *myatezh voina*. They know how to evoke *udar* by creating surprise and manipulated perceptions and by applying their deception methods, while the Western world never fully understood this mode of deception. In short, in the West an effort has to be made to catch up in order to fully understand the modern Russian way of warfare, including their deception methods.

## 1.2 Aim and scope

Deception is a traditional and important part of Russian warfare, even after the Soviet era. The overall aim of the research that underlies this dissertation was to gain a better understanding of how Russian authorities influence decisionmakers of opponents with deception warfare at the strategic level, and what role deception played during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in 2008 and Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014. The research focuses on how Russian authorities manage to apply deception in modern armed conflicts. The ratio for studying deception during armed conflicts is twofold. First, this dissertation aims to contribute to a further understanding of the concept of deception. Second, this dissertation would also like to provide an insight into how Russian authorities are currently tackling the international conflicts they are involved in. As indicated, the choice has been made for two recent armed conflicts the Russian Federation has conducted, namely the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in 2008 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014. These were the only two recent armed conflicts to which Russian authorities openly admitted their involvement. This

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<sup>34</sup> Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory*, Originally published in 1997, (Abingdon (UK): Frank Cass Publishers, 2004), 164-192.

dissertation also investigates how the decisionmakers of both Georgia and Ukraine responded to the Russian version of deception warfare.

As explained this dissertation focuses on the deception activities solely of the Russian authorities. This does not mean that other countries, including Western countries, do not perform deception activities. For example, there are Anglo-Saxon publications, accusing the George W. Bush administration and Prime Minister Tony Blair's government of misleading public opinion to launch an attack on Iraq in 2003 under the pretence of Saddam Hussein's alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction.<sup>35</sup> These are indeed also forms of deception, and ought to be investigated further, but they do not fall within the scope of this dissertation. However, it does illustrate the importance of research into deception.

### 1.3 Relevance

This dissertation aims to pursue military-professional relevance. Since the 1980s hardly any academic research has been done into deception warfare in general, as shown in Annex A. Therefore, this research gives additional insight into how influencing people during a conflict works, especially by the way of deception. In particular, the research offers a better understanding of the Russian version of influencing by means of deception. In order to shed light on these phenomena, this research used multidisciplinary scientific methods from psychology, political science, communication sciences, military-operational sciences and the history of the Russian Federation to look at Russian actions from various angles.

This dissertation also aims for social relevance. Western governments and armed forces, as well as the media and the Western population have witnessed a number of developments of Russia's foreign policy over the last 15 years. As these Westerner entities are still seeking clarification to explain all Russian activities, this research tries to increase insights, and perhaps even understanding, among Western government institutions, experts and other interested parties in Russian deception methods in order to pursue better and more carefully formulated policies towards Russian actions.

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<sup>35</sup> Timothy Levine, *Encyclopedia of Deception*, Volume 1, (Thousand Oaks, CA (USA): SAGE Publications, 2014), 546-550. And: Eric Herring and Piers Robinson, 'Deception and Britain's Road to War in Iraq', *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies*, 8 (2014) 2&3, 213–232. Also: Daniel Lieberfeld, 'Theories of Conflict and the Iraq War', *International Journal of Peace Studies*, 10 (2005) 2, 1-12.

## 1.4 Framing the problem

Over the past ten years, Russian authorities, with their activities during conflicts, have increasingly focused on the use of the information environment to present a self-created image about the Russian Federation. As a result, Russian authorities managed to display their nation as a powerful one, time and again, while concealing any weaknesses. In the Western world, many people experienced Russian activities as a form of deception. The rest of the world often remained in the dark about Russian intentions and power. In a number of cases Russian authorities presented to the rest of the world a different reality than the Russians experienced themselves. In addition, Russian authorities regularly tried to undermine the reality of opponents, weakening opponents' messages and making the Russian message stronger. This led to questions, such as: how do Russian authorities manage to influence opponents and the outside world in this way? What human mechanisms play a role in these actions? How effective are Russian authorities in this activity? Is it hard for Russian authorities to maintain such a manipulated perception? Or does the surprise effect and the manipulated perception fade away quickly? Is Russian deception the main element of Russian action during the aforementioned armed conflicts in 2008 and 2014, or just a side effect? And finally, are Russian authorities concerned about their own international reputation arising from their actions?

In 2008, during the armed conflict with Georgia, the Russian Federation demonstrated its progress in the information domain. And during the annexation of Crimea six years later, Russian authorities took it to the next level. Their activities in the information environment were particularly striking, with their communication skills playing a major role.

Communication must be taken in a broad sense. It is not only the dissemination of information and utterances by means of official spokespersons and other forms of 'old' and 'new' media, but all activities, and even non-activities can somehow be understood as a form of communication.

Information, in turn, is a comprehensive concept that requires further explanation in order to get a better understanding of how Russian authorities used it. The Austro-American

psychologist Paul Watzlawick was right when he stated that ‘one cannot not communicate’.<sup>36</sup> And as all communication creates perceptions and raises expectations, so does behaviour. Even doing nothing contributes to imaging. People will give meaning to information and images, and that is how opinion is created. When such opinions are shared, a collective opinion may arise. The idea of influencing is that individual and collective opinions can be led in the desired direction with targeted actions. Manipulation might be the next step. People are then influenced to follow a designated direction without being aware of it. A manipulator can, among other things, surprise, exaggerate, remain silent, share limited information, twist, deceive people and steer their decisions, behaviour and activities in an anticipated direction. The Russian Empire and the Soviet Union have a long history with deception. That obviously raises the question whether the current Russian authorities have developed their own style of deceiving since the establishment of the Russian Federation in 1991.

## 1.5 The research question

This dissertation examines modern Russian deception warfare, especially how it is used during recent armed conflicts in which the Russian Federation has been involved. This approach leads to the main research questions:

How did Russian authorities use deception warfare to deceive the decision-makers of Georgia and Ukraine during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in 2008 and Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014? Can it be assumed that there is a modern Russian version of deception warfare?

The two main research questions are divided into eight research sub-questions:

1. What is the Russian version of deception warfare?
2. What are the various academic and professional Western views on deception and the deception process?
3. What are the human dimensions of deception warfare?
4. What does a relevant framework for analysing modern Russian deception warfare look like?

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<sup>36</sup> Paul Watzlawick, Janet Beavin Bavelas, and Don Jackson, *Pragmatics of Human Communication: A Study of International Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes*, Originally published in 1967, (New York, NY (USA): W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2011), 29-52.



5. Who are the Russian authorities involved in deception warfare?
6. How were Georgian decision-makers deceived during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in 2008?
7. How were Ukrainian decision-makers deceived during the annexation of Crimea in 2014?
8. Is there a modern Russian version of deception warfare?

The main research question requires a further delineation in time. In order to focus on modern armed conflicts that the Russian Federation took part in, the time frame for this dissertation starts with the prelude to the armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Georgia, which started in 2006-2007. On 18 March 2014, Russian President Putin officially announced that Crimea had become part of the Russian Federation. This decision marks the end of this PhD research.

## 1.6 Research methodology

In this section, the various methodological considerations for this research will be explained. This research is based on empirical case studies as well as on literature studies. Both methods are clarified in this section, and it is also explained why this approach has been chosen. Furthermore, this section explains which scientific approach has been chosen for research, the choice between positivism and constructivism.

### Empirical case studies

The research conducted for this dissertation is based on empirical case studies. Empirical evidence is the kind of testimony received by observation and documentation of patterns and behaviour through experimentation. The word empirical originates from the Greek word *εμπειρία* or *empeiria*, which means experience.<sup>37</sup> Case studies must comply with two essential conditions. First, case studies are the preferred research approach when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being examined. Second, the researcher selects case studies when he or she has

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<sup>37</sup> Merriam Webster Dictionary, ‘Empirical Adjective’, Merriam Webster Website. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/empirical#note-1>, (30 December 2019). And: Alina Bradford, ‘Empirical Evidence: A Definition’, Live Science Website, (28 July 2017). <https://www.livescience.com/21456-empirical-evidence-a-definition.html>, (30 December 2019). Also: Kerri Goodwin and James Goodwin, *Research in Psychology: Methods and Design*, 8th Edition, Originally published in 2004, (Hoboken, NJ (USA): John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 6.

little or no control over events. When meeting these conditions, case studies are explanatory in character, meaning they provide the researcher with insights into the research subject.<sup>38</sup>

The subject for this dissertation is modern Russian deception warfare. A framework, specifically constructed for this research (Chapter 5), based on earlier studies into Russian deception and deception in general, was used to disclose to what extent Russian authorities have used new forms of deception. To this end, two cases that belong to the most recent international conflicts in which the Russian Federation participated, namely the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in 2008 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014, are analysed in detail. The Russian authorities have also officially admitted that they were involved in both conflicts. This research thus meets the two necessary conditions for case studies. First, the main research question is a typical 'how' question, asking how Russian authorities used deception to mislead the decisionmakers of respectively Georgia and Ukraine. In other words, in what way, by what means and with what methods did Russian authorities use deception during recent armed conflicts in which they were involved? Second, two events were found in which Russian authorities applied deception during an armed conflict in recent years, viz the Russo-Georgian armed conflict of 2008 and Russia's annexation of Crimea, taking place in 2014. Given the fact that these armed conflicts happened in the recent past and that the deception methods of Russian authorities at the time are part of the research subject, it is obvious that the researcher could not further influence or control the cases. At the moment, research into modern Russian deception warfare is simply a much sought-after and topical subject. Many people and Western authorities are still looking for explanations for what Russian authorities actually did in Crimea and Ukraine.

## Literature study

This dissertation is also based on a literature study, which means that a segment of a published body of knowledge is reviewed and critically analysed to create new insights into a subject. This method means that mainly secondary sources are used for this research. Available information on a certain subject is used to answer a new research question. The consequence of such research is that the researcher may unknowingly be influenced by the

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<sup>38</sup> Robert Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Third Edition, Applied Social Research Methods Series, Volume 5, (Thousand Oaks, CA (USA): Sage Publications, Inc., 2003), 1-18.

insights and thoughts of the primary researcher.<sup>39</sup> In addition, it must be noted that practically only English-language sources are used in this research. As for the publications of Russian researchers and publicists, which were originally written in Russian, only English-language translations are used for this PhD-dissertation. This means that there is a risk that opinions and intentions are interpreted differently from what the original publicist intended.

In order to prevent such pitfalls, efforts have been made as much as possible to use publications by renowned researchers and publicists. In addition, this dissertation uses a variety of secondary sources from countries such as the Russian Federation, United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Israel, Poland, Estonia and the Netherlands, all of which have different cultural backgrounds and, as a result, provide different views on the matter. Besides secondary sources, primary resources are also used such as the official announcement of the President of the Russian Federation, which were translated in English by the Russian government and published on the official website of the Kremlin.

## Reasoning method

The logical reasoning method used for this dissertation is abduction. The most well-known forms of reasoning are induction and deduction. Deductive reasoning provides the strongest evidence: if the premises or statements are certain and true, and the deductive rules are followed, then the conclusion is inevitably true. With inductive reasoning the premises or statements offer some evidence for the truth of the conclusion. Abductive reasoning is a different form of logical inference that begins with an observation and then tries to find the most likely explanation for the observation. Therefore, abduction can be seen as an interpretive form of inference. Medical diagnoses, story understanding, and most court rulings are based on abduction. The same goes for scientific fields such as astronomy, history and political sciences. Hard evidence often lacks in this form of reasoning.<sup>40</sup> It is about which explanation makes the most sense and is therefore accepted in the academic world, where it has become common practice.

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<sup>39</sup> Peter Swanborn, *Methoden van Sociaal-wetenschappelijk Onderzoek* (Methods for Social Scientific Research), (Meppel (NLD): Boom Publishers, 1993), 214-217.

<sup>40</sup> John Johnston and Susan Johnston (Ed), *Abductive Inference: Computation, Philosophy, Technology*, Originally published in 1994, (Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1996), 5-11.

Abduction can be displayed as follows:

*D* is a collection of data (facts, observations, givens).

*H* explains *D* (would, if true, explain *D*).

No other hypothesis can explain *D* as well as *H* does

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Therefore, *H* is probably the most plausible reason to justify *D*.<sup>41</sup>

The reasoning in this PhD dissertation is based on abduction, as it was for instance not possible to interview Russian authorities and officials of the Russian Armed Forces and Russian Security Services concerned, or key players in Georgia and Ukraine, or to study unpublished government records in the region.

## Positivism versus constructivism

Research into Russian warfare deception is inextricably linked to the discussion about positivism versus constructivism. Russian methods of deception strive to evoke manipulated perceptions that logically may not exist in reality but only in people's minds. Many times, a researcher of Russian deception methods asks himself: 'Is this true or not?' But then what is the truth? And is there an absolute truth? While supporters of positivism argue that knowledge already exists, independent of the learner, and that therefore there is an absolute truth, followers of constructivism are convinced that reality is not directly knowable and can only be inferred or assigned by convention or consensus. Thus, knowledge is constructed by the learner.<sup>42</sup> This research into Russian deception warfare is done in the constructivist tradition. Russian authorities portrayed events and their actions in a certain way, while opposing Western governments and experts disagreed and accused them of lying and cheating. It is difficult for a researcher to make an absolute judgment in such situations, which, understandably, this research does not offer either. However, in a number of cases, such as the questions who is responsible for the start of the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in 2008, the various positions have been made clear in this dissertation.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>42</sup> Jim Mackenzie, 'Positivism and Constructivism, Truth and "Truth"', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 43 (2011) 5, 534-546.

## 1.7 Structure of the dissertation

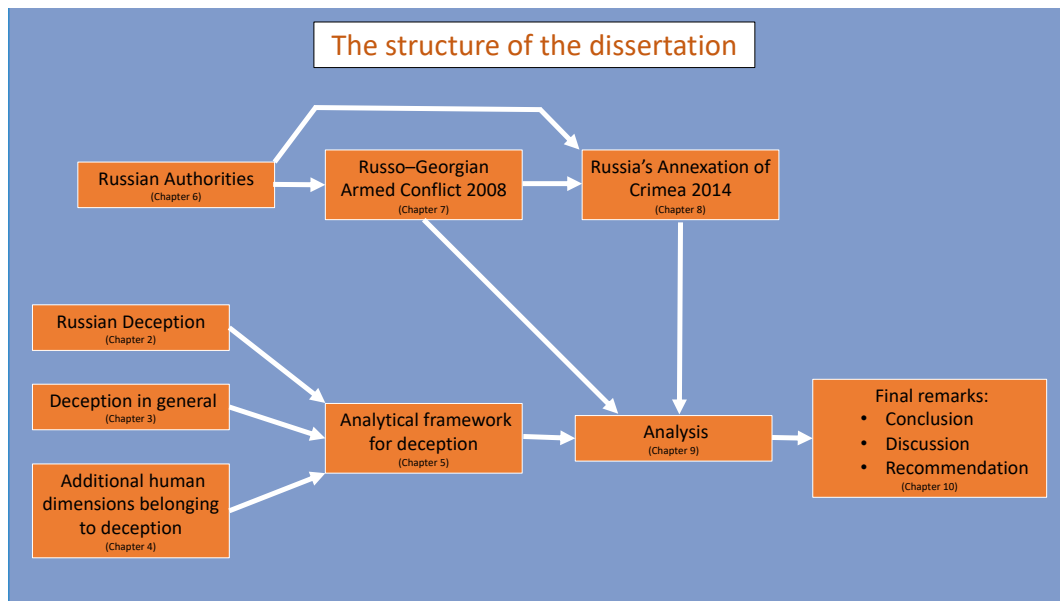


Figure 1.2 Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation is structured around the eight secondary research questions, specified in paragraph 1.4 'Research question'. Chapter 2 'Russian Deception' starts off with a closer look at the history and various methods and elements of Russian deception warfare. Chapter 3 'Deception warfare' shows which relevant Western studies of deception have appeared in the last fifty years and also provides a definition of deception. Chapter 4 'Human dimensions' supplements the previous chapter and delves deeper into the three elements that are essential for deception, namely uncertainty, surprise and manipulated perception. Uncertainty is a necessary precondition, because without uncertainty or ambiguity there can be no deception. The intended outcomes of deception are surprise and manipulated perceptions, which are remarkably rarely described and explained in previous deception researches. Chapter 5 'An analytical framework' is a short chapter in which the most important results from the previous two chapters are compared and combined into an analytical framework for studying deception. Chapter 6 'Russian authorities' not only describes which Russian political leaders and government institutions are involved in deception warfare, but also indicates how these institutions are managed and how they relate to each other. This chapter also pays attention to the history and function of the Russian Security Services as far as it is necessary to understand their role in deception activities. Chapter 7 'Russo-Georgian armed conflict 2008' describes the armed conflict in Georgia and the breakaway regions. It then utilizes the aforementioned analytical framework to determine to what extent Russian authorities used deception during the conflict with Georgia in 2008, and how susceptible Georgian leadership was to this. The

same approach is applied in Chapter 8 'The Annexation of Crime 2014' to determine whether Russian authorities also used deception during the 2014 annexation of Crimea and their campaign in Ukraine and how the Ukrainian decisionmakers responded to this Russian deception. Chapter 9 'A new vision' explains how the two conflicts of 2008 and 2014 are related, but also how they differ from each other. In addition, the chapter shows six unique elements in modern Russian deception warfare and adapts the analytic framework for deception that was presented in Chapter 5 accordingly. Chapter 10 'Final remarks' concludes with a summary and an answer to the main research question, six points for further discussion and four recommendations.

# Chapter 2 Russian Deception

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## 2.1 Preamble

This chapter focuses on how the Russian authorities were able to deceive people, especially opposing decisionmakers, with disinformation during the last decade and a half. It provides an answer to the first secondary research question of this dissertation:

What is the Russian version of deception warfare?

The techniques to deceive employed by the Russian authorities are interlaced with delusive trickery and shady methods. Typical Russian oddities are used to fool an audience. Current Russian deception operations largely take place in the information sphere and consist of active measures, *dezinformatsiya* and reflexive control. Other methods of deception are also used, such as imitation, diversion, stratagem<sup>1</sup> and feints, but these methods are nowadays less prominent in Russian security operations. All these forms of deception together are referred to in the Russian language as *maskirovka*. There is a hierarchy in those terms, which is shown in Figure 2.1.

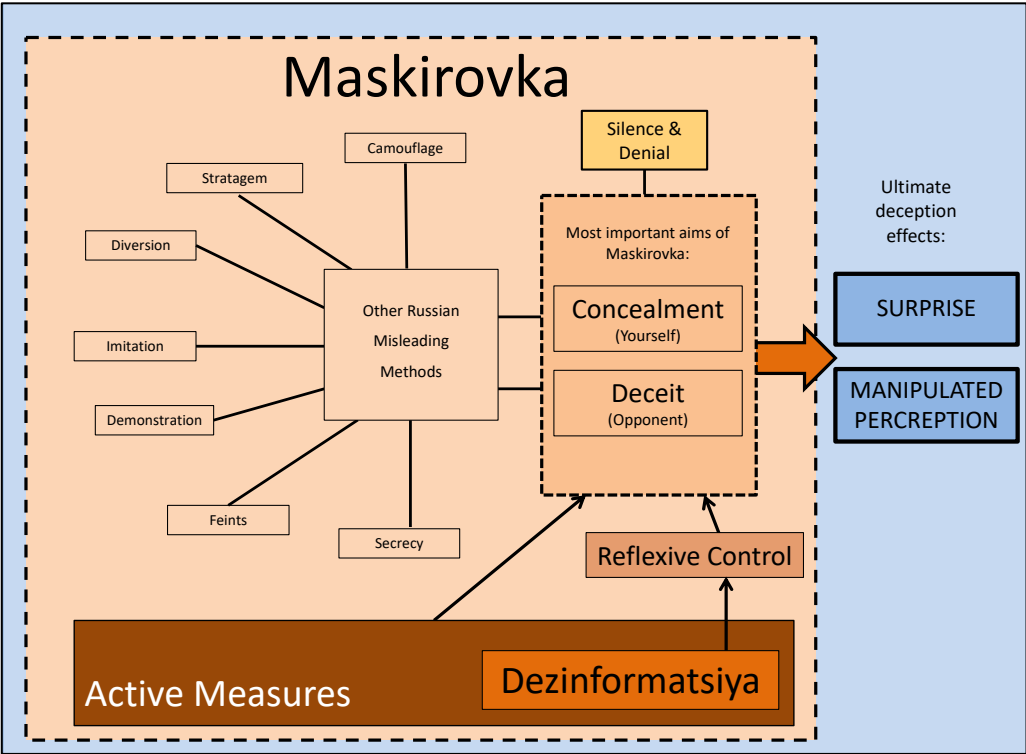


Figure 2.1 Overview of maskirovka, reflexive control and dezinformatsiya

*Maskirovka* is the overarching notion to disguise the truth applied in the information sphere in order to create either surprise or manipulated perceptions, which are the ultimate Russian deception effects. Russian authorities prefer to keep silent, to deny or to employ reflexive control, which is an empathic management tool for achieving a *maskirovka* effect in order to lead opposing decisionmakers in a certain and favourable direction. An initiator of deception, also known as a deceiver, applying reflexive control, often uses manipulated information, which in Russian is called *dezinformatsiya* or disinformation. This manipulated information

<sup>1</sup> Stratagem is either ‘a cleverly contrived trick in war for deceiving and outwitting an opponent’, or a ‘skill in ruses or trickery’ See: Merriam-Webster Dictionary, ‘Stratagem’, Merriam-Webster website (2015). <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stratagem>, (18 June 2019).



may have the capacity of *kompromat*, a Russian expression for information with compromising content. Researchers and publicists, especially during the Cold War, utilized the terms ‘disinformation’ and ‘active measures’ interchangeably, which raises the question whether that is correct. Essentially, the most important aims of *maskirovka* are concealment and deceit.

This chapter starts in section 2.2 with the Russian view on information warfare, and then goes more into the details of Russian deception and is therefore sub-divided into three other substantive sections: 2.3 *maskirovka*, 2.4 reflexive control, and 2.5 *dezinformatsiya*. All three sections will separately pay attention to the questions: What is it? What are its elements? Which techniques are used? What is its history? And what is its current appearance? The section of *dezinformatsiya* will also differentiate between Russian disinformation and active measures, and it comprises an explanation of agents of influence, Russian propaganda and *kompromat*. The chapter concludes with a resume in section 2.6 that explains the connection between these elements. The topics examined in this chapter are based on a combination of Russian and Western, especially American, sources.

## 2.2 Russian view on information warfare

Russian authorities base their deception behaviour during a conflict on the information sphere. At the beginning of this research it is therefore important to consider how the Russian authorities view information warfare. The Russian Federation has two different official documents which illustrate how important all information traffic is for the security of Russian society. The two documents are the ‘Russian Federation’s National Security Strategy’, also known as the ‘National Security Strategy’, and the ‘Information Security Doctrine of the Russian Federation’, also known as the ‘Information Security Doctrine’. Both documents form the basis for Russian information warfare, including cyber activities and deception warfare.

The National Security Strategy started as a national security concept for the Russian Federation in 1997. This concept was updated in 2000 and became a national security strategy

in 2009.<sup>2</sup> The National Security Strategy focuses on the development of the comprehensive security of the Russian Federation. It includes an officially acknowledged system of strategic priorities, goals and measures with regard to domestic and foreign policy'.<sup>3</sup> The 2009 version of the doctrine foresaw that the 'global information struggle will intensify'. It discussed the strengthening of the cooperation with the European Union and the building of an 'equitable and valuable strategic partnership with the United States of America'.<sup>4</sup>

The analysis of the Information Security Doctrine is also of interest. The publication of the version of the Information Security Doctrine that was valid during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea, dates back to 2000. It was later revised in 2016, but that remains outside the scope of this dissertation. The Information Security Doctrine represents a totality of official views on goals, objectives, principles and basic guidelines for ensuring information security in the Russian Federation.<sup>5</sup> It focuses on the protection of Russian national interest and state policy in the information sphere. It also describes the conceivable threats to the information security of the Russian Federation in relation to constitutional rights, freedom of the individual and citizen, national information industry, and Russian telecommunication systems.

External information threats to Russian national interests could be activities of foreign political, economic, military, intelligence and information entities, while internal threats might come from criminality and insufficient coordination among federal bodies of state authority in shaping and carrying out a unified information security policy. The 2000 version of the doctrine is defensive in nature and fixated on the protection of Russian interests. Timothy Thomas, an American expert on Russian information warfare, has remarked that the notion of information security in the Russian Federation is associated with information itself and its materiel carriers, including the human mind. Thus, in its doctrine, the Russian Federation deals with information-psychological and information-technical issues.<sup>6</sup> These

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<sup>2</sup> The Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis in India, 'Russian Foreign Policy Documents and Military Doctrine', Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis Website (2009). <https://idsa.in/eurasia/resources> (24 March 2019).

<sup>3</sup> President of the Russian Federation, *National Security Strategy to the Russian Federation to 2020*, (May 2009). <http://mepoforum.sk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/NDS-RF-2009-en.pdf>, (31 December 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> President of the Russian Federation, *Information Security Doctrine of the Russian Federation*, (September 2000). [https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Cybersecurity/Documents/National\\_Strategies\\_Repository/Russia\\_2000.pdf](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Cybersecurity/Documents/National_Strategies_Repository/Russia_2000.pdf), (31 December 2019).

<sup>6</sup> Timothy Thomas, 'Information Security Thinking: A Comparison of U.S., Russian, and Chinese Concepts', *The Science and Culture Series*, (2001), 344-345.

information-psychological issues are relevant to this dissertation and are explained in detail in chapters 2 and 5.

In addition, the 2011 version of the ‘Russian Federation Armed Forces’ Information Space Activities Concept’ states that ‘a massive psychological manipulation of the population to destabilise the state and the society, as well as coercion of the state’ will happen during a confrontation between two or more states.<sup>7</sup> While it is a military concept, it demonstrates the scope of the Russian definition of information warfare. This definition goes well beyond what the Russian Armed Forces could be expected to deliver. It shows how Russian authorities fit the military into a much wider range of actions and agencies of the Russian state.<sup>8</sup>

A key principle in Russia’s approach to information warfare is to control information in whatever form. On the one hand, the content of the message is important. On the other, the way the information is disseminated is crucial for Russian authorities as well. In this context, Russian authorities deem cyber activities as just a technical representation of information, standing alongside other information carriers such as print, broadcasts and social media, and diplomacy. This is a principle that has to be borne in mind when considering ‘Russian aims to extract, exfiltrate, manipulate, distort or insert information, or just isolate a target from sources of information other than Russian ones.’<sup>9</sup>

### 2.3 *Maskirovka*

This section deals with *maskirovka*, which became a popular term again since Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014. Understanding the Russian perspective on events is not always easy for Westerners, most of whom perceive events taking place in the security environment differently from the Russians. That is understandable as there are many differences in culture, society, politics, worldview, history, warfare and approaches to conflict management between the Western world and the Russian Federation. One of the dissimilarities is that the Soviet and Russian authorities have already used *maskirovka* for quite some time, while within NATO

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<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, *Russian Federation Armed Forces’ Information Space Activities Concept*, (January 2012).

<https://eng.mil.ru/en/science/publications/more.htm?id=10845074@cmsArticle>, (30 December 2019).

<sup>8</sup> Michael Mazarr et al., *Hostile Social Manipulation: Present Realities and Emerging Trends*, (Santa Monica, CA (USA): RAND Corporation, 2019), 54.

<sup>9</sup> Keir Giles, *The Next Phase of Russian Information Warfare*, (Riga (LTV): NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 2016), 6.

deception was not frequently employed. This section considers *maskirovka* in a broad sense and is consequently divided into seven subsections: ‘description’, ‘aim and techniques’, ‘early history’, ‘World War II’, ‘Cold War’, ‘post-Cold War era’, ‘current appearances’ and ‘summary’.

## Description

*Maskirovka* is significantly a deceptiveness concept that permeates the entire nation. It is not just a military term, but it is practised throughout Russian society. All the instruments of power, such as diplomacy, information, the deployment of armed forces and economic measures, in the Russian Federation include *maskirovka*. The term *maskirovka* is difficult to translate. It is an umbrella concept that encompasses many English terms such as camouflage, concealment, deception, imitation, disinformation, secrecy, stratagem, feints, diversion, and simulation. While these terms overlap to a large extent, a complication is that the Soviet and later the Russian notion is more than the sum of these English terms. Thus, in order to understand the concept of *maskirovka* it is vital to grasp the entire concept rather than just its components.

It is worth noting that there are four principles of *maskirovka* that appear to be the most relevant and consistent in Russian security publications during the 1980s: (1) *maskirovka* implies a form of ferociousness, which stresses that all *maskirovka* measures need to provide opponents with manipulated impressions and ideas to induce them to make incorrect estimates of the situation; (2) all *maskirovka* efforts must be plausible to make opponents believe that what they see is real when in fact it is not; (3) recurrence of *maskirovka* patterns should be avoided and variety is desired to avoid predictability; (4) continuity of *maskirovka*, because it is a concept that is used both in war and peace time. It will not stop after a conflict is settled.<sup>10</sup>

During the 1970s, two Field Marshals of the Soviet Union, Andrei Grechko and Nikolai Orgakov, who chaired the main editorial commission for the Soviet Military Encyclopedia, explicitly described the twofold functions of *maskirovka*. In their compendium they recorded that *maskirovka* is on the one hand a means for securing one’s own operations and daily activities. On the other hand it is also a set of measures to deceive the enemy in order to

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<sup>10</sup> Charles Smith, ‘Soviet Maskirovka’, *Air Power Journal*, 2 (1988) 1, 28-39,

achieve surprise, protect combat readiness and amplify the security of objects.<sup>11</sup> Both functions of *maskirovka*, masking one's own performances and misleading the opponent, have been the prominent elements of the concept, and are still used today.

## Aim and techniques

As mentioned by Grechko and Orgakov, the immediate aim of *maskirovka* is to conceal one's own operation and to deceive the opponent. Although terms such as mislead, disorient, ruse or delude are often used as a substitute for deceive, the combination of concealment and deception is reflected as the nub of *maskirovka*. To take it to the next level, concealment and deception are not ends in themselves. The overall aim of the combination of both, being *maskirovka*, is to achieve *vnezapnost*, a surprise effect.<sup>12</sup> The Soviet armed forces were already convinced that surprise could be pivotal. The Soviet military dictionary of the mid 1960s stated that surprise could diminish the opponent's combat power within short periods of time, paralyze his will, and prevent him from the possibility of organizing resistance.<sup>13</sup> Soviet military thinkers also recognised that the effect of surprise was limited by time. They regarded it as a temporary condition that fades away through reaction and adjustment. Soviet experts stressed that their doctrine needed to be exploited to the maximum extent once surprise was achieved. Those responsible for the surprise effect must constantly seek alternatives to achieve new forms of *maskirovka* in order to continuously deceive their opponent.<sup>14</sup> There are four techniques for achieving *maskirovka*, which were used in the Cold War and are still being used by Russian authorities and armed forces: (1) concealment, (2) simulation, (3) demonstration, which is a show of force that threatens an opponent, but it does not include enemy contact and (4) disinformation.<sup>15</sup> *Maskirovka* can be considered as an old concept that has been used for many years by the Russian authorities, who have become highly skilled in this concept and perfected it over the years.

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<sup>11</sup> Andrei Grechko and Nikolai Ogarkov, *The Soviet Military Encyclopedia* (1976), English Language Edition, Vol. 1, Edited and translated by William Green and Robert Reeves, (Boulder, CO (USA): Westview Press, 1993), 345-346.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel Krueger, *Maskirovka – What's In It for US?*, Monograph, (Fort Leavenworth, KS (USA): United States Army Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Military Studies, 1987), 16.

<sup>13</sup> United States Defense Intelligence Agency, *Lexicon of Soviet Terms Related to Maskirovka*, a Defense Intelligence Report, and a translation of the 'Dictionary of Basic Military Terms' of the Soviet Armed Forces by the Vorshilov General Staff Academy of 1965, (Washington, DC (USA): Defense Intelligence Agency, 1983), 14.

<sup>14</sup> Vasilii Reznichenko, *Taktika* (Tactics), (Moscow (USSR): *Voyennoye Izdatel'stvo Ministerstvo Oborony* (Military Publishing Office of Ministry of Defence), 1966), 48.

<sup>15</sup> Krueger, *Maskirovka*, 17-18.

## Early history

The origin of *maskirovka* is disputed. Some Russian scholars go back to the Battle of Kulikovo, which took place on 8 September 1380.<sup>16</sup> The battlefield, which today is located some 120 miles south of Moscow, was the venue where the Russian leader Prince Dmitry Ivanovich Donskoy of Moscow divided his mounted fighters into two groups and fooled the Mongol Golden Hordes of Mamai.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, Timothy Thomas, an expert on Russian information warfare, believed that the *maskirovka* concept was merely a military idea dating back to the Czar's Imperial Army.<sup>18</sup> Thomas stated that a 'Higher School for *Maskirovka*', founded in 1904 and closed down in 1929, provided students with theories and frameworks that are still applicable today.<sup>19</sup> Not only the Russia's Imperial Army was keen on a Russian form of deception. The Czarist secret police, *Okhrana*, which was formed in 1882 after the assassination of Czar Alexander II and disbanded in 1917, also conducted covert operations, interlaced with deception, against anarchists in Russia. Although using ruses and trickery, the *Okhrana* did not label this form of deception as *maskirovka*.<sup>20</sup> David Glantz, a researcher of Soviet military deception, assumed that *maskirovka* is a particular aspect of communism. *Maskirovka* already existed, but it became supreme in the Soviet epoch. After studying *Vremennyi Polevoi Ustav RKKA 1936*<sup>21</sup>, the temporary field regulations of the Red Army, which became effective the same year, Glantz concluded that *maskirovka* is part of a Marxist-Leninist tradition, which is founded on the truth of inevitable and predictable dialectic change. The dialectic is deterministic and describes a process of inevitable change, based on economic, social and political realities, resulting in a state of communism. All measures that accelerate the change process are desirable, if not crucial. War, in all its forms, is a normal element of that process, and therefore *maskirovka* is a valid tool to speed up change, both in peacetime and during war. The Soviet authorities assumed

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<sup>16</sup> Smith, 'Soviet Maskirovka', 29.

<sup>17</sup> Mark Thompson, 'The 600 Years of History Behind Those Ukrainian Masks', TIME Online (18 April 2014), <http://time.com/67419/the-600-years-of-history-behind-those-ukrainian-masks/>, (12 March 2019). See also: Josh Elliot, 'Theatricality and Deception: How Russia Uses "Maskirovka" to Shake the World', Global News Website, (9 June 2018), <https://globalnews.ca/news/4260938/russia-strategy-maskirovka-military-politics-putin/> (12 March 2019).

<sup>18</sup> Timothy Thomas, *Recasting The Red Star: Russia Forges Tradition and Technology Through Toughness*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS (USA): Foreign Military Studies Office, 2011), 107.

<sup>19</sup> Timothy Thomas, 'Russia's Reflexive Control Theory and the Military', *Journal of Slavic Studies*, 17 (2004) 2, 239.

<sup>20</sup> Amanda Ward, *The Okhrana and the Cheka: Continuity and Change*, Master thesis, (Athens, OH (USA): Ohio University, College of Arts and Sciences, 2014), 17-37.

<sup>21</sup> Red Army of the Soviet Union, *Vremennyi Polevoi Ustav RKKA, 1936* (Temporary Field Regulations of the Red Army, 1936), Translated by United States Army War College, Translation Section, Washington, DC (USA), (Moscow (USSR): Voenizdat, 1937), 52.

*maskirovka* to be a moral idiosyncrasy, somewhat alien to the Western world, which views deception as immoral, akin to dishonesty. Marxist-Leninist theory defines morality as a means to realize the socialistic end state, according to Glantz.<sup>22</sup> He stated:

Morality is measured by the degree to which an action impels the dialectic process to its logical and desirable end. What assists in the achievement of socialism is moral. What does not is not. Hence deception in peacetime is a valid, if not imperative, means for achieving political aims without resorting to war. It is likewise a valid means for securing advantage in wartime.<sup>23</sup>

In earlier work, Glantz clarified that *maskirovka* was a typical military tool during the Interbellum and World War II. *Maskirovka* was not limited to the tactical level then. The Soviet high command, acting at the strategic level, used a complex of measures to protect their strategic operations and also disinformation to mask their true intentions and operations of their armed forces. Operational *maskirovka* in the form of openly demonstrated manipulated pretensions and fake orders was conducted by front line, army and fleet commanders to secure the secrecy of their operations. Commanders at corps level and below used tactical *maskirovka* focused on a single objective, like camouflage and stratagem, in order to guarantee the confidentiality of their battle plans.<sup>24</sup>

## World War II

A classic example of *maskirovka* occurred prior and during the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. At the end of the Interbellum, the Soviet armed forces purchased lots of German built 100 mm artillery pieces. German intelligence reports dealing with Red Army capabilities were partly based on the Russian procurement of these 100 mm guns. During the invasion, the Germans were overwhelmed by the Russian firepower delivered by the many powerful 130 mm artillery pieces of the Soviets. The Germans were tricked. Although the Soviet Army had bought the German guns, it ditched this German ordnance when they

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<sup>22</sup> David Glantz, *Soviet Military Deception in the Second World War*. (Totowa, NJ (USA): Frank Cass and Company, 1989), 3.

<sup>23</sup> Glantz, *Soviet Military Deception in the Second World War*, 3-4.

<sup>24</sup> David Glantz, 'The Red Mask: The Nature and Legacy of Soviet Military Deception in the Second World War', *Intelligence and National*, 2 (1987) 3, 178-179.

produced their own 130 mm guns, creating a manipulated perception of the Soviet Army strength.<sup>25</sup>

*Maskirovka* was employed to limited effect during the first years of World War II. Although Stalin distrusted the concept of *maskirovka*, it was exploited at the tactical level during the counter-offensive to relieve Moscow and later in the encirclement of the German Sixth Army attacking Stalingrad.<sup>26</sup> In the Spring of 1944, prior to Operation Bagration, the Soviet offensive in Eastern Europe in 1944 and 1945, the German Army intelligence chief on the Eastern Front, Major General Reinhard Gehlen, was provided with disinformation by human agents saying that the main Russian offensive would take place in southern Ukraine. Every possible measure was taken to mask the Red Army's intention in 1944.<sup>27</sup> The *Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del*, or NKVD, which means People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs and is seen as the interior ministry of the Soviet Union, expanded largely during World War II and used *maskirovka* successfully at the strategic level.<sup>28</sup> Their most triumphant deception operation was Operation Monastery, undertaken in conjunction with the *Galvnoye Razvedyvatel'noye Upravleniye* or GRU, the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation or Military Intelligence Service. This operation started in July 1941 and lasted till 1943. Operation Monastery intended to infiltrate the *Abwehr*, the German military intelligence service from 1925 till 1945, and provided the German High Command with disinformation. The most effective form of *maskirovka* in World War II was used during the build-up phase of the Manchurian Strategic Offensive Operation against the Japanese *Kwantung* Army. Preparations for the campaign started at the end of 1944, although formal planning began only in February 1945, following the Yalta Conference, in which Stalin promised the Allies to help them in the war against Japan within three months of the German surrender. The Soviet Army was able to move troops and equipment unseen to the Manchurian border. The newly-created Soviet Far East Command commanded almost 1.6 million personnel and in total 5,600 tanks and self-propelled guns along a 5,000 km frontline. On 9 August 1945, the Japanese Kwantung Army was completely taken by surprise.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Smith, 'Soviet Maskirovka', 29.

<sup>26</sup> Mark Lloyd, *The Art of Military Deception*, London (UK): Leo Cooper, 1997), 116.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Pringle, *Historical Dictionary of Russian and Soviet Intelligence*, Historical Dictionaries of Intelligence and Counterintelligence, No. 5, (Lanham, MD (USA): Scarecrow Press, Inc., The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., 2006), 154.

<sup>28</sup> See section 6.4 'Intelligence and security services' for more explanation.

<sup>29</sup> Lloyd, *The Art of Military Deception*, 115-122.



## Cold War

During the Cold War, *maskirovka* became a much broader concept. The experiences of the Second World War provided the Soviets with the foundation for further development of the concept, although it was mainly used by the military. After the ‘Great Patriotic War’<sup>30</sup>, the Soviet authorities realized that warfare had changed. The three major advances in warfare during the Cold War were: (1) more advanced means of reconnaissance, (2) growing numbers of weapons, and (3) a higher operational tempo. Soviet strategists of the time emphasized that these developments made ‘*maskirovka* more, not less, important.’<sup>31</sup> They understood that *maskirovka* was a relatively inexpensive means in the arms race that developed during the Cold War. It is also important to mention that the Soviet authorities in the 1950s and 1960s no longer considered *maskirovka* merely a military concept. They started employing it as one of many Soviet government activities. During the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, the Soviet secret services deceived their American counterparts. The operation for the movement of Soviet military units, missiles, and submarines was codenamed ‘Anadyr’. Soviet troops received winter equipment, and they were being assigned to a mission in the eastern part of the Soviet Union. Meanwhile officers of the GRU controlled the ships bound for Cuba. They ordered that no Soviet soldier was allowed on deck during daylight hours. This operation was so carefully organized that Moscow moved almost 40,000 troops as well as short- and medium-range missiles to Cuba without alarming American intelligence services.<sup>32</sup> In 1966, Russian strategist Major General Vasilii Reznichenko acknowledged that *maskirovka* was more than simply a military tactic for deception. In his book ‘*Taktika*’ he portrayed *maskirovka* as a ‘set of measures, which consists of such actions as concealing true targets and installing simulated ones to deceive and confuse the enemy [...], and the use of disinformation.’<sup>33</sup>

Especially during the Cold War, keeping silent and subsequently denying activities became also part of *maskirovka*. Denial invariably involves secrecy and can be regarded as a form of concealment to prevent foreign agents, surveillance, electronic monitoring or even media from revealing political or military matters. The Soviet Union had a long history of taciturnity

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<sup>30</sup> The Russians call the Napoleonic War in which they fought the ‘Patriotic War’, whereas World War II is called the ‘Great Patriotic War’.

<sup>31</sup> Krueger, *Maskirovka*, 4-15.

<sup>32</sup> Price, *Historical Dictionary of Russian and Soviet Intelligence*, 154.

<sup>33</sup> Reznichenko, *Taktika*, 148. See also: Kenneth Keating, *Maskirovka: The Soviet System of Camouflage*, Student research report, (Garmisch (GER): United States Army Russian Institute, 1981), 4.

and denying incidents and involvement. For instance, for decades the Soviet authorities denied the 1932-1933 man-made *Holodomor*.<sup>34</sup> During the famine, millions of people died from starvation in a peacetime catastrophe unprecedented in the history of Ukraine, then part of the Soviet Union; it is also known as the ‘Terror-Famine’ or ‘Famine-Genocide in Ukraine’.<sup>35</sup> Until the end of the Cold War, the official version of the Soviet Union was that the famine never occurred. Sometimes the Soviet authorities admitted to it, but diminished the scale and significance of the famine.<sup>36</sup> Another example is the denial of the Soviet Union concerning its occupation of Eastern European countries during the Cold War. This rejection was the official statement of the Soviet Union for decades.<sup>37</sup>

The mentioned Operation Anadyr<sup>38</sup>, was also an example of Soviet authorities keeping silent, and later on, flatly denying. At the end of the summer of 1962, the Soviet Union secretly dispatched nuclear capable SS-4 and SS-5 surface-to-surface missiles to Cuba, which could reach almost the entire East Coast of the United States. The Kennedy administration was shocked, but Soviet spokesmen kept up a steady stream of denials. Prior to the Cuba crisis, which took place in October 1962, the Soviet Ambassador Anatoli Dobrynin assured Robert Kennedy, Attorney General at the time, and brother of President John F. Kennedy, that no missiles nor offensive weapons would be placed in Cuba. It turned out to be different.<sup>39</sup>

Another example of Soviet silence happened in 1986, when the Soviet authorities initially refused to provide any information during the nuclear blast at Chernobyl, a nuclear reactor nearby the town of Pripyat in northern Ukraine. The Chernobyl accident turned out to be the worst nuclear disaster in the history of mankind. Almost three days later the Soviet news agency TASS made the first brief announcement, only after angry demands for information

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<sup>34</sup> The term *Holodomor* derives from the Ukrainian language, meaning ‘death by starvation’.

<sup>35</sup> Roy Baumeister, *Evil: Inside Human Violence and Cruelty*, (New York, NY (USA): Henry Holt and Company, 1999), 179. See also: Robert Sternberg and Karin Sternberg, *The Nature of Hate*, (New York, NY (USA): Cambridge University Press, 2008), 67.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime*, (New York, NY (USA): Vintage Books, Random House Inc., 1995), 232-236.

<sup>37</sup> Michael Neiberg, *Warfare and Society in Europe: 1898 to the Present*, (New York, NY (USA): Routledge, 2004), 160.

<sup>38</sup> The code name for the operation, Anadyr, was designed to mislead the Soviets themselves as well as foreigners about the destination of the equipment, which was shipped. Anadyr is the name of a river flowing in the Bering Sea. The Anadyr was to suggest to Soviet military commanders and Western spies that the action was a strategic exercise in the far north of the Soviet Union. See: Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble: Krushchev, Castro, and Kennedy*, (New York, NY (USA): W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 191.

<sup>39</sup> Dino Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball: The Inside Story of the Cuban Missile Crisis*, (New York, NY (USA): Random House, 1991), 115.

from Sweden, the first country to discover fallout originating from the Chernobyl site.<sup>40</sup> After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the authorities of the Russian Federation took over the tradition of silence and denial, notably with the Kursk submarine disaster in 2000<sup>41</sup>, the downing of MH17, which will be explained more in detail in section 2.3 ‘Reflexive Control’, and the more recent nuclear incident at Severodvinsk in August 2019<sup>42</sup>, a mysterious accident at a naval test base killing seven people and causing radiation. Edward Jay Epstein, former professor of political science at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, came up with a different perspective on Soviet denial. He considered denial in the tense Cold War relation between the intelligence service of the United States and that of the Soviet Union as a ‘useful limit on the imagination’ to further avoid feeding weird ideas, and an ‘outer boundary on what explanation would be tolerated’.<sup>43</sup> In short, ‘silence and denial’ of the Soviet and Russian authorities again and again caused much uncertainty and confusion. No one knew where they stood. Ultimately, the Soviet and Russian authorities thus concealed their own unwanted occurrences, such as a famine, a nuclear disaster and the demise of a nuclear submarine.

Remarkably, it was famous novelist Tom Clancy in the mid-1980s who rekindled interest in *maskirovka* in the Western world with the publication of ‘Red Storm Rising’.<sup>44</sup> Clancy’s book featured a World War III scenario in which the Soviet Armed Forces planned to invade West-Germany, using *maskirovka* to cover their intentions.<sup>45</sup> Partly due to Clancy’s novel, the

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<sup>40</sup> United States Directorate of Intelligence, *The Chernobyl’ Accident: Social and Political Implications*, Declassified, Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 12 September 2012, (Langley, VA (USA): Central Intelligence Service Publication, 1987), 9.

<sup>41</sup> The sinking of the Oscar-class nuclear powered Russian submarine *Kursk*, caused by an explosion of a dummy torpedo, took place during a major Russian naval exercise in southern part of the Barents Sea on 12 August 2000. All 118 personnel on board were killed. The Russian navy’s response was slow and inadequate. The Russian authorities initially kept silent and later denied the incident. In their first announcements, they downplayed the accident and claimed a collision with a NATO submarine. In the beginning of the incident President Putin continued his vacation at the Black Sea, and only on the fifth day he authorised British and Norwegian assistance. See: Robert Brannon, *Russian Civil-Military Relations*, (Farnham (UK): Ashgate Publishers Ltd, 2009), 131-164.

<sup>42</sup> On 8 August 2019, during a test firing exercise, a missile engine exploded at a naval test range, west of Severodvinsk at the Russian northern coast. It is a mysterious accident that killed seven people and released radiation. The Russian authorities at first kept silence, later they denied the incident and released inadequate and incomplete statements, moderating the severity of the accident. See: Andrew Kramer, ‘Russia Orders Evacuation of Village Near Site of Nuclear Explosion’, *New York Times*, 13 August 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/13/world/europe/russia-nuclear-explosion-accident.html>, (18 August 2019).

<sup>43</sup> Edward Jay Epstein, *Deception: The Invisible War Between the KGB and CIA*, Originally published by G.P. Putnam in 1989, (New York, NY (USA): EJE Publication, 2014), 168.

<sup>44</sup> Christian Kamphuis, ‘Reflexive Control: The Relevance of a 50-year-old Theory Regarding Perception Control’, *Militaire Spectator* (Military Spectator), 187 (2018) 6, 324. See also: Smith, *Soviet Maskirovka*, 28.

<sup>45</sup> Tom Clancy, *Red Storm Rising*, (London (UK): HarperCollins Publisher, 1987).

study of Soviet deception, including *maskirovka*, flourished at Western military academies and universities in the second half of the 1980s. During that decade *maskirovka* also became fashionable in the Soviet Union again, and that was not without reason. The Soviet Armed Forces had invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, and were dragged into a guerilla war against insurgent groups, also known as the Mujahedeen. The rugged Afghan terrain determined Soviet counter-guerilla strategy, making it impossible to conduct classic offensive and defensive military operations. The two principal forms of combat used by the Soviet Army were, firstly, the raid, block and sweep, a new tactic for the Russians with a defence element (the block) and an assault element to attack the enemy (the sweep) and, secondly, different kinds of ambushes.<sup>46</sup> Surprise was the key factor in these actions. It was one of the main reasons why Soviet military experts started to delve deep into the concept of *maskirovka* again. Unlike the Western Armed Forces, the Soviet authorities and other Soviet strategy experts published a number of books and articles on deception and *maskirovka*, such as the publications of General of the Army Makhmut Gareev and of the duo Iwan Vorobyov and Valery Kiselev in the Soviet military magazine *Voyennaya Mysl* (Military Thoughts).<sup>47</sup>

## Post-Cold War era

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, Western interest in *maskirovka* almost dropped to zero. The Russian Federation and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), a regional organization of ten former Soviet republics, came into being, while NATO member states were much more focused on other unstable and insecure parts in Europe, such as Bosnia and later Kosovo. The Russian Federation became involved in two different Chechen campaigns during the 1990s, the first of which started in 1994 and lasted till 1996, the second one taking place from 1999 till mid-2009. Both Russian campaigns were aimed against the unrecognized secessionist government of the Chechen Republic of Ickeria, which wanted to implement the sharia, supported by elements of Arab Mujahedeen.<sup>48</sup> It is important to note that Russian authorities never lost their appetite for the concept of *maskirovka*. During the

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<sup>46</sup> Les Grau and Michael Gress, *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost, The Russian General Staff*, (Lawrence, KS (USA): University Press of Kansas, 2002), 306-307

<sup>47</sup> Makhmut Gareev, *If War Comes Tomorrow? The Contours of Future Armed Conflict*, First published (in Russian) in 1995, Translated in 1998 by Yakov Fomenko, Edited by Jacob Kipp, (Abingdon (UK): Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 93-126. And: Ivan Voroboyov and Valery Kiselev, 'Strategiya Nepryamykh Deystviy v Novom Oblike' ('Indirect Action Strategy in its New Form'), *Voyennaya Mysil* (Military Thought), 15 (2006) 9, 2-5.

<sup>48</sup> Christopher Robertson, *A Small War: The Development of the Russian-Chechen Conflict 1994-2010*, (Quantico, VA (USA), United States Marine Corps, Command and Staff College, 2011), 5-25.

first campaign Russian secret services spread numerous fake news items, e.g. about the alleged castration of 25 Russian soldiers by Chechen separatists, which was believed by the majority of Western media.<sup>49</sup> In September 1999, prior to the start of the second campaign, a series of bomb attacks took place in Moscow and Volgodonsk in Russia, and in the Dagestani town of Buynaksk. Almost 300 people were killed in two weeks time. Criminal investigations resulted in the conviction of eight suspects linked to Chechen organizations. The local police apprehended agents of the *Federalnaya Sluzhba Bezopastnosti*<sup>50</sup> or FSB, the current Russian domestic intelligence service, for planting one of the bombs, but they were released on Moscow's order. Many observers, including State Duma deputies Yuri Shchekochikhin and Sergei Kovalev, and former FSB-agent Alexander Litvinenko, who died from a deadly poison in London in 2006, cast doubt on the official version, and claimed that the bombings were a false flag attack, organized by the FSB, in order to win public support for a new full-scale war in Chechnya.<sup>51</sup> While Russian authorities still used the *maskirovka* methods in the 1990s, the Western armed forces and military experts moved away from the *maskirovka* concept, because they turned their attention to other events and to different developments in the security domain.

The 9/11 attacks became a game changer in many ways. It certainly renewed the attention for *maskirovka*. On September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2001, just after 9/11, President Bush of the United States launched the term 'The War on Terror', at a Camp David session with journalists.<sup>52</sup> A few days later, on September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2001, Bush explained this bellicose term in a speech to the American Congress: 'Our war on terror begins with Al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.'<sup>53</sup> The phrase 'Global War on Terror' was born in the media and taken over by politicians. President Putin saw an opportunity in this American point of view. During a

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<sup>49</sup> Richard Clogg, 'Disinformation in Chechnya: An Anatomy of a Deception', *Central Asian Survey*, 16 (1997) 3, 425-430.

<sup>50</sup> In Russian: Федеральная Служба Безопасности, translated: Federal Security Service.

<sup>51</sup> John Dunlop, *The Moscow Bombings of September 1999: Examinations of Russian Terrorist Attacks at the Onset of Vladimir Putin's Rule*, Second revised and expanded edition, (Stuttgart (GER): Ibidem-Verlag / Ibidem-Press, 2014), 13-77. And: Vladimir Pribylovsky and Yuri Feltshinsky, *The Age of Assassins: The Rise and Rise of Vladimir Putin, How Scary Are Russia's New Rulers?* (London (UK): Gibson Square Books, 2008), 105-111.

<sup>52</sup> Kenneth Bazinet, 'A Fight versus Evil, Bush and Cabinet Tell U.S.', *New York Daily News*, 17 December 2001, [http://www.nydailynews.com/archives/news/2001/09/17/2001-09-17\\_a\\_fight\\_vs\\_evil\\_bush\\_and\\_c.html](http://www.nydailynews.com/archives/news/2001/09/17/2001-09-17_a_fight_vs_evil_bush_and_c.html), (29 March 2019).

<sup>53</sup> President of the United States, 'Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People', (Washington, DC (USA): The White House, 20 September 2001), <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>, (29 March 2019).

meeting of President Bush with President Putin at Bush's Crawford Ranch in Texas in November 2001, both men spoke about the aftermath of 9/11 and the possible connection between this terrorist attack and Muslim fighters in Chechnya. The George W. Bush Administration ceased their criticism of Russia's campaign in Chechnya and acknowledged links between Chechen fighters and global terrorists.<sup>54</sup> The United States and the Russian Federation stood firm in their fight against terrorism.

Following the example of the George W. Bush Administration, Western analysts also focused on the worldwide phenomenon of terrorism. During their studies of the Russian approach to Islamic insurgents in the North Caucasian region, Western researchers, again, hit upon the concept of *maskirovka*. Soon they discovered that Russian authorities used *maskirovka* in a much more comprehensive way than only relating to the anti-terrorism campaigns in the Caucasian region. For example, in 2002 Timothy Shea, an American officer who examined modern Russian deception warfare, concluded that *maskirovka* was not a concept that had ended after the Cold War. He argued that former Soviet states that became independent, including the Russian Federation, used passive and active measures of *maskirovka* in varying degrees to enhance their interests. He called *maskirovka* a unilaterally imposed 'fog of war' that distorts the truth for both external and domestic public. It was used to counter western peacetime military engagement. At the time Shea believed that *maskirovka* permitted Russian regional military leaders 'to feed on United States freebies while feigning interest in transparency, professing pro-NATO strategic orientations, or claiming support for democratic models.'<sup>55</sup>

The start of the third millennium was also a time frame in which the Western military was absorbed by developments in information technology. Sensor capacity, satellite communication, data processing and network centric operations minimized the time for the decision-making process. An improved command and control function became paramount.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Philip Gordon, 'Bush-Putin: The End of the Cold War', Brookings Website (13 November 2001): <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/bush-putin-the-end-of-the-end-of-the-cold-war/> (29 March 2019).

<sup>55</sup> Timothy Shea, 'Post-Soviet Maskirovka: Cold War Nostalgia, and Peacetime Engagement', *Military Review*, 82 (2002) 3, 63.

<sup>56</sup> Norman Davis, 'An Information-Based Revolution in Military Affairs', in: John Arquilla and 'David Ronfeldt (Ed), *In Athena's Camp: Preparing for the Conflict in the Information Age*, (Santa Monica, CA (USA): RAND, 1997): 84-88. See also: David Alberts and Richard Hayes, *Power to the Edge: Command... Control... in the Information Age*, Reprint, Originally published in 2003, (Washington, DC (USA): U.S. Department of Defense Command and Control Research Program (DoD-CCRP), 2004), 98-103. And: David Alberts, John Gartska and Frederick Stein, *Network Centric Warfare: Developing and Leveraging Information Superiority*, Reprint,

Research journalist Shane Harris added that following the military-industry complex, referring to a term used by American President Dwight Eisenhower during his farewell speech on 17 January 1961, a military-internet complex was created soon after 9/11. The main focus in counter terrorism turned to intelligence, and in a broader sense to the information sphere. Looking at the situation in the United States, Harris argued that the government always outsourced national security to a certain degree. The military ordered their weapons and materiel from companies, and never produced this munition and equipment themselves. The use of the weapons and materiel was the exclusive right of the military, since the government had a monopoly on the use of force. And this is where the military-internet-complex differs from its predecessor. Private firms and government are now competing for cyber security. The intelligence-collecting capabilities of businesses are as good as, if not better than, government ones. Harris was concerned about this development, because it affects the primacy of the government.<sup>57</sup> It also reflected that Western military researchers more intensively approached the progressions in the information sphere itself. Likewise, these researchers concentrated more on concepts used in the information sphere, like *maskirovka*.

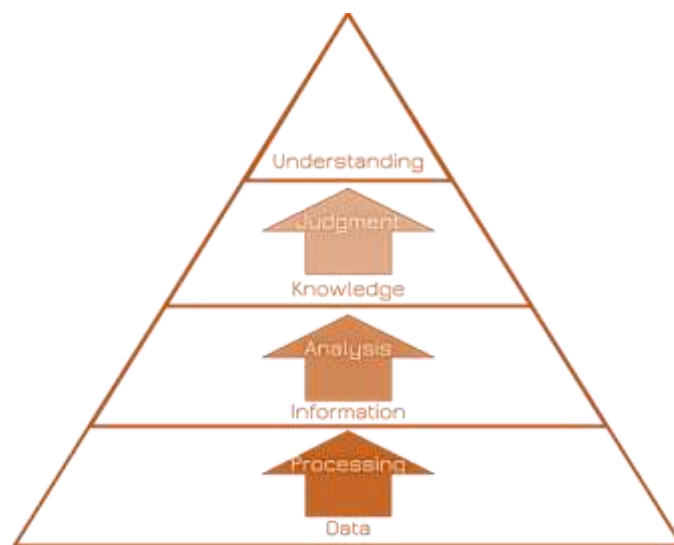


Fig 2.2 Cognitive or DIKW hierarchy of Ackoff<sup>58</sup>

Following the development in the information sphere, researchers started to investigate *maskirovka* in relation to the cognitive or DIKW hierarchy. American mathematician and

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Originally published in 1999, Reprint, First published in 1999, (Washington, DC (USA): U.S. Department of Defense Command and Control Research Program (DoD-CCRP), 2003), 87-114.

<sup>57</sup> Shane Harris, @ War: The Rise of the Military-Internet Complex, (New York, NY (USA): Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014), 218-222.

<sup>58</sup> 'The Cognitive Hierarchy', Parling Thought Website, (28 March 2016).

<https://parkingthought.com/2016/03/28/2016-3-26-data-mining-the-cognitive-hierarchy/> (10 April 2020).

organisational expert Russel Ackoff introduced this hierarchy that starts with raw data, being factual new evidence. These data become information through processing. The next step is the analysis of information. This way, information transforms into knowledge. One step further is judging the knowledge, which results in wisdom and understanding, as shown in Figure 2.2.<sup>59</sup> Understanding, in turn, leads to decision superiority, which is portrayed in many Western doctrine publications as the ultimate effect. The British Joint Doctrine Publication 04 ‘Understanding and Decision Making’ explains understanding as obtaining and maturing knowledge to a level that enables humans to know why something has happened or is happening which is the insight part and be able to identify and anticipate what might happen which is the foresight part.<sup>60</sup>

However, there is a distinction between Western-style information operations and *maskirovka*. Western information activities seek to influence data collection and information construction to create a distorted enemy image. *Maskirovka* goes much further and aims to prevent knowledge building about a situation in order to disrupt the opponent's decision-making.<sup>61</sup> In 2011, Timothy Thomas commented that the deception concept in Russia has undergone a change that dominates the discourse of deception at the moment. The terms ‘*obman*’, Russian for deception, and ‘*vvedenie v zabluzhdenie*’, Russian for misleading, appear to have replaced the term *maskirovka* with the latter notion now understood to be part of those two terms. ‘*Voennaya khitrost*’, which is Russian for stratagem, seemed to be most used as a deception tool, according to Thomas.<sup>62</sup>

## Current Appearances

James Roberts, lecturer at the U.S. National Defense University, explained that the deceitful techniques Russian authorities use, are ‘not new – and certainly not new to them.’<sup>63</sup> The Soviet and Russian authorities did not only use *maskirovka* in the past, but continued to use it

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<sup>59</sup> Russel Ackoff, ‘From Data to Wisdom’, *Journal of Applied System Analysis*, 16 (1989) 1, 3-9.

<sup>60</sup> United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, *Joint Doctrine Publication 04: Understanding and Decision-making*, 2nd Edition, (Shrivenham (UK): The Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre, December 2016), 9.

<sup>61</sup> Rudolph Janiczek, *The New Maskirovka: Countering US Rapid Decisive Operations in the 21st Century*, A research paper, (Quantico, VA (USA): Marine Corps University, School of Advanced Warfighting, 2002), 6-11.

<sup>62</sup> Thomas, *Recasting The Redstar*, 107-108.

<sup>63</sup> James Roberts, *Maskirovka 2.0: Hybrid Threat, Hybrid Response*, Occasional paper, (MacDill Air Force Base, FL (USA): Joint Special Operations University Press, 2015), 1.



as a key part for ‘operational planning and execution’, even in recent operations.<sup>64</sup> Russian President Putin reintroduced Russia’s traditional way of deception in the country’s recent operations. Today’s *maskirovka* is largely conducted through ‘cunning use of networks to shape perceptions blurring the picture and opening up for world opinion to see this view as the correct one, intending to legitimize the policy steps’.<sup>65</sup> Julian Lindley-French, then Senior Fellow at the Institute for Statecraft in London, regards ‘strategic *maskirovka*’ as a means to apply disinformation against all levels of an opponent and the wider public opinion to keep its political and military echelons off-balance. It also creates ambiguity in the minds of the decisionmakers about whether and ‘how best to respond.’<sup>66</sup> Some experts termed the current appearance of this Russian deception concept as ‘*maskirovka 2.0*’ to make a clear distinction with regard to the earlier Soviet version. *Maskirovka 2.0* relies on ‘secret diplomacy and extensive low visibility and clandestine preparation of the political, military, economic and informational landscape.’<sup>67</sup> Others explained that the contemporary manifestation of *maskirovka* is no longer the traditional Soviet approach, but much more the smooth modern Russian version, with propaganda, media manipulation, and using deception to bring about Russian influence by any means possible.<sup>68</sup> In short, modern *maskirovka* is masking own intentions, while openly showing activities that often suggest something else, and purposely providing disinformation to create surprise and manipulated perceptions.

## Summary

As seen *maskirovka* is a concept that developed over time. Starting as a military tool, it became a part of all Russian instruments of power. The ultimate goal of *maskirovka* is to surprise one’s opponent or create manipulated perceptions. The difficulty, from the perspective of the deceiver, however, is to maintain the surprise and manipulated perception effects. As soon as surprise and/or a manipulated perception have been evoked, the initiator has to find and exploit new opportunities to continue the element of surprise effect or to

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<sup>64</sup> Richard Warnes, *Maskirovka: The Russian Art of Operational Deception*, (Thatcham, Berkshire (UK): British Armed Forces, Specialist Group Military Intelligence, 2016), 2.

<sup>65</sup> Joergen Oestroem Moeller, ‘Maskirovka: Russia’s Masterful Use of Deception in Ukraine’, (2014), HUFFPOST Website (Huffington Post), [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joergen-oerstroem-moeller/maskirovka-russias-master\\_b\\_5199545.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joergen-oerstroem-moeller/maskirovka-russias-master_b_5199545.html) (11 March 2019).

<sup>66</sup> Julian Lindley-French, *NATO: Countering Strategic Maskirovka*, (Calgary (CAN): Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute, 2015), 2-4.

<sup>67</sup> Roberts, *Maskirovka 2.0*, 1.

<sup>68</sup> Luis Lázaro Tijerina, ‘Soviet Diplomacy and Maskirovka’, Website Geopolitica.ru (2018), <https://www.geopolitica.ru/en/article/soviet-diplomacy-and-maskirovka>, (12 March 2019).

maintain a manipulated perception. Russian authorities did well and refined their *maskirovka* concept several times in order to adapt it to new eras. Today's manifestations of *maskirovka* are soft and smooth and merely used in the information sphere. In recent years, Russian authorities used a self-created version of strategic communications,<sup>69</sup> interlaced with deceitful methods, to manipulate populations and, especially, opposing decisionmakers. The most important elements of current *maskirovka* are concealment and deceit. Reflexive control is one of the main mechanisms used in this deceptive version of strategic communications.

## 2.4 Reflexive Control

As shown in the previous paragraph, today's *maskirovka* is part of all the Russian instruments of power, and used at the tactical as well as operational and strategic level. One of the mechanisms to achieve *maskirovka* is the application of reflexive control. This paragraph is structured along the questions: What is reflexive control? Which methods or techniques are used? What is its history? And what is its current appearance? The paragraph consists of nine sections: 'description', 'modelling', 'early history', 'after the Cold War', 'modern era', 'renewed notion', 'use of social media', 'current types', and 'summary'.

### Description

In his book *Conflicting Structures*, originally published in the Soviet Union in 1965, Vladimir Lefebvre, a Russian mathematic psychologist and considered the founding father of the reflexive control theory, explained that reflexive control is simply the process of conveying the basis for decision-making from one person to another. Lefebvre clarified that a precise comprehension of the opponent's situational awareness, collection systems, processed data and decision-making process is vital for constructing a narrative to induce decisions and actions preferred by the initiating side. Any deceitful movement, provocation, intrigue, camouflage, even calumny, or, more generic, a falsehood of any type establishes reflexive control. Thus, there is a very thin line between truth and lie: for example, sending truthful

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<sup>69</sup> Ofer Fridman argued that if the Western notion of strategic communications is the use of words, actions, images, or symbols to influence the attitudes and opinion of target audiences to shape their behaviour, than the Russian interpretation of information warfare with a combination of military and non-military means to influence the informational-psychological state of a target audience can be considered as the Russian counterpart to Western strategic communications. See: Ofer Fridman, "'Information War' as the Russian Conceptualisation of Strategic Communications", *The RUSI Journal*, 165 (2020) 1, 44-45. And: James Farwell, *Persuasion and Power: The Art of Strategic Communication*, (Washington, DC (USA): Georgetown University Press, 2012), xviii-xix.

information to the opponent, with the intention that the opponent considers it false, may deceive the opponent and may lead to a decision advantageous to the sender. The trick is that the truth is considered a fib, all is mixed up, and in the end the opponent cannot see the wood for the trees.<sup>70</sup>

Bottom line up front, reflexive control comprises four basic elements that serve as a checklist for practitioners at all levels:

1. *Power pressure*, which includes: the use of superior force, force demonstrations, psychological attacks, ultimatums, threats of sanctions, threats of risk, combat reconnaissance, provocative manoeuvres, denying the opponent access to certain areas, destabilizing the situation in the opponent's rear, demonstrating ruthless actions and showing mercy toward an opponent ally that has stopped fighting.
2. *Measures to present manipulated information about the situation* ('*dezinformatsiya*'), which include disguise, creation of mock installations, weapons bluffing, changing a mode of operation, concealing true relationship between units or creating manipulated ones, or deliberately losing critical documents.
3. *Affecting the opponent's decision-making algorithms*, which includes: the systematic conduct of games of what is perceived as routine plans, publishing a deliberately unrecognized doctrine, striking control elements and key personnel, dissemination of false background data, and taking action to neutralize the opponent's operational thinking.
4. *Modifying the decision-making time*, which can be done by surprise and suddenly starting combat actions, transferring information so that the opponent, when working out what seems feasible and predictable, makes a hasty decision that changes the mode and character of his operation.<sup>71</sup>

Another important aspect of reflexive control is that it involves four steps. The first step is to build up understanding of the opponent's perception of the situation. This step includes the collection and analysis of vital information of the opponent. The second step is to find out

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<sup>70</sup> Vladimir Lefebvre, *Constituting Structures*, Translation from Russian of the 2nd edition, Original published in 1967, (Los Angeles, CA (USA): Leaf & Oak Publishers, 2015), 42-43.

<sup>71</sup> Mikhail Ionov, 'On Reflexive Control on the Enemy in Combat', *Voyennaya Mysl* (Military Thought), 1 (1995), 46-48. See also: Timothy Thomas, *Cyber Silhouettes: Shadows over Information Operations*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS (USA): Foreign Military Studies Office, 2005), 251-252.

what the opponent's goals are and how to manipulate them. There are three ways to affect the shaping of these goals: (1) a show of force to convince the opponent that a specific objective is unobtainable, (2) a demonstration of a threat to such an extent that it dominates the opponent's goals, and (3) a presentation of a variety of uncertainties about the initiator's own actions resulting in the inability to define any satisfactory objectives. The third step in the application of reflexive control during a decision-making process is the introduction of a solution algorithm. This algorithm includes the behavioral principles of an opponent, his analytic procedures, his methods for exploiting and evaluating the situation, and his arranged alternatives. It is not only disclosed in conventions, methods and SOPs, but it is also demonstrated in education, training and experience of the decisionmakers. The fourth step is the making of a decision. This last step is a difficult one to target. The first two steps, learning about the opponent's perception of the situation and his goals are the most suitable for reflexive attempts to control the opponent. The use of disinformation, which will be explained in the next section, is a method used during reflexive control for influencing an opponent, especially his perception of the situation.<sup>72</sup>

Some American researchers, like Diane Chotikul, researcher at the US Naval Postgraduate School, described reflexive control as 'a result of the historical and cultural soil of Russia, germinated by the emphasis on control, nourished by psychological aspects of the Russian mindset, such as dependence on a leader, awareness of external others, the importance placed on cognition and reflection, and a society characterized by suspicion and *maskirovka*.'<sup>73</sup> Volodymyr Shemayev, researcher at the Ukrainian National Institute for Strategic Studies, considered reflexive control as a simple method that manipulates decision-making while using psychological features of humans, which is the method further explained in Chapter 4 'Human Dimensions'.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Clifford Reid, 'Reflexive Control in Soviet Military Planning', in: Brian Dailey and Patrick Parker, *Soviet Strategic Deception*, (Stanford, CA (USA): Hoover Institute Press, 1987), 295-296.

<sup>73</sup> Diane Chotikul, *The Soviet Theory of Reflexive Control in Historical and Psychocultural Perspective*, A preliminary study, (Monterey, CA (USA): Naval Postgraduate School, 1988), 76-77.

<sup>74</sup> Volodymyr Shemayev, 'Cognitive Approach to Modeling Reflexive Control in Socio-Economic Systems', *Information & Security, an International Journal*, 22 (2007), 35.

## Modelling

Colonel Sergei Komov, one of the most productive Russian researchers on information warfare in the 1990s, amplified the idea of targeting an opponent with information that will unconsciously activate some psychological and cognitive mechanisms within a decisionmaker's brain in a way which is favourable for the initiator. He renamed reflexive control over an opponent as 'intellectual methods of information warfare'.<sup>75</sup> Komov created a list of reflexive control mechanisms that can cause psychological effects ranging from deception to suggestion (see table 1). If one of the mechanisms fails, the reflexive control method needs to employ another mechanism, or its initial effect might degrade soon.<sup>76</sup>

Mechanisms of Reflexive Control and their Effects	
Deception	Forcing the opponent to reallocate forces to a threatened region during the preparatory phases of combat operations.
Deterrence	Creating the perception of insurmountable superiority.
Distraction	Creating a real or imaginary threat to one of the opponent's most vital locations during the preparatory phases of combat operations, thereby forcing him to reflect on the wisdom of his decisions to operate along a certain axis.
Division	Convincing the opponent that he must operate in opposition to coalition interests.
Exhaustion	Compelling the opponent to carry out useless operations, thereby joining combat with reduced resources.
Overload	Frequently sending the opponent a large amount of conflicting data.
Pacification	Leading the opponent to believe that preplanned operational training is ongoing, rather than offensive preparations, and therefore reducing his attentiveness.
Paralysis	Creating the perception of a specific threat to a vital interest or a weak spot.
Pressure	Offering information that disgraces the government of the opponent in the eyes of its population.
Provocation	Force the opponent into a mode of taking action, which is advantageous for the provocateur's side
Suggestion	Offering information that affects the opponent legally, morally, ideological, or in other modest areas.

Figure 2.3 Overview of mechanism of Reflexive Control and their effects by Komov<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Thomas, *Cyber Silhouettes*, 255.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas, *Recasting the Redstar*, 131. See also: Tony Selhorst, 'Russia's Perception Warfare', *Militaire Spectator* (Military Spectator), 184 (2016) 4, 151-152.

<sup>77</sup> Sergei Komov, 'About Methods and Forms Conducting Information Warfare', *Voennaya Mysl* (Military Thought), (1997), 18-22. See also: Thomas, *Recasting the Redstar*, 129-130. And also: Selhorst, 'Russia's Perception Warfare', 152.

Reflexive control is considered a mixture of arts and sciences. The art part is the psychological concept of reflection, and the science part is the cybernetic concept of control. Cybernetics is an approach in science to exploring regulatory systems. It focuses on their structures, constraints, usefulness, and possibilities. In 1948 Norbert Wiener, at the time Professor of Mathematics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, described cybernetics as ‘the scientific study of control and communication in the animal and the machine.’<sup>78</sup> In other words, it is the study on how humans, animals and machines control each other and how they communicate with one another.

The psychological approach is accomplished by ‘understanding his [the opponent’s] cognitive map thoroughly enough to shape his perception of situation without evoking his awareness that his thoughts are not his own.’<sup>79</sup> The psychological aspects and subjective factors are pivotal. Vladimir Druzhinin and David Kontorov, two Russian researchers of military systems, stated:

Control of the enemy assumes the influencing of the enemy’s decisions by utilizing a profound knowledge of his politics, ideology, military doctrine, objectives, state of forces, organization, psychology, the personal qualities of his executive personnel, his mutual relations, and emotional state.<sup>80</sup>

Tony Selhorst, a Dutch officer who published an article on Russian Perception Warfare, defined reflexive control as a whole of systems, methods, and tasks to influence the perception and behaviour of the enemy, population, and international community on all levels. Reflexive control is a system approach based on perception management to target enemy leadership and alter their orientation in such a way that they make decisions advantageous to the Russian Federation and take actions that lead to a sense of despair within their leadership.<sup>81</sup> Senior Consulting Fellow of Chatham House, Keir Giles’ view contrasted with Selhorst’s opinion. Giles mentioned that the term reflexive control is far more frequently

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<sup>78</sup> Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics: or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*, (Cambridge, MA (USA): MIT Press, 1948), 159-167.

<sup>79</sup> Chotikul, *The Soviet Theory of Reflexive Control*, 79.

<sup>80</sup> Vladimir Druzhinin and David Kontorov, *Voprosy voyennoy sistemotekhniki* (Problems of Military Systems Engineering), (Moscow (USSR): *Voyenizdat* (Military service), 1976). See also: Chotikul, *The Soviet Theory of Reflexive Control*, 79.

<sup>81</sup> Selhorst, ‘Russia’s Perception Warfare’, 151.

used in recent Western publications dealing with Russian information warfare than in Russian sources. In the Russian discourse, the phrase ‘reflexive control’ became outdated and is partly substituted by ‘perception management’, with a connotation similar to the Western interpretation of this phrase. However, ‘reflexive control’ still offers a ‘suitable descriptor’ for Russian information activities of this kind.<sup>82</sup> Thomas does not agree with these views of Selhorst and Giles. In his book *Kremlin Kontrol*, he specified that reflexive control diverged from any Western supervising idea. Reflexive control is focused on cybernetic control, i.e. adjusting one’s course based on feedback mechanisms, rather than perception management, which is a specific Russian method.<sup>83</sup>

An example of a reflexive control model, in which psychological and cybernetic effects are shown, is the effect-based model, like the one shown in figure 2. Deceiver A defines the preferred goals and effects and identifies perceptions, attitudes, decisions and behaviours, within target B that will support those goals.

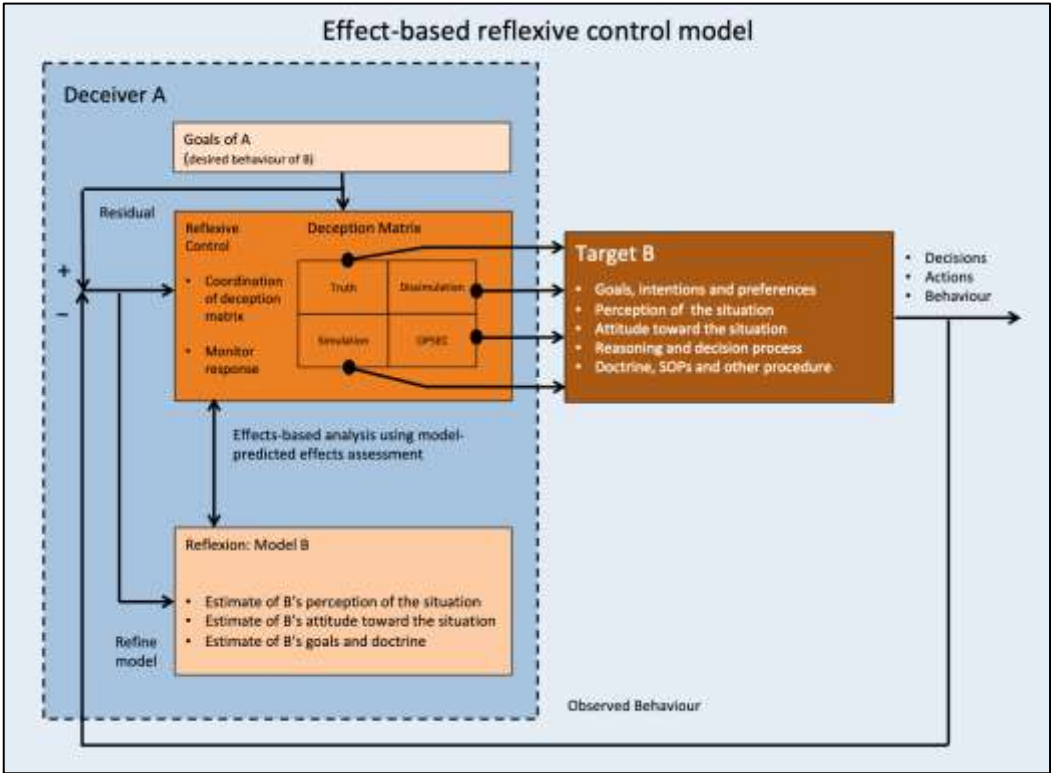


Figure 2.4 Effect-based reflexive control model by Bennett and Waltz<sup>84</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Keir Giles, *Handbook of Russian Information Warfare*, Fellowship Monograph, (Rome (ITA): NATO Defence College, Research Division, 2016), 19-20.

<sup>83</sup> Timothy Thomas, *Kremlin Kontrol: Russia's Political Military Review*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS (USA): Foreign Military Studies Office, 2017), 175-197.

<sup>84</sup> Michael Bennett and Edward Waltz, *Counterdeception Principles and Applications for National Security*, (Boston, MA (USA): Artech House, 2007), 134.

In this model, reflexive control includes four steps:

1. Deceiver A defines the preferred goals and effects and identifies perceptions, attitudes, decisions and behaviours, within target B that will support those goals.
2. Deceiver A develops multiple representation reflexion models of itself, of target B, and of target B's perception of deceiver A's self-model. The reflexive control comes into play when deceiver A uses the reflexion models and a so-called virtual deception matrix, which exists in the minds of members belonging to deceiver A. The deception matrix consists of four elements: (1) A's perception of the truth, and the opportunities to use this truth or elements of it towards target B (2) A's options for simulation like showing what is not there or using self-created false information, (3) A's option for dissimulation like hiding or concealing undesired information, and (4) Operational Security, information that may not be shared. Deceiver A conducts an assessment of the alternative control actions to influence B to make decisions favourable to deceiver A.
3. Once deceiver A finishes the deception plan and presents the information to target B, deceiver A starts observing the effects of the action. Successively, deceiver A compares the outcome with the expected responses of target B, and evaluates the outcome by using his reflexion models of target B.
4. Deceiver A might use the differences in anticipated and actual response of target B to:  
(a) refine the deception plan using the typical feedback, and (b) refine his reflexion models of target B.<sup>85</sup>

In short, when deceiver A gets a profound understanding of target B, knowing his interests, capabilities, preferences, morale, behavior, attitude, culture, and intentions, deceiver A is able to manipulate target B's decision by putting him under pressure and offering him (true or false) information. It is the offensive way of using reflexive control. In this case, deceiver A takes the initiative to deceive target B, and will continually observe target B's behavior after each information stimulus is delivered. These steps portray how deceiver A achieves a state of maskirovka, realizing a cunning effect on target B. The next step is to maintain this effect. To this end deceiver A needs to observe and analyze constantly every decision made by target B.

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<sup>85</sup> Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 133-134.



Subsequently deceiver A needs to adjust the manner in which he or she delivers manipulated information.

There is also a defensive way to deceive an opponent with reflexive control, namely when deceiver A is concerned that he is accused of commitment to actions with negative publicity or of deceiving behaviour. Deceiver A's reaction is to deny every connection to activities in which target B supposes that deceiver A is involved. Both versions, though the offensive one more than the defensive one, require a deliberate intelligence process and a keen understanding of the opponent.

## Early history

Experts distinguished four stages in the development of reflexive control: (1) the first period focused on the discovery of and further research into the reflexive control mechanisms (from late 1950s to the late 1970s); (2) during the second period, practitioners, both in the Soviet armed forces and the secret services, were fascinated by the utilitarian application of reflexive control mechanism (from late 1970s to the early 1990s); (3) the third period is characterized by the further development of reflexive control primarily in mathematical psychology, and taught at universities (from early to mid-1990s), and (4) the fourth period is a psycho-social phase, in which research is done on how to protect and affect international political decision-making.<sup>86</sup>

The development of reflexive control already started in the late 1950s due to the comprehensive study of military cybernetics at the First Computer Centre of the Soviet Ministry of Defence, the so-called 'Unit 01168'. The young Vladimir Lefebvre focused on the optimization of military decision-making, based on computerization and digitalization.<sup>87</sup> He tried to integrate cybernetic concepts into decision-making. In his view, it was essential to set up a 'modeling system, which consisted of three subsystems: (1) a unit to simulate one's own decisions, (2) a unit to simulate the adversary's decisions, and (3) a decision-making unit.'<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Thomas, 'Russia's Reflexive Control Theory', 238. See also: Thomas, *Cyber Silhouettes*, 245.

<sup>87</sup> Reid, 'Reflexive Control in Soviet Military Planning', 293.

<sup>88</sup> Vladimir Lefebvre and Victorina Lefebvre, *Reflexive Control: The Soviet Concept of Influencing an Adversary's Decision-making Process*, (Englewood, CO (USA): Science Application Inc., 1984), 7.

Lefebvre believed this model would influence an opponent in ways that were favourable to Soviet decision-making,<sup>89</sup> arguing that:

We can influence his [the opponent's] channels of information and send messages which shift the flow of information in a way favourable to us. The adversary [...] finds the optimal decision. However, it will not be a true optimum, but a decision predetermined by us. In order to make our own effective decision, we should know how to deduce the adversary's decision based on information he believes in.<sup>90</sup>

Lefebvre's approach caused a paradigm shift in conflict studies. A conflict was no longer regarded as simply an interaction between two entities or actors. He emphasized that a conflict was also an interaction between decision-making processes governing the actions and reactions of the concerned entities or actors.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, a conflict became a reflexive interaction between two opponents, whereby the psychological term 'reflexive' implies that every decision is based on a self-image and perception of the opponent.<sup>92</sup>

In the second half of the 1960s the KGB, the main intelligence service in the Soviet Union, discovered Lefebvre's work. It published a classified report on reflexive control in 1968, written by a KGB-officer only known by his last name, Panov. Shortly after the publication of Panov's report the theory of reflexive control became a classified subject. Kremlin experts during the Cold War deemed this classification as proof that the Soviet authorities perceived the reflexive control theory as extremely valuable. The Soviet Armed Forces also took a keen interest in psychological and mathematical modeling of decision-making, and discovered the reflexive control theory as well. The Soviet military started to utilize reflexive control on the battlefield and in their education courses, while other Soviet governmental establishments used it for political, diplomatic and administrative activities.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Reid, 'Reflexive Control in Soviet Planning', 293.

<sup>90</sup> Lefebvre and Lefebvre, *Reflexive Control*, 9.

<sup>91</sup> Governing the action and reaction corresponds with the Marxist model, which was hailed in the Soviet Union. In his book *Poverty of Philosophy* Marx applied the dialectic approach, consisting of thesis, antithesis leading to synthesis, to political economy to explain the capitalist methods of production. See: Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, in: *Marx-Engels Collected Works, Volume 6: Marx and Engels 1845-1848*, (New York, NY (USA), International Publishers, 1976), Chapter 2, 1.

<sup>92</sup> Reid, 'Reflexive Control in Soviet Planning', 294.

<sup>93</sup> Chotikul, *The Soviet Theory of Reflexive Control*, 89-90.

It is significant to notice that the Soviets progressively relied on their psychological knowledge and insights. They were quite rigid and aloof in the management of their own population during their communist oppression, but in the understanding of their opponents they became very empathic. The Soviets assumed that different societies and different individuals in those societies operate on different levels of awareness of the existence of reflection, the so-called multiple-tier awareness. The side with the higher level of reflection would have the advantage in a conflict situation.<sup>94</sup> During the 1980s the Soviets beat the Westerners in their interpretation of humans and the use of reflection. These Westerners tended to be rationalists, following a kind of logic, constructed by facts and arguments, and reasoning sequentially. In this linear thinking, Westerners were inclined to validate the real situation only as they perceived it, without using the opponent's perspective, in other words they were working from a positivist rather than a constructivist paradigm.<sup>95</sup> Another explanation for the lack of reflexive control at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Western world was the prevailing limited planning horizon. Russian military researchers expressed that traditionally the Russian mind, as embodied in Russia's General Staff and authorities, looked further ahead than its Western counterpart 'on the basis that foresight implies control'.<sup>96</sup>

## Post-Cold War era

In the mid-1990s Major General Nikolai Turko, former lecturer at Russia's General Staff Academy, specified that reflexive control used in a conflict is more effective in achieving strategic objectives than traditional firepower. Turko also praised the geopolitical essence of reflexive control as an information weapon. Reflexive control could generate a geopolitical effect when it produces a manipulated perception or a threat of imposing damage against a state or an alliance, or when it frightens an opponent by attacking his information resources.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Fjodor Gaivoronskiy and Mikhail Galkin, *Kul'tura Voyennogo Myshleniya*, (Culture of Military Thought), (Moscow (RF): Voenizdat, 1991), 243. See also: Charles Blandy, *Calculating Military Outcomes*, AA24, (Camberley (UK): Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, Soviet Studies Research Centre, 1993), 1

<sup>97</sup> Nikolai Turko and Sergei Modestov, *Refleksivnoe Upravlenie Razvitiem Strategicheskikh sil Gosudarstva kak Mechanizm Sovremennoi Geopolitiki* (Reflexive Control in the development of Strategic Forces of States as a Mechanism of Geopolitics), Report of the conference on 'System Analysis on the Threshold of the 21st Century: Theory and Practice, (Moscow (RF): Russian Academy of Science, 1996), 257-258 and 366. See also: Thomas, 'Russia's Reflexive Control Theory', 240.

This is rather a firm observation of Turko's, but it is substantiated by Russian operations in Chechnya. The start of Russia's military counter-terrorist operation in Chechnya in October 1999, also known as the Second Chechen War, is an example of Russian geopolitical reflexive control. Although never confirmed by Russian authorities, experts on the Russo-Chechen armed conflict considered that the entire excuse for the Russian intervention in Chechnya, being Chechen Jihadist Groups attacking various targets in neighbouring Dagestan, was created by Moscow itself.<sup>98</sup> It is a form of Russian geopolitical reflexive control, overwhelming Chechen decisionmakers. Successively, the entire Russian invasion in Chechnya was covered with forms of reflexive control to create manipulated perceptions, delusions and mistrusts about the locations and intentions of the Russian Armed Forces throughout the military build-up phase.<sup>99</sup>

## New Millennium

It was during the start of the new millennium that the Institute of Psychology of the Russian Academy of Science became more interested in the entire reflexive process and its application in management sciences. At the beginning of 2002 this institute started its own magazine *Reflexive Process and Control, an International Interdisciplinary Scientific and Practical Journal* with psychological, sociological, political, philosophical and mathematical articles in the English language, mainly from Russian researchers and experts. Vladimir Lepsky, the head of Russia's laboratory of reflexive process, was the first editor-in-chief.<sup>100</sup> Later the Russian Centre of Interdisciplinary Research of Reflexive Processes and Control, a subunit of the Institute of Psychology of the Russian Academy of Science, became responsible for publishing the magazine.<sup>101</sup>

Over the last decade the research of reflexive control has become more focused on the application of it in international relations. In 2011, reflexive control was regarded as a means

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<sup>98</sup> Charles Blandy, *Chechnya: Federal Retribution, Encirclement, Forceful Intervention and Isolation*, (Camberley (UK): Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Conflict Studies Research Centre, 2001), 10-31. See also: Marcel van Herpen, *Putin's War: The Rise of Russia's New Imperialism*, (Lanham, MD (USA): Rowan & Littlefield, 2014), 171-183.

<sup>99</sup> Blandy, *Chechnya*, 33-92.

<sup>100</sup> Vladimir Lepsky, 'From the Editor', *Reflexive Process and Control, an International Interdisciplinary Scientific and Practical Journal*, (Moscow (RF): Institute of Psychology of the Russian Academy of Science, 2002), 4.

<sup>101</sup> World Organisation of Systems and Cybernetics Website, [wosc.co/2016/05/10/the-russian-centre-of-interdisciplinary-research-of-reflexive-processes-and-control-joins-wosc/](http://wosc.co/2016/05/10/the-russian-centre-of-interdisciplinary-research-of-reflexive-processes-and-control-joins-wosc/) (17 March 2019).

of conveying specially prepared information to a partner nation or an opponent to incline him voluntarily to make predetermined decisions desired by the initiator of the action.<sup>102</sup> Christian Kamphuis, a Dutch officer, who published a distinctive article about reflexive control in 2018, compared books and articles dealing with reflexive control. He came to the conclusion that reflexive control is a notion in which one international actor provides particular and preordained information to another international actor, with the obvious aim to control the decisions made by the receiving actor. The quintessence of this notion is to regulate the decision-making process of different nations whereby the receiving actor makes preferred decisions for the initiating actor leading to a change in thinking and behaviour, or ultimately leading to the receiving actor's defeat.<sup>103</sup>

## Rekindled notion

The modern version of reflexive control is yet another Russian concept used as a 'manipulator of thought processes'.<sup>104</sup> The theory of reflexive control can be used against either human-mental or computer-based decision-making processors. It is similar to the Western concept of perception management, except that it attempts to control rather than manage a subject. Reflexive control involves creating a pattern or providing partial information that causes an opponent to react in a predetermined fashion without realizing that he is being manipulated.<sup>105</sup>

In today's Russian notion of manipulating decision-making, reflexive control is not considered as a final remedy to solve any international dispute. It is a way to engage the opponent, but it also costs a lot of effort. The application of reflexive control mechanisms requires hard and soft power means as well as tools to affect decision-making algorithms and net assessment.<sup>106</sup> Hard power comprises the use of the armed forces, whereas influencing with non-lethal instruments like information, diplomatic or economic incentives or restrictions, such as the supply or cut-off of energy, is considered as soft power.<sup>107</sup> The means

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<sup>102</sup> Thomas, *Recasting the Redstar*, 118.

<sup>103</sup> Kamphuis, 'Reflexive Control', 326.

<sup>104</sup> Thomas, *Recasting the Redstar*, 118.

<sup>105</sup> Thomas, *Cyber Silhouettes*, 241.

<sup>106</sup> Daniel Bagge, *Unmasking Maskirovka: Russia's Cyber Influence*, (New York, NY (USA): Defense Press, 2019), 50.

<sup>107</sup> James Sherr, *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad*, (London (UK): Chatham House, 2013), 92-116. And: Can Kasapoglu, *Russia's Renewed Military Thinking: Non-Linear Warfare and Reflexive Control*, Research Paper, No. 121, (Rome (ITA): NATO Defence College, Research Division, 2015), 5.

of hard power, disinformation and incentives should affect the adversary's decision-making algorithms, and simultaneously alter the adversary's response time.<sup>108</sup>

Reflexive control is a concept that keeps adjusting to today's world. In the last decade, the theory continued to undergo further modifications. Many Russian articles were published showing that reflexive control managed to adapt to modern methods such as its application in network-centric warfare and deterrence theory. In 2006 Colonel Viktor Karankevich published an article in the *Voennaya Mysl* that the art of deception is nothing more than the communication of relevant but manipulated information and, under certain conditions, partly true information to decision-makers, based on reflexive control mechanisms.<sup>109</sup> Later, in 2011, Thomas noticed that several Russian authors annotated reflexive control as 'one of the technologies for effects against social consciousness'.<sup>110</sup> Thomas stated:

Reflexive control is first of all the arts of manipulating people and groups of people, and, secondly, a specific method of social control. The technology is mainly aimed against a narrow group of people in a specific state, who are invested with the greatest authority, or against separate individuals in the group. It is assumed that information-psychological effects (IPE) against the leadership and executive structures of a country result at least in a temporary slowdown of [...] decision-making, and even in a blocking of centers [sic] of administrative control of a state; at best, they can result in the "authority" elites making decisions that are favorable [sic] with respect to the goals and intentions of the initiator of the IPE.<sup>111</sup>

In 2013, retired Lieutenant General Valery Makhnin noticed that going from the reflection of collaboration to a state of conflict can break the will of the opponent's civilian and military top brass. This is known as throttling the opponent in a 'friendly embrace'. It is a new supplement to the reflexive control theory, again, with the aim to create confusion: first hugging then dealing a lethal blow. Two years later, Dmitry Adamsky, Professor of Strategy and Decision-making at IDC Herzliya with a special interest in Russian strategy, noted that modern reflexive control 'forces the adversary to act according to a false picture or reality in a predictable way, favourable to the initiator of the international strike, and seemingly

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<sup>108</sup> Can Kasapoglu, *Russia's Renewed Military Thinking: Non-Linear Warfare and Reflexive Control*, Research Paper, No. 121, (Rome (ITA): NATO Defence College, Research Division, 2015), 5.

<sup>109</sup> Viktor Karankevich, 'How to Learn to Deceive the Enemy', *Voennaya Mysl* (Military Thought), 9 (2006), 44-46.

<sup>110</sup> Unknown Russian authors, op. cit. in: Thomas, *Kremlin Kontrol*, 177.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

independent and benign to the target. The end result is a desired strategic behaviour.<sup>112</sup> Also in 2015, Vladimir Kazakov and Alexander Kiriushin published an article in the *Journal of the Academy of Military Science* in which they introduced the so-called simulacra, which are information packages used as a means of deception. Simulacrum derives from the Latin word ‘*simulare*’, which means ‘to pretend’.<sup>113</sup> There are two sorts of simulacra. First, the representational ones, which include copies of copies pretending to be originals or authentic items, containing manipulated information which is not predominant over real information. They can be state documents, ranging from passports to ministerial memoranda, all real but with slight modifications. Second, the non-representative versions that go beyond the framework of real copies and do not presume a correlation with an existing version. These can be fake state documents, not real but posing for real, like completely falsified passports or ministerial memoranda. The latter occur in the form of simulation, comprising manipulated information.<sup>114</sup>

In nowadays’ reflexive control, it is vital that regulation of the opponent’s decision-making process stays undetected. This is partly done by pushing him in the preferred direction, and also by constant interaction with the opponent during which the opponent is provided with all the necessary information to make the desired decisions logically and apparently of his own volition. To research this condition, the Russian Federation uses a well-established arsenal of information warfare tools and methods. Some were already used in the Czarist and Soviet eras, others are new and exploit the hyper-connectivity of the Internet and social media.<sup>115</sup> Adamsky recapitulated the nature of these tools with a modern version of reflexive control:

Three main characteristics predominate. First, Russia’s approach to informational struggle is holistic (*kompleksnyy podhod*), that is, it merges digital-technological and cognitive-psychological attacks. While digital sabotage aims to disorganize, disrupt, and destroy a state’s managerial capacity, psychological subversion aims to deceive the victim, discredit the leadership, and disorient [...] the population and the armed forces. Second, it is *unified* (*edinstvo usilii*), in that it synchronizes informational struggle warfare with kinetic and non-

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<sup>112</sup> Dmitry Adamsky, *Cross-Domain Coercion: The Current Russian Art of Strategy*, Proliferation Papers, No. 54, (Paris (FRA): *Institute Français des Relations Internationales* (IFRI), 2015), 27.

<sup>113</sup> Valery Kazakov and Alexander Kiriushin, ‘All-inclusive Command and Control of Combat Operations’, *Journal of the Academy of Military Science*, 4 (2015), 36-37. See also: Thomas, *Kremlin Kontrol*, 191-193.

<sup>114</sup> Kazakov and Kiriushin, ‘All-inclusive Command and Control’, 36-37.

<sup>115</sup> Keir Giles, James Sherr, and Anthony Seaboyer, *Russian Reflexive Control*, Contract Report, (Kingston, Ontario (CAN): Royal Military College of Canada, Defence Research and Development Canada, 2018), 11.

kinetic military means and with effects from other sources of power; and it is *unified* in terms of co-opting and coordinating a spectrum of government and non-government actors – military, paramilitary, and non-military. Finally, the informational campaign is an uninterrupted (*‘bezpriryvnost’*) strategic effort. It is waged during ‘peacetime’ and wartime, simultaneously in domestic, the adversary’s, and international media domains and in all spheres of the new media.<sup>116</sup>

There are two important issues regarding current reflexive control. First, there are many different channels and means that Russian authorities employ to mislead an opponent, varying from military exercises and internet to doctrine and deterrence. Reflexive control is not applied all the time, but its use should always be taken into account when Russian operations are analyzed. Second, Russian authorities understand how an opponent makes decisions; they know how their opponents think and process information, or are learning to do so, and focus on the opponent’s preferences.<sup>117</sup>

## Use of social media

An increasing trend can be observed in the use of social media for reflexive control purposes by different governmental and non-governmental organizations of the Russian Federation. Social media are pre-eminently platforms for applying reflexive control while remaining anonymous. They are internet-based with the aim of ‘influencing, collecting, storing, aggregating, sharing, processing, discussing and delivering user-generated content’.<sup>118</sup> This relatively new media platform can influence awareness, perception, opinion, acceptance and actions, and promote or hamper certain behaviour. Today there are more than 200 different social media platforms which differ in what services they deliver.<sup>119</sup> In Figure 2.5, a matrix gives some examples of social media platforms. Its basis is a report from the Multinational Capability Development Campaign<sup>120</sup> on the use of social media, supplemented with insights

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<sup>116</sup> Adamsky, *Cross-Domain Coercion*, 27.

<sup>117</sup> Timothy Thomas, *Russian Military Thought: Concepts and Elements*, Sponsored by United States European Command ECJ39, (McLean, VA (USA): The Mitre Corporation, 2019), 4-11.

<sup>118</sup> Giles et al., *Russian Reflexive Control*, 29-30.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Multinational Capability Development Campaign is a transformation force-multiplier led by United States Joint Staff J-7 to develop and deliver new capabilities to enhance partnership and effectiveness in joint, multinational and coalition operations. Several nations form teams together to study topics like autonomy, hybrid warfare, cyber, medical, logistics or strategic communications. Since 2002, NATO’s Allied Command Transformation participates in this campaign. See NATO’s Allied Command Transformation, Website Multinational Capability Campaign, <https://www.act.nato.int/mcdc>, (21 June 2019).



from SimilarWeb into top platforms in the Russian Federation. The platforms in bold are used by the Russians, and the ones in bold type and italics are used for reflexive control operations.

Examples of platforms types and providers	
Platform type	Providers
Social networks	<b>Facebook</b> , <b>Vkontakte</b> , WeChat, <b>LinkedIn</b> , Xing, QQ, <b>Ok.ru</b> , Myspace
Search engines	<b>Google</b> , Wiki.com, Startpage, DuckDuckGo, CC Search, <b>Gibiru</b> , <b>Yandex</b>
News	Yahoo!, Google News, HuffingtonPost, CNN, Guardian, El Mundo, <b>Rambler</b> , <b>Lenta</b> , <b>RIA</b>
Marketplace	Ebay, Bing, Amazon, Etsy, Craigkist, Ruby Lane, Rakuten, <b>Aliexpress</b> , <b>Wildberries</b>
Video content	<b>YouTube</b> , <b>Vimeo</b> , Youku, Periscope, <b>Facebook Live</b>
Picture content	<b>Instagram</b> , <b>Tumblr</b> , <b>Flickr</b> , Snapfish, <b>Snapchat</b> , <b>Pinterest</b>
Instant messaging	<b>Facebook messenger</b> , <b>WhatsApp</b> , Telegram, Skype, Signal, Viber
Blogs	WordPress, <b>Blogspot</b> , SquareSpace, <b>LiveJournal</b>
Micro-blogging	<b>Twitter</b> , Friendfeed, Twitpic, Weibo, Qzone

Figure 2.5 Overview of examples of platform types and providers<sup>121</sup>

Social media sites generally do not last long, the exception being Facebook, which has existed since 2004. It is difficult to identify all possible social media that might play a role in Russian reflexive control operations, since new platforms emerge, but also disappear, rapidly while others are only used in limited regions.<sup>122</sup> The Internet providers currently most used for reflexive control operations are Live Journal, Facebook, VKontakte, LinkedIn, YouTube and Twitter.<sup>123</sup> *Runet* also uses many blogs where interaction between sender and audiences happens online.<sup>124</sup> The portals and online discussion groups on *Runet* are often the object of organized action.<sup>125</sup> The use of social media is an extremely relevant part of the reflexive

<sup>121</sup> See: Giles et al., *Russian Reflexive Control*, 30. And: Christian Bell, *Use of Social Media as an Effort*, Multinational Capability Development Campaign, (Mayen (GER): *Zentrum für Operative Kommunikation der Bundeswehr*, 2016). And: SimilarWeb, ‘Top Website Ranking: Top Website Ranking for all Websites in Russian Federation’, <https://www.similarweb.com/top-websites/russian-federation>, (21 June 2019).

<sup>122</sup> Giles et al., *Russian Reflexive Control*, 30.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> ‘Runet’ is a portmanteau of ‘ru’, an abbreviation of the Russian language, and ‘net’ or network. It indicates the Russian-language community on the Internet and websites.

<sup>125</sup> Jolante Darczewska, *The Anatomy of Russian Information Warfare: The Crimean Operation*, A Case Study, Point of View, Nr 24, (Warsaw (POL): Centre for Eastern Studies, 2014), 26.

control. Reflexive control operations can be considered as larger social media interactions, using different platforms including e-mail accounts. The use of social media exploded over the last decade and it has made reflexive control operations much more effective, cheaper and feasible ‘while enabling full deniability’.<sup>126</sup>

Since 2014, internet experts like British journalist Max Seddon, have been warning against an influx of activities by Russian trolls. The term ‘trolls’ is Internet jargon for all kinds of possible mood-making as well as Russia’s Internet Research Agency (IRA), also known as *Glavset* or troll farm or troll factory.<sup>127</sup> The IRA/*Glavset* is explained in more detail in section 6.5 ‘Other government bodies’. Troll activities were not only noticed during the annexation of Crimea, but for instance also during the MH17 disaster in 2014 and the United States presidential election campaign in 2016.<sup>128</sup> In 2017, the United States Intelligence Community published a report ‘Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections’ which describes the IRA as a ‘troll farm’. The report is convinced that Russian authorities are the driving force behind the IRA: ‘The likely financier of the so-called Internet Research Agency of professional trolls located in Saint Petersburg is a close ally of Putin’s with ties to Russian intelligence.’<sup>129</sup> In 2019, Special Counsel Robert Mueller declared that there was inadequate proof for a formal accusation of Russian authorities.<sup>130</sup>

## Current types

Social media use(d) and exploit(ed) different types of reflexive control, such as: (1) spreading narratives, (2) starting smear campaigns, (3) committing character assassination, (4) testing narratives, (5) constructing credibility and legitimacy of influencers and commentators who

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<sup>126</sup> Giles et al., *Russian Reflexive Control*, 30.

<sup>127</sup> Max Seddon, ‘Documents Show How Russia’s Troll Army Hit America: The Adventures of Russian Agents like The Ghost of Marius the Giraffe, Gay Turtle, and Ass – Exposed for the First Time’, BuzzFeed News, (2 June 2014), <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/maxseddon/documents-show-how-russias-troll-army-hit-america>, (20 June 2019).

<sup>128</sup> Robert van der Noordaa and Coen van de Ven, ‘Hoe Russische Trollen Inspelen op Westerse Angsten’, (‘How Russian Trolls Respond to Western Fears’), *De Groene Amsterdammer* (The Green Amsterdammer), Nr. 35, (29 August 2018).

<sup>129</sup> United States Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections*, Intelligence Community Assessment, ICA 2017-01D, Washington, DC (USA): National Intelligence Council, 6 January 2017), 2-3.

<sup>130</sup> United States Department of Justice (US DOJ), ‘Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller III Makes Statement on Investigation into Russian Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election’, DOJ Website (29 May 2019). <https://www.justice.gov/opa/speech/special-counsel-robert-s-mueller-iii-makes-statement-investigation-russian-interference>, (11 February 2020).

support the Kremlin, (6) undermining the credibility of opponents, (7) information sabotage and counterfeit of evidence, (8) policy paralysis by creating chaos in the information space that leads to eroding trust in a government and its institutions, (9) societal norm manipulation, e.g. institutionalizing homophobia and racism for political gain, (10) information pressure that comprises dedicated narratives to instill confusion about a certain dossier or case, (11) provoke hasty, unplanned or imprudent response to incidents, (12) creation of desired movements, where social media are used for marketing and recruitment, (13) allure dissenting opinion and entice physical, offline demonstrations, (14) distraction during negative incidents for the Russian Federation, (15) propaganda and spin news.<sup>131</sup>

It is a long list of offensive reflexive control activities used by Russian governmental and non-governmental organizations, media and Rунet-users in order to influence opponents and public opinion. Other types of modern offensive Russian reflexive control include attacks on physical structures that are blamed on others, use of pretexts and conditioning, cyber issues, denial, use of media, publicly submitted letters and publications blaming states for using false sources, the use of historical analogies, and the use of simulacra.<sup>132</sup>

An example of modern defensive reflexive control activities that are known worldwide, concerns the different Russian messages that were released after the downing of flight MH17 on 17 July 2014, and Russian statements after the revelation of international investigations into the causes of the airliner downing. In the first two days after the crash the Saint Petersburg-based Russian troll factory issued at least 65,000 tweets, and probably more, most of them in the Russian language, to condemn Ukraine for the downing of MH17.<sup>133</sup> Four days after the crash, on 21 July 2014, the Russian Ministry of Defence held a press conference stating that a Ukrainian Su-25 fighter aircraft had approached the Malaysian aircraft within two to three miles while the airliner was tumbling from the skies.<sup>134</sup> The spokesperson never accused Ukraine directly for causing this incident during the press conference, but the

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<sup>131</sup> Giles et al., *Russian Reflexive Control*, 31-42.

<sup>132</sup> Thomas, *Kremlin Kontrol*, 198.

<sup>133</sup> Robert van der Noordaa en Coen van de Ven, 'Nepnieuws uit Sint-Petersburg' ('Fake News from Saint Petersburg'), Website *De Groene Amsterdammer* (The Green Amsterdammer), (13 mei 2019). <https://www.groene.nl/artikel/nepnieuws-uit-sint-petersburg>, (18 april 2020). And: Cees van Doorn, Societal Resilience and an Answer to Disinformation: The Case of Flight MH17, MSS Master thesis, (Breda (NLD): Netherlands Defence Academy, 2019), 22-23.

<sup>134</sup> Olga Razumovskaya, 'Russia Presents Its Account of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 Crash', *The Wall Street Journal*, (22 July 2014), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-presents-its-account-of-malaysia-airlines-flight-17-crash-1405952441>, (30 March 2019).

statements suggested that a Ukrainian fighter jet might have downed the airliner with an air-to-air missile. Vladimir Babak, chief engineer of the Su-25, denied this insinuation in Russian media in March 2015, almost nine months after the incident.<sup>135</sup> Later the Dutch Safety Board (DSB) supported Babak's statements following a meticulous inquiry into the crash. In their report, the DSB concluded that an air-to-air missile strike must be ruled out. However, Russian authorities denied the Dutch conclusions.<sup>136</sup> On 22 July 2014, the day after the press conference of Russia's Ministry of Defence, the same ministry also claimed that satellite pictures showed that the Ukrainian Army moved a BUK SAM battery close to the disaster area on the morning of the incident, and the same battery was removed a day after the incident.<sup>137</sup> Again, Russian authorities did not directly reveal the facts of the incident, but they pretended that a Ukrainian BUK missile might have shot down the Malaysian airplane. Two days later, Russian Deputy Defence Minister Anatoly Antonov denied any claims made by the American State Department that the separatists, controlled by the Russian Armed Forces - although always denied by Russian authorities - had brought down the airliner.<sup>138</sup> At that moment, Antonov was prompting that the Ukrainian Army might be held responsible for downing the aircraft. On 13 October 2015, the DSB's issued its final report, stating that the Malaysian airliner was shot down by a BUK 9M38-series surface to air-missile with an 9N314M warhead.<sup>139</sup> Soon after, the Joint Investigation Team (JIT), comprising law enforcement authorities from Australia, Belgium, Malaysia, and the Netherlands, started a criminal investigation into the MH17 crash. At the end of its inquiry, the JIT supported the conclusion of the Dutch Safety Board. It stated at a press conference on 24 May 2018 that pro-Russian separatists shot down the MH17 flight. Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov said convincing evidence was lacking and denied any Russian involvement.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> RT, 'Could SU-25 Fighter Jet Down a Boeing? Former Pilots Speak Out on MH-17 Claims', (12 March 2015), <https://www.rt.com/news/239881-mh17-ukraine-fighter-jet/>, (30 March 2019).

<sup>136</sup> Matthew Weaver, 'MH17 crash report: Dutch investigators confirm Buk missile hit plane – live updates', *The Guardian* (13 October 2015), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2015/oct/13/mh17-crash-report-ukraine-live-updates>, (30 March 2019).

<sup>137</sup> Razumovskiykaya, 'Russia Presents Its Account'.

<sup>138</sup> RIA Novosti, 'US Claims of Flight MH17 Downing by Militia Remain Unfounded – Russia's Defense Ministry', (24 July 2014), <https://sputniknews.com/russia/20140724191186319-US-Claims-of-Flight-MH17-Downing-by-Militia-Remain-Unfounded-/>, (30 March 2019).

<sup>139</sup> Dutch Safety Board, *Crash of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17*, 253.

<sup>140</sup> Meijer and Sterling, 'Netherlands, Australia Hold Russia Responsible in MH17 Downing'.

## Summary

Reflexive control is a mechanism that has developed over time. It uses the cybernetic concept of control in combination with psychological insights of the opponent. The four elements of reflexive control are: (1) power pressure (2) *dezinformatsiya*, (3) affecting the opponent's decision-making algorithms, and (4) time pressure. In order to use these elements for reflexive control it is important to find out what the opponent's perception of the conflict is, and to get an understanding of his goals, intentions and the possibilities for manipulating them. Then these insights form the basis of the solution algorithm to affect the opponent's decision-making and observe his behaviour. The next step is to evaluate the opponent's behaviour and adjust the information injects. In both the offensive and defensive use of reflexive control, the deceivers use disinformation to influence those involved in order to manipulate their decision-making process. Today's reflexive control is a merger of cybernetics and cognitive-psychological mechanisms. The Russian Federation always tries to synchronize the use of reflexive control in combination with physical and non-physical military operations, and also with other governmental influence activities. Reflexive control does not stop after military operations are finished.; its use by the Russian Federation is permanent.

### 2.5 *Dezinformatsiya*

A relevant tool for reflexive control is the use of '*dezinformatsiya*', the Russian version of disinformation. Wholly in line with previous sections, this paragraph pays attention to the questions: What is it? What are the elements of this topic? And which techniques are used? What is its history? And what is its current appearance? It addresses the contrast between *dezinformatsiya* and active measures, and it also deals with '*kompromat*', which is deemed as a special form of disinformation. The paragraph contains six sections: 'description', 'history', 'active measures', '*kompromat*', 'current appearance' and 'summary'.

### Description

Before explaining Russian disinformation, a distinction should be made between misinformation and disinformation. Six different criteria can be used for evaluating information: (1) authority, (2) accuracy, (3) objectivity, (4) currency, (5) aim, and (6)

coverage. Misinformation and disinformation differ from each other, especially in the areas of aim, objectivity and coverage. Misinformation is mistaken or quasi information, not necessarily given with a purpose to mislead the receiver. Misinformation also comprises personal opinions, which are not value-free and can be extremely subjective to other people, who disagree with these conceptions. Disinformation, on the other hand, is intentionally deputed mistaken information with the purpose to mislead the user. It can be invented, or partially inaccurate or distorted, news, and it is often unknown who is the initiator, or it is impossible to identify the initiator.<sup>141</sup> A further analysis of mis- and disinformation will be discussed in the Annex A '18 Deception Studies (1969-2019)'.

Disinformation itself is a carefully constructed manipulated message leaked into an opponent's communication system to deceive the decision-making elite or the public. In order to succeed, every disinformation message must at least partly correspond to generally accepted views. Without a considerable degree of plausible, verifiable information, it is difficult to gain the victim's confidence.<sup>142</sup> Otherwise the disinformation will not be accepted by the public.<sup>143</sup> Today the concept of disinformation is still in use in the Russian Federation and is reframed by Western specialists as 'Kremlin's Weaponization of Information',<sup>144</sup> or earlier as the 'fabrication of information'.<sup>145</sup> Russian authorities use two different types of disinformation. The first category is offensive disinformation, which is used to influence foreign decision-makers and public opinion abroad. The second category includes defensive disinformation, which Russian authorities employ to influence their own citizens.<sup>146</sup>

During the Cold War *dezinformatsiya* was part of a comprehensive Soviet programme to influence foreign decision-makers. The recognized channels for the distribution of

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<sup>141</sup> James Fetzer, 'Disinformation: The Use of False Information', *Minds and Machines*, 14 (2004), 231-232. And: Don Fallis, 'Mis- and dis-information', in: Luciano Floridi, *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Information*, (Abingdon (VK): Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 332-344. Also: Miroslav Tudjman and Nives Mikelic, *Information Science: Science about Information, Misinformation and Disinformation*, Short conference paper, (Zagreb (CRO): University of Zagreb, 2003).

<sup>142</sup> Ladislav Bittman, *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation: An Insider's View*, (McLean, VA (USA): Pergamont-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1984), 49.

<sup>143</sup> Ladislav Bittman, *The Deception Game: Czechoslovak Intelligence in Soviet Political Warfare*, Syracuse University Research Corporation (New York, NY (USA): Ballantine Books / Random House, 1972), 20.

<sup>144</sup> Peter Pomerantsev and Michael Weiss, *The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money*, A special report presented by The Interpreter, Institute of Modern Russia (November 2014).

<sup>145</sup> Robert George, *A Historical Investigation of Soviet Strategic Deception*, Student report, (Maxwell Air Base, FL (USA): U.S. Air Command and Staff College, 1987), 11.

<sup>146</sup> Jon White, *Dismiss, Distort, Distract, and Dismay: Continuity and Change in Russian Disinformation*, Policy Brief, Issue 2016/13, (Brussels (BEL): Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Free University Brussels), Jean Monnet Centre for Excellence, Institute for European Studies, 2016).

*dezinformatsiya* were similar to those used for the dispersal of all kinds of information, not necessarily only *dezinformatsiya*, in the communication model of Harold Laswell. Laswell laid the foundation for the traditional approach to analysing mass communication, asking the question: Who says what, in what channel, to whom, with what effect? In 1948, Laswell was one of the first to describe the route from an originator sending a message through a medium or different media to a receiver, which led to changed behaviour.<sup>147</sup>

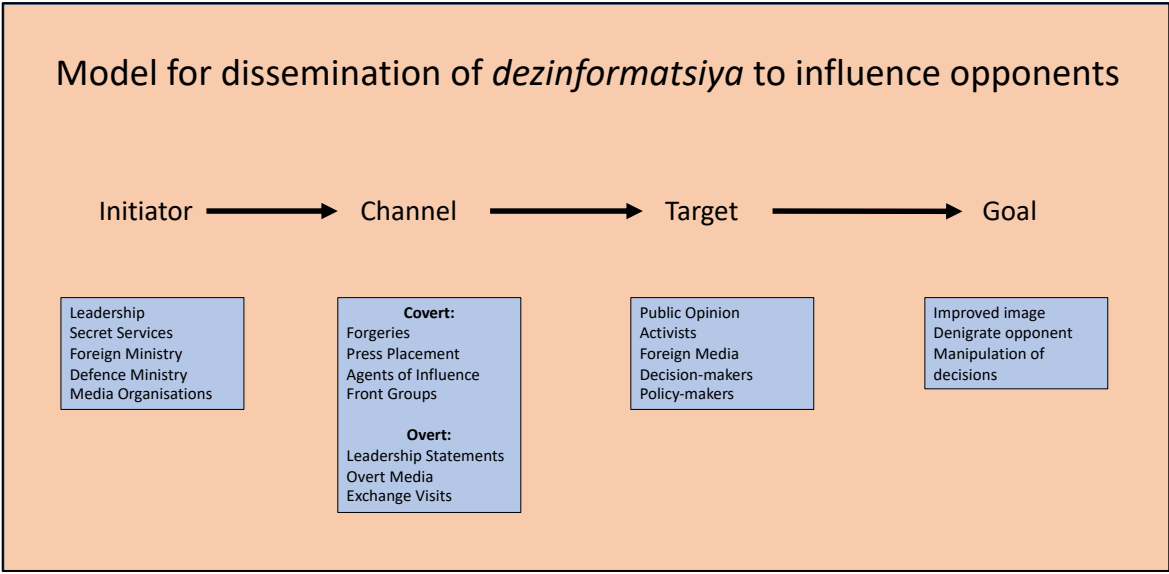


Figure 2.6 Model for dissemination of *dezinformatsiya* by Heuer<sup>148</sup>

In the case of a *dezinformaziya* operation there will be an initiator, a channel, a target and a goal, being the ultimate end state of influencing. The channels for the dispersal of *dezinformatsiya* can be divided into overt and covert ones. Overt channels include leadership statements, media, exchange visits, open policy decisions and concrete actions. Covert channels on the other hand include forgeries, covert press placement, agents of influence and, in the semi covert category, front group-activities.<sup>149</sup> However, this model for dissemination of *dezinformatsiya* is a linear model in which a feedback loop is lacking. A feedback loop is a circular arrangement of interconnected elements, whereby each element has an effect on the next element and the last element feeds back into the first element. Feedback can be considered as the control of the entire process or system; it conveys information and insights

<sup>147</sup> Denis McQuails and Sven Windhal, *Communication Models: For the Study of Mass Communication*, 2nd Edition and 4th impression, Originally published in 1982, (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1996), 13-15.  
<sup>148</sup> Richards Heuer, *Assessing Soviet Influence Operations*, (1990), Copyright 2008 Richards J. Heuer and Pherson Associates, LLC., 4, [www.pherson.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/07.-Assessing-Soviet-Influence-Operations\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.pherson.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/07.-Assessing-Soviet-Influence-Operations_FINAL.pdf), (25 March 2019).  
<sup>149</sup> Heuer, *Assessing Soviet Influence Operations*, 2-5.

about the results of the process.<sup>150</sup> In the dissemination of *dezinformatsiya* model the initiator does not measure whether the target has achieved the goals set or has partially achieved them. The initiator cannot therefore determine whether he should adjust his activities.

## History

The science of crafting *dezinformatsiya* is rooted in the Russian identity.<sup>151</sup> In the eighteenth century, the French Marquis Astolphe de Custine remarked that ‘everything is deception in Russia. [...] Russian despotism not only counts ideas and sentiments for nothing but remakes facts. It wages war on evidence and triumphs in the battle’.<sup>152</sup> Joseph Stalin decided that disinformation should look as if it were originally French. He organized an information campaign in which the word *dezinformatsiya* seemed to be derived from the French language. It was a portmanteau of the French words ‘*des*’ and ‘*information*’. It was a meaningless expression, but another form of Russian ruse. Stalin made believe that *dezinformatsiya* was a French ‘capitalist’ tool targeted against the peaceful people of the Soviet Union.<sup>153</sup> Soviet intelligence officer Walter Krivitsky<sup>154</sup> did not agree with this explanation. He had another view on the origin of *dezinformatsiya*. According to him the term ‘disinformation’ dated back to the First World War, during which the German Armed Forces established a General Staff’s Disinformation Service to disseminate improper information and news in order to confuse their adversaries. The first Soviet secret service adopted the term and the underlying techniques, and used it for its own purposes. It translated the term into *dezinformatsiya*.<sup>155</sup>

While there were previous successes during the Cold War, *dezinformatsiya* did not catch on until the early 1960s. After the establishment of KGB's Department D in 1959, the unit was directly connected to the Presidium of the Soviet Communist Party, and their main task was

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<sup>150</sup> Frans Osinga, *Science, Strategy and War: The Strategic Theory of John Boyd*, (Abingdon (UK): Routledge, 2007), 72-73.

<sup>151</sup> Ion Mihai Pacepa, *Disinformation: Former Spy Reveals Secret Strategies for Undermining Freedom, Attacking Religion, and Promoting Terrorism*, (Washington, DC (USA): WND Books, 2013), 36.

<sup>152</sup> Astolphe de Custine, *Journey for Our Time: The Russian Journals of Marquis de Custine*, Gateway edition, Translation and edited by Phyllis Penn Kohler, (Washington, DC (USA): Regnery, 1987), 14 and 161.

<sup>153</sup> Pacepa, *Disinformation*, 39.

<sup>154</sup> Walter Krivitsky, born as Samuel Ginsberg in 1899 in Galicia (Austria-Hungary), served as a Soviet intelligence officer in Germany, Poland, Austria, Italy, Hungary, and The Netherlands. In 1938 he fled to the United States. During his American years he wrote a book published under the title *In Stalin's Secret Service*. One and a half year later, in 1941, he was found death in a hotel room in Washington, DC (USA).

<sup>155</sup> Walter Krivitsky, *In Stalin's Secret Service*, A reprint, Originally published in 1939, (Frederick, MD (USA): University Publications of America, 1967), 234.



the dissemination of *dezinformatsiya*. Department D consisted of forty to fifty people, divided by region and function. In 1962, Department D was upgraded to the status of a service, Service A, under direct supervision of the First Chief Directorate of the KGB. Ivan Agayants, a legendary KGB officer of Armenian descent, became Chief of Service A. Five years after its foundation, Service A managed nearly 400 *dezinformatsiya* operations per year. Agayants had a strict policy of recruiting new personnel involved in the conduct of *dezinformatsiya* operations. A new agent needed to be able to think creatively, culturally empathically and out-of-the-box, alongside possessing personal characteristics such as rigour, self-discipline and ideological determination.<sup>156</sup>

During the 1980s the Soviets often dealt with the use of *dezinformatsiya* in an opportunistic manner. Unplanned incidents were seized upon by the Soviet KGB to launch a major *dezinformatsiya* campaign. Examples include incidents such as the attack on Pope John Paul II in 1981 by a Turkish terrorist, which was regarded as a CIA retaliation. Another example is the shooting of the Korean airliner with flight number KAL007 over the Kamchatka Peninsula in 1983 by a Soviet Sukhoi Su-15 interceptor fighterjet resulting in 269 fatalities. This incident was initially surrounded by conflicting reports and eventually dismissed as a purely defensive measure that had been hard to avoid. Also, the kidnapping of Soviet defector Oleg Bitov in the United Kingdom in 1984, carried out by the KGB, was used to conduct an extensive smear campaign against the West with extensive use of *dezinformatsiya*.<sup>157</sup>

## Active measures

Some Russian, and Western circles as well, used the term *dezinformatsiya* to refer to what the Soviet leaders called ‘active measures’.<sup>158</sup> Although some consider active measures as just another term for *dezinformatsiya*, it is not quite the same. *Dezinformatsiya* is merely one of the overt and covert influencing practices used by Soviet and later by Russian leadership in these so-called active measures.<sup>159</sup> Soviet authorities considered *dezinformatsiya* as a

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<sup>156</sup> Thomas Rid, *Active Measures: The Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare*, (London (UK): Profile Books, Ltd, 2020), 145-146.

<sup>157</sup> Michael Voslensky, ‘The Empire of Lies’, in: Raymond Sleeper, *Mesmerized by the Bear: The Soviet Strategy of Deception*, (New York, NY (USA): Dodd, Meade & Company, 1987) 33.

<sup>158</sup> Richard Shultz and Roy Godson, *Dezinformatsia: Active Measures in Soviet Strategy*, (McLean, VA (USA): Pergamon-Brassey’s International Defense Publishers, 1984), 39.

<sup>159</sup> Nicolas Cull et al., *Soviet Subversion, Disinformation and Propaganda: How the West Fought Against It, An Analytic Report with Lessons for the Present*, (London (UK): London School of Economics and Political Science, LSE-consulting, 2017), 18.

strategic weapon, useful in its overall active measure strategy. Active measures, *активные мероприятия* or *aktivnyye meropriyatiya*, was a Soviet term for active intelligence operations for the purpose of influencing world events in order to reach one's own geopolitical aim.<sup>160</sup> Retired KGB General Oleg Kalugin regarded *dezinformatsiya* as a critical component of active measures. Kalugin experienced subversion, and not intelligence collection, as the most crucial task of the Soviet secret services. He saw subversion as 'active measures to weaken the West, to drive wedges in Western community alliances of all sorts [...] [and] sow discord among allies'.<sup>161</sup> Active measures focused on and exploited opponents' vulnerabilities in order to expand Soviet influence and power around the globe.<sup>162</sup>

Active measures vary from media forgeries to messages that can cause reactions with various degrees of violence. Active measures are broader than only disinformation, they also include propaganda, subversive activities, counterfeiting official documents, disinformation operations leading to assassinations, agents of influence, political domination, and various forms of religious suppression.<sup>163</sup> Despite the difference in scope and elaboration, the similarity between spreading disinformation and active measures is that both activities are specifically targeted actions with the purpose to confuse an opponent regarding the true intentions of the initiator, and to obtain a beneficial reaction from the targeted opponent that would not have been accomplished with open means.<sup>164</sup> There is a substantial overlap between active measures and covert action, although active measures also include overt activities. The term covert action is a uniquely American expression, which has evolved since World War II.<sup>165</sup> United States law defines covert action in the 1991 Intelligence Authorization Act as influencing 'political, economic or military conditions abroad, where it is intended that the role of the United States Government will not be apparent or acknowledged publicly.'<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Aristedes Mahairas and Mikhail Dvilyanski, 'Disinformation - Дезинформация (Dezinformatsiya)', *The Cyber Defense Review*, 3 (2018) 3, 21.

<sup>161</sup> Oleg Kalugin, op. cit. in: Mahaireas and Mikhail Dvilyanski, *Disinformation*, 21.

<sup>162</sup> Bittman, *The Deception Game*, 4-5. And: Matthew Lauder, *Truth is the First Casualty of War: A Brief Examination of Russian Informational Conflict during the 2014 Crisis in Ukraine*, Scientific Letter, DRDC-RDDC-2014-L262, (Ottawa (CAN): Defence Research and Development Canada, 2014), 3.

<sup>163</sup> Vasili Mitrokhin and Christopher Andrew, *The Mitrokhin Archives: The KGB in Europe*, (London (UK): Penguin Books, 2000), E-Book.

<sup>164</sup> Herbert Romerstein, 'Disinformation as a KGB Weapon in the Cold War', *The Journal of Intelligence History*, 1 (2001), 54.

<sup>165</sup> Jennifer Kibbe, 'Covert Action', *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*, (March 2010), DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.135.

<sup>166</sup> Kibbe, 'Covert Action'.

Subversion is a comprehensive term for activities intended to influence a target nation's domestic politics. It may vary in gradation. For example, there are differences in the intensity, threat, and legitimacy of particular Russian subversive activities. For Russian and, previously, Soviet authorities, subversion can serve three purposes. First, subversion of Kremlin's opponents might distract or deter them from interfering in Russia's politics, both domestic and in its sphere of influence. Second, foreign subversion might have a positive influence on popular support for Russian leaders. Third, subversion might weaken Western nations and institutions that are perceived as a threat to the Russian Federation, like the United States and NATO.<sup>167</sup>

The first known use of the term 'active measures' was in a document intercepted by the Shanghai Municipal Police in March 1919. The document was an agenda for a secret Bolshevik meeting with subversive elements, containing, for example, 'ways and means to create disturbances in Siberia, and the adoption of active measures in China, Japan, Europe and the United States'.<sup>168</sup> The U.S. Information Agency defined active measures as a Soviet term referring to the application of manipulative information, such as slogans, arguments, disinformation, deliberately selected true information. The Soviet authorities used this manipulative information to influence the attitudes and actions of foreign political decision-makers as well as entire populations.<sup>169</sup> The opponent's change of mind or attitude is the active part of active measures.

As stated, active measures could be covert and overt just like the propagation of *dezinformatsiya*. The covert messages reinforced overt propaganda campaigns, which include the use of, written or oral, intentionally deputed mistaken information used by controlled international front organisations or agents of influence, and forgeries. Overt messages are those used by Soviet officials, official propaganda outlets, Soviet diplomats and cultural organisations. While most active messages were negative in order to weaken and undermine the opponent, constructive themes placed the Soviet Union or its leadership in a positive

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<sup>167</sup> Andrew Radin, Alyss Demus and Krystyna Marcinek, *Understanding Russian Subversion: Patterns, Threats, and Responses*, Report on Experts Insights on a Timely Policy Issue, (Santa Monica, CA (USA): RAND Corporation, 2020), 2-4.

<sup>168</sup> Roy Godson (Ed), *Disinformation: Soviet Active Measures and Disinformation Forecast*, No. 3, Washington DC: Regnery Gateway, (1986), 9.

<sup>169</sup> United States, Defense Information Agency, *Soviet Active Measures in the 'Post-Cold War' Era 1988-1991*, (June 1992).

spotlight.<sup>170</sup> The Soviet authorities preferred to make a mixture of covert and overt active messages and to use them at different times and places to augment inclusive effects.<sup>171</sup>

The application of active measures planned against important targets is a rather complex operation. Detailed attention is paid to the mixture of messages and use of different techniques, such as dropping falsified reports on foreign media, the appearance of relevant forgery in another part of the world leading to wide publicity, a whispering campaign by well-stationed agents of influence followed, perhaps, by an act of violence. In an ideal scenario, the effects of active measures targeted against an individual or an institution seemed innocent, spontaneous and coincidental. The target should have no awareness of the operation, at least not until maximum damage had been inflicted. Then, if Soviet involvement was suspected, it should be nearly impossible to attribute these activities to the Soviet authorities.<sup>172</sup> And, by then, the Soviet authorities would have started a denial campaign.

The use of active measures in modern Russian operations is merely the continuation of Soviet policy. In the last 20 years, the Russian Federation has ‘simply recycled and updated these old subversion techniques for use in the digitally interconnected and globalized world.’ Although the ends and ways of Putin’s active measures may be similar to those of the Soviet Era, many of the means have been updated for the new epoch. In some cases, new methods replaced old ones: gone are the typewriters and letter writing campaigns, and instead, Russian authorities are now using view counts, retweets and ‘troll factories’. In other instances, old techniques continued to be used. Programmes such as front groups, friendship societies, and agents of influence seems to be perpetual and are ongoing.<sup>173</sup> Today the ‘old’ active measures are still present in the current Russian performance, but they have only been given a different look. Current active measures include disinformation and subversion methods, such as deploying Orthodox priests, Russian government-funded news media outlets like RT and Sputnik, spies and ‘computer hackers to ride and help create the wave of populist anger’.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Kevin McCauley, *Russian Influence Campaign Against the West: From the Cold War to Putin*, (North Charleston, SC (USA): CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), 5

<sup>171</sup> Shultz and Godson, *Dezinformatsia*, 2-3.

<sup>172</sup> Chapman Pincher, *The Secret Offensive, Active Measures: A Saga of Deception, Disinformation, Subversion, Terrorism, Sabotage and Assassination*, (London (UK): Sidgwick & Jackson, 1985), 30.

<sup>173</sup> Steve Abrams, ‘Beyond Propaganda: Soviet Active Measures in Putin’s Russia’, *Connections*, 15 (2016) 1, 18.

<sup>174</sup> Or Honig and Ido Yahel, ‘The Art of “Subversive Conquest”: How States Take over Sovereign Territories Without Using Military Force’, *Comparative Strategy*, 36 (2017) 4, 294.

## Agents of influence

The *agent vliyaniya* or ‘agents of influence’ are a special implementation of the active measures. In the *Soviet Intelligence Officer’s Handbook* the agents of influence are described as persons ‘operating under intelligence instructions, who use their official or public position, and other means, to exert influence on policy, public opinion, the course of particular events, the activity of political organisations and state agencies in target countries.’<sup>175</sup> They can also recruit, organize and train civilians in another country to provoke or support armed insurrection where appropriate.<sup>176</sup> Agents of influence are often difficult to identify, as there is seldom solid evidence that link them to a driving nation. The term ‘agent of influence’ is often used both for individuals and organisations engaged in influence operations in a foreign country.<sup>177</sup> The agents of influence can be divided into two different groups. The first group comprises those that are directly recruited and controlled by a foreign power. The second group consists of persons, who act as ‘trusted contacts’ and consciously collaborate without having been directly recruited and controlled by a foreign nation.<sup>178</sup> The agent of influence programme also includes front organisations that often assume the capacity of non-governmental organisations. In Western societies non-governmental organisations are based on private initiative and often pursue a good or idealistic goal. Russian non-governmental organisations are created by Russian authorities and work in the interest of the Russian state. These front organisations serve Russian and foreign media as opinion leaders and arrange propaganda events stirring up agitation, such as conferences, marches and protest actions. They also serve to build up contact networks within foreign nations.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Vasiliy Mitrokhin (Ed), *KGB Lexicon: The Soviet Intelligence Officer’s Handbook*, Originally published in 2001, (Abingdon (UK): Frank Cass & Co Ltd, 2004), 3.

<sup>176</sup> René De La Pedraja, *The Russian Resurgence: Post-Soviet Decline and Rebuilding, 1992-2018*, (Jefferson, NC (USA): McFarland & Company, Inc, Publishers, 2019), 281.

<sup>177</sup> Shulz and Godson, *Dezinformatsia*, 132-133.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 193-194.

<sup>179</sup> Jolanta Darczewska and Piotr Żochowski, *Active Measures: Russia’s Key Export*, Point of view, Nr. 64, (Warsaw (POL): Centre for Eastern Studies, 2017), 50-51. And: Orysia Lutsevych, *Agents of the Russian World: Proxy Groups in the Contested Neighbourhood*, Russia and Eurasia Programme, (London (UK): Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2016), 6-13. And also: Alexander Sergunin, *Explaining Russian Foreign Policy Behavior: Theory and Practice*, Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society, (Stuttgart (GER): *Ibidem-Verlag* (Ibidem Publishing Company), 2016), 195-196.

## Propaganda

Propaganda has a specific position within *dezinformatsiya* and active measures. In 1935, Leonard Doob, Professor of Psychology at Yale University, concluded that most propaganda uses stereotyping and suggestion. Stereotyping is the process in which people create mental images about human character traits and appearances, and use these images to judge other people. In the case of propaganda, the propagandist constructs a picture or a narrative that his target group is ready to wholeheartedly accept.<sup>180</sup> This construction can be used as a stimulus to generate a suggestion, which often affects people's reaction and behaviour, and often their attitude.<sup>181</sup> Harold Lasswell also researched propaganda. He noted that the perfect propagandist always depicts the opposing party as 'demonstrably overbearing and contemptuous' in order to create a contrast between himself and the opposing party.<sup>182</sup> A Harvard study into Nazi propaganda labelled this contrast as the 'Us vs. Them' theme.<sup>183</sup> Hugh Rank, Professor of Literature at Governors State University in Park Forest, Illinois, took it one step further. He explained that a propagandist ('Us') tries to persuade the public by intensifying his own 'good', using glorifying wording, and downplaying his own 'bad', while he also intensifies the other party's ('Them') 'bad', using denigrating language, and downplaying the other's party's 'good', denying their behaviour and actions.<sup>184</sup>

*Agitprop*, a portmanteau of 'agitation' and 'propaganda', is a special Russian form of propaganda. Agitation indicates the emotional and spoken part of propaganda, referring to how the message is received and to the mental state of the receiver. Propaganda, on the other hand, refers to the framing of the message and the way the message should be disseminated.<sup>185</sup> *Agitprop* is a form of political propaganda, especially communist propaganda, which was often used during the Soviet era. Emotional agitation puts the recipient in a condition in which he will act erratically, and in a non-rational way. In order to reach a large audience, *agitprop* is spread to the general public through popular information

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<sup>180</sup> Leonard Doob, *Propaganda: Its Psychology and Technique*, (New York, NY (USA): Henry Holt and Company, 1935), 35-37.

<sup>181</sup> Leonard Doob, *Propaganda*, 51-56

<sup>182</sup> Harold Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, Reprinted, Originally published in 1927, (New York, NY (USA): Peter Smith, 1938), 77-82.

<sup>183</sup> Karthik Narayanaswami, *Analysis of Nazi Propaganda: A Behavioral Study*, A thesis for the course HIST E 11572: Holocaust in History, Literature and Film, (Cambridge, MA (USA): Harvard University, Faculty of Arts & Sciences, 2017), 4.

<sup>184</sup> Hugh Rank, 'Teaching about Public Persuasion: Rationale and Schema', in: Daniel Dietrich (ed), *Teaching about Doublespeak*, (Urbana, IL (USA): National Council of Teachers of English, 1976), 3-20

<sup>185</sup> Bouwmeester, 'Lo and Behold', 138.

channels, like literature, plays, movies, pamphlets, paintings and other art forms that all carry political messages, overtly or covertly.<sup>186</sup> As a political theorist and later as the head of Government of Soviet Russia, Vladimir Ulyanov, better known as Lenin, distinguished between propaganda and agitation as two different ways of influencing, which also had to be complementary to each other. The propagandist had to highlight the factual aspects of a subject. For example, in the case of unemployment, the propagandist had to explain to the capitalist the nature and causes of the crisis, and the need for transformation, while his speech had to contain many insights, so many that only a few in his audience would understand. On the other hand, the agitator spoke much more about the emotional side of the matter. Speaking on the same topic of unemployment, the agitator had to address issues such as famine, poverty; using facts, known to all, to engage and move the masses.<sup>187</sup>

Another special Russian form of propaganda is the so-called *spetspropaganda*, which is short for 'special propaganda'. *Spetspropaganda* was first taught as a separate subject in 1942 at the Military Institute of Foreign Languages in Moscow. It was removed from the curriculum in 1990, but reintroduced in 2000 after the institute was reorganized.<sup>188</sup> *Spetspropaganda* was used for blocking influence and for applying pressure and manipulation. The Soviets used *spetspropaganda* in line with the social-technical principles of successful propaganda, which were: (1) the principle of a massive and long-lasting impact, (2) the principle of believing desired and manipulated information, (3) the principle of supposed obviousness, and (4) the principle of emotional agitation, like *agitprop*.<sup>189</sup>

The creation of *dezinformatsiya*, *agitprop* and *spetspropaganda* did not stop after the collapse of the Soviet Union. These forms of influencing are still used by Russian authorities today. Established Russian media platforms, such as RT, together with news agencies, such as Sputnik and Rossiya Segodny, create and disseminate story lines, frames, *agitprop* and

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<sup>186</sup> Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929*, (Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1985), 251-255.

<sup>187</sup> Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State*, 7. And: Matthew Lenoe, *Agitation, Propaganda and the 'Stabilization' of the Soviet Press, 1922-1930*, The Carl Beck Paper in Russian & East European Studies, (Pittsburgh, PA (USA): University of Pittsburgh, The Center for Russian and East European Studies, 1998), 15.

<sup>188</sup> Viktoria Margaryan, 'Russian Information Warfare', (2014).

[https://www.academia.edu/9596147/Russian\\_information\\_warfare](https://www.academia.edu/9596147/Russian_information_warfare), (28 September 2019).

<sup>189</sup> Darczewska, *The Anatomy of Russian Information Warfare*, 25.

*spetspropaganda*. These media outlets are still the heart of Russia's activities in the information environment.<sup>190</sup>

### *Kompromat*

'*Kompromat*' is a special form of *dezinformatsiya*, and part of active measures. *Kompromat*, its literal translation is 'compromising material', refers to discrediting information that can 'be collected, stored, traded, or used strategically across all domains: political, electoral, legal, professional, judicial, media, or business.' Russian *kompromat* conflicts are machinations exercised through the dissemination of often 'unsubstantiated or unproven information' (documents, messages, files, etc.), which are destructive for all those involved. *Kompromat* has four ideal types. The first type entails revelations about a victim's political activities, such as abuse of power, discrediting connections and political disloyalty. The second type involves a victim's disreputable, sometimes illegal economic activities, such as distrusted apportionment of budgets, fraudulent bank deals, capital flight and preferential treatment in business agreements. The third type comprises accusations of victims taking part in criminal activities, including organized crime, contract killing, spying and tapping and blackmail. The fourth type of *kompromat* contains revelations about a victim's private life, especially the ones that were created to discredit the victim. This type includes details of illegitimate income or property, sexual behaviour, sexual orientation, health and misbehaviour of family members of the victim. *Kompromat* does not necessarily have to be *dezinformatsiya*, as the four types of *kompromat* mentioned may also be factual and accurate or partially true. To give an example of *kompromat*: in the summer of 1997 Russian Minister of Justice, Valentin Kovalev, was removed from his position after a Russian newspaper, *Sovershenno Sekretno*, had published certain pictures, taken from a video. This video showed Kovalev with prostitutes in a sauna, which was controlled by a criminal group called *Solntsevskaiia*. The minister insisted that he was lured into a trap.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Edward Lucas and Peter Pomerantzev, *Winning the Information War: Techniques and Counter-strategies to Russian Propaganda in Central and Eastern Europe*, A Report by CEPA's Information Warfare Project in Partnership with the Legatum Institute, (August 2016), 6.

<sup>191</sup> Alena Ledeneva, *How Russia Really Works: The Informal Practices that Shaped Post-Soviet Politics and Business*, (Ithaca, NY (USA): Cornell University Press, 2006), 58-56.



## Current appearances

Contemporary Russian activities in the information environment mixes previous Soviet disinformation campaigns with insights into American information strategies. More accurately, today the Russian government utilizes the main principles from the Soviet deception toolkit. Russia's current information campaigns are designed along the four elements of a former disinformation operation, also known as the 4-D approach: dismiss, distort, distract and dismay.<sup>192</sup> In 2007 Alexandr Bedritsky, a Russian strategist, wrote that the key of current Russian warfare is not to destroy the enemy's morale or psyche or bring about physical destruction, but rather to form such a perception of reality that would be in line with Russian interests.<sup>193</sup> It may be argued that the contemporary way in which information and intelligence are gathered and possible opponents are manipulated makes Russia's disinformation operations very effective. Their covert activities include espionage, hacking, stealing and laundering; their semi-covert actions consist, among other activities, of troll deeds, forgery, disruption and amplification, while the overt method is to provide propaganda pushers and fake news launderers with improper information.<sup>194</sup> The tactics of Russian authorities have been to confuse rather than convince, and to divide opinions rather than to provide new insights. By creating many different storylines, Russian authorities tried to deny the audiences the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood. On the other hand, the spokesperson of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs often raised concerns about the risk of disinformation in the Western media, in which the Russian Federation is portrayed very negatively, and brazenly called on the United Nations to formulate a global strategy against disinformation and fabricated news.<sup>195</sup>

Today the term *dezinformatsiya* is still a topic in many publications, but the expression active measures is no longer in use. For the American authorities, the term active measure is linked to the Soviet era. The U.S. Government now introduced the term 'Kremlin's malign influence operations'. In their report *Putin's Asymmetric Assault on Democracy in Russia and Europe*,

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<sup>192</sup> Maria Snegovaya, *Putin's Information Warfare in Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia's Hybrid Warfare*, (Washington, DC (USA): Institute for the Study of War, 2015), 12-13.

<sup>193</sup> Alexandr Bedritsky, *Realization of the Concepts of Information Warfare by Military and Political Leadership of the USA during the Modern Era*, Moscow (RF): Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISI), (2007).

<sup>194</sup> Max Bergmann and Carolyn Kenney, *War by Other Means: Russian Active Measures and the Weaponization of Information*, (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, June, 2017).

<sup>195</sup> Alexander Averin, 'Russia and its Many Truths', in: Jente Althuis and Leonie Haiden (Eds), *Fake News: A Roadmap*, (Riga (LTV): NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence / London (UK): The King's Centre for Strategic Communications, 2018), 59-60. 59-68.

the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations explained that modern malign influence operations ‘employ state and non-state resources to achieve their ends, including security services, television stations and pseudo news agencies, social media and internet trolls, [...], organized crime groups, think tanks [...], and social and religious groups’.<sup>196</sup> The Committee also concluded that in the modern world the Kremlin disseminates *dezinformatsiya* to discredit politicians and democratic institutions like elections and independent media. Likewise, current Russian leadership uses cultural, religious and political organizations to repeat the Kremlin’s narrative of the day and disturb social cohesion in alliances and nations. Russian authorities ordered their *Sluzhba Vneshney Razvedki* or SVR, Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service, to use and exploit different forms of corruption in Western countries to influence politicians and to infiltrate decision-making bodies.<sup>197</sup> Former KGB-officer Anatoliy Golitsyn stated that the scope and state of Soviet disinformation and influence activities were nearly unlimited with no legal, ethical or political obstacles to these operations and using all possible types and channels for the dissemination.<sup>198</sup> Nowadays the report of the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the U.S. Senate shows that nothing has changed.

## Summary

*Dezinformatsiya* or Russian disinformation is the widely used expression in many studies of deception warfare. It is one of the main tools in a reflexive control mechanism. Disinformation must be plausible or, at least in some way, refer to a commonly accepted opinion. It may contain compromising material, in which case it is called *kompromat*. Many experts and researchers contemplate *dezinformatsiya* and active measure as a substitute for each other, but this is not the case. Constructing disinformation is only a part of active measures, which also include propaganda, falsification of documents and the dissemination of disinformation. The term active measures is also linked to the past, more specifically to the Soviet era. Today, the U.S. government prefers to speak of Kremlin’s malign influence operations, but so far that term has exclusively been used by the Americans.

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<sup>196</sup> United States Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Putin’s Asymmetric Assault on Democracy in Russia and Europe: Implications for U.S. National Security*, (Washington, DC (USA): United States Government Publishing Office, 2018), 37.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Anatoliy Golitsyn, *New Lies for Old: The Communist Strategy of Deception and Disinformation*, 2nd Edition, Originally published in 1984, (San Pedro, CA (USA): GSG & Associates, 1990), 8.

## 2.6 Concluding remarks

This chapter has answered the first research question: ‘what is the Russian version of deception warfare?’ The chapter is divided into three sections, which are the main fundamentals of Russian methods to deceive: (1) *maskirovka*, (2) reflexive control, and (3) *dezinformatsiya*. There is a hierarchy between the three basics of Russian methods to deceive, as it is shown in Figure 2.7, at the beginning of this chapter. *Maskirovka* is the general term for all Russian methods of deception; it includes a variety of underlying mechanisms and activities such as camouflage, strategy, diversion, imitation, demonstration, feints and secrecy, many of which are of military origin. All these just mentioned forms of *maskirovka* feature in figure 2.7, grouped together as the so-called other Russian misleading methods. Silence and a state of denial are considered as a special form of *maskirovka*, used by the Soviet and Russian authorities themselves and leading to confusion and uncertainty, and ultimately to concealment. Today’s *maskirovka* is most of the time smooth and soft, in contrast with the old rigid Soviet notion of *maskirovka*.

Modern *maskirovka* is often applied in the information environment, being part of deceitful strategic communications. The main components of present-day *maskirovka* are concealment, being a disguise of own activities, and deceit, i.e. manipulation of the opponent. The overall aim of *maskirovka* is to surprise a possible opponent or to create manipulated perceptions. Once *maskirovka* is applied, the challenge is to maintain the opponent’s status of surprise.

A large part of *maskirovka* consists of active measures, which was a Soviet term for active intelligence operations with the purpose to influence humans or world events in order to reach one’s own geopolitical aim. It includes propaganda, subversive actions, counterfeiting official documents, the deployment of agents of influence and exerting different forms of religious suppression. One of the mechanisms used for active measures is reflexive control, particularly used in the information sphere. Reflexive control contains four main elements: (1) putting on power pressure, (2) *dezinformatsiya*, (3) affecting an opponent’s decision-making algorithm, and (4) creating of time pressure. Reflexive control can be used in an offensive way, attacking opponents with the aforementioned elements. This side of reflexive control is linked to deception. Reflexive control can also be used in a defensive manner, protecting one’s own sensitive actions and behaviour. This form of reflexive control is linked to concealment. Today’s reflexive control consists of cybernetics-control methods together with cognitive-psychological mechanisms. It is not a stand-alone mechanism; the Russian Federation will

always harmonize its use with other governmental influence activities. It constantly uses reflexive control, and it does not stop applying reflexive control when operations are over.

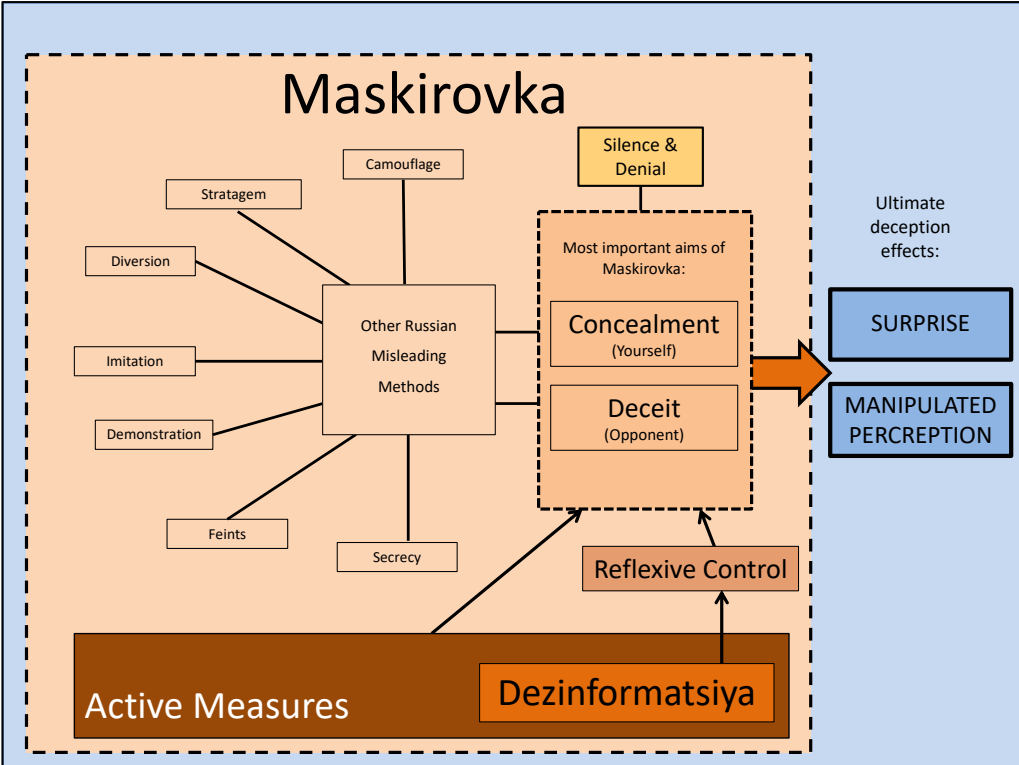


Figure 2.7 Overview of maskirovka, reflexive control and dezinformatsiya

One of the main tools used in reflexive control is *dezinformatsiya*, the Russian version of disinformation, which is the intentional spread of inaccurate or manipulated information with the purpose to deceive other persons. *Dezinformatsiya* should be credible to a certain extent otherwise no one will trust the information. It can contain comprising material, the so-called *kompromat*, to discredit an opponent. *Dezinformatsiya* and active measure are considered different terms for the same content and meaning, but that is incorrect. Whereas *dezinformatsiya* is just a message, a kind of intangible substance containing some manipulated or well selected knowledge that can influence the thinking, attitude and behaviour of human beings, active measures are activities like the spreading of propaganda, including *agitprop* and *spetspropaganda*, and *dezinformatsiya*, and the forgery of documents, in order to deceive an opponent.

# Chapter 3 Deception Warfare

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### 3.1 Preamble

The previous chapter dealt with Russian deception, discussing *maskirovka*, reflexive control and *dezinformatsiya*, and the hierarchy amongst these different elements. This chapter focusses on a general understanding of deception, especially when it is used during conflict. History shows many conflicts in which deception was used. This chapter answers the second research sub-question:

What are the various academic and professional Western views on deception and the deception process?

As this chapter will show, deception is considered as an activity that intentionally imposes intimate authenticity on a target's perception of reality or to hide part of reality for the benefit of the deceiver. This chapter starts with a few classic and current examples of deception to set the scene. It continues with the discussion why the Western world lost its interest in deception warfare. In the last few decades, the military and top political-military circles of many NATO

nations considered deception as an inferior form of warfare or conflict solution, although in the past Western nations also used deception. Then the present chapter will define the aim of deception and what deception warfare is essentially, followed by an explanation of the deception process, which will show the different elements of deception warfare. It is sometimes believed that surprise, as one of the principles of war, is the real goal of deception warfare. A different view is that deception warfare aims to manipulate perceptions in order to disrupt the resulting decision-making. It is more than just trying to influence humans; it is the cunning art of persuasion and manipulation. The chapter is structured into six paragraphs: 3.2 Classic and current examples, 3.3 'Lost appetite', 3.4 'The Aim of deception', 3.5 'Manifestation', 3.6 'The deception process' and 3.7 'Concluding remarks'. The topics examined in this chapter are mainly based on Western academic, military and intelligence sources.

## 3.2 Classical and current examples

Deception has been part of conflicts since the dawn of history. In early warfare it was the individual commander, who used tactical deception on the battlefield.<sup>1</sup> One of the oldest examples of deception can be found in the Book of Judges of the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible, and dates back to c. 1162 BC. The Midianites, a nomadic Bedouin tribe, conquered ancient Israel and brought their herd to graze the lowlands where the Israelites cultivated their crops. The people of Israel escaped and hid themselves in the surrounding hills for seven years, because the Midianites harried them. Then *Yahweh*<sup>2</sup> chose Gideon, a young man from the Manassah tribe, to free the people of Israel. It was a difficult task, because *Yahweh* restricted Gideon to assemble just 300 men for this divine task. Gideon got the idea that only cunning could achieve what numbers could not. During the night *Yahweh* ordered Gideon to approach the camp of the Midianite army. Gideon gave each man a shofar, a Jewish trumpet made of ram's horn, and a clay jar with a torch. As soon as they arrived at the camp, Gideon divided his unit of 300 men into three groups. On Gideon's order the men blew their shofar, shouted the battle-cry 'For the Lord and for Gideon' and lit the torches, simulating a massive attack by

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<sup>1</sup> Oikonomakis Panagiotis, *Strategic Military Deception: Prerequisites of Success in Technological Environment*, (Piraeus (GRE): University of Piraeus, Department of International and European Studies, 2015), 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Yahweh* is the Hebrew name for God, just like *Hashem* or *Adonai*.

an overwhelming force. Caught by surprise, the Midianite soldiers fell into disarray, fighting each other, and finally scampered off.<sup>3</sup>

The story of Gideon is certainly not the only story from Antiquity about deception. The use of the Trojan Horse is another classic tale. During the Trojan war the Greeks constructed a huge wooden horse, which contained a group of soldiers. They left this horse at the borders of the city of Troy and made believe that they had sailed back to Greece. The Trojans considered the huge wooden horse as a war trophy and carried the horse inside the city. During the night the Greek soldiers under the leadership of Odysseus crept out of the horse and opened the gates for their army that had sailed back that night. The Greeks entered the city and won the war.<sup>4</sup> The Trojan Horse can be assessed as a mythical illustration of subterfuge.

A more recent example of deception is Operation Fortitude during World War II. It was the code name for a deception campaign conducted by Allied forces as part of an overall deception strategy, codenamed 'Bodyguard', in the build-up to Operation Overlord in June 1944, also known as D-Day. Operation Fortitude consisted of two different plans, one for the Northern part of Europe and one for its southern part, and it involved the creation of phantom field armies based at different locations in the United Kingdom. The ones around Edinburgh were poised against Norway, known as Operation Fortitude North. There were also ghost armies stationed in the south of the United Kingdom, meant as a threat to the *Pas de Calais* and the French west coast. This part of the plan was called 'Operation Fortitude South'. The overall intention of Operation Fortitude was to divert the Axis' attention from Normandy, earmarked as the designated location for the Allied landings and, as soon as the Allied invasion on the coastline of Normandy took place, to convince the German High Command that it was purely a distracting secondary attack, and not the main effort.<sup>5</sup> Operation Fortitude South was successful before the start of the Allied landings in Normandy. The deception operation about a potential landing location strengthened the existing ideas of the German Higher Command, which, as a result, kept a substantial part of their heavy armour in the *Pas de Calais* or in reserve. After the landings had got underway, the surprise effect soon faded

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<sup>3</sup> *The Tanakh* (Hebrew Bible), Book of the Judges, 7:17 – 7:22.

[https://www.chabad.org/library/bible\\_cdo/aid/63255/jewish/The-Bible-with-Rashi.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/63255/jewish/The-Bible-with-Rashi.htm), (6 April 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Clifford Broeniman, 'Demodus, Odysseus, and the Trojan Horse', in: 'Odysseus' 8, *The Classical World*, 90 (1996) 1, 3-13.

<sup>5</sup> Anthony Cave Brown, *Bodyguard of Lies: The Extraordinary True Story Behind D-Day*, Originally published in 1975, (Guilford, CT (USA): The Globe Pequot Press / The Lyons Press, 2002), 459-449. See also: Joshua Levine, *Operation Fortitude: The Story of the Spy Operation that Saved D-Day*, (London (UK): Collins, 2011).

away, albeit that Operation Fortitude South contributed to the confusion of the German Higher Command over the exact location of the Allied invasion.<sup>6</sup>

In recent times, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), led by NATO, also used deception during their security operations in Afghanistan. In October 2008, Task Force Uruzgan (TFU), under the command of then Colonel Kees Matthijssen, deceived the Opposing Militant Forces (OMF) during Operation Tiger Ghar. This small-scale deception operation preceded Operation Bor Barakai, which was a massive security campaign in the Mirabad Valley, a gorge located approximately 30 miles west of Uruzgan's capital Tarin Kowt. TFU was reinforced with more than 500 British paratroopers, part of the reserve of ISAF's Regional Command South, to conduct Operation Bor Barakai. TFU started with Operation Tiger Ghar in order to mislead the OMF about the real intentions of their actions in the Mirabad. For that operation a 155mm *Panzerhowitzer* of the Netherlands Horse Artillery Regiment, attached to TFU, took position at Patrol Base Buman located 20 miles north of Tarin Kowt. TFU also ordered small reconnaissance units from the Netherlands *Regiment Huzaren van Boreel* (Hussars Regiment Boreel), also belonging to TFU, to conduct overt operations to demonstrate their presence in the Balushi Valley, just 10 miles north of Patrol Base Buman. These activities gave the impression that TFU would conduct a large-scale operation in the Balushi Valley, which the OMF were tricked to believe. They decided to focus on the Balushi Valley instead of the Mirabad region. The *Panzerhowitzer* fired some rounds into the Balushi Valley to support the reconnaissance units, but mainly to make the deception work. Subsequently, the *Panzerhowitzer* was also able to cover the Mirabad region with fire support. Thus, the deceptive role of the *Panzerhowitzer* for Operation Tiger Ghar transferred smoothly into a fire support role for Operation Bor Barakai. For more than three weeks after the operation the *Panzerhowitzer* stayed in Patrol Base Buman.<sup>7</sup>

### 3.3 Lost appetite

Many officers in Western armed forces do not have a profound understanding of what deception means and how and why it should be an integral part of a military plan. This

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<sup>6</sup> Craig Bickell, 'Operation FORTITUDE SOUTH: An Analysis of Its Influence upon German Dispositions and Conduct of Operations in 1944', *War & Society*, 18 (2000) 1, 121.

<sup>7</sup> Wiel Jacops, *Eene Onvermijdelijke Noodzakelijkheid: 225 Jaar Rijdende Artillerie 1793-2018* (An Unavoidable Necessity, 225 Years Horse Artillery 1793-2018), (The Hague (NLD): *Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie* (Netherlands Institute for Military History), 2018), 112-113.



includes officers of NATO nations, who, in most cases, embrace the Western physical way of warfare. There are several causes for the declining recognition of deception in Western military thinking.

First, deception is not recognized as a warfighting function in official Western military doctrine. A warfighting function entails a group of tasks and systems, including people, organizations, information, and processes, united by a common purpose that commanders use to accomplish missions.<sup>8</sup> The official warfighting functions are: (1) movement and manoeuvre, (2) fires or fire power, (3) information and intelligence, (4) protection, and (5) sustainability. In some nations' military tradition, such as the United States, leadership and mission command are also acknowledged as warfighting functions. Several military experts consider deception as part of the warfighting function of movement and manoeuvre.<sup>9</sup> However, deception is more than just movement and manoeuvre, it also includes perception management: all forms of manipulated information with the intention to deceive opponents and all efforts to create manipulated perceptions that affect the quality of the opponents' decision-making.

Second, deception has not been taught or encouraged at Western military academies for decades. As shown before, history is full of examples of deception, stratagems and cunning plans during conflicts, but the Western world has lost its interest in deception. One of the main reasons for this lack of interest can be found in the nature of operations the Western armed forces have prepared themselves for. During the Cold War, most NATO countries were focused on physical manoeuvre operations to stop the armoured columns of the Warsaw Pact, to prevent their support of fighters and bombers, and to ensure unrestricted use of the Transatlantic sea lines of communication.<sup>10</sup> The incumbent top brass of Western armed forces were educated and trained at military and naval academies at the end of the Cold War or the

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<sup>8</sup> U.S. Army, *Army Doctrine Publication 3-0: Unified Land Operations* (ADP 3-0, version 2011), (Washington, DC (USA): Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2011), 13-14. And also: U.S. Army, *Army Doctrine Publication 3-0: Operations* (ADP 3-0, version 2017), (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2017), 12.

<sup>9</sup> ADP 3-0, version 2017, 12. See also: Koninklijke Landmacht (Royal Netherlands Army), *Doctrine Publicatie 3.2: Landoperaties* (Doctrine Publication 3.2: Land Operations), (Amersfoort (NLD): Land Warfare Centre, 2014), 6-28 - 6-31.

<sup>10</sup> Han Bouwmeester, 'Lo and Behold Let the Truth Be Told: Russian Deception Warfare in Crimea and Ukraine and the Return of "Maskirovka" and "Reflexive Control Theory"', in: Paul Ducheine and Frans Osinga, *Netherlands Annual Review of Military Studies 2017 (NLARMS-2017) - Winning Without Killing: The Strategic and Operational Utility of Non-Kinetic Capabilities in Crises*, (The Hague (NLD): Springer / T.M.C. Asser Press, 2017), 128.

period shortly after, at a time when training and education was totally permeated by the idea of physical destruction. The armoured hordes of the Warsaw Pact needed to be stopped and annihilated. In general, deception warfare is still not pivotal to the post-Cold War generation of military leaders, Operation Tiger Ghar in 2008 in Uruzgan merely being the exception.

Third, after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, during the first half of the 1990s, the armed forces of most NATO countries became involved in peace and stabilisation operations, e.g. in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan. The Netherlands' doctrine for land operations stated that one of the main idiosyncrasies of these peace and stability operations is to be transparent and not to betray the local population and public opinion.<sup>11</sup> Most NATO nations contributed to these operations. Moreover, for most armed forces of NATO nations the participation in these operations was a way to prove their right to exist after the Warsaw Pact collapsed.<sup>12</sup> By and large, the consensus opinion in the 1990s and later was that deception plans were neither considered serious business, nor an important part of military strategy anymore.<sup>13</sup> So, soldiers in Western nations gradually became less and less familiar with deception operations.

Fourth, most Western democracies and their armed forces still uphold the medieval code of chivalry when waging wars, like knights on horseback. Brigadier-General Paul Ducheine, Professor of Cyber warfare at the University of Amsterdam and the Netherlands Defence Academy, pointed out in his inaugural lecture that knights were the personification of an ideal, of chivalrous behaviour. He considered current military officers as the embodiment of the medieval knights, including the custodianship of the chivalric code of honour in wartime.<sup>14</sup> Western military officers represent state systems in which freedom, human rights and superior ethical standards are principal values, and they do not want to lose this moral high ground. Deception warfare as a form of 'fraud' has acquired a dubious meaning and is often judged as ungentlemanly: 'just as "Gentlemen do not open each other's mail",<sup>15</sup> decent

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<sup>11</sup> DP 3.2 *Land Operations*, 7-3 & 7-4.

<sup>12</sup> Bouwmeester, 'Lo and Behold', 128.

<sup>13</sup> Martijn Kitzen, 'Western Military Culture and Counter-Insurgency: An Ambiguous Reality', *Scientia Militaria, South African Journal of Military Studies*, 40 (2012) 1, 1-8.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Ducheine, *Je hoeft geen Zwaard of Schild te Dragen om Ridder te Zijn, Mythen over Digitale Oorlogsvoering en Recht* (You Do not Need to Carry a Sword and Shield in order to Be a Knight: Mythes about Digital Warfare and Law), Inaugural Speech Nr. 559, (Amsterdam (NLD): University of Amsterdam, 2016), 6. And: Terry Gill, 'Chivalry: A Principle of the Law of Armed Conflict', in: Mariëlle Mathee, Brigit Toebes and Marcel Brus, *Armed Conflict and International Law: In Search of the Human Face*, Liber Amicorum in Memory of Avril McDonald, (The Hague (NLD): Springer / T.M.C. Asser Press, 2013), 33-51.

<sup>15</sup> In 1929, Henry Stimson, United States' Secretary of State under President Hebert Hoover, closed the Department of State's code-breaking office, also known as the Black Chamber. He later justified this action by seeing: 'Gentlemen do not read each other's mail.' See: Henri Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service*

people should not be engaged in what is sometimes seen as an indecent activity'.<sup>16</sup> Still, ancient Chinese general and strategist Sun Tzu once stated that all warfare is based on deception. 'Alas, for the common soldier or the daring officer this has not always been the case, for the commander with the big battalions often finds it more comfortable to rely on honest, brute force.'<sup>17</sup>

Fifth, national armed forces represent 'the modern conception of the state as custodian of the monopoly of legitimate violence.'<sup>18</sup> It is therefore considered immoral when the armed forces or security services of a Western nation become involved in manipulating the foundations and principles of democracy. Especially the freedom of expression and of independently making a choice without being influenced by one's own government is considered a highly appreciated value.<sup>19</sup>

Sixth, and this closely links to the previous reason, Western institutions dealing with security of their nations or alliances and acting in the information sphere are involved in an asymmetric battle in which they do not want to be caught spinning and distributing manipulated information. A government does not intend to lie to its people in a Western democracy. Moreover, Western media and the governments of the nations from which they originate, keep hammering on the need for balanced reporting of events and avoid accusations of spin and deliberate framing at all costs.<sup>20</sup> This attitude should prove its durability in this cyber era.

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*in Peace and War*. First edition, (New York, NY (USA): Harper & Brothers, 1948), 188. See also: David Kahn, *The Codebreakers*, (London (UK): Macmillan and Sons, 1967), 360.

<sup>16</sup> John Gooch and Amos Perlmutter, *Military Deception and Strategic Surprise*, (London (UK): Frank Cass and Company Ltd, 1982), 1.

<sup>17</sup> John Bowyer Bell and Barton Whaley, *Cheating and Deception*, Originally printed in 1982 by St. Martin's, (London (UK): Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 15.

<sup>18</sup> Élie Tenenbaum, 'Hybrid Warfare in the Strategic Spectrum: An Historical Assessment', in: Guillaume Lasconjarias and Jeffrey Larsen, *NATO's Response to Hybrid Threats*, Forum Paper 24, (Rome (ITA): NATO Defence College, Research Division, 2015), 100.

<sup>19</sup> Shay Shabtai, 'War, Cognitive Bias and Perception Management: The Time Has Come', *Infinity Journal*, 6 (2019) 4, 31.

<sup>20</sup> Keir Giles, *Russia's 'New' Tools for Confronting the West: Continuity and Innovation in Moscow's Exercise of Power*, Research paper for Russia and Eurasia Programme, (London (UK): Chatham House, 2016), 37-40. And: David Betz, *Carnage and Connectivity: Landmarks in the Decline of Conventional Military Power*, (Oxford (UK): Oxford University Press, 2015), 117-130. Also: Thomas Rid, *War and Media Operations: The US Military and the Press from Vietnam to Iraq*, (London (UK): Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 7-8 & 118-119.

Seventh, in Western armed forces there is still a strong preference for ‘destroy and defeat’ in a physical way. James Monroe, student at the United States Naval Postgraduate School, clarified that the desired style of warfare in the Western world, including at NATO, is firmly rooted in cumulative destruction. It is originally based on Clausewitz’s views on warfare, and it hardly leaves any latitude for indirect methods like deception. Monroe created a spectrum of warfare with on one end the cumulative destruction and, on the other, systemic disruption. Cumulative destruction, which includes a strategy of annihilation and attrition, seeks to destroy the opponent’s capacity of war leading to a decisive defeat of the opponent’s military force. Successful application of the cumulative destruction approach depends on strategic force superiority.<sup>21</sup> This style of warfare has a strong preference for physical destruction, and the main warfighting functions are movement & manoeuvre and fires. Systemic disruption yields victory through engaging the opponent’s weaknesses, which impairs the opponent in such a way that he is left incapable of reacting straight and successfully. This approach places strength against weakness and is not dependent on absolute force superiority. Monroe is convinced that an inferior force is able to achieve a strategic victory over a superior force as long as it leans towards systemic disruption.<sup>22</sup> Systemic disruption is not only focused on physical destruction; it also includes other means to exploit an opponent’s flaws. The main warfighting functions are deception, which is momentarily not recognized as a warfighting function, information and intelligence.

However, warfare does not merely belong just to one end of this spectrum. All warfare can be projected as existing somewhere in this spectrum. However, the degree in which a commander’s solution for an operation tends either to cumulative destruction or to systemic disruption affects the degree in which deception is achieved in that operation.<sup>23</sup> The table created by Monroe is reproduced below. However, the last row of the table does not originate from Monroe’s table; it is the author’s. This row shows the main warfighting functions of the two warfare styles to accentuate additional differences between cumulative destruction and systemic disruption.

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<sup>21</sup> James Monroe, *Deception: Theory and Practice*, Thesis, (Monterey, CA (USA): Naval Postgraduate School, 2012), 25-26

<sup>22</sup> Monroe, *Deception*, 26-27.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29.

	Cumulative Destruction	Systemic Disruption
Target	Strength against strength.	Strength against weakness.
End State	Incapacitation through attrition of resources (strategy of annihilation).	Incapacitation through strategic paralysis.
Focus of Effort	Tactical level, with objects in terms of enemy and terrain.	Operational level, with objectives in terms of shattering the opponent.
Outcome	Predictable, based on 'overall superiority'.	Unpredictable, based on ability to perceive and affect the opponent's weaknesses.
Orientation	Interior focus on processes to achieve maximum efficiency of tasks.	External focus to identify enemy weakness and limitation.
Force Design	Systems and formations designed for all-around capabilities – infrequent, revolutionary changes to capabilities.	Systems and formations designed for specific enemy forces – frequent, evolutionary changes to capabilities.
Main warfighting functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Movement and manoeuvre</li> <li>• Fires</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deception</li> <li>• Information and Intelligence</li> </ul>

Figure 3.1 Overview of Cumulative Destruction and Systemic Disruption<sup>24</sup>

Another study suggested that forces leaning towards a cumulative destruction style tend to be more internally focused instead of concentrating on the opponent since triumph is achieved by superior firepower. Because of this inward focal point, there is less attention for understanding the situation and the battlefield environment, which are needed for successful deception. In contrast, commanders oriented toward systemic disruption are more focused on the external because victory is attained through the detection and utilisation of the opponent's weaknesses. Deception together with the avoidance of the opponent's strength and dominance of the momentum are the principles of systemic disruption. Deception is considered vital in systemic disruption and equals functionalities like manoeuvre and firepower in an operation plan; 'certainly deception planning cannot remain a mere afterthought'.<sup>25</sup> In Western thinking, including NATO's, there is a strong preference for well-organized and structured forces and for an industrial way of warfare with superior forces, which tends to cumulative destruction.

It should be noted here that deception is not the exclusive privilege of armed forces, as other security and intelligence services can also play a major role in deception operations at the

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>25</sup> Edward Luttwak and Steven Canby, *Mindset: National Styles in Warfare and Operational Level of Planning, Conduct and Analysis*, Unpublished paper, (Pontiac, MA (USA): C&L Associates, 1980), 17-21.

strategic level. Defence doctrine stipulates that fighting power of a state is the total capacity of a state to secure and defend its territory and society. It enables a state to conduct coherent operations and consists of three components: (1) the conceptual component, (2) the moral component, and (3) the physical component.<sup>26</sup> In the case of deception, it means that the conceptual component includes profound doctrine and a sophisticated plan for deception, whereas the physical component comprises manpower and equipment to deploy in deception operations, and the moral component stands for the willingness among politicians, civil service and military leadership to apply deception. The latter component often prevents Western deception operations at the strategic level, because many Western leaders think they are inappropriate for open and democratic societies. Moreover, performing deception operations is considered not fair and uncouth in current Western ethical awareness.

### 3.4 The aim of deception

There is no overall agreement among deception researchers on what is the aim of deception in a conflict. In general, there are two trains of thought about the aim of deception: one concerns surprise and the other, manipulated perception. Several researchers assert that the aim of deception is to manipulate a perception in order to influence a target's decision making.<sup>27</sup> They consider deception to be a concept related to perception and misperception. Some state that deception can reach three consecutive goals, the last one of which, the long-term goal, must be regarded as the desired end state. Its immediate purpose is to condition a target's beliefs; the intermediate purpose is to affect the target's actions, and the long term purpose is that the deceiver profits from these actions.<sup>28</sup> In many cases deception is successful when only the first goal has been achieved while the overall goal is never realized.<sup>29</sup> In order to have success in deception activities, the deceiver must penetrate in the inner mind of his opponent to identify his assumptions, expectations and aspirations.<sup>30</sup> These manipulated perceptions should be the input into important decision-making and lead to a lower quality of the

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<sup>26</sup> Netherlands Defence Staff, *Nederlandse Defensie Doctrine (Netherlands Defence Doctrine)*. (The Hague (NLD): Ministry of Defence / Defence Staff, 2019), 63-73. Also: United Kingdom, Chief of the General Staff, *Army Doctrine Publication: Land Operations*, AC 71940, (Warminster (UK): Headquarters Field Army, Warfare Branch, Land Warfare Development Centre, March 2017), 3-1.

<sup>27</sup> Whaley, 'Toward a General Theory of Deception', 180-182. See also: Donald Daniel and Katherine Herbig, 'Propositions on Military Deception', in: Donald Daniel and Katherine Herbig, *Strategic Military Deception*, (New York, NY (USA): Pergamon Press Inc, 1982), 3-5.

<sup>28</sup> Daniel and Herbig, 'Propositions on Military Deception', 5.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Amos Perlmutter and John Gooch, 'Introduction', in: John Gooch and Amos Perlmutter (Ed), *Military Deception and Strategic Surprise*, (London (UK): Frank Cass and Company Ltd, 1982), 1.

opponents' decisions. Deception, therefore, refers to a nation's effort to cause an opponent to believe something that is not there, or may never have happened, and to disrupt vital decision-making on the part of the opponent.<sup>31</sup> Bob de Graaff, Professor of Intelligence and Security Studies at Utrecht University, took the aim of deception to the next level; he considered the effects that occur after the aims of the deception had been achieved. He concluded that deception has a limited preservability. Once an opponent discovers that he has been bamboozled, he will take action to recover. A temporary success in an operation caused by deception rarely leads to lasting success. Another point made by De Graaff is that every deception activity consumes manpower, which is often relegated from the main force. This means that these servicemen, who are committed to deception activities, are not available for the main effort of the operation.<sup>32</sup> A deceiver will, therefore, often first make a cost-benefit analysis: what does it cost? And what does it possibly yield?

Other researchers regard surprise as the main goal of deception rather than the generation of an alternative perception.<sup>33</sup> They make a distinction between the deceiver and the target of surprise. For the initiator, surprise is the result of a well-considered effort. It is an orchestrated attempt coming together in an accumulated burst of activity, and all parts work accurately to generate the expected effect. For the target, surprise is more like an event: sudden, stunning, sometimes traumatic and humiliating. Surprise catches the target at its weakest, exposing and exploiting his flaws. Only in hindsight does the target become aware of the origin of surprise.<sup>34</sup> A few researchers believe that surprise may cause subjectivity in a target's judgment, psychological perceptions and misperceptions, and wishful thinking.<sup>35</sup>

Surprise occurs, because it is often difficult to identify last minute indications that lead to an astounding effect. Roberta Wohlstetter, an American historian of intelligence, emphasized that there is a strong human tendency to pay primary attention to signals that support current

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<sup>31</sup> Roy Godson and James Wirtz, 'Strategic Denial and Deception', in: Roy Godson and James Wirtz, *Strategic Denial and Deception: The Twenty-First Century Challenge*, Originally published in 2002, (New Brunswick, NJ (USA): Transaction Publishers, 2005), 1-2.

<sup>32</sup> Bob de Graaff, *Data en Dreiging: Stap in de Wereld van Intelligence* (Data and Threats: Step into the World of Intelligence), (Amsterdam (NLD): Boom, 2019), 149.

<sup>33</sup> Michael Handel, *Perception, Deception and Surprise: The Case of the Yom Kippur War*, Jerusalem Papers on Peace Problems, (Jerusalem (ISR): The Hebrew University, Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, 1976), 9-11. See also: Lani Kass and J. Phillip London, 'Surprise, Deception, Denial and Warning: Strategic Imperatives', *Orbis*, (2013), 62-65.

<sup>34</sup> Kass and London, *Surprise, Deception, Denial and Warning*, 62-65.

<sup>35</sup> Handel, *Perception, Deception and Surprise*, 7-8.

existing expectations about the behaviour of an opponent. Most of the time, other contradictory signals are ignored or not well understood.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, surprise can unsettle an opponent when his plans dictate that he should be reacting, preventing him from using his capabilities efficiently and effectively, while the deceiver is exploiting his own abilities to the maximum.<sup>37</sup> Thus, surprise is the outcome of deception, next to creation of a manipulated perception, and the deceiver is hoping that it will lead to a state of shock, leading to paralysis and indecisiveness among his opponents.

### 3.5 Manifestation

In the previous chapter, attention was focused on specific forms of Russian deception. This chapter will focus on more general principles of deception in order to construct an analytical framework in chapter 5 that can assess recent Russian deception operations. Deception is reckoned as an important aspect of information warfare. It is a survival mechanism in order to gain an advantage in an exhaustion game.<sup>38</sup> This section takes a closer look at the question: how does deception manifest itself? There are many opinions about what deception exactly is, few of which are discussed in this section. Deception can also be a keen and inexpensive tool, the essence of which is to deploy already procured resources in an unexpected manner.<sup>39</sup> Some experts believe that deception is the application of a combination of chicanery and shrewdness. It aims to intentionally provoke misperceptions in the human mind.<sup>40</sup> Others state that deception is often neither a result of chance nor the spin-off of another undertaking, as many people see deception.<sup>41</sup> Deception is sometimes considered as the process of influencing opponents to make decisions disadvantageous to themselves by supplying or denying information.<sup>42</sup> Deception produces an image of people that makes them look much

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<sup>36</sup> Roberta Wohlstetter, *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision*, (Stanford, CA (USA): Stanford University Press, 1962), 392-393.

<sup>37</sup> Richard Betts, *Surprise Attack: Lessons for Defense Planning*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1982), 4-5.

<sup>38</sup> Carlo Kopp, 'Classical Deception Techniques and Perception Management vs. Four Strategies of Information Warfare', in: Graeme Pye and Matthew Warren (Ed), *Conference Proceedings of the 6th Australian Information Warfare & Security Conference (IWAR 2005)*, (Geelong (AUS): Deakin University, School of Information Systems, 2005), 81.

<sup>39</sup> Bouwmeester, 'Lo and Behold', 130.

<sup>40</sup> Scott Gerwehr and Russell Glenn, *The Art of Darkness: Deception and Urban Operations*, RAND Monograph, Report M1132-1, (Santa Monica, CA (USA): Arroyo Center, RAND Army Research Division, 2000), 15.

<sup>41</sup> Edward McClesky, *Applying Deception to Special Operations Direct Actions Missions*, (Washington, DC (USA): Defense Intelligence College, 1991).

<sup>42</sup> Michael Handel, *Strategic and Operational Deception in Second World War*, (London (UK): Frank Cass and Company Ltd, 1987), 1.



more impressive and important than they are in reality, or hides characteristics that they do not want to show.<sup>43</sup> That makes deception the ‘art of bluff’ or ‘bluff in warfare’, and as such it has been considered to be as old as warfare itself.<sup>44</sup> Deception can also be seen as ‘the communication of information that is known by the communicator to be inaccurate and/or misleading’.<sup>45</sup> Deceptive communication can take place both in a verbal and non-verbal way, in writings, in images, or through actions by manipulation of words, human expressions, illustrations and pictures, illusions, behaviour or other appearances that will create manipulated impressions.<sup>46</sup>

Barton Whaley, a highly respected expert on stratagem, described deception as ‘information designed to manipulate the behaviour of others by inducing them to accept a manipulated or distorted presentation of their environment – physical, social, or political’.<sup>47</sup> Whaley understood that deception occurs not only by information itself, but also by signals, even the deviant ones, in the sphere people live in. These signals might come from messages, news, articles, books, movies, clips, but also from human sensory perceptions, like visual or audio observations. Whaley stressed that acceptance of manipulated perception is important for successful deception. Therefore, deception is a form of forgery which shows inaccurate elements and which the intended target group tends to believe. They accept it as a reality and, consequently, it becomes their perception of reality.<sup>48</sup> This form of acceptance is called the Thomas theorem, which was formulated in 1928 by Dorothy and William Thomas: ‘If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences’.<sup>49</sup> It means that no human interpretation is objective as human actions are always affected by subjective perceptions of situations.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Yehezkel Dror, *Crazy States: A Counterconventional Strategic Problem*, (Lexington, MA (USA): D.C. Heath and Company, 1971), 63.

<sup>44</sup> Jon Latimer, *Deception in War*, Originally published in 2001, (London (UK): Thistle Publishing, 2015), 1-43.

<sup>45</sup> Pamela Kalbfleisch and Tony Docan-Morgan, ‘Defining Truthfulness, Deception, and Related Concepts’, in: Tony Docan-Morgan (Ed), *The Palgrave Handbook of Deceptive Communication*, (Cham (SWI): Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 33.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Barton Whaley, ‘Toward a General Theory of Deception’, in: John Gooch and Amos Perlmutter (Ed), *Military Deception and Strategic Surprise*, (London (UK): Frank Cass and Company Ltd, 1982), 188-190.

<sup>48</sup> Bouwmeester, ‘Lo and Behold’, 130.

<sup>49</sup> William Thomas and Dorothy Thomas, *The Child in America: Behavior Problems and Programs*, (New York, NY (USA): Alfred A. Knopf, 1928), 572.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Merton, ‘The Thomas Theorem and the Matthew Effect’, *Social Forces*, 4 (1995), 379-424.

In 1990, Yigal Sheffy, a Tel Aviv University lecturer, scrutinized the British campaign in Egypt and Palestine during World War I with a special interest in deception. Sheffy concluded that deception, as it was used during the British campaign, had a unique aspect: novelty. Previously used deception tricks soon become known, so a target of deception likely to quickly recognize them. Therefore, deception methods should always be innovative. Sheffy's conclusion was focused on the application of originality and a creative way of thinking in devising and planning deception. In addition, Sheffy was of the opinion that every deception planner should strive for what he called 'points of persuasion'. These points of persuasion take advantage of already existing basic concepts with the target of deception. According to Sheffy, the more accurate the deceiver analyses and evaluates the basic perceptions of the target of deception, the better the deceiver can adopt his deception methods to the basic ideas and notions of the target. A deceiver must respond to this. Then the target will quickly accept the misleading message and take appropriate action on the basis of the manipulated perception of the target.<sup>51</sup> This study also shows that the Western approach to warfare in the past had also been focused on the use of deception, but that attention has since disappeared.

More recently, deception has been regarded as a process intended to advantageously impose the intimated authenticity on a target's perception of reality.<sup>52</sup> The definition emphasizes that deception must have a target subject and an objective or a desired end state in order to gain a benefit.<sup>53</sup> Michael Bennett and Edward Waltz, two American intelligence experts, made a distinction between denial and deception. They conceived denial as 'measures designed to hinder or deny the enemy knowledge of an object, by hiding or disrupting the means of observation of the object', while deception is seen as 'measures designed to mislead the enemy by manipulation, distortion, or falsification of evidence to induce him to react in a manner prejudicial to his interests'.<sup>54</sup> In the previous chapter it emerged that Russian authorities made no difference between denial and deception. Initially, the Russians remained silent, while the rest of the world tried to show that Russian authorities were involved in a certain situation. They then switched to denial, distorting the truth. Denial, as applied by the

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<sup>51</sup> Yigal Sheffy, 'Institutionalized Deception and Perception Reinforcement: Allenby's Campaigns in Palestine', *Intelligence and National Security*, 5 (1990) 2, 226-227.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Clark and William Mitchell, *Deception: Counterdeception and Counterintelligence*, (London (UK): SAGE Publications Ltd, 2019), 9.

<sup>53</sup> Clark and Mitchell, *Deception*, 10.

<sup>54</sup> Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 7.

Russian authorities, is therefore a special part of *maskirovka* to initially conceal the true origins and circumstances of a situation.

Bennett and Waltz distinguished several objectives, methods, channels, targets and effects for creating deception in a conflict. They developed a basic deception information and influence flow chart with these fundamental elements of deception.<sup>55</sup> The flow chart shows many similarities with Laswell's communication model, as discussed in the previous chapter: who says what, in which channel, to whom, with what effect? In fact, this observation is not surprising, since it concerns an information and influence flow chart. As the name of the flow chart suggests, information is created and sent to evoke an effect at a target, and that is precisely what a communication model is all about.

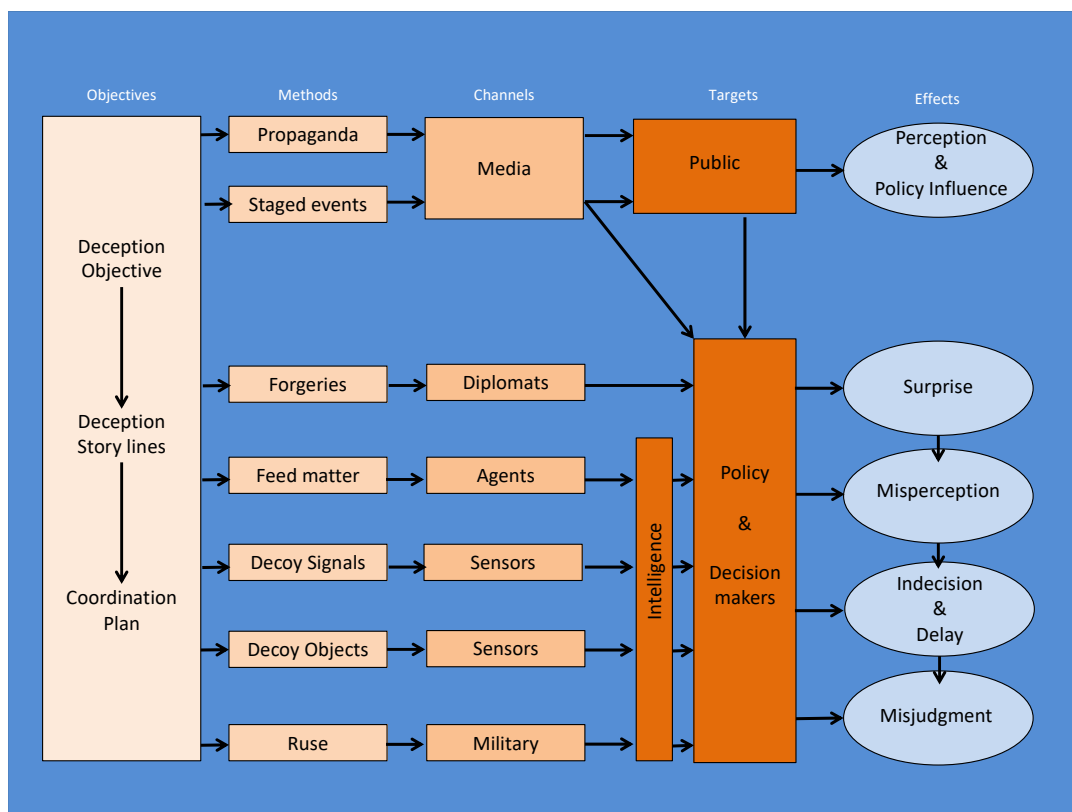


Figure 3.2 Basic Deception Information and Influence Flow Chart by Bennett and Waltz<sup>56</sup>

In contrast to Laswell, Bennett and Waltz do not start with a person who can serve as an instigator or sender, but their starting point is a coordination plan with objectives and deception story lines. Yet those objectives, storylines and coordination do not appear out of

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 6.

nothing. It is the deceiver who devises and designs these objectives, story lines and plans. Moreover, the flow chart starts with the identification of the deception objectives. It is the way in which a deceiver wants to reach the objectives using deceptive story lines, and a coordination plan. The methods that are used, such as propaganda, forgery, ruse and also decoy signals, are connected to different channels, such as media, diplomacy, agents and sensors. Such a combination of method and channel will generate an effect on the deception targets, such as the general public, the opponent's intelligence services and policy- and decision-makers. The desired effects are perception and policy influence, surprise, misperception, indecision and misjudgement. Bennet and Waltz specified that these effects may occur independently, but the effect of surprise and the pressure that may arise from negative public opinion often cause policy- and decision-makers to misperceive the situation, leading to indecisiveness and delay. It may ultimately lead to misjudgment. Bennet and Waltz failed to provide a profound explanation for these mutual relations between the effects mentioned.<sup>57</sup>

These are not the only imperfections of the basic deception flow chart. A logical grouping in phases is lacking in this basic deception information flow. A simple phasing would have been obvious: (1) planning, (2) execution, (3) desired outcomes. A relationship between diplomats and intelligence services is also absent. Although not openly visible in many international relations between nations and hard to prove, government authorities, representing their nation, and diplomats, will have their share in cheating intelligence services. This is not an exclusive activity for spies and members of intelligence services. There is also no relation between perception and policy influence, and that is strange, because public perception and opinion in a nation or an alliance can have an impact on the posture of official policy- and decision-makers. Moreover, this model also lacks some form of feedback.

This section delved deeper into the question: how does deception manifest itself? There is no predominant view on deception. However, most researchers agree that deception can be considered as a form of persuasion, whereby people tend to accept and believe inaccurate and manipulated information and other stimuli. Bennett and Waltz introduced a 'Basic Deception Information and Influence Flow Chart'. Although not yet complete, the flow chart provides valuable insights into deception activities like a planning phase in which the deception goals,

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

methods, channels, possible targets are set, and, ultimately, the effects that may occur. Bennett and Waltz's flow chart is an adequate starting point for further development of the deception process. Other researchers consider deception not just an activity but rather as a process almost similar to decision-making.<sup>58</sup> The deception process will be explained in the next section.

### 3.6 The deception process

Several researchers have tried to develop models and theories and to generate new ideas about deception. As mentioned, this section will further analyse the deception process, and its elements, that takes place at the political-strategic level. Bennett and Waltz have taken a first step with their Basic Deception Information and Influence Flow Chart. Their insights have been supplemented in this section with leading academic and professional insights, theories and deception models that have been developed over the past fifty years. This period has been chosen, because then a variety of actions took place in the security environment, such as conventional actions by armed forces including the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the Falklands War in 1982, and Operation Desert Storm in 1990-1991, but also insurgency and intrastate actions in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s and Somalia in 1992.<sup>59</sup> Later, operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and against Islamic State were added. In addition, this 50-year period covers the development and use of the Internet for security purposes.<sup>60</sup> Stirred by curiosity and academic interest, it is relevant to discover to what extent deception warfare has taken place during this period.

In addition to the Bennett and Waltz study, 17 other studies were consulted for this section, starting with a 1969 stratagem study and ending with an information disorder report of 2018. The 18 deception studies look at general deception aspects and analysed case studies that took place at the strategic level or looked at important aspects of deception. Nevertheless, the yield of 18 studies cannot be called substantial, due to 'lost appetite', explained in section 3.2 of this chapter. It is remarkable that the majority of the researchers took the deceiver as the focal

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<sup>58</sup> Whaley, *Stratagem*, 67-75. And: Greenberg, 'The Role of Deception', 139. Also: Mitchell, 'A Framework for Discussing Deception', 21-28; Gerwehr and Glenn, *The Art of Darkness*, 27-28; Bowyer Bell, 'Toward a Theory of Deception', 253.

<sup>59</sup> Martin van Creveld, 'Technology and War II: From Nuclear Stalemate to Terrorism, in: Charles Townshend, *The Oxford History of Modern War*, New Edition, Originally published in 1999, (Oxford (UK): Oxford University Press, 2005), 341-364.

<sup>60</sup> Harris, @ *War*, 69-82.

point of their research, while just a few others focused on the target. In addition, it was equally remarkable that the studies over that 50-year period did not build on each other's insights and conclusions. It is, therefore, difficult to identify different schools of thought in these 18 studies. Only Greenberg and Bennett and Waltz elaborate on earlier deception studies. The 18 studies used are shown in Figure 3.2; a more detailed explanation of all 18 studies can be found in Annex A, '18 Deception Studies 1969-2018'.

18 Deception studies used			
Nr	Year	Researcher	Publication
1	1969	Barton Whaley	'Stratagem: Deception and Surprise in War' (Book) <sup>61</sup>
2	1976	Michael Handel	'Perception, Deception and Surprise: The Case of the Yom Kippur War' (Research paper) <sup>62</sup>
3	1980	CIA	'Deception Maxims: Fact and Folklore' (Research paper) <sup>63</sup>
4	1982	Irwin Greenberg	'The Role of Deception Theory' (Article) <sup>64</sup>
5	1982	Donald Daniel & Katherine Herbig	'Propositions on Military Deception' (Chapter) <sup>65</sup>
6	1982	Barton Whaley	'Toward a General Theory of Deception' (Chapter) <sup>66</sup>
7	1986	Robert Mitchell	'A Framework for Discussing Deception' (Chapter) <sup>67</sup>
8	1986	Myrdene Anderson	'Cultural Concatenation of Deceit and Secrecy' (Chapter) <sup>68</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Barton Whaley, *Stratagem: Deception and Surprise in War*, Originally published in 1969, (Norwood, MA (USA): Artech House, 2007).

<sup>62</sup> Handel, *Perception, Deception and Surprise*.

<sup>63</sup> Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), *Deception Maxims: Fact and Folklore*, A Research Paper as part of Deception Research Program, Originally published in 1980, (Washington, DC (USA): Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Research and Development, 2016)

<sup>64</sup> Irwin Greenberg, 'The Role of Deception in Decision Theory', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 26 (1982) 2, 139-156.

<sup>65</sup> Daniel and Herbig, 'Propositions on Military Deception', 3-30.

<sup>66</sup> Whaley, 'Toward a General Theory of Deception', 178-192.

<sup>67</sup> Robert Mitchell, 'A Framework for Discussing Deception', in: Robert Mitchell and Nicolas Thompson (ed), *Deception: Perspectives on Human and Nonhuman Deceit*, (Albany, NY (USA): State University of New York, 1986), 3-40.

<sup>68</sup> Myrdene Anderson, 'Cultural Concatenation of Deceit and Secrecy', in: Robert Mitchell and Nicolas Thompson (Ed), *Deception: Perspectives on Human and Nonhuman Deceit*, (Albany, NY (USA): State University of New York, 1986), 323-348.

18 Deception studies used			
Nr	Year	Researcher	Publication
9	1989	Michael Handel	'War, Strategy and Intelligence' (Book) <sup>69</sup>
10	1999	Peter Lamont & Richard Wiseman	'Magic in Theory: An Introduction to the Theoretical and Psychological Elements of Conjuring' (Book) <sup>70</sup>
11	2000	Scott Gerwehr & Russell Glenn	'The Art of Darkness: Deception and Urban Operations' (RAND Monograph) <sup>71</sup>
12	2002	Scott Gerwehr & Russell Glenn	'Unweaving the Web: Deception and Adaptation in Future Urban Operations' (RAND Research Report) <sup>72</sup>
13	2002	Abram Shulsky	'Elements of Strategic Denial and Deception' (Chapter) <sup>73</sup>
14	2003	John Bowyer Bell	'Toward a Theory of Deception' (Article) <sup>74</sup>
15	2007	Michael Bennett & Edward Waltz	Counterdeception Principles and Applications for National Security' (Book) <sup>75</sup>
16	2010	Thomas Carson	'Lying and Deception: Theory of Practice' (Book) <sup>76</sup>
17	2012	James Monroe	'Deception: Theory and Practice' (Thesis) <sup>77</sup>
18	2018	Claire Wardle & Hossein Derakhshan	'Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making' (Report) <sup>78</sup>

Figure 3.3 In total 18 deception studies used for this section

<sup>69</sup> Michael Handel, *War, Strategy and Intelligence*, (London (UK): Frank Cass and Company Ltd, 1989).

<sup>70</sup> Peter Lamont and Richard Wiseman, *Magic in Theory: An Introduction to the Theoretical and Psychological Elements of Conjuring*, Originally published in 1999, (Hatfield (UK): University of Herefordshire Press, 2008).

<sup>71</sup> Gerwehr and Glenn, *The Art of Darkness*.

<sup>72</sup> Scott Gerwehr and Russell Glenn, *Unweaving the Web: Deception and Adaptation in Future Urban Operations*, Research report for the United States Army, (Santa Monica, CA (USA): RAND, 2002).

<sup>73</sup> Abram Shulsky, 'Elements of Strategic Denial and Deception', in: Roy Godson and James Wirtz (Ed), *Strategic Denial and Deception: The Twenty-first Century Challenge*, Originally published in 2002, (New Brunswick, NJ (USA): Transaction Publishers, 2005), 15-32.

<sup>74</sup> John Bowyer Bell, 'Toward a Theory of Deception', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 16 (2003) 2, 244-279.

<sup>75</sup> Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas Carson, *Lying and Deception: Theory and Practice*, Originally published in 2010, (Oxford (UK): Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>77</sup> Monroe, *Deception*.

<sup>78</sup> Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan, *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making*, 2nd Revised edition, Originally published in September 2017, (Strasbourg (FRA): Council of Europe, 2018).

Combining the insights from the 18 examined deception studies, a new deception definition and process can be formulated. Deception is best described as an activity that intentionally imposes a manipulated perception of a situation on a target, or as hiding a part of the situation from the target for the benefit of the deceiver.<sup>79</sup> Deception can be considered as an interaction between two actors and is based on an information flow constructed by the deceiver in order to lead the target astray.<sup>80</sup> Deceptive information should interconnect with topical and accurate information for optimal effect.<sup>81</sup> In most cases, it will affect the decision-making of a target.<sup>82</sup> In some studies deception has been broken up into denial, being blocking information, and deception, showing certain factual information and manipulated information.<sup>83</sup> The effect of deception has only limited preservability and a deceiver will therefore benefit from an adequate feedback loop.<sup>84</sup>

The Bennett and Waltz Information and Influence Flow Chart was taken as the starting point to construct an overall deception process. Next to Bennett and Waltz's flow chart, Laswell's communication model is also taken into consideration. This communication model starts with a sender, who might be the deceiver, and ends with the effects the deceptive information or activity has on the receiver, who is the target of deception. Laswell's model has previously been mentioned in section 2.4 '*Dezinformatsiya*'. Subsequently, a number of changes and additions have been made to the flow chart as a result of the insights gained from the 18 deception studies used.

The overall deception process describes how a deception action proceeds and consists of four separate phases, namely (1) a planning phase in which a plan is drawn up and a decision made

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<sup>79</sup> Daniel and Herbig, 'Propositions on Military Deception', 3-5. And: Whaley, 'Toward a General Theory of Deception', 179-186. Also: Bowyer Bell, 'Toward a Theory of Deception', 247-248; Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 51-52; Monroe, *Deception*, 40-41.

<sup>80</sup> Whaley, *Stratagem*, 7-9. And: Mitchell, 'A Framework for Discussing Deception', 18-21. And: Anderson, 'Cultural Concatenation of Deceit and Secrecy', 323. Also: Lamont and Wiseman, *Magic in Theory*, 31. And: Gerwehr and Glenn, *The Art of Darkness*, 26-27. And: Gerwehr and Glenn, *Unweaving the Web*, 37. And: Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 58-59; Carson, *Lying and Deception*, 55-57. And: Wardle and Derekhshan, 10-12,

<sup>81</sup> Handel, *Perception, Deception and Surprise*, 14-18. And: CIA, *Deception Maxims*, 5-9. Also: Handel, Strategy and Intelligence, 334; Mitchell, 'A Framework for Discussing Deception', 39-40; Wardle and Derekhshan, *Information Disorder*, 10-21.

<sup>82</sup> Whaley, *Statagem*, 67-75. And: Greenberg, 'The Role of Deception', 139. Also: Bowyer Bell, 'Toward a Theory of Deception', 253.

<sup>83</sup> Shulsky, 'Elements of Strategic Denial and Deception', 15-16. And: Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 58-59.

<sup>84</sup> CIA, *Deception Maxims*, 33-36. And: Mitchell, 'A Framework for Discussing Deception', 39-40. Anderson, 'Cultural Concatenation of Deceit and Secrecy', 325-327. Also: Shulsky, 'Elements of Strategic Denial and Deception', 30-32; Bowyer Bell, 'Toward a Theory of Deception', 253



on how to deal with deception, (2) the implementation phase, which focuses on which methods and which channels are used, (3) the phase in which the results become clear by recognizing the correct target and the effect that deception can have on such a target, and (4) a feedback phase to determine whether the deception was successful or need to be adjusted. The deception process takes place in an atmosphere of uncertainty. The four phases and the condition of uncertainty will be explained in the next subsections.

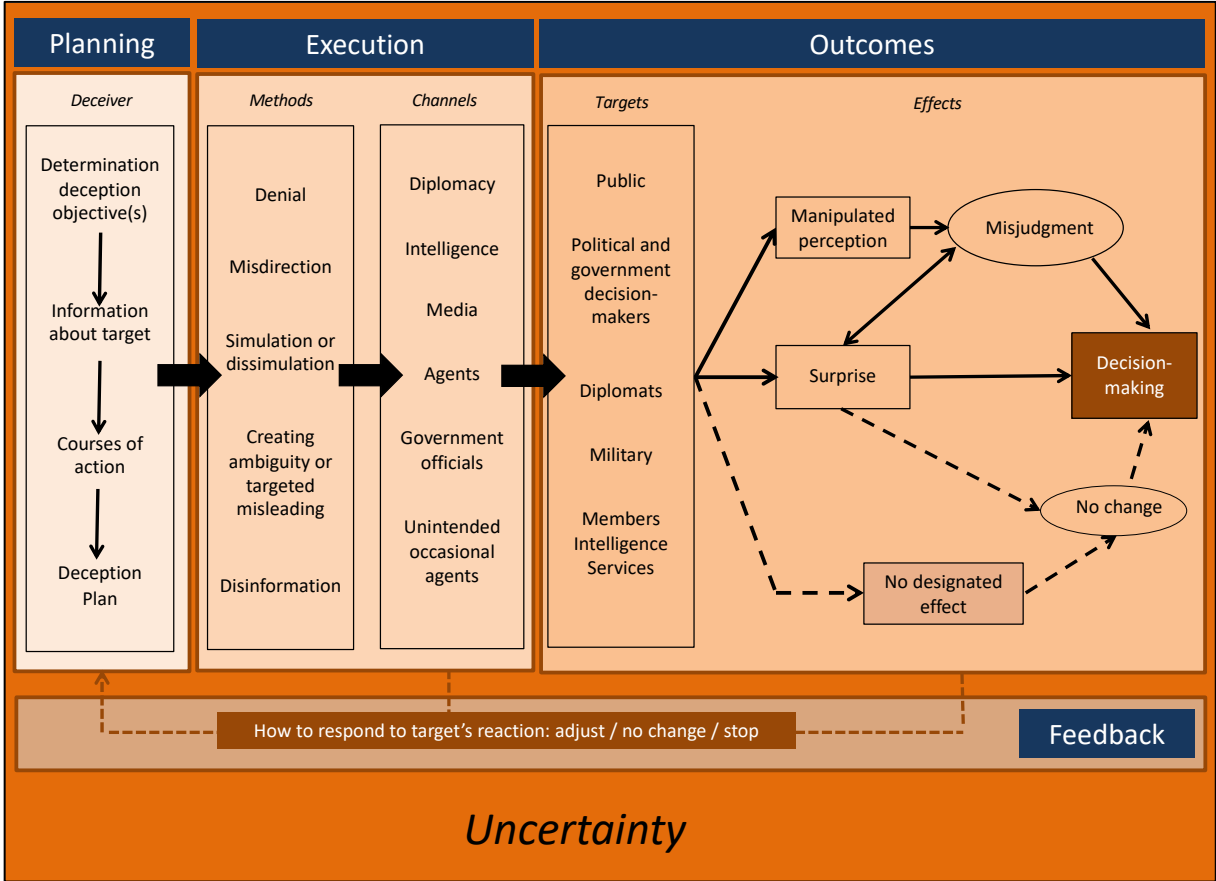


Figure 3.4 Overview of a deception process

### The planning phase

Deception as discussed in this dissertation is part of the security policy of a state or an alliance. States or alliances pursue a security policy to protect their own vital interests, i.e. like their own territory, social welfare or fundamental human rights.<sup>85</sup> A central element in such a security policy is how plans and decisions are made. Graham Allison, Professor of Political Science at Harvard University, studied the decision-making of the John F. Kennedy

<sup>85</sup> Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *Principle of International Politics*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, (Thousand Oaks, CA (USA): Sage Publications, Inc, CQ Press, 2014), 10-21.

Administration during the Cuban crisis in October 1962. His study into the decision-making process to solve the crisis has long been regarded one of the standard works in political science. Allison constructed different kinds of models, one of the best-known of which is the Rational Actor Model (RAM), featuring an actor making optimal choices in neatly defined situations.<sup>86</sup> Although Allison left in the middle whether an actor represents a person or a state, it is never the state that makes decisions. It is the individuals in a state who make decisions and act to initiate an operation, such as heads of state, government leaders and ministers.<sup>87</sup> According to Allison, the actor is able to select the most efficient alternative, that is, the one that maximizes the output of a given input. Allison assumed that the actor exactly knows what his goals are, is able to formulate alternatives, oversees all consequences, and is, therefore, able to make a rational choice.<sup>88</sup>

Today, rational thinking is strongly anchored in Western views on planning and decision making. It is based on a decision maker who makes use of deliberate economic considerations based on pre-recognized and consistent preferences.<sup>89</sup> Rational planning processes and decision-making comprise four major steps: (1) identifying the problem and setting a goal, (2) gathering information on situation and possible opponents, (3) formulating and analysing courses of action, (4) making a decision, implementing the chosen option and evaluating subsequently.<sup>90</sup> It is a step-by-step model that is frequently used, but also criticised. For example, the decision-making model implies that decision-makers often make deliberate decisions, but the model does not always lead to better judgment, and as a consequence, to better outcomes.<sup>91</sup> Another point of criticism is that individual traits of a decision-maker can play a vital role during the decision-making process. These factors, such as personality characteristics, personal values and personal experiences, often determine how the decision-

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<sup>86</sup> Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Originally published in 1971, (New York, NY (USA): Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers Inc., 1999), 17-18.

<sup>87</sup> Herbert Kelman, 'Social-Psychological Approaches to the Study of International Relations: The Question of Relevance', in: Herbert Kelman (Ed), *International Behavior: A Social-Psychological Analysis*, (New York, NY (USA): Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), 586-587.

<sup>88</sup> Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 17-18.

<sup>89</sup> Alex Mintz and Karl De Rouen Jr, *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making*, (New Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 2010), 57-58.

<sup>90</sup> Greg Cashman, *What Causes War? An Introduction to Theories of International Conflict*, (New York, NY (USA): Lexington Books, 1993), 77-78.

<sup>91</sup> Jonathan Renshon and Stanley Renshon, 'The Theory and Practice of Foreign Policy Decision Making', *Political Psychology*, 29 (2008) 4, 512-525.

maker views the problem to be solved.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, the rational model fits into the Western tradition, because the West values reasoned and linear thinking. Westerners have a predilection for an organised mind and prefer to unravel a problem and to categorize the necessary information to find a solution in a well-considered way.<sup>93</sup> So, during the planning phase a deceiver often uses a rational decision-making process in order to decide, while keeping all possibilities and their consequences in their mind. The deceiver determines the deception objectives and receives information and intelligence about a potential target, which he needs to formulate possible courses of action. At the end of the planning process, the deceiver decides, and this is how deception comes about. This leads to the next step in the deception process: the execution phase.

## The execution phase

The execution phase, the second step in the deception process, comprises of two elements: methods and channels. It should be noted that most of the 18 deception studies used focus on these two elements. Therefore, this dissertation provides a detailed description of both elements, starting with (2) the methods used.

### *(1) Methods*

The methods include (a) denial, (b) misdirection, (c) simulation or dissimulation, (d) creating ambiguity or targeted misleading, and (e) disinformation, which will be explained in following sub-subsections. It is not necessary for a receiver to stick to one method; he can also choose a combination.

#### *(1a) Denial*

The first method used for deception is denial. The Cambridge Dictionary describes denial as ‘the unwillingness to accept that something unpleasant has happened’ or ‘as not allowing someone to do or to have something’. It can also be a state in which someone will not admit

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<sup>92</sup> James Robinson, ‘The Concept of Crisis in Decision-making, in: Naomi Rosenbaum (Ed), *Readings on the International Political System*, Foundations of Modern Political Science Series, (Englewood, NJ (US): Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), 82-83.

<sup>93</sup> Daniel Levitin, *The Organized Mind: Thinking Straight in the Age of Information Overload*, Originally published in 2014, (London (UK): Penguin Random House, 2015), 219-267.

that he has knowledge, responsibility, or feelings.<sup>94</sup> Psycho-analyst Sigmund Freud considered denial as a form of negation, denial being a self-defence mechanism to repress certain thoughts.<sup>95</sup> In terms of deception, denial is the attempt to block all information channels by which an opponent could learn some truth, and therefore denial makes it impossible for him to respond in time. Denial may include four different methods: (1) counter-reconnaissance, (2) jamming, (3) counter-intelligence, and (4) the physical destruction of collection tools.<sup>96</sup>

### *(1b) Misdirection*

The second method of deception is misdirection. This is the art of drawing attention to a one subject to distract it from another. It is the way an audience is misled by an illusionist in what they see and what they do not see. Magic has a massive overlap with deception warfare, and it is therefore useful for this research into different studies of deception warfare and associated subjects. Misdirection can be divided into two broad categories. The first category is the physical misdirection, in which the magician wants to control the spectator's attention. This category depends on the fact that although a human eye captures tens of millions of bits of information each second that it is open, the brain selectively attends to only a miniscule portion of that data, unprocessed information, and effectively discards the rest.<sup>97</sup> In cognitive psychology this phenomenon is called 'change blindness'. During a performance a magician uses change blindness with another symptom, called 'inattention blindness' to distract the audience. It is a trick to point the audience's attention in the wrong direction.<sup>98</sup> The second category is psychological misdirection. In this type of misdirection, the magician aims to shape what the audience thinks is occurring by controlling its suspicions. The magician can do so either by reducing or by diverting the distrust. There are three methods for reducing suspicion: (1) maximizing naturalness, based on consistency with the audience's preconceptions of reality, and necessity that encompasses accepted necessary actions with no unusual gestures, (2) making the unnatural appear natural, which can be achieved by ruse, and

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<sup>94</sup> Cambridge Dictionary, 'Denial', Cambridge University Press, Cambridge Dictionary Website (2020). <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/denial>, (02 May 2020).

<sup>95</sup> Bonnie Litowitz, 'An Expanded Developmental Line for Negation: Rejection, Refusal, Denial', *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 46 (1994) 1, 121-148.

<sup>96</sup> Shulsky, 'Elements of Strategic Denial and Deception', 15-16. And: Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 58-59. Also: Monroe, *Deception*, 42-44.

<sup>97</sup> Lamont and Wiseman, *Magic in Theory*, 31.

<sup>98</sup> Christof Koch, *The Quest for Consciousness: A Neurobiological Approach*, (Englewood, NJ (USA): Roberts and Company Publishers, 2004), 153-157.

(3) raising the audience’s firmly held beliefs regarding the effect.<sup>99</sup> In other deception research it emerged that misdirection determines where and when the target’s attention is focused on influencing what the target registers.<sup>100</sup> It may also include sending a clear and unambiguous signal to entice the target to track the receiver. Examples are feints, demonstrations, decoy, dummies and disguises.<sup>101</sup>

*(1c) Simulation or dissimulation*

The third method of deception is simulation and dissimulation, which focuses on the view that deception is the result of a target’s misperception, as opposed to accurate perception.<sup>102</sup>

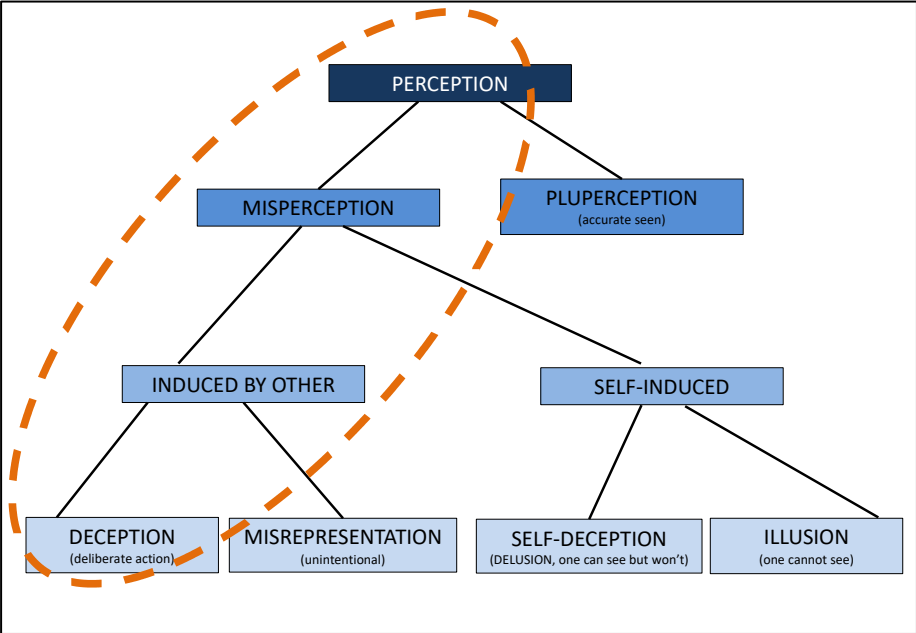


Figure 3.5 Whaley’s typology of misperception<sup>103</sup>

Barton Whaley considered misperception as a psychological phenomenon that takes place in the ‘eye of the beholder’. People are not deceived by others, but merely by themselves. The deceiver only attempts to provoke deception by revealing a fabricated picture of the situation. In order to be deceived, a person must both perceive this attempted portrayal and accept it in terms of ‘intended’ and ‘projected’. Misperception can be self-induced in two ways. First, there is a form of self-deception in cases in which one can see through the deception but

<sup>99</sup> Lamont and Wiseman, *Magic in Theory*, 31-67. See also: Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 43-48.  
<sup>100</sup> Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 59.  
<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.  
<sup>102</sup> Whaley, ‘Toward a General Theory of Deception’, 178-180.  
<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

refuses to do so. This is also called delusion. Second, an illusion occurs when one cannot see nor discover the deception due to one’s own shortfalls. Situations in which others cause the misperception are of much greater importance for this chapter. Misperception, induced by others, can be divided into deception that is intended, and misrepresentation that is unintentional.<sup>104</sup>

The next step is that every deception activity consists of only two basic parts: (1) dissimulation or ‘hiding’, and (2) simulation or ‘showing’. There are three ways of ‘hiding’. The first one is by ‘masking’, making reality invisible. Masking either interposes a screen to cover something or to integrate that something into its environment so it is overlooked. The second one is by ‘repackaging’; i.e. hiding reality by masquerading it and changing its appearance. The third way is causing confusion through ‘dazzling’, which puzzles, confounds, baffles, and perplexes people, reducing certainty about the real nature of anything. Just as simulation and dissimulation are opposites, their separate sub-categories also stand opposed to one another. Thus, masking has its counterpart in mimicking, repackaging has its counterpart in inventing and dazzling is the dissimulation reflection of decoying. Despite the contradictions, simulation and dissimulation together are always present in any single deception operation.<sup>105</sup>

THE STRUCTURE OF DECEPTION	
DECEPTION (distorting reality)	
DISSIMULATION (hiding)	SIMULATION (showing)
<b>Masking</b> Concealing one’s own or matching another’s characteristics to eliminate an old pattern or blend it with a background pattern.	<b>Mimicking</b> Copying another’s characteristics to create an old pattern, or imitating it.
<b>Repackaging</b> Adding new or subtracting old characteristics to modify an old pattern by matching another.	<b>Inventing</b> Creating new characteristics to produce a new pattern.
<b>Dazzling</b> Obscure old or add alternative characteristics to blur an old pattern, reducing its certainty	<b>Decoying</b> Create alternative characteristics to provide an additional, alternative pattern, and increase its certainty.

Figure 3.6 Whaley’s structure of deception<sup>106</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 179-182.  
<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 183-186.  
<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 186.

Dissimulation, or hiding, comes in different shapes and sizes. The most intensive form is masking, which means that a deceiver either interposes a screen to cover something or integrates it with its environment, so it is overlooked. A milder form of dissimulation is disguising something or change its appearance. The less intense form of dissimulation is causing confusion through dazzling which bewilders, confounds, baffles and perplexes humans. Simulation also comes in three different versions. The most intense form is mimicking, which shows falseness in the form of imitation. It needs to represent an adequate imitation, otherwise it is obvious that the deceiver uses deceit. The second and milder form is inventing, which tries to show another reality. Unlike mimicking, inventing creates something new, albeit false. The third and mildest version is decoying, which distracts attention. Decoying offers a misleading option and is therefore a type of misdirection.<sup>107</sup> More focused on information, simulation is the equivalent of revealing fiction, while dissimulation is concealing facts.<sup>108</sup>

The notion of ‘dissimulation and simulation’, being the two parts of a deception operation, was used long before Whaley introduced it in his description of the general theory of deception. As early as 1597, the English philosopher Francis Bacon was the first to use this essential dichotomy in his distinguished essay *On Simulation and Dissimulation*, applying to interpersonal relationships. It was a British officer, Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen,<sup>109</sup> who introduced the simulation-dissimulation contrast in the military world at the end of World War I in 1918. Meinertzhagen wrote a memo on ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ camouflage.<sup>110</sup> British artist-painter Solomon Joseph Solomon, who served as a private in ‘The Artists’ Rifles’<sup>111</sup> at the beginning of World War I, became a pioneer in camouflage techniques. On 31

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 183-186.

<sup>108</sup> Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 51-52. And: Anderson, ‘Cultural Concatenation of Deceit and Secrecy’, 325.

<sup>109</sup> Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen CBE, DSO, was a controversial British intelligence officer and ornithologist of German origin. He was credited for the infamous Haversack Ruse during the Sinai and Palestine Campaign in October 1917. According to his diary, he let a haversack containing false British battle plans fall into Ottoman hands. It gained the British Army their victory in the Battle of Beersheba and Gaza. Research after his death present him as a fraud for creating fables about his performances. See: Barton Whaley, *Meinertzhagen’s False Claim to Haversack Ruse* (1917), in: Hy Rothstein and Barton Whaley (Ed), *The Art and Science of Military Deception*, (Boston, MA (USA): Artech House, 2013), 57-58. And: Brian Garfield, *The Meinertzhagen Mystery: The Life and Legend of a Colossal Fraud*, (Washington, DC (USA): Potomac Books, Inc., 2007), 1-37.

<sup>110</sup> Rothstein and Whaley, *The Art and Science of Military Deception*, 19-20.

<sup>111</sup> ‘The Artists’ Rifles’ is a reserve intelligence unit, during World War I belonging to the British Home Defence Corps. The regiment was raised in 1859 by Edward Sterling, an artist student, and disbanded in 1945. In 1947 the regiment was re-established to resurrect the Special Air Service regiment. See: Barry Gregory, *A History of The Artists’ Rifles 1859-1947*, (Barnsley (UK): Pen & Sword Books, 2006), xvi and 297.

December 1915, General Haig, Commander of the British Expeditionary Forces on the Western Front in Belgium and France, promoted him to temporary lieutenant-colonel in order to enable him to set up a team for the development of camouflage products in France.<sup>112</sup> In 1920, Solomon was the first researcher who applied the two-part simulation-dissimulation to military theory in his pioneering book *Strategic Camouflage*.<sup>113</sup>

Solomon's contemporary, zoologist John Graham Kerr, came up with the idea to use another kind of contrast as camouflage for ships: a complex decoration of geometric shapes in opposing colours. This camouflage pattern, known as dazzle camouflage, originated from animals like the zebra and jaguar.<sup>114</sup> These kinds of illusions are based on the principle that transforming an object into an irrelevant form is more effective than simply hiding one.<sup>115</sup> It can be considered as a form of dissimulation. Subsequently, the Royal Navy and the U.S. Navy adopted dazzling camouflage, and used it during World War I. British marine artist Norman Wilkinson, explained that unlike other forms of camouflage, the intention of the dazzle camouflage was not to conceal a vessel but to make it impossible for an opponent to estimate its range, speed, and heading.<sup>116</sup>

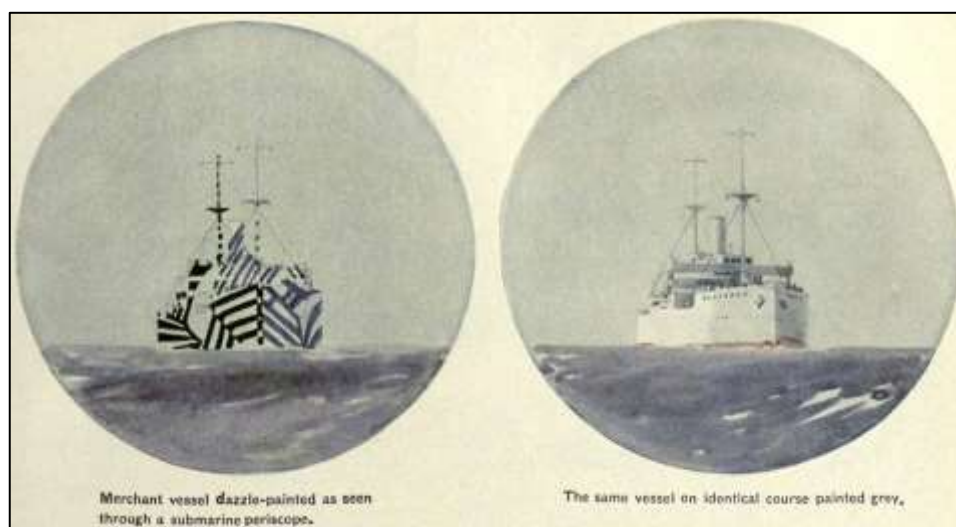


Figure 3.7 Artist impression of dazzle camouflage<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Nicholas Rankin, *Churchill's Wizards: The British Genius for Deception 1914-1945*, (London (UK): Faber & Faber, 2008), 34-48.

<sup>113</sup> Solomon Joseph Solomon, *Strategic Camouflage*, Originally published in 1920, (Sidney (AUS): Wentworth Press, 2019).

<sup>114</sup> Peter Forbes, *Dazzled and Deceived: Mimicry and Camouflage*, (New Haven, CT (USA) Yale University Press, 2009), 87-89.

<sup>115</sup> Bowyer Bell, 'Toward a Theory of Deception', 258-259.

<sup>116</sup> Tim Newark, *Camouflage*, Book based on an Imperial War Museum exhibition, (London (UK): Thames & Hudson, 2007), 74.

<sup>117</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*, (London (UK), 1922).



### *(1d) Creating ambiguity or targeted misleading*

The fourth method of deception is creating ambiguity versus targeted misleading. American researchers Donald Daniel and Katherine Herbig distinguished two versions of deception, one of which is producing different effects, and the other, operating in different directions. Both versions only work in an uncertain environment, but Daniel and Herbig did not focus on this aspect during their research. The first version is ‘ambiguity-increasing’ or A-type deception, also known as the less elegant version, which puzzles a target to such an extent that he is unsure as to what to believe. By guaranteeing an impact, A-type deception requires that the deceiver’s lies are plausible and coherent enough to the target’s comfort so that he cannot ignore them when the deceiver enhances uncertainty by providing extra information, a target may delay decision-making, thereby giving the deceiver wider freedom to arrange resources and take or retain the initiative. By assuring a high level of ambiguity concerning the deceiver’s intentions, the target is forced to spread his resources ‘to cover all important contingencies’, thereby reducing the opposition the deceiver can expect at any time. The other version, branded as ‘misleading’ or M-type deception, is much more complicated. M-type deception is designed to reduce the target’s uncertainty by showing the attractiveness of one wrong alternative, which the target is let to believe. It causes a target to concentrate its resources on a single result, maximizing the deceiver’s chances for prevailing in all others.<sup>118</sup> The M-type may be characterised as a form of target misleading. The essence of M-type deception is captured by the phrase that ‘the ultimate goal of stratagem is to make the enemy quite certain, very decisive and absolutely wrong’.<sup>119</sup>

### *(1e) Disinformation*

The last and fifth method of deception is disinformation. This subsection about disinformation consists of an explanation of what disinformation actually is, how it relates to mis- and malinformation, and what disinformation is. The act of lying is also examined, which is of course a special form of disinformation. Furthermore, this subsection also looks at how disinformation nowadays also affects national security problems and finally why disinformation does not always appeal to the intended public.

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<sup>118</sup> Daniel and Herbig, ‘Propositions on Military Deception’, 5-7. And: CIA, *Deception Maxims*, 22-27.

<sup>119</sup> Barton Whaley, op. cit. in: Michael Handel, ‘Intelligence and Deception’, in: John Gooch and Amos Perlmutter (Ed), *Military Deception and Strategic Surprise*, (London (UK): Frank Cass and Company Ltd, 1982), 131.

Disinformation is the term that covers all verbal or written forms of information that feed the target's information collection systems and is used for the purpose of deception while, in contrast, camouflage and diversion apply to the non-verbal and visual forms of disinformation.<sup>120</sup> Disinformation can be considered as an active deception method designed to convey deceptive indicators to the target.<sup>121</sup> Actually, disinformation is a strange phenomenon. For instance, politicians in Western democracies have always made unrealistic promises during election campaigns, and the electorate still believed them. Organisations and business corporations have always manipulated people to think in a certain way, and the media have long disseminated misleading stories for their shock value in order to increase circulation and the audience ratings. These methods of influencing, referred to as 'information pollution', are illustrative of the fact that the rise of the Internet has brought about fundamental changes in the way information is produced, communicated and dispersed. This modern information environment has four major characteristics:

1. Information is widely accessible, inexpensive and sophisticated platforms have made it easy for everyone with access to the world wide web to create and disseminate content;
2. Information consumption that used to be a private matter, has become public because of social media;
3. The speed at which information is dispersed and available has been amplified by fast-tracked new cycles and mobile handsets;
4. Information is passed in real-time between trusted users, and almost all information is far less likely to be challenged and checked.<sup>122</sup>

In 2017, the Council of Europe, a collective body that comprises the Heads of State or governments of the European Union (EU) member states and defines EU's political direction and priorities, ordered a research into disinformation. In the Council of Europe's report the term 'information disorder' was introduced, together with a framework for explaining information disorder comprising three parts, namely (1) types, (2) elements and (3) phases.

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<sup>120</sup> Whaley, *Stratagem*, 7-9.

<sup>121</sup> Monroe, *Deception*, 40-44.

<sup>122</sup> Claire Wardle and Hossien Derekhshan, *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making*, 2nd Revised edition, Originally published in September 2017, (Strasbourg (FRA): Council of Europe, 2018), 10-12.

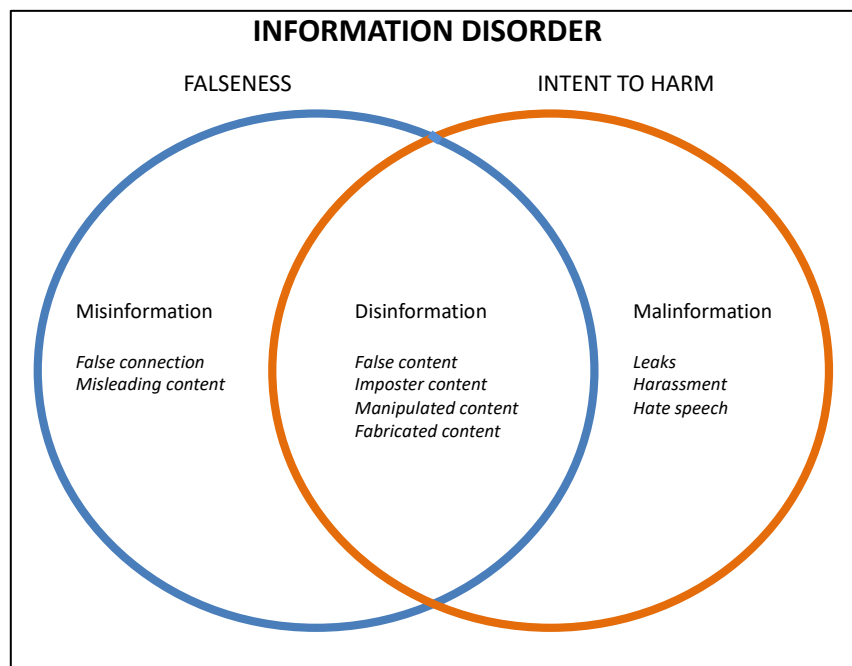


Figure 3.8 Information disorder venn diagram by Wardle and Derakhshian<sup>123</sup>

The first part of the information disorder framework includes the types of information. These three types are:

1. *Misinformation*. This is information that is false, but not created with the intention of causing harm. This includes unintentional mistakes, like inaccurate photo captions, dates, statistics, translations, or when satire is taken seriously.
2. *Disinformation*. This is information that is false and deliberately created to harm a social group, an organization or a country. This form of information comprises false context, imposter content, manipulated content and fabricated content. It also includes conspiracy theory and rumours.
3. *Mal-information*. This is information that is based on reality, used to inflict harm on a person, social group, organization or country. Examples are leaks, harassment and hate speeches. People are often targeted because of their beliefs, history or social associations, which considerably affect people in their feelings and emotions.<sup>124</sup> *Kompromat*, which was introduced in section 2.4 ‘*Dezinformtsiya*’ can also be an example of mal-information.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 5

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

The second part of the information disorder framework consists of three elements: agents, message, and interpreters. The first element is the agent, who creates, produces and distributes all kinds of information. It is of interest to a nation that is targeted to find who they are, but it is often difficult to attribute the origin of the information to a source. The second element is the message, which is the actual information that is disseminated. Messages can be communicated in person, through gossip, speech, etc., in text, through newspapers, magazines, articles, etc. or in audio-visual material, such as images, videos, motion-graphics, memes, etc. In order to get more insight into messages, Wardle and Derakhshian have mentioned five relevant aspects of messages:

1. *Durability*. Some messages are designed to stay relevant for a long time, e.g. during a war, while others are made for the short term, like elections.
2. *Accuracy*. Malinformation is truthful information but used to cause harm to a target. For incorrect information, there is a scale ranging from false connection, e.g. a mismatching headline, to 100% fabricated and manipulating information.
3. *Legality*. A message can be illegal, like hate speeches, privacy infringements or harassment. The legality of a message is determined by jurisdiction.
4. *Imposter content*. The message may unofficially use formal branding or authorisation, or it may steal the name or image from an individual, or use manipulated and untrue content in order to appear credible.
5. *Intended target*. The agent has an audience in mind, albeit different from the target of a message. The audience in mind can be the one the agent wants to affect, and the targets of messages are those who are being discredited. The target can vary in size, from individuals to an entire society. There are four characteristics that make a message more tempting and therefore more likely to be accepted and shared: (1) it provokes a strong feeling or response, (2) it has a powerful visual component, (3) it has a strong narrative, and (4) it is repeated, making it stick in people's minds.

The last element is the target, who picks up the message and transforms it into understandable information or even places it in a context creating an opinion for his or her social group.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 25-42.

The third part of the information disorder framework is the phasing. Information disorder can be distinguished in three phases in total:

1. *Creation*. The time period when the content of the message is created.
2. *Production*. The stage during which the message is turned into a media product, using the appropriate format and considering what platform is most suitable.
3. *Distribution*. The stage in which the message is distributed or made public.

The different phases need to be considered in combination the aforementioned elements (agent, message and interpreters), because an agent that creates the content is often different from the one who produces it. For instance, the motives of a creator of a state-sponsored disinformation campaign can be very different from those of low-paid ‘trolls’, who were tasked to turn the campaign into specific posts. Once a message is disseminated, it can be reproduced and redistributed endlessly. The role of the mainstream media as agents in intensifying fabricated or misleading content is crucial to understanding information disorder. Quality journalism always uses verification and fact-checking, but hoaxers and those who spread disinformation do not. Newsrooms, increasingly relying on the social web for ideas, input and content, make themselves extremely vulnerable to absorbing and distributing fabricated and manipulated content.<sup>126</sup>

As mentioned in the introduction of this subsection, a special form of disinformation is lying, and it is therefore relevant to examine this subject further next to the information disorder framework. Lying can be regarded as a form of withholding information, but there is more: a liar aims to lure his victim away from an object or a situation. Liars produce and commit alternatives and seek to draw a victim’s attention towards them. Lying is nothing more than providing alternative statements to a situation and, in a broader sense, it may also involve manipulating the context surrounding the statement to improve the reliability of the statement. Artifice is the manipulation of the context that surrounds the lie to increase credibility. Deception is a concept with, in comparison with lying, a wider scope. It also includes the reactions of the target to those dishonesties.<sup>127</sup> A liar can lie by not telling what he considers

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 23-25.

<sup>127</sup> Daniel and Herbig, ‘Propositions on Military Deception’, 3-5.

the truth, by telling only part of that truth, or by telling that truth in such a way that no one believes it.<sup>128</sup>

A subject closely related to lying is wilfully withholding information, which can generate deception if there is a clear expectation, promise, or professional obligation that such information will be provided. Withholding information is in fact hiding information from someone in order to prevent it from being discovered. In many cases information causes deception. A second-hand car dealer may, for instance, have the following reasoning: 'I am selling a used car that has extensive body rust. I treat the rust without removing it, and give it a new coat of paint, matching the original colour. I am trying to convince the potential buyer falsely that the body of the car is free of rust. If I succeed with my action, I have deceived the buyer.' It is also possible to conceal information without deceiving anyone. In the case of the sale of the car with rust on its body, this rust might not have been a big deal for the buyer. He was not focused on corrosion during the inspection of the car, but only interested in the model, mileage and the quality of the tyres.<sup>129</sup> Thus, there are two primary ways of lying: concealment and falsification.<sup>130</sup> Remarkably, it has long been thought that high-stake lies differed from smaller everyday lies, but evidence for this assumption is still lacking. Recent research has shown that the liar's motivation has relatively little influence on his way of lying and its intensity.<sup>131</sup>

In recent years, disinformation in international relation has re-emerged, and its use has been seen primarily as a security issue. NATO's Strategic Centre of Excellence considers disinformation in nature a national security problem, because it is primarily a political activity during elections or other democratic processes that varies from nation to nation. Often the intent of disinformation is 'to undermine confidence in legitimate institutions and democratic processes and [to] deepen societal fault lines through entrenching views/beliefs and subverting a society's values'.<sup>132</sup> Disinformation is nowadays especially applicable in new areas such as meme warfare and domain cycling, which is the method of changing domains to

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<sup>128</sup> Anderson, 'Cultural Concatenation of Deceit and Secrecy', 323-325.

<sup>129</sup> Carson, *Lying and Deception*, 56-57.

<sup>130</sup> Paul Ekman, *Telling Lies: Clues to Deceit in the Marketplace, Politics, and Marriage*, Originally published in 1985, (New York, NY (USA): WW – Norton & Company, 1992), 28-32.

<sup>131</sup> Timothy Levine and Steven McCormack, 'Theorizing about Deception', *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 33 (2014) 4, 435.

<sup>132</sup> Rachael Lim, *Disinformation as a Global Problem – Regional Perspectives*, (Riga (LTV): NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 2020), 6.

avoid detection by fact-checkers.<sup>133</sup> Disinformation can also be regarded as manipulation of information. Disinformation with the intention to manipulate and to cause destruction can have three different aims: (1) demoralization of the nation by disintegration of subgroups, (2) discrediting of authorities and their values, and (3) neutralization of masses to prevent spontaneous behaviour and to bring a small group serenely to power at a given moment.<sup>134</sup>

Although disinformation is widely used nowadays, the dissemination of disinformation is not always a smooth operation. Disinformation will not always find its way to a target audience. This is an remarkable observation, because the generation of disinformation is most of the time a deliberate process dependent on a contemplative understanding of the target audience. Austrian-American social and communication scientist Paul Watzlawick gave two reasons why disinformation does not always reach its intended target. It is either because the transmission or translation was insufficient, or because the content of the messages contradicted with existing ideas or the messages with disinformation contradicted each other. In both cases the outcome would lead to confusion and uncertainty, causing negative effects.<sup>135</sup>

Finally, a combination of deception methods is also possible. For example, denial or the A-type deception may contain a lot of disinformation, as became clear from Russian statements and reports from both the Russian authorities and the media, regarding the downing of flight MH17, which is discussed in section 2.3 'Reflexive control'.

## *(2) Channels*

Another element in the execution phase of deception is the channels through which signals can be distributed. The five different channels are:

1. *Intelligence channels.* This means using intelligence organisations and its members to pass on false signals. This may be easier, and in other cases harder, than using human intelligence channels.

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>134</sup> Vladimir Volkoff, *Petite Histoire de la Désinformation: Du Cheval de Troie à Internet* (A Small History of Disinformation: From the Trojan Horse to the Internet), (Monaco (MON): Édition du Rocher, 1999), 12.

<sup>135</sup> Paul Watzlawick, *How Real is Real? Confusion, Disinformation, Communication: An Anecdotal Introduction to Communications Theory*, (New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, 1976), 45.

2. *Diplomatic channels.* This means using a diplomat, who could be an honest civil servant sent abroad, to intentionally lie for his country. A foreign diplomat is assumed to be loyal to his government, so officials of a target nation ought to be aware that anything a diplomat says could be meant to deceive.
3. *News channels.* This means the use of the Internet and mainstream media to spread propaganda, allowing a deceiver to reach his target audience through several channels. Many of these channels may remain relatively hidden to the public at large. Some experts think that deception and propaganda are the same, but Shulsky differentiated between the two. The aim of deception is to induce a target to do something that is in the deceiver's interest, but not necessarily in the target's. Propaganda attempts to affect a target's beliefs more generally and is not only directed at the target but also at the populace at large rather than at the nation's leadership.
4. *Agents-of-influence.* This means the use of agents; persons who are able to get close to important government officials in order to influence their views and actions with respect to major issues. Usually, the target is unaware of the loyalty of the agent-of-influence; ideally, from the deceiver's point of view, the target considers the agent the best of friends, who has the target's best interests at heart, whereas the agent is loyal to the opponent. Such a complete misunderstanding of the agent's loyalty is not necessary for him to operate successfully as agent-of-influence. An agent might be able to gain the confidence of the target, although he openly upholds other ideas than the target's.
5. *Government officials.* This means using officials who represent their department at official meetings, assemblies or conferences abroad, and have them spread inaccurate information.
6. *Others,* like occasional agents-of-influence. This rest group contains travellers, businessmen or relief workers, temporarily recruited to work for an intelligence service.<sup>136</sup>

Michael Handel, a strategic studies researcher, has conducted extensive research into information flows during to the Yom Kippur War.<sup>137</sup> He found that the flow of information can be hampered by channel blockade by barriers. In times of crisis, while vital national

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<sup>136</sup> Shulsky, 'Elements of Strategic Denial and Deception', 19-26.

<sup>137</sup> On the eve of the Jewish holy day Yom Kippur, in October 1973, Egypt and Syria, supported by Iraq, Morocco, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Saudi Arabia, attacked Israel, which was a total surprise for Israel. See: Chaim Herzog, *The War of Atonement, October 1973: The Fateful Implications of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, (Boston, MA (USA): Little, Brown and Company, 1975), 32-39 and 55-77.



interests are at stake, the information needed for decision-making, may consist of signals, as necessary information, and noise, as polluting information.<sup>138</sup>

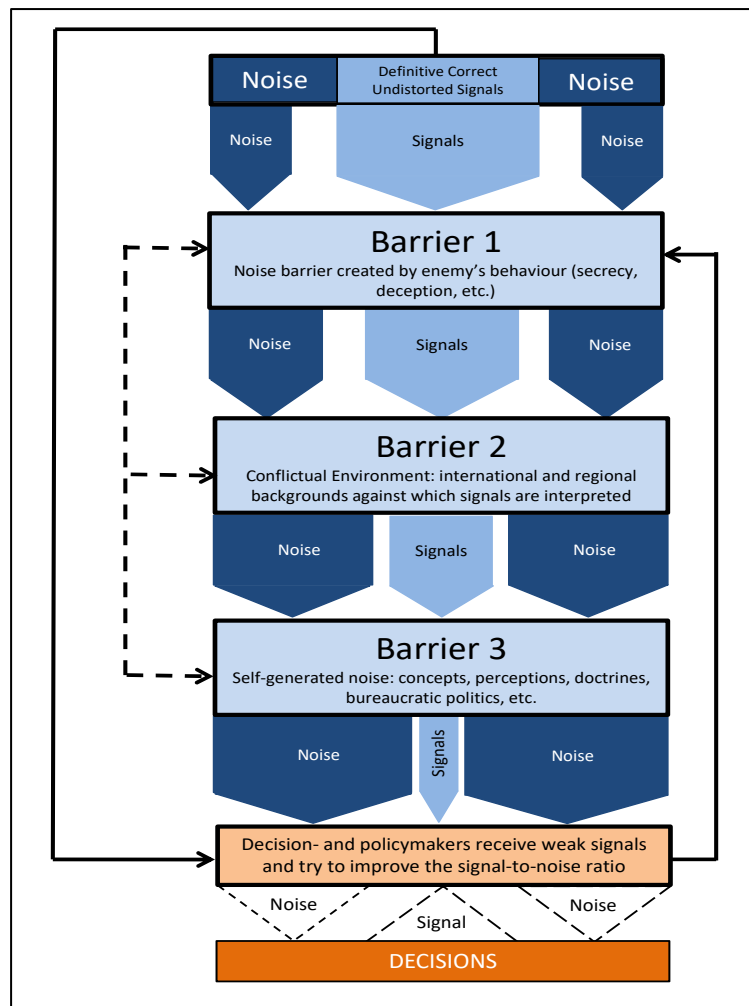


Figure 3.9 Handel's three barrier model<sup>139</sup>

The signals and noise flow sent through these channels can be filtered, delayed or stopped by three noise barriers: (1) noise barriers created by the deceiver's behaviour, like secrecy and deception, (2) the conflict environment, being the international and regional background against which received signals are interpreted, and (3) noise generated by the intended target, such as concepts, perceptions, mind-structures, doctrine and also organizational aspects like bureaucratic politics. As the amount of noise increases after each barrier the intelligence information that passes each barrier will have a changing noise-information ratio. At the end

<sup>138</sup> Handel, *Perception, Deception and Surprise*, 10-18.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

of this line policy- and decision-makers receive a weak signal and much noise, and, as a consequence, they will try to improve the signal-noise ratio.<sup>140</sup>

The CIA report on deception maxims warns for the Jones' lemma, which implies that deception becomes more difficult as the number of channels of information available to the target increases. However, within limits, the larger the number of controlled channels, the more likely it is that deception is believed.<sup>141</sup> The phrase 'Jones' lemma' comes from Professor Reginald Jones, who was a key figure in British scientific intelligence during World War II. At that time, Jones focused on the detection of forgeries. He stated that the success of detecting was much greater when different channels of investigation were used at the same time. Jones' conclusion was that it was better to use several independent means of detection, instead of putting the same total effort into the development of only one.<sup>142</sup> An analogy of Jones' principle is used by the CIA in their deception research.

### The outcome phase

The last phase of the deception process is focused on the outcome. It starts with a target of deception in a conflict, which can be the general public, politicians and decision-making authorities of a nation, diplomats, the military, or members of intelligence services. The target decodes the deceiver's signals and accepts the deception if it is credible or rejects it when it is not. If the deception is believable, the target has three options: (1) he can believe it, (2) not believe it, or (3) become doubtful. If the deception is unbelievable, the target may not believe it or may expect a completely other meaning.<sup>143</sup> When the target believes the deception, two effects may occur: (1) the target has a manipulated perception, leading to misjudgement, (2) the target may be surprised. There will be no designated effect when the target is doubtful or does not believe the deception. The deception activity is successful as soon as the target is tricked, but when the target does not fall for it, the deception is of no avail.

All three effects, manipulated perception, surprise and no designated effect, alter the decision-making process of the target. Surprise can paralyze a target to such an extent that he is not

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 10-18.

<sup>141</sup> CIA, *Deception Maxims*, 21-22.

<sup>142</sup> Reginald Jones, 'The Theory of Practical Joking – Its Relevance to Physics', *Bulletin of the Institute of Physics*, (June 1967), 7.

<sup>143</sup> Anderson, 'Cultural Concatenation of Deceit and Secrecy', 326-328.

able to think straight and decide, which can lead to the inability to arrive at a correct perception. In other words, when a target is surprised there is a chance that he or she will come to an incorrect decision or none at all, which facilitates the possibility of a manipulated perception. Manipulated perception may cause misjudgements, which, in turn, may lead on the one hand to surprise, as the target misunderstands a situation leading to the unexpected. On the other, misjudgement can also affect the quality of the decision-making of a target. It is also possible that deception does not work. In that case there are unintentional effects and it will not have a major impact on decision making. It means there is no change in the situation and the status quo will be maintained. Surprise does not always lead to manipulated or fallacious perceptions. Surprise can initially cause a shock, but a target may recover quickly and proceed with the daily routine. However, the mentioned shock effect can also cause a delay in the decision-making process or have a negative impact on the quality of decision-making. It is also important for a deceiver to organize feedback, not only about visible effects of the deception activity, but also about the execution, in order to find out whether the deception was successful. A deceiver never knows for certain how long the deception effect will last.

## The feedback phase

From the execution phase and from the outcomes phase, a feedback loop also goes back to the planning phase. Although it is sometimes hard for a deceiver to measure the levels of success of deception, it is necessary for the deceiver to get feedback from the target to indicate what the effect of the deception was and to determine the degree of success.<sup>144</sup> The deceiver's response to the feedback could be: (1) maintain, (2) stop, or (3) escalate the deception. If the target ignores the deceiver's signals, the deceiver is in the difficult position of having to blindly decide what option to take. This is a situation in which the deceiver lacks insights into what the target may be responding to.<sup>145</sup> As soon as the deceiver decides to continue the deception, he needs to know which methods and channels were successful, and which of them need to improve.<sup>146</sup> All factors must be considered, even if the created illusion is effective, changes need to be made, because the deception effect, even if it is successful, is never

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<sup>144</sup> Daniel and Herbig, 'Propositions on Military Deception', 8. And: CIA, *Deception Maxims*, 33-36.

<sup>145</sup> Anderson, 'Cultural Concatenation of Deceit and Secrecy', 326-328.

<sup>146</sup> Shulsky, 'Elements of Strategic Denial and Deception', 28-32.

everlasting.<sup>147</sup> It is not only the deceiver who can learn from his deception experience, but also the target. Both deceiver and targets evaluate their actions and will correspondingly try to improve their performance.<sup>148</sup> However, there is a risk that when the target discovers ongoing deception activities, or parts of them, he will use the feedback channel for counter-deception.<sup>149</sup>

## The condition of uncertainty

A fundamental aspect in deception warfare is uncertainty. In his study of the Yom Kippur War, Handel indicated that ‘certainty of uncertainty’ was his starting point.<sup>150</sup> The CIA deception maxims assumed the uncertainty of a deceiver in some of the maxims and in others the uncertainty of a target. The deceiver may be uncertain about the results of the deception, while the target is often uncertain about whatever may happen in a situation.<sup>151</sup> Uncertainty is central to Daniel and Herbig's research into the two different types of deception. The A-Type deception is based on enhancing the target's uncertainty by providing extra information, while the M-type deception is designed to only reduce uncertainty by offering an attractive but wrong alternative the target is bound to believe in.<sup>152</sup>

Gerwehr and Glenn went deeper into their research on deception and recognize that humans involved in deception, particularly potential targets, operate under conditions of uncertainty, that is, without complete knowledge. A party in possession of almost all relevant facts, or one thoroughly convinced of the accuracy of its perceptions, is extremely unlikely to be persuaded by contra-indicators.<sup>153</sup> Gerwehr and Glenn concluded that there is at least a correlation between lack of information and uncertainty. It is striking, however, that none of the 18 deception studies mention further analyses of where uncertainty comes from and what exactly it entails. Richard Betts, Professor of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University, underlined the importance of uncertainty. A target does not know what his possible opponent will do, whether, ‘if’, ‘when’, ‘where’ and ‘how’ he will strike or deceive.<sup>154</sup> In other words:

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<sup>147</sup> Bowyer Bell, ‘Toward a Theory of Deception’, 253.

<sup>148</sup> Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 39-40.

<sup>149</sup> Daniel and Herbig, ‘Propositions on Military Deception’, 8.

<sup>150</sup> Handel, *Perception, Deception and Surprise*, 9

<sup>151</sup> CIA, *Deception Maxims*, 4-47. See also: Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 35.

<sup>152</sup> Daniel and Herbig, ‘Propositions on Military Deception’, 5-7;

<sup>153</sup> Gerwehr and Glenn, *The Art of Darkness*, 26-27.

<sup>154</sup> Betts, *Surprise Attack*, 4.

deception is not possible when a target exactly knows the desired goals, preferences, judgments and abilities of its suspected deceiver. Uncertainty is therefore a significant feature of deception during a conflict.

### 3.7 Concluding remarks

This chapter answers the second secondary research question: What are the different academic and professional Western views on deception and the deception process?

Prior to answering the secondary research sub-question, this chapter showed classic cases of deception, starting with the story of Gideon, from the Hebrew Bible, and the Trojan Horse from ancient Greek history. Also, in World War II, before the start of D-Day in Normandy in June 1944, Operation Fortitude was carried out to mislead the German High Command as to where and when the invasion was to take place. More than a decade ago, in Afghanistan, Task Force Uruzgan conducted a tactical deception operation called Tiger Ghar whose purpose was to deceive the Opposing Militant Force. Although Western nations and armed forces used to be interested in deception in the past, the concept of deception has completely vanished in the West over the last few decades. There are reasons for this disappearance, one of them being the current types of operations carried out by the West. During the Cold War, NATO forces had been focused primarily on the physical elimination of the impressive operational manoeuvre groups of the Warsaw Pact. After the Cold War, the Western armed forces have primarily been committed to peace and stabilisation operations, which mainly required mutual trust and transparent action, so deception would have been counter-productive. Moreover, deception was less in line with current Western thinking about conflict management, and ethically, deception is also not considered 'chic'. Western forces need to respect the law of armed conflict, and people in Western democracies do not want to be lied to and misled by their governments. That would undermine democratic principles. In addition, Western forces prefer to take out their opponents with cumulative destruction rather than systemic disruption.

Back to answering the second research sub-question. Deception is an activity that causes surprise or manipulates the perception of a target, leading the target astray. In most cases, this state of the target affects its decision-making, ultimately creating a situation that is beneficial to the deceiver.

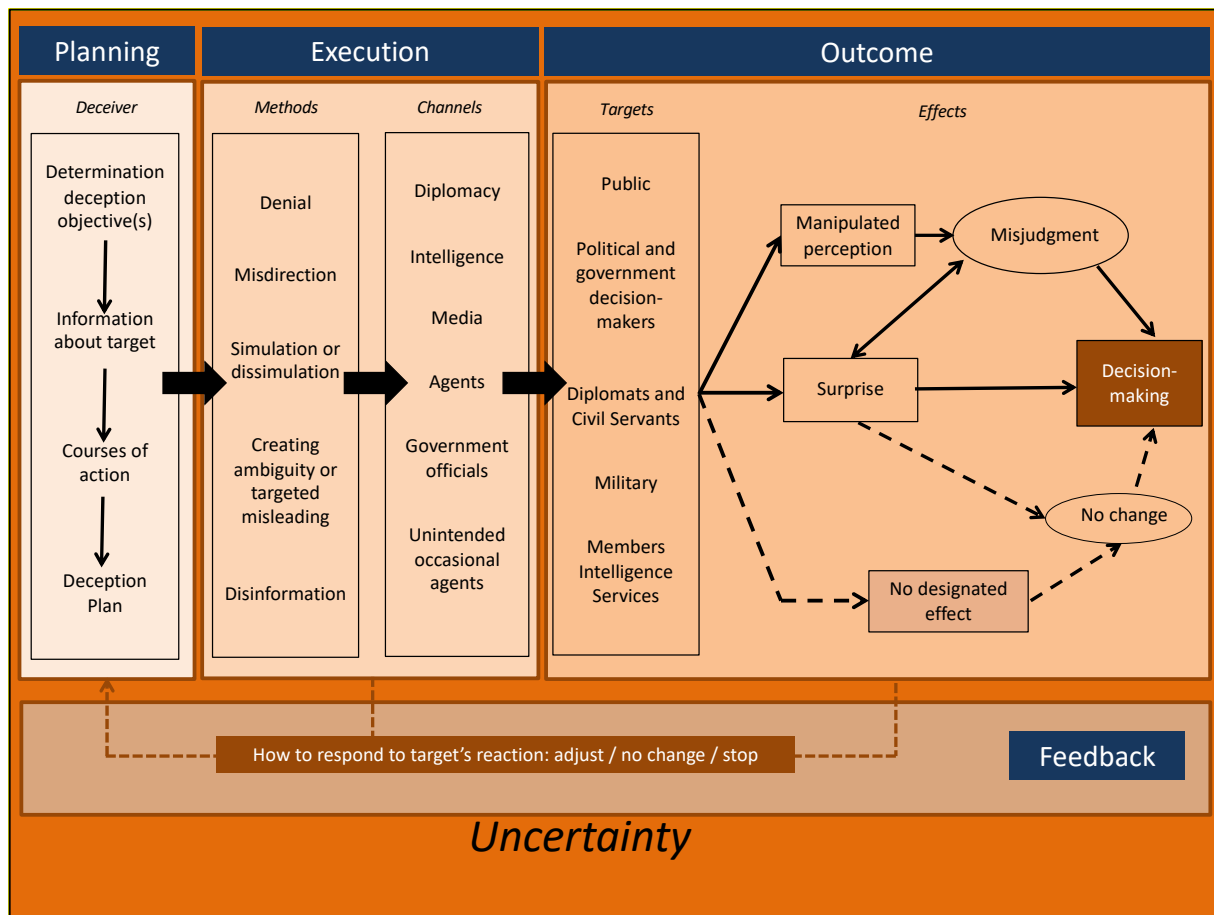


Figure 3.10 Overview of deception process

The deception process comprises four phases: phase 1 is the planning phase, in which the deceiver determines the ultimate deception goal. In preparation, the deceiver will gather information about the target and weigh possible courses of action. Phase 2 deals with the methods and channels. The methods are grouped into: (1) denial, (2) misdirection, (3) simulation versus dissimulation, (4) creating ambiguity or targeted misleading, and (5) disinformation. A deceiver can use different channels, like diplomacy, intelligence, the media, agents, government officials or occasional agents to reach a target. Phase 3 is focused on the outcomes. There is no specific target, but a target can be, for example, the political and administrative sector of a nation, but diplomats, civil servants, military personnel or members of security forces can also become targets, including the entire population, in order to influence public opinion. The aim of deception is twofold: creating surprise and/or manipulated perceptions. And an atmosphere sets the condition to evoke deception. Phase 4 comprises feedback. The deceiver may decide to adjust or stop the deception activities, or he might decide to continue the deception when it is successful.

The next chapter addresses human explanations behind deception, with special attention for uncertainty and for the aims of deception: surprise and manipulated perceptions. The explanations behind these human dimensions were missing in the studies researched in this chapter, which has provided the reason for conducting more extensive research into these human dimensions.





# Chapter 4 Human Dimensions

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## 4.1 Preamble

The previous chapter dealt with deception in general; its manifestation and different notions about deception. Some of the studies used in the previous chapter, like the ones from Barton Whaley and J. Bowyer Bell, mentioned the power of psychology, although none of the studies thoroughly investigated the human mechanisms behind the various forms of deception. In the previous chapter it became clear that the elements ‘uncertainty’, ‘surprise’ and ‘manipulated perception’ in particular, were hardly explained, or not at all, although they are significant parts of the deception process, as shown in figure 3.10 ‘Overview of deception process’. All three elements mentioned are clearly anchored in the human mind, but researchers in deception warfare have hardly investigated the explanations for these elements. This is astonishing, because uncertainty is the condition, which is necessary for deception to occur, while surprise and manipulated perceptions are the ultimate effects of deception.

Therefore, this chapter focuses on three missing human-centred elements in the deception process: (1) uncertainty, (2) surprise, and (3) the emergence of manipulated perceptions, and provides underlying reasons for the origin of uncertain situations in which deception takes place, and for the emergence of surprise and manipulated perceptions. The research sub-question for this chapter reads:

What are the human dimensions of deception in warfare?

In order to answer the third research sub-question, this chapter, apart from the preamble, is divided into four sections. These sections will provide a more detailed explanation of the three human elements, which were barely clarified in figure 3.10. Section 4.2 deals with uncertainty, while section 4.3 investigates surprise and section 4.4 researches manipulated perceptions.

Decision-making is a central element of deception. People make countless decisions every day, from minor innocent decisions to extensive and drastic decisions. As soon as an individual gets new information or new incentives, he will consider and reconsider this new input. The individual then contrasts this new input with previous views, but also with the individual's values and experiences. The individual comes to a choice and ultimately makes a decision. Often these steps happen unnoticed and in a split second. Decision-making can lead

to individuals forming an opinion, but also to adjusting or revising an opinion. In this case, decision-making initiates an internal mental process. Individual decision-making can also lead to certain behaviour or to adjustment of behaviour, or to certain actions.<sup>1</sup> The input of a decision-making process can be compromised, leading to surprise and misjudgment, and this is the essence of deception, as shown in Figure 4.1. During deception, a deceiver will attempt to create surprise and misjudgement to bring about a change in opinion, behaviour, or action towards a target in such a way that it benefits the deceiver. Furthermore, this entire process takes place under the condition of uncertainty.

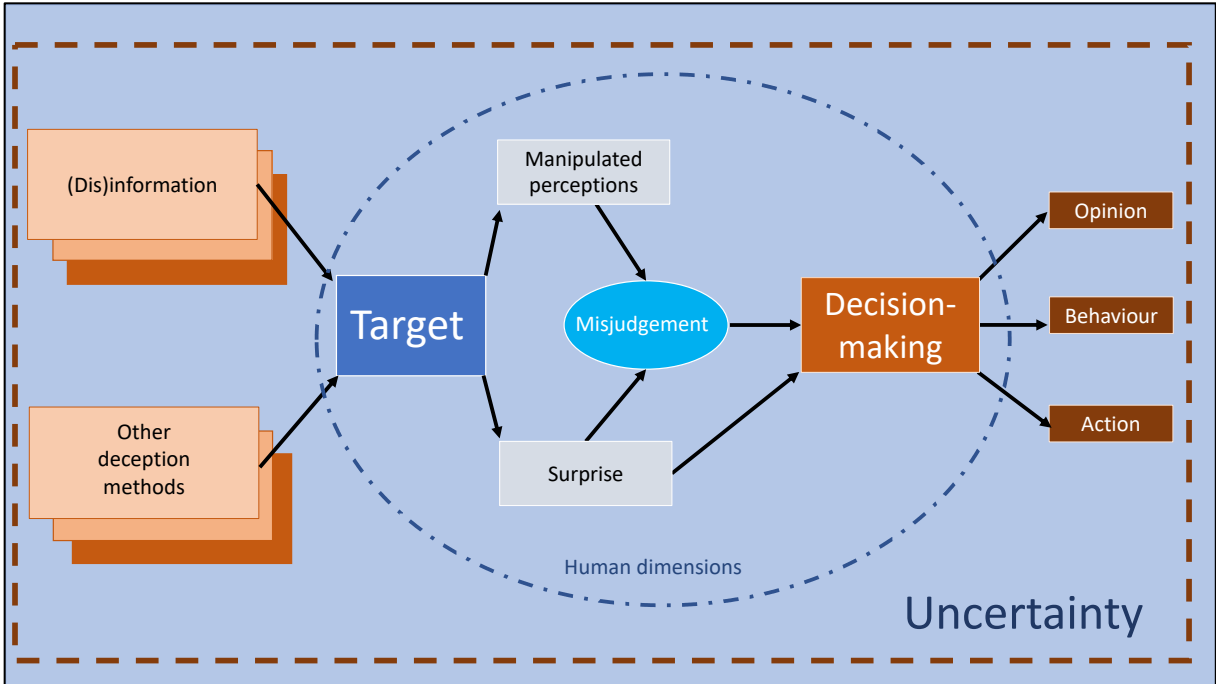


Figure 4.1 Overview of the human dimensions

## 4.2 Uncertainty

The previous chapter showed that deception is enveloped in a veil of uncertainty. Uncertainty has been studied in various scientific fields for quite a long time, especially the part of mathematical science and engineering that focuses on statistical calculations and the determination of probabilities in relation to uncertainty. Likewise, economic and social sciences have discovered uncertainty, especially to explain consumer behaviour and how people make choices. Uncertainty in this dissertation must be considered in the context of decision-making. After all, it is the decision-making process that determines the direction in

<sup>1</sup> Gary Klein, Sources of Power: How People Make Decisions, (Cambridge, MA (USA): The MIT Press, 1999), 17-23.

which conflicts are going, and to what extent decision-makers and authorities involved consider using violence or misleading an opponent. Humans are generally averse to uncertain and ambiguous situations, which means they look for answers, often quickly and definitively. This mechanism is called ‘cognitive closure’, which is intended to create a form of certainty within uncertain situations and environments.<sup>2</sup> These are not the only limitations of humans in a situation of uncertainty. A number of human characteristics during uncertainty will be highlighted in this section. This section will pay attention to a multi-scientific approach to uncertainty to gain an adequate insight into the notion of uncertainty. It starts with NSE<sup>3</sup>, followed by economic and financial science, international relations and, ultimately, psychology. This section concludes with a summary.

## Nature, Science and Engineering

It has been an academic discourse by statisticians, engineers and other technical experts for quite a long time to explain the nature of uncertainties and the manner in which humans deal with it. These science and technology specialists solve their problems and academic challenges within the confines of the NSE-domain. This domain contains many mathematical, physical and probabilistic equations and models that reflect the mathematical idealization of reality to render a solution for the problem at hand.<sup>4</sup>

Although there are many different sources of uncertainty, it is expedient to divide the character of uncertainties in either ‘aleatory’ or ‘epistemic’. The word aleatory comes from the Latin word *alea*<sup>5</sup>, which literally means ‘dice’. The term aleatory matches the broader meaning of ‘throw the dice’, which can be translated in a non-metaphorical way into ‘by chance’ or ‘unpredictable’. It is the kind of uncertainty that arises from an unclear and unpredictable situation, which makes it difficult to estimate because there is no pattern or regularity in it. In other words, an aleatory uncertainty is one that is assumed to be the

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<sup>2</sup> Christina Nemr and William Gangware, *Weapons of Mass Distraction: Foreign State-Sponsored Disinformation in the Digital Age*, (Washington, DC (USA): Park Advisors, 2019), 8-9.

<sup>3</sup> NSE stands for Natural Science and Engineering, sometimes is also the acronym SMET used: Science, Mathematics, Engineering and Technology.

<sup>4</sup> Armen Der Kiureghian and Ove Ditlevsen, *Aleatory or Epistemic? Does It Matter?*, Calling letter for a special workshop on Risk Acceptance and Risk Communication, (Stanford, CA (USA) Stanford University, 26-27 March 2007), 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> There is also the famous Latin saying ‘*alea iacta est*’, which means ‘the die is cast’.

inherent randomness of a phenomenon. The word aleatory is also used in the world of music, theatre and other arts, meaning unpredictability or improvisation in the performance.<sup>6</sup>

The word epistemic comes from the Old Greek word *ἐπιστήμη* or *episteme*, which means knowledge. Epistemic uncertainty is therefore the kind of uncertainty that arises from the lack of knowledge or information. The distinction between the two categories is that epistemic uncertainty can be reduced by increasing knowledge or information, whereas aleatory uncertainty cannot. The identification of uncertainties as aleatory or epistemic is sometimes artificial, because it is highly dependent on circumstances and application.<sup>7</sup> What one person knows about something, another person does not yet need to know. During conflict situations, epistemic uncertainty is the kind of doubt that is caused by the fact that an actor does not know the real intention of his opponent, although the actor might have gathered valuable intelligence about his opponent's capabilities and options. Aleatory uncertainty is always present in a conflict situation, because an opponent always has the possibility to suddenly change his course.

## Economic and financial sciences

Behavioural economics relies on findings that originate from observations of human decision-making. Uncertainty means that a future event or incident cannot be reasonably calculated *ex ante*.<sup>8</sup> In a complex, dynamic and interconnected world, consequence of decisions cannot reliably be foreseen. Many decisions were made in the so-called radical uncertainty. That is the decision-making context in which decision-makers cannot know all the relevant options available to them and what the consequences of those options will be. Many government leaders make most of their decisions in radical uncertainty. Most researchers on decision-making have avoided taking this radical uncertainty into consideration, preferring rational decision-making models like the RAM, as shown by Allison in section 3.6 'The deception process', which is dependent on correctly formulated probabilities to predict the future in

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<sup>6</sup> Kiureghian and Ditlevsen, *Aleatory or Epistemic?*, 1-2.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> David Tuckett, *Uncertainty, Conflict and Divided States: Some Psychological Foundations for Macropprudential Policy*, Conference paper for the Interdisciplinary Workshop on the Role of Uncertainty in Central Bank Policy, (London (UK): Bank of England, 2014), 3.

international relations.<sup>9</sup>

Although many economic scientists suppose that actors often work rationally by analysing the situation, some critical notes on the rational decision-making process can be made. Often, an actor creates his own reality during rational decision-making in which analysis tends to be an excessive unravelling of the situation or perhaps even a disguise of what is happening. Many human beings often adopt sub-optimal biases and utilise sub-optimal heuristics, which will be explained in section 4.4 ‘Manipulated perception’, during their decision-making, especially in delicate situations. People err, and to end such erring is problematic when information is ambiguous and results are unknown in advance.<sup>10</sup> It is an example of incremental decision-making, which is focused on ‘marginal analysis’ during the decision-making process and ‘successive limited comparison’ to previous decisions and policy.<sup>11</sup> Also, the outcomes of judgment and decision-making research cannot be generalized by the problems caused by ontological uncertainty.<sup>12</sup>

This ontological uncertainty needs further explanation. Ontological uncertainty derives from research into the relationship between uncertainty and economic innovation. Action was seen as a bridge that actors construct in the present, linking their previous experiences in the past to a desired future. Humans constantly make choices before taking action. In doing so, they use assumptions when information is missing, and formulate propositions about the future and the next step to take. Ontological uncertainty actually depends on the notion of an actor’s ontology. Ontology is regarded as an actor’s belief about what kind of entities inhabit their world, what kind of interactions these entities can have among themselves, and how change will take place because of these interactions. Sometimes the actor’s environment changes so rapidly that he cannot generate stable ontological categories. In those cases, the actor is confronted with ontological uncertainty. In contrast to the other two types of uncertainty, ontological uncertainty resists the formation of propositions about the future.<sup>13</sup>

The financial world also centres around uncertainty. Should executives of listed companies avoid risk and focus on incremental investments? Or do they have to bet big, hedge or wait?

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<sup>9</sup> David Tuckett and Milena Nikolic, ‘The Role of Conviction and Narrative in Decision Making under Radical Uncertainty’, *Theory & Psychology*, 27 (2017) 4, 502-503.

<sup>10</sup> Tuckett, *Uncertainty, Conflict and Divided States*, 3-4.

<sup>11</sup> Charles Lindblom, ‘The Science of “Muddling Through”’, *Public Administration Review*, 19 (1959) 2, 79-88.

<sup>12</sup> Tuckett, *Uncertainty, Conflict and Divided States*, 3-4.

<sup>13</sup> David Lane and Robert Maxfield, ‘Ontological Uncertainty and Innovation’, *Journal of Evolutionary Economics*, (2005) 15, 7-11.

These are crucial questions in the world of finance. Boards of directors always weigh the risks when they invest and try to reduce uncertainty as much as possible when looking at the future. There are four levels of uncertainty in the financial world. Level 1: ‘A Clear-Enough Future’, at which executives can develop a single forecast of the future, which is sufficient to develop a strategy. Level 2: ‘Alternate Futures’, at this level the future is portrayed as one of the discrete scenarios developed to predict the future. Analysis is not able to identify which scenario will happen, although it may help establish probabilities. Level 3: ‘A Range of Futures’, many future scenarios are defined by a selected number of variables. And level 4: ‘True Ambiguity’, at this level ‘multiple dimensions of uncertainty interact to create an environment that is virtually impossible to predict.’<sup>14</sup>

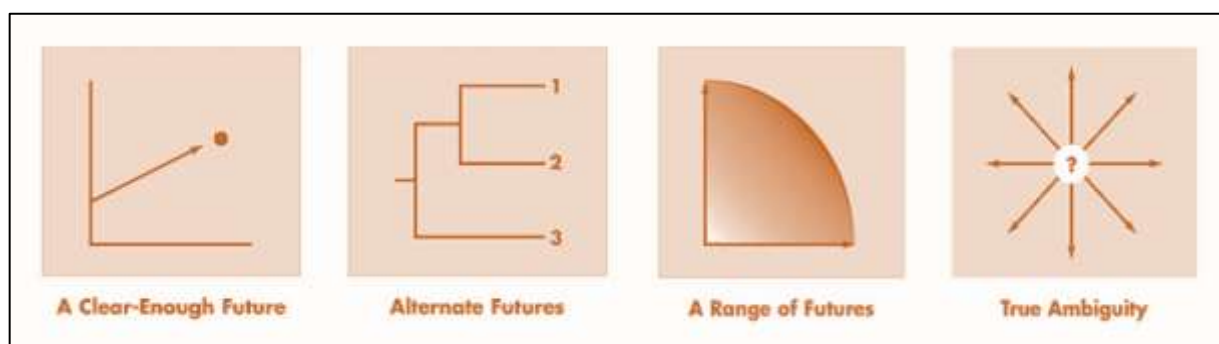


Figure 4.2 Schematic overview of the four levels of uncertainty<sup>15</sup>

These levels show how difficult it is for executives to make strategic decisions.<sup>16</sup> In the 1920s, American economist Frank Knight already understood the distinction between risk and uncertainty. In Knight’s point of view, risk is still measurable and quantifiable, thus known as measurable uncertainty, whereas ‘true uncertainty’ must be considered as the lack of any quantifiable knowledge about some possible occurrence. This second form of uncertainty is now known as Knightian uncertainty.<sup>17</sup>

## International relations

In the study of international relations, the nation-state plays a central role in uncertainty.

<sup>14</sup> Hugh Courtney, Jane Kirkland and Patrick Viguerie, ‘Strategy under Certainty’, Reprint 97603, *Harvard Business Review*, (November-December 1997), 3-5. 1-14.

<sup>15</sup> Courtney, Kirkland and Viguerie, ‘Strategy under Certainty’, 5-6.

<sup>16</sup> Hugh Courtney, Jane Kirkland and Patrick Viguerie, ‘Strategy under Certainty’, Reprint 97603, *Harvard Business Review*, (November-December 1997), 3-5. 1-14.

<sup>17</sup> Yakov Ben-Haim and Maria Demertzis, *Decision Making in Times of Uncertainty: An Info-gap Perspective*, DNB Working Paper, No. 487, (Amsterdam (NLD): De Nederlandse Bank (The Netherlands Bank), 2015), 3.

Rathburn concluded that the force of uncertainty is the central part of every distinguished research tradition in international relations. Uncertainty has different meanings that broadly correspond with four paradigms of international relations: realism, rationalism, cognitivism and constructivism.<sup>18</sup> Both realism and rationalism claim that states regard their environment objectively and relatively confidently, while cognitivism and constructivism struggle with perception and interpretation. This creates a different approach to uncertainty. In realism and rationalism uncertainty is considered as the problem of lacking information about others' intentions, but one that can be handled resolutely. Cognitivists and constructivists believe that states are uncertain about the availability of information on the intentions of other states. This kind of uncertainty makes them less determined and affects their degree of boldness.<sup>19</sup>

More specifically, realists experience uncertainty as fear, because states are cautious about the intentions of others, which cannot be known with certainty. The fear is induced by a combination of anarchy in the world system and the possibility of predation, being guzzled by other states. There is hardly any interest in signalling and selection of information, as the gathering and build-up of information does not improve security. Rationalists look upon uncertainty not as a form of anxiety as realists do, but rather as a form of ignorance.

Rationalists capture states as agonistic entities that do not accept anything. Ignorance is the best way to describe this form of uncertainty as a lack of interest in information about others' intentions without fear. The term ignorance depicts the position of a state of almost being in the dark and it also refers to avoidance of cognitive abilities of the states involved.

Cognitivists understand the confusing situation in which statesmen and governmental

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<sup>18</sup> 'Realism' is a school of thought in international relations theory unified by the belief that world politics is always and necessarily a field of conflict among actors pursuing power. Believers of the 'rationalistic approach in international relations' believe that multinational and multilateral organizations have their place in the world order, but they do not think that a world government is feasible. They emphasize the rule of law and order being important to nations as it helps to reduce conflicts. 'Cognitivists' criticise realist and rationalist theories on grounds of flawed assumptions such as nation-states are always rational actors, whose interest remain static and different interpretation of power and interest are not possible. Their collective opinion is that not only power or interests matters in international relations but much more perceptions and environment. Their approach is knowledge-based and focuses on the origin of interest as perceived by states, accentuating the role of normative and casual beliefs of decision makers. Followers of 'constructivism' claim that significant aspects of international relations are historically and socially constructed, rather than inevitable consequences of human nature or other essential characteristics of world politics. Social constructions are given their form by ongoing processes of social practice and interaction. They examine international relations by looking at goals, threats, fears, cultures, identities and other elements of social reality. See: Robert Goodin, *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, (Oxford (UK): Oxford University Press, 2010), 130-138. See also: Andreas Hasenclever, Peter Mayer and Volker Rittberger, 'Interests, Power, Knowledge: The Study of International Regimes', *Mershon International Studies Review*, 40 (1996) 2, 177-228.

<sup>19</sup> Brian Rathburn, 'Uncertain about Uncertainty: Understanding the Multiple Meanings of a Crucial Concept in International Relations Theory', *International Studies Quarterly*, 51 (2007), 533-535.



authorities need to make decisions due to the complexity of their task and their rational confines. Statesmen and authorities rely on models and cognitive rules of thumb to comprehend the complexity during conflict situations, but this also generates uncertainty. This uncertainty arises since the decision-maker with his models and rules is never certain whether he can oversee the entire situation. Uncertainty is most noticed in constructivism, more than the other three paradigms, although it is less explicit. Constructivists believe that states are uncertain about what to do primarily because action is lacking norms. States behave like *tabula rasa*<sup>20</sup> in international relations, creating uncertainty in this domain, because most of the states are indeterminate. Information has no fundamental connotation lacking these social constructions. Although, whether rationalism, cognitivism and constructivism are distinctive paradigms in the study of international relations is debatable, it leaves the impression that there is no true notion of uncertainty in this field.<sup>21</sup>

Many tragic outcomes of international politics, like security dilemmas and preventive wars, are often the result of worst-case assumptions imposed by uncertainty about intentions. Most governments rely on two general categories of indicators to estimate each other's intentions. First, they analyse domestic politics and social characteristics of opponents, such as ideology, political institutions, and the personalities of political or military leaders. Many governments perceive states with a similar or complementary ideology as benign and states with fundamentally opposed ideologies as malign. For example, during the George W. Bush administration the United States considered West European nations as friends whereas North-Korea, Iran and pre-invasion Iraq were labelled as 'rogue states'. Second, governments observe and judge other states' behaviour, like treaty commitments, arms procurement, and entering into friendships and alliances, to find out whether it reveals anything about future behaviour. In the American assessment of the Soviet-Union's intentions, the Soviet arms control policy made the Soviet state look increasingly benign. Next to the mentioned indicators, followers of the offense-defence theory<sup>22</sup> contend that states show their intentions through the weapons they produce.<sup>23</sup>

However, domestic characteristics and behavioural signals are just limited indicators of

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<sup>20</sup> *Tabula rasa* is a 'clean slate'.

<sup>21</sup> Rathburn, 'Uncertain about Uncertainty', 535-554.

<sup>22</sup> In the field of strategic studies, the offense-defence theory contends that a state's relative ease to attack and defence provide a powerful predictor of war initiation. See: Charity Butcher, 'Offense – Defense Theory: An Empirical Test', *International Studies Review*, 8 (2006) 3, 489-491.

<sup>23</sup> David Edelstein, 'Managing Uncertainty: Beliefs about Intentions and the Rise of Great Powers', *Security Studies*, 12 (2002) 1, 9-10

intentions. Recognition of a state's ideology often gives an ambiguous view of the actual intentions of a state, and behavioural signals are even more problematic. Those signals provide an insight into short-term crisis intentions but are unreliable for the future. Too often, just one absolute 'master indicator' of intentions has been sought, whether it be domestic characteristics or costly behaviour like arms procurement, which states use to estimate each other by creating a portfolio of available indicators rather than relying on a single keystone indicator. A well-designed intelligence portfolio needs to be varied, and it should rely on many possible sources of information. When the elements of this intelligence portfolio consistently point in one direction, governments are more likely to reach well-balanced conclusions about another state's intentions. When the portfolio offers inconsistent information, then uncertainty about intentions will ensue. Even though the components of portfolios are likely to differ from state to state, the process of looking for consistency among a variety of indicators is likely to be comparable.<sup>24</sup>

A remarkable fact in the publications about uncertainty in the study of international relations is that most researchers consider states as human beings, who can independently make decisions.<sup>25</sup> However, states do not make any decisions or suffer from uncertainty. It is, of course, the members of a government and in some cases other relevant dignitaries who determine which direction a nation takes. Researchers in the international relations study need to be very precise at which level decisions in an international environment are analyzed. Otherwise, these researchers will be confronted with the level-of-analysis problem in international relations.<sup>26</sup> Alexander Wendt, an American political scientist of German origin and one of the core social constructivist researchers in international relations, introduced the term 'agent-structure problem' in which the agent is referring to human beings who can influence their environment and their society, and structure refers to the society itself, which is made up of social relationships.<sup>27</sup> The conceptual problem at the heart of the agent-structure debate is how agents and structures are related. This debate arose because structures are often not observable, and the unintended consequences of an agent's conscious choices can create

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>25</sup> Kelman, 'Social-Psychological Approaches to the Study of International Relations', 586-587.

<sup>26</sup> J. David Singer, 'Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations', *World Politics*, 14 (1961) 1, 77-92.

<sup>27</sup> Alexander Wendt, 'The Agent Structure Problem in International Relations Theory', *International Organization*, 14 (1987) 3, 337-338.

an efficacious structure.<sup>28</sup> The debate shows that human information processes, thought structures, decisions, attitudes and actions affect the stance and behaviour of states. It is, therefore, of much interest to look at the cognitive and behavioural dynamics of human beings in order to find out what drives the decision-makers.

## Psychology

One of the leading psychological publications on uncertainty during decision-making came from Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky. They stated that at all levels of biological complexity there is uncertainty about the importance of signs or stimuli, and also about possible consequences of actions. Action is needed to resolve uncertainty, and an appropriate balance needs to be found between specific readiness for events that are most likely to occur, and a proper response when the unexpected happens. Before events take place, a human being will have expectations.<sup>29</sup>

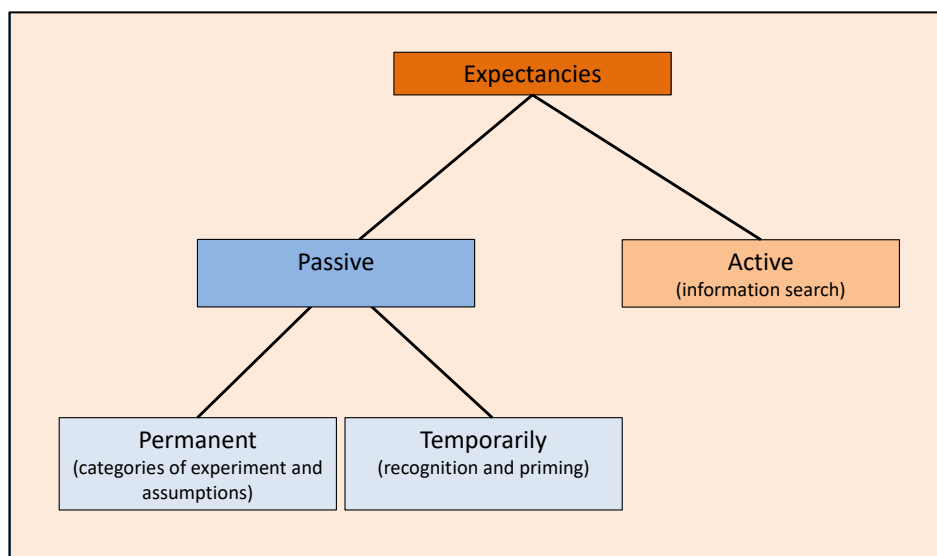


Figure 4.3 Perceptual expectancies by Kahneman and Tversky<sup>30</sup>

Kahneman and Tversky made a distinction between active and passive expectations: active expectations make use of human attention, searching for information, while passive

<sup>28</sup> Harry Gould, 'What Is at Stake in the Agent-Structure Debate?', in: Vendulka Kubáľková, Nicholas Onuf and Paul Kowert (Ed), *International Relations in a Constructed World*, (Milton Park, Abingdon (UK): Routledge, 1998), 79-97.

<sup>29</sup> Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, 'Variants of Uncertainty', in: Daniel Kahneman, Paul Slovic and Amos Tversky (Ed), *Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases*, Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, (1982), 509-510.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 511.

expectations take place automatically and without any effort. Some expectations are almost permanent, which are needed to define the perceptual categories that we use to arrange and to attach significance to experience. Specific long-term expectations function as permanent assumptions that help to interpret ambiguous stimuli. Kahneman and Tversky warned that expectations sometimes produce hallucinatory experiences, a special kind of illusion, which humans cannot separate from real experiences. They also discerned temporarily passive expectations. These expectations mediate contextual effects on recognition and diverse variants of priming.<sup>31</sup>

In social psychology priming is a phenomenon that refers to the process within the human mind how events or actions affect the activation of stored knowledge and social representations, such as traits, stereotypes or goals, by exposure to different categories of information, and the application of these activated representations in social judgment and behaviour.<sup>32</sup> Priming can highlight particular aspects. For instance, mass media can make some issues more salient than others, influencing the standards by which governments, heads of state, policies and candidates for public office are judged. In this case, priming is a logical consequence of agenda-setting by the press.<sup>33</sup> Priming can be very subtle, as tiny cues and stimuli can already subconsciously and significantly affect human behaviour. These stimuli can be a word, a phrase, an image, a sound, a smell or even a physical movement. It is often used in advertising, whereby celebrities use products to raise sales. Many people have role models, who are successful in some way or the other, and they will be triggered by such persons. Advertisement can have a priming effect on humans. For instance, people start buying a certain brand of coffee, because their role model drinks that particular coffee in a commercial.

Kahneman and Tversky noticed that perceptual expectancies decide what one sees in ambiguous stimuli. The result of such perceptual consideration is that human beings are strongly committed to the chosen interpretation of stimuli. Kahneman and Tversky stated that suppression of uncertainty and equivocation in perception suggest that human beings might be biologically predetermined to act on the perceptual best bet, as if no risk or error were

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 510-512.

<sup>32</sup> Daniel Molden, 'Understanding Priming Effects in Social Psychology: What Is "Social Priming" and How Does It Occur?', *Social Cognition*, 32 (2014) 3. See also: E. Tory Higgins and Baruch Eitam, Priming... Shimming: It's About Knowing When and Why Stimulated Memory Representations Become Active, *Social Cognition*, 32 (2014), 141-154.

<sup>33</sup> Dietram Scheufele, 'Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing Revisited: Another Look at Cognitive Effects of Political Communication', *Mass Communication & Society*, 3 (2000) 2&3, 302-306.

involved. A significant dissimilarity between active expectations and thoughts is that the latter can contain doubt and uncertainty, whereas the former normally do not.<sup>34</sup>

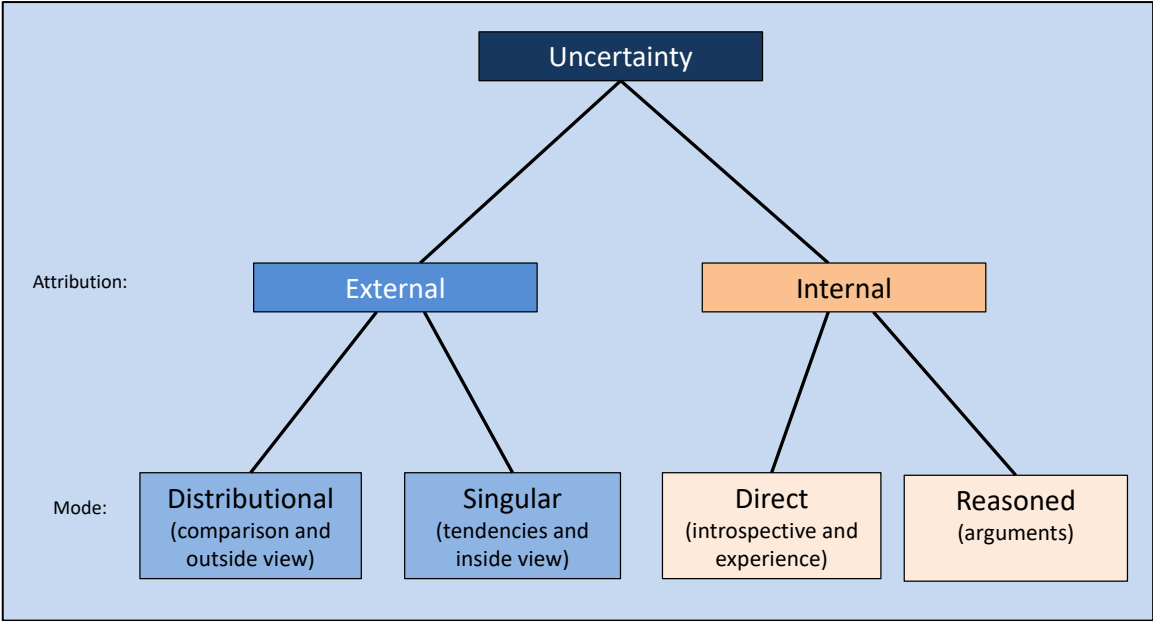


Figure 4.4 Variants of uncertainty by Kahneman and Tversky<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, Kahneman and Tversky distinguished two different ways that attribute to uncertainty, identified by the nature of information that is used in evaluating probability. The two variants are external and internal uncertainty. External uncertainty originates from uncertainty attributable to processes in the external world. This kind of uncertainty can emerge by comparing information that is called 'distributional uncertainty'. External uncertainty can also emerge when someone is guided by tendencies; this then is singular uncertainty. For example, one can bet on a horse based on the number of times the horse has previously won a race, which is a form of gambling arising from distribution uncertainty, or based on its current health record, which is a form of gambling grounded in singular uncertainty.<sup>36</sup>

Internal uncertainty is based on the lack of personal knowledge that comes with a given question. This question can sometimes be assessed both in a reasoned, based on arguments, and in a direct or introspective way, based on experiences. For example, a question

<sup>34</sup> Kahneman and Tversky, 'Variants of Uncertainty', 512-513.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 516.

<sup>36</sup> Kahneman and Tversky, 'Variants of Uncertainty', 515-519. And: Marie Juanchich, Amélie Gourdon-Kanhukamwe, and Miroslav Sirota, "I am Uncertain" vs "It is Uncertain": How Linguistic Markers of the Uncertainty Source Affect Uncertainty Communication', *Judgment and Decision Making*, 12 (2017) 5, 445-446.

concerning the age of a celebrity can be approached introspectively by providing an answer that sounds familiar, possibly heard or read before, or in a reasoned way by trying to distract an answer from other sources of knowledge. Kahneman and Tversky added that none of the experiences of uncertainty can be assigned to one of the four variants in figure 2. There are undeniably many intermingled or vague cases where uncertainty can be traced back to one of the four mentioned versions. Uncertainty in a given situation can be attributed to external factors, but also to one's ignorance or imperfection, or both.<sup>37</sup>

There are two degrees in the lack of knowledge. The first degree is the result of not having enough information to make decisions, due to the partial availability of information. This first degree may cause epistemic uncertainty. The second degree is when the information is unreliable, or when the uncertainty derives from an inadequate understanding of the situation in which a decision maker is forced to make a decision. It is uncertainty that is caused by ambiguity. A careful analysis is needed to further analyse this specific form of uncertainty. Three forms of inadequate understanding were discovered. The first form is the result of equivocal information. The second form stems from the novelty of a situation. The third form may arise from a rapidly changing or unstable situation the decision-maker finds himself in.<sup>38</sup>

## Summary

Uncertainty can be taken into account from various fields of science, such as NSE, economic sciences, the study of international relations and psychology. The uncertainty that is being felt arises from the process of decision-making about possible options. In the NSE field, a distinction is made between aleatory and epistemic uncertainty. Epistemic uncertainty focuses on the lack of prior knowledge, while aleatory uncertainty is about chance and unpredictability. Although NSE makes a distinction in uncertainty, the basis for this disparity comes from the humanities. Both forms of uncertainty are focused on the emotions of human beings. Unpredictability as to how someone is going to (re)act, decide or behave, or insufficient knowledge to form an adequate understanding of someone makes humans feel uncomfortable.

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<sup>37</sup> Kahneman and Tversky, 'Variants of Uncertainty', 515-519. And: Juanchich, Gourdon-Kanhukamwe, and Sirota, "I am Uncertain" vs "It is Uncertain", 445-446.

<sup>38</sup> Raanan Lipshitz and Orna Strauss, 'Coping with Uncertainty: A Naturalistic Decision-Making Analysis', *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 69 (1997) 2, 155. 149-163.

Uncertainty		
Science approach	Term / Current	Explanation
NSE	Epistemic uncertainty	Lack of knowledge & information
	Aleatory uncertainty	By chance / Unpredictable
Economy and Financial	Radical uncertainty	Not overseeing all possibilities and consequences
	Ontological uncertainty	Rapid changing circumstances
	Risk (or measurable uncertainty)	Future occurrence is measurable and quantifiable
	True or Knightian uncertainty	Lack of any quantifiable knowledge about some possible occurrence
	Four levels of uncertainty <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clear-enough future</li> <li>2. Alternate futures</li> <li>3. A range of futures</li> <li>4. True ambiguity</li> </ol>	
International Relations	Realists	Anxiety about intentions, and uncertainty is experienced as 'fear'
	Constructivists / Rationalists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of ignorance, which is a lack of interest;</li> <li>• Lack of identity, values and norms.</li> </ul>
	Cognitivists	Models and theories not sufficient to understand a conflict situation.
Psychology	Expectations	Matching stimuli and info against expectations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not overseeing all consequences;</li> <li>• Shut themselves off for information.</li> </ul>
	External uncertainty	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Distributional uncertainty: comparing information;</li> <li>2. Singular uncertainty: someone is guided by tendencies</li> </ol>
	Internal uncertainty, based on lack of personal knowledge, because of:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reasoning: based on arguments;</li> <li>2. Direct / introspective: based on experience.</li> </ol>
	Two degrees in lack of knowledge:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Not having enough information, due to availability, which can cause epistemic uncertainty;</li> <li>2. Having unreliable information or not understanding of situation, due to ambiguity</li> </ol>

Figure 4.5 Overview of the different kinds of uncertainty

Economic science, on the other hand, is especially interested in human behaviour and decisions. Most economic researchers know that humans are constantly confronted with uncertainty, because human beings make many decisions during the day: What to wear? What

to eat? What to buy? Financial experts divide uncertainty into four different levels: Level 1: Clear-Enough Future, Level 2: Alternate Futures, Level 3: A Range of Futures, and Levels 4: True Ambiguity. Economist Frank Knight made a distinction between risk, which is still measurable and quantifiable, and true uncertainty.

Economic researchers rather talk about radical uncertainty. It is radical, because a person simply cannot oversee all possibilities and consequences. In addition, ontological uncertainty, a term that is also used in the economic sciences, deals with rapidly changing circumstances. It is applicable during armed conflict, during which conditions can switch rapidly. Today a decision-maker is often no longer able to oversee a fast-changing conflict situation and to simultaneously give meaning to all changes in his belief system, eventually leading to ontological uncertainty. This form of uncertainty comes close to the uncertainty that is recognized by cognitivists studying international relations. Cognitivists believe that uncertainty arises because the knowledge in the form of models and rules is insufficient to understand the entire conflict.

Within the international relations there are other forms of uncertainty. Rationalists and constructivists ascertain that uncertainty results from ignorance and a lack of identity, values and norms. Realists, on the other hand, consider uncertainty as a form of anxiety about unknown intentions. Although most practitioners in the study of international relations consider states as monoliths that act as human beings with the same 'human' uncertainties, such as fear, ignorance, feeling a lack of identity and anxiety, these phenomena can be attributed to decision-makers in a state. Uncertainty leads to human shortcomings, which will be further explored in the next chapter.

In psychology, in turn, uncertainty is linked to probability and expectations in one of the leading researches on uncertainty. Decision-makers may be uncertain about signs and stimuli, but also about consequences of decisions and actions. Humans test signs and stimuli against their perceptual expectations, which can lead to odd situations where perceptual expectations can cause a false sense of experience, which human beings cannot distinguish from their real experience. These decision-makers make their own make-believe world invisible. A distinction can also be made in uncertainty attribution. It deals with the question how decision-makers receive and digest information, which may create uncertainty. External uncertainty is evoked either by comparing information or through establishing tendencies. Internal uncertainty is based on a personal lack of information, which can be caused by the



unavailability of information, by unreliable information or by not understanding the situation.

A common characteristic in this research is that uncertainty is the result of unknown intentions. This may be the result of the environment, in which there is not enough or predominantly inadequate information available, or caused by the decision-maker himself who is unable to oversee all the consequences of his actions, or closes himself off from relevant information. It can also arise from complexity, where decision-makers and other actors enter into rapidly changing relationships with each other, or from ambiguity, in which it is not clear to the decision-maker what meaning he should give to the actions and intentions of his opponent.

All in all, the multiple scientific approaches to uncertainty are all related to human decision-making that can affect opinion, behaviour or action. Uncertainty arises, because human beings cannot oversee all the possibilities to choose from and all the related consequences. In a conflict the opponent might be unpredictable, and his intentions might be unknown. Today's conflicts might also be too complex, whereby events promptly take place and relationships can shift constantly leading to ambiguity. Because of this fast-moving momentum in a conflict, decision-makers are no longer able to contemplate and give meaning to all developments in a conflict. On the other hand, a decision-maker might become ignorant to new information or unwilling to study an opponent, leading to a lack of knowledge and understanding, which in turn can instigate uncertainty. The next section deals with the emotional part of uncertainty, also known as surprise and explains the manipulation of perception and related behaviour.

### 4.3 Surprise

The previous chapter showed that surprise is one of the aims and outcomes of deception. Surprise is closely linked to uncertainty; some researchers even argue that uncertainty and surprise are caused by the same mechanisms. Surprise is a human mechanism and therefore it is also a main element of the third research sub-question: what are the human dimensions of deception in warfare? Surprise is a phenomenon that can be analysed from different approaches, like the study of international relations and the role of intelligence in these relations, war studies and psychology. It is precisely these scientific approaches that take a great interest in surprise. How can a state's civilian decision-makers and soldiers suddenly be surprised by attacks from other states? Have they never recognized certain patterns? Or have

they not correctly processed and assessed relevant information? And which psychological mechanisms play a role here? This section starts with the insights from international relations and intelligence studies and continues with the military and psychology, and concludes with a summary.

## International relations and intelligence

In the field of international relations and intelligence studies, many studies on surprise deal with surprise attacks. Ever since Roberta Wohlstetter launched her ground-breaking work on ‘Pearl Harbor’, many researchers have debated the cause of surprise attacks and intelligence failures and the degree in which intelligence services are able to foresee, stop and avoid future surprise attacks.<sup>39</sup> Wohlstetter presented the signal-to-noise metaphor, which was later elaborated by Michael Handel with his Three Barrier Model, explained in section 3.6 ‘The deception process’. Wohlstetter was convinced that indicators of a surprise attack are often appear in the data available to intelligence analysts, but they are overwhelmed by meaningless information. As long as authentic indicators in certain information packages, known as signals, remain relatively weak compared to other parts in those packages, known as noise, intelligence analysts will not recognize any surprise attacks.<sup>40</sup> However, the real art in preventing surprise attacks is not only distinguishing between reliable warning signs and excessive noise, but being able to make this distinction ‘on the eve of an attack, rather than the morning after’.<sup>41</sup>

The rest of this subsection deals with (1) intelligence analysts, (2) decision-makers, (3) human psyche, and (4) essence and classification.

### *(1) Intelligence analysts*

In many international deception cases it is also highly unlikely that surprise could have been avoided if analysts had been able to ‘connect the dots’ and distinguish the signals from the noise. The problem with intelligence data available prior to surprise attacks is that they are too

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<sup>39</sup> Joshua Rovner, *Fixing the Facts: National Security and the Politics of Intelligence*, (Ithaca, NY (USA): Cornell University Press, 2011), 6.

<sup>40</sup> Wohlstetter, *Pearl Harbor*, 386-396

<sup>41</sup> Abraham Ben-Zvi, ‘Hindsight and Foresight: A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of Surprise Attacks’, *World Politics*, 28 (1976), 4, 382.

generic and non-specific to be useful to decision-makers. Decision-makers can see the smoke of a growing threat, but not the flames. So, they do not know how and where to react to it, or decision-makers underestimate the urgency of the warnings.<sup>42</sup> The way in which information is digested by analysts is fascinating and may contribute to intelligence failures. For example, an analyst with access to high-quality intelligence data may still have no idea of his opponent's future behaviour. One reason for this lack of understanding is that even high-quality information can be questionable in a situation of uncertainty, particularly if the information is preceded by previous warnings and no attack follows. This false alarm construction is known as 'Crying Wolf' syndrome.<sup>43</sup>

Another problem for the analyst is the increasing amount of available information. Information overload affects the estimates of the analyst, because there are limits to analysts' abilities to manage information and to combine estimates from multiple sources. The more information is collected, the more difficult it becomes to filter, structure and integrate all pieces of information into an estimate. Nevertheless, additional information often enhances the precision of intelligence estimates.<sup>44</sup> Not sharing information between analysts can also be harmful, which is why intelligence institutions also matters. The way an intelligence service is organised helps or hinders the unified 'collection-analysis-warning-political decision-action process'.<sup>45</sup> Intelligence services should not act too compartmentalised. Many subsections own just part of it all, which leads to parochialism and politicization of intelligence processing and that hinders the quality of an adequate intelligence process.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Erik Dahl, *Intelligence and Surprise Attack: Failure and Success from Pearl Harbor to 9/11 and Beyond*, (Washington, DC (USA): Georgetown University Press, 2013), Kindle Edition, Introduction. And: Janne Nolan, Douglas MacEachin, and Kristine Tockman (Ed), *Discourse, Dissent, and Strategic Surprise: Formulating U.S. Policy in an Age of Uncertainty*, (Washington, DC (USA): Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Edmund A Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, 2006), 100-101.

<sup>43</sup> The 'Cry Wolf' syndrome derives from one of Aesop's Fables 'The Boy Who Cried Wolf'. The tale portrays a shepherd boy that frequently ruses nearby residents into believing wolves are attacking his herd. When a wolf actually appears and the boy again shouts for assistance, the residents are certain that it is another false alarm and all the sheep are eaten by the wolf. See: Louis Untermeyer, 'The Boy Who Cried Wolf, An Aesop Fable', Adapted by Untermeyer in 1965, <https://raynhalfpint.wordpress.com/2010/11/16/the-boy-who-cried-wolf/>, (24 May 2019).

<sup>44</sup> Ephraim Kam, *Surprise Attack: The Victim's Perspective*, Updated paperback edition, Originally published in 1988, (Cambridge, MA (USA): Harvard University Press, 2004), 53-55.

<sup>45</sup> John Gentry and Joseph Gordon, *Strategic Warning Intelligence: History, Challenges and Prospects*, (Washington, DC (USA): Georgetown University Press, 2019), 27-50.

<sup>46</sup> Gentry and Gordon, *Strategic Warning Intelligence*, 27-50, and 227-240.

## (2) *Decision-makers*

Even when intelligence analysts have unmistakably distinguished signals that can cause a surprise attack, it is hard for them to convince political and military decision-makers of the severity of the threat. Since many decision-makers analyse the situation and create their own beliefs, it is hard for them to absorb disconcerting information.<sup>47</sup> Analysts should be aware that decision-makers may have perspectives or biases that make them in varying degrees receptive to intelligence information, including mis-, mal- and disinformation. Likewise, decision-makers may be involved in national or international arrangements or agreements. Therefore, they cannot always respond promptly and adequately to warnings and intelligence.<sup>48</sup> In addition, many decision-makers often proceed with caution, carefully weighing all aspects before making a decision. Despite the fact that decision-makers often receive sufficient information, they are only prepared to take action once the crisis has started.<sup>49</sup> Many mistakes or errors can occur in the entire intelligence chain before the decision-maker gets the intelligence necessary to make a decision. This approach has been framed the ‘no-fault’ school in intelligence, because it seems to exculpate intelligence services from the responsibility of making mistakes.<sup>50</sup> The ‘no fault school’ assumes that an error is unavoidable and that no method can lead to the truth, if there is an absolute truth.<sup>51</sup> A different view on intelligence processing is based on a more assertive way of intelligence collection and adequate diagnostic methods. In addition, a different organizational set-up of the intelligence process can also lead to a more accurate warning system for decision-makers in order to avoid surprise attacks.<sup>52</sup>

## (3) *Human psyche*

Not only information, but also the human psyche can be disruptive in preventing a surprise

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<sup>47</sup> Richard Betts, ‘Analysis, War, and Decision: Why Intelligence Failures Are Inevitable’, *World Politics*, 31 (1978) 1, 61-89.

<sup>48</sup> John Gentry and Joseph Gordon, *Strategic Warning Intelligence: History, Challenges and Prospects*, (Washington, DC (USA): Georgetown University Press, 2019), 27-50.

<sup>49</sup> De Graaff, *Data en Dreiging (Data and Threat)*, 147.

<sup>50</sup> Rovner, *Fixing the Facts*, 7.

<sup>51</sup> John Ferris, *Intelligence and Strategy: Selected Essays*, (Abingdon (UK): Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 101-102.

<sup>52</sup> Elliot Cohen, ‘The No Fault School of Intelligence’, in: Roy Godson (Ed), *Intelligence Requirements for the 1990s: Collection, Analysis, Counterintelligence, and Covert Action*, (Lexington, MA (USA): Lexington Press, 1989), 71-81. And: Ariel Levite, *Intelligence and Strategic Surprises*, (New York, NY (USA): Columbia University Press, 1987), 135-172.

attack. The human mind is often incapable of critically examining its predetermined notion under conditions of stress and ambiguity. Humans are often incapable of proceeding beyond the narrow range of pre-existing ideas, which might cause surprise effects when dealing with conflict situations that are not quite clear.<sup>53</sup> Other human weaknesses, such as over-confidence, unwillingness to reassess viewpoints and bolster continuity, make analysts and decision-makers extremely vulnerable to surprise. It is often hard for humans to conceptualise developments in a situation or to estimate the behaviour of a potential opponent and to recognise the existence of ‘known unknowns’ and ‘unknown unknowns’.<sup>54</sup> The categorisation of the unknowns became popular after former United States Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld declared in one of his news briefings:

Reports that say that something hasn’t happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns – the ones we don’t know we don’t know. And if one looks throughout the history of our country and other free countries, it is the latter category that tends to be the difficult one.<sup>55</sup>

The ‘known unknowns’ are those doubts that have been identified within the national and international security communities, but for which there are no clear answers available. Gathering these known unknowns is an important step. Attempts to describe known unknowns identify ‘what to watch and where hedges are needed’.<sup>56</sup> It reduces the effects of surprise. The ‘unknown unknowns’, also called ‘black swans’, are more difficult.<sup>57</sup> These are concerns about the security realm that are not identified and not sufficiently understood.<sup>58</sup> Not recognising the unknowns means that something, an action, event or development, took place contrary to one’s expectations, proving that one’s perceptions were ill-founded. When that ‘something’ happens, most people expected it to occur later, at another location, or in a different way. On the other hand, humans do not always disregard the likelihood of a potential

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<sup>53</sup> Abraham Ben-Zvi, ‘The Study of Surprise Attacks’, *British Journal of International Studies*, 5 (1979) 2, 130.

<sup>54</sup> Cancian, *Avoiding Coping with Surprise*, 25.

<sup>55</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, ‘Department of Defense News Briefing with the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff’, Washington, DC (USA): United States Department of Defense, (12 February 2002). <https://archive.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=2636>, (23 May 2019).

<sup>56</sup> Cancian, *Avoiding Coping with Surprise*, 27-28.

<sup>57</sup> Black swans are sporadic and unpredictable events that differ enormously from other events, and there is a human tendency to find simplistic explanations for these events in hindsight. See: Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of Highly Improbable*, Revised edition, Originally published in 2007, (London (UK): Penguin Books, 2010), 1-20.

<sup>58</sup> Cancian, *Avoiding Coping with Surprise*, 28.

appearance of surprise, but rather tend to reject it as unlikely. It is a form of inductive reasoning error.<sup>59</sup>

Most psychological research of surprise within the study of international relations remains superficial and is preoccupied with describing stressors or patterns of misperception that occur with a victim and cannot prevent surprise. Much less attention was paid to underlying cognitive processes that help to create an adequate understanding of the situation that is necessary to organise an actual response to a perceived threat or surprise attack.<sup>60</sup> Richards Heuer, supported by Randolph Pherson, was an exception; he analysed the psychology of intelligence. It does make clear that additional research into these cognitive aspects is necessary.

#### *(4) Essence and classification*

The essence of surprise can be summarised by four simple elements: *whether* surprise will occur, and if surprise occurs, *when*, *where* and *how* it will take place. Surprise is considered as a state of mind of the victim. When a victim is not aware of all four elements, there is a high level of surprise. That level reduces gradually when a victim was suspicious of one or more of the elements.<sup>61</sup> Depending on the level, surprise can cause shock, demoralisation, or paralysis. These three unwanted psychological effects for a victim can, in turn, lead to his freezing reaction, indecisiveness, delayed activities, or inability to take protective activities at all.<sup>62</sup> Two different schools of thoughts on surprise attacks have been recognized for some years now. The ‘orthodox school’ argues that the inherent ‘pathologies and obstacles in the intelligence work’ make successful surprise possible, while the ‘revisionist school’ proclaims that the roots of the surprise element in surprise attacks lie in avoidable mistakes of specific intelligence authorities. Surprise failures can often not be traced back to just one of the schools; there is no question of an intelligence research dichotomy. Both schools provide insights necessary for a comprehensive view on surprise.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Kam, *Surprise Attack*, 2-9.

<sup>60</sup> Abraham Ben-Zvi, ‘Perception, Misperception and Surprise in the Yom Kippur War: A Look at the New Evidence’, *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 15 (1995) 2, 5-29.

<sup>61</sup> Kam, *Surprise Attack*, 2-24.

<sup>62</sup> Mark Cancian, *Avoiding Coping with Surprise in Great Power Conflicts*, A report of the CSIS International Security Program, (Washington, DC (USA): Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2018), 11-16.

<sup>63</sup> Or Honig, ‘Surprise Attacks – Are They Inevitable? Moving Beyond the Orthodox – Revisionist Dichotomy’, *Security Studies*, 17 (2008) 1, 72-73.

## The military

In the military domain, most armed forces use doctrine publications<sup>64</sup> to provide a set of fundamental principles that give direction in their thinking process, e.g during the planning of an operation. In the doctrine of most Western armed forces, surprise belongs to the ‘principles of war’, also known as the ‘principles of joint operations’ or the ‘principles of military operations’.<sup>65</sup> These principles are guidelines that are important to take into consideration prior to and during a conflict situation. This section focuses on NATO, American and British doctrine, because this Alliance and these NATO member states are the driving forces behind doctrine development, not only within NATO but in the entire Western world. American doctrine only states the aim of surprise as it is seen by the United States Armed Forces: ‘The purpose of surprise is to strike at a time or place or in a manner the enemy is unprepared for.’<sup>66</sup> NATO follows the American doctrine, and considers surprise from the initiator’s perspective: ‘Surprise is to strike the adversary at a time or place or in a manner for which they are unprepared. A surprise action may achieve results disproportionate to the effort expended.’<sup>67</sup> The American and NATO notion of surprise refers to Kam’s where, when and how surprise will take place. The British Joint Doctrine also describes the effect of surprise as:

Surprise limits our opponents’ reaction time by affecting their ability to make decisions.

Surprise may also undermine our opponent’s cohesion and morale. Surprising an opponent is a significant way of seizing the initiative and may be a critical precondition for success.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Doctrine, in the military context, is often seen as a formal expression of military thinking, valid for a period of time. Doctrine is descriptive, not prescriptive, and defines and explains foundation, starting points and secondary conditions for military operations at different levels. It ensures unity of terms and concepts within the armed forces.

<sup>65</sup> Most Western armed forces distinguished the following principles: (1) objective, (2) offensive, (3) concentration and mass, (4) maintenance of morale, (5) manoeuvre, (6) economy of force, (7) unity of command, (8) security, (9) surprise, (10) flexibility and (11) simplicity, (12) freedom of action, and (13) initiative. American doctrine uses the term ‘principles of joint operations’ that are formed around the traditional principles of war and added with three additional principles: restraint, perseverance and legitimacy. Netherlands doctrine calls it ‘principles of military operations’, the Netherlands armed forces consider legitimacy as a principle that always applies. See: United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 3-0, Joint Operations*, Revised edition incorporating change 1, Originally published on 17 January 2017, (Washington, DC (USA): Department of Defense, 22 October 2018), Appendix 1: Principles of Joint Operations, A-3. See also: United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, *Joint Doctrine Publication 0-01: UK Defence Doctrine*, 5th Edition, (Shrivenham (UK): The Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre, November 2014), 30.

<sup>66</sup> United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 3-0*, Appendix 1: Principles of Joint Operations, A-3.

<sup>67</sup> NATO, *Allied Joint Publication 01 (AJP-01)*, Edition E Version 1, (Brussels (BEL): NATO Standardization Office, February 2017), 1-14.

<sup>68</sup> United Kingdom MoD, *UK Defence Doctrine*, 30.

The British Army Doctrine is more specific:

Surprise is a potent psychological weapon, causing shock through unexpected action in time, space and method. Enabled by security, surprise involves using secrecy, concealment, deception, originality, audacity or tempo to confuse, paralyse or disrupt effective decision-making, and undermining an adversary's cohesion and morale. [...]. Surprise is by nature transient, as shock and confusion recede over time, so its effects should be exploited rapidly and aggressively.<sup>69</sup>

This British army approach to surprise not only relates to Kam's when, where and how, but it also takes the effects of surprise on the victim into consideration. Likewise, the British army doctrine recognizes that surprise has only a limited effect when viewed over time. All in all, it is striking that current military doctrine of Western nations barely pays attention to surprise, and this is in line with the findings about deception. As the previous chapter already noted: deception is seldom used in the Western armed forces.

Another principal aspect of surprise, which is important to military leaders bent on aggression, has been speed. Speed provides decisive deception and surprise only when it outruns the speed of information to an opponent or, if it does not succeed, an opponent's ability to prepare for a conflict. However, in the modern world, the speed of communication may forestall total surprise. Surprise will have a more significant effect when speed and secrecy are part of the surprise plan.<sup>70</sup>

## Psychology

Surprise can be considered as a confrontation with unexpected or novel situations that are not immediately understood. It is a lack of knowledge and understanding that causes specific affective states and emotions, and it also elicits other processes in the human brain.<sup>71</sup> Surprise is also an 'information gap'. People try to give meaning to all the events they experience. It is

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<sup>69</sup> United Kingdom, Chief of the General Staff, *Army Doctrine Publication: Land Operations*, (Warminster (UK): Headquarters, Field Army, Warfare Branch, Land Warfare Development Centre, March 2017), Annex 1A: Principles of War, 1A-2.

<sup>70</sup> Herbert Goldhammer, (Edited by Joan Goldhammer), *Reality and Belief in Military Affairs, A First Draft*, R-2448-NA, A report prepared for the Director of Net Assessment, Office of the Secretary of Defense, (Santa Monica, CA (USA): The Rand Corporation, February 1979), 118-123.

<sup>71</sup> Marret Noordewier, *The Dynamics of Surprise and Curiosity*, PhD-dissertation, (Leiden (NLD): Leiden University, 2016), 7.



a form of sense making. Likewise, during an unexpected event, humans want to understand what happens. In other words, a human being has a certain amount of knowledge, and after an unexpected event this human being realises that he lacks certain knowledge to predict and explain what was to be expected. There is an information gap between the time period before a surprise event and the time period during and after the surprise event.<sup>72</sup> The information gap is often experienced as a negative feeling, after all ‘inconsistency, knowledge deprivation, lack of structure or uncertainty is aversive’ because it threatens a human’s need for a foreseeable, well-structured and consistent world.<sup>73</sup>

This subsection also explains: (1) surprise-elicited process, and (2) emotions involved in surprise.

### *(1) Surprise-elicited process*

After an unexpected event, such as surprise, different processes in the human brain will take place, which can be displayed in a framework. Such a framework with surprise related processes is based on the fundamental idea that perception, thought, emotion and action are, to a large extent, controlled by complex knowledge structures, called schemata. These schemata are informal, unarticulated concepts about humans, objects, situations and events. For schemata to function, they must at least be about correct, which in turn, necessitates that they are consistent with the available information.<sup>74</sup>

On the one hand, as long as there is consonance between activated schemata and events that are encountered, the interpretation of the events and the suitable actions takes place automatically, in an effortless, unconscious and unintentional way. On the other, if there is a difference between schemata and informational input, surprise is provoked, schematic processing is disrupted, and a more effortful, conscious and deliberate analysis of the unexpected event is initiated.<sup>75</sup> This way of conscientisation is also the foundation of the recognised primed decision-making (RPD) process. RPD is a model that describes how people often make decisions. It is based on recognition and interpretations of situations in

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<sup>72</sup> George Loewenstein, ‘The Psychology of Curiosity; A Review and Reinterpretation’, *Psychological Bulletin*, 116 (1994) 1, 86-87.

<sup>73</sup> Noordewier, *The Dynamics of Surprise and Curiosity*, 8.

<sup>74</sup> Wulf-Uwe Meyer, Rainer Reisenzein, and Achim Schützwohl, ‘Toward a Process Analysis of Emotions: The Case of Surprise’, *Motivation and Emotion*, 21 (1997) 3, 251-256

<sup>75</sup> Meyer et al., ‘Toward a Process Analysis of Emotions’, 251-256.

which decisionmakers quickly adjust and apply previous knowledge when making relevant decisions.<sup>76</sup>

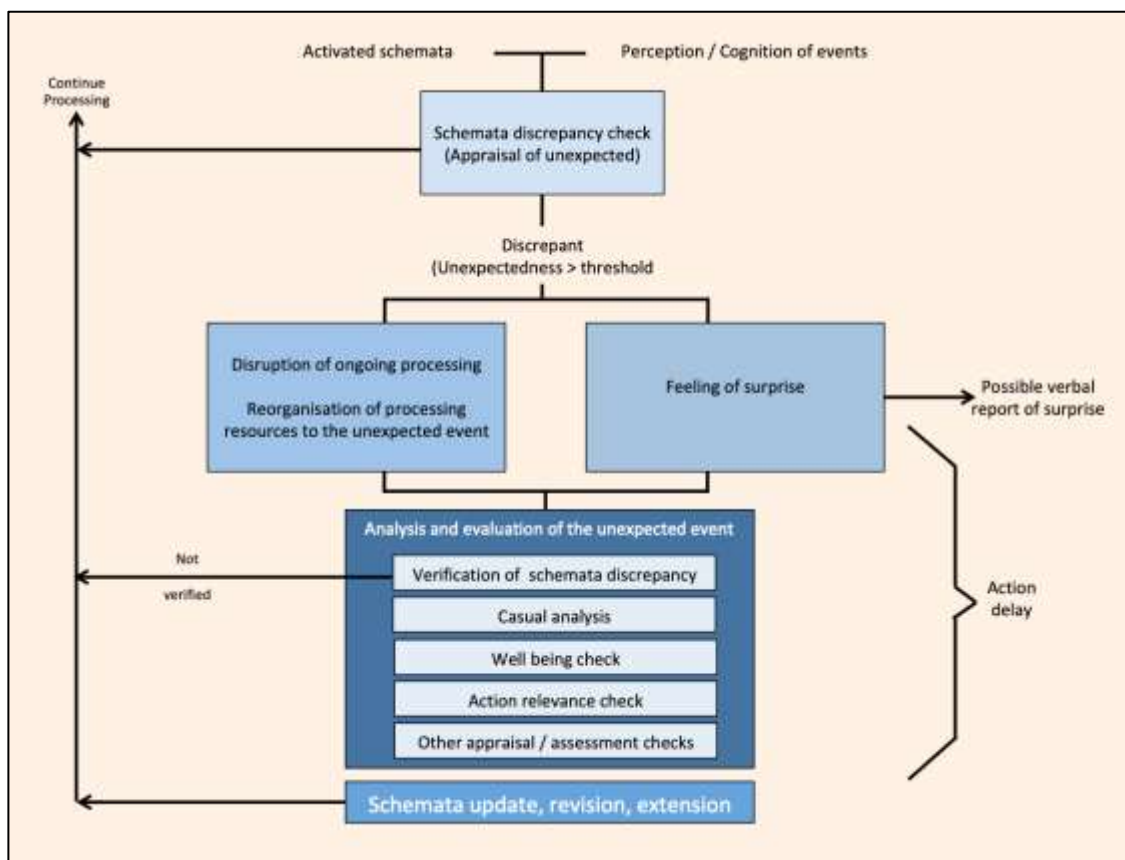


Figure 4.6 Surprise-elicited processes by Meyer, Reisenzein and Schützwohl<sup>77</sup>

Surprise-eliciting events initiate a series of processes that begin with the assessment of an identified event as exceeding a certain threshold of unexpectedness, continuing to experience a surprise experience, while disrupting ongoing information processing and reorganization of processing resources to the unexpected event. A surprise-eliciting event concludes with an analysis and evaluation of this event, together with, if necessary, an update, revision or extension of the relevant schemata. The analysis and evaluation include a verification of schemata discrepancy, an analysis into the causes of surprise, a well-being check on physical condition, emotions and feelings and an action relevance check. The only two overt indicators of surprise are a possible verbal report of surprise by the victim and action delay, the latter caused by the analysis and evaluation of the unexpected event.<sup>78</sup> Once people attend to a surprise stimulus they subsequently stare at it, probably to make sense of it, which lowers

<sup>76</sup> Klein, *Sources of Power: How People Make Decisions*, 23-27.

<sup>77</sup> Meyer et al, 'Toward a Process Analysis of Emotions', 254

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 251-256.

attention to non-surprising surroundings.<sup>79</sup>

## (2) *Emotions*

Psychology researchers often consider surprise to be the sense of amazement that someone feels for the unexpected. A surprisingly enjoyable event can generate unusually strong positive feelings, much stronger than an expected enjoyable event. Likewise, a surprisingly negative effect can cause pain, more than when the effect was expected. The explanation is that surprise generates feelings normally associated with expectations, which in turn are fueled by cognitive assessments of probability, intuition and superstition. When unexpected pleasant events occur, it exceeds expectations and generates hedonic experiences.<sup>80</sup> There are parallels between human science studies showing surprise effects and electrophysiological studies of dopamine neurons in monkeys.<sup>81</sup> When monkeys expected a reward, dopamine neurons became very active, and when as monkeys receive a reward, the neuron activities depended on previous expectations. Unexpected rewards led to more activities than expected rewards.<sup>82</sup>

The comparisons with humans can easily be made, because surprise effects not only occur in the mind of humans but also in the mind of other mammals, which are close to human beings, like monkeys. It is easy to construct evolutionary reasons for the effects. Victims can compare the result of their activities to many reference points, like the status quo, personal aspirations, or social desires, amongst others. These reference points can shift over time. For instance, when students imagine their performance prior to an exam and afterwards, when they have more information, they might change their ambitions. Surprise intensifies emotional experiences. The pleasure of a surprising gain can exceed the pain of an expected loss, while

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<sup>79</sup> Noordewier, *The Dynamics of Surprise and Curiosity*, 32.

<sup>80</sup> Barbara Mellers et al, 'Surprise: A Belief or an Emotion?', in: V.S. Chandrasekhar Pammi and Narayan Srinivasan (Ed), *Progress in Brain Research, Decision Making: Neural and Behavioural Approaches*, Vol. 202, (Amsterdam (NLD): Elsevier, 2013), 3-17.

<sup>81</sup> Dopamine is a certain neurotransmitter, which is released by nerve cells to send signals to other nerve cells. For a long time, dopamine was often considered as the main hormone of pleasure, but according to today's pharmacological opinion, dopamine confers motivational salience; it signals the perceived motivational desirability or aversiveness of an outcome. See: Robert Malenka, Eric Nestler and Steven Hyman, *Molecular Neuropharmacology: A Foundation for Clinical Neuroscience*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (New York, NY (USA): McGraw-Hill Professional, 2008), 147-148, 366-367 and 375-376. And: Jennifer Wenzel et al, 'A Role for Phasic Dopamine Release within the Nucleus Accumbens in Encoding Aversion: A Review of the Neurochemical Literature', *ACS Chemical Science*, 6 (2015) 1, 16-26.

<sup>82</sup> Mellers et al, 'Surprise: A Belief or an Emotion?', 17.

the pain of a surprising loss can be larger in dimension than the pleasure of an expected gain.<sup>83</sup>

## Summary

Surprise, like uncertainty, can be analysed from multiple disciplines. In international relations studies, especially those that deal with intelligence, surprise is often translated into strategic surprise or surprise attacks, which can take place for various reasons. Several intelligence experts note shortcomings in the intelligence process, while others see imperfect intelligence analysts as the main reason. Although adequate information on upcoming events and warnings are often available before an attack, surprise will still take place. This might be a result of failures in the intelligence collection. Other reasons for surprise are that analysts are not able to recognize patterns in available information, also known as ‘connecting the dots’, or that selective reception of information leads to incorrect expectations and perception among intelligence analysts and decision-makers. A deeper reason for these human imperfections might be that, during a conflict, intelligence analysts and decision-makers function under constant pressure, stress and ambiguity, arising from a lack of available and adequate information. Human beings are then losing their ability to think comprehensively. From a victim’s perspective, surprise can occur in a conflict, because events or new information might contravene existing expectations built upon great confidence in aspects such as high technology equipment used by armed forces, doctrine or other conventions. In some cases, the victim of surprise might suffer from gullibility, still thinking that the security environment is not at risk and that the threat of a possible opponent will naturally disappear.

Situations in which intelligence analysts have doubts, both the known unknowns and unknown unknowns may cause surprise. Within the group of leading nations regarding the development of military doctrine, it is the British Army, where surprise is concerned, that not only focuses on when, where and how to expect or create surprise, but also on the limited time effect of surprise. Two other elements considered by the military in order to create surprise in their operations are speed and secrecy.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 3-11.

Surprise		
Approach	Term	Explanation
IR and intelligence	Causes of surprise attacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early warning not working well</li> <li>• Indicators overwhelmed by meaningless information</li> <li>• Not in line with expectations</li> <li>• No warning noticed</li> <li>• Inadequate intelligence process</li> </ul>
	Surprise often leads to a disturbed state of mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shock / demoralisation / paralysis</li> <li>• Possible result with the victim: freeze, indecisiveness, delayed reaction or no action at all.</li> </ul>
	Intelligence failures can underlie surprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shortcoming in information and intelligence collection, interpretation, distribution and prioritisation</li> <li>• Misperception of patterns in information</li> <li>• Selective reception to information</li> <li>• Pressure and stress can lead to incomprehensive thinking of analysts and decisionmakers.</li> <li>• Analyst cannot convince decisionmaker</li> <li>• Narrative building implies often a shut down for contrasting information</li> <li>• Known unknowns and unknown unknowns not recognized or understood</li> </ul>
Military	Surprise is a principle of war	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning aspects: when, where and how</li> <li>• Limited time effect</li> <li>• Speed</li> <li>• Secrecy</li> </ul>
Psychology	Confrontation with unexpected or novel situation	Based on lack of knowledge and understanding or on an information gap.
	Surprise can intensify emotional experiences	Such as anger, fear, but also pleasure.
	Surprise is the connection between cognition and emotion	
	Surprise can lead to action delay	Person is overwhelmed and needs time to pull himself together again.
	Gullibility can lead to surprise	People perceive no threat, see no risk and the threat will disappear again by itself.

Figure 4.7 Overview of the different observations of surprise

From a psychological point of view, surprise is a confrontation with the unexpected, or new, situation, based on an information gap before and during the occurrence of surprise, also considered as a lack of dedicated information to predict and explain the expected. Moreover, surprise is the linking pin between cognition, mostly a lack of knowledge and information, and emotion. Surprise intensifies emotional experiences and can evoke emotional reactions, like shock, freeze, demoralisation and paralysis. It can also lead to an action delay, because a person, who is overwhelmed by the surprise, needs to get a grip on the situation again. To conclude the surprise part of this chapter, it is important to recognize the human shortfalls prior to, and during, the occurrence of surprise, as well as the fact that surprise is an effect that will quickly erode over time. It is only an event to create shock and awe. The next section of the chapter looks at other human processes that contribute to the creation of perception, in particular manipulated perceptions.

#### 4.4 Manipulated perception

Just as uncertainty and surprise, manipulated perception was one element of the deception process that was hardly explained in earlier deception research. Manipulated perception, as shown in figure 3.10 ‘Overview of the deception process’ are one the aims of deception. While positivists used a term like ‘false perception’ to create a contrast with real or true perceptions, it is difficult to clarify what false perception really is.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, this section concentrates on how perceptions can be manipulated. Before researching how to manipulate perceptions, it is prudent to consider what perceptions actually are. However, perceptions in the human brain do not guarantee a fixed pattern of thinking and behaviour. In this way, two decision-makers with the same perception may decide differently. On the other hand, decision-makers with different perceptions may come to the same decision.<sup>85</sup>

Perceptions occur to understand received data and sensory information compared to the context and environment in order to become meaningful experiences, which in turn may contribute to the development of wisdom of a person.<sup>86</sup> Humans tend to be well-organized in

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<sup>84</sup> Robert Mandel, *Perception, Decisionmaking, and Conflict*, (Washington, DC (USA): University Press of America, 1979).

<sup>85</sup> Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, (Princeton, NJ (USA): Princeton University Press, 1976), 31. And: Ithiel de Sola Pool, ‘The Kaiser, the Tsar, and the Computer: Information Processing in a Crisis’, in: Naomi Rosenbaum (Ed), *Readings on the International Political System*, Foundations of Modern Political Science Series, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ (USA): Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), 104-105.

<sup>86</sup> Douglas Bernstein, Louis Penner, Alison Clarke-Stewart and Edward Roy, *Psychology: Instructor’s Annotated Edition*, Sixth edition, (Boston, MA (USA): Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003), 144.

their minds, and they classify patterns according to their own internal rules in an effort to create some order in their thinking and behaviour.<sup>87</sup> The two trends in psychology that might explain the manipulation of perception are social and cognitive psychology. Cognitive psychology in general is the approach that focuses on how humans take in, mentally represent, and store information. Cognitive psychologists then relate perception and information processing to patterns of behaviour.<sup>88</sup> On the other hand, social psychology in general studies several aspects on how humans think about, relate to, influence, and are influenced by others. It involves research into social influence, persuasion, and manipulation.<sup>89</sup>

This section starts with a subsection in which an explanation is given of what perception is. The next step, and therefore the next subsection, is the manipulation of perceptions, which consists of various methods.

## Perception

The first step in this subsection is to analyse the phenomenon of perception. In general, perception is the foundation for how people perceive their environment and interpret and process new information. The formation of new perception can best be explained with the (1) cognitive hierarchy, shown in section 2.2 '*Maskirovka*'. Furthermore, human capabilities that contribute to the creation of perceptions are (2) 'connecting the dots', explained by Gestalt psychology, (3) belief systems, (4) self-fulfilling prophecy, (5) memory and (6) preferences. These capabilities are described in coming sub-subsections.

### *(1) Cognitive hierarchy*

In short, the cognitive hierarchy describes human information processing from perceived data to information. Next step is the analysis of information leading to the forming of knowledge. Another step further in the hierarchy is to judge the knowledge that creates understanding and wisdom. Broadly speaking, the formation of perceptions takes place around the level of information in the cognitive hierarchy. Raw data are processed into information. During this

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<sup>87</sup> Herschel Leibowitz and Lewis Harvey Jr, 'Perception', *Annual Review of Psychology*, 24 (1973), 214.

<sup>88</sup> Douglas Bernstein and Peggy Nash (Ed), *Essentials of Psychology*, Second Edition, (Boston, MA (USA): Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002), 9-10.

<sup>89</sup> Bernstein et al, *Psychology: Instructor's Annotated Edition*, 6.

step, a person will create a certain image unnoticed, so that he will look at the world in a certain way. This image also influences the analysis of information from which knowledge arises. This will be explained in more detail in the following paragraphs.

The accuracy of perceptions depends on the effectiveness of information processing. In this context, the information derives from anything that happens in an actor's environment, but also from action, behaviour, decisions, or exposure to messages and other incentives. This type of information is raw data that gets attention and receives meaning when it penetrates the cognitive system of a human.<sup>90</sup> Humans unwittingly make a selection from a large amount of information. The selected information, or sensory information, enters into their cognitive hierarchy. This method of filtering is referred to as the process of attention. Used by, for example, the advertising industry, which has been focusing on attracting the attention of consumers for years.<sup>91</sup> All rejected information is attenuated and does not get any further into the nervous system to provoke any human reaction.<sup>92</sup>

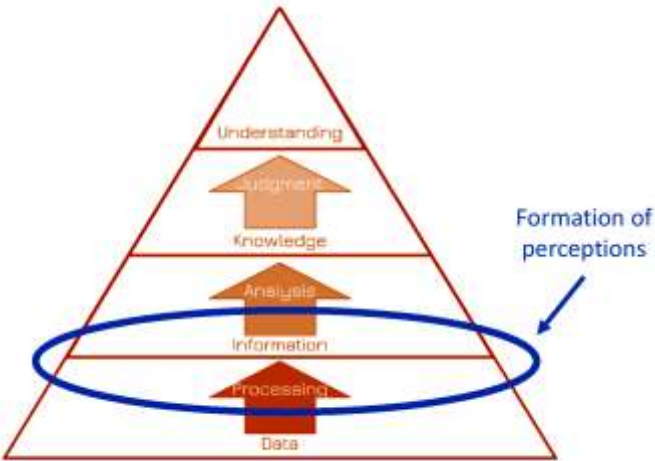


Figure 4.8 Place of the formation of perceptions in the cognitive hierarchy of Ackoff

The next step is that sensory information is interpreted as meaningful experiences. It is seen as an active process, human brains digest sensory information and generate a coherent picture of the world, often by filling information and using gained experiences and knowledge to give

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<sup>90</sup> Yacoov Vertzberger, *The World in Their Minds: Information Processing, Cognition, and Perception in Foreign Policy Decisionmaking*, (Stanford, CA (USA): Stanford University Press, 1990), 23-25.  
<sup>91</sup> Herschel Leibowitz, *Visual Perception*, The Critical Issues in Psychology Series, (New York, NY (USA): The Macmillan Company, 1965), 28-34.  
<sup>92</sup> David Green and John Swets, *Signal Detection Theory and Psychophysics*, Originally published by John Wiley & Sons in 1966, (Los Altos, CA (USA): Peninsula Publishing, 1988), 334-335.



understanding and meaning to what they see, hear, smell, taste or feel.<sup>93</sup> Most of the perception process takes place unconsciously. A distinction can be made between ‘perception’ and ‘conception’. Perceptions, in order to be useful, happen quickly and are often based on superficial knowledge, whereas the forming of concepts, the last step in the cognitive hierarchy, may even take years, since knowledge and notions are in a sense timeless.<sup>94</sup> Daniel Kahneman explained this distinction by dividing the thought processes in the human mind into two different systems:

1. *System 1*: this system operates automatically and quickly, with little or no effort and no sense of voluntary control. It initiates impressions and feelings that are the main source of explicit beliefs and deliberate choices of system 2.
2. *System 2*: this system assigns attention to effortful mental activities that demand it, including complex calculations. It is slower than system 1, but it can construct thoughts in an orderly sequence of steps.<sup>95</sup>

By far most perception, and implicitly so misperception too, is created by system 1, whereas system 2 is the system that creates knowledge and conception.

## *(2) Gestalt psychology: connecting the dots*

The next phase in the cognitive hierarchy takes place at the level of information. Gestalt psychology further explains how the mosaic of sensory information gave rise to perception by the tendency to group things into simple units. Gestalt psychologists believe that there are pre-existing pictures and certain formats inside the human brain, and missing pieces of information in these pictures are filled in automatically. A few lines are all that is required for eyes, and the brain does the rest.<sup>96</sup> It is about connecting the dots! It also works for a few letters that are necessary to form a word, a few words to form a sentence, and few information packages to form a new narrative. Gestalt psychology considers how the mind organises futile, elemental stimuli, like raw data, into meaningful global perceptions.

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<sup>93</sup> Bernstein et al, *Psychology: Instructor's Annotated Edition*, 144. And: Richards Heuer, *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*, Originally published in 1999, McClean, VA (USA): Center for Intelligence Studies, Central Intelligence Agency, (2001), 7.

<sup>94</sup> Richard Gregory and Oliver Zangwill, *The Oxford Companion to the Mind*, (Oxford (UK): Oxford University Press, 1987), 598-599.

<sup>95</sup> Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slowly*, Originally published in 2011, (London (UK): Penguin Books, 2012), 20-24.

<sup>96</sup> Richard Gregory, *Eye and Brain: The Psychology of Seeing*, Third edition: revised and updated, World University Library, Originally published in 1966, (New York, NY (USA): McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1978), 9-14.

Part of Gestalt psychology is the so-called Zeigarnik effect. This effect, which means that people remember unfinished and interrupted tasks better than completed ones, demonstrates the general presence of Gestalt mechanisms, not only as perceptual effects, but also in daily life and cognition as subjects express a need for completion.<sup>97</sup> This means that people do not only appreciate unfinished tasks, they also have the tendency to complete figures and stories that, in the opinion of people, are not complete. People start filling in the missing parts themselves. Gestalt psychology and the Zeigarnick effect are further explained in detail in the Annex B ‘Gestalt psychology’.

### *(3) Belief systems*

The filling in of missing information, as outlined in the functioning of Gestalt mechanisms, is largely based on someone's belief system. Belief systems are structures of norms that are interrelated. In other words, belief systems are narratives that humans tell themselves to define their personal sense of reality. Every human being has a belief system, and it is through this system that every individual makes sense of the world he lives in. Persons are strongly committed to their belief systems and psychological mechanisms, such as cognitive congruence, that may help explain this individual commitment. The boundaries of belief systems are often generally defined. Belief systems are affected by the existence or nonexistence of certain conceptual entities, like ‘God, the Motherland, witches and assassination conspiracies’, and they can include representations of alternative, often idealistic, world views, typically the world as it is versus the world as it should be.<sup>98</sup>

These belief systems include a ‘substantial amount of episodic material’ from personal experience, cultural folklore, gossips, or propaganda. Elements of a belief system are values, substantive beliefs based on culture and religion, assumptions, language, perspectives, prescriptions, and ideals.<sup>99</sup> There are three types of belief. First, people hold beliefs about the consequences the way they behave themselves. Second, people form beliefs about what they

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<sup>97</sup> Kenneth Savitsky, Victoria Husted Medvec, and Thomas Gilovich, ‘Remembering and Regretting: The Zeigarnik Effect and the Cognitive Availability of the Regrettable Actions and Inactions’, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 23 (1997) 3, 248-257.

<sup>98</sup> Joseph Louis Usó-Doménech and Josue Nescolarde-Selva, ‘What Are Belief Systems?’, *Foundation of Science*, 21 (2016) 1, 147-152.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

think important individuals or groups in their lives would approve or disapprove of. Third, humans also form beliefs about personal and environmental factors. This last type may cause either a high or a low self-esteem, and it includes the so-called 'control beliefs' that may result in a sense of high or low self-efficacy.<sup>100</sup>

#### *(4) Self-fulfilling prophecy*

Perceptions are highly affected by individual and societal belief systems. Therefore, perceptions can be interpreted as 'social constructs of reality' based on the fact that people interact in a social system and create, over time, a mental representation of each other's actions.<sup>101</sup> Perceptions are subjective and when people trust too much their own assumptions and predictions, a form of 'self-fulfilling prophecy' may occur. This is a situation whereby a person purely trusts on an assumption or prediction that causes the expected event to occur, and thereby confirms his own belief.<sup>102</sup> It is a potentially erroneous definition of the situation that evokes a new behaviour by way of which the original wrong view becomes true. This apparent accuracy of the forecast maintains a misjudgment, namely that the predictor will provide what finally happened as proof that he was right from the start.<sup>103</sup> For instance, when someone assumes that he is not respected, he will, because of this assumption, behave bluntly to others in his environment, who, in turn, will react with disdain, which proves again and again his firmly entrenched conviction.<sup>104</sup> It also refers to the Thomas theorem mentioned earlier in section 3.5 'Manifestation'.

#### *(5) Memory*

People store their perceptions in their memories. In every new situation, they test new sensory information against the perceptions they have already recorded. It seems that people almost compulsively tend to distrust new sensory information that does not fit within their

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<sup>100</sup> Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen, *Predicting and Changing Behavior: The Reasoned Action Approach*, (New York, NY (USA): Psychology Press, Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 20-21.

<sup>101</sup> Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in Sociology of Knowledge*, (London (UK): Penguin Books, 1966), 47-91 and 129-174.

<sup>102</sup> Paul Watzlawick, 'Self-Fulfilling Prophecy', in: Paul Watzlawick (Ed), *The Invented Reality: How Do We Know What We Believe We Know?* (New York, NY (USA): W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), 95.

<sup>103</sup> Robert Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structures*, Revised edition, Originally published in 1947, (New York, NY (USA): Free Press, 1968), 477.

<sup>104</sup> Paul Watzlawick, 'Self-Fulfilling Prophecy', in: Paul Watzlawick (Ed), *The Invented Reality: How Do We Know What We Believe We Know?* (New York, NY (USA): W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), 95.

perceptions already formed.<sup>105</sup> Memory is an important quality in the process of forming new perceptions.<sup>106</sup> In their minds, humans continuously make associations with previously obtained images of reality. These virtually saved images of reality are often no longer complete, but, within the best Gestalt-tradition, human minds automatically fill in the missing parts of the images. Humans are even able to modify their saved images and thus correct the previously saved images. This is why a person recognizes another person, known to him, even though they have not seen each other for years. Their faces may have changed, maybe they have developed grey hair or become bold, have more wrinkles, and their physical condition might be different, but they can still identify each other and know exactly who they are.<sup>107</sup>

### (6) Preferences

Perceptions also form the basis of how people arrive at preferences and judgments. In making these deductions, humans need to seek indications in a world with different faces: sometimes aloof and unresponsive, yet in other cases helpful, and often manipulative. The more humans understand the factors shaping their inferences, the better they learn what they prefer. After receiving information, humans start processing these incentives and this activates the generation of preferences. During this process humans translate their perceptions into numerical judgments. The way these judgments are shaped depends on how the incentives are presented and digested. Humans also use their beliefs to construct preferences. At the end of the process humans tend to translate the preferences into suitable terms in order to state those preferences.<sup>108</sup> On the other hand, humans often make deductions about the other's personal qualities, and even when they are unsure, they can remember how they actually behaved, using uncertain behavioural evidence. Even worse, people come to conclusions about others when they know that the information is not correct.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Celia Green and Charles McCreery, *Lucid Dreaming: The Paradox of Consciousness during Sleep*, (London (UK): Routledge, 1994), 43-44.

<sup>106</sup> Richard Gregory, 'Visual Illusions Qualified', *Trends in Cognitive Science*, 1 (1997) 5, 191-193.

<sup>107</sup> Wolfgang Köhler, *Gestalt Psychology: An Introduction to New Concepts in Modern Psychology*, Originally published in 1947, Renewed edition in 1975 by Lili Köhler, (New York, NY (USA): Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1992), 248-278. And: Mary Henle, (Ed), *Documents of Gestalt Psychology*, (Los Angeles, CA (USA): University of California Press, 1961), 165.

<sup>108</sup> Baruch Fischhoff, 'Constructing Preferences from Labile Values', in: Sarah Lichtenstein and Paul Slovic (Ed), *The Construction of Preferences*, (Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 2006), 653-662.

<sup>109</sup> Yaacov Torpe, 'Inferences of Personal Characteristics on the Basis of Information Retrieved from One's Memory', in: Daniel Kahneman, Paul Slovic and Amos Tversky, (Ed), *Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases*, (Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1982), 378-387.

## Various ways of manipulation

Now that perceptions and their development have been explained and after detailing how personal belief systems and Gestalt mechanisms can influence the formation of perceptions, how perceptions in turn can influence judgment, and how perceptions are stored in memory, this subsection takes a closer look at how perceptions can be manipulated.

First of all: what exactly is manipulation? The purpose of manipulation is to make a decision-maker misjudge the situation to influence his decision-making.<sup>110</sup> In other words, it is ‘a puzzling motivating action geared towards interferences in the decision-making process of another person, usually without his approval’.<sup>111</sup> It is an intrusion done indirectly by employing morally questionable, sometimes controversial, tricks. In their troublesome forms, manipulative acts fail to respect decision makers; they undermine people’s autonomy and do not respect their dignity.<sup>112</sup> A subtle form of manipulation gives the target the illusion that he is able to choose his actions freely and independently.<sup>113</sup> The manipulation of perception is closely linked to Russian reflexive control, as discussed in chapter 2. Perceptions can be manipulated by the Gestalt mechanisms, but also during their storage in memory and from subliminal stimulation.

Perceptions can be disturbed by mechanisms described in the so-called information manipulation theory. In addition, perceptions can also be manipulated by affecting people's ability to remember, by unnoticed giving people stimuli that they are not aware of, or by other relevant neural and cognitive mechanisms. These four methods, namely (1) mechanisms of the information manipulation theory, (2) memory distortion, (3) subliminal stimulation, and (4) the use of other relevant neural and cognitive mechanisms is now further explained in this subsection

### *(1) Information manipulation*

The theory of information manipulation is based on how a sender can compile information

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<sup>110</sup> Zeev Maoz, ‘Framing the National Interest: The Manipulation of Foreign Policy Decisions in Groups Settings’, *World Politics*, 43 (October 1990), 77.

<sup>111</sup> Sapir Handelman, *Thought Manipulation: The Use and Abuse of Psychological Trickery*, (Santa Barbara, CA (USA): ABC-CLIO, LLC / Greenwood Publishing Group, 2009), iv.

<sup>112</sup> Cass Sunstein, *The Ethics of Influence: Government in the Age of Behavior Science*, (Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 2016) 81-82.

<sup>113</sup> Handelman, *Thought Manipulation*, 1-17.

packages, such as messages, addressed to a victim to deliberately give the wrong impression from the sender's perspective. Mechanisms, which are part of the information manipulation theory, assume that the sender of the information chooses certain details for a message from the available amount of information, but omits other information or modifies other parts of the information in order to bring about a certain perception in the victim. These mechanisms of information manipulation also include evasion of sensitive information. Information manipulation theory focuses not only on the content of the message, but also on the relationship, the relevance, the context and the way in which the message is presented and distributed.<sup>114</sup> It assumes that the sender empathises with the intended victim, because the text and context are constructed reflectively during the manipulation.<sup>115</sup>

Mechanisms, known from the Gestalt psychology, can contribute to information manipulation. As soon as a victim is provided with certain information packages, the victim will paint a larger picture of the whole for himself by filling in the gaps, which are actually perceived as missing information, and by connecting the dots. Ambiguous information, disinformation and the use of oxymorons, such as 'the comedian was seriously funny' or 'do you have the original copies we requested?' will contribute to the manipulation of perceptions.<sup>116</sup> The goal of the sender is often not to make a victim doubt or to let him believe in an alternative truth, but to make him think that there is an absolute truth in order to create confusion and paralyse every action. Therefore, the message must be calibrated and adjusted to a particular audience, depending not only on the region, but rather on socio-economic and demographic profiles of the selected audience. This often happens on the basis of so-called 'patho-centered tactics', because people are manipulated more quickly when it comes to emotional topics.<sup>117</sup>

When it comes to presentation and dissemination of messages as mechanisms of information manipulation, both social and mainstream media are, perhaps more than ever, closely related to terms as 'fake news' and 'alternative facts'. The use of these terms is usually based on a positivist approach, which assumes that there is an absolute truth and an underlying condition

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<sup>114</sup> Steven McCormack, 'Information Manipulation Theory', *Communication Monographs*, 59 (1992) 1, 1-16.

<sup>115</sup> Scott Jacobs, Edwin Dawson and Dale Brashers, 'Information Manipulation Theory: A Replication and Assessment', *Communication Monographs*, 63 (1996) 1, 71-82.

<sup>116</sup> Richard Gregory, 'Perceptions of Knowledge', *Nature*, 140 (2001) 3, 21.

<sup>117</sup> Jean-Baptiste Jeangène Vilmer et al., *Information Manipulation: A Challenge for Our Democracies*, (Paris (FRA): Policy Planning Staff of French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Institute for Strategic Research of the Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2018), 75-77.

of independent and objective media. Terms such as ‘fake news’ and ‘alternative facts’ started to gain popularity, both during the American election campaign and in the run-up to the Brexit referendum in 2016. Some researchers claim that fake news consists of a mixture of true statements and false claims while others assert that there is no unified agreed definition for ‘fake news’. Until 2017, fake news had actually been regarded as an equivalent of disinformation. It was pre-edited information to influence or even manipulate a particular victim or audience. That changed in 2017, because from that moment on, fake news has gained a second meaning. In an effort to muddy the waters, President Donald Trump started framing news coverage that he disliked as fake news. These were attempts, in retrospect, to place unfavourable news in the dunce corner of poor journalism so that the public would distrust the mainstream media.<sup>118</sup> So, disinformation is the same as the ex-ante version of fake news, and it is the ex post version of fake news that has no relation with the academic views on disinformation.

Trying to define ‘fake news’ is not only related to the question whether there is fake versus true news, it also raises the question how to think about the nature of news. From a positivist perspective, news is a product of adequate journalism with reporting of self-observed events, expecting to provide ‘independent, reliable, accurate, and comprehensive information’.<sup>119</sup> News media not only provide facts, but also explanations and discussion, helping the public to deal with the unexpected.<sup>120</sup> News can then be regarded as a mild form of information manipulation. In addition, news reporting has also been assigned a ‘watchdog function’ in recent decades about relevant events in a society, usually government actions concerning. For example, the growing media appearance over the last 50 years has resulted in a critical analysis of the behaviour of ruling politicians, governmental institutions and their activities. Politicians did no longer get away with ‘those up there know what they are doing’. As a result, confidence in the government has declined.<sup>121</sup> Nowadays, people are losing their trust

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<sup>118</sup> David Graham, ‘Some Real News about Fake News’, The Atlantic Website (7 June 2019). <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/06/fake-news-republicans-democrats/591211/> (29 March 2020). Margret Sullivan, ‘The Term Fake News Has Lost All its Meaning. Is Truth Next?’, *The Washington Post*, (5 April 2018), Section C1.

<sup>119</sup> Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect*, (New York, NY (USA): Three River Press, 2001), 11.

<sup>120</sup> Leonard Downie Jr. and Robert Kaiser, *The News About the News: American Journalism in Peril*, (New York, NY (USA): Vintage Books, A Division of Random House Inc, 2003), 4.

<sup>121</sup> Yehezkel Dror, *Policymaking under Adversity*, Originally published in 1986 by Transaction Publishers, (Abingdon (UK): Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 28-29.

not only in governmental institutions, but also the quality of the media is rapidly diminishing.<sup>122</sup>

Moving from a positivist to a constructivist approach, news can also be seen as a social construct. In 1922, Walter Lippmann wrote that news and truth are not the same. News is the translation of an occurrence into a story. It is fabricated by a journalist to inform the public about an event, using a ‘triangular relationship’ between the scene of the action, the human picture of that scene as perceived by the media, and the human response and description of that picture projecting itself on the scene of the action.<sup>123</sup> It is the journalist’s interpretation of the occasion. Lippmann remarked that the media, in his time primarily the newspapers, were not able to keep an eye on all mankind. Likewise, the media decided what events and impressions were reported.<sup>124</sup> This form of agenda-setting can also be regarded as information manipulation: the media determines the topics they want to deal with and also what the public should think. Lippmann saw the press as the principal connection between events in the world and the perception of the public of these events. Selective reporting: that is exactly what news is about! Many times, the media are affected by the ‘economic, social, and political agendas of the privileged groups that dominate the society and state.’<sup>125</sup> Moreover, the public is also often negatively affected in their opinion, because people are subjected to a never-ending cascade of negative news from across the world about conflicts, famines, natural disasters, political disasters, diseases and terror. ‘Journalists who report flights that did not crash or crops that were not lost would rapidly lose their jobs.’<sup>126</sup> Sometimes, the media show fabricated stories, referring to articles without a factual base that are published in the form of news articles to create legitimacy, while the reader of the article is not aware that the producer often has intentions to misinform the audience.<sup>127</sup> These ways of presenting news can therefore be classified under the heading of information manipulation.

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<sup>122</sup> Alice Marwick and Rebecca Lewis, *Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online*, Data & Society Report, (New York, NY (USA): Data & Society Research Institute, 2017), 45. And: Anthony Marx and Jamie Woodson, *Crisis in Democracy: Renewing Trust in America*, The Report of the Knight Commission on Trust, Media and Democracy, (Washington, DC (USA): Aspen Institute, 2019), 52-69.

<sup>123</sup> Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, (New York, NY (USA): Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922), Chapter 1: The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads, Section 4.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., Chapter 23: The Nature of News, Sections 1 & 2.

<sup>125</sup> Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Originally published in 1988, (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002), 298.

<sup>126</sup> Hans Rosling, *Factfulness: Ten Reasons We're Wrong About the World – And Why Things Are Better Than You Think*, Written together with Ola Rosling and Anna Rosling Rönnlund, (New York, NY (USA): Flatiron Books, 2018), 66.

<sup>127</sup> Edson Tandoc Jr., Zheng Wei Ling, Richard Ling, ‘Defining “Fake News”: A Typology of Scholarly Definitions’, *Digital Journalism*, 6 (2017) 2, 141-147.



## *(2) Distortion of memory*

Another way to manipulate perceptions can be found in the distortion of memories. In the past, researchers in humanities assumed that memories, once stored, were permanently stored, and that traces of memories always survived. That changed in the mid-1970s due to an extensive study into the expiration of memory and how memory distortion arises after exposure to different types of information, like mal-, mis- and disinformation. The main research question was whether information disorder ever produced memory impairment. Loftus concluded that deluded subjects were more likely to internalise a manipulated item of information in their memories than to use their own observations or sensory perceptions. From the moment subjects used the manipulated information item as their own memory, they did so with a high degree of confidence, making it almost impossible that someone was merely guessing. Even when people do not have an original memory, they can accept mal-, mis- and disinformation and adopt it as if it were their own. It also appears that mal-, mis- and disinformation can sometimes impair an otherwise accessible original memory.<sup>128</sup>

People are especially sensitive to memory impairment when the passage of time allows original memory to fade. In other words, with a long period of time between the real event and the injection of disinformation, the possibilities that memory impairment will occur increase. There are two main ways how disinformation could affect memory negatively. First, disinformation could update or change the previously formed memory. In that case new information combines with earlier traces to change the representation. Second, disinformation is able to cause retrieval impairment. In this case, disinformation makes the original memory trace less accessible without altering it. To conclude, misleading information can turn a form of deception into memory's truth. It can cause people to believe that they sensed things or information that never existed, or that they sensed parts of information differently from the way things were. In most cases humans are confident about these manipulated memories and misleading information can also impair earlier recollections. Once adopted, the newly formed memories can be believed as strongly as genuine memories.<sup>129</sup> In this way misleading information can fool people, making it an important deception factor.

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<sup>128</sup> Elizabeth Loftus and Hunter Hoffman, 'Misinformation and Memory: The Creation of New Memories', *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 118 (1989) 1, 100-101.

<sup>129</sup> Elizabeth Loftus, 'When a Lie Becomes Memory's Truth: Memory Distortion after Exposure to Misinformation', *Psychological Science*, 1 (1992) 4, 121-123.

### *(3) Subliminal stimulation*

A third way in which perceptions can be manipulated is in the subconscious mind of people. That is because the development of perceptions often typically happens in the unconscious. This is called subliminal perception, which is based on the concepts of objective and subjective thresholds. An objective threshold needs to be passed for an incentive to be sensed, that is, to appear in the appropriate sensory system. When an incentive passes a subjective threshold, it will enter conscious awareness. There is no perception when an incentive does not pass the objective threshold. If the objective threshold is passed but the subjective is not, then there is subliminal perception. And if the subjective threshold is passed as well, there is conscious perception. This regularity is a widely accepted axiom in psychology. The problem, however, is that a subjective threshold cannot be determined. There is no fixed subjective threshold that works for people under all circumstances. Strangely enough, researchers who investigated subliminal perception have always met some obstruction, since most people think that subliminal perception does not exist. This denial is rooted in the fear that humans are not in control of their thoughts and behaviour, and that conscious perceptions and thoughts give directions to everything they do.<sup>130</sup>

Although there is no permanent subjective threshold, subliminal stimulation can be used to intentionally influence people's behaviour with subliminal presentation techniques. Initiators of subliminal stimulation will determine a threshold for the stimulus that will be used as a subliminal stimulus. These subliminal stimuli can be either visual or auditory. A special form of subliminal stimuli is subliminal persuasion: the direct influence of behaviour by subliminal directives, which happens to humans when they are directly affected by advertisement and marketing. For instance, James Vicary, an American marketeer, who claimed that he had greatly increased the sales of popcorn and sodas in a New Jersey cinema by subliminally flashing 'eat popcorn' and 'drink cola' during a movie. Although Vicary later admitted that he never found any evidence for subliminal influencing behaviour. Later research found that subliminal flashing words designating food and drinks can increase subjective hunger and thirst, and it can also initiate eating and drinking. Moreover, subliminally activated personality traits and stereotyping can affect overt behaviour. It is also possible to subliminally affect the choice of people. Various psychological researchers came to the

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<sup>130</sup> Ap Dijksterhuis, Henk Aarts, and Pamela Smith, 'The Power of the Subliminal: On Subliminal Persuasion and Other Potential Application', in: Ran Hassin, James Ullleman and John Bargh (Ed), *The New Unconscious*, (Oxford (UK): Oxford University Press, 2005), 77-106.

conclusion that commercial application of subliminal stimulation can work.<sup>131</sup>

Persuasion in itself is a complex, continuing, interactive process in which an initiator and a target are linked by symbols, verbal and non-verbal, the initiator uses to induce a change in the attitude and behaviour of a target. What happens is that the target of the persuasive interaction relates the information or incentive with his existing perception, beliefs, understanding and experience or contrast it. There are three forms of persuasion:

1. *Shaping*. This is similar to learning, where the initiator is the teacher and the target is the student. The initiator may attempt to shape the response of the target by teaching it how to behave and offer positive reinforcement for learning.
2. *Reinforcement*. If the target already has a positive attitude toward a subject, the persuader reminds him of positive attitudes and stimulates him to feel even better.
3. *Change*. This is the most difficult kind of persuasion, because it involves asking people to switch from one attitude to another and people may be reluctant to shift their position.<sup>132</sup>

#### *(4) The use of other relevant neural and cognitive mechanisms*

In addition to forms of perception manipulation, there are many inherent characteristics or working principles of our brain influencing internal information processing, which can also lead to the creation of abnormal perceptions.<sup>133</sup> They can therefore also be considered as mechanisms that are able to contribute to perception management. Most of these mechanisms are part of cognitive psychology, too. The Defence, Safety and Security Department of TNO<sup>134</sup> in the Netherlands conducted an extensive study into ‘military behavioural influencing in integrated operations’ and listed many possible neural mechanisms in their report ‘Subconscious manipulation in psychological warfare’. Not all characteristics mentioned in this report are related to the generation of manipulated perceptions, but some most obvious ones will be explained in this subsection: (4a) negative association, (4b)

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Garth Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 5th Edition, (Thousand Oaks, CA (USA): SAGE Publications Inc., 2012), 32-34. And: Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements*, Originally published in 1951 by Harper & Row, Publishers, (New York, NY (USA): Perennial Classics / HarperCollins Publishers, 1989), 105.

<sup>133</sup> Johan E. Korteling, Anne-Marie Brouwer and Alexander Toet, ‘A Neural Network Framework for Cognitive Bias, *Frontiers in Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01561>, (05 June 2020).

<sup>134</sup> TNO stands for (*Nederlandse Organisatie voor*) *Toegepast Natuurkundig Onderzoek*, which means (Netherlands Organisation for) Applied Scientific Research.

stereotyping, (4c) narration, (4d) multiple exposure and repetition, (4e) cognitive dissonance, and (4f) biases and heuristics.

#### *(4a) Negative association*

The brain, as a neural network, functions in a highly associative way. Correlation and coincidence detection are the basics of neural functioning. As a result, humans constantly, automatically and subconsciously search for links and coherence in the form of consistent, invariant patterns. Negative association is an endeavour that is used to connect a person to negative images and symbols. Those images and symbols can be adopted from the culture or historical heritage of the group or society a person belongs to. For instance, right-wing populists may be demonised by linking them in different ways, verbally or through imaging, to prominent leaders of Nazi Germany. Likewise, the credibility of an opponent may be harmed by portraying him in close proximity of negative persons, or objects, or under suspicious circumstances, like excessive alcohol use, poverty, diseases, et cetera. This way, everything that an opponent does or originates from him may be appraised as negative.<sup>135</sup>

#### *(4b) Stereotyping*

Belief systems were discussed earlier in this section. Closely related to belief systems are individuals' images about the world beyond their own immediate environment. Just like beliefs, these images are also made up of cognitive diagrams, patterns for structuring information, which consist of personal knowledge and interpretation of situations.<sup>136</sup> Images do not appear randomly, but they are based on an individual's cultural understanding, cultural background and social group he belongs to. Obtaining recognition within a social group and starting relationships with others within this group lays the foundation for a shared culture. This culture gives rise to expectations within the social group and it guides information processing and behaviour towards other people. It also creates mental representations.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Johan E. Korteling, Maaïke Duistermaat and Alexander Toet, *Subconscious Manipulation in Psychological Warfare [V1522]*, TNO Report, TNO 2018 R11543, (Soesterberg (NLD): TNO – Defence, Safety & Security, 2018), 13.

<sup>136</sup> Aaron Rapport, 'Cognitive Approaches to Foreign Policy Analysis', in: Cameron Thies (Ed), *Oxford Encyclopedia of Foreign Policy Analysis*, (Oxford (UK): Oxford University Press, 2018), 4-6. At: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.397.

<sup>137</sup> Daniel Bar-Tal and Yona Teichman, *Stereotypes and Prejudice in Conflict: Representations of Arabs in Israeli Jewish Society*, (Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 2005), 242.

When people make judgments, they rely on this kind of representativeness. This is the degree to which an object or situation is similar in essential characteristics to its parent population and reflects the noticeable features of the process by which it is generated. Stereotyping may easily lead to incorrect judgments because the fact that something is considered more representative than something else does not actually make one more likely than the other.<sup>138</sup> In social psychology, a stereotype is an over-generalized belief about a particular category of people. Generalizations in the way that one assumes that the stereotype is true for each individual person in the group may encourage prejudice.<sup>139</sup> Cultural constructions about one's identity create prejudicial images often leading to racial stereotyping. In international politics, many decisions are made and alliances between countries are formed on the basis of this stereotyping.<sup>140</sup>

#### *(4c) Narration*

A narrative or framework of related events or situations, both real or imaginary, consisting of coherent and believable elements is more easily accepted and better remembered than plain unrelated facts.<sup>141</sup> In the explanation of the Zeigarnik effect, it has already been indicated that people do not like unfinished tasks or incomplete appearances. Thus, in order to create a remaining emotional impact, it can be very prolific to present related facts in a coherent story. These stories may be partly based on trustworthy facts plus some basic undeniable facts and on illustrative juxtapositions that do not necessarily have to be true. The dissemination of those narratives by social media might have impact on public opinion than merely reporting dry facts and statistics. Narratives may also be used to generate or enhance feelings of connectedness and commitment of humans to certain groups, societies, nations, alliances or ideologies.<sup>142</sup>

#### *(4d) Multiple exposure and repetition*

This principle was well-understood by Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels, when he stated:

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<sup>138</sup> Korteling, Duistermaat and Toet, *Subconscious Manipulation*, 14.

<sup>139</sup> Mike Cardwell, *Dictionary of Psychology*, Ian Marcouse (Ed), Originally published in 1996, (London (UK): Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 1999).

<sup>140</sup> Christopher Hemmer and Peter Katzenstein, 'Why is There NO NATO in Asia? Collective Identity, Regionalism, and Origins of Multilateralism', *International Organizations*, 56 (2002) 6, 598-603.

<sup>141</sup> Korteling, Duistermaat and Toet, *Subconscious Manipulation*, 14.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

“If you repeat a lie often enough, it becomes a truth!” The more and longer humans are exposed to ambiguous or deceiving information, likely to produce an erroneous impression, the more resistance will arise to change this flawed impression. Inaccurate notions based on disinformation persist even after people have received correct information and reports on facts to clarify the flawed impression. The exposure effect can be enhanced by using as many different channels and options as possible to disseminate the flawed information. So, repetition of a deceiving message has more impact than just one persuasive attempt and may gradually lead a person to perceive the message as correct and to become a believer.<sup>143</sup>

#### *(4e) Cognitive dissonance*

In 1957, American social psychologist Leon Festinger introduced his theory of cognitive dissonance, which specifies that once a person has made an important decision, this same person is in a committed state. As mentioned before in the previous subsection, there is a new neural state that is sensitive to new information that is consistent with that condition, which causes a need to have consistency in one’s cognitive elements. As soon as inconsistent information is presented, the person experiences psychological discomfort.<sup>144</sup> The discomfort is triggered by a situation in which the person’s belief clashes with his newly-perceived evidence. When confronted with facts that contradict perceptions, beliefs, ideals or values, humans try to find a method to resolve the contradiction and reduce their discomfort.<sup>145</sup> In most cases, humans will not accept the new information, or adapt their old ideas to it only very slightly. Dissonance may drive humans to construct a distorted representation of reality, e.g. to see the world different from its factual state. Consequently, it may lead to sub-optimal decisions and behaviour.<sup>146</sup>

#### *(4f) Biases and heuristics*

As mentioned before, the human mind is limited in its capabilities to make judgments in a way that is perfectly rational and supported by as much information as available. Rationality may help to solve problems, for which a profound analysis is necessary. However, it may fail

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>145</sup> Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, (Stanford, CA (USA): Stanford University Press, 1957), 1-31. See also: Leon Festinger, ‘Cognitive Dissonance’, *Scientific American*, 207 (1962) 4, 93-107.

<sup>146</sup> Korteling, Duistermaat and Toet, *Subconscious Manipulation*, 17.

in complex real-life situations, under time pressure, and/or where essential information is lacking. In these situations, human information processing is characterized by so-called ‘shortcuts’ or heuristics. These are a variety of simple decision principles that can be applied quickly. Heuristics often generate judgment and decisions that are ‘good enough’ when measured against time and against an acceptable cognitive load or have been known to be effective in previous situations. However, heuristics can also lead to suboptimal decision making. When a heuristic method was not appropriate in the situation or when it has gone ‘wrong’, it is called cognitive bias. Cognitive biases most likely occur in complex situations, e.g. when relevant information is ignored or irrelevant information interferes, or in situations that are mistakenly perceived as familiar while actually they are not. Cognitive biases can support flawed perceptions; they are pervasive in human reasoning and have important practical implications for human behaviour.<sup>147</sup> Cognitive biases can also be used to affect, or weaken, a decision-making process, making the decision-maker an easier target for effective reflexive control.<sup>148</sup>

Remarkably, some experts came to the conclusion that research into biases and heuristics can also be biased.<sup>149</sup> Nevertheless, cognitive biases can offer fertile actions designed for influencing perceptions and, as a result, to affect the adversary’s decision-making process. This process is sometimes called ‘consciousness manipulation’ or ‘perception management’.<sup>150</sup> The eight important biases for the creation and conservation of manipulated perceptions are:

- *Confirmation bias.* Humans tend to filter their information and interpret information in such a way that it matches their existing views. They also tend not to accept disconfirming evidence. In most cases they even do not see this disconfirming information. The confirmation bias is related to how people view the world, expectations, assumptions, selective perceptions, schemata. In general, people turn out to be inferior seekers for

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<sup>147</sup> Alexander Toet et al., *Effects of Personal Characteristics, Mental State and External Factors on Susceptibility to Bias: A Literature Study*, TNO Report, TNO 2016 R11452, (Soesterberg (NLD) TNO Earth, Life & Social Sciences, 2016), 9.

<sup>148</sup> Natalie Minton, *Cognitive Biases and Reflexive Control*, Master Thesis, (Oxford, MS (USA): The University of Mississippi, The Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College, 2017), 55.

<sup>149</sup> Itiel Dror, ‘Combating Bias: The Next Step in Fighting Cognitive and Psychological Contamination’, Letter to the Editor, *Journal of Forensic Science*, 57 (2012), 276-277.

<sup>150</sup> Shabtai, ‘War, Cognitive Biases and Perception Management’, 30.

‘disconfirming evidence’.<sup>151</sup> Humans also tend to focus on the information available and often do not consider other information that might be significant. Kahneman called this shortcut: ‘What You See Is All There Is (WYSIATI)’.<sup>152</sup>

- *Anchoring bias*. This bias occurs when humans rely on an initial piece of information (the anchor) to make subsequent judgments. Those objects near the anchor tend to be assimilated into it and those further away from the anchor tend to be displaced in the other direction. Once the value of this anchor is set, all future information processing and, as a result, all future negotiations, argumentation, estimates, et cetera are considered in relation to the anchor.<sup>153</sup>
- *Halo effect*. This bias is actually closely linked to the anchoring bias. Humans tend to increase the weight of first impressions, and subsequently apply these first impressions to everything associated with the perceived information.<sup>154</sup> It is also the tendency for positive impressions of a person, an organization, a brand or product in one area to positively influence his opinion or feelings in other areas, like a halo.<sup>155</sup>
- *Availability bias*. In this bias, humans assess the likelihood, or frequency, of an event on the basis of the ease with which relevant instances or occurrences can be brought to mind. For instance, people, who read more case studies of successful businesses may judge the probability of running a successful business to be greater.<sup>156</sup>
- *Representativeness bias*. This bias enables humans to estimate the likelihood of a state of affairs given the knowledge of another state of affairs by mainly comparing the similarities between the two. This may lead to incorrect conclusions. For example, if people have to make a judgment about what profession an individual is likely to hold, they will assess this individual at the degree to which he or she corresponds with the stereotype of that profession. In this case, people think that a certain Steve is a librarian, because he likes books and is wearing spectacles. Somebody who reads a lot and wears eyeglasses cannot be a professional football player or a soldier, so he must be a librarian.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Johan E. Korteling et al., *Neurowetenschappelijke Mechanismen van Cognitieve Bias (Neuro Scientifically Mechanisms of Cognitive Bias)*, TNO Report, TNO 2016 R11451, (Soesterberg (NLD): TNO, Earth, Life & Social Sciences, 2016), Appendix A.

<sup>152</sup> Cancian, *Avoiding Coping with Surprise*, 25.

<sup>153</sup> Korteling et al., *Neurowetenschappelijke Mechanismen (Neuro Scientifically Mechanisms)*, Appendix A.

<sup>154</sup> Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slowly*, 82.

<sup>155</sup> Al Ries, ‘Understanding Marketing Psychology and the Halo Effect: What Apple’s iPod and Motorola’s Razer Can Teach Us’, AdAge Website (17 April 2006). <https://adage.com/article/al-ries/understanding-marketing-psychology-halo-effect/108676>, (23 February 2020).

<sup>156</sup> Kam, *Surprise Attack*, 107-112.

<sup>157</sup> Kam, *Surprise Attack*, 107-112.



- *Optimism bias.* The ability to anticipate is a hallmark of cognition. Inferences about what will occur in the future enable humans to prepare their actions so as to avoid harm and gain reward. Given the significance of these future projections, one might expect the human brain to possess accurate, unbiased foresight. However, humans exhibit a prevalent and astonishing bias: when it comes to predicting what will happen tomorrow, next week, or over time, they overestimate the likelihood of positive events, and underestimate the likelihood of negative events. For example, people underrate their chances of getting divorced, being in a car accident, or suffering from cancer, but they expect to live longer than objective measures would warrant, overestimate their success at the job market and believe that their children are extraordinarily talented. This phenomenon is known as the optimistic bias.<sup>158</sup>
- *Hindsight bias.* This bias is the tendency to erroneously perceive events as inevitable or more likely to happen once they have occurred before. In hindsight, people constantly exaggerate what could have been anticipated in foresight.<sup>159</sup> Deceivers might use this bias to create manipulated perceptions of the past.
- *Bias blind spot.* People see the occurrence of biases much more in others than in themselves.<sup>160</sup> So, awareness of biases, they may have themselves is not a guarantee for a more accurate perception.

These biases show the main fallacies of human thinking, which make people vulnerable to the creation of manipulated perception. Human beings do not like to seek for and accept all relevant information in a neutral way; instead they prefer, for example, confirming and optimistic information.

## Summary

In order to understand how perceptions can be manipulated, one should first consider what perceptions are and how they are formed. Perceptions are sensation that are interpreted by the human mind in order to generate meaningful experiences. They arise during a transformation process, also referred to as the cognitive hierarchy. This process starts when raw data are

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<sup>158</sup> Tali Sharot, 'The Optimism Bias', *Current Biology*, 21 (2011) 23, R941-R945.

<sup>159</sup> Baruch Fischhoff, 'For Those Condemned to Study the Past: Heuristics and Biases in Hindsight', in: Daniel Kahneman, Paul Slovic and Amos Tversky, (Ed), *Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases*, (Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1982), 336-341.

<sup>160</sup> Emily Pronin, Daniel Lin and Lee Ross, 'The Bias Blind Spot: Perceptions of Bias in Self Versus Others', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28 (2002) 3, 369-381.

processed and then information is analysed. This perception creation process is based on human belief systems. Most perceptions come into being unconsciously. Mechanisms explained by Gestalt psychology, the part of psychological science that gives explanations for how pieces of information give rise to perceptions of objects but also of entire narratives, and enables people to make their own perceptions even if they do not possess all the essential information to complete the perception. As a result, alternative perception may arise.

Perceptions are only a state of mind that enables a human being to understand the environment in which he lives, and these perceptions can be manipulated. There are three main methods to manipulate perceptions: (1) information manipulation, (2) distortion of memory and (3) subliminal stimulation. Information manipulation takes place when a victim receives insufficient or modified information or when sensitive information is avoided. The way information is presented and how it is disseminated are parts of information manipulation. Another element that can contribute to the manipulation of perception is that people can change their memories. When confronted with new information, including disinformation, people can create new memories, as if they were their own initial memories. Other research pointed out that subliminal stimulation, which administers incentives during subconsciousness, may manipulate perceptions. The use of other neural and cognitive mechanisms also supports perception management, like negative association, stereotyping, narration, repetition, cognitive dissonance, biases and heuristics. These characteristics of human information processing provide an insight into how alternative perceptions may arise and how people then respond to them and adopt their behaviour to these manipulated perceptions.

## 4.5 Concluding remarks

The previous chapter, Chapter 3 ‘Deception Warfare’, highlighted three relevant elements of the deception process, as shown in figure 3.10 ‘Overview of the deception process’. These three elements were uncertainty, surprise and manipulated perceptions, and were framed in this dissertation as the human dimensions of deception warfare. This present chapter explained these human dimensions and provided an answer to third research sub-question formulated as: what are the human dimensions of deception warfare? While uncertainty is a necessary condition for deception, both surprise and manipulated perceptions are the outcomes of a deception action. Uncertainty derives from unknown intentions, a lack of

knowledge, ambiguity and complexity. Both the initiator and the target of surprise are not sure about one another's intentions and targets. There is a difference between risk and uncertainty; the former is measurable and quantifiable, while the latter would suggest a complete lack of knowledge.

Surprise is first and foremost related to whether-, when-, where- and how-questions. Speed and secrecy are to be considered as vital elements of surprise. In most cases surprise occurs because there is a lack of information, human inadequacies or a failing intelligence collection system. During a moment of surprise there will be a so-called action delay, in which the target of surprise verifies schemata discrepancy, the origin of the surprise and other causalities, his own well-being and other assessment checks. Surprise may cause emotional reactions as shock, demoralisation and paralysis leading to freeze, indecisiveness, or no protective activities at all. Some victims of surprise suffer from gullibility; they still think that their security environment is not at risk and that the threat will disappear without becoming serious.

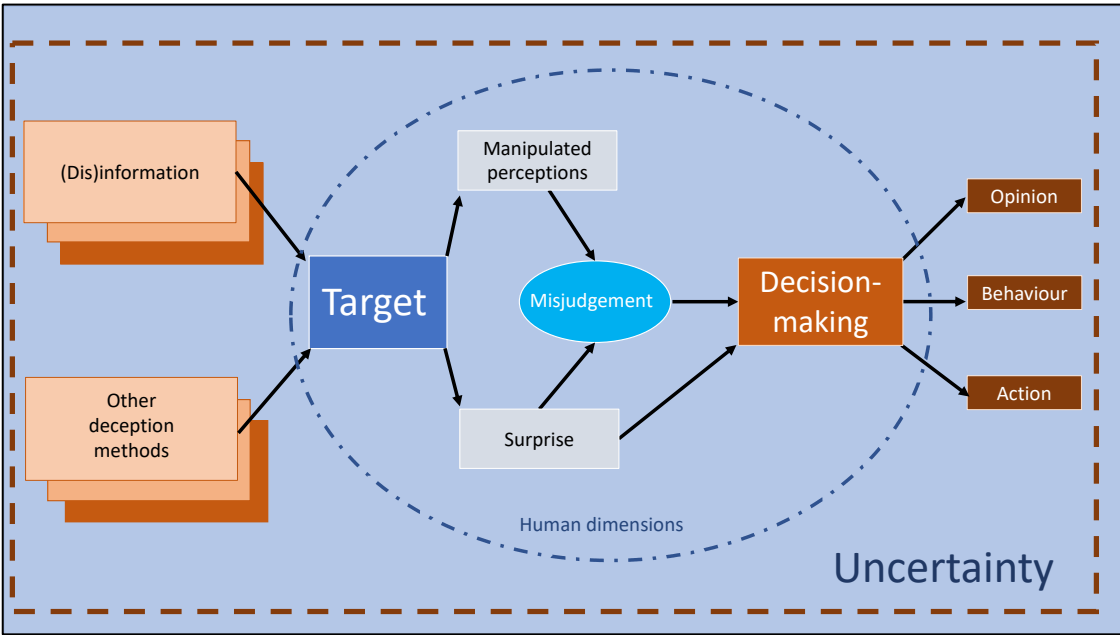


Figure 4.9 Overview of the human dimensions

The third human dimension is perception, more specifically, manipulated perception. An important aspect in the creation of perceptions is ‘connecting the dots’: people receive pieces of information and create their perceptions, which may differ from reality. Belief systems and memories are the basis for perceptions, which are easy to manipulate. The three main methods to manipulate perceptions are (1) information manipulation, (2) distortion of memory, and (3)

subliminal stimulation. There are many other relevant principles and tendencies of human information processing that possibly contribute to perception management, like negative associations, spurious causality, stereotyping, narration, repetition, and cognitive dissonance. The next chapter combines the results of this chapter with the insights gained in the two previous chapters, which together create a framework of criteria to assess Russia's recent operations with.

# Chapter 5 An Analytical Framework

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## 5.1 Preamble

This chapter focuses on creating a framework for analysing Russian deception during an armed conflict. The previous chapters discussed in detail subjects such as Russian deception, deception as Western researchers analysed it (or important elements of it), and the human dimension that comes with deception, being uncertainty, surprise and manipulated perception.

This chapter answers the fourth secondary research question:

What does a relevant framework for analysing modern Russian deception warfare look like?

Before constructing a framework, an explanation is given as to why a framework has been chosen to analyse Russian deception. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of this dissertation discussed different aspects of deception research. More specifically, it is Russian concepts supplemented by Western insights of deception and three human dimensions that are vital for deception, namely uncertainty, surprise and manipulated perception.

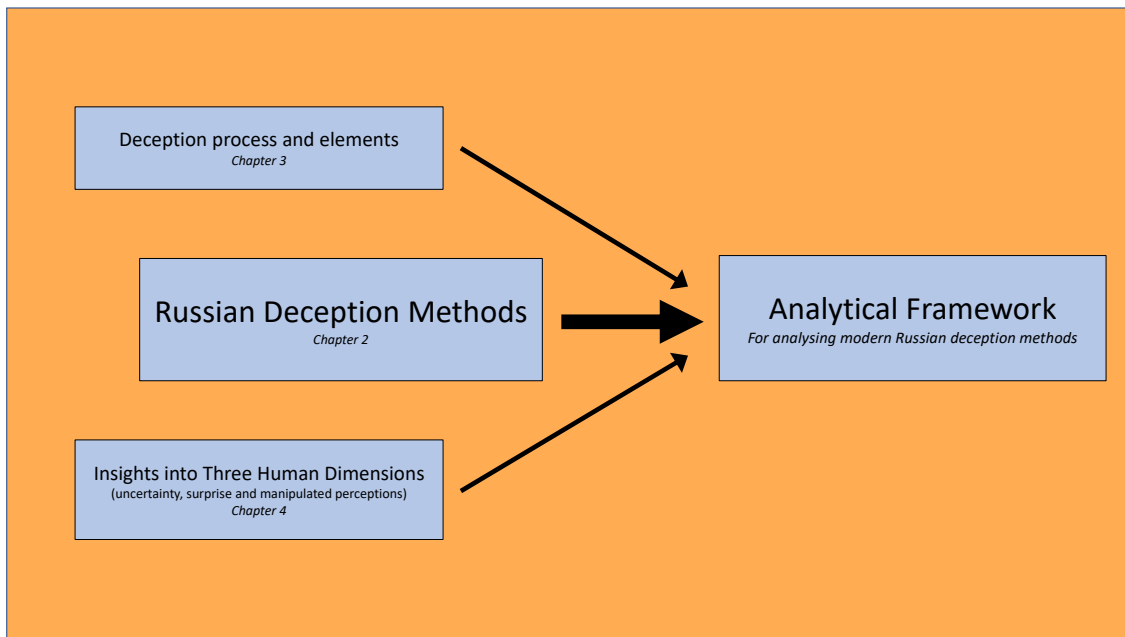


Figure 5.1 Foundation for the framework to analyse modern Russian deception warfare

Given the different approaches to deception, it is necessary to apply triangulation, which can be defined as the use of two or more approaches in the study of some aspect of human behaviour. It attempts to map out ‘the richness and complexity of human behaviour’, or aspects of it. A multi-approach provides a less limited and filtered view of situations in which humans interact than a single approach.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will feature a theoretical triangulation, in which Russian and Western insights, methods and theories of deception together with detailed insights into three human dimensions, namely uncertainty, surprise and manipulated perceptions, are used to create one analytical framework for Russian deception. The chapter starts with an explanation of qualitative synthesis in section 5.2 ‘Qualitative synthesis’, followed by sections 5.3 ‘Analysis’, and 5.4 ‘The amalgamation of deception factors’, which includes the framework. Section 5.5 contains concluding remarks.

## 5.2 Qualitative synthesis

The method that utilises triangulation and ultimately manages to construct a framework is qualitative synthesis. In a qualitative synthesis study, findings are systematically interpreted through a series of judgments and, therefore, the findings of qualitative studies are pooled.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison, *Research Methods in Education*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, (Abingdon (UK): Routledge, 2007), 141.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Bearman and Philip Dawson, ‘Qualitative Synthesis and Systematic Review in Health Professions Education’, *Medical Education*, 47 (2013), 253.

However, there is a general lack of information on how a qualitative research synthesis should be conducted. An adequate way to solve this shortcoming is to compare in a synthesis to integrate several subsections of a comprehensive research the different studies used. First, it is necessary to identify what the main elements of the studies are. Then a comparison of the studies can be made, with special attention for the differences and the similarities. The next step, which is actually the real synthesis, is to judge all the studies' concepts, select the 'most adequate one' to describe the phenomenon and to add important parts of the other studies to it. The product of the synthesis depends on its aim; in this dissertation the product is an analytical framework that can be used to examine Russian deception warfare. The last step is that the product of the synthesis, which is the analytical framework in this dissertation, provides an interpretation for understanding a deception situation.<sup>3</sup>

In short, there are three steps in a qualitative synthesis: it starts with a profound analysis, and then it goes from analysis through synthesis to final interpretation. This approach is appropriate for this dissertation, because it combines the different insights into deception that were gained in the chapters 2, 3 and 4. Chapter 2 describes Russian deception, while chapter 3 covers a general deception process with its phases and elements, and chapter 4 clarifies three different human dimensions that were not discussed in the studies used for chapter 3. The results of chapter 2 'Russian deception' are the foundation for constructing an analytical framework, as shown in Figure 5.1. This is an obvious step, because this framework analyses Russian deception warfare in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine and Crimea in 2014.

### 5.3 Analysis

The first step involves an analysis consisting of a brief discussion of the findings of the previous chapters, chapter 2 *Russian deception*, chapter 3 'Deception warfare' and chapter 4 'Human dimensions', and an examination of the similarities and differences between Russian and other, Western, variants of deceptions.

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<sup>3</sup> Claire Howell Major and Maggi Savin-Baden, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research Synthesis: Managing the Information Explosion in Social Science Research*, (Abingdon (UK): Routledge, 2010), 56-57.

## Findings of the study into Russian deception

*Maskirovka* is the umbrella term for methods to disguise the truth, ranging from camouflage to stratagem, feints and demonstrations.

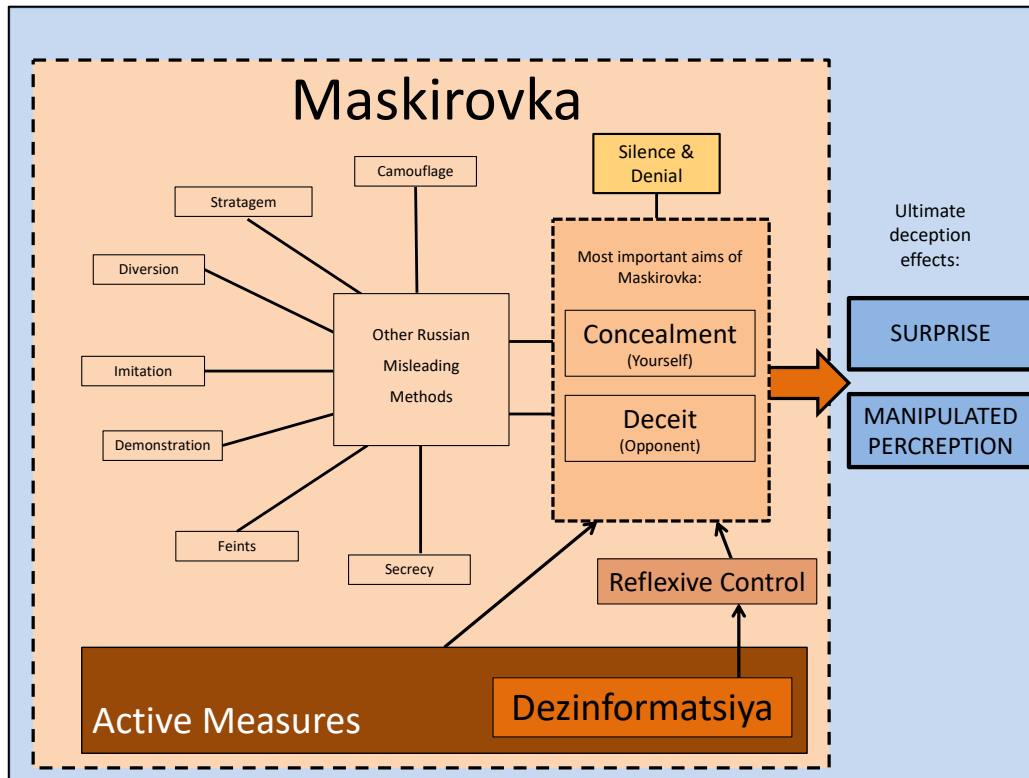


Figure 5.2 Overview of *maskirovka*, reflexive control and *dezinformatsiya*

Today's *maskirovka* largely takes place in the information environment, which consists of three dimensions: (1) physical dimension, (2) virtual dimension, and (3) cognitive dimension.<sup>4</sup> In practice, Russian physical and virtual misleading activities will have an impact on human cognitive abilities and knowledge of their opponents. Russian authorities prefer to use active measures and reflexive control, a way of manipulation, to achieve a state of *maskirovka*. For applying reflexive control, Russian authorities use *dezinformatsiya*, which may contain, for instance, *kompromat* to discredit an opponent. Reflexive control consists of four elements: (1)

<sup>4</sup> United Kingdom, Ministry of Defence, *Joint Doctrine Publication 04: Understanding*, (Shrivenham (GBR): The Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre, December 2010), 2-9. And: Paul Ducheine, Jelle van Haaster and Richard van Harskamp, 'Manoeuvring and Generating Effects in the Information Environment', in: Paul Ducheine and Frans Osinga, *Netherlands Annual Review of Military Studies 2017, (NLARMS-2017) Winning Without Killing: The Strategic and Operational Utility of Non-Kinetic Capabilities in Crises*, (The Hague (NLD): Springer / T.M.C. Asser Press, 2017), 159-161. Also: Jelle van Haaster, *On Cyber: The Utility of Military Cyber Operations During Armed Conflict*, PhD-Dissertation University of Amsterdam, (Breda (Nld): Netherlands Defence Academie / Facilitair Bedrijf Defensie, 2019), 180-181.



power pressure, (2) the dissemination of *dezinformatsiya*, (3) affecting an opponent's decision-making algorithm, and (4) the generation of time pressure. Offensive reflexive control aims to create concealment, while defensive reflexive control tends to protect and mask Russia's own sensitive information and behaviour. Russian authorities use reflexive control in combination with governmental influence activities, both physical and virtual, which does not stop when the armed conflict has been settled. *Dezinformatsiya* needs to carry at least some truthful information in order to be trustworthy. Russian authorities also have a long tradition of taciturnity and the pursuit of a state of denial, which was also frequently used by the Soviet authorities. The overall aim of *maskirovka* is the creation of surprise or manipulated perception.

### Findings of the study into deception warfare in general

In total 18 different studies on deception and deception-related topics, covering a period of 50 years from 1969 to the present, were used for this part of the research. 15 of the 18 studies concentrate on deception in conflict situations, while the other three focus on related themes such as lying, the art of jugglery, and deception in general.

Deception is an activity that intentionally imposes intimidated authenticity on a target's perception of reality or to hide part of reality for the benefit of the deceiver. It is a relatively low-cost instrument as far as finance and casualties during a conflict are concerned. From the 18 studies a deception process could be deduced with a planning, an execution, an outcome and a feedback phase, each of which contains different element, as shown in Figure 5.3.

Deception takes place in an uncertain environment; it is a necessary condition for deception, albeit that it was not further researched in the 18 studies of deception mentioned. Likewise, the final aims of deception, being surprise and manipulated perception, were not further examined either. This is the reason why these terms, all three related to human cognition, judgment and behaviour, were analysed in chapter 4 'Human dimensions'.

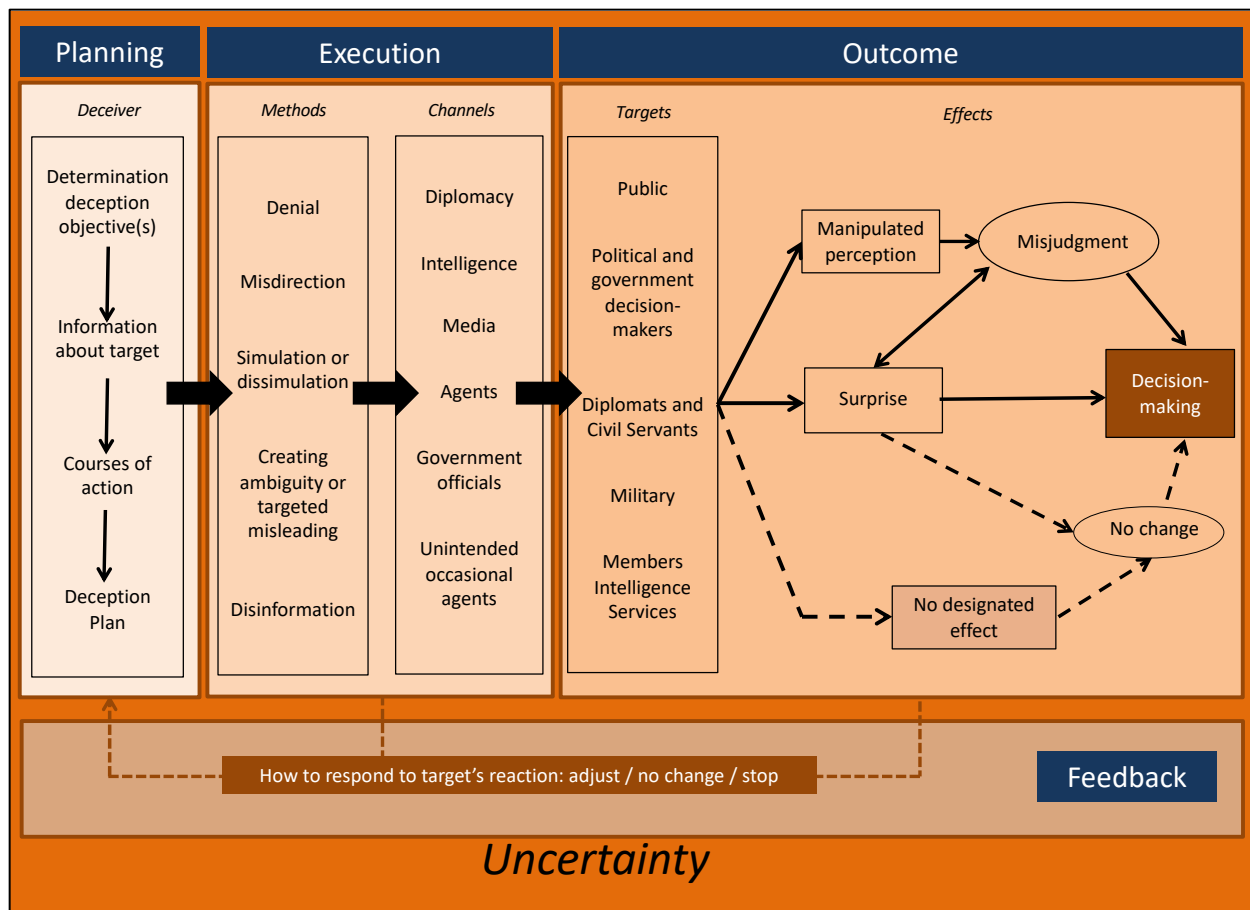


Figure 5.3 Overview of deception process

Deception is in its basic form a variant of a communication model, with a sender, the deceiver, and a target at the receiving end. It is often better to reinforce an already existing belief than to present the target with unnatural or far-fetched evidence to convince the target and change his belief. There are mainly five different methods to create deception: (1) denial, (2) misdirection, (3) simulation versus dissimulation, (4) A-type versus M-type, and (5) disinformation. Often a combination of methods is used for deception. It seems obvious, but information channels that can reach the opponent are crucial for successful deception operations. Similarly, it is better to have multiple channels to affect the opponent than only one. Feedback is necessary in order to know whether the deception was successful, but also how long the deception effect will last and whether a new deception booster or method is needed to keep the target in a numb state.

### Findings of the study into human dimensions of deception

In the previous chapters, three elements of the deception process were key: uncertainty, surprise and manipulated perception. All three elements are essential because they are related

to the decision-making of the target, which is a notion absent in the research done in the 18 aforementioned studies.

Uncertainty is the condition in which deception can take place, while surprise and manipulated perception are the main aims of deception. Uncertainty is based on emotion, human behaviour and human information processing. It arises because human beings are not able to oversee all possibilities and their consequences in conflict situations, when they are confronted with a problem while it is necessary to decide and act. The opponent can simply be unpredictable, and often the environment in which the conflict takes place is very complex. The operational tempo in such an environment may be high and relationships within this context changing rapidly. These conflicts cause a lot of ambiguity, which, in turn causes a lot of uncertainty. The decisionmaker himself may be ignorant of new information or he may refuse to get a better understanding of his opponent, both prompting uncertainty.

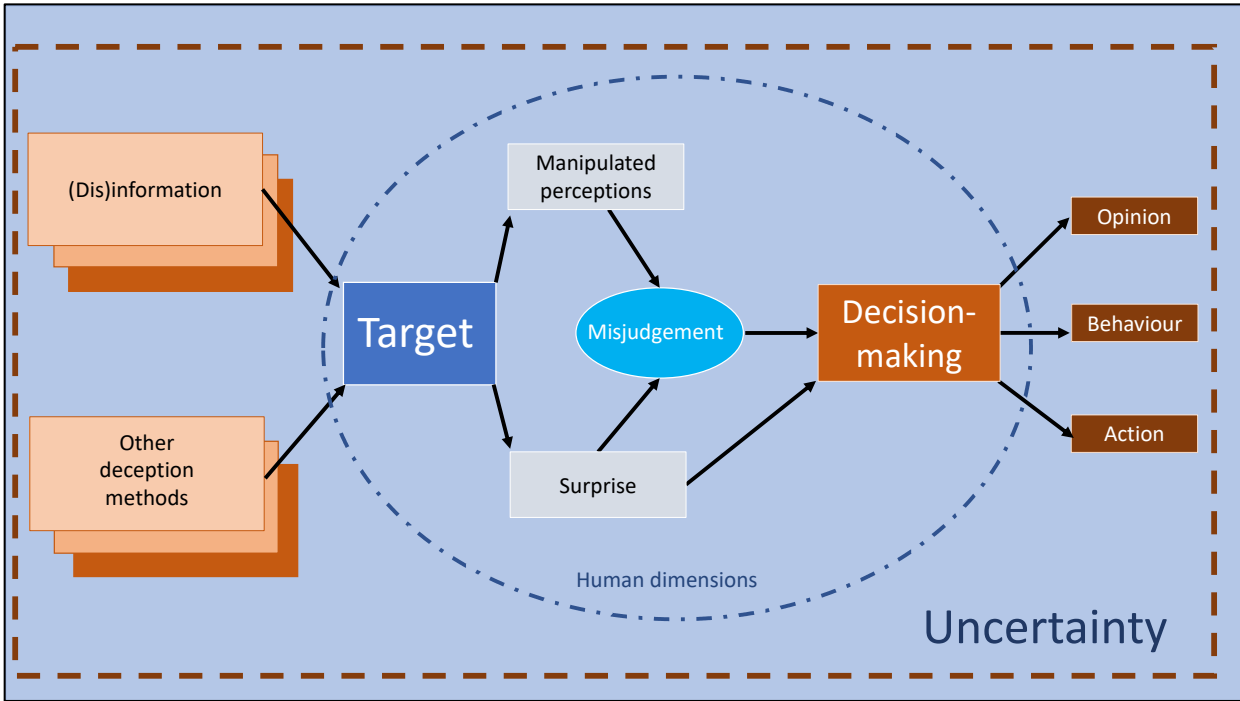


Figure 5.4 Overview of the human dimensions

Surprise is another phenomenon that was researched in the previous chapter and, for those studying international relations, surprise is connected to surprise attacks. The clarifications for surprise attacks can be found in deficiencies of the intelligence process that precedes a surprise attack, as well as in the human inadequacies of intelligence analysts. These analysts might not recognize patterns in available information, or might not be receptive to it, because

they are under constant pressure during a conflict situation, suffering from stress and unable to find their way in ambiguous circumstances. Surprise is a state of mind that can fade away rapidly. In order to create surprise in military operations initiative, speed, which means thinking and acting faster than the opponent, and secrecy, are paramount. Surprise is considered as the relation between cognition, more specifically, a lack of knowledge about the opponent and the conflict situation, and emotion. Surprise can evoke emotional and stress reactions, like shock, freeze, demoralisation or paralysis, and it may induce action delay.

Perceptions are sensations interpreted by the human mind to produce meaningful experiences. Most of the creation of perceptions takes place in the unconscious. Belief systems, among other things, based on culture, religion, education, life experience, and acquired knowledge, play a major role in the creation of perception. Human beings are able to create their own perceptions, even if they do not possess all the necessary information. It may lead to perceptions as well as manipulated perceptions. Mechanisms of information manipulation can contribute to the creation of wrong impressions in order to control a person. In such a case, the sender will select certain information from a larger amount of information, or the shared information can be modified, but he can also avoid communicating sensitive information. Memories are an important element in the creation of perceptions, and they can be manipulated. When confronted with new information, including disinformation, humans can create new perceptions, and believe in them as if they were their original memories. For deceivers this memory distortion is a good starting point for creating manipulated perceptions. If a person is aware of certain perceptions, it is difficult for him to change them. Subliminal stimulation is another technique, used to create manipulated perception. The next level is that this stimulation can persuade or even manipulate human beings through the creation of manipulated perceptions. There are also other neural and cognitive mechanisms that can affect the generation of manipulated perceptions, like negative association, stereotyping, narration, repetition, cognitive dissonance, and biases and heuristics.

## Similarities

The main similarity between Russian and other, principally Western, deception warfare is that both approaches have the same overall aims: surprise and manipulated perceptions in order to influence the decision-making process of the opponent. These overall aims make it possible to make a comparison between the two approaches. It is not comparing apples and pears; either

approach is focused on the same kind of aims. Surprise is the confrontation with an unexpected situation, inducing emotional reactions, such as shock, demoralisation and paralysis. Both Russian and, primarily, Western deception warfare are trying to create these kinds of effects. It might lead to confusion and in the longer term to a delay in reaction or to no action at all. Russian and other, mainly Western, deception warfare recognises that manipulated perceptions can be created when a target is provided with disinformation. Human beings create their own perceptions, even if the information is inaccurate or incomplete. These mechanisms are explained in the Gestalt psychology. Besides, Russian and Western deception warfare concepts acknowledge that memory distortion, subliminal stimulation and responding to the aforementioned neural and cognitive mechanisms may contribute to the creation of manipulated memory.

Another similarity is that both Russian and Western deception warfare concepts are largely focused on concealment, which is hiding or masking own sensitive information or activities, and deceit, which is a form of misleading whereby someone shows something in a manipulated form in order to make an opponent believe that there is something, which might lead to certain perception. Both Russian and Western deception warfare concepts show that concealment is predominantly conducted to protect oneself, whereas deceit is aimed at an opponent. Russians and Western deception warfare concepts may differ about the way in which concealment and deceit can be achieved. The next step in this dissertation is, therefore, to find out what differences exist between Russian and the other approaches to deception.

## Differences

In addition to similarities, there are differences as well between Russian deception and deception in general. The first main difference is that in the Russian Federation *maskirovka*, Russia's version of deception, is used by several departments of the Russian government. *Maskirovka* is a form of deception that is second nature to several government bodies. It is part of all the instruments of power, and not only limited to the military and secret services. This is different in the Western nations, where only the armed forces and the intelligence services focus on the use of deception methods in conflict situations. Yet, even in these Western services there has been little interest in the use of deception methods in recent years. This differs greatly from the Russian Federation, whose authorities do not hesitate to use deception at all levels and in all instruments of power, should it be required.

Another difference is that in the Russian Federation, authorities significantly more than in other countries, use the information environment to generate deception. While other, primarily Western, nations wash their hands of deception, the Russian Federation and its predecessor Soviet Union has a long tradition of active measures and *dezinformatsiya*. Reflexive control is the method par excellence to use *dezinformatsiya* to manipulate an opponent. This sets the Russian Federation apart, because other countries do not use such methods, or hardly use them at all, at least not as clearly and openly as Russian authorities do.

## 5.4 The amalgamation of deception factors

In this section the aim of a framework is discussed and towards the end the framework for testing is presented. After discussing the aim and the hermeneutic approach, which is the kind of approach used for this research, the structure of the framework is shown.

### The aim of the framework

The framework will be used to analyse Russian deception activities during the armed conflict in Georgia in 2008 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014. It consists of criteria to support the final assessment. The criteria are derived from the findings of Chapter 2 *Russian deception* supplemented with the insights from Chapter 3 ‘Deception of warfare’ and Chapter 4 ‘Human dimensions’. The previous paragraph clarified that the Russian Federation mainly distinguishes itself through the use of the information sphere, consisting of active measures, *dezinformatsiya* and reflexive control. In addition, there is of course also *maskirovka*, used by the Russian authorities. The methods mentioned will be supplemented with insights from a different Western approach to deception as described in chapter 3. The three human-oriented concepts elaborated in chapter 4, namely uncertainty, surprise and manipulated perception are broadly discussed in the framework.

This framework should provide an insight into how Russian authorities have used deception during the operations in 2008 and 2014, and to what extent they have been distinctive. The intention is to use the framework to analyse both cases, firstly, the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in 2008 and, secondly, Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014. Analysing the two cases, it might appear that the framework is too comprehensive, because not all criteria of the

framework are applicable. It is essential then to find out why these criteria were not used in 2008 and 2014. It is also indispensable to discover why methods to cause deception are not in the framework and may not have been used or written about before. These previously unused methods can then be considered as new Russian deception tactics. It is a way of assessing events in the recent past in order to get an understanding of current Russian deception methods as well as to modify the framework on the basis of the outcomes of the case studies if necessary.

## Hermeneutic approach

The application of the framework, created to analyse the use of deception by Russian authorities in their armed conflict with Georgia in 2008 and Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, can be regarded as a hermeneutic approach. Being part of the constructivist tradition, hermeneutics as a methodology of interpretation is concerned with problems and challenges that result from dealing with relevant human activities and the outcome of these human activities. 'It offers a toolbox for efficiently treating problems of the interpretation of human actions, texts and other meaningful material.'<sup>5</sup> And that is the exact purpose of this framework: give an interpretation of Russian deception on the basis of many publications on the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in 2008 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

## Structure of the framework

The framework consists of four phases: (1) planning phase, (2) execution phase, (3) outcome phase, and (4) feedback phase. Furthermore, there are two key elements in the framework: the deceiver, being the Russian authorities, and the target, being the Georgian and the Ukrainian decision-makers. The deceiver uses *maskirovka*, consisting of silence and denial, active measures, *dezinformatsiya*, reflexive control, and other means of deception, to deceive the target. The target might have a lack of knowledge about the deceiver, not knowing what the deceiver's goals are, not grasping his methods and his way of operating or ignore signals and indications. The target might even suffer from gullibility. The deception attempts take place under a veil of uncertainty created by *maskirovka* and leading to concealment and/or deceit.

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<sup>5</sup> Edward Zalta and Uri Nodelman (Ed), 'Hermeneutics', in: *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (Stanford, CA (USA): Stanford University, Center for Study of Language and Information, 2016), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hermeneutics/>, (1 July 2019).

The *maskirovka* methods used can cause surprise and/or manipulated perception of the security situation. Sometimes *maskirovka* will not lead to any effect at all. It is interesting to analyse the way the deceiver, the Russian authorities, organised their feedback. Figure 1 shows the framework.

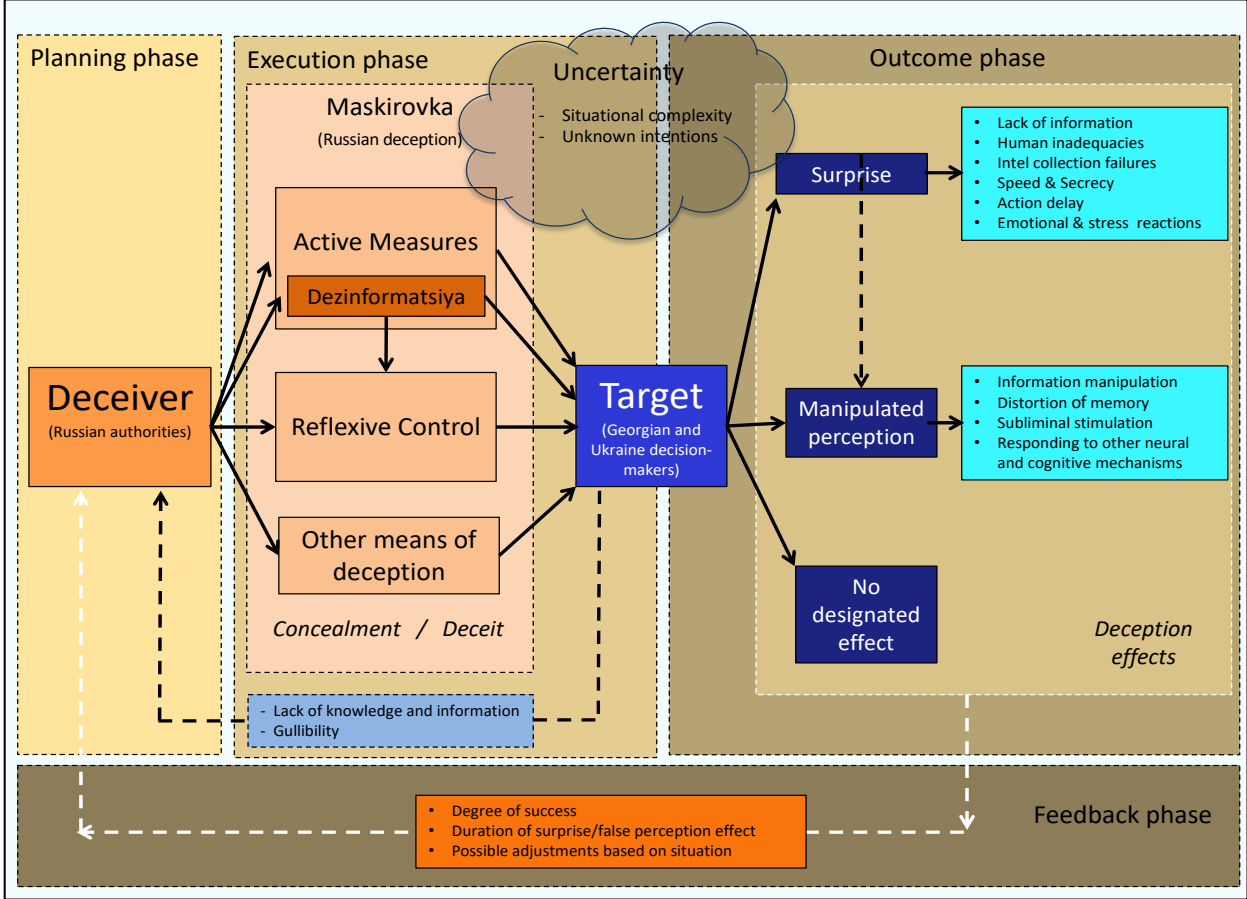


Figure 5.5 Schematic overview of the analytical framework

### 5.5 Concluding remarks

This chapter answered the fourth secondary research question: what does a relevant framework for analysing modern Russian deception warfare look like? The chapter made a theoretical triangulation that included an analysis and a synthesis of the three previous chapters in order to construct a framework. The framework consists of two key elements: the deceiver, being the Russian authorities, and the target, more specifically the authorities of the target nations. The purpose of this framework is to analyse Russian deception methods used in the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in 2008 and Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014, on the basis of the criteria. This assessment can be found in the chapters 7 and 8. Before returning to these, the Russian authorities are explained in the next chapter.



## Chapter 6 Russian Authorities

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## 6.1 Preamble

This chapter is about the Russian authorities, involved in armed conflict in 2008 and annexation in 2014, and thereby provides an answer to the fifth secondary research question:

Who are the Russian authorities involved in deception warfare?

The Russian authorities involved in deception warfare are the highest political level, with the President and his chief security advisory body, the Security Council of the Russian Council, playing a leading role. This chapter starts with the ambitions of Russian authorities.

Ultimately, it is the Russian President who decides, and this is the reason why this chapter also elaborates on how the Russian political system works. This policy is the administrative side of Russian deception warfare, while government and semi-governmental bodies are also involved in the execution of deception methods. These organisations contribute to physical operations from which a deception effect arises, but many Russian deception operations take place in the information sphere. In addition to the political system, the other involved organisations include the Russian intelligence and security services, the procuracy, the Ministry of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media and the Internet Research Agency. The Russian Armed Forces naturally also contribute to deception warfare, but this organisation is discussed in chapters 7 and 8. A special place in the execution of deception warfare has been reserved for the *siloviki*, the former members of the intelligence and security services who were powerful in Russian society at the time of the Russo-Georgian conflict and the annexation of Crimea.

In order to provide an assessment of these Russian authorities, this chapter consists of four different sections. The first section, 6.2 ‘Russia’s ambition’ discusses the aspiration of the Russian President and his authorities. The second section, 6.3 ‘Political System in the Russian Federation’, explains how Russia’s political system functioned at the time of the conflict in 2008 and the annexation in 2014. The third section, 6.4 ‘Intelligence services’, describes the history and current organisation of the Russian security services that played a role in creating *Maskirovka*. Section 6.5 ‘*Siloviki*’ explains that the so-called *siloviki*, the former security agents, played a major background role in Russian political decision-making. Section 6.6 ‘Other government bodies’ focuses on other Russian government organisations that were likely to have been involved in Russian deception activities during the conflict with Georgia

and the annexation of Crimea. The Russian Armed Forces, being a Russian government organisation, are discussed in Chapter 7 ‘Russo-Georgian Armed Conflict 2008’ and Chapter 8 ‘The Annexation of Crimea 2014’. Concluding remarks in section 6.7 wrap up this chapter.

## 6.2 Russia’s ambition

To determine whether Russian authorities were effective with their deceiving activities, it is relevant to consider the strategic aims of the Russian Federation. Researchers such as Ioffe and Osinga have indicated that the Russian Federation is claiming a place of respect on the international stage and wants to be seen as a world power. Grigas points out that President Putin feels responsible for all Russians, including ethnic Russians in the former Soviet republics. At the same time President Putin strives for stability in Russia’s entire region. Besides, Muzyka and Kissinger indicate the special and strategic significance of Georgia, Ukraine and Crimea to the Russian authorities, who also played a role in the two conflicts in 2008 and 2014. All three goals will be discussed in the following subsections.

First, concerning Russia as a respected world power, Julia Ioffe, a Russian-born American journalist, stated in *The Atlantic* that Russian authorities would like to reclaim a fully accepted and respected place on the world stage. In her article Ioffe illustrated Putin’s ambition at the *Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz*, i.e. ‘Munich Security Conference’ in 2007.<sup>1</sup> Based on official statements, Russian authorities were of the opinion that Western leaders had ignored Russia’s role in international affairs and viewed the Russian Federation not just as a great power, but as a ‘regular’ or ‘regional’ power.<sup>2</sup> Frans Osinga, Professor of War Studies, stated in his inaugural speech at Leiden University that the Russian Federation is keen to restore its status as a superpower on the international stage. It believes in its own dominant civilization with mythical and certainly orthodox religious foundations in which there is no room for Western liberal values and legal principles. These views exude a strong sense of aversion to the Western world. The Russian Federation also tries to restore the geographical strategic buffer and sphere of influence between the Russian Federation and Western Europe with its activities in neighbouring countries. In a more abstract sense, it is engaged in a

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<sup>1</sup> Julia Ioffe, ‘What Putin Really Wants: Putin’s Game’, *The Atlantic*, 321 (2018) 1, 68-85.

<sup>2</sup> Deborah Yarsike Ball, *Protecting Falsehood with a Bodyguard of Lies: Putin’s Use of Information Warfare*, Research Paper, No. 136, (Rome (ITA): NATO Defence College, Research Division, 2017), 7.

struggle against attempts of the West to structure the international order and against its liberal ideas.<sup>3</sup>

Second, with regard to President Putin's responsibility for all Russians, it is clear that not only geopolitical factors played a role. The Russian identity is also very important. According to Agnia Grigas, an American political scientist on Russia's security, President Putin feels responsible for all Russians, including the so-called 'Compatriots Abroad', the Russians who came to live outside the territory of the Russian Federation, especially due to the collapse of the Soviet Union. In her book *Beyond Crimea: The New Russian Empire*, Grigas observed that Compatriots Abroad concerned people with an 'ethnic, religious, spiritual or historical bond with the Russian Federation';<sup>4</sup> in other words, one of Russia's top priorities is the protection of ethnic Russians all over the former Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup> Another top security goal for the Russian authorities is creating and maintaining internal as well as external stability. Domestically, they want to avoid any popular unrest, separatism, terrorism, or other threats to the current political order. Russian authorities also seek external stability, most of all on its borders because of a perceived link between events there and security inside the Russian Federation. This so-called border stability is characterised by avoidance of 'Colour Revolutions', whereby, as Russian authorities see it, Western governments exploit popular unrest to overturn sitting governments and install one that is hostile to the Russian Federation.<sup>6</sup>

Third, there is this special and strategic importance of Georgia and especially Ukraine and Crimea to the Russian authorities. Konrad Muzyka, a Polish independent analyst of Russian and Belarussian armed forces, considered the Russian incursions into Georgia and Crimea as a post-imperial action, rather than a neo-imperial. The main purpose of Russian authorities to start the operations was to restore control over Russia's strategically important regions and locations, like South-Ossetia and Crimea, instead of conquering new territories. The activities demonstrated by the Russians were not strictly physical and offensive in order to destroy the

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<sup>3</sup> Frans Osinga, *Oorlog en het Schild van Athena, De Waarde van Krijgswetenschappen* (War and the Shield of Athena: The Value of War Studies), Inaugural Speech, (Leiden (NLD): Leiden University, 2019), 13.

<sup>4</sup> Agnia Grigas, *Beyond Crimea: The New Russian Empire*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 57-93.

<sup>5</sup> Roland Freudenstein, 'Facing Up to the Bear: Confronting Putin's Russia', *European View*, 13 (2014) 2, 228.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Radin et al., *The Future of the Russian Military: Russia's Ground Combat Capabilities and Implications for U.S.-Russia Competition*, (Santa Monica, CA (USA): RAND Corporation, 2019), 9.

enemy or to seize territory.<sup>7</sup> Former United States Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, indicated that the Western world did not have a thorough understanding of what Ukraine meant to the Russian Federation. It was not just a foreign country to Russian authorities. Russian history began in what was then called *Kievan Rus*, a federation of Slavic tribes under the reign of the Rurik Dynasty that covered the area of what is now Belarus, Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Kievan Rus is considered to be the start of the destiny of the Russian people. Ukraine was not only the centre of Russian civilisation, as it had been part of the Russian Empire for centuries, and their histories were intertwined before that. The Battle of Poltava<sup>8</sup> between the Russian Empire and Sweden in 1709 was one of the most important battles for Russian freedom, and was fought on Ukrainian soil.<sup>9</sup> This historical fact that is further elaborated in section 8.5 'Russian efforts', is not the only aspect that is important to Russian authorities. The Black Sea Fleet, Russia's means to project power in the Mediterranean, is allowed to use the port of Sevastopol, located in Crimea, as agreed in a long-term lease programme between the Russian Federation and Ukraine.<sup>10</sup> This lease-plan will be explained in section 8.3 'The history of Ukraine and Crimea'.

In short, there is no common view about Russia's goals. A comparison of the different views shows that Russian authorities appeared to pursue three main strategic goals: (1) to become a respected player on the world stage again with a strong belief in its civilization, (2) to provide security to all Russians, including those living outside Russia, and the pursuit of stability favourable for Russian authorities in the region, and (3) being in control over Russia's strategic regions and locations. This deduction is consistent with the findings of a recent RAND study into Russia's core interests that guide its foreign policy. In this study, the researchers show a list of five goals, in order of priority: (1) a vision of the Russian Federation as a great power, (2) influence in its proximity, the former Soviet nations, (3)

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<sup>7</sup> Konrad Muzyka, *When Russia Goes to War: Motives, Means and Indicators*, Anysis, (Tallinn (EST): *Rahvusvaheline Kaitseuringute Keskus* (International Centre for Defence and Security), 2020), 3.

<sup>8</sup> During the Battle of Poltava Czar Peter the Great achieved a decisive victory over King Charles XII of Sweden in the Great Northern War. The battle is regarded as the end of Sweden's status as major power in the Northern region, and it marked the beginning of Russian supremacy in Eastern Europe. The Swedish army had ceased to exist, and King Charles fled southward to the Ottoman Empire, where he lived his last five years in exile. Today Poltava is a city in the North-Eastern part of Ukraine. See: Jacob Field, 'Battle of Poltava', *European History* [1709], Encyclopædia Britannica Website (2012). <https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Poltava>, (29 February 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Henry Kissinger, 'To Settle the Ukraine Crisis, Start at the End', *The Washington Post Website* (5 March 2014). [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/henry-kissinger-to-settle-the-ukraine-crisis-start-at-the-%20end/2014/03/05/46dad868-a496-11e3-8466-d34c451760b9\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/henry-kissinger-to-settle-the-ukraine-crisis-start-at-the-%20end/2014/03/05/46dad868-a496-11e3-8466-d34c451760b9_story.html), (29 February 2020).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

defence of the country, Russian leadership and its political system, (4) non-interference in domestic affairs, and (5) political and economic cooperation as a partner equal to other great powers.<sup>11</sup>

In the aim for status, care for all Russians and control of key areas in the region, the Russian authorities attempt to break down solid Western alliances, such as NATO and the EU. In early 2019, American historian Anne Applebaum indicated that President Putin has two ambitions. His first ambition is the unity within NATO to disappear. Applebaum stated that Putin is not afraid of European treaties and military pressure from NATO; he is much more afraid of the democratic values that most NATO member states radiate. These democratic values are very attractive to the Russian people, and they affect the dominant position of the Russian President and the Kremlin.<sup>12</sup> It is a reason for the Russian authorities to use disinformation in order to portray the West as ‘chaotic and unappealing’.<sup>13</sup> A second ambition of Putin’s, according to Applebaum, is to divide Europe. If representatives of the Russian Federation talk or negotiate one-on-one with representatives of countries like Poland, Germany or the Netherlands, Russian representatives then know how to dominate. But these countries often speak on behalf of the EU. In negotiations with the EU, the Russian Federation position is much weaker, Applebaum argued.<sup>14</sup> Later in 2019, Applebaum stated that she is not concerned about a Russian incursion into European NATO countries, because Russian authorities are still convinced that they can achieve their goals, the break-up of NATO and EU, without any physical invasion.<sup>15</sup> In an article in Foreign Affairs American political scientist John Mearsheimer outlined that President Putin was afraid of an ever-expanding NATO. In his opinion, NATO was responsible for Russia’s decision to intervene in Georgia in 2008 and for the annexation of Crimea in 2014, after both Georgia and Ukraine were

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<sup>11</sup> Andrew Radin and Clint Reach, *Russian Views of the International Order*, Report, (Santa Monica, CA (USA): RAND Corporation, 2017), 8-23.

<sup>12</sup> Anne Applebaum op cit in: Lamyae Aharouay, ‘*Mensen Hebben de Online Revolutie Onderschat*’ (People Have Underestimated the Online Revolution), *NRC*, 23 February 2019. And: Maarten Rothman, ‘On the Instrumentality of Soft Power; or Putin Against Democracy Promotion’, in: Paul Ducheine and Frans Osinga, *Netherlands Annual Review of Military Studies 2017, (NLARMS-2017) Winning Without Killing: The Strategic and Operational Utility of Non-Kinetic Capabilities in Crises*, (The Hague (NLD): Springer / T.M.C. Asser Press, 2017), 39-54.

<sup>13</sup> Kasey Stricklin, ‘Why Does Russia Use Disinformation’, *Lawfare Blog*, a Cooperation between the Lawfare Institute and Brookings, (29 March 2020). <https://www.lawfareblog.com/why-does-russia-use-disinformation>, (30 March 2020).

<sup>14</sup> Anne Applebaum op cit in: ‘*Mensen Hebben de Online Revolutie Onderschat*’.

<sup>15</sup> Anne Applebaum, ‘Anne Applebaum on Poland, Putin and Progress in Eastern Europe’, *CAPX Website* (26 November 2019). <https://capx.co/anne-applebaum-on-poland-putin-and-progress-in-eastern-europe/>, (31 December 2019).

openly considering NATO membership, and NATO not being opposed to it.<sup>16</sup> According to Erik Grossman, publicist in military professional journals like *Parameters* and *Small Wars Journal*, Russian authorities judge the frozen conflicts<sup>17</sup> that resulted after the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea<sup>18</sup> as a solution to the problem of creeping Western influence in post-Soviet territory.<sup>19</sup>

### 6.3 Political system of the Russian Federation

This section elaborates on the political system of the Russian Federation, in particular the centralisation of power within the Russian government. It was Irving Horowitz, at that time Professor of Sociology at Rutgers University, who at the end of the twentieth century compared the state with a Behemoth,<sup>20</sup> an impressive creature, a large monster with a powerful appearance, although changing looks every time.<sup>21</sup> This can certainly be said of the Russian state over the centuries: from absolutism under the Mongols, despotism under the Czars, communism under the Soviets, anarchy under President Yeltsin, to the current type of governance under President Putin.<sup>22</sup> This section focuses on the last episode of Russian history: the new centralized system. Two subsections explain the new centralised system: the first one deals with the political system itself, the so-called ‘sovereign democracy’ or ‘power vertical’, while the second subsection focuses on the executive body with many supremacies

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<sup>16</sup> John Mearsheimer, ‘Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West’s Fault: The Liberal Delusions that Provoked Putin’, *Foreign Affairs*, 93 (2014) 5, 77-89.

<sup>17</sup> Frozen conflicts have certain characteristics in common: (1) armed hostilities have taken place with parties to which include a state and separatists in a state’s territory, (2) a change in effective control of territory has resulted from the armed hostilities, (3) the state and separatists are divided by lines of separation, (4) the separatists make a self-determination claim on which they base a putative state, (5) no state recognized the putative state, and (6) a settlement process involving outside parties has been sporadic and inconclusive. See: Thomas Grant, ‘Frozen Conflicts and International Law’, *Cornell International Law Journal*, 50 (2017) 3, 390.

<sup>18</sup> The annexation of Crimea transferred into an unclear and simmering conflict in the Ukrainian Donbas region. The annexation encouraged Russian-speaking minorities in East Ukraine who apparently hoped that the Russian authorities would repeat the same scenario. In Ukrainian cities like Kharkov, Donetsk, Lugansk and Odessa so-called ‘People’s Republics’ were proclaimed. The Russian Federation still denies any involvement. This denial is in contrast to the annexation of Crimea, in which President Putin admitted that the Russian Federation was involved. See: Sabine Fisher, *The Donbas Conflict: Opposing Interests and Narratives, Difficult Peace Process*, SWP Research Paper 5, (Berlin (GER): *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik* (German Institute for International and Security Studies), 2019), 8-11. And: Anton Bebler, ‘The Russian-Ukrainian Conflict over Crimea’, Ifimes (International Institute for Middle East and Balkan Studies) Website, (28 June 2015). <https://www.ifimes.org/en/9035>, (29 April 2020).

<sup>19</sup> Erik Grossman, ‘Russia’s Frozen Conflicts and the Donbas’, *Parameters*, 48 (2018) 2, 52.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Behemoth’ is a mythological animal, which is considered as the king of mammals, alongside ‘Ziz’, the king of birds and ‘Leviathan’, the king of fish. See: *The Tanakh*, Job 40:15 – 41:26. [https://www.chabad.org/library/bible\\_cdo/aid/63255/jewish/The-Bible-with-Rashi.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/63255/jewish/The-Bible-with-Rashi.htm), (14 February 2020).

<sup>21</sup> Irving Horowitz, *Behemoth: Main Currents in the History and Theory of Political Sociology*, (New Brunswick, NJ (USA): Transaction Publishers, 1999), Inside coverpage and 3.

<sup>22</sup> Keir Giles, *Moscow Rules: What Drives Russia to Confront the West*, (Washington, DC (USA): Brookings Institution Press, and: London (UK): Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2019), 71-74.

and with a central role in Russian security decision-making: the Security Council of the Russian Federation.

## Sovereign democracy

The way the Russian Federation is governed is often misinterpreted. The Russian Federation became a democratic state after the collapse of the Soviet Union but is not comparable to Western democracies. That does not mean that the Russian Federation became an authoritarian state. It is undoubtedly more democratic than the former Soviet Union and the regime of President Putin can be characterized as a democracy that is managed and controlled from the highest echelon, which will be explained in the rest of this subsection. It consists of five parts: (1) *systema*, (2) central control, (3) the power vertical, (4) restrictions to criticism, and (5) triad of orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality.

### (1) *Sistema*

It started on 29 December 1999 when Vladimir Putin became acting President of the Russian Federation after Yeltsin's unexpected resignation. Putin gave a programmatic statement, also known as Putin's Millennium Message, a speech coloured with emotion and richly adorned with Russian historical tales and cultural symbolism. Putin clarified what he could deliver as new head of state. He specified that he would 'rebuild the Russian state, protect Russian sovereignty, preserve domestic stability and unity, and ensure national security'.<sup>23</sup> Once in office, Putin was officially sworn in as President of the Russian Federation on 7 May 2000. The Russian population was not supposed to ask any questions about his methods, nor would they be involved in 'deciding the nuts and bolts of policy or of governing the Russian Federation'.<sup>24</sup>

Putin shaped his system of governance, founded on pragmatism rather than ideology. Russian critics, such as Gleb Pavlovsky<sup>25</sup> and Alena Ledeneva, prefer to speak about the *sistema*, the

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<sup>23</sup> Fiona Hill and Clifford Caddy, *Mr Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*, A Brooking Focus Book, (Washington, DC (USA): Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 211.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>25</sup> Gleb Pavlovsky, a political scientist, was advisor of the Russian Presidents Yeltsin, Putin and Medvedev. He was also considered as one of Putin's most influential spin doctors till he was fired in 2011, because he openly supported President Dmitry Medvedev's re-election in 2012. Since then, he has become a critic of the Russian political system. See: Rebecca Reich, 'How the War Against Truth Went Global', *The New York Times*



system. This system is a style of exercising power whereby the state has unlimited access to all national resources, both public and private, and in all layers of Russian society, in order to quickly resolve the Kremlin's urgent state problems. The word *sistema* was already in vogue during the Soviet era, then indicating the relationship between state, Communist Party apparatus and the people.<sup>26</sup> The manner in which Putin has formed *sistema* is referred to as sovereign democracy, consisting of the state, Putin's inner circle and the Russian population. A main characteristic of Putin's *sistema* is the wide discrepancy between the official administrative structure and informal political connections. For instance, the CEO of a major Russian company can be more influential than a minister in the Russian cabinet.<sup>27</sup> Remarkably, President Putin, on the other hand, still argues that legitimacy is an important aspect for him. He has long stated that he wanted to be elected through democratic elections. The Russian people should have a "choice" and he is also convinced that the Russian Constitutional Court should ratify the appointment of the Russian President.<sup>28</sup>

In February 2006, Vladislav Surkov<sup>29</sup>, at the time deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation, used the term sovereign democracy in a speech to

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Website, (6 August 2019). <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/06/books/review/peter-pomerantsev-this-is-not-propaganda.html>, (14 February 2020). And: Brian Whitmore, 'The Pavlovsky Affair', RadioFreeEurope / RadioLiberty Website, (29 April 2011). [https://www.rferl.org/a/the\\_pavlovsky\\_affair/16798268.html](https://www.rferl.org/a/the_pavlovsky_affair/16798268.html), (14 February 2020).

<sup>26</sup> Alena Ledeneva, *Can Russia Modernise? Sistema, Power Networks and Informal Governance*, (Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 2013), 19-32. And: Gleb Pavlovsky, 'Russian Politics Under Putin: The System Will Outlast the Master', *Foreign Affairs*, 95 (2016) 3, 10-17.

<sup>27</sup> Tatiana Stanovaya, 'Unconsolidated: The Five Russian Elites Shaping Putin's Transition', Carnegie Moscow Center Website, (11 February 2020). <https://bit.ly/30entnP>, (16 February 2020).

<sup>28</sup> Elena Alekseenkova, 'Russia First? The New Constitution's Impact on Domestic and Foreign Policy, in: Aldo Ferrari and Eleonora Tafuro Ambrosetti, *Forward to the Past? New/Old Theatres of Russia's International Projection*, (Milan (ITA): Ledizioni LediPublishing, 2020), 27.

<sup>29</sup> Vladislav Surkov was originally born in Chechnya, and his official name is Aslambek Dudayev, although both data are often denied by the Kremlin. Surkov had been a loyal vassal of Vladimir Putin since the start of his Presidency in 2000. He had emerged as one of Putin's greatest spin doctors. He was appointed as Deputy Prime Minister and later, after his resignation, he worked for the Executive Office of President Putin as personal adviser of the Russian President. Under the pseudonym Natan Dubovitsky (the male version of his wife's name Natalya Dubovitskaya), he published light-hearted and fairy tale stories, like the short story 'Without Sky' about non-linear warfare. This 'Without Sky' story was first published as an annex to the magazine *Russian Pioneer* of May 2014. Surkov is also associated with the information operations surrounding the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in 2008, the Russian mysteries surrounding the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the conflict in the Ukrainian Donbass region, and the Russian cover-up of facts after the downing of the MH-17. Surkov was fired by President Putin in February 2020. See: Whitney Milam, 'Who is Vladislav Surkov? The Many Faces and Farces of Putin's most Notorious Political Operative', Medium Website, (14 July 2018). <https://medium.com/@wamilam/the-theater-director-who-is-vladislav-surkov-9dd8a15e0efb>, (2 March 2020). And: Amy Mackinnon and Reid Standish, 'Putin Fires His Puppet Master: Vladislav Surkov, Who Stage-Managed Russia's Involvement in Ukraine, Is Replaced'. Foreign Policy Website, (21 February 2020). <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/02/21/putin-fires-vladislav-surkov-puppet-master-russia-ukraine-rebels/>, (02 March 2020).

an assembly of Russia's United Party, which is Putin's political party.<sup>30</sup> Surkov described a sovereign democracy as a democratic and socially-oriented state whereby the highest power, the sovereignty of a state and its institutions, belong to the nation. It is important to know that the Russian Federation can only materialize the principle of sovereign democracy through state control and dominance, whereas Russia's foreign policy should restore its global influence.<sup>31</sup> Surkov related sovereignty to political competition, and he considered international terrorism, military control, uncompetitive economy and the Colour Revolutions supported by foreign states among the biggest concerns for sovereignty.<sup>32</sup>

## (2) *Central control*

*The Washington Post* stated that high officials of the Russian Federation used the term sovereign democracy in an intensive public relations effort to improve Russia's image in the run-up to the G-8 Summit in Saint Petersburg in June 2006. Jokingly, *The Washington Post* labelled sovereign democracy as a Kremlin coinage conveying two messages: 'first, that Russia's regime is democratic and, second, that this claim must be accepted, full stop. Any attempt at verification is considered as unfriendly and as meddling in Russia's domestic affairs.'<sup>33</sup> In Karl Deutsch's point of view, the Russian political system concentrates sovereignty. Deutsch, at the time Professor of Political Science at Harvard University, did research into models of political communication and control. He concluded that when important decisions are concentrated at one point in the political system of a state, and when all decisions tend to supersede all other decisions made elsewhere in the system, this system resembles 'the absolute monarchies of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe'. Deutsch labelled the system he studied as a 'concentrated sovereignty'.<sup>34</sup> The current Russian system is comparable to the centralized system outlined by Deutsch. It is, therefore, no wonder that Russian authorities could and can reach decisions quickly and, consequently, act quickly. It is an explanation of rapid Russian decision-making, as is shown in the chapters 7 and 8.

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<sup>30</sup> Ivan Krastev, 'Sovereign Democracy, Russian Style', *Inside Turkey*, 8 (2006) 4, 113.

<sup>31</sup> Kristina Puleikytė, 'Sovereign Democracy: Democracy or Sovereignty?', *Geopolitika Website*, (27 April 2007). <http://www.geopolitika.lt/?a=6>, (30 October 2019).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Masha Lipman, 'Putin's "Sovereign Democracy"', *The Washington Post Website* (15 July 2006). <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/14/AR2006071401534.html>, (30 October 2019).

<sup>34</sup> Karl Deutsch, *The Nerves of Government: Models of Political Communication and Control*, (New York, NY (USA): The Free Press, A Division of the MacMillan Company, 1966), 209.

Surkov can be seen as the architect of sovereign democracy and this political approach perfectly matched Putin's political views of Russian society. Surkov pursued to build a political system in the Russian Federation with one dominant party, United Russia, and a few minor parties that could function as opposition to United Russia without in any way threatening the Kremlin's hold on power.<sup>35</sup> The Centre for Geopolitical Studies in Lithuania did extensive research into sovereign democracy. The centre concluded that under the guise of sovereign democracy the Putin regime consolidated state power through nationalisation of the energy sector, almost total control of the media, formation of political parties by Russian authorities and the harassment of opponents, ensuring support to the regime during crises.<sup>36</sup>

### *(3) The power vertical*

In 2011, the model of sovereign democracy gradually changed to another system, one that presents no alternatives: Putin is considered as the central figure, and United Russia as the only party.<sup>37</sup> This structure is sometimes dubbed the 'Russian Power Vertical', the vertical being a team of influential Russians around Putin, at the time most of them were *siloviki*, and taking shape in formal institutional structures such as the Security Council, which had become a reservoir of experience and authority. Until recently, the power vertical sometimes worked with a slight hitch. Despite the appointment of loyal personnel in this structure, presidential instructions and orders are not always carried out and sometimes remain incomplete. These instructions and orders then remain stuck between the different layers of the power vertical.<sup>38</sup>

Only two people, Rosneft President Igor Sechin and Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, both very close to President Putin, were allowed to carve out their spheres of influence. The rest had to play by the rules and refrain from jumping away from the vertical. A few politicians, like Sergey Lavrov, and economic players, like Arkady Rosenberg,<sup>39</sup> had some latitude to

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<sup>35</sup> Vladimir Frolov, 'Rise and Fall; of Surkov's Sovereign Democracy', The Moscow Times Website, (12 May 2013). <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/05/12/rise-and-fall-of-surkovs-sovereign-democracy-a23891>, (30 October 2019).

<sup>36</sup> Puleikytė, 'Sovereign Democracy'.

<sup>37</sup> Ray Sontag, *The End of Sovereign Democracy in Russia: What Was It, Why Did It Fail, What Comes Next, and What Should the United States Think of This?*, Rising Experts Task Force Working Paper, (Washington, DC (USA): Centre on Global Interest, 2013), 2.

<sup>38</sup> Andrew Monaghan, The Vertikal: Power and Authority in Russia, *International Affairs*, 88 (2012) 1, 1-16.

<sup>39</sup> Arkady Rosenberg is a childhood friend of Vladimir Putin. Later, Putin and Rosenberg became judo partners. See: Harry Holmes, 'Putin's Friend Receives State Funding to Combat Corruption', Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) Website, (15 January 2019). <https://www.occrp.org/en/daily/9119-putin-s-friend-receives-state-funding-to-combat-corruption>, (2 March 2020).

manoeuvre but only within the framework set by the centre. Since 2016-2017, many participants of the power vertical have started to claim more autonomy, cordoning off their influence and setting their own rules.<sup>40</sup> However, during the annexation of Crimea the power vertical was still in place and functioned well. Because of this mechanism, Russian authorities were able to reach a decision quickly and, consequently, to act quickly.

#### *(4) Restrictions to criticism*

Criticism of the Russian political system has been increasingly controlled over the past decade. Since 2004, Federal Law No. 54-FZ 'On Meetings, Rallies, Demonstrations, Marches, and Pickets' is in effect. This law provides for requests to criticise the political system and demonstrations, to be submitted in advance and for the express approval of the Russian authorities, including local authorities. In principle, authorities always gave permission, unless public security was endangered. However, since 2012, when Putin started his third term in office, legislation on holding demonstrations and gatherings criticising the Russian political system has been tightened considerably. The size of, and reporting about demonstrations, have been severely restricted. Unsanctioned demonstrations were initially overlooked, but since 2012 severe penalties have been imposed on organizers and participants of such demonstrations.<sup>41</sup>

#### *(5) Triad of orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality*

Over the last 20 years, Russian democracy under President Putin has become a system based on power. It bore many similarities to the old Czarist triad of 'orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality.'<sup>42</sup> In 1833, the triad was introduced by Count Sergey Uvarov, who was Minister of Education under Czar Nicolas I. The introduction of the triad should be seen as a reaction to the Decembrist uprising in 1825, when Russian army officers protested against the rights of Czar Nicolas I after his elder brother Constantine refused to succeed Czar Alexander I after his death. Other factors that had influenced the Uvarov triad were the revolutionary events in

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<sup>40</sup> Andrey Pertsev, 'The Beginning and the End of the Russia's Power Vertical', Carnegie Moscow Center Website, (31 January 2017). <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/67848>, (30 October 2019).

<sup>41</sup> Olga Khvostunova (Ed), *Russia Under Putin; 20 Years of Protests*, Report, (New York, NY (USA): The Institute of Modern Russia, 2020), 14.

<sup>42</sup> Susan Glasser, 'Putin the Great: Russia's Imperial Imposter', Foreign Affairs Website (12 August 2019). <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/2019-08-12/putin-great>, (31 December 2019).

the Kingdom of the Netherlands, with Belgium's secession from the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and an uprising in the Kingdom of Poland, both in the period 1830-1831. The triad became the dominant imperialist policy of Nicolas I and later also of other Romanov's. The orthodoxy and autocracy meant protection of the Russian Orthodox Church and unconditional loyalty to the sovereign. Nationality was based on the Russian word *narodnost*, translated as national spirit or nationalism. Narodnost meant that the first official state-founding role of Russian nationality and equal civil rights were recognized for all people living in the Russia Empire.<sup>43</sup> Today it is President Putin, who has revived Uvarov's triad in contemporary Russian society with the concept of Russkiy Mir, which will be explained more in detail in section 8.5 'Russian efforts'. Recently in March 2020, President Putin made a proposal to the Russian State Duma to amend the Russian constitution, which will allow him to stay in office as Russian President for an additional two six-year terms. The proposal was passed by the State Duma just hours after it had suddenly been introduced.<sup>44</sup> In early July 2020, a referendum in the Russian Federation revealed that 78% of the voters have approved changes to the Russian constitution, allowing President Putin to remain in power through 2036.<sup>45</sup>

## The Security Council of the Russian Federation

There is one body in Russian government that takes central stage. In April 1992, a Russian Security Council was founded after the Russian Federation had become an independent state. Its main task was to achieve a greater degree of coordination within Russian security policy. It soon became one of the political institutions that Russian media examined with distrust. Russian journalists claimed that the road was open for a new guiding force for society. The media regarded the Security Council of the Russian Federation as a new potential Politburo

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<sup>43</sup> Alexei Miller, *The Romanov Empire and Nationalism: Essays in the Methodology of Historical Research*, Originally published in Russian language: *Imperiia Romanovykh i nationalism* by *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie* in Moscow in 2006, Translated by Serguei Dobrynin, (New York, NY (USA): Central European University Press, 2008), 139-159. And: Simon Sebag Montefiori, *The Romanovs: 1613-1918*, (New York, NY (USA): Vintage Books / Penguin Random House LLC, 2016), 339-384.

<sup>44</sup> Anton Troianovski, 'Putin Endorses Brazen Remedy to Extend His Rule, Possibly for Life', The New York Times Website, (10 March 2020). <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/10/world/europe/putin-president-russia.html>, (14 March 2020). And: Evan Gershkovich, "'President for Life': Putin Opens Door to Extending Rule Until 2036", The Moscow Times Website, (10 March 2020). <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/03/10/president-for-life-putin-opens-door-to-extending-rule-until-2036-a69576>, (14 March 2020).

<sup>45</sup> Amy Mackinnon, 'Putin's Russia Gets Voters' Rubber Stamps', Foreign Policy Website, (03 July 2020). <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/03/putin-russia-voter-rubber-stamp-approval-constitutional-referendum-2036/>, (06 July 2020).

like the one that had existed during the Soviet era. Russian media used scoops like ‘an administrative super monster’, compared to the aforementioned Behemoth, or even ‘a junta come to power without a military coup’.<sup>46</sup> Former President Boris Yeltsin was not immune to this criticism, he chose to limit the influence of the Russian Security Council and changed its structure a few times. The influence of the council fluctuated over time during his presidency, but never rose to considerable height. With the arrival of President Putin, things started to change. Putin set conditions favourable for the council to become the focus of Russian security policy coordination and preparation. Over time, the Russian Security Council developed a powerful administrative structure without seriously competing security policy institutions. The secretary of the council turned into an intimate ally of President Putin’s and, in turn, received the President’s confidence.<sup>47</sup> This section will further elaborate on the subject of: (1) national security, and (2) the structure of the organisation.

### *(1) National security*

When President Putin took office, the broad term of national security was defined. National security involves high priority areas such as state security, public safety, socio-economic security and security in the domains of defence, information and international affairs. It is the council that formulates policy and coordinates inter-departmental and inter-agency activities related to the aforementioned aspects of national security. Regular meetings of the Russian Security Council are held in accordance with the agenda of the Chairman, who is the President of the Russian Federation.<sup>48</sup> The Russian Foreign Policy Concept of July 2008 showed that the Russian Security Council had the ambition to take a dominant position in articulating, not only coordinating, Russia’s national security. The Russian National Security Strategy, issued in 2009, took this event a step further, endowing the Russian Security Council with a broader and a more proactive coordination and monitoring role in Russia’s most important security matters.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Carolina Vendil, ‘The Russian Security Council’, *European Security*, 10 (2001) 2, 67-70.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> President of the Russian Federation, About the Security Council, Kremlin Website (2019). <http://en.kremlin.ru/structure/security-council>, (20 September 2019).

<sup>49</sup> Keir Giles, *Who Gives the Orders in the New Russian Military?*, Research Paper, No. 74, (Rome (ITA): NATO Defence College, Research Division, 2012), 4-5.

## *(2) The structure of the organisation*

During the conflict with Georgia and the annexation of Crimea, the Russian Security Council was organised as a three-tier organisation consisting of meetings, apparatus, and interdepartmental and inter-agency commissions. These commissions were formed around security policy issues and function as organs of management. There were a few permanent commissions, but they were mostly ad hoc and manned by representatives of the departments and government authorities concerned.<sup>50</sup> The composition of the Russian Security Council under President Putin has varied considerably over time. During Putin's second term in office the number of members grew to over twenty, including the chairman of Russia's Academy of Science.<sup>51</sup> In the last decade the council consisted of a Chairman, a Secretary and 10 members, including the Prime Minister, the Chief of Staff of the Presidential Executive Office, the Chairman of Council of Federation, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence and the Interior, and the directors of intelligence services, and the Special Representative for Environmental Protection and Transport.<sup>52</sup> Officially, the council has only two positions for the intelligence services, the FSB and SVR, but in practice many of the council members still belong to the *siloviki*. It can therefore be deduced that there is a firm connection between the Russian Security Council and the security services. The Russian Security Council oversees the administrative activities of the Russian armed forces, including financial expenditure, while the outside world believes that the Russian Defence Minister is playing a much more prominent role. Likewise, doctrinal and organizational changes in the Russian Armed Forces need formal approval from the Russian Security Council.<sup>53</sup>

One level down in the chain of command, just under the level of the Russian Security Council, operates the *Obeyedinennye Strategicheskiye Komandovaniya* (OSK), the Joint Strategic Command. The OSK has direct bearing on how and under what circumstances the Russian Federation deploys its military apparatus. During so-called 'special periods', commanders of the military district in the Russian motherland could become commanders of an activated OSK, exercising control over all units belonging to that specific military district. In military terms this would mean a switch from administrative control to operational control.

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<sup>50</sup> Vendil, 'The Russian Security Council', 70.

<sup>51</sup> Carolina Vendil Pallin, 'The Russian Power Ministries: Tool and Insurance of Power', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 20 (2007) 1, 3.

<sup>52</sup> President of the Russian Federation, 'Security Council Structure', Kremlin Website, (2019). <http://en.kremlin.ru/structure/security-council/members>, (20 September 2019).

<sup>53</sup> Giles, *Who Gives the Orders in the New Russian Military?*, 5-6.

This switch could take place during the emergence of a military threat within a short timeframe.<sup>54</sup> The Russian Federal Law on Defence stipulates that the formal decision to declare a ‘special period’ needs to be made by the President of the Russian Federation, advised by the Russian Security Council, and with prompt notification of the Federation Council and the State Duma. The Russian President formally issues orders to the Commander of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation to carry out military action.<sup>55</sup>

## 6.4 Intelligence and security services

This section deals with the history and current situation of the Russian security services. The Russian Federation and its predecessors have a long track record of security services, suppression, manipulation and dishonesty. History shows that the first Russian security services were mainly focused on repression of their own population, and on gathering intelligence. Later, during the Soviet period, these secret services also developed the use of *dezinformatsiya* in order to manipulate their opponents. Current services have started to focus on the information sphere. Since there is much to explain about the services, this section is divided into two subsections, namely ‘The history of the Russian security services’ followed by subsection ‘Modern times’.

### The history of the Russian intelligence and security services

This section describes the extensive history of the Russian intelligence and security services and consists of five different segments: (1) early history, (2) the Bolsheviks, (3) the rise of military intelligence, (4) World War II, and (5) post World War II.

#### *(1) Early history*

One of the first organized Russian security services was the *Oprichnina*. In December 1564 Czar Ivan IV, his wife, son and his treasury left Moscow without giving any reason, and settled in *Aleksandrovsкая Sloboda*, their royal hunting retreat. After settling in, Ivan IV had sent letters to Russian authorities in Moscow and even to the populace of Moscow, indicating

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<sup>54</sup> Mikheil Barabanov, *Russia's New Army*, 1st Edition, (Moscow (RF): Centre for Strategies and Technology, 2011), 32.

<sup>55</sup> Russian Federal Law on Defence, op. cit. in: Keir Giles, *Who Gives the Orders in the New Russian Military?*, Research Paper, No. 74, (Rome (ITA): NATO Defence College, Research Division, 2012), 7.



that he intended to renounce the throne. The authorities as well as the Muscovites petitioned him to return to Moscow, and Czar Ivan IV agreed upon the condition that he could establish the *Oprichnina*, a private appanage, a state-within-a-state, under his exclusive authority. The *Oprichnina* became the instrument by which Ivan IV then spread mass terror among the Muscovite society. The in total 6,000 loyal *Oprichniki* were dressed in black tunics to overawe the Russian population. The *Oprichnina* murdered thousands of men and women suspected of disloyalty to the Czar, purging the city of Novgorod of its leaders and merchants. In 1572, Ivan IV abolished the *Oprichnina* and parts of the organisation were renamed 'royal household' and *dvor* (court).<sup>56</sup>

Czar Fyodor I Ivanovich, who succeeded Ivan IV, produced only one daughter, who died at the age of two. This was the end of the Rurik Dynasty, causing a violent succession crisis. Russia slipped into the 'Time of Troubles', which was a period during which many usurpers and pretenders claimed the throne. Meanwhile Russia suffered from a famine that killed more than two million Russian residents and from the ruthless occupation by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth until 1612 when the Polish-Lithuanian rulers were driven from Russian soil. In 1613, Mikhail Romanov was elected Czar by the *Zemsky Sobor*, the parliament of Russia's Estates of realm.<sup>57</sup>

Mikhail's grandson, Czar Peter the Great understood that autocracy required 'tireless checking and threatening'.<sup>58</sup> In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century he formed two new regiments that had three different tasks: (1) bodyguard of the Czar, (2) an elite infantry regiment in the Imperial Russian Army, and (3) a gendarmerie force for the state Secret Chancellery. This Preobrazhensky Lifeguard Regiment was named after the village where it was founded, and the Semyonovsky Lifeguard Regiment was named after the village where it was initially stationed. The officers in these regiments were selected from Peter the Great's *poteshnye voiska*, 'toy' or 'fun forces', being Peter's playmates and friends, and other noblemen's sons, whom he trusted. The first head of the *Preobrazhensky Prikaz*, the ruling office of both regiments, was Prince Fyodor Romodanovsky. He is considered the first official head of the

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<sup>56</sup> Charles Halperin, 'Contemporary Russian Perceptions of Ivan IV's Oprichnina', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 19 (2017) 1, 95-124.

<sup>57</sup> Chester Dunning, *Russia's First Civil War: The Times of Trouble and the Founding of the Romanov Dynasty*, (University Park, PA (USA): Pennsylvania State University, 2001), 46-59, 138-161 and 424-442.

<sup>58</sup> Simon Sebag Montefiori, *The Romanovs, 1613-1918*, (New York, NY (USA): Vintage Books, A Division of Penguin Random House LLC, 2016), xxiii.

Russian security services and police. Both regiments supported Czarina Catherine the Great during her coup against her husband Czar Peter III. Catharina radically reorganized her government and created a new secret office, which she named the 'Secret Expedition'.<sup>59</sup> Later, the Preobrazhensky and Semyonovsky Lifeguard Regiments assisted successive Czars in suppressing the Russian population and maintaining public order in Russia. The two regiments were disbanded in 1917.<sup>60</sup> During the last period of their existence, the focus of the actions shifted gradually to those of elite infantry units.<sup>61</sup>

After the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1882, as described in section 2.2 'Maskirovka', the *Okhrana* was created by the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs to penetrate opposition movements in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Warsaw as well as in Paris. It was a ruthless secret police and intelligence organisation that also took on other tasks than infiltration missions only, because it was available and loyal to all Russian political authorities. The *Okhrana* in Paris became involved in secret diplomacy, establishing a clandestine diplomatic channel between France and Russia. In the Russian homeland, the *Okhrana* helped conservative politicians create and conduct pogroms in which many Jews were killed. The *Okhrana* could not prevent the collapse of the Czarist empire during the Revolution, and it was dissolved in 1917 by the Bolsheviks.<sup>62</sup>

## (2) *The Bolsheviks*

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, the leader of the Bolsheviks, believed that a revolution without secret police and a firing squad was doomed to catastrophe. In 1917, he approached Polish revolutionary Feliks Dzerzhinsky to head a new secret service, the Cheka, which was founded within six weeks after the Bolshevik Revolution. Cheka is the abbreviation for the

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<sup>59</sup> Richard Deacon, *A History of the Russian Secret Service*, (London (UK): Frederick Muller Ltd, 1972), 34-39.

<sup>60</sup> In 2013 President Putin signed Presidential Decree no. 236 which reinstates the title 154<sup>th</sup> Preobazhensky Independent Commandant's Regiment to his official honour guard, while the 1<sup>st</sup> Semyonovsky Independent Rifle Regiment joined the Kremlin Regiment for ceremonial guard duties for the Kremlin, as well as a motorized rifle unit in the Russian Armed Forces. See: President of the Russian Federation, 'A separate commandant regiment is given an honorary name', (9 April 2013), <http://kremlin.ru/acts/news/17856>, (15 September 2019).

<sup>61</sup> Joseph Wiczynski, 'The Mutiny of the Semenovsky Regiment in 1820', *The Russian Review*, 29 (1970) 2, 167-180.

<sup>62</sup> Pringle, *Historical Dictionary of Russian and Soviet Intelligence*, 181-183. See also: Ward, *The Okhrana and the Cheka*, 17-37.

*Vserossiyskaya Chrezvychaynaya Komissiya*, the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission.<sup>63</sup>

The Cheka ruled with an iron fist, executing more than 143,000 men and women, intellectuals, nobility, capitalists, and priests between 1918 and 1921, which was an enormous increase compared to the 12,000 executions conducted by the Okhrana between 1881 and 1917.<sup>64</sup> One of the first activities of the Cheka was the creation of a department that could disseminate *dezinformatsiya*. The design of the department was inspired by the German General Staff's Disinformation Service, which functioned during World War I.<sup>65</sup>

Dzerzhinsky shaped the Cheka into a domestic counter-intelligence service also responsible for border control, while the foreign operations were regarded as an extension of internal security and counterintelligence missions. It had more than 250,000 employees and oversaw the *GULAG* system of forced labour camps. *GULAG* is an acronym that stands for *Glavnoye Upravleniye Lagerey*, the Main Administration of Camps. The Cheka was dissolved in 1922 by the Soviet leadership, and replaced by the *Gosudartsvennoye Politicheskoe Upravleniye* or GPU, the State Political Directorate, which in turn became in 1923 the *Obyedinennoe Gosudartsvennoye Politicheskoe Upravleniye* or OGPU, the Unified State Political Directorate. During this time Joseph Stalin, Lenin's successor, gradually took over the security services. The OGPU was mainly used against insurgents in Central Asia, peasants resisting collectivisation, and political opponents. In 1936 the NKVD was formed, replacing the OGPU.<sup>66</sup> Between 1936 and 1938 Stalin used the NKVD to conduct the Great Purge, a campaign of political repression, involving the killing of governmental officials, *kulaks*, being wealthy farmers, and Red Army leadership. The estimated total number of deaths due to the Great Purge is between 680,000 and 1,200,000.<sup>67</sup> In 1938, Stalin installed Lavrentiy Beria, a ruthless Georgian bureaucrat, who had already worked for the Cheka as leader of the NKVD.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> The official name was *Vserossiyskaya Chrezvychaynaya Komissiya po Borbe s Kontrarevolutsiei i Sabotazhem*, the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage, and abbreviated to VChK and commonly known as Cheka (ChK, the extraordinary commission).

<sup>64</sup> Robert Pringle, 'Guide to Soviet and Russian Intelligence Services', *The Intelligencer: Journal of United States Intelligence Studies*, 18 (2011) 2, 51.

<sup>65</sup> Krivitsky, *In Stalin's Secret Service*, 234.

<sup>66</sup> Pringle, 'Guide to Soviet and Russian Intelligence Services', 51.

<sup>67</sup> Robert Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia, 1934-1941*, (New Haven, CT (USA): Yale University Press, 1998), 139.

<sup>68</sup> Pringle, 'Guide to Soviet and Russian Intelligence Services', 52.

### *(3) The rise of military intelligence*

Meanwhile Russian military intelligence gradually developed. It was in 1810 that the Russian Minister of War, Field Marshal Prince Michael Barclay de Tolly, advised the Russian Czar to create a unit for strategic military intelligence. A bureau for 'Secret Affairs' was formed, which later became a department led by the Chief of Staff of the Russian Imperial Army.<sup>69</sup> On 5 November 1918, the first military intelligence service of the Bolsheviks was established, by secret order, by Jukums Vācietis, the Latvian-born first Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army, and by Ephraim Sklyansky, Leon Trotsky's deputy, who was the civilian leader of the Red Army. This service was known as the *Registrupravlenie*, the Registration Agency of the Field Headquarters of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, or as the *Registrupr*, Registration Department. After 1926, the military intelligence service became a separate department, the Fourth Department, directly under the control of the State Defence Department.<sup>70</sup> In 1942 the GRU, the military intelligence service that still exists, was officially established by explicit orders of Joseph Stalin.<sup>71</sup>

### *(4) World War II*

In 1941 the *Narodniy Kommissariat Gosudartstvennoi Bezopasnosti* or NKGB, the People's Commissariat of State Security, was formed from foreign intelligence and domestic counter-intelligence elements of the NKVD. The NKVD itself continued to exist in a slimmed-down construction. Both the NKGB and GRU provided foreign intelligence for the Soviet leadership and infiltrated into British, French, German, American and Japanese secret services and government bureaucracy. Stalin received more than 100 different warnings from these agents about German plans to invade the Soviet Union, but he ignored all of them. Stalin was stressed and suspicious, although the Soviet secret service functioned well. One of the great successes of the two Russian security services was stealing critical information about the first atomic bomb, which accelerated the Soviet nuclear programme.<sup>72</sup> In the meantime, the three

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<sup>69</sup> Michael Josselson and Diana Josselson, *The Commander: A Life of Barclay de Tolly*, (Oxford (UK): Oxford University Press, 1980), 20-48. And: Alexander Mikaberidze, *The Russian Officer Corps in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1792-1815*, (El Dorado Hills, CA (USA): Savas Beatie LLC, 2005), 25-26.

<sup>70</sup> Raymond Leonard, *Secret Soldiers of the Revolution, Soviet Military Intelligence, 1918-1933*, Contribution in Military Studies, Number 183, (Westport, CT (USA): Greenwood Press, 1999), 5-26.

<sup>71</sup> Jonathan Haslam, *Near and Distant Neighbors: A New History of Soviet Intelligence*, (New Haven, NY (USA): Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015), 119-126 and 281-282.

<sup>72</sup> Pringle, *Guide to Soviet and Russian Intelligence Services*, 52.

autonomous counter-intelligence agencies of the Red Army, not being part of the GRU, formed a new organisation to prevent the German forces from infiltrating the Red Army on the Eastern Front. The formation was officially announced on 14 April 1943. Joseph Stalin called this new organization *SMERSH*<sup>73</sup>, a portmanteau of the Russian phrase *Smyert' Shpionam*, meaning 'Death to the Spies'. SMERSH fought against 'anti-Soviet' elements, traitors and deserters in the Red Army. SMERSH became increasingly powerful, even more than the NKVD, and received more tasks like improving the discipline and morale of the Red Army, controlling partisans loyal to the Soviet Union, and establishing the whereabouts of Adolf Hitler. SMERSH agents later found Hitler's burned corpse near the *Führerbunker*, Hitler's headquarters, in Berlin. SMERSH ceased to exist in 1946.<sup>74</sup> Its main counter-intelligence tactics were the use of informants, radio messages, and the dissemination of *dezinformatsiya*, ensuring the reliability of the military and civilian population.<sup>75</sup>

### (5) *Post-World War II*

In 1946 the NKGB was transformed into the *Ministerstvo Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti* or MGB, the Ministry of State Security. It was created by Joseph Stalin when he converted all 'People's Commissariats' into ministries. The MGB became a powerful organisation invested with the intelligence, counter-intelligence and security functions of both the NKVD and NKGB.<sup>76</sup> In his final years Stalin became increasingly paranoid, intensifying his use of manipulation and suppression to maintain his power. As a consequence, several rising stars within the Communist Party were killed or imprisoned during the early 1950s.<sup>77</sup>

An example of Stalin's paranoid suspicion and his use of manipulation came in 1952-1953 when he turned against the Russian Jews following the so-called 'Doctors' Plot', an anti-Semitic campaign initiated by Stalin himself and executed by the MGB. A group of predominantly Jewish medical doctors from Moscow was accused of conspiring to assassinate

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<sup>73</sup> The name *SMERSH* is familiar to supporters of the James Bond movies and books. SMERSH is introduced in the second chapter of author Ian Fleming's debut novel, *Casino Royale*. Fleming suggests in this novel that Beria is the head of SMERSH and that the headquarters of SMERSH is located in Leningrad. This is wrong, fact and fiction are mixed up. In his second novel, *From Russia with Love*, Fleming indicated that SMERSH was the 'murder apparatus of the MGB, the Ministry of State Security, which is not correct. See: Vadim Birnstein, *SMERSH: Stalin's Secret Weapon*, (London (UK): Biteback Publishing Ltd, 2012), 3.

<sup>74</sup> Birnstein, *SMERSH*, 3-9, 177-193 and 301-314.

<sup>75</sup> Robert Stephan, *Stalin's Secret War: Soviet Counterintelligence Against the Nazis, 1941-1945*, (Lawrence, KS (USA): University Press of Kansas, 2004), 87-120.

<sup>76</sup> Pringle, *Historical Dictionary of Russian and Soviet Intelligence*, 159.

<sup>77</sup> Pringle, *Guide to Soviet and Russian Intelligence Services*, 52.

Soviet leaders. Hundreds of Jewish doctors and officials were arrested. The exact reasons for these actions were never revealed, but presumably Stalin wanted to use the anti-Jewish campaign to launch another massive purge of the Communist Party. A few weeks after Stalin's death on 5 March 1953, the new Soviet authorities dropped the charge for lack of evidence.<sup>78</sup>

In 1953 the MGB was incorporated into the *Ministerstvo Vnutrennikh Del SSR* or MVD, the Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs. The MVD was divided into several different directorates responsible for a wide range of tasks. These tasks included investigating certain categories of crime, supervising the internal passport system, maintaining public order, managing labour camps and running special psychiatric hospitals.<sup>79</sup> Also, by 1953, more than five million people were kept in the GULAG system or internal exile. Stalin's successor, Nikita Khrushchev, the newly-appointed General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, carried out a major cleansing operation within the ranks of the Soviet secret services. He gave orders to arrest Beria, who was shot with some of his closest acquaintances, and released more than one million people from camp internment and forced exile. Stalin's crimes were condemned, and in 1954 the MGB was transformed into the KGB, the *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti* or Committee for State Security, which Khrushchev placed under party control. The KGB evolved into a massive intelligence community. At the end of the Cold War the KGB was the largest intelligence and security service in the world with a staff of over 480,000, including approximately 250,000 Border Guards. Other significant sections of the KGB were the First Chief Directorate, responsible for foreign intelligence, the Second Chief Directorate, responsible for domestic security and counter-intelligence, the Fifth Chief Directorate, responsible for surveillance of churches and dissidents, the Eight and Sixteenth Chief Directorates, responsible for communication security, and the Ninth Chief Directorate, responsible for the protection of Soviet authorities. The First Chief Directorate ran hundreds of foreign *rezidenturas*, meaning intelligence stations, a popular term often used in the KGB and GRU. These *rezidenturas* had large support staffs, including dedicated code clerks, and

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<sup>78</sup> Simon Sebag-Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, (New York, NY (USA): Vintage Books, Random House, 2005), 611-630. And: Zhores Medvedev, 'Сталин и еврейская проблема: новый анализ' ('*Stalin I Yevreyskaya Problema: Novyy Analiz*'), translated: '*Stalin and the Jewish Question: New Analysis*', (Moscow (RF): Pravda Cheloveka, 2003), 148-186. Also: Edvard Radzinsky, *Stalin: The First In-depth Biography Based on Explosive New Documents from Russia's Secret Archives*, Originally published in 1996 in the Russian Federation, Translated by H.T. Willets, (New York, NY (USA): Anchor Books, Doubleday, Random House Inc., 1997), 537-582.

<sup>79</sup> Raymond Zickel (Ed), *Soviet Union: A Country Study*, Area Handbook Series, (Washington, DC (USA): Federal Research Division, Library of United States Congress, 1991), 781-782.

conducted signal operations from embassies, consulates and personal residences of diplomats.<sup>80</sup>

In the 1970s and 1980s the KGB arrested thousands of dissidents, such as the writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Nobel Laureate Andrei Sakharov, as well as nationalists from the Ukraine and Central Asia. Mikhail Gorbachev, the last General Secretary of the Communist Party, tried to limit the control and power of the KGB during the final years of the Soviet regime. Key elements of the KGB turned against Gorbachev and took part in the failed August 1991 putsch that marked the end of the rule by Gorbachev and the Soviet Union.<sup>81</sup>

## Modern times

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the MVD continued to exist but was reshaped into the MVD of the Russian Federation which focused on federal law enforcement tasks. The KGB was dismantled and broken down into several parts, forming the different security services SVR, FSK (later FSB), FSO and FAPSI, as will be explained in the next subsections. Russian society changed quickly, the economy and politics became gradually more open, and the country connected more and more with the rest of the world. This subsection includes six different items: (1) post KGB, (2) FAPSI, (3) military intelligence, (4) Rosgvardia, (5) the Procuracy, and (6) Fancy Bear.

### *(1) Post-KGB*

The First Chief Directorate of the KGB, separated from the internal part of the KGB, was renamed the *Sluzhba Vneshnei Rezvedki* or SVR, the Foreign Intelligence Service.<sup>82</sup> Yevgeny Primakov<sup>83</sup>, the first director of the SVR, clarified that the SVR's duties in post-Soviet Russia were not only intelligence collection and analysis, but also taking active measures as the KGB had done before.<sup>84</sup> The SVR also ran an 'agents of influence' programme. These agents

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<sup>80</sup> Pringle, *Guide to Soviet and Russian Intelligence Services*, 53. And: Pringle, *Historical Dictionary of Russian and Soviet Intelligence*, 222.

<sup>81</sup> Pringle, *Guide to Soviet and Russian Intelligence Services*, 53. And: Pringle, *Historical Dictionary of Russian and Soviet Intelligence*, 222.

<sup>82</sup> Mikhail Strokan and Brian Taylor, 'Intelligence', in: Andrei Tsygankov (Ed), *Routledge Handbook of Russian Foreign Policy*, (Abingdon (UK): Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 155-156.

<sup>83</sup> Yevgeni Primakov also served as Foreign Minister (1996-1998) and Prime Minister (1998 – 1999) of the Russian Federation, under President Boris Yeltsin.

<sup>84</sup> Pringle, *Historical Dictionary of Russian and Soviet Intelligence*, 261.

operated under strict intelligence instructions, using their official or public position, and other means, to exert influence on policy, public opinion, the course of a particular event, activities of political organizations, and state agencies in target nations.<sup>85</sup>

The Second Directorate of the KGB became the *Federalnaya Sluzhba Kontrrazvedki* or FSK, the Federal Counter-Intelligence Service. In 1995 the FSK transferred into the FSB, which developed into Russia's main domestic security service at the moment.<sup>86</sup> Although the separation between the SVR and FSB, respectively the foreign and domestic services, might be evident, in practice it is not so straightforward. The FSB did not limit its activities to Russian territory, it was also interested in former Soviet states. The SVR agreed to the so-called 'near abroad' agreement not to spy on these former Soviet states, a position that was reaffirmed in 2016 by the SVR director Sergey Naryshkin. The FSB never made such a promise and created a directorate to manage intelligence activities in post-Soviet regions. Over time the directorate of the FSB did not limit itself to Russia and the former Soviet states, but expanded its activities to several other nations it was interested in.<sup>87</sup> The *Federalnaya Sluzhba Okrany*, or FSO, the Federal Protection Service, includes the Presidential Security Service and can be regarded as the continuation of the KGB's Ninth Main Directorate.<sup>88</sup>

On 24 December 1991, originating from the Eighth Main Directorate of the KGB, the unit dealing with government communications, and the Sixteenth Directorate, a new agency was created for signal intelligence and the security of government communications. This agency was called *Federalnaya Agentstvo Pravitel'stvennoy Sviazi i Informatsiy* or FAPSI, the Federal Agency for Governmental Communications and Information. It collected information like no other organisation in the Russian Federation, but members of FAPSI had no mandate to investigate, arrest, or detain offenders. It was President Yeltsin's favourite service, because it could provide inside information, which was more than welcome for an insecure president like Yeltsin. FAPSI was considered as Russia's unofficial Ministry of Information Warfare,

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<sup>85</sup> Ivo Juurvee, *The Resurrection on 'Active Measures': Intelligence Services as Part of Russia's Influencing Toolbox, Strategic Analysis*, (Helsinki (FIN): The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, 2018), 3-4.

<sup>86</sup> Mark Galeotti, 'We Don't Know What to Call Russian Military Intelligence and That May Be a Problem', War on the Rocks Website (19 January 2016). <https://warontherocks.com/2016/01/we-dont-know-what-to-call-russian-military-intelligence-and-that-may-be-a-problem/> (25 February 2020).

<sup>87</sup> Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, *The New Nobility: The Restoration of Russia's Security State and the Enduring Legacy of the KGB*, (New York, NY (USA): PublicAffairs, Perseus Books Group, 2010), 209-212.

<sup>88</sup> Mark Galeotti, *Putin's Hydra: Inside Russia's Intelligence Services*, Policy Brief, (Berlin (GER): European Council on Foreign Relation, 2016), 2.



because it was, at the time, the only Russian organisation that could hack its way through enemies' communication and computer systems or infect it with viruses.<sup>89</sup>

## (2) *FAPSI*

The First Deputy General of FAPSI, Vladimir Markomenko, described on the basis of his conviction at the time, the four main elements of information war as: (1) the suppression of components of the infrastructure of an opponent state and military administration, (2) acquisition of intelligence through intercepting and deciphering information flows transmitted via communication channels, (3) unauthorised access to information resources with subsequent distortion, destruction, or theft, or the disruption of the normal operations of these systems, and (4) formation and mass dissemination of *dezinformatsiya* to influence opinions, intentions and orientation of society and decision-makers through information channels of the opponent or global data interaction networks.<sup>90</sup>

In March 2003, FAPSI was transformed into *Sluzhba Spetsial'noy Sviazi I Informatsiy*, the 'Special Communication and Information Service', or in short *Spetssviaz' Rossii*, the 'Special Communications in Russia', and became part of the FSO. Its main function is crypto analysis. Another part of FAPSI became the 'Sixteenth Centre' or 'Unit 71330'. This unit is the FSB's main signals intelligence unit responsible for surveillance of electronic communications. Unit 71330 is located along Russia's borders and operates with satellite dishes that function as information reception centres.<sup>91</sup>

## (3) *Military intelligence*

The GRU survived the downfall of the Soviet Union, and still exists as Russia's military intelligence service. It is involved in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation. Together with the SVR, the GRU operates a mix of human intelligence officers under diplomatic cover,

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<sup>89</sup> Gordon Bennett, *The Federal Agency of Governmental Communications & Information*, C105, (Camberley (UK): Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, Conflict Studies Research Center, Directorate General Development and Doctrine, 2000), 4-12.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-15.

<sup>91</sup> *Välisluureamet* (Foreign Intelligence Agency), *International Security and Estonia 2019*, (Tallinn (EST): Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service, 2019), 54-58. And: Antonio Villalón, 'The Russian ICC (V): FSB', Security A(r)work Website, (20 December 2016). <https://www.securityartwork.es/2016/12/20/the-russian-icc-v-fsb/>, (16 February 2020).

inside embassies, and covert officers, the so-called ‘illegals’. The SVR is quite traditional, not least because of its long-term, deep-cover spy networks, while the GRU acts more aggressively and is willing to take risks. GRU-tasks also include substantial military intelligence activities, such as electronic, satellite and battlefield surveillance and *Spetsnaz*. *Spetsnaz* is an abbreviation that stands for *Voyska Spetsialnovo Naznacheniya*, the Special Purpose Forces. The *Spetsnaz* were formed in 1950, but the Soviet Union already had an extensive tradition of Special Forces, from the elite elements of the original Bolshevik Red Guards to behind-the-lines commando forces in World War II. The *Spetsnaz* consider themselves as the inheritors of the long proud tradition of the *razvedchik*, the military scouts who operated behind enemy lines during World War II.<sup>92</sup>

#### (4) *Rosgvardia*

In 2016, the Russian Federation also established a *Rosgvardia*,<sup>93</sup> a National Guard of the Russian Federation. This guard functions as the internal military force of the Russian government. It operates separately from the Russian Armed Forces as an independent agency and reports directly to the President of the Russian Federation and the Chairman of the Russian Security Council. The *Rosgvardia* comprises approximately 340,000 personnel in 84 units across the Russian Federation and consolidated special national police units.<sup>94</sup> The *Rosgvardia* is traditionally linked by Presidential Order to the Internal Guards Corps, which was established in 1811 by a decree of Czar Alexander I.<sup>95</sup>

#### (5) *The Procuracy*

The Procuracy in the Russian Federation has a special status in the Russian Federation and can be considered an exclusive security service.<sup>96</sup> In 2011, President Dmitry Medvedev gave the Procuracy’s Investigation Committee its complete independence, and it split off from the

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<sup>92</sup> Mark Galeotti, *Spetsnaz: Russia’s Special Forces*, (Oxford (UK): Osprey Publishing, 2015), 1-14.

<sup>93</sup> *Rosgvardiya* is the less formal translation for ‘Russian Guard’, which is commonly used by the Russian population. It is regarded as National Guard. The Official name is *Federalnaya Sluzhba Voiysk National’noiy gvardii Rossiyskoiy Federatsii*, the Federal National Guard Troops Service of the Russian Federation.

<sup>94</sup> Zdzislaw Sliwa, *The Russian National Guard: A Warning or a Message?*, Working Paper no. 01/18, CSSR Working paper Series, (Riga (LTV): National Defence Academy of Latvia, Center for Security and Strategic Research, 2018), 6-17.

<sup>95</sup> President of the Russian Federation, ‘Executive Order Establishing National Guard Day’, (16 January 2017). <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53736> (19 August 2019).

<sup>96</sup> Mikhail Zygar, *All the Kremlin’s Men: Inside the Court of Vladimir Putin*, (New York, NY (USA): PublicAffairs, 2016), 134.

Procuracy. Till that time, the Procuracy in the Russian Federation was known for excelling at business raids, political tricks and misleading Russian citizens. Still, the Procuracy has an emphatic say in condemning people, who flout against laws, rules, decisions and implementing provisions of the Russian Federation, whereas the Investigative Committee can arrest potential perpetrators, seeking to pressure them for almost any reason, without the Procuracy's cooperation.<sup>97</sup>

### (6) *Fancy Bear (APT 28)*

Although the three main Russian security and intelligence services, the SVR, the FSB and the GRU, all have their own spheres of responsibility, the competition between these three services is significant. They often blur their own well-defined areas. For example, if the SVR recruits a foreign military officer, they will not hand him over to the GRU, which should have been appropriate, since the GRU deals with military intelligence. On the other hand, the GRU might also be looking for political and economic intelligence, while the FSB might work far from Russia and the 'near abroad', gathering military intelligence.<sup>98</sup> The influence of the GRU has increased in recent years. Researchers claim that a GRU detachment, known as Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) 28 or *Fancy Bear*, was involved in hacking websites of American governmental websites and the Democratic Party during the elections in the United States in 2016, although these researchers could not prove it conclusively.<sup>99</sup> In an official statement on the website of the United States Department of Justice, Special Counsel Robert Mueller declared that the 'Report on the Investigation into Russian Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election' details numerous Russian efforts to affect the American elections in 2016, but overall there was 'insufficient evidence to charge a broader conspiracy.'<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Ella Paneyakh and Dina Rosenberg, 'The Courts, Law Enforcement, and Politics, in: Daniel Treisman', *The New Autocracy: Information, Politics, and Policy in Putin's Russia*, (Washington, DC (USA): Brookings Institution Press, 2018), 232-235.

<sup>98</sup> Strokan and Taylor, 'Intelligence', 159.

<sup>99</sup> United States National Cybersecurity & Communications Integration Center, *Grizzly Steppe: Russian Malicious Cyber Activity*, Joint Analysis Report with United States Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, (Washington, DC (USA): NCCIC, 29 December 2016), 1-13. And: Sergei Boeke, 'Heads Rolling at the GRU? Blundering Russian Intelligence', Clingendael Institute, (23 October 2018). <https://spectator.clingendael.org/nl/publicatie/heads-rolling-gru-blundering-russian-intelligence#>, (19 August 2019). Also: Matt Burgess, 'Exposed; How One of Russia's Most Sophisticated Hacking Groups Operate', WIRED Website, (11 January 2017). <https://www.wired.co.uk/article/how-russian-hackers-work>, (16 September 2019). And: Benjamin Jensen, Brandon Valeriano and Ryan Maness, 'Fancy Bear and Digital Trolls: Cyber Strategy with a Russian Twist', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 42 (2019) 2, 6-8.

<sup>100</sup> US DOJ, 'Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller III Makes Statement'. And: Robert Mueller, *Report on the Investigation into Russian Interference In the 2016 Presidential Election*, Volume II of II, (Washington, DC (USA): United States Department of Justice, 2019), 182.

Researchers also held APT 28 responsible for other cyber-attacks, including a false flag operation,<sup>101</sup> taking French TV-station TV5 Monde offline, shifting the blame to the Cyber Caliphate, and a hacking operation into a Ukrainian power station in 2015.<sup>102</sup> Some regarded these attacks as part of ‘Operation Pawn Storm’,<sup>103</sup> a long-lasting economic and political Russian cyber-espionage operation that targets a wide range of high-profile entities like Western government and business institutions, embassies and NATO since 2004.<sup>104</sup> Although irrefutable evidence is still lacking, the GRU is arguably assumed to have played a role in the separatist insurgence activities against the Ukrainian government in the Donbas Area in Eastern Ukraine, and the downing of the MH17 and the subsequent mysterious information provision around the airline disaster, both in 2014.<sup>105</sup>

In 2018, the attempted assassination of Sergei Skripal<sup>106</sup> and his daughter Yulia in Salisbury in the United Kingdom, and the attempt to hack the computer networks of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague in the Netherlands were regarded as failed GRU-operations.<sup>107</sup> Since 2018, the United States Department of Justice and secret services divides APT 28 further into two different units: unit 26165 and unit 74455. Unit 26165 is dedicated to targeting military, political, governmental and non-governmental organisations outside the Russian Federation. This unit is specialized in stealing, implanting

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<sup>101</sup> False flag operations are covert operations designed to deceive. The deception creates the perception of a particular person, group, nation or other entity responsible for an activity, disguising the actual source. The term ‘false flag’ derived from pirate ships that flew flags of nations as a concealment to prevent their victims from fleeing or preparing for battle. See: Lance deHaven-Smith, *Conspiracy Theory in America*, (Austin, TX (USA): University of Texas Press, 2013), 225.

<sup>102</sup>Boeke, ‘Heads Rolling at the GRU?’ And: Burgess, ‘Exposed’.

<sup>103</sup> The name ‘Pawn Storm’ derives from chess. It is a strategy in which several pawns are moved in rapid succession towards the opponent’s defence. See: Bruce Pandolfini, *Chess Thinking*, (New York, NY (USA): Simon & Schuster, 1995), 179.

<sup>104</sup> Jensen, Valeriano and Maness, ‘Fancy Bear and Digital Trolls’, 8.

<sup>105</sup> Nikolay Mitrokhin, ‘Infiltration, Instruction, Invasion: Russia’s War in the Donbass’, *The Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society (JSPPS)*, 1 (2015) 1, 223-224. And: Tor Bukkvoll, ‘Russian Special Operations Forces in Crimea and Donbas’, *Parameters*, 46 (2016) 2, 17-20. And: Bellingcat, ‘“A Birdie Is Flying Towards Us”: Identifying the Separatists Lined to the Downing of the MH17’, (Leicester (UK): Bellingcat Investigation Team, 2019), 4-5.

<sup>106</sup> Sergei Skripal was a former Russian military intelligence officer, who worked for the GRU. He acted as double agent for the British intelligence services during the 1990s and early 2000s. He was caught by the FSB and sentenced to 13 years in prison. In 2010, he moved to the United Kingdom as part of the spy exchange. See: BBC News, ‘Sergei Skripal, Who Is the Former Russian Intelligence Officer?’, (29 March 2018). <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-43291394> (19 August 2019).

<sup>107</sup> Boeke, ‘Heads Rolling at the GRU?’. See also: Christian Esch, ‘The Rise of Russia’s GRU Military Intelligence Service: Doing Putin’s Dirty Work’, *Spiegel Online*, (19 October 2018). <https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/russia-and-the-rise-of-gru-military-intelligence-service-a-1233576.html>, (19 August 2019).

malicious software and espionage. Unit 74455 is also engaged in cyber operations to assist unit 26165, and is specialized in inserting *dezinformatsiya*, *spetspropaganda* and *kompromat* in computer networks.<sup>108</sup>

Russian and Soviet Security Services and Units (Non-military)	
Period	Name
1565 - 1572	Oprichnina
1882 - 1917	Okhrana
1917 - 1922	Cheka / VChK (Vserossiyskaya Chrezvychaynaya Komissiya)
1922 - 1923	GPU (Gosudartsvennoye Politicheskoe Upravlenie)
1923 - 1934	OGPU (Obyedinennoe Gosudartsvennoye Politicheskoe Upravleni)
1934 - 1946	NKVD (Narodniy Kommissariat Vnutrennikh del CCCP)
1941 - 1953	MGB (Ministerstvo Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti)
1943 - 1946	NKGB (Narodniy Kommissariat Gosudartstvennoi Bezopasnosti)
1953 - present	MVD (Ministerstvo Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti)
1954 - 1991	KGB (Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopastnosti)
1991 - present	Russian Procuracy
1991 - present	SVR (Sluzhba Vneshnei Rezvedki)
1991 - 1994	FSK (Federalnaya Sluzhba Kontrrazvedki)
1991 - 2003	FAPSI (Federal'noye Agentstvo Pravitel'stvennoy Sviasi i Informatsiy)

<sup>108</sup> Mueller, *Report On the Investigation into Russian Interference*, 44-45. And: Antonio Villalón, '(Cyber) GRU (VIII): Structure. Unit 74455', Website SECURITY A(r)TWORK, (26 February 2019), <https://www.securityartwork.es/2019/02/26/cyber-gru-viii-structure-unit-74455/>, (23 September 2019).

Russian and Soviet Security Services and Units (Non-military)	
Period	Name
1995 - present	FSB (Federalnaya Sluzhba Bezopastnosti)
1996 - present	FSO (Federalnaya Sluzhba Okrany)
2003 - present	Spetssviaz (Sluzhba Spetsial'noy Sviazi I Informatsiy)
2003 - present	Unit 71330
2008 - present	Advanced Persistent Threat 29 (APT 29) (Also known as 'Cozy Bear')

Figure 6.1 Russian and Soviet security services and units (non-military)

Russian and Soviet Military Intelligence Services and Units	
Period	Name
1683 - 1917	Preobazhensky Lifeguard Regiment
1683 - 1918	Semyonovsky Lifeguard Regiment
1918 - 1926	Registrupravlenie/Registupr
1926 - 1942	Fourth Department of Soviet Defence Department
1941 - 1945	Razvedchik (Military scouts behind enemy lines)
1942 - present	GRU (Galvnoye Razvedyvatel'noye Upravleniye)
1943 - 1946	SMERSH (Smyert' Shpionam)
1950 - present	Spetsnaz (Voyska Spetsialnovo Nazacheniya)
2005-present	Advanced Persistent Threat 28 (APT) (Also known as 'Fancy Bear')
2016 - present	Rosgvardia (Federalnaya Sluzhba Voiysk National'noiy Gvardii Rossiyskoiy Federatsii)

Figure 6.2 Russian and Soviet military intelligence and security services and units

## 6.5 *Siloviki*

A power analysis of the Russian Federation over the last fifty years distinguishes three different periods and three corresponding groups of people who were in charge. The first period is the Soviet era, ending in 1991. The Communist Party, with its *apparatchiks*<sup>109</sup> and its *nomenklatura*,<sup>110</sup> dominated Soviet leadership, holding all top positions within the Kremlin, local governments, industry, agriculture and academics.<sup>111</sup> The second period is the presidency of Boris Yeltsin from 1991 to 1999. The chaotic transition from Communist Soviet Union to capitalistic Russia under President Yeltsin was accompanied by the rise of extremely rich businessmen, known as the *oligarchs*.<sup>112</sup> This select group greatly profited from the privatisation of state-owned industry and real estate and was able to gain control over media, essential commercial organisations and political institutions. One of the most flamboyant oligarchs, Boris Berezovsky, intimated that the *Semibankirschina*<sup>113</sup>, seven privileged bankers,<sup>114</sup> controlled over fifty to seventy percent of Russian economy, and also used their power in the form of funding and accessing the media to get Boris Yeltsin re-elected in 1996. The third period started under President Vladimir Putin, who wanted to get rid of the oligarchs and created a new elite group, the *siloviki*.<sup>115</sup> The era of *siloviki* lasted from 2000 to approximately 2015.

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<sup>109</sup> Russian word аппаратчик, *apparatchi*, means a full-time professional of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union or the Soviet government.

<sup>110</sup> *Nomenklatura*, in Russian *номенклатура*, derives from the Latin word *nomenclatura* and means 'list of names'. The term is used in the Soviet Union to indicate a specific elite group with powerful relations to the Kremlin and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

<sup>111</sup> Kevin O'Connor, *Intellectuals and Apparatchiks: Russian Nationalism and the Gorbachev Revolution*, (Lanham, MD (USA): Lexington Books, The Rowan & Littlefield Publishers Group, Inc, 2006), 211-233. And: Dmitry Gershenson and Herschel Grossman, *Cooptation and Repression in the Soviet Union*, IMF Working Paper, Washington, DC (USA): International Monetary Fund, 2000), 5-10.

<sup>112</sup> The word *oligarch* derives from Ancient Greek word *ὀλιγάρχης* (*oligárkhes*), which means 'few rulers'.

<sup>113</sup> The Russian word *Semibankirschina* derives from the word *Semiboyarchina*, the seven boyars (members of the feudal aristocracy in Russia) that ruled during the Times of Troubles. The term *Semibankirschina* was used by Russian journalist Andrey Fadin in an article in the *Obschaya Gazeta* (14 November 1996) to clarify the power of these seven bankers. Fadin wrote that 'they controlled the access to budget money and basically all investment opportunities in Russia. They own the gigantic information resources of the major TV channels. They were the voice of the President and form his opinion.'

<sup>114</sup> These seven bankers included: (1) Boris Berezovsky, being the owner United Bank and the main Russian media channel, (2) Mikhail Khodorkovsky, being the owner of Bank Menetap and energy companies, (3) Mikhail Fridman, an investor at Alpha Group, (4) Petr Aven, the director of Alpha Bank, (5) Vladimir Gusinsky, the founder Most Bank and owner of media organisations, (6) Vladimir Potanin, being the creator of loan for share programme and president of United Export Import Bank, and (7) Alexander Smolensky, the founder of Bank Stolichny and owner of Russian newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*. See: Marshall Goldman, *The Privatization of Russia: Russian Reform Goes Awry*, (London (UK): Routledge, 2003), 132.

<sup>115</sup> Sam Broekman, *Russia's Elite Groups: Siloviki Representation during Putin's Third Term*, Master Thesis, (Leiden (NLD): Leiden University, 2017), 2

The word *siloviki* derives from the expression *silvoye struktury*, which means ‘force structure’. The *siloviki* refers to current or former members of the armed services, law enforcement bodies and intelligence agencies that exercise the strong-arm of the state. The group is an informal network of government officials and businessmen led by confidants of Putin, who knew each other from the intelligence services KGB and FSB. The *siloviki* share similar political views, beliefs and policy preferences. These common viewpoints and their communal interests unite them.<sup>116</sup> Viktor Cherkosov, a former KGB-chief in Leningrad and Saint Petersburg and former First Deputy Director of the FSB under Vladimir Putin, stated in 2004: “We [*siloviki*] must understand that we are one whole. History rules that the weight of supporting the Russian state fell on our shoulders. I believe in our ability, [...] and remain faithful to our oath.”<sup>117</sup>

## Band of brothers?

*Siloviki* trust each other because of the emphasis on loyalty during their training in one of the earlier-mentioned Russian security services.<sup>118</sup> Although their background is not identical, they emanate from various Russian security authorities, *siloviki* are familiar with the use of *maskirovka* and other deception methods, which have been taught and used for decades in Russia’s security environment. Within the group of *siloviki*, there is a certain hierarchy. At the top of this caste are the current and former agents of the FSB, followed by agents of the FSO, and civil servants of the Prosecutor-General’s Office. Members and former members of the SVR and GRU do play a role in the *siloviki*, but they hold a lower position on this power ladder.<sup>119</sup>

Some researchers like Andrei Soldatov, founder and editor of *Agentura.ru*<sup>120</sup>, and Michael Rochlitz, do not consider the *siloviki* a cohesive group. Rather than a coordinated takeover of state institutions and large Russian business companies, Soldatov and Rochlitz regarded the

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<sup>116</sup> Ian Bremmer and Samuel Charap, ‘The Siloviki in Putin’s Russia: Who They Are and What They Want’, *The Washington Quarterly*, 30 (2007) 1.

<sup>117</sup> Viktor Cherkosov, op. cit. in: Edward Lucas, *The New Cold War: Putin’s Russia and the Threat to the West*, Fully Revised and updated, Originally published in 2008, (New York, NY (USA): Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 28-29.

<sup>118</sup> Aaron Bateman, ‘The Political Influence of the Russian Security Services’, *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 27 (2014) 3, 392.

<sup>119</sup> Brian Taylor, *Russia’s Power Ministries: Coercion and Commerce*, (Syracuse, NY (USA): Syracuse University, Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism, 2007), 23. Andrei Illarionov, ‘The Siloviki in Charge’, *Journal of Democracy*, 20 (2009) 2, 69-70.

<sup>120</sup> *Agentura.ru* is an information hub on Russia’s intelligence agencies.



*siloviki*'s rise to power as a result of Putin's reliance on his particular network of trusted friends and former colleagues. They also see a mosaic of clans and factions within the *siloviki*. These subgroups are separated rather than form a massive group and lack communal leadership. They compete against each other for power and budget allocation.<sup>121</sup> Mark Galeotti, researcher in Russian and Eurasian studies, partly agreed with Soldatov and Rochlitz. He found that the *siloviki* do not represent a 'single, unified bloc'. They are divided by sectarian and individual opposition. On the other hand, Galeotti also recognized that the *siloviki* share a personal devotion to President Putin and support his worldview of Russia asserting its place in the world. This loyalty and assistance to Putin provide the *siloviki* certain latitude to exercise their power and shape Russian society in the way that suits them most.<sup>122</sup>

## Developments

In the last couple of years, there have been changes in the powerful group around Putin. The *siloviki* could not find solutions for all the political and economic challenges confronting the Kremlin since the 2000s. Despite his dissatisfaction, Putin kept some *siloviki* close to him in top positions and continued to listen to their advice. He trusted these men, because they had known each other for decades in the FSB or KGB. Since 2016, Putin has been following a different path; he started to push aside his old *siloviki* comrades from the FSB and KGB and recruited new talented aides from the Foreign Ministry and the FSO.<sup>123</sup>

Today, Putin's inner circle is fragmented and consists of five elite groups: (1) 'Cadre reserve', which is an intriguing group, consisting of close confidants Putin will turn to in order to uphold his influence after he will have left the presidency, if that ever happens. The group consists of Putin's personal executive office and senior officers of the FSO, who used to work closely together. Some of the FSO officers recently became regional governors. (2) Putin's associates from earlier phases of his career in the KGB and FSB, like Sergej Ivanov<sup>124</sup>, who

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<sup>121</sup> Andrei Soldatov and Michael Rochlitz, 'The Siloviki in Russian Politics', in: Daniel Treisman (Ed), *The New Autocracy: Information, Politics and Policy in Putin's Russia*, (Washington, DC (USA): Brookings Institution, 2018), 83-108.

<sup>122</sup> Mark Galeotti, 'Putin's Spies and Security Men: His Strongest Allies, His Greatest Weakness', Center for Security Studies | ETH Zürich and Länder-Analysen Deutschland: *Russian Analytical Digest*, N0 173 (12 October 2015), 10.

<sup>123</sup> Soldatov and Rochlitz, 'The Siloviki in Russian Politics', 83-108.

<sup>124</sup> Sergej Ivanov was one of President Putin's closest political and professional associates. The two studied at the Leningrad State University and became career intelligence officers in the KGB and later FSB. Ivanov became Putin's deputy when Putin headed the FSB. Ivanov also served as secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, Minister of Defence, First Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation and Chief of

stood by the President's side when he first came to power in 2000. Putin initially rewarded them with influential positions in the Russian government and originally state-owned companies, giving them power. This situation is changing now. Because of their increased wealth and influence, they have evolved into independent hubs of power, and increasingly moved away from the sistema. Slowly but surely, President Putin replaced them with technocrats. (3) The political technocrats became a rising category of Putin's inner circle. These persons had not been close intimates of Putin's from the start, but they had won his trust. In addition, they possess special knowledge and skills. These technocrats including Sergei Kiriyenko, the First Deputy Chief of Staff, Sergei Shoigu, Minister of Defence, and Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs now run areas like domestic, defence and foreign policy. (4) Together the protectors are a group that functions as a watchdog for the Russian regime. The people belonging to this group share a conservative and anti-Western ideology, arguing for more repressive policies and often using aggressive rhetoric. The remaining siloviki are part of this group. It includes Sergey Naryshkin, head of the FSB, Alexander Bastrykin, head of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation, and Nikolai Patrushev, the secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation. (5) The implementers are a group of people who ensure that the intended Russian policy is executed unopposed. They traditionally had no connection with Putin, they have gained his trust because they implemented Russian policies with a firm hand and performed their duties without fail. This group consists of Sergei Sobyenin, the mayor of Moscow, Ramzan Kadyrov, head of the Chechen Republic, and Alexander Beglov, Governor of the Saint Petersburg district.<sup>125</sup>

## 6.6 Other government bodies

Although not officially confirmed, other Russian government organisations have probably played a role in recent Russian deception warfare as well. These organisations incorporate *Minkomsvyaz* and the Internet Research Agency, whose role will be explained further down the section.

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Staff of the Presidential Administration. See: Mikhail Fishman and Datria Litvinova, 'Why Putin Fired his Chief of Staff and Longtime Ally', The Moscow Time Website (12 August 2016). <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/08/12/why-putin-replaced-head-of-presidential-administration-a54978>, (16 February 2020). And: Yekaterina Sinelschikova, Sergei Ivanov; 'Who is the Official Putin Has Just Fired?', Russia Beyond Website (15 August 2016). [https://www.rbth.com/politics\\_and\\_society/2016/08/15/sergei-ivanov-who-is-the-official-putin-has-just-fired\\_621223](https://www.rbth.com/politics_and_society/2016/08/15/sergei-ivanov-who-is-the-official-putin-has-just-fired_621223), (16 February 2020).

<sup>125</sup> Stanovaya, 'Unconsolidated'.

## *Minkomsvyaz*

The Minister of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media, his department is known as *Minkomsvyaz*, is not a permanent member of the Russian Security Council, but he is bound to be called in by the Russian President or by the secretary of the Russian Security Council if the situation so requires. *Minkomsvyaz* interferes in almost any Russian academic publication or article, from research journalists. It is highly plausible to assume that this minister took part in many meetings of the Russian Security Council over the last couple of years. Security matters in the sphere of information and official statements or other means to influence public opinion in the Russian Federation are of the highest priority for the Russian authorities. *Minkomsvyaz* was established in May 2008. Until that time the Russian government comprised a Ministry of Telecom and Mass Communications, a Russian federal executive body responsible for information technology, including the Internet, telecommunications, media and post.<sup>126</sup> This subsection includes two explanations: (1) subunits, and (2) InfoRos.

### *(1) Subunits*

At the same time as *Minkomsvyaz* was set up, three other subunits also came into being: (1) the Russian Federal Service for the Supervision of Communication, Information Technology and Mass Media, also known as *Roskomnadzor*, (2) the Russian Federal Agency on Press and Mass Communication, known as *Roschepat*, and (3) the Russian Federal Agency of Communication, known as *Rossvyaz*. *Roskomnadzor* is responsible for control, censorship and supervision of all forms of media and mass communications. It also has the supervision over personal data processing and the coordination of radio frequency services in the Russian Federation.<sup>127</sup> *Roschepat* is a federal agency responsible for providing government services and managing government property in the field of press, mass media and mass communications, including public computer networks.<sup>128</sup> It is supposed to be one of the authorities overseeing the use of the Internet in the Russian Federation. The main task of *Rossvyaz* is controlling Russian satellite communications and law enforcement functions in

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<sup>126</sup> Russian Federation / Federal Service for Supervision in the Field of Communication, 'Information Technologies and Mass Communications,' Official Website (21 June 2019). <http://rkn.gov.ru/eng/>, (20 September 2019).

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> The Russian Federation / Russian Government, 'Federal Agency for Press and Media', Official Website, (2019). <http://government.ru/en/department/66/>, (20 September 2019).

the field of communication and information.<sup>129</sup> It is difficult to identify how powers and responsibilities within *Minkomsvyaz* have been distributed. In any case, censorship is entrusted to *Roskomnadzor*, while *Roschepat* primarily focuses on the protection of Russian interests in the media and on the Internet. *Rossvyaz* focuses on monitoring satellite communication and adheres to the rules regarding communication and information. Presumably these Russian agencies contribute, in one way or another, to Russia's information war, including deception.

## (2) *InfoRos*

Likewise, InfoRos is a Russian information agency focused on a wide range of issues of political, economic and social life in the Russian Federation and the other CIS-states. It is registered with *Minkomsvyaz*, and acts as if it is the state media, not identifying an editorial staff but speaking on behalf of the Russian Federation. Its main website is 'inforos.ru', which publishes news and opinions in English and Russian, and it also runs Twitter, Facebook and VKontakte accounts of varying influence. InfoRos is linked to GRU Unit 54777. Postings on Facebook are closely intertwined, although evidence for this observation is scarce.<sup>130</sup> GRU unit 54777, also known as 72<sup>nd</sup> Special Service Centre, is one of the GRU's main psychological warfare capabilities and aimed at Russian expatriates and compatriots abroad. It runs several front organisations and an Institute of the Russian Diaspora. It also created fake personas and posted comments on Russian- and English-language social media platforms.<sup>131</sup>

## Internet Research Agency / Glavset

Russian Internet Research Agency (IRA) began its operations in 2013 in Saint Petersburg. The agency was run like a sophisticated marketing bureau in centralized office surroundings in Russia's second city. The IRA employed and trained over a thousand people to conduct

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<sup>129</sup> Russian Federation / Federal Agency of Communications, 'Homepage', Official Website (10 December 2018), <https://eng.rossvyaz.ru>, (20 September 2019).

<sup>130</sup> Renée DiResta and Shelby Grossman, *Potemkin Pages & Personas: Assessing GRU Online Operations, 2014-2019*, (Stanford, CA (USA): Stanford University, Internet Observatory, Cyber Policy Center, 2019), 51.

<sup>131</sup> Anton Troianovski and Ellen Nakashima, 'How Russia's Military Intelligence Agency Became the Covert Muscle in Putin's Duel with the West', The Washington Post Website, (28 December 2018). [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/how-russias-military-intelligence-agency-became-the-covert-muscle-in-putins-duels-with-the-west/2018/12/27/2736bbe2-fb2d-11e8-8c9a-860ce2a8148f\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.adf07e375152](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/how-russias-military-intelligence-agency-became-the-covert-muscle-in-putins-duels-with-the-west/2018/12/27/2736bbe2-fb2d-11e8-8c9a-860ce2a8148f_story.html?utm_term=.adf07e375152), (15 February 2020).

round-the-clock influence operations.<sup>132</sup> It has often been called the ‘Troll Farm’ or the ‘Russian Troll Factory’.<sup>133</sup> It is strongly believed that the IRA first targeted Ukrainian and Russian citizens and, subsequently, American citizens well before the United States elections in 2016.<sup>134</sup> The agency, legally formed in 2015, started out as the Internet Research Agency and was later called Teka now renamed Glavset. It is interesting to note that Glavset’s corporate address is in Rostov-on-Don, but its physical address is in Saint Petersburg. Glavset is housed and financially supported by Yevgeny Prigozhin, also known as ‘Putin’s Chef’. President Putin personally chose his company to cater several of his exclusive presidential receptions and dinners. Members of Glavset mask their Internet activities using proxy servers and other anonymizers in order ‘to astroturf’.<sup>135</sup> Their main products are propaganda, fake news, trolling (writing reactions on comment sections of an article on the Internet).<sup>136</sup> The remainder of this subsection goes into more details: (1) ties with the Russian intelligence and security services and *Minkomsvyaz*, and (2) way of operating.

### *(1) Ties with others*

The IRA, or now Glavset, is considered to have close ties with Russian authorities, although there are no publications that confirm the relation between IRA/Glavset and *Minkomsvyaz* or its sub-agencies, or other Russian government agencies. Nevertheless, it is plausible that IRA/Glavset coordinates its activities with *Minkomsvyaz*, and its sub-agencies, as well as the Russian security services, especially unit 74455 of the GRU, in order to synchronise Russia’s information activities. What is striking here is that the creation of storylines, messages and responses on the Internet by operators of IRA/Glavset is done in a very sophisticated way, also using *maskirovka* methods, such as reflexive control and the dissemination of disinformation. This evokes a strong association with the working methods of the FSB, SVR and GRU, and especially unit 74455, although there is no hard evidence for any form of cooperation between Russian Security Services and IRA/Glavset.

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<sup>132</sup> Renée DiResta et al, *The Tactics & Tropes of the Internet Research Agency*, A Report Supported by the United States Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, (Austin, TX (USA): New Knowledge, 2018), 6.

<sup>133</sup> Adrian Chen, ‘The Agency’, *New York Time Magazine* (2 June 2015), <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/07/magazine/the-agency.html>, (21 September 2019).

<sup>134</sup> DiResta, *The Tactics & Tropes*, 6.

<sup>135</sup> Astroturfing is the practice of masking the originator of a message to make it appear as though it derives from and is supported by a grassroots participant.

<sup>136</sup> Joel Harding, ‘Glavset is the New Name for Russian Internet Research Agency: The Russian Troll Farm’, Website ‘To Inform is to Influence’, (10 September 2017), <https://toinformistoinfluence.com/2017/09/10/glavset-is-new-name-for-russian-internet-research-agency-the-russian-troll-farm/>, (21 September 2019).

## *(2) Way of operating*

IRA/Glavset is an organisation with different departments focussing on specific geographic regions in combination with specialisation. A form of specialisation is the production of memes, while the leadership of IRA/Glavset tasked another department within IRA/Glavset with commenting on posts by others. The operators work in twelve-hour-shifts, on a 24/7 basis. The individual operators run multiple fake accounts and are expected to produce around fifty comments on news articles every day. Other operators maintain six Facebook accounts, posting three times daily about news and discussing new developments in Facebook groups twice a day, with a target of at least 500 subscribers at the end of the first month. On Twitter, operators run about ten accounts with up to 2,000 followers each and produce at least fifty tweets daily. Those making comments are required to make 135 remarks during their shift. These operators are provided with five keywords or topics to use in their postings in order to stand out in search engines, as a result of which users of the Internet are drawn to earlier postings.<sup>137</sup>

The operators at IRA/Glavset mainly use three different methods to build an audience following them to increase their influence. The first method is buying followers. The traditional way to build an audience of followers is a long-term investment, buying a following audience is much quicker. Websites, such as ‘buycheapfollowerslike.org’, offers 1,000 accounts for less than \$20. Their followers have profile pictures, unique bios and are active tweeters, but they are bots.<sup>138</sup> This method is based on the principle that a large following audience with many active tweeters will attract new potential tweeters. Social media influencers, celebrities and marketeers also use this buying method to attract and influence other people. The second method is ‘follower fishing’, which is a specific tactic by which IRA/Glavset accounts follow thousands of other accounts in a very short time frame.

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<sup>137</sup> Andrew Dawson and Martin Innes, ‘How Russia’s Internet Research Agency Built Its Disinformation Campaign’, *The Political Quarterly*, 90 (2019) 2, 246. Also: John Gallacher and Rolf Fredheim, ‘Division Abroad, Cohesion at Home: How the Russian Troll Factory Works to Divide Societies Overseas But Spread Pro-regime Messages at Home’, in: Sebastian Bay (Ed), *Responding to Cognitive Security Challenges*, (Riga (LTV): NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 2019), 61-80.

<sup>138</sup> A bot is a software application that is programmed to do certain tasks. Bots are automated, which means they run according to their instructions without a human user to start them up. Bots often imitate or replace a human user’s behaviour. Typically, they do repetitive tasks, and they can do them much faster than human users could. Bots usually operate via a network. More than half of Internet traffic is bots scanning content, interacting with webpages, chatting with users, or looking for attack targets. Some bots are ‘evil’ and are programmed to break into user accounts, scan the web for contact information for sending spam, or perform other malicious activities. See: Cloudflare, ‘What is a bot?’, Website of Cloudflare (September 2019). <https://www.cloudflare.com/learning/bots/what-is-a-bot/>, (30 September 2019).

The purpose of this method is to attract the new accounts to respond to the IRA/Glavset account. It is a form of follow-back, and it induces the feeling of reciprocity. After few days, the IRA/Glavset operator unfollows the newly recruited account. It is important for the IRA/Glavset operator that most platforms, depending on their algorithms, recognize the fast-growing account of the IRA/Glavset operator as an authority, attractive for followers. The third method is narrative switching. Operators start with writing about ordinary and innocent issues, responding to the preferences of followers. After an extended time period, messages become overtly more political and in line with pro-Russian narratives, while the followers just keep following and do not bother to stop the mutual relationship.<sup>139</sup>

The IRA/Glavset strategy, using digital advertising tricks to spread disinformation and propaganda on multiple platforms and often making use of false personas or imitating idealistic groups, has three benefits: (1) It enables the IRA/Glavset to research a broad target audience across multiple platforms and formats. The IRA/Glavset ensures that the numerous messages show consistency across the various platforms, making the narratives more truthful. (2) It helps to create a feeling of legitimacy for the false groups and fake personas managed by the IRA/Glavset. Users believe the credibility of the false groups operating websites set up by the IRA/Glavset across the platforms, YouTube channels, Facebook pages, Twitter accounts and even PayPal accounts for receiving donations. (3) The IRA/Glavset is able to maintain its presence on social media. Once an account is compromised, it can redirect its traffic to platforms where its activities have not been disrupted, using this other platform to complain about the disruption of their account on that initial platform.<sup>140</sup> The majority of these listed activities is still ongoing.

## 6.7 Concluding remarks

This chapter has answered the fifth secondary research question: who are the Russian authorities involved in deception warfare? The Russian political system is a sovereign democracy in which the Russian President has centralised power. His decision surpasses all the other decisions in the system, and there is little room for opposition. The main body for security matters, next to the Russian President, is the Russian Security Council, which

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<sup>139</sup> Dawson and Innes, 'How Russia's Internet Research Agency Built Its Disinformation Campaign', 247-250.

<sup>140</sup> Philip Howard et al, *The IRA, Social Media and Political Polarization in the United States, 2012-2018*, Computational Propaganda Research Project, (Oxford (UK): University of Oxford, 2018), 8.

controls the Russian security service and also monitors the activities and developments of the Russian Armed Forces. The Russian Security Council is the nucleus of the Russian authorities and the security services involved, which implement the decisions of the Russian President and his Security Council. The Russian Federation and its predecessors, the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, and their security services, go back a long time. The first services were mainly focused on repression of the Russian population. Today, Russian Security Services are also focused on Russian compatriots abroad and intelligence from neighbouring countries and other countries they are interested in.

The current three main security services are the FSB for domestic matters and the former Soviet states, the SVR for foreign countries and the GRU, the military intelligence service. The power of the GRU has grown considerably over the last 15 years compared to that of the other two major services. These services still use *maskirovka* methods, like the KGB before them. The *siloviki* are former members of the security services and the armed forces. They were very powerful at the time of the conflict with Georgia and the annexation of Crimea and formed a close group around the Russian President. Their influence has been declining for some years. Putin no longer relies unilaterally on their judgment. Other Russian government organisations belonging to Russian authorities that were undoubtedly involved in the use of deception methods included the Ministry of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media, known as *Minkomsvyaz* and the Internet Research Agency, nowadays called Glavset and also known as Russia's Troll factory. They both play a major role in influencing the Internet and social media.



# Chapter 7 Russo-Georgian Armed Conflict 2008

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## 7.1 Preamble

This chapter analyses the armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Georgia in 2008, the so-called Russo-Georgian armed conflict.<sup>1</sup> It provides insights into what extent Russian authorities were able to apply deception during the conflict and how the Georgian authorities responded. The chapter focuses on the sixth secondary research question:

How were Georgian decision-makers deceived during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in 2008?

In order to answer this problem, the sixth secondary research question is subdivided into research sub-questions. This third layer of research sub-questions comprises: (1) What happened during the 2008 Russo-Georgian armed conflict? (2) Is there a common perspective among researchers about the 2008 Russo-Georgian armed conflict? (3) Were the Russian authorities the only deceivers during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict? (4) What were the Russian efforts during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict? (5) How was Georgian receptiveness? (6) What were the Georgian responses to the Russian efforts? All these questions will be answered in this chapter.

The chapter starts with an overview of all Russian organisations, mainly military forces and intelligence services that committed themselves to organise, execute or facilitate Russian deception activities during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict. What follows is an historical overview and an analysis of the Russian efforts and the Georgian receptiveness and responses. The chapter is divided into five sections: 7.2 ‘Historical overview’, 7.3 ‘Different opinion’, 7.4 ‘Russian efforts’, 7.5 ‘Georgian receptiveness and response’s, 7.6 ‘Russian Lessons learnt’, followed by concluding remarks in section 7.7.

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<sup>1</sup> The Russian-Georgian Armed Conflict of 2008 is also known as ‘Russo-Georgian War’, the ‘2008 Russian-Georgian Conflict’, ‘August 2008 War’ or ‘Little War’.

## 7.2 Historical overview of the armed conflict

In order to answer the first research sub-question: ‘What happened during the 2008 Russo-Georgian armed conflict?’, this section is divided into five subsections. The first subsection gives a historical survey of relevant events and activities before the start of the conflict. The subsequent subsections elaborate on what happened during the conflict. This is followed by subsections that deal with the involvement of the intelligence services prior and during the conflict. The last subsections give some final considerations about the conflict.

Before discussing the history that preceded the conflict and describing the course of the armed conflict, it is worth noting that there are many publications on the Russo-Georgian armed conflict with a variety of different perspectives on the conflict. 51 different publications in total, articles as well as books, were used to analyse the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in this dissertation. The authors of these publications are from Sweden, Estonia, Georgia, Canada, Rumania, the United Kingdom, Germany, the United States, The Netherlands, Switzerland, the Russian Federation, and Israel, or worked for the EU. This is a heterogeneous and colourful group of publicists with wide-ranging attitudes towards the Russo-Georgian armed conflict.

### Sensitive operation

There were aspects that made this ‘little war’ a sensitive one. Some of the greatest sensitivities were the involvement of the Russian Federation, seen as a continent-sized nation and a regional power and Georgia’s flirtations with NATO. Understandably, Russian authorities were concerned about the geopolitical developments during the so-called Colour Revolutions. The term ‘Colour Revolutions’ was used by media worldwide to describe various related movements opting for non-violent resistance, also known as civil resistance. These movements protested against corruption and the authority of political systems and, at the same time, strove for democratic elections. The movements adopted names referring to colours or flowers, especially in countries that belonged to the former Soviet Union and the Balkans. Georgia had its Rose Revolution in November 2003, Ukraine its Orange Revolution in 2005 and the Grape Revolution went on in Moldova in 2009.<sup>2</sup> As previously hinted, the

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<sup>2</sup> Steven Levitsky and Lucas Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*, (Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 2010), 183-235.

flirting actions between Georgia and NATO were another sensitivity. Georgian leadership hoped to become a full member of NATO. Georgia also became a close ally of the United States, which set up a 'Georgia Sustainment and Stability Operations Programme' to train Georgian troops. Georgia formed a partnership with the National Guard of the American state of Georgia and received visits from America's Sixth Fleet. A third sensitivity was the major oil pipeline from Baku in Azerbaijan to Ceyhan in Turkey and a gas pipeline from Baku to Ezurum in Turkey, both crossing Georgian territory. These sensitivities were evidence that the stakes of the conflict would be high.<sup>3</sup>

The Russo-Georgian armed conflict shocked many world leaders and Western policy makers.<sup>4</sup> Many of them believed the war between the Russian Federation and Georgia broke the rule of post-Cold War European security, claiming that borders in Europe would never be changed by force of arms again. The implosion of the Former Republic of Yugoslavia had been an exception to this rule. Border disputes would no longer take place, and certainly not the ones where the Russian Federation would be involved in, was the collective idealistic opinion held by many. Reality turned out to be different. The Russian Federation showed its true colours: it was once again willing to use power to safeguard its interest, even in a face-to-face confrontation with its neighbours.<sup>5</sup>

## A prelude to the armed conflict

While the world was focused on the opening of the 29<sup>th</sup> Olympic Summer Games in Beijing in China on 8 August 2008, the news media outlets started scrolling news tickers at the bottom of the TV screen about a war erupting in the Caucasus region. Initially the war between the Russian Federation and Georgia received little attention. Only few people had ever heard about areas like Abkhazia and South Ossetia, when news bulletins reported attempts by the Georgian army to seize control of Tskhinvali, the main city of South-Ossetia. Tensions in Georgia date back to the early 1920s, when South Ossetia made unsuccessful endeavours to secure its independence. South Ossetia ended up as an autonomous region

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<sup>3</sup> Vicken Cheterian, 'The August 2008 War in Georgia: From Ethnic Conflict to Border Wars', in: Stephen Jones (Ed), *War and Revolution in the Caucasus: Georgia Ablaze*, (Abingdon (UK): Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 63.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Hamilton, *August 2008 and Everything After: A Ten-Year Retrospective on the Russia-Georgia War*, (Philadelphia, PA (USA): Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2018), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Ronald Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West*, (New York, NY (USA): Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 4-5.

within Soviet Georgia after the Red Army occupied Georgia in 1921.<sup>6</sup> During the Soviet era, South-Ossetia enjoyed an autonomous status within the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic.<sup>7</sup> At the end of the Soviet regime, in 1989, South Ossetia had tried to reunite with North Ossetia and sought independence, without success, though.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile the Supreme Council of Georgia, the highest legislative body in Georgia, established in 1990 while the country was still part of the Soviet Union, declared Georgia's independence after a referendum held on 31 March 1991. Zviad Gamsakhurdia, a Georgian scholar and a dissident under the Soviet regime, became Georgia's first elected president, but not for long. He was highly criticised by his opponents, who accused him of 'unacceptable dictatorial behaviour'. The opposition launched a violent *coup d'état*, and Gamsakhurdia fled to Armenia, and later went into exile in Chechnya. Eduard Shevardnadze, a former Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs (1985-1991) replaced Gamsakhurdia as President of the Republic of Georgia. Shevardnadze had joined the leaders of the coup, and together they formed 'The State Council'.<sup>9</sup>

## Tensions

Georgia's own independence from the former Soviet Union in March 1990 sparked new tensions between Georgia and South Ossetia. In January 1991, hostilities between the two broke out, leading to an estimated 2,000 – 4,000 casualties and the displacement of tens of thousands of people. Soviet security units from the MVD and KGB had been in Tskhinvali from the start of the conflict. Their role was obscure and even inconsistent, supporting the separation movement in South-Ossetia, but they did not stop the Georgian troops from taking Tskhinvali in 1991. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, the Soviet security units left the South-Ossetian capital and handed over their arms to the Ossetians.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Jim Nichol, *Russia-Georgia Conflict in August 2008: Context and Implications for U.S. Interests*, Report for United States Congress, Prepared for Members and Committees of Congress, (Washington, DC (USA): Congressional Research Service, 2009), 1-2.

<sup>7</sup> Charles King, 'The Five-Day War: Managing Moscow after the Georgia Crisis', *Foreign Affairs*, 87 (2008) 6, 4.

<sup>8</sup> Nichol, *Russia-Georgia Conflict in August 2008*, 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Zaza Tsuladze and Umalt Dudayev, 'Burial Mystery of Georgian Leader', Institute for War & Peace Reporting, CSR Issue 375, (16 February 2010). <https://web.archive.org/web/20140225035959/http://iwpr.net/report-news/burial-mystery-georgian-leader>, (20 August 2019).

<sup>10</sup> Dennis Sammut and Nikola Cvetkovski, *Confidence-Building Matters: The Georgia-South Ossetia Conflict*, (London (UK): Verification Technology Information Centre, 1996), 13.

In June 1992, the Russian Federation initiated a cease-fire.<sup>11</sup> It led to an agreement between Georgia, South-Ossetia and the Russian Federation, which was signed by Georgian President Shevardnadze and Russian President Yeltsin in the Russian town of Sochi. In the agreement, known as the Sochi Agreement, a designated security zone around Tskhinvali was created. It was also agreed that the Russian Federation should withdraw its engineer and helicopter regiment from this conflict region. A Joint Control Commission (JCC), composed of representatives of the Russian Federation, Georgia and South-Ossetia, would be set up in Tskhinvali to exercise control over the implementation of the cease-fire, the withdrawal of armed formations, the disbandment of self-defence forces, and to maintain security in the region. Attached to the JCC were special mixed groups of observers, who were deployed along the security perimeter.<sup>12</sup> Soon the JCC-observers were known as the ‘Joint Peace Keeping Forces’. In December 1992, the OSCE started a mission in the region to monitor the work of the JCC-observers.<sup>13</sup>



Figure 7.1 Map of Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Nichol, *Russia-Georgia Conflict in August 2008*, 1-2.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Agreement on Principles of Settlement of the Georgian – Ossetian Conflict’, (Sochi, 24 June 1992). [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/GE%20RU\\_920624\\_AgreemenOnPrinciplesOfSettleme ntGeorgianOssetianConflict.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/GE%20RU_920624_AgreemenOnPrinciplesOfSettleme ntGeorgianOssetianConflict.pdf), (22 September 2019).

<sup>13</sup> Marietta König, ‘The Georgian-South Ossetian Conflict’, in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg / *Institut für Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik Hamburg* (IFSH or Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy Hamburg), *OSCE Yearbook 2004*, (Baden-Baden (GER): IFSH, 2005), 241-243.

<sup>14</sup> University of Texas at Austin, Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection. [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/georgia\\_republic.html](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/georgia_republic.html) (21 August 2019).

In August 1992 the Georgian government led by President Shevardnadze accused Zivad Gamsakhurdia supporters of kidnapping Roman Gventsada, Georgia's Interior Minister, and holding him captive in Abkhazia. The Georgian government sent 3,000 troops to the region to restore order, which gradually turned into a series of hostilities with some fierce fighting around Sukhumi, the Abkhazian capital. An Abkhazian militia was formed, consisting of Abkhazians, ethnic Georgians, Armenians and Russians living in Abkhazia. The militia was supported by North Caucasian militants and Cossack units.<sup>15</sup> The warring factions agreed to a Russian-brokered truce, which was again signed in Sochi, late July 1993. The agreement provided a Joint Control Commission, like the one for South-Ossetia, including representatives of the Russian Federation, Georgia, Abkhazia, the UN and CSCE<sup>16</sup> to observe the cease-fire. In the beginning, a trilateral Georgian-Abkhazian-Russian interim group, comprising three to nine persons, had supported the JCC in Abkhazia.<sup>17</sup> Later, these interim groups were followed by 88 United Nations observers, who deployed in the conflict zone.<sup>18</sup> The use of military equipment only for combat purposes was forbidden and no additional troops or armed formations were allowed in the territory of Abkhazia.<sup>19</sup> The agreement was soon broken. The Abkhazian militia quickly overran the capital and the rest of Abkhazia, followed by a period of ethnic cleansing of Georgians in the region. Georgia never gained control over the region again, despite launching some police operations.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Georgiy Mirsky, *On the Ruins of Empire: Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Former Soviet Union*, Contributions in Political Science, Number 375, (Westport, CT (USA): Greenwood Press, 1997), 61-90. And: Thomas Goltz, 'The Paradox of Living in Paradise: Georgia's Descent into Chaos', in: Svante Cornell and S. Frederick Starr (Ed), *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia*, (Armonk, NY (USA): M.E. Sharpe, 2009), 10-27.

<sup>16</sup> CSCE stands for Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. It is based on the Helsinki Accords of 1975 for the improvement of Warsaw Pact and the West, including the NATO member states. In 1995, a few years after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the downfall of the Warsaw Pact, the CSCE was renamed into OSCE, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. See: Michael Cotey Morgan, *The Final Act: The Helsinki Accord and the Transformation of the Cold War*, (Princeton, NJ (USA): Princeton University Press, 2018), 75-107.

<sup>17</sup> 'Annex I, English', to: *Agreement on a Cease-Fire in Abkhazia and Arrangements to Monitor its Observance*, (Sochi: 27 July 1993).

[https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/GE\\_930727\\_AbkhaziaCeasefireAndArrangementsToMonitorObservance.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/GE_930727_AbkhaziaCeasefireAndArrangementsToMonitorObservance.pdf), (23 September 2019).

<sup>18</sup> United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 'Georgia – UNOMIG – Background', United Nations Peacekeeping Website, (2009). <https://peacekeeping.un.org/mission/past/unomig/background.html>, (11 February 2020).

<sup>19</sup> 'Annex I, English, to the Agreement'.

<sup>20</sup> Mirsky, *On the Ruins of Empire*, 61-90. And: Goltz, 'The Paradox of Living in Paradise', 10-27.

## Agreement

Later, in 1994, a new cease-fire and separation-of-forces agreement was signed in Moscow by Georgian and Abkhazian leaders, and witnessed by observers from the UN, CSCE and the Russian Federation. The agreement was confirmed by the UN Security Council (UNSC) in UNSC Resolution 394.<sup>21</sup> This agreement between Georgia and Abkhazia stipulated that a security zone at the border between Georgia and Abkhazia separated the armed forces of Georgia and Abkhazia. Armed forces and heavy military equipment, including artillery, mortars, tanks and armed vehicles, were not allowed in the security zone. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)<sup>22</sup> was tasked to deploy a peace-keeping force and military observers into the security zone to monitor compliance with the agreement. The peace-keeping force of the CIS and representatives of the United Nations would supervise the withdrawal of Georgian troops to their initial places of deployment beyond the frontiers of Abkhazia. Regular patrols of peace-keeping forces and international observers were organized in the Kodori Valley.<sup>23</sup> The United Nations agreed on a new mission, United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG).<sup>24</sup>

## Russian influence

Shevardnadze went through a difficult time as President of the Republic of Georgia. He was facing different enemies, some dating back to his Soviet period, others accusing him as Georgian President of being too much pro-Western. He declared the ambition to join NATO and EU. From 1992 until 1998, Shevardnadze survived in total six attacks on his life: three

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<sup>21</sup> United Nations Security Council (UNSC), *Resolution 394*, (New York, NY (USA), 30 June 1994).

<sup>22</sup> Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is a regional intergovernmental organisation of former Soviet republics in the Eurasia region, which was formed after the collapse of the Soviet Union. On 8 December 1991, the founding republics signed the Belasvezha Accords declaring that the Soviet Union would cease to exist and announced the CIS in its place. Later that month, on 21 December 1991, the Alma-Ata Protocol was signed which declared that the Soviet Union was disbanded, and the Russian Federation became its successor. The member-states of the CIS are Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Turkmenistan and Ukraine belonged to the founding states, but did never ratify the Charter, and Georgia became a full member in 1994 but withdraw in August 2008. See: Zhenis Kembayev, *Legal Aspects of the Regional Integration Process in the Post-Soviet Area*, (Berlin (GER): Springer-Verlag, 2009), 25-40.

<sup>23</sup> 'Annex I, English', to: *Agreement on a Cease-Fire and Separation of Forces*, Original in Russian, (Moscow (RF): 14 May 1994). [https://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/1994/583](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/1994/583), (23 September 2019).

<sup>24</sup> UNSC, *Resolution 394*.



assassination attempts, two car bomb attacks, and a deadly ambush with his motorcade.<sup>25</sup> Georgia suffered from crime and corruption, and its economy did not flourish.<sup>26</sup> In the meantime, the Russian Federation increased its influence in South Ossetia and also in Abkhazia. Residents of South Ossetia and Abkhazia were granted Russian citizenship and offered Russian passports. Many of these residents opted for the Russian bid and wanted their regions to become part of the Russian Federation.<sup>27</sup>

## Rose Revolution

In 2003 Mikheil Saakashvili, a lawyer and Georgian politician, promised democratic and economic reforms, and at the end of the year he came to power during the so-called 'Rose Revolution'.<sup>28</sup> During this revolution, Russian authorities had tried to help the incumbent president, Eduard Shevardnadze, even though the Russians had reviled him for a long time for his role in the collapse of the Soviet Union and his apostasy to Georgia.<sup>29</sup> Despite Russian pressure, Saakashvili was elected president. He increased the pressure on South Ossetia by tightening border control and sending several hundreds of police, military and intelligence personnel into South Ossetia and to Abkhazia. Georgia rapidly transformed its armed forces in accordance with Western standards, with significant United States military assistance. The transformation of the Georgian army was accompanied by an extensive PR campaign to show a modern army and to impress the people within Georgia and abroad. It was also the quintessence of a new Georgian deterrence campaign against many threats that it had to endure<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Carolyn McGiffert Ekedahl and Melvin Goodman, *The Wars of Eduard Shevardnadze*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Originally published in 1997 by the Pennsylvania State University Press, (Washington, DC (USA): Brassey's, 2001), 257-284.

<sup>26</sup> Shalva Machavariani, 'Overcoming economic Crime in Georgia through Public Service Reform', in: Louise Shelley, Erik Scott and Anthony Latta (Ed), *Organized Crime and Corruption in Georgia*, (London (UK): Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 37-49.

<sup>27</sup> Jim Nichol, *Russia-Georgia Conflict in August 2008*, 3-4. And: Mikhail Barabanov, 'The August War Between Russia and Georgia', *Moscow Defense Brief*, (Moscow (RF): Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, 16 April 2009).

<sup>28</sup> The 'Rose Revolution' was one of the earlier mentioned colour revolutions.

<sup>29</sup> Dan Jakopovich, 'The 2003 "Rose Revolution" in Georgia: A Case Study in High Politics and Rank-and-File Execution', *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*, 15 (2007) 2, 211-220.

<sup>30</sup> Nichol, *Russia-Georgia Conflict in August 2008*, 3-4. And: Barabanov, 'The August War Between Russia and Georgia'.

## Reorientation

When almost two years in office, President Saakashvili announced a new peace plan for South Ossetia, which meant substantial autonomy for the region and a three-stage settlement: (1) demilitarization, (2) economic rehabilitation and steady growth of prosperity in the region, and (3) a political settlement. The OSCE Ministerial Council held in December 2005 backed the peace plan. In November 2006 a popular referendum was held in South Ossetia, reaffirming its breakaway from Georgia and its independence, but Georgia, followed by the OSCE, did not recognize this voting. In 2007 President Saakashvili launched another peace plan with South Ossetia remaining part of Georgia, but Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs blocked this plan during a conference on the matter in Tbilisi in October 2007. No further meetings have been scheduled since.

Georgia invested heavily in its alliance with the United States, especially during the George W. Bush Administration. Georgian troops served in Kosovo, as well as in Iraq, deployed as a contingent of 2,000 soldiers until their withdrawal in 2008. They were the third largest Troop Contributing Nation in Iraq, following behind the United States and the United Kingdom. Unfortunately for Georgia, the relationship was not reciprocal; Georgia never received any strategic dividend as a result of its efforts. Georgia was not allowed to join NATO in the near future because of the unstable situation in its country. During the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008 Georgia's Membership Plan (MAP) was rejected, despite its close links with the United States. This was exactly what the Russian leadership anticipated. More than a year before the NATO summit in February 2007, Vladimir Putin, at the time the incumbent President of the Russian Federation, expressed his serious concerns about NATO's expansion at the Munich Security Council.<sup>31</sup>

## Influence of Kosovo's and Transdniester's attempts at secession

The stalemate between Georgia, on the one hand, and South-Ossetia and Abkhazia, on the other, was affected by developments in the Balkans. On 17 February 2008 Kosovo, the breakaway province of Serbia, unilaterally declared its independence from Serbia. The United States and many EU-members determined that Kosovo's independence was the most

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<sup>31</sup> President of the Russian Federation, 'Speech and Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy', (10 February 2007). <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034>, (22 August 2019).

convenient way to solve a long-lasting dispute in the Balkans. Serbia and the Russian Federation were strongly against Kosovan autonomy. The day after, United States' Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice stated: 'Kosovo cannot be seen as a precedent for any other situation in the world today.' Russian authorities were furious. They regarded Serbia as a 'brotherhood' nation, and a staunch ally. Furthermore, Kosovo was located in an area they considered their own sphere of influence.<sup>32</sup> The developments in Kosovo had a major impact on the Russian authorities, who saw extensive parallels with the situation in South-Ossetia, Abkhazia, and also Transdniestser.

Transdniestser is a Moldovan breakaway region situated between Ukraine and Moldova with an extensive Russian population. It is internationally recognized as part of Moldova. In 1990 pro-Transdniestser movements, supported by the newly-formed 'Transdniestser Republican Guard', Russian volunteers and Cossack units, fought for independence against Moldovan troops and police. In 1992 a cease-fire was signed by Boris Yeltsin, President of the Russian Federation, and Mircea Snegur, President of the Republic of Moldova. The cease-fire agreement provided a Joint Control Commission with an observer force attached to it. Since 1992 there has been a Russian military presence of about 1,200 soldiers to monitor the 1992 cease-fire agreement between Moldova and Transdniestser.<sup>33</sup>

General Yuri Baluyevsky, then Chief of Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, foretold Moscow's reaction a few months prior to Kosovo's declaration of independence. The reaction became known as the 'Baluyevsky reaction' or the 'Kosovo-precedent'. Whether it was just Russian rhetoric or a seriously meant reaction, the Russian position on Kosovo certainly put political pressure on Georgia. Baluyevsky stated:

If we cross the Rubicon and Kosovo gains an independent status tomorrow, frankly speaking, I expect this independence to echo in other regions as well, including those close to Russia's

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<sup>32</sup> David Smith, 'The Saakashvili Administration's Reaction to Russian Policies Before the 2008 War', in: Svante Cornell and Frederick Starr (Ed), *The Guns of August: Russia's War in Georgia*, (Armonk, NY (USA): M.E. Sharpe, 2009), 124-125.

<sup>33</sup> William Crowther, 'Moldova: Caught between Nation and Empire', in: Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (Ed), *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*, (Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1997), 316-352.

borders. You perfectly understand what I mean - I mean Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transdniester.<sup>34</sup>

Those were ominous words, soon followed by action. During the first half of 2008 the Russian Armed Forces deployed 500 soldiers of an airborne battalion and artillery to Abkhazia, which was justified by the Russians as having been laid down in the Moscow Agreement of 1994.<sup>35</sup> From May until July Russian authorities deployed so-called railroad troops, being engineers, to repair 54 kilometres of the railroad line in Abkhazia.<sup>36</sup> Georgian leadership protested since these troops were not legitimate under the Moscow agreement, but Russian authorities responded by typifying their mission as humanitarian.<sup>37</sup> Russian peacekeeping units in Abkhazia had been further reinforced with troops, which secretly took place by train in late July.<sup>38</sup>

## Military exercises

Later in July Russian Armed Forces conducted exercise KAVKAZ 2008 in the Russian homeland near the Georgian border. The exercise included over 9,000 troops, and in total about 700 military vehicles and more than 30 aircraft. One of the exercise scenarios was a hypothetical attack by an unidentified force in the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russian forces practised a counterattack to reinforce Russian observers and peacekeepers and to protect Russian citizens in the two regions.<sup>39</sup> After completion of the KAVKAZ 2008 exercise, a Russian force of two battalions remained near the South Ossetian border.<sup>40</sup> During the same time period the Georgian army, together with 1,000 US troops, conducted exercise

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<sup>34</sup> Yuri Baluyevsky, op. cit. in: Russia Today, 'Kosovo Independence to Spark Chain Reaction in Caucasus?', RT Website, (27 December 2007). <https://www.rt.com/news/kosovo-independence-to-spark-chain-reaction-in-caucasus/>, (24 August 2019).

<sup>35</sup> Ariel Cohen and Robert Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgia War: Lessons and Implications*, ERAP Monograph, (Carlisle, PA (USA): United States Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2011), 17-18. And: Carolina Vendil Pallin and Frederik Westerlund, 'Russia's War in Georgia: Lessons and Consequences', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 20 (2009) 2, 405

<sup>36</sup> Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgia War*, 17-18.

<sup>37</sup> Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgia War*, 17-18. And: Pavel Felgenhauer, 'Russian Railroad Troops Complete Mission in Abkhazia', *Euresia Daily Monitor*, Volume 5, Issue 146, The Jamestown Foundation, (31 July 2008). <https://jamestown.org/program/russian-railroad-troops-complete-mission-in-abkhazia/>, (24 August 2019).

<sup>38</sup> Vendil Pallin and Westerlund, 'Russia's War in Georgia', 405.

<sup>39</sup> Nichol, *Russia-Georgia Conflict in August 2008*, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Anton Lavrov, 'Timeline of Russian-Georgian Hostilities in August 2008', in: Ruslan Pukhov (Ed), *The Tanks of August*, (Moscow (RF): Centre for the Analysis and Technologies, 2010), 42-44..

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE 2008 in Georgia. The aim of the exercise was to increase Georgian inter-operability with NATO forces and coalition actions in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>41</sup>

## Clashes

In the weeks before the start of the Russo-Georgian armed conflict there was an increasing number of clashes between South Ossetian paramilitary groups and Georgian troops in and around Tskhinvali. The Georgian troops were part of the JCC-observers in South-Ossetia. On 28 July South-Ossetian fighters started shelling Georgian JCC-observers and Georgian ethnic villages in South-Ossetia.<sup>42</sup> Four days later, on 1 August 2008, five Georgian observers were wounded in a bomb attack carried out by Ossetian paramilitary groups. Georgian JCC-observers in South-Ossetia, responded to this attack. Heavy fighting in Tskhinvali led to the deaths of six Ossetian fighters and the wounding of 15 others.<sup>43</sup> Meanwhile Abkhazian fighters were bombarding Georgian villages on 1 August.<sup>44</sup> More clashes took place on 6 August between Georgian troops stationed in South-Ossetia and South-Ossetian paramilitaries, with numerous casualties on both sides. As a result, the Ossetian leadership decided to evacuate civilians from Tskhinvali, fearing an escalation of violence.<sup>45</sup>

## A five-day confrontation

At 11:35 p.m. on 7 August 2008, Georgian artillery fired smoke grenades into South Ossetia, intentionally targeting South Ossetian military objects. Georgian military commanders pledged to secure safety of Russian troops in South Ossetia, because of their internationally agreed neutral status, but Russian troops followed orders to attack Georgian troops.<sup>46</sup>

Georgian Brigadier-General Mamuka Kurashvili, head of the Georgian contingent of the observer and peacekeeping mission in South-Ossetia and Abkhazia, stated that the Georgian

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<sup>41</sup> Nichol, *Russia-Georgia Conflict in August 2008*, 4.

<sup>42</sup> Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World*, 165.

<sup>43</sup> Cheterian, 'The August 2008 War in Georgia', 67.

<sup>44</sup> Iulian Chifu, 'A Typical Case of Strategic Surprise: Decision-making in Crisis in Georgia during the Russian-Georgian War', in Iulian Chifu, Oazu Nantoi and Oleksandr Susko, *The Russian Georgian War: Trilateral Cognitive Institutional Approach of the Crisis Decision-making Process*, (Bucharest (RUM): Editura Curtea Veche, 2009), 57.

<sup>45</sup> Cheterian, 'The August 2008 War in Georgia', 67.

<sup>46</sup> Ants Laaneots, *The Russian-Georgian War of 2008: Causes and Implications*, ENDC Occasional Papers 4/2016, Translated by Karl Salum, (Tartu (EST): *Eesti Riigikaitsekolledž* (Estonian National Defence College), 2016), 55-58.

government had ‘decided to restore constitutional order’ in South-Ossetia.<sup>47</sup> After the artillery barrages Georgian forces started moving in the direction of Tskhinvali to engage South Ossetia troops and militia.<sup>48</sup>

At 10 a.m. on 8 August 2008, Georgian troops reached the town centre of Tskhinvali. Soon after that same morning, Russian air strikes hit targets inside South Ossetia and Georgia. That afternoon the Russian Security Council gathered in an emergency session and accused Georgia of aggression against South Ossetia. President Medvedev made clear that ‘Russia would defend its peacekeepers and South Ossetian citizens who were Russians’.<sup>49</sup>



Figure 7.2 Overview of the Russo-Georgian armed conflict<sup>50</sup>

Later that day, Russian fighter jets attacked the harbour of Poti, while a few Russian reconnaissance units made a survey of the harbour area. During the confrontation between Georgia and the Russian Federation, the Russian Air Force repeatedly attacked military

<sup>47</sup> Mamuka Kurashvili, op. cit. in: Cheterian, ‘The August 2008 War in Georgia’, 67

<sup>48</sup> Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (IIFFMCG), *Report: Volume II*, (Brussels (BEL): Council of the European Union), 209-217.

<sup>49</sup> IIFFMCG, *Report: Volume II*, 209-217.

<sup>50</sup> Andrei Nacu, via *Wikimedia Commons*.

infrastructure around the Georgian capital of Tbilisi. In the late afternoon of 8 August, Georgian troops tried to push deeper into the town of Tskhinvali but were repulsed suffering casualties and they were forced to withdraw. Meanwhile the Russian Army sent troops in advanced columns to South Ossetia, and the Russian Air Force conducted airstrikes around the city of Gori, about 25 km distance from Tskhinvali. The Russian Air Force continued to do so the following days, targeting Georgian military garrisons. The Georgian government claimed that at least 70 civilians were killed.<sup>51</sup> Among the casualties was Dutch TV journalist Stan Storimans while another reporter was injured.<sup>52</sup> On 9 August, the Georgian government, based in Tbilisi, evacuated its offices.<sup>53</sup> That day, Abkhazian forces and separatists opened a second front by attacking the Kodori Valley, held by Georgian troops. Russian forces, deployed as self-proclaimed ‘peacekeeping forces’ in accordance with the Moscow Agreement of 1994, initially did not participate in the battle, but soon conducted raids into Abkhazian valleys. Later, Russian land forces, initially located in the Russian homeland, came to support the Abkhazian forces in Abkhazia, and from there they advanced into western Georgia. Russian troops arrived in the Georgian town of Senaki that day and confiscated a military base there.<sup>54</sup>

## The conclusion of the conflict

On 10 August 2008, a naval confrontation between Russian and Georgian ships occurred off the coast of Abkhazia, with one of the Georgian ships being sunk. The Russian Black Sea Fleet blockaded the Georgian coast. It had departed from its home base of Sevastopol before hostilities between Russia and Georgia started. Russian land forces then captured the town of Gori on 13 August. The next day, on 14 August, Major General Vyacheslav Borisov, the commander of the Russian occupation forces, stated that the Georgian police together with the Russian Army were in charge of the town of Gori.<sup>55</sup> This cooperation came as a surprise, but it turned out to be a short-lived joint venture; the next day Russian troops pushed southwards to a location at about 40 km from the Georgian capital Tbilisi. Russian front units stopped at

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<sup>51</sup> IIFMCG, *Report: Volume II*, 209-217.

<sup>52</sup> Ynet, ‘Dutch Journalist Killed in Russian Bombing of Gori’, Yedioth Ahronot, Ynet News.com Website, (12 August 2008). <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3581326,00.html>, (22 August 2019).

<sup>53</sup> IIFMCG, *Report: Volume II*, 209-217.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Sam Savage, ‘Russian Military Will Leave Gori in 2 Days’, Red Orbit Website (14 August 2008). [https://www.redorbit.com/news/general/1522325/russian\\_military\\_will\\_leave\\_gori\\_in\\_2\\_days/](https://www.redorbit.com/news/general/1522325/russian_military_will_leave_gori_in_2_days/) (11 February 2020).

the Georgian town of Igoeti at the very moment that the United States' Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, visited President Saakashvili.<sup>56</sup>

Altogether the armed hostilities lasted only five days. President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev announced the cessation of the peace enforcement operation in Georgia on 12 August 2008. On the same day, the Russian President met with French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who was the incumbent chair of the European Council. Medvedev and Sarkozy agreed to a six-point proposal.<sup>57</sup> On 14 August, Saakashvili reluctantly signed the document in Tbilisi in the presence of Condoleezza Rice, showing the United States' support of Georgia. Besides, the United States also had an interest in preventing another major confrontation in the region in addition to the on-going operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Two days later, at 16 August, President Medvedev, satisfied with the final result, also signed the document.<sup>58</sup>

On 17 August Medvedev announced that Russian troops would start their retreat the following day, and the exchange of prisoners of war two days later. One week later, the Russian parliament, the State *Duma*, passed a motion for the diplomatic recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Nevertheless, the hostilities did not stop immediately after a ceasefire was signed by the Russian President,<sup>59</sup> as the occupation of the harbour of Poti by 70 Russian soldiers testifies. This happened in the morning of 19 August, after President Medvedev had announced the formal withdrawal of Russian troops.<sup>60</sup> On 26 August, President Medvedev claimed that 'humanitarianism' dictated the Russian Federation to recognise the independence of both Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Russian Federation stood alone. Many states, like the United States and France, and international organisations,

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<sup>56</sup> IIFMCG, *Report: Volume II*, 209-217.

<sup>57</sup> The six points in the proposal were: (1) No recourse to the use of force, (2) A lasting cessation of hostilities, (3) Unfettered access to humanitarian aid providers, (4) Georgian military forces must withdraw to their usual bases of encampment, (5) Russian military forces must withdraw to their positions prior to the outbreak of hostilities. While awaiting an international peace-monitoring mechanism, Russian peacekeeping forces will take additional security measures, (6) Launch of international discussions on security and stability arrangements for Abkhazia and South Ossetia. See: David Phillips, *Implementation Review: Six-Point Ceasefire Agreement Between Russia and Georgia*, (New York, NY (USA): Columbia University, Institute for the Study of Human Rights, 2011 / Washington, DC (USA): The National Committee on American Foreign Policy), 9-11.

<sup>58</sup> Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World*, 189-214.

<sup>59</sup> IIFMCG, *Report: Volume II*, 219.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 209-217.



like the OSCE, NATO and the G7,<sup>61</sup> condemned Russian recognition on the grounds that it violated the integrity of Georgia.<sup>62</sup>

## The role of the Russian intelligence and security services

From 2005 to 2007 Russian authorities launched a comprehensive reform of the GRU, which established a special headquarters in a prosperous district of Moscow. This centre was equipped with modern technical facilities and equipment, and a special Operational Management Centre (OMC) to support real-time decision-making was created. This OMC made it possible for Russian authorities to centralise all strategic and operational intelligence functions at one location. Early 2008 the FSB and GRU were very anxious to know more about the intentions of Saakashvili. At the beginning of August 2008, the FSB accused the Georgian intelligence service of being very active in the Russian Federation, especially in setting up networks, spying and recruitment of Russian servicemen through the use of threats against their relatives living in Georgia. On 11 August, nine Georgian agents were reportedly caught while engaged in spying activities.<sup>63</sup> The Russian security services were very keen on intercepting Georgian espionage networks

The GRU also played a role in the planning and intelligence prior to the armed conflict. The Russian invasion of Georgia was not an opportunistic affair; it had been planned for months, if not years, prior to the conflict. The GRU probably followed the developments in Georgia closely, especially in South Ossetia where it manned key positions in the Ossetian intelligence service, the KGB<sup>64</sup>. During the conflict, a spetsnaz battalion took part in the invasion itself, which is striking because these battalions do not directly fall under Russian forces.<sup>65</sup> These units are part of the GRU, and do not belong to the conventional Russian Armed Forces. The participation of such an 'external' unit in an action of the conventional Russian forces requires a great deal of coordination in the planning and execution of such an operation.

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<sup>61</sup> The G7 include: (1) Canada, (2) France, (3) Germany, (4) Italy, (5) Japan, (6) the United Kingdom, and (7) the United States.

<sup>62</sup> Nichol, *Russia-Georgia Conflict in August 2008*, 8-11.

<sup>63</sup> Stéphane Lefebvre and Roger McDermott, 'Intelligence Aspects of the 2008 Conflict Between Russia and Georgia', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 22 (2009) 1, 4-19.

<sup>64</sup> South Ossetia kept this unreformed name for their intelligence service.

<sup>65</sup> Vendil Pallin and Westerlund, 'Russia's War in Georgia', 400-424.

Konstantin Preobrazhensky, a former Russian KGB-officer, explained that the FSB would not only guard the South Ossetian borders with their Border Guards units, but also intended to conduct espionage against Georgia. A third task of the FSB in South Ossetia was to participate in the South Ossetian KGB, while quite a number of South Ossetian political leaders had an explicit Soviet-KGB background. Evidently, there was a reason why South Ossetia still identified its intelligence service as KGB.<sup>66</sup>

There are no open source publications that provide more insight into the involvement of the FSB, SVR and GRU in Russia's information campaign, but it is conceivable that these services have played a significant role in the armed conflict. Prior to the armed conflict, Russian Security Services gathered information on Georgia in order to determine the capabilities and intentions of the Georgian Armed Forces, while the Russian security services prevented the Georgian security service from discovering their own troop build-up in South Ossetia. It is also plausible that Russian security services, especially the SVR and the FSB, were behind granting Russian citizenship and issuing Russian passports to ethnic Russians. After all, the SVR had an extensive programme of agents of influence, who undoubtedly played a role in this, and the FSB focused primarily on the so-called 'compatriots abroad', ethnic Russians in neighbouring countries of the Russian Federation. During the combat phase of the armed conflict, the spetsnaz of the GRU were in the forefront as one of the spearhead units. And although it was never officially confirmed by Russian authorities and never revealed in a publication, it is also presumed that the FSB and GRU played a significant role in the coordination of hackers' activities.

### The role of the Georgian intelligence and security services

In order to understand the Georgian intelligence service, one must take note of the growing mutual tensions within the service. In December 2004, Georgian Deputy Security Minister Batu Kutelia, announced a major reform of the *Sakartvelos Dazvervis Samsakhuri*, the Georgian Intelligence Service, because of growing concerns about Russian intentions. He separated the external intelligence section from the Intelligence Department and insisted that the new independent service would act directly under his responsibility. The domestic

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<sup>66</sup> Konstantin Preobrazhensky, 'South Ossetia: KGB Bachyard in the Caucasus', The Central Asia Analyst Website, (11 March 2009). <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/11799-analytical-articles-caci-analyst-2009-3-11-art-11799.html>, (24 August 2019).

intelligence service moved from the Ministry of Security to the Ministry of the Interior. Saakashvili fervently wanted the external service to operate more effectively and supported the transformation, but this change did not yield the expected fruit. Remarkably enough, the external service in particular had to struggle every year since 2004 to obtain an adequate share of Georgian public funding. The Georgian external service was lacking knowledge and manpower to timely and adequately deliver intelligence to its government in Tbilisi. In 2006, the Georgian Minister of Defence announced publicly that he would disband the military intelligence service, which in practice did not take place. This does, however, demonstrate the deplorable state the Georgian intelligence services were in at that time.<sup>67</sup>

During hearings of a Georgian parliamentary ad-hoc commission, installed to investigate the events leading up to the outbreak of the war in August 2008, the Chief of General Staff of the Georgian Armed Forces and the Chief of the Georgian Intelligence Service (GIS) issued contradictory statements. The former testified that none of the Georgian intelligence services had indications that the Russian Federation would invade by crossing Georgian borders. The latter, on the other hand, stated that before the start of hostilities there had been a sentiment among Russian leaders to punish Georgia for its pro-Western attitude. He also claimed that intelligence officers from the Russian Federation had assessed the strengthening of the Georgian state. Russian authorities were concerned that they would lose influence in the region because of Georgia's Euro-Atlantic ambitions. It left Russian authorities with only one option, as the GIS had estimated: using military force. In the opinion of Russian authorities, Georgia's political and diplomatic isolation could never be achieved and an information war against Georgia would prove to be fruitless, as the Chief of the GIS stated.<sup>68</sup> These statements show that the Georgian intelligence service and the armed forces judged the conflict differently, and it also implicitly demonstrates that there was no mutual cooperation between the intelligence service and the armed forces.

The GIS anticipated that a conflict with the Russian Federation was likely to occur, but it would start with an escalation of tensions during the autumn of 2008, at the earliest September 2008. In general, Georgian intelligence was classified as unreliable.<sup>69</sup> As shown earlier in this chapter, it took the GIS more than half a day to get their utmost important

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<sup>67</sup> Lefebvre and McDermott, 'Intelligence Aspects of the 2008 Conflict', 9-13.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-18.

intelligence about Russian movements into Georgia to Georgian leadership. The military intelligence was inaccurate; it claimed for instance that Russian troops occupied the city of Gori, which was refuted by several independent sources. Overall, the Georgian intelligence services gave a weak impression, lacking exact details, and underestimating the strength and military capabilities of the Russian Armed Forces as well as the planning and force of Russia's response.<sup>70</sup>

### Some reflections on the conflict

It was striking how quickly Georgia managed to externally host a number of important websites. From the start of the conflict on 7 August, the Georgian Crisis Emerging Response Team (CERT-Georgia), which normally provides computer network support to Georgian higher education institutes, assumed the role of national CERT and coordinated the mitigation of cyber attacks. In addition, on 9 August, a Georgian expatriate, Nino Doijashvili, chief executive officer of Tulip Systems Inc., an Atlanta-based hosting company, offered help to host some important Georgian government websites. Estonia and Poland also provided assistance. That is how it came about that the Georgian presidential website and the websites of a popular TV station, Rustavi2.com, and the Ministry of Defence were rerouted via Tulip Systems. Servers from the Estonian government facilitated the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while the Polish President even made part of his own presidential website available to the Georgian government, thus enabling it to continue communications and provide information to the outside world.<sup>71</sup>

The Russo-Georgian armed conflict was predominantly a physical confrontation between the Russian Federation and Georgia, supported by cyber and information operations. During the conflict, in total 170 servicemen, 14 police officers and 288 civilians from Georgia lost their lives, and 1,747 Georgians were wounded, most of them civilians. Besides, sixty-seven Russian servicemen were killed and 283 wounded. Furthermore, among South-Ossetian fighters and civilians there were 365 fatalities.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Eneken Tikk, Kadri Kaska, and Liis Vihul, *International Cyber Incidents: Legal Considerations*, (Tallinn (EST): Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, 2010), 67-79.

<sup>72</sup> Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (IIFFMCG), *Report: Volume I*, (Brussels (BEL): Council of the European Union), 5.

## Different narratives

Georgia and the Russian Federation created their own narratives. Both nations were eager to position themselves as victims. Norwegian peace investigator, Johan Galtung, who did extensive research in conflict and post-conflict situations, explained that parties involved in a conflict often end up in a sensitive perpetrator-victim discussion in which it is much more convenient to take on the role of victim. The perpetrator often denies having started the conflict out of fear for being accused, which is often followed by international repercussions, while the victim tries to exploit the injustice done to him and the traumatic situation resulting from the conflict. Victims are considered to deserve sympathy, and often receive international support.<sup>73</sup>

The Georgian leadership justified their military intervention in South-Ossetia as a reaction to the increase of violence in South-Ossetia, referring to clashes that took place before the armed conflict started. Furthermore, it accused the Russian Federation of direct intervention in support of the South Ossetian paramilitary organizations. Georgian officials stated that the intelligence that almost 150 Russian military vehicles that passed through the Roki tunnel, through the mountain range between South-Ossetia and the Russian Federation, was the reason for the Georgian government to start military action. These actions were merely a reaction to Russia's starting of the conflict. During the combat, it was a Russian attack on Georgian troops in Tskhinvali that caused the massive destruction of the South-Ossetian capital and most of the civilian casualties.<sup>74</sup>

Russia's narrative is more straightforward. Georgian troops invaded South-Ossetia, while their artillery fired indiscriminately at the civilian population, many of whom held a Russian passport and citizenship. Georgian troops also fired without reason on Russian 'peacekeepers', who were stationed in and around Tskhinvali. The Russian leadership described the Georgian operation in South-Ossetia as 'genocide' and stated that thousands of civilians were killed by Georgian troops. The reason for Russia's intervention was to save civilians from military aggression, their argument being in line with NATO's motive for their 'humanitarian intervention' in Kosovo in 1999. Since that operation, NATO has always stated

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<sup>73</sup> Johan Galtung and Dietrich Fischer, *Johan Galtung: Pioneer of Peace Research*, Springer Briefs on Pioneers in Science and Practice 5, (Heidelberg (GER): Springer, 2013), 179-188.

<sup>74</sup> Cheterian, 'The August 2008 War in Georgia', 68-69.

that it is the responsibility of great powers to intervene in an internal conflict to prevent civilians from falling victim to massive violations of human rights.<sup>75</sup> This Russian legitimisation refers to the concept of responsibility to protect (R2P).

### 7.3 Different opinions

This section answers the second tertiary research question of this chapter: 'Is there a common perspective that explains the cause and the course of the 2008 Russo-Georgian armed conflict? During the research for this dissertation it was striking to find that many publications displayed a biased standpoint about who started the armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Georgia. Many publications did not provide a factual explanation of what had happened, who was responsible for starting the conflict, and who was to be regarded as the victim. Therefore, it can be stated that there is no unanimous perspective on the 2008 Russo-Georgian armed conflict. The Russo-Georgian armed conflict was not only a physical encounter between four different parties, the Russian Armed Forces, the Georgian Armed Forces and militants from South Ossetia as well as Abkhazia, but it was also a conflict of perceptions. It was important for the affected party to blame the other party for starting the conflict and to be considered a defenceless victim of the wrongs inflicted.

So, if there is no agreement on the origin of the conflict, how can the cause of the Russo-Georgian armed conflict be determined? There are four predominant schools of thought among researchers with differing opinions on the cause and course of the fight during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict. These schools came up with different assessments, especially explanations of the cause of the conflict, and also different interpretations of the course of the conflict. The first school believed that Georgian units just occupied the breakaway regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, while the Georgian leadership was blind to any reaction from the breakaway regions and neighbouring states. The second school regarded the Russian Federation as provoking Georgia in order to portray Georgia as the initiator of the conflict. The third school considered Georgia as occupier of South-Ossetia, provoking the Russian Federation to respond and, consequently, get the blame for starting the conflict. Finally, the fourth school took a neutral stance and contemplated the armed conflict from a pragmatic angle. These four approaches are explained in the next sub sections.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

## School 1: Georgia's miscalculation

The first school is based on the perspective that Georgian troops, separate from the present Georgian JCC-observers in the area, occupied the breakaway region of South Ossetia. Georgian leadership seriously miscalculated Russia's reaction or did not make any risk assessment when planning the military operation in South-Ossetia. Various reasons were put forward that caused this misjudgment. There are researchers, among them Ants Laaneots, Anton Lavrov and Vicken Cheterian, who felt that the Georgian political and military leadership closed itself off from relevant information and, therefore, suffered from tunnel vision.

Retired General Ants Laaneots, former Commander of the Estonian Armed Forces and veteran of the Soviet Red Army, assumed that the Georgian order to enter South Ossetia by force was merely a political one without considering military implications, such as reactions of South-Ossetian fighters and the Russian Armed Forces. He blamed the Georgian leadership for being narrow-minded, and in his view, Georgian leadership made a disastrous mistake by not considering all the relevant options before making the decision to intervene in South Ossetia. The most significant shortcoming in the Georgian plan, according to Laaneots, was the fact that 'Tbilisi completely ruled out the possibility of armed clashes with Russian forces.'<sup>76</sup>

Anton Lavrov, a Russian independent military analyst, agreed with Laaneots, and stated that the Georgian plan was too limited. Georgian leadership's ambition was to rapidly defeat the main body of South Ossetian troops. In order to do so, they would occupy the capital Tskhinvali, and block off the Transcaucasian Highway, connecting southern Russia through the Caucasion mountains and the Roki Tunnel with Georgia, to prevent the arrival of potential volunteers from the Russian Federation. The weakness of the Georgian plan was that it completely overlooked a possible response from the Russian Army, and this led to the Georgian armed forces being insufficiently prepared for a possible confrontation with Russian troops. Georgian authorities had hoped that by offering Moscow safety guarantees for Russian ceasefire observers in the region, they could prevent or at least procrastinate Russia's

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<sup>76</sup> Laaneots, *The Russian-Georgian War of 2008*, 85.

participation, but that was not the case. Consequently, the Georgian military command was forced to improvise.<sup>77</sup>

Vicken Cheterian, researcher of the Caucasus region, is convinced that Georgian leadership did not expect a rapid and overwhelming Russian response. In his view, the Georgian Ministry of Defence did not expect the Russian Federation to enter into a direct military confrontation but anticipated that the Russians would have South Ossetian fighters act by proxy. Cheterian considered that the biggest mistake the Georgian leadership made in the war with the Russian Federation was not to try and avoid it. They really underestimated the Russian reaction.<sup>78</sup>

Other researchers, like Blandy and Lanoszka, believed that the Georgian leadership suffered from entrapment. Entrapment entails that one party in an international cooperation will drag another into a quarrel in which the latter has no substantial stake. The risk of entanglement is getting involved in an unwanted or unnecessary war.<sup>79</sup> In other words, how alliances might make war likelier to happen. The outbreak of World War I offers an example of entrapment. Great powers like Britain, Germany, France and Russia were drawn into war by quarrels of their lesser allies, like Austria-Hungary, Serbia and Montenegro.<sup>80</sup> The opposite can also take place: superpowers and extensive regional security alliances may steer smaller and vulnerable nations into conflicts. Georgia was longing for NATO and EU membership, and strengthened its ties with the United States, which in turn was apprehensive about of the Russian Federation having too much influence in the region. Georgian leadership aimed for a safe environment in which South Ossetia and Abkhazia were kept under control, because those were the conditions for joining Western Alliances, such as NATO and the EU. The international ambitions of the Georgian leadership pulled their country, through the occupation of South-Ossetia, step-by-step into an armed conflict with the Russian Federation. Georgian leadership also assumed that Western nations, e.g. the United States, United Kingdom and Germany would block any attempt of the Russian Federation to use force in Georgia, or at least to stop a Russian military operation.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Lavrov, 'Timeline of Russian-Georgian Hostilities', 42-44.

<sup>78</sup> Cheterian, 'The August 2008 War in Georgia', 70-71

<sup>79</sup> Michael Mandelbaum, *The Fate of the Nations: The Search for National Security in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, (Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1988), 101.

<sup>80</sup> Michael Mandelbaum, *The Nuclear Revolution: International Politics Before and After Hiroshima*, (Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1981), 152.

<sup>81</sup> Chifu, 'A Typical Case of Strategic Surprise', 60.



Charles Blandy, a United Kingdom Defence Academy researcher for the Caucasus region, specified that no matter what Russian forces were doing, President Saakashvili was resolute in achieving his goals: first get the breakaway regions under control and, second, membership of EU and NATO. He instructed the Georgian forces to prepare for an intensive operation against South Ossetian fighters.<sup>82</sup> The Georgian leadership was blinded by its international ambitions. Alexander Lanoszka, researcher of the University of London, concluded that NATO had been reckless in its outreach towards Georgia by hinting that Georgia might become a member of NATO. In doing so, it had encouraged Georgia to behave more aggressively towards the Russian Federation, even risking an armed conflict. Hence, the danger of entrapment was lurking. Lanoszka claimed that the Russo-Georgian armed conflict demonstrated the necessity to unravel the factors that pushed states like Georgia to go to war while seeking alliances, which also underscores the need to study how alliances could fuel wars.<sup>83</sup>

In the perspective of school 1, it is clear that the Georgian leadership was determined to gain control over South-Ossetia, one of the breakaway regions, which was naïve, because it overlooked an obvious Russian response. Georgia was considered the initiator of the armed conflict, but that played only a minor role in this perspective. Who was the deceiver and who the victim did also not play a significant role for school 1. If anything, it can be said that the Georgian leadership had fallen victim to a classical form of self-deception. Self-deception arises when people favour welcome over unwelcome information in a manner that reflects their intentions. Self-deception consists of different processes like biased search strategies, biased interpretive processes and biased memory processes.<sup>84</sup> According to school 1, that is exactly what happened to Georgia, which was far too much focused on occupying South Ossetia and then closed itself off from further information.

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<sup>82</sup> Charles Blandy, *Provocation, Deception Entrapment: The Russo-Georgian Five Days War*, (Shrivenham (UK): Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, 2009), 8.

<sup>83</sup> Alexander Lanoszka, 'Tangled Up in Rose? Theories of Alliance Entrapment and the 2008 Russo-Georgian War', *Contemporary Security Policy*, 39 (2018) 2, 251-252.

<sup>84</sup> William von Hippel and Robert Trives, 'The Evolution and Psychology of Self-deception', *Behavioral and Brain Science*, 34 (2011) 1, 1-2.

## School 2: The Russian Federation provoked Georgia

This school is based on the perspective that Russian authorities provoked a Georgian reaction. Russian authorities violated the Sochi and Moscow agreements by moving more and more troops into South Ossetia and Abkhazia under the guise of their own ‘peacekeeping’ mission or humanitarian support. Moreover, the KAVKAZ 2008 exercise provided an exquisite opportunity for the Russian Federation to direct many troops to the border with South Ossetia. Georgia felt threatened and therefore decided to occupy South Ossetia as quickly as possible. Roy Allison, Ronald Asmus, Oksana Antonenko, Ariel Cohen and Robert Hamilton belong to this school, which is dealt with in more detail below.

Roy Allison, Professor of Russian and Eurasian Studies at the University of Oxford, extensively analysed the Russo-Georgian armed conflict. His conclusions supported this second approach. Allison clarified that the Russian Federation claimed to conduct peacekeeping operations in the region in accordance with the Sochi agreement, suggesting that Russian forces also had the authority to enforce peace if necessary, while in reality the accords had only allocated Russian troops a ceasefire observer status. The Russian Federation chose to present its troop build-up in South Ossetia and Abkhazia as part of a peace operation, but it turned out to be a coercive provocation of Georgia, Allison stated.<sup>85</sup>

Ronald Asmus, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State under President Bill Clinton, suggested that Russian authorities had a certain intention in mind with their troop build-up in the breakaway regions. Russian forces deployed far exceeded the number of troops needed to come to the support of endangered Russian observers and peacekeepers. It took months rather than weeks to enlarge the Russian contingent in the region. Everything, from the modernization of military infrastructure and railroads to increased deliveries of advanced weapon systems, indicated a major military operation planned well in advance. Indeed Georgia had to respond to this development, otherwise it would lose any form of control over the breakaway regions.<sup>86</sup> Oksana Antonenko, a Russian-born British researcher of political trends and crisis-management, deduced that international observers from the OSCE were alarmed by Russia’s military build-up in the South-Ossetian conflict region. These observers

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<sup>85</sup> Roy Allison, ‘Russia Resurgent? Moscow’s Campaign to “Coerce Georgia to Peace”’, *International Affairs*, 84 (2008) 6, 1145-1171.

<sup>86</sup> Asmus, *A Little War That Shook the World*, 165-166.

had no doubt that this force accumulation would lead to a Georgian response, which in turn would spark a Russo-Georgian armed conflict.<sup>87</sup>

Ariel Cohen, a political scientist focusing on international security, and Robert Hamilton, an associate professor of Eurasian Studies at the United States Army War College, stated that a journalist working for Radio Free Europe spotted 50 embedded reporters, who were flown in from the Russian Federation into Tskhinvali by the Russian government prior to the armed conflict. This cast doubt upon Russian intentions. Its narrative that Russian peacekeepers and citizens in South Ossetia were the unforeseen victims of Georgian aggression became unreliable, and it seemed likely that this narrative had already been fabricated in advance.<sup>88</sup>

In this school of thought, it is the Russian Federation that is the actual, be it invisible, initiator of the conflict, while ultimately Georgia responded to it. The outside world only observed Georgia's reaction and regarded that country as the evil genius and instigator of the conflict. It is clear that in this case the Russian Federation acted as the deceiver and Georgia was the victim of Russian deception.

### School 3: Georgia provoked the Russian Federation

This view is based on the perspective that the Georgian leadership elicited a response from the Russian Federation. Georgia gave the Russian Federation the impression, in the run-up to the conflict, that it wanted to make the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia an integral part of the Georgian state without interference from neighbouring states. The Georgian leadership made a military plan for occupying the aforementioned areas and started the armed conflict with an artillery bombardment on Tskhinval followed by the invasion of South-Ossetia. The Georgia Armed Forces used the exercise IMMEDIATE RESPONSE 2008, which was conducted together with several US military units in the run up to the armed conflict, as a kind of ruse to build up their own troops in the vicinity of the South Ossetian conflict region. Researchers as Mikhail Barabanov and Jeffrey Michaels are convinced that Georgia caused the conflict. They belong to this third school, and their views are expounded below.

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<sup>87</sup> Oksane Antonenko, 'A War with No Winners', *Survival*, 50 (2008) 5, 23-36.

<sup>88</sup> Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgia War*.

Mikhail Barabanov, Chief Editor of the *Moscow Defense Brief*, supported this approach. He expressed the view that Georgia used the exercise to concentrate their troops around the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.<sup>89</sup> Jeffrey Michaels, Senior Lecturer of Defence Studies at King's College London, even took his comments a step further. Michaels deemed that it was Georgia rather than the Russian Federation that escalated the violence. Michaels regarded Georgia as the real instigator of the armed conflict. As such, Georgian leadership deliberately planned the Georgian intervention into South Ossetia to coincide with the Olympic Games in Beijing. Michaels stated that Georgia's plan relied on a delayed Russian response, due to Prime Minister Putin's absence from Moscow to attend the Olympics, and the belief that President Medvedev would not take any action without Prime Minister Putin being consulted.<sup>90</sup>

Evidently, from the perspective of school 3, Georgia is not only the initiator of the armed conflict, but also the deceiver. The Russian Federation was misled, and the only possibility left was to react robustly and convincingly to the provocation of Georgia.

#### School 4: Neutral and practical

The fourth school did not take sides in who started the armed conflict, and who was the main culprit. It reflected on the armed conflict in a more pragmatic way. The researchers belonging to this school concluded that there was not one overriding reason for starting the conflict. There were several minor reasons on both sides, Georgian as well as Russian. The researchers, therefore, did not single out one guilty party. For example, Per Gahrton, a Swedish 'rapporteur' of the European Parliament for the South Caucasus from 1999-2004, looked in a balanced way at the start of the armed conflict. He followed the line of the EU, which had declared that it was impossible to assign overall responsibility for the eruption of the war to one side only. Either nation had reasons to start a conflict and did not de-escalate the tense situation prior to the armed conflict. Based on a factual analysis, the EU determined that the openly hostilities began with Georgia's shelling of Tskhinvali during the late hours of 7 August 2008. Gahrton acknowledged that the EU point of view embarrassed many

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<sup>89</sup> Barabanov, 'The August War Between Russia and Georgia'.

<sup>90</sup> Jeffrey Michaels, 'The August 2008 South Ossetia Conflict: Revising the Status Quo', Royal United Services Institute Website, (11 August 2008). <https://rusi.org/commentary/august-2008-south-ossetia-conflict-revising-status-quo>, (24 August 2019).

Caucasus experts and Western politicians who assessed the armed conflict from a different perspective. These experts and politicians put the blame on the Russian Federation and the Saakashvili administration was declared innocent.<sup>91</sup>

Another exponent of this school is Charles King, Professor of International Affairs at Georgetown University. He added that the Russo-Georgian armed conflict killed hundreds, and left thousands of refugees living in temporary shelters. It was remarkable that during the armed conflict Georgia progressively dominated public relations. Within hours after Russian troops crossed the border, an opportunistic Georgian government began sending e-mails, almost every hour, to foreign journalists. President Saakashvili appeared live on CNN. In every interview he gave and speech he delivered, he hit many major talking points meaningful to Western audiences, like claims of ethnic cleansing and war crimes committed by Russian troops. Meanwhile the Georgian government stage-managed demonstrations in Tbilisi waving EU flags and Georgian civilians screaming for EU support, which was also broadcast by Western media.<sup>92</sup>

This school is not pro-Russian nor is it pro-Georgian per se, but it considers the reconstruction of the Russo-Georgian armed conflict as a fact and looks at all practicalities without directly judging who caused the conflict and, therefore, who is to blame. This approach is not about designating a distinct initiator and a victim, neither about who is the deceiver nor who is the target.

## Common denominator

The view put forward in this chapter is based on a combination of viewpoints of the second, third and fourth school, which all contain valuable and plausible arguments and insights. The Russo-Georgian armed conflict cannot be viewed solely from the position of one of these schools of thought. All three approaches contain elements that are important to arrive at an impartial reconstruction of the armed conflict. It was Georgia that started the combat actions by shelling the South-Ossetian capital with its artillery, but many acts on both sides preceded the bombardment. Russian authorities slowly built up their manpower and heavy weapons in the breakaway areas in order to gain more influence in the region, despite the Sochi and

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<sup>91</sup> Per Gahrton, *Georgia: Pawn in the New Great Game*, (London (UK): Pluto Press, 2010), 188-189.

<sup>92</sup> King, 'Five-Day War', 8-9.

Moscow agreements. Russian authorities were indeed planning to seduce and mislead the Georgian leadership, hoping that Georgia and the outside world would not notice their steady troop build-up. Once there was a large Russian force in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, these troops would have a deterring effect. The fact that Georgia did not receive NATO membership in April 2008, and could therefore not rely on NATO protection, was a slap in the face of the Georgian leadership. It gave the Russian Federation a license to step up the pressure in the region.

### Georgian countermeasures

The Georgian leadership was not receptive to Russian deception attempts. It followed its own course and wanted to regain control of the breakaway areas of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. It made military plans, but did not anticipate a possible, rapid and large-scale response from the Russian Armed Forces. Valuable intelligence only slowly reached the very core of the Georgian leadership, probably causing some confusion and insufficient situational awareness, but it did not see any reason to adjust its intentions. The Russian Federation had better intelligence, and already after the KAVKAZ 2008 exercise had its troops at the border with South Ossetia, which could possibly respond quickly to a Georgian occupation of South Ossetia. After Georgian artillery bombing in South Ossetia and the invasion of that region, well-organized Russian troops quickly deployed in South Ossetia and later in Georgia.

A few days later, Russian authorities increased the pressure and they started a second operation in and around Abkhazia. Obviously, at the end of the first day Georgia proved physically unable to cope with this Russian force majeure. The Russian Federation also attempted to use cyber capabilities to mislead the Georgian population and to disrupt coherence in all its political and military actions, but this was only partly achieved. Georgia managed to recover remarkably from the cyber-attacks with foreign assistance. It was the Georgian government and, above all, the Georgian President, Saakashvili, who conducted an impressive public relations campaign via Western media outlets. Saakashvili acted opportunistically and had to improvise time and again in his contacts with the West. Nevertheless, he succeeded in portraying Georgia as a helpless victim of a brutal Russian incursion. It was not a matter of misleading, but of influencing the Western world. Saakashvili had an ad hoc constructed message, but he demonstrated convincingly that he had to guide Georgia into NATO and the EU in order to connect with the Western world. The

Russian Federation, on the other hand, suddenly started acts of violence against Georgia while it was modernizing and westernizing, according to Saakashvili's version of events. Many Western politicians, commentators and experts became increasingly convinced that Russia was the malevolent genius. At the end, after five days of conflict in Georgia and the breakaway regions, the French President, as the incumbent EU President, brokered a ceasefire agreement between Georgia and the Russian Federation.

These considerations about the conflict lead to the third tertiary research question: 'Were Russian authorities the only deceivers during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict?' Prior to and during the armed conflict, Russian authorities made various attempts to mislead Georgian political and military leadership as well as the Georgian people. In the run-up to the armed conflict, the continuous build-up of Russian troops in South Ossetia and Abkhazia was always vaguely classified under the Sochi and Moscow agreements. In both disputed regions, the Russians assumed the role of peacekeepers, who had to be facilitated and protected, while the Sochi and Moscow agreements did not mention this. Conversely, during the conflict Russian authorities often attempted to disrupt Georgian political and military leadership, with hardly any success. Georgian leadership, on the other hand, did not deliberately focus on misleading the Russian Federation and the rest of the world, but managed to influence many Western politicians and Western public opinion through an improvised PR campaign on many Western mainstream media.

Back to the analytical framework, which was introduced in section 5.4 'The amalgamation of deception factors'. This framework regards Russian authorities as the deceiver. It assumes that a deceiver, in this dissertation the Russian authorities, can mislead the target through a number of *maskirovka* methods, causing a deception effect, such as surprise or manipulated perception. It is also possible that there is no deception effect at all. The framework does not take into account a target that can take a number of countermeasures, as Georgia did during the 2008 conflict. This means that the model, as introduced in section 5.4 'Amalgamation of deception factors', is only unilaterally focused: only the deceiver is taken into consideration with the main question being: what a deceiver can do in order to deceive a target.

## 7.4 Russian efforts

While the previous sections have shown how the conflict developed and experts and researchers opined differently as to who started the conflict, it is time to answer the next tertiary research question of this chapter: ‘What were the Russian efforts during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict?’ As seen in the previous sections, Russian authorities tried to deceive Georgian leadership and the Georgian population but were not always successful. The Russian exertions are analysed by the framework, which was created in Chapter 5 ‘Analytical Framework’. Russian authorities are considered the deceiver, because the scope of this study is on Russia’s way of deception. The deceiver’s part of the framework consists of six principal elements: (1) Deception elements, (2) Silence and denial, (3) Active measures and *dezinformatsiya*, (4) Reflexive control, and (5) *Maskirovka*.

### Deception elements

The deception elements start with Russia’s intentions, and is followed by other elements from the aforementioned framework: (1) intention, (2) uncertainty, and (3) surprise and manipulated perception.

#### *(1) Intention*

The Russian Armed Forces deployed almost 40,000 soldiers to Georgia between 7 and 12 August. Nearly 20,000 were deployed in South Ossetia, while the other 20,000 were stationed in Abkhazia.<sup>93</sup> The preparations for deploying of such a force, with all its troop movements, logistical arrangements and preparing for combat readiness, is based on a deliberate Russian campaign plan with goals and intentions, courses of action and a time schedule. Such a campaign plan requires an elaborate planning process, which is not an activity that is fixed within a few hours. Furthermore, in the run-up to the conflict, Russian authorities managed to significantly expand the number of JCC observers in South Ossetia, and Russian peacekeeping troops in Abkhazia were reinforced with manpower and heavy weapons, which indicates that there was a Russian overall strategy for South-Ossetia.

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<sup>93</sup> Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World*, 165-167.



The Russo-Georgian armed conflict did not come as a surprise. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the Russian Federation already had JCC-observers in South-Ossetia and JCC-observers and peacekeepers in Abkhazia, as stated before in section 6.3 'Historical overview of the armed conflict'. It gave the Russian Federation influence in the region. After the Rose Revolution, Georgian President Saakashvili strengthened the relationship with the United States, and also hoped for NATO membership in the future.

Both Medvedev and Putin certainly did not want any expansion of NATO with states bordering on the Russian Federation. A unilateral occupation of the two controversial areas, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, by the Georgian army and security forces could ultimately lead to a more stable situation in Georgia, a precondition for Georgia's entry into NATO and the EU. Subsequently, Georgia would gain more influence in the region, which included other tense places for the Russian Federation, like North Ossetia and Chechnya, and a possible 'GO' for NATO membership would become more likely. Thus, in the summer of 2008 Russian authorities appeared to be content with the current situation and were not waiting for disruptions like the Georgian occupation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The starting point of Russia's plan was to be able to respond to possible offensive operations by Georgia.

## *(2) Uncertainty*

The environment and the history of Russo-Georgian relations were complex. The start of this relation was far from flawless. Georgia's secession from the Soviet Union, however, was a smooth action, while the authorities in Moscow had just averted a coup attempt themselves. Skirmishes in the 1990s and 2000s had taken place between Georgian military units and South Ossetian and Abkhazian troops and militias, the Ossetians and Abkhazians frequently supported by Russian troops. Russian authorities made the situation more complex by deploying military observers in South Ossetia and peacekeepers in Abkhazia in order to oversee ceasefire agreements, labelling the JCC-observers as official peacekeepers.

More ambiguity was created when Russian authorities granted persons from South Ossetia and Abkhazia Russian citizenship and issued them with Russian passports. It made the Georgian leadership unsure as to what to expect from the Ossetian population. What kind of loyalty could the Georgian leadership rely on? Did the Ossetian population feel attracted to the Russian Federation? Or was their loyalty with Georgia? Or did the Ossetians want neither

of them? And were they striving for independence for their breakaway regions? And what were Russia's intentions?

After its independence in 1991, dual citizenship in Georgia was a very sensitive matter. Most of the new political parties in Georgia turned against a second nationality, fearing a 'fifth column' from neighbouring countries with an interest in the young nation that might take undermining actions against the Georgian state, might arise.<sup>94</sup> With a change of the law in 1994, residents of the breakaway regions were automatically given the Georgian nationality. Only a few, mostly inhabitants from Abkhazia, made use of this regulation and often only for pragmatic reasons, such as trading opportunities or to make use of the Georgian health system.<sup>95</sup> With the arrival of President Saakashvili, the sentiment in Georgia with regards to dual citizenship changed. It began to be recognized that it was perhaps practical to grant Georgian nationality to the many Georgians who had left the country in the first years after independence, in addition to their new nationality. In 2004, a new law was passed in Georgia to ease the restrictions on dual citizenship. It was initially thought that only small numbers applied for dual citizenship, but that number was growing rapidly. That same year, 44 people were officially granted dual citizenship, and in the 2005-2008 period the number had risen to 15,120. In most cases it concerned the Russian nationality for ethnic Russians, in addition to their Georgian nationality. There were also many people who accepted a Russian passport without officially informing the Georgian authorities, which created a very confusing situation for the Georgian authorities.<sup>96</sup> The question of where the loyalty of these people lay was therefore implicitly involved: did these residents feel related to the Russian Federation rather than to Georgia? Although this was never openly admitted, this kind of situation increased the uncertainty of the Georgian authorities.

Russian authorities seemed to be well-informed about Georgian intentions to resume control of both apostate areas by way of an offensive. Niklas Nilsson, Research Fellow at Swedish Uppsala University focused on post-Communist transitions, claims that Russian authorities had already held the neighbouring countries completely under control for years, with intelligence networks, Russian non-governmental organisations and agents of influence, who

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<sup>94</sup> Alexi Gugushvili, *Country Report: Georgia*, RSCAS/EUDO-CIT-CR 2012/3, EUDO Citizenship Observatory, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies in collaboration with Edinburgh University Law School, (Florence (ITA): European University Institute, 2012), 3-4.

<sup>95</sup> Gugushvili, *Country Report: Georgia*, 5-8.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-13.

could undertake subversive activities. Russian authorities had also infiltrated Georgia's political elite and society.<sup>97</sup> In 2006, two years before the start of the armed conflict, Georgia apprehended four Russian intelligence officers and ten Georgian citizens on charges of espionage, after Georgia discovered a Russian intelligence network in Georgia. The apprehension is also known as 'the spy scandal' or the '2006 Georgia-Russian espionage controversy'.<sup>98</sup> It adds to the idea that Russian authorities were possibly secretly preparing an operation and were silently designing a campaign plan to block a potential offensive of Georgian forces in South Ossetia. In the meantime, Georgian authorities did not seem to have any information or knowledge about Russian intentions. Russian authorities seemed to be able to create a sphere of ambiguity in which the two parties did not trust each other.

This raises the question whether Georgia was 'spying blind' or 'made blind'. Spying blind, as explained in Amy Zegart's eponymous book, focusses on shortcomings and failures in the intelligence process in a particular country, in this case Georgia, which means that the country's leadership does not receive adequate information or no information at all, to make relevant decisions.<sup>99</sup> Made blind means that the opposing intelligence services, in this case the Russian security services, such as the FSB, SVR and GRU, were able to sufficiently cover the Russian activities in South-Ossetia and Abkhazia, and to conceal Russia's intentions. The Russian security services were doing so well that the secret services and security units of Georgia did not notice anything or were unable to recognize patterns in Russian activities. Both 'spying blind' and 'made blind' were the case prior to the armed conflict, but it was spying blind, Georgia's inadequate secret service, that was decisive, as is explained in more detail in section 6.5 Georgian receptiveness and response.

### *(3) Surprise and manipulated perception*

Although Russian troops responded to the Georgian artillery barrage and the advance of the Georgian troops in South Ossetia, the pace of the Russian response to the Georgian offensive evidently came as a surprise to the Georgian leadership. The Georgian advance into the

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<sup>97</sup> Niklas Nilsson, *Russian Hybrid Tactics in Georgia*, Silk Road Studies Program, (Stockholm (SWE): Institute for Security and Development Policy / Washington, DC (USA): American Foreign Policy Council, 2018), 20-21 and 37-41.

<sup>98</sup> Sergi Kapanadze, *Georgia's Vulnerability to Russian Pressure Points*, Policy Memo, (Berlin (GER): European Council on Foreign Relations, 2014), 5.

<sup>99</sup> May Zegart, *Spying Blind: The CIA, the FBI, and the Origins of 9/11*, (Princeton, NJ (USA): Princeton University Press, 2007), 15-60.

capital of South Ossetia had already stopped on 8 August, during the first day of the armed conflict. Georgian leadership anticipated that the Russian Federation would stay aloof during their invasion of South Ossetia and that Russian authorities would not be able to set off a counter offensive so rapidly. Georgian authorities did not foresee the Russian Armed Forces starting a second front off the coast and on Abkhazian territory, because there were no indications they were prepared for it.

Besides, as discussed in section 7.3 ‘Historical overview of the armed conflict’, Russian forces used the KAVKAZ 2008 exercise in the vicinity of the border with South Ossetia to serve as a cover for putting at least two battalions in place for a quick response. The exercise provided a scenario with a release of Russian self-proclaimed peacekeepers, and Russian citizens in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which became the real-live situation during the armed conflict. The exercise was also a ruse for the build-up of a Russian second echelon, actually the main force that would follow the two battalions within less than a day.

## Silence and denial

Russian authorities did not use the deception tactic of silence, nor the method of denial. Nevertheless, in their first statements Russian authorities were not very clear about the large Russian troop build-up just prior to the armed conflict. On 7 August, just before midnight, Georgian artillery started the armed conflict with the shelling of South Ossetian positions. That night and during the early morning of 8 August, the bombardment was followed by an advance of Georgian troops into South Ossetia. It was the trigger for Russian forces to start their own movement into the area. Although it is not shown in any publication, Russian forces had been put on a short notice to move. That afternoon, at 3 PM Moscow Time, after a meeting with the Russian Security Council, the President of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, came with an official statement. He accused Georgian troops of committing ‘what amounts to an act of aggression against Russian peacekeepers and civilian population in South Ossetia.’<sup>100</sup> Medvedev considered the Georgian actions as ‘a gross violation of international law and of the mandates that the international community had given to the

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<sup>100</sup> President of the Russian Federation, ‘Statement on the Situation in South Ossetia’, Kremlin Website (8 August 2008). [http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/08/08/1553\\_type82912type82913\\_205032.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/08/08/1553_type82912type82913_205032.shtml), (23 August 2019).

Russian Federation as a partner in the peace process.’<sup>101</sup> He made clear that he was shocked by the fact that innocent civilians, the majority of them Russian citizens, died that first day of the armed conflict in South Ossetia. He also condemned Georgian ‘peacekeepers’ that opened fire on Russian ‘fellow-peacekeepers’, although they were supposed to work together to observe the ceasefire agreement and maintain peace in the region. Medvedev saw it as his obligation to protect the lives and dignity of the Russians and it forced him to take the necessary steps, concluding his statement with: ‘the perpetrators will receive the punishment they deserve.’<sup>102</sup>

Another argument to underline that Russian authorities did not keep silent came on the very first day of the armed conflict, when the Russian President made clear that the Russian Federation had an interest in the conflict and would not remain a bystander. In a firm statement, he made it plain that the Russian Federation was determined to take action. This also showed that Russian authorities were not in a state of denial either, but the reason why they gave for their response is debatable and can be considered as misleading. A response of such proportion is not a spontaneous action, but an operation resulting from well-considered planning. Besides, Russian authorities claimed that their operation and ensuing security measures in Georgia had been *sui generis* and essentially reactive in nature, an ad-hoc though large-scale response to a Georgian advance in South Ossetia. Critics of Russia’s response asserted that Russia’s apparent obligation to protect ‘Russian citizens’ had primarily served as a convenient argument to accelerate a military intervention in Georgia for other strategic purposes.<sup>103</sup>

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Allison argued that Russian authorities grossly exaggerated the reason for their response, for which he gave four arguments. First, there had been a need to protect the Russian JCC-observers’ contingent under attack in Tskhinvali, a few dozen of whom lost their lives, and adequately deter further Georgian attacks on these Russian soldiers. It provided grounds for a Russian reaction, but not on the scale of the entire Russian response, which was disproportional. Second, the scale of Russia’s response and the use of enforcement tactics, which included high-intensity combat and deep strikes in Georgia, to safeguard Russian observers was exaggerated. It is worth noting that the Sochi Agreement

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<sup>101</sup> The President of the Russian Federation, ‘Statement on the Situation’.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Allison, ‘Russia Resurgent?’, 1145-1171.

of 1992 limited Russia's JCC-observers' role in South Ossetia to monitoring the ceasefire of 1992, with no provision for peace enforcement. Later, in a letter to the United Nations Security Council, Russian authorities justified their response as self-defence under article 51 of the UN Charter. Third, Russian authorities were condemning Georgian 'aggression' in general in South Ossetia, appealing to nationalist sentiment within the Russian Federation, but this condemnation offers no legal basis for Russia's offensive or other forms of combat against Georgia. International norms prohibited the use of force to stop aggression as conducted by one state against another. Moreover, South Ossetia was not a recognised state, not even by the Russian Federation at the time. Fourth, Russian authorities wanted to portray the Georgian invasion of South Ossetia as a campaign that lost sight of ethical standards. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin used the phrase 'a kind of genocide against Ossetian people' during a visit to the North Caucasus on 10 August 2008. A day later, President Medvedev stated in a meeting with leaders of factions in the Russian parliament, the State Duma, that their mission was intended primarily to prevent an unfolding humanitarian disaster and, secondly, to protect Russian citizens in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.<sup>104</sup>

In his final argument, Allison clarified that after two days of conflict Russia's reason for its response grew over time, and became more comprehensive, even though the Georgian forces' advance in South Ossetia and clashes with Abkhazian troops stopped after one day and Georgian troops retreated. Ultimately, it can be argued that the Russians gave their own twist to the reason why they 'spontaneously' launched a large-scale response to stop the Georgian forces, and to advance deep into Georgia. As such, they created a different perception of Russia's intervention.

### Active measures and *dezinformatsiya*

The Russo-Georgian armed conflict was first and foremost an information war, in which terms like 'victory' and 'defeat' were not only important, but also *leitmotifs* as to who was the aggressor and thus deserved the blame, and who was the victim and therefore entitled to some sympathy. It was the first armed conflict in which not only the traditional media, such as radio, television, newspapers and magazines, played a role, but also the new media, the Internet with e-mails, the blogosphere and websites. In 2008, social media, with platforms like *LinkedIn* (2003), *Facebook* (2004), *Twitter* (2006), and *Vkontakte* (2006), were very

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

much on the rise, but did not play a decisive role during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict yet. For example, during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in August 2008, *Twitter* had 2.8 million unique users worldwide, the vast majority of whom in the United States, Western Europe and Australia, and 300,000 daily tweets. In 2009 it had grown to 2.5 million tweets per day.<sup>105</sup> Bloggers were already very active during the armed conflict.<sup>106</sup> However, at the time, Georgia had only a few options for Internet connectivity through land routes, namely Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, but most routes went through the Russian Federation. That made Georgia, in terms of Internet, very dependent on the Russian Federation.<sup>107</sup>

Timothy Thomas was not surprised that the Russian Federation extensively used the information sphere during the armed conflict. He discovered a tendency towards the use of the information sphere among Russian politicians, government officials, military officers and civil servants in the period prior to the conflict. Many Russian academics and military experts published articles about the impact of the information age on Russian domestic, foreign and military affairs. Especially the politicians and diplomats were interested in strategies and policies designed to shape the information sphere to Russia's liking. Dmitry Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation at the time of the conflict, was allegedly an active Internet user, who understood the importance of the Internet and the use of it as a vital information weapon. Russian military was also interested in two particular areas of information warfare: (1) the information-technical aspects, and (2) information-psychological aspects.<sup>108</sup> Incidentally, not only did Russian authorities focus on the information sphere, there was also a great deal of interest in information operations in the Western world. It was simply the *Zeitgeist*.

The rest of subsections deal with the following aspects: (1) cyber operations, (2) mainstream media, (3) themes, (4) information manipulation, and (5) conspiracy narratives.

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<sup>105</sup> Kevin Weil, 'Measuring Tweets', (22 February 2010).

[https://blog.twitter.com/official/en\\_us/a/2010/measuring-tweets.html](https://blog.twitter.com/official/en_us/a/2010/measuring-tweets.html), (24 August 2019).

<sup>106</sup> Timothy Thomas, 'The Bear Went Through the Mountain: Russia Appraises its Five-Day War in South Ossetia', *The Journal of Slavic Studies*, 22 (2009) 1, 31-67.

<sup>107</sup> Tikk, Kaska, and Vihul, *International Cyber Incidents*, 68.

<sup>108</sup> Timothy Thomas, 'Russian Information Warfare Theory: The Consequences of August 2008', in: Stephen Bland and Richard Weitz (Ed), *The Russian Military Today and Tomorrow: Essays in Memory of Mary Fitzgerald*, (Carlisle, PA (USA): United States Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2010), 265-267.

### *(1) Cyber operations*

Upon the outbreak of the armed conflict, Russian cyber groups launched a cyber-hacking campaign on a total of 38 Georgian and Western websites, including Georgian ministries, the National Bank, Parliament, the Supreme Court and United States and United Kingdom embassies in Georgia. They started with intervals of 30 minutes, beginning at 5:15 a.m. in the early morning of 8 August, and finishing at about 12:45 p.m. on 11 August 2008, making it highly likely that these cyber-attacks were centrally coordinated.<sup>109</sup> Subsequently, as stated before, the website of the Georgian President, as well as the website of some Georgian ministries and a TV-station, were quickly hosted by foreign servers.

Cohen and Hamilton argued that it is unlikely that the attacks were conducted directly by the Russian government. Although Russian authorities already had a reputation for some sophisticated cyber-attacks on Georgian governmental networks and computers earlier in 2008, Cohen and Hamilton assumed that the cyber-attacks originated from a shadowy group, called Russian Business Network (RBN). The fact that RBN is not a registered company, and the fact that its Internet domains are registered at anonymous addresses makes it difficult to conduct forensic research and attribute attacks or other forms of cybercrime to them. RBN is not only infamous for many forms of cybercrime, such as identity theft, phishing, spam and malware distribution, but it is best known for their 'Distributed Denial of Service' (DDoS) attacks, aimed at Georgian websites during the armed conflict<sup>110</sup>. Cohen and Hamilton concluded that the most likely scenario in both cases is that RBN conducted the attacks on behalf of the Russian authorities.<sup>111</sup>

The Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCD COE) in Tallinn believed that the role of the RBN in the entire cyber operation was not as extensive as Cohen and Hamilton suggested. The CCD COE stated that the involvement of RBN did not amount to more than providing hosting services to the botnets involved in the operation. It deemed it unlikely that

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<sup>109</sup> Roland Heickerö, *Emerging Cyber Threats and Russian Views on Information Warfare and Information Operations*, User report, (Stockholm (SWE): *Totalförsvarets Forskningsinstitut* (Swedish Defence Research Agency), 2010), 43-46.

<sup>110</sup> In a clash between the Russian Federation and Estonia in 2007 over the removal of a former Soviet war memorial from a prominent place in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, the Estonian government was subjected to a series of similar DDoS attacks also believed to be conducted by RBN. See: Tikk, Kaska, and Vihul, *International Cyber Incidents*, 14-32.

<sup>111</sup> Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgia War*, 44-45.



RBN itself carried out the DDoS attacks. The researchers of the CCD COE did not have any doubt that the larger Russian hacker community were involved in the cyberattacks. The coordination and support of the attacks took place mainly in the Russian language and was conducted through Russian and Russian-friendly forums. The Russian government denied any involvement in the cyber assaults, the results of which were not far-reaching. Since Georgian society, government organisations as well as private companies, had a relatively a low ICT dependence, the cyberattacks only caused limited damage to their servers and infrastructure. It was difficult for the CCD COE to determine what the financial damage was, because business information falls under certain protective restrictions so that there is no legal obligation for the private sector to provide data.<sup>112</sup>

Jart Ammin, a cybercrime researcher who runs a website tracking the activities of RBN, explained that RBN visits to Georgian sites had been rerouted through servers in Russia and Turkey, where the traffic was blocked. However, administrators in Germany had intervened during the weekend of 9 and 10 August 2008. They temporarily made the Georgian sites available again by rerouting their data through German servers run by Deutsche Telekom, but within hours control over the Georgian sites had been regained back, this time by Moscow-based servers.<sup>113</sup> By 11 August, the website of Georgian President, Mikheil Saakashvili had been hacked and defaced, and images comparing President Saakashvili to Adolf Hitler were posted in order to influence the Georgian population. A few weeks before the outbreak of the armed conflict, the website of the Georgian President had come under DDoS-attacks many times.<sup>114</sup> However, it was not only RBN that targeted Georgia. On the first day of the armed conflict, Russian hacktivist websites, like stopgeorgia.ru, shared lists of Georgian sites to attack, together with instructions, downloadable malware, and after-action assessments. This meant that anyone, anywhere in the world, pro-Russia or anti-Georgia, could contribute to the attack.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Tikk, Kaska, and Vihul, *International Cyber Incidents*, 74-79.

<sup>113</sup> Jon Saine, 'Georgia: Russia Conducting Cyber War', *The Telegraph*, (11 August 2008).

<sup>114</sup> Dancho Danchev, 'Coordinated Russia vs Georgia Cyber Attack in Progress', ZeroDay Network, (11 August 2008). <https://www.zdnet.com/article/coordinated-russia-vs-georgia-cyber-attack-in-progress/>, (23 August 2019).

<sup>115</sup> Michael Connell and Sarah Vogler, *Russia's Approach to Cyber Warfare*, (Washington, DC (USA): CNA Analysis & Solutions, 2017), 17.



Figure 7.3 Examples of the defacement of the Georgian President's Website<sup>116</sup>

## (2) Mainstream media

During the Russo-Georgian armed conflict, Russian authorities seemed to be significantly more astute in dealing with the broadcast and paper media than they had been in previous conflicts, especially the ones in Chechnya. Russian military spokesmen had studied the briefings from United States Central Command about their operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and tried to copy these recitals. Russian authorities showed an exaggerated willingness to work together with Russian, mostly state-owned, media. They arranged some 50 reporters to be temporarily stationed in Tskhinvali days before the outbreak of the armed conflict, as indicated in section 7.3 'Different opinions'. It was regarded as yet another indication that Russia's response was well-prepared.<sup>117</sup> Russian forces also adopted their version of the news media embedded programme the way the United States Armed Forces had done during their advance to Baghdad, as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom, during the Spring of 2003.<sup>118</sup> Russian journalists were embedded with Russian troops to report on the advance of Russian

<sup>116</sup> Retrieved from ZeroDay network. [https://www.zdnet.com/i/story/60/80/001670/georgia\\_ddos3.JPG](https://www.zdnet.com/i/story/60/80/001670/georgia_ddos3.JPG), (23 August 2019).

<sup>117</sup> Margarita Akhvlediani, 'The Fatal Flaw: the Media and Russian Invasion of Georgia', in: Paul Rich (Ed), *Crisis in the Caucasus: Russia, Georgia and the West*, (Abingdon, (UK): Routledge, 2010), 163.

<sup>118</sup> Han Bouwmeester, 'Showtime: Embedded News Media during Operation Iraqi Freedom, *Militaire Spectator* (Military Spectator), 175 (2006) 6, 282-297.

units, to convey how Russian troops protected Russian citizens in South-Ossetia and to expose ‘Georgian atrocities’.<sup>119</sup>

### (3) Themes

Russian authorities used three different themes for their information warfare. First and foremost, Georgian President Saakashvili, in particular, and the Georgian authorities, more in general, were portrayed as the aggressors. For instance, Figure 7.3 shows how the Georgian President Saakashvili is compared with Adolf Hitler. Second, Russian authorities had been left with no other option than to intervene in order to safeguard the protection of their citizens and their human rights and, therefore, deserved the unconditional support of the international community. Third, the United States and NATO had no basis for criticizing Russian activities because of NATO’s earlier actions in Kosovo and elsewhere. Russian authorities, using their state-owned media, also stated that Georgia had acted first and hence provoked the conflict.<sup>120</sup> Russian television also portrayed Georgia as a watered-down version of a Western power by showing American equipment used in its recent exercise IMMEDIATE RESPON 2008. It suggested that American forces had assisted their Georgian counterparts in planning and executing their intervention in South Ossetia. Russian authorities had also been in touch with Western journalists, and they were continuously complaining that Georgian officials, especially the President, were given much more airtime on Western mainstream media.<sup>121</sup>

During the five days of armed conflict, Russian television constantly depicted Georgian authorities and soldiers as sadists guilty of war crimes, supported by the United States and NATO using Georgia to foster their urge for expansion. The Georgian President was depicted as a latter-day Hitler, while the Russians appeared as peace-seeking humanitarians whose intervention rescued the Abkhazians and Ossetians from possible genocide.<sup>122</sup> On the face of it, this is a far-reaching form of persuasion and propaganda, as explained in section 2.4 ‘*Dezinformatsiya*’, creating an ‘Us vs. Them’ situation.

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<sup>119</sup> George Donovan, *Russian Operational Art in the Russo-Georgian War of 2008*, Strategy Research Project, (Carlisle, PA (USA): United States Army War College, 2009), 21.

<sup>120</sup> Paul Goble, ‘Defining Victory and Defeat: The Information War Between Russia and Georgia’, in: Svante Cornell and S. Frederick Starr (Ed), *The Guns of August 2008: Russia’s War in Georgia*, (Armonk NY (USA): M.E. Sharpe, 2009), 183-184.

<sup>121</sup> Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgia War*, 47-48.

<sup>122</sup> Gregory Carleton, *Russia: The Story of War*, (Cambridge, MA (USA): The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017), 228-229.

Conflicts always cause reactions at different levels in a society, levels such as the government and other governmental bodies, the media, the population, the armed forces, or the security services. During the Russo-Georgian armed conflict, the Russian media assault on Georgia during the armed conflict had indeed unintended consequences, also for Russian authorities. Russian media, radio and television, broadcast such distorted reports of the war that those Russians that wanted to know what was really happening were forced to resort to the Internet or to turn to Western broadcasters such as Radio Liberty. A media critic in Saint Petersburg explained: ‘facts, especially in our days, do not exist on the [Russian] television screen in a pure form, separated from interpretation and commentary.’ This same critic was also disappointed in how unoriginal Russian television presented its themes. The way the military actions in South Ossetia were projected was an adapted re-do of the reporting of the second Chechen campaign.<sup>123</sup>

#### *(4) Information manipulation*

Manipulated information used during the coverage of the Russo-Georgian armed conflict was quickly challenged and dispensed with. The disinformation, embedded in, or mixed with, facts was often considered plausible or hard for others to check. Especially when this type of disinformation was disseminated by more or less reliable media, such as Russian newspapers, certain sites of Russian think tanks or official government websites, it was quickly picked up, especially on the Internet, by other sources that used it in good faith, which in turn added credibility to the disinformation. On the other hand, the Russian authorities were confronted with a problem they clearly had not anticipated. Some of the messages sent to one group of people were also received by other unintended groups. The latter acted on them in ways not foreseen by the Russian authorities. An example was the message in which the Russian authorities continuously expressed their support for the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. It was Goble’s opinion that this message might have had a spill-over effect in the Russian Federation itself, but this was not the case.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Goble, ‘Defining Victory and Defeat’, 187. And: Kent Lee (Ed), *Countdown to War in Georgia: Russia’s Foreign Policy and Media Coverage of the Conflict in South Ossetia and Abkhazia*, (Minneapolis, MN (USA): East View Press, a Division of East View Information Service, 2008), 393-409.

<sup>124</sup> Goble, ‘Defining Victory and Defeat’, 189-190.

### (5) *Conspiracy narratives*

There was another prominent phenomenon during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict: the so-called conspiratorial *mythopoeia*, also known as conspiracy narratives.<sup>125</sup> Conspiracy theories are not mentioned in the framework in Chapter 5 ‘An Analytical Framework’ to generate uncertainty that can cause any form of deception. The Russian Federation has had a history of conspiracy narratives in relation to conflicts. Particularly, the Chechens have been exposed to these conspiracy narratives, resulting in new conflicts.<sup>126</sup> The Russo-Georgian armed conflict, being a mixture of fear and anxiety, fuelled all kind of rumours and conspiracy narratives. The main narratives were: ‘Georgia planned a *reconquista*’, it was the Georgian leadership that started the armed conflict, it wanted to reconquer the two ‘breakaway regions’, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Another conspiracy narrative is that the United States gave the green light to attack South Ossetia, and also to attempt to reoccupy Abkhazia. The role of the United States is really a subject of substantial conspiracy debate. Some believed that the 2,000 Georgian troops trained for counter-insurgency operations in Iraq were part of an American plan to get influence in the region.<sup>127</sup> Russian authorities also created a narrative that the Georgian authorities together with trivial groups were planning to start a series of terrorist attacks against major Russian cities. This was a clear effort to mobilize Russian anger against Georgia, but one that took a different turn: many Russians were wondering whether the Kremlin was doing the right thing and setting the right priorities.<sup>128</sup>

Russian authorities also disseminated the conspiracy narrative that Israel was involved in the armed conflict, supporting Georgia. The notorious racist group *Dvizheniye Protiv Nelegal'noye Immigratsiy*, translated as the ‘Movement Against Illegal Immigration’, picked-up the narrative and promoted their xenophobic agenda. In some cases, Jews in Russian cities were attacked, which was probably not foreseen by Russian authorities.<sup>129</sup> The conspiracy narratives spread during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict were embedded in the structure of domestic and international politics and could take the shape of different interdepending

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<sup>125</sup> Richard Sakwa, ‘Conspiracy Narratives as a Mode of Engagement in International Politics: The Case of the 2008 Russo-Georgian War’, *The Russian Review*, 71 (2012), 581.

<sup>126</sup> Moshe Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear: Three Centuries of Chechen Defiance of Russian Rule*, (London (UK): C. Hurst & Co Ltd, 2006), 200-218.

<sup>127</sup> Sakwa, ‘Conspiracy Narratives’, 597-601.

<sup>128</sup> Dmitry Vladimirov, ‘Patrioty Gruzi gotovyat terakty v Moskve?’ (‘Georgian Patriots preparing terrorist acts in Moscow?’), *Izvestiya*, (15 October 2015). <http://www.izvestia.ru/investigation/article3121602>, (24 August 2019).

<sup>129</sup> Goble, ‘Defining Victory and Defeat’, 190.

forms. In the case of the conflict, a broad spectrum of Russian opinion, regardless of political preferences, assumed that the United States was trying to change the geopolitical situation in the Caucasus. Likewise, the Israel narrative sparked physical anti-Semitic reactions among Russians. Although often neglected, conspiracy narratives are an important mode of influence in domestic and international politics.<sup>130</sup>

## Reflexive control

The opinions as to whether reflexive control was frequently applied during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and how decisive it was, differ greatly, and are partly dependent on how the researcher views the conflict. Pro-Georgian researchers Oscar Jonsson and Robert Seely intimated that Russian authorities consciously applied successful reflexive control that was crucial for the armed conflict. In their article the two researchers ascertained that Russian authorities strongly influenced Georgian decision-makers. Most significantly, Russian authorities provoked Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili into ordering the initial artillery barrage on 7 August 2008. Saakashvili had to make that decision to keep the ‘breakaway regions’ within Georgia. Georgian authorities were greatly challenged by Russian pressure: gradually more Russian passports had been issued in both disputed regions, a Russian exercise was held at the border with South Ossetia, and the Russian Federation gave support to local militias in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The IIFMCG later concluded that the initial Russian reaction was justified, but the invasion that followed was not. In their report the IIFMCG noted that the international community should have been more aware of the ‘impact of great power’s coercive politics and diplomacy against a small and insubordinate neighbour.’<sup>131</sup>

Selhorst argued that Russian reflexive control had been successful during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict. Russian authorities used a three-phase influence campaign for different audiences and with several aims. First, they targeted Russian citizens and pro-Russian inhabitants of Abkhazia and South Ossetia with *dezinformatsiya*, appealing to their patriotism, justifying a possible intervention and convincing them to join ad-hoc partisan forces. Meanwhile Russian media portrayed Georgia as a close ally of Nazi Germany during World

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<sup>130</sup> Sakwa, ‘Conspiracy Narratives’, 609.

<sup>131</sup> Oscar Jonsson and Robert Seely, ‘Russian Full-Spectrum Conflict: An Appraisal After Ukraine’, *The Journal for Slavic Military Studies*, (20 June 2015), 7.

War II in order to demonize the Georgian leadership and its citizens in the eyes of the Russians. Second, Russian main-stream media targeted the international community, depicting the situation of Georgia as a Kosovo-scenario, justifying an intervention based on the discrimination of and atrocities against ethnic Russians by Georgians. Third, Russian media targeted the Georgian population to discredit its government and set the condition for a political upheaval. During the conflict RBN tried to isolate the Georgian government and leadership by using DDoS attacks.<sup>132</sup>

Selhorst regarded the Russian information warfare campaign as a distinct illustration of reflexive control in order to influence public opinion prior and during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict. He concluded that Russian authorities used proven media techniques, such as: (1) giving one-sided information, (2) imposing an information blockade, (3) spreading disinformation, (4) keeping silent about over events inconvenient to the Russian Federation, (5) ‘cherry picking’ of eye-witnesses and Georgians that criticized their government, (6) denying collateral damage caused by the Russian Federation, and (7) using the Russian version of town names in the regions suggesting that Abkhazia and South Ossetia belonged to the Russian Federation. In Selhorst’s point of view, these media techniques supported the reflexive control mechanisms of overload, pressure and suggestion. The RBN cyber activities established an information blockade in Georgian networks trying to isolate Georgian leadership. Russia’s information campaign attempted to incite Georgian decision-makers to take action in their ‘break away’ regions, and... it worked.<sup>133</sup>

The question remains whether Georgian leadership was really affected by Russian actions and Russia’s information campaign prior to and during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict. The answer to this question would give a more detailed insight into whether Russian authorities used reflexive control successfully. However, as this dissertation is based on literature research, it was not possible to exactly deduce from the available sources whether Georgian leadership had actually been influenced by Russian action. It is likely that the Georgian authorities would have taken action in Abkhazia and South Ossetia even without all the pressure from the Russians. After the Rose Revolution, Georgia came into a positive flow. Economic and political reforms were announced and would be implemented. A possible membership of NATO beckoned, but then Georgia had to be a stable country without

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<sup>132</sup> Selhorst, ‘Russian Perception Management’, 155-156.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 156-157.

'breakaway regions'. Furthermore, Russian pressure and actions during the conflict were strong and sometimes even personal, such as making a comparison between Saakashvili and Hitler. It did not cause Georgian leadership to change its decision-making. It probably expected a different Russian reaction, and after a full day of war it was clear that the Georgian army had not been able to withstand the Russian Army. Saakashvili appeared to have been blinded by the fact that he wanted his country to become a member of NATO and the EU. Some researchers even suggest that he fell victim to entrapment, as discussed in the previous section on the subject of 'School 1', but that is a ponderous statement. It is understandable that Saakashvili thought that the occupation of South-Ossetia by Georgian troops would be 'a piece of cake', which turned out differently. Later during the conflict, Saakashvili frequently sought support for the Georgian cause through press conferences, official statements and contacts with foreign heads of state.

### *Maskirovka*

Russian authorities conducted *maskirovka* methods in order to deceive the Georgian government and population but were not always successful in their effort. At the strategic level, Medvedev, Putin, Lavrov and other Russian politicians made strong public statements, accusing Georgia of being the aggressor and indicating that it had committed genocide in South Ossetia. Thomas considered this the first step in Russia's strategic approach: Russian politicians and diplomats shape the international information sphere with the purpose to influence their opponents and public opinion. 'Russian politicians', Thomas stated, 'are mentally armed with the experience of losing an ideology at the end of the Cold War. This is why they understand the important role of information in influencing opponents and the minds of citizens.'<sup>134</sup> Carolina Vendil Pallin, researcher at the *Totalförsvarets forskningsinstitut (FOI)*, the Swedish Defence Research Agency, and Frederik Westerlund, deputy research director of FOI, stated that as far as can be ascertained, the declarations of Russian politicians 'were merely part of Russian *maskirovka*, a strategic deception with the intention to act as 'a smoke screen' and to mislead the opponent and international opinion.<sup>135</sup>

On the other hand, Russian media came up with many unreliable scoops strongly accusing Georgia, which even continued after the five days of conflict. An example was the statement of Igor Komissarov, Deputy Chairman of the Investigative Committee of the General

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<sup>134</sup> Thomas, 'Russian Information Warfare Theory', 267-268.

<sup>135</sup> Vendil Pallin and Westerlund, 'Russia's War in Georgia', 404.



Prosecutor's Office, made on 14 August. The statement was reported by *PIIA Новостям*, or *RIA Novosti*, a Moscow-based Russian press agency. Komissarov reflected on the conflict: 'a genocide probe based on reports of actions committed by Georgian troops aimed at murdering Russian citizens – ethnic Ossetians – living in South Ossetia.'<sup>136</sup> Western politicians and the population did not take such a message very seriously. Moreover, lots of Russian citizens no longer trusted their own broadcast media, being too much over the top, and switched to the Internet or western media to fill in their information void. More importantly, Georgian decision-makers, being the primary target, were not deceived by Russia's *maskirovka* attempts. Russian actions and information incentives had no hold over them. Georgian leadership stuck to its own plan to deploy their troops in South Ossetia to restore order.

## 7.5 Georgian receptiveness and responses

This section provides an answer to both the fifth and sixth tertiary research questions: 'How was the Georgian receptiveness?' and 'what were the Georgian responses to the Russian efforts?' In order to explain Georgian leadership receptiveness and the way they responded to the Russian efforts use will be made of the framework from Chapter 5. In the present section Georgian decision-makers and political leadership are considered the target of Russian efforts. Prior to and during the armed conflict, Russian authorities tried several times to create confusion or to mask their own activities, although the Georgian leadership was not very receptive to it. In line with the mentioned framework, this section consists of six subsections: (1) Deception elements, (2) Silence and denial, (3) *Maskirovka*: active measures, *dezinformatsiya*, and reflexive control, and (4) The role of Georgian intelligence services.

### Deception elements

This subsection is sub-divided into three different parts: (1) intentions, (2) uncertainty, and (3) surprise and manipulated perceptions. It discusses the intentions of the Georgian leadership, followed by the way Georgian leadership perceived uncertainty about Abkhazia and South Ossetia in their relationship with the Russian Federation, and whether Georgian leadership was surprised and had a fabricated perception of the situation during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict.

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<sup>136</sup> The Statement of Igor Komissarov, reported by RIA Novosti on 14 August 2008, cited in: IIFFMCG, *Report: Volume II*, 422.

## (1) Intentions

The previous section, 7.4 'Russian efforts', already discussed that the Russian Federation and Georgia had a tense relationship from the very beginning. Since the start of the ceasefire agreements for South Ossetia in 1992 and Abkhazia in 1993, Georgia was confronted with Russian JCC-observers and peacekeepers on their territory. Moreover, the Russian Federation began to hand out more and more Russian passports to the local population of both renegade areas. From a Georgian perspective, certainly after the Rose Revolution, this was an eyesore. The new Georgian leadership aimed for a modern and stable state without interference from neighbouring countries. Besides, it had set its sights on a possible membership of NATO and on joining the EU, but to achieve that the country had to be stable and independent without interference from other nations. It turned out to be wishful thinking for Georgia.

Nikolay Silaev, research associate at the Centre for Caucasian Studies and Regional Security of the Russian MGIMO-University<sup>137</sup>, described that the relationship between Georgia and the Russian Federation changed after the arrival of Mikheil Saakashvili as Georgian President. His attempt to 'unfreeze' the tense relationship, in particular by sending military and police forces to South Ossetia in the summer of 2004 created a new set of problems. The Russian Federation associated this deployment of troops with new existential threats in the Caucasus.<sup>138</sup> Instead of having a stabilizing effect on the region, the deployment caused more tension in the relationship with the Russian Federation.

In Autumn 2007, Georgia dealt with internal political problems. Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili met strong opposition in the political arena after the death of politician Zurab Zhvania, who passed away under suspicious circumstances,<sup>139</sup> and allegations from former

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<sup>137</sup> MGIMO stands for *Moskovskiy Gosudarstvennyy Institut Mezhdunarodnykh Otnosheniy Universitet*, the Moscow State Institute of International Relations. The MGIMO-university is considered as the most prestigious university of the Russian Federation. Henry Kissinger dubbed it the 'Harvard of Russia', because it educates most of Russia's political, economic and academic elite. See: Martin Müller, *Making Great Power Identities in Russia: an Ethnographic Discourse Analysis of Education at a Russian Elite University*, (Zürich (SWI): LIT Verlag, 2009). And: Tatiana Smorodinskaya, *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Russian Culture*, Encyclopedia of Contemporary Culture Series, (Abingdon (UK): Routledge, 2007), 400-401.

<sup>138</sup> Nikolay Silaev, 'Resolving the Conflicts in the post-Soviet Space', *Russia Direct*, Theme number: Frozen Conflicts in the post-Soviet Space, Number 22, (August 2015), 7-8.

<sup>139</sup> Zurab Zhvania was a Georgian politician, who served as Prime Minister of Georgia and Speaker of the Georgian Parliament. Zhvania's role during the privatisations of Georgia were controversial. He received death threats. Zhvania died in 2005 from what was officially claimed as carbon monoxide poisoning, but his family and fellow politician, like Irakli Okruashvili, claimed he was murdered. See: Dan Brennan, 'Zurab Zhvania: Georgian Prime Minister Who Led a Peace Process with Separatist', Obituary, The Guardian Website, (4 February 2005). <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2005/feb/04/guardianobituaries.georgia>, (25 August 2019).

Minister of Defence, Irakli Okruashvili, directed at Saakashvili. Some 50,000 Georgians gathered on Rustaveli Avenue in Tbilisi in support of the opposition against Saakashvili. On 7 November 2007, events took a turn for the worse when the Georgian police intervened to break up the mass demonstration. That evening Saakashvili addressed the entire Georgian population in a direct television broadcast, accusing Russia's FSB of being responsible for the chaos. He claimed that his measures, including having declared a state of emergency, were in harmony with Western democratic practice. The next day, Saakashvili announced early presidential elections to be held in the beginning of January 2008. Gahrton believed that it was a cunning move of Saakashvili's to regain lost political ground. It worked out well for the incumbent president; Saakashvili won the first democratic presidential elections held in Georgia.<sup>140</sup>

Later that year, on 21 May 2008, Georgian parliamentary elections were also held. The opposition against Saakashvili turned out to be very strong, and the Georgian population still had the illusion that only Georgian businesses were profiting from the promises made during the Rose Revolution, and later during the election campaign. In a large demonstration attended by thousands of dissatisfied Georgians on Georgia's National Day, held on 26 May 2008, 'the opposition accused Saakashvili of ruling the country due to electoral fraud and suppression of dissenting opinions.'<sup>141</sup> Saakashvili urgently needed a distracting manoeuvre that would once again rally the people of Georgia. Moreover, he wanted more stability in the regions that were seceding.

It can be concluded that Georgian civilian and military leadership made a plan for South Ossetia, but that it did not meet the Western standards of a strategy with ends, ways, means and risks assessment. The first three elements were clear. The end was the retake of South Ossetia and later Abkhazia, the ways were the capture of South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali and the occupation of South Ossetia to bring it back under control, and the means were the Georgian armed and security forces. However, Georgian leadership apparently never anticipated the risk, i.e. the way South Ossetia and other parties involved, like the Russian Federation, would respond to a Georgian invasion.

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<sup>140</sup> Gahrton, *Georgia*, 155-173.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

## *(2) Uncertainty*

Although Georgian leadership lacked knowledge and accurate information about Russia's intentions, Russian authorities took a number of measures in the months prior to the armed conflict that were very confusing and contributed to Georgia's uncertainty. Examples of these measures were the reconstruction of the railroad track in Abkhazia despite Georgian protests, and the reinforcement of the Russian peacekeeping unit in Abkhazia with heavy equipment, such as artillery, in the Spring of 2008. In July 2008, the Russian Army also staged exercise KAVKAZ 2008, north of South Ossetia, with over 9,000 troops, 700 military vehicles and more than 30 aircraft. According to official statements, the main purpose of the exercise was to train for anti-terror operations, another aim was to practise peace-enforcement operations in conflict zones. Later studies revealed that many of the Russian units involved in the exercise took part in the Russo-Georgian armed conflict. It is, therefore, not remarkable that both Russian and American analysts regarded exercise KAVKAZ 2008 as a dress rehearsal for the operation in South Ossetia.<sup>142</sup> Timothy Thomas published a list of headlines from postings made on the open source website 'Georgia-Russia Relations Timeline' in July 2008. This list illustrates the confusing atmosphere before the outbreak of the armed conflict:

- 3 July, Georgia criticised Russian peacekeepers after the attack on a pro-Tbilisi leader.
- 4 July, Two persons were killed and up to 10 wounded after intensive shelling of Tkshinvali and some other villages in the conflict zone. South Ossetia accused Georgia of launching a planned military operation whereas Georgia claimed it was responding to Ossetian provocations.
- 7 July, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev declared that Russia is ready to normalize relations with Georgia; Georgia's Foreign Minister replied that Georgia never received concrete peace proposals from Medvedev.
- 8 July, Detained Georgian officers were accused of training occasional artillery observers; Georgia decided to take 'unilateral steps' unless Russian peacekeepers were replaced.
- 9 July, Georgia's Foreign Minister held Moscow accountable for provocations in the conflict zone and accused Russian warplanes of breaching the airspace over South

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<sup>142</sup> Felgenhauer, 'Russian Railroad Troops'. And: Tom Shanker, 'Russians Melded Old-School Blitz with Modern Military Tactics', New York Times, (16 August 2008).  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/17/world/europe/17military.html>, (24 August 2019).

Ossetia; The Russian Federation calls Georgia a ‘threat to peace and security’ in the Caucasus.

- 10 July, Russian authorities stated that their warplanes flew “briefly” over South Ossetia on 9 July to prevent a Georgian invasion threat; Russian troops were ready to help peacekeepers in Georgia's breakaway republics; Russia's OSCE envoy urged Georgia to stop provocations against South Ossetia.
- 11 July, Georgia recalled its ambassador to the Russian Federation after Russian authorities admitted that four of their planes had flown over South Ossetia on 8 July; Georgia threatened to shoot down planes if they entered Georgian airspace again; the EU responded concerned and called for international mediation.
- 12 July, Georgia's Parliament called for international support in its standoff with the Russian Federation; the Russian Federation labeled Georgia's appeal to the UN as ‘pure propaganda.’
- 14 July, A Russian paper viewed prospects of a Russo-Georgian war; the United States embassy in Georgia blamed the Russian Federation for provocations; Russian authorities told Tbilisi to stop ‘undermining’ the peacekeeping mission in South Ossetia.
- 15 July, Russian authorities condemned NATO expansion in Georgia and Ukraine, and addressed it as unacceptable; the United States, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Ukraine began exercise IMMEDIATE RESPONSE 2008 at the Vaziani training area in Georgia.
- 16 July, South Ossetian officially accused Georgia of rejecting peace talks; Tbilisi protested against Russia's military exercises.
- 19 July, South Ossetia rejected EU-proposed talks with Georgia in Brussels.
- 21 July, The United Nations Security Council held a closed session to review the situation in Georgia; South Ossetian authorities accused Georgian police of taking four Ossetian men hostage.
- 22 July, The Georgian envoy to the UN stated that the United Nations condemned Russia's ‘military aggression’, concerning the 9 July over flights by Russian airplanes over the region of South Ossetia; the Russian UN envoy criticised the ‘pro-Georgian bias’ of the Western world at a session of the United Nations Security Council.
- 23 July, Georgia's Foreign Ministry ‘seriously’ concerned about Russian military exercises.

- 29 July, South Ossetia accused Georgia of shelling and firing on the villages of Andisi and Sarabuki near Tskhinvali and of firing on a group of peacekeepers that arrived on the scene. Georgia accused South Ossetia of attacking the peacekeeping groups and of trying to seize the strategic Sarabuki heights under control of Georgian peacekeepers where the Georgian flag was hoisted on 28 July; Georgia would take radical measures if separatists would repeat their shooting on peacekeepers in South Ossetia.
- 31 July, South Ossetia confirmed setting up military fortifications in the conflict zone.
- 1 August, A Georgian official proclaimed that the remote-controlled bombs that injured Georgian policemen originated from an Ossetian peacekeeping checkpoint.
- 2–4 August, Six people were killed and more than 20 injured in one of the most serious clashes in the conflict zone in many years and both sides blame each other; Georgian leadership specified that Russian peacekeepers were involved in the incidents, which Russian authorities termed a ‘dirty provocation’; President Kokoity of South Ossetia announced that he is ready to mobilise his forces, and threatened to strike Georgian cities.
- 7 August, South Ossetia accused Georgia of attacking Tskhinvali and Georgian President Saakashvili called for an immediate end to the ‘frenzy.’<sup>143</sup>

The actions of the Russian Federation together with the long lists of incidents, in which Georgia was also a participant, created a confusing and volatile situation.

### *(3) Surprise and manipulated perception*

As stated in section 7.2 ‘Historical overview of the armed conflict’, some of the researchers on the Russo-Georgian armed conflict believed that Russia’s response to the Georgian intervention in South Ossetia came as a surprise, while other researchers were convinced that Georgian leadership had a predetermined plan and wanted to provoke a Russian reaction. Laaneots reported that Georgian intelligence informed Saakashvili that Russian troops were entering Georgian territory, as a Russian convoy of over 100 vehicles moved into South Ossetia, already on 7 August 2008. At 11:00 p.m. that day, this message was presented to Saakashvili, while the Georgian intelligence community had got wind of it in the morning. In this tense situation, Saakashvili made a fatal mistake for Georgia. Instead of establishing

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<sup>143</sup> Thomas, ‘The Bear Went Through the Mountain’, 31-67.

defensive positions along the South Ossetian border, which would show the world who the aggressor was, Saakashvili chose for a ‘hopeless’ military confrontation with an overwhelming Russian force. At 11:35 p.m. Georgian artillery started firing at South Ossetian defensive positions and strongpoints in Tskhinvali in order to destroy known South Ossetian targets and to demoralize Ossetian soldiers.<sup>144</sup> The Georgian president gave the following orders to the Georgian armed forces:

The mission of the task force is to conduct an operation in order to destroy enemy forces with accurate strikes, to provide security for the peaceful citizens, to crush the enemy completely within 72 hours and to impose Georgian jurisdiction over the territory.<sup>145</sup>

Most force commanders and their staffs in Western armed forces are trained to generate ‘what if’ scenarios to anticipate changing situations during operations. It is therefore remarkable that the Georgian military did not have any contingency plan at the ready in case their intervention was blocked by Ossetian troops supported by Russian airpower. This prompts the questions: was this really the case in August 2008? Did the Georgian military only have one rigid campaign plan? In hindsight it is difficult to imagine what had exactly been Georgian considerations during the decision-making process. To all intents and purposes, it seems likely their leadership made a plan with only one single option, which they were intent to carry out. It is noteworthy in this respect that valuable information about Russian troop movements was available to the Georgian leadership, but due to serious flaws in the Georgian intelligence service it came through too late. Anyway, this information may have caused some confusion among the Georgian leadership, but it did not prove enough for them to adapt their original plan. All in all, it should be noted that initially the Georgian leadership was lacking situational awareness of the armed conflict.

## Silence and denial

The start of the armed conflict can in essence be characterized as just a cat and mouse game. One party tried to outwit the other party by fabricating as many allegations as possible. Silence and denial did not fit in this game, and it was not experienced in such a way by the Georgian leadership. Of course, both parties, the Russian Federation as well as Georgia, did

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<sup>144</sup> Laaneots, *The Russian-Georgian War of 2008*, 57-58.

<sup>145</sup> The President of Georgia, op. cit. in: Laaneots, *The Russian-Georgian War of 2008*, 58.

not make public all their information, intelligence and actions. Yet, the characteristic silence and denial tactics of Russian authorities, as mentioned in the previous section, were out of the question. On the first day of the armed conflict, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, already announced that the Russian Federation was determined to respond to Georgia's acts of aggression. The reason he gave was that innocent Russian civilians in South Ossetia were attacked at the same time as the self-proclaimed Russian 'peacekeepers' in the region. It made it clear that Russian authorities did not remain silent and did not deny their intentions.

### *Maskirovka*, including active measures, dezinformatsiya, and reflexive control

With their actions and statements, sometimes far-fetched and often based on disinformation, Russian authorities tried to isolate Georgian leadership from their population and to portray them as very bad. It looked as if Georgian leadership was not significantly affected by Russian active measures and *dezinformatsiya*. On the contrary, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, took the opportunity to influence Western politicians and public opinion. Saakashvili was eager to speak to the foreign press in order to gain international support. Asserting that the movement of Georgian forces into South Ossetia did not violate any international law whereas Russia's invasion of South Ossetia and later of Abkhazia and even Georgia did, received extensive attention in the Western press.<sup>146</sup> Saakashvili explained that Russian troops crossed international borders and in doing so they were the aggressors. Many Western governments supported Georgia, although they criticised Saakashvili for rashness or provocative behaviour. Some European countries, Germany most notably, acknowledged Russia's narrative.<sup>147</sup> Goble specified that these countries did so out of concern for continued access to Russian gas and for trade relations, and their arguments in favour of backing the Russian Federation sometimes proved to be effective in the European Union.<sup>148</sup>

Although the Russian authorities directed many attempts to apply *maskirovka*, their activities did not really confuse Georgian leadership. At best, Russian actions, being a large invasion into South Ossetian and even Georgian territory supported by air assets, generated to some extent a deterrent effect, which can be regarded as one of the reflexive control mechanisms. Additionally, Russian authorities acted very provocatively in their statements. So, they

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<sup>146</sup> Goble, *The Guns of August 2008*, 184-185.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*



created reflexive control mechanisms in the information sphere. However, these mechanisms, deterrence and suggestion, hardly had any impact on the Georgian leadership to radically adjust their behaviour and decision-making. Russia's *maskirovka* attempts were insufficient to deceive and manipulate the Georgian decision-makers.

## 7.6 Post-conflict considerations

In 2008, General Nikolay Makarov, at the time Chief of Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, stated shortly after the Russo-Georgian armed conflict that the Russian Federation was incapable of fighting a modern war. For him the Russo-Georgian armed conflict served as a wake-up call. It was modern for Makarov in the sense that it incorporated and utilised a DDoS cyber campaign and the Russian operation relied heavily on local proxies of dubious loyalties and professionalisms, often recruited through the agents of influence programme. Whether the Russo-Georgian armed conflict can be seen as an example of integrated planning, which included the orchestration of information and conventional operations together with activities of Russian Security Services, still remains a question.

In any case, after the conflict General Makarov made major changes within the Russian Armed Forces, which were called the 'New Look' and are discussed in section 8.2 'Russian lessons learnt'. Other Russian authorities also learnt from the armed conflict. They portrayed Russian peacekeepers and citizens in South Ossetia as victims of Georgian aggression. According to this storyline, the Russian Armed Forces just prevented a Georgian genocide. Furthermore, they accused Georgian leadership of being US puppets, and tended to exaggerate the estimates about civilian casualties, suggesting that over 2,000 citizens had succumbed.<sup>149</sup> Unfortunately for them, American studies and the IIFFMCG-report of the European Union discredited these figures and statements. This left the Russian authorities embarrassed; these damaging reports did not give them the reputation and status they had hoped for.

Some researcher thought they had discovered that one of the first things Russian authorities subsequently did was hiring a prestigious Western public relations firm, Ketchum, to improve

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<sup>149</sup> Dmitry Solovyev, 'Russian Army Not Fit for Modern War: Top General', Reuters Website (16 December 2008). <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-army/russian-army-not-fit-for-modern-war-top-general-idUSTRE4BF5JM20081216>, (29 September 2019).

its messaging.<sup>150</sup> It turned out to be slightly different. Already in 2006, Russian authorities had hired the New York-based public relations agency Ketchum to work on boosting its image while the Russian Federation was chairing the G8<sup>151</sup> meeting in Saint Petersburg. Ketchum had around 50 people working on the account in the different G8 countries. After the Russian authorities had figured out that Georgian leadership was granted airtime in Western media during the armed conflict, they intensified their contract with Ketchum in order to try to win the PR-battle after the armed conflict. In 2009, the Russian Federation paid Ketchum at least \$ 14 million for their pro-Russian public relations activities in the previous three years.<sup>152</sup> The cooperation between the Russian Federation and Ketchum would last for nine years; it stopped in 2014.<sup>153</sup>

Researchers from the Modern War Institute of the United States Military Academy West Point stated in their report that after the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in 2008 the Russian authorities have improved their information warfare concepts and capabilities. The cooperation with American PR-company Ketchum was just one aspect of this change. Another aspect was that Russian authorities discovered that they had to operate in the information sphere along three operation lines: (1) information manipulation, (2) espionage, and (3) cyber-attacks. The researchers also developed four main elements for their information warfare, assessed from a positivist point of view.<sup>154</sup> First, they had to aim to put the best spin they could devise on ordinary news. Second, they should provoke the population with fake information to prepare an engagement area. Third, they had to use disinformation and create enough ambiguity to confuse participants in the conflict in this engagement area. Fourth, they should absolutely lie when given true information and claim it to be falsified.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Modern War Institute, *Analyzing the Russian Way of War: Evidence from the 2008 Conflict with Georgia*, A West Point Report (West Point, NY (USA): United States Military Academy 'West Point', Modern War Institute, 2018), 49-53.

<sup>151</sup> The G8, or Group of Eight, was an inter-governmental forum that existed from 1997 till 2014. The participants were: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, The Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States. It started as the G7, but in 1997 they also included the Russian Federation. Since 2014, this inter-governmental forum resumed operating under the name of G8 after the Russian Federation was disinvited. It is sometimes also called G8+5, also including the five largest growing economies: Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South-Africa. See: University of Toronto/G7 Research Group, What is G7/G8?, Website of G7 Information Center, (September 2019). <http://www.g8.utoronto.ca>, (29 September 2019).

<sup>152</sup> David Teather, 'PR Groups Cash in on Russian Conflict', The Guardian Website, (24 August 2009). <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2009/aug/24/public-relations-russia-georgia-ketchum>, (29 September 2019).

<sup>153</sup> Ivana Kottasova, 'Putin Drops his American PR Company', CNN Business (12 March 2015). <https://money.cnn.com/2015/03/12/media/russia-putin-pr-ketchum/index.html>, (29 September 2019).

<sup>154</sup> West Point Report, 53.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

According to West Point researchers, this Russian information strategy had several aims: to degrade trust in institutions across the world, to weaken political institutions and traditions, to push populations in conflict to simply accept the status quo and not push for a solution, and to prevent neighbouring states from joining regional institutions like EU and NATO. In short, according to the Modern War Institute, Russian authorities should have taken more advantage of controlling the narrative via propaganda, disinformation, distortion and so-called fake news. Finally, Russia's approach of keeping the opponent guessing about the situation together with the spreading of all sorts of rumours, would be part of its overall new strategy.<sup>156</sup>

Cohen and Hamilton indicated that Russian political and military leaders learnt three practical lessons. First, accusations made against an opponent needed to be verified or to be moderated if verification would not be possible. An example is the Russian claim of a 'genocide' committed by Georgian forces in Tskhinvali. The initial accusation came from South Ossetian authorities and Russian authorities immediately adopted these statements, giving them more credibility than they otherwise would have received. When these claims were later definitely disproven by multiple independent investigations, Russian claims of genocide by Georgian troops became untrustworthy and hypocritical. Second, embedded 'independent' journalists are sometimes double-edged swords. They can be effective at putting a human face on Russia's military operation by reporting Russian experiences, but they can also undermine the information strategy. For instance, the journalist mentioned in section 7.2 'Historical overview of the armed conflict' who discovered 50 embedded Russian reporters, flown in from their homeland into Georgia, made Russia's narrative untrustworthy. Third is the proliferation of mobile telephones nowadays. Soldiers, journalists and civilians carrying mobile phones, with cameras, were 'a constant and omnipresent potential source of unfiltered content straight from the battlefield to the Internet.' On 8 August, Georgian soldiers shot some footage, showing that Tskhinvali was deserted and intact. Some smoke was visible from one building, which cast doubt on the official Russian statement that Georgia had heavily bombarded the South Ossetian capital the night before. So, Russian authorities needed to reconsider their embedded news programme.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>157</sup> Cohen and Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgia War*, 54-55.

Thomas reported that there were different schools of thought in the Russian Federation concerning the Russo-Georgian armed conflict. Some believed that the Russian Federation lost the information war, while others thought that Russian information warfare had done well against Georgia. Igor Panarin, a long-time information warfare specialist and a Soviet-KGB veteran, was not impressed by Russia's information campaign. According to him, the armed conflict demonstrated Russia's inability to champion its aims and interests in the worldwide information arena. The Russian government lacked a sufficient management system and analytical structures to counter information aggression against the Russian Federation. Instead of conducting *maskirovka* aimed at Georgia to mislead the government and its population, the Russian Federation was not even able to protect itself against such external attacks. Others were also dissatisfied with Russia's information campaign and made an urgent appeal for units consisting of state and military news media that would conduct strategic analysis, and design information influence, including deception, and information countermeasures.<sup>158</sup>

On the other hand, General Anatoliy Nogovitsym, at the time the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, was positive about Russia's information warfare effort. He said that 'Russian journalists stood united with the Russian Army as never before, displaying heroism in covering the events in South Ossetia', and journalists helped 'finding the words and evidence to rebut torrents of lies and rejection, and helped the West to view our operations with understanding.'<sup>159</sup>

## 7.7 Concluding remarks

This chapter answered the sixth secondary research question: 'How were Georgian decision-makers deceived during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in 2008'? Russian authorities attempted to deceive the Georgian leadership, but did not seem to be very successful. In the months before the armed conflict started, Russian authorities launched their version of the Kosovo-precedent, and already built new railroad tracks in Abkhazia, enlarged their contingent in Abkhazia and reinforced it with artillery. They also issued Russian passports to ethnic Russians, especially in the breakaway regions, who already had a Georgian citizenship. With these actions, Russian authorities tried to buy the loyalty of those ethnic Russians in order to confuse the Georgian authorities. Moreover, the Russian Armed Forces conducted a

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<sup>158</sup> Thomas, 'Russian Information Warfare Theory, 279-282.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 283.

large exercise on Russian soil, close to the border with South Ossetia. The efforts of Russian authorities and media might have caused some pressure on Georgian leadership from time to time, but they did not seem to have fallen victim to Russian reflexive control. Georgian leadership continued to believe in their campaign plan to keep South Ossetia occupied for as long as possible. Russian hacktivists, although not openly working for the Russian authorities, tried to isolate Georgian leadership with cyberattacks, but Saakashvili was still able to speak to the foreign press and even made active contact with them to issue new statements about the armed conflict. Georgian websites, like the ones from the Georgian President and some ministries, managed quickly to return online hosted by foreign providers. Russian authorities used conspiracy narratives trying to mislead the opponent, public opinion, and also their own population. Some of these narratives were successful. A broad Russian audience believed that the United States actively and physically affected the situation in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, while another narrative gave rise to several anti-Semitic reactions.



## Chapter 8 The Annexation of Crimea 2014

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## 8.1 Preamble

This chapter concentrates on the seventh research sub-question:

How were the Ukrainian decision-makers deceived during the annexation of Crimea in 2014?

The previous chapter discussed the Russo-Georgian armed conflict of 2008. This chapter analyses the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. In February 2014, men wearing balaclavas, weapons, helmets and dressed in Russian-style dark green uniforms without insignias turned up in Crimea and took control of the Ukrainian peninsula. There was no armed confrontation between the men in green uniforms and Ukrainian military and security forces. Only a few skirmishes took place in which predominantly armed civilians and paramilitary groups were involved. Who were these ‘green men’? Where did they come from? And what were their intentions?

Was there a black swan situation because of this annexation, as described in section 4.3 ‘Surprise’? In other words, was it a complete surprise, or was it something that could perhaps



have been foreseen, but had been ignored? These questions are the reason that before the historical course and analysis of the annexation are examined, this chapter pays attention to what extent Russian authorities, as well as the Ukrainian leadership, had learnt lessons from the armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Georgia in 2008. The conflict in Georgia and the breakaway regions may have revealed new insights into possibilities for the deception and manipulation of decision-makers and public opinion. Starting point of this chapter is the Russian Federation, in particular Russian authorities, in the role of deceivers during the annexation of Crimea, since it was their initiative to invade the Ukrainian peninsula. Ukrainian decision makers are seen as the victims in this case, unable to cope with the tricks of the Russian authorities.

This chapter begins with section 8.2 ‘Russian lessons learnt’, which were points of attention taken from the Russo-Georgian armed conflict, followed by a description of the Ukrainian and Crimean developments in section 8.3 and an historical overview of the annexation of Crimea in section 8.4. Section 8.5 ‘Russian efforts’ examines the Russian attempts to deceive Ukrainian decision-makers and public opinion prior to and during the annexation, while section 8.6 ‘The Ukrainian receptiveness and responses’ analyses the way the Ukrainian decision-makers responded to the Russian efforts. Section 8.7 ‘Energy’ examines whether energy also played a role in influencing certain designated audiences during the annexation of Crimea. Section 8.8 ‘Concluding remarks’ completes this chapter.

## 8.2 Russian lessons learnt

This section emphasizes the steps taken by the Russian authorities and the Russian Armed Forces after the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and comprises three different subsections. The first subsection called ‘Transformation’ highlights how the Russian Armed Forces evaluated the conflict in 2008. The next subsection, ‘Information warfare’, shows how important information warfare became for the Russian authorities. The last subsection is called ‘The quasi Gerasimov doctrine’.

### Transformation

In order to get a better understanding of the security policy the Russian Federation used in 2014, this subsection describes the way in which the Russian Armed Forces dealt with their

experiences gained from the conflict in 2008. As seen in section 7.6 ‘Considerations after the conflict’, in 2008, the Russian Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, General Nikolay Makarov, had learnt from the armed conflict with Georgia that the Russian Federation was not capable to fight a modern war. In addition to the conventional armed action, what was needed, according to Makarov, was to integrate aspects, such as offensive information operations, DDoS cyber-attacks and the use of proxies, often led by Russian agents of influences, into a comprehensive Russian plan of operations. For that purpose, the Russian Armed Forces needed a concept, and Makarov felt obliged to provide the forces with a so-called ‘New Look’. This subsection consists of: (1) ‘New Look’ programme, (2) new military doctrine, and (3) Russian Special Operations Forces Command.

### *(1) ‘New Look’ programme*

It was actually Anatoly Serdyukov, who gave the initial impetus to these changes in the Russian forces. In February 2007, Serdyukov was the first civilian appointed Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation. Both President Putin and Prime Minister Medvedev tasked him to fight corruption and inefficiency in the armed forces. Early 2008, Serdyukov presented his first measures to restructure the Russian Armed Forces. The Russo-Georgian armed conflict certainly acted as a catalyst for major changes. In October 2008, Serdyukov introduced a programme for transformation, which he called the ‘New Look’ in order to avoid the historically charged term of ‘reform’.<sup>1</sup>

At the political level the ‘New Look’ suggested four major changes. First, a reduction of the officer corps and the establishment of a non-commissioned corps, which until then did not exist. The Russian armed forces used a system known as *dedovshchina*, which were informal methods of suppression of junior conscripts by senior ones. Second, a reorganisation of the command and control structure was necessary. The Russo-Georgian armed conflict had showed the lack of flexibility and unity of command in the Russian Armed Forces. The number of command levels would go from four to three levels. Third, the ‘skeleton units’, partly filled with cadre, needed to be eliminated. It meant the end of mass mobilisation. The storage of weapons and equipment stayed in place, but the number of units down to company level would be reduced from 1890 to only 172, all of them fully manned with professional

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Braun, ‘The Russian Military in 2020: Russia’s Way Back to Power Projection? Implications for NATO’, *Connections: The Quarterly Journal*, 11 (2012), 2, 69-72.

soldiers. The new units were known as the 'permanent readiness force'. Fourth, the system of military education needed to be reshaped.<sup>2</sup>

Since their size would become much smaller, the Russian Armed Forces could reduce the number of their educational facilities. By 2013, the military educational system would comprise three joint teaching centres, six academies to educate potential officers, and one military university. A modernisation programme of military equipment was also announced, which would be executed in parallel with the New Look programme. The State Armaments Programme, based on a \$ 704.9 billion fund for the period from 2011 to 2020, would modernize the nation's nuclear weapons arsenal, air defence, communications, command and control, and introduce new space weapons and improved strategic mobility. Serdyukov's plans were not taken lightly by Russia's military top brass. Many senior officers, the so-called three, four- and five-star generals and flag officers<sup>3</sup>, were furious about Serdyukov's plans and submitted their retirement papers or were forced to resign.<sup>4</sup>

## *(2) New military doctrine*

On 13 November 2008, General Makarov submitted his reform plans in a comprehensive document entitled 'The Future Look of the Russian Federation Armed Forces and Top-Priority Measures for its Formation in 2009-2020' to the Russian State Duma. It contained the most radical reforms in the Russian Armed Forces since the post-Soviet period. Fifteen months later, on 5 February 2010, the Russian Federation published its new 'Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation'. In the Russian security community, doctrine is regarded as 'officially accepted views at any given time on employment of military forces and means for political aims, on the nature of military missions and the means of their resolution, and on the main direction of military construction.'<sup>5</sup> The experiences gained from the armed conflict with Georgia influenced the content of the doctrine. A Russian analysis of how successful their information campaign had been to manipulate the Georgian leadership failed, because it

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> General officers in the army, air force, marines and sometimes gendarmerie forces include brigadier general (one star), major-general (two stars), lieutenant-general (three stars), general (four stars), general of the armed forces (five star), and in some armed forces even the field marshal. Flag officers, the navy officers who may fly their own flag on their ship, rank from commodore, rear admiral, vice admiral to lieutenant-admiral and admiral.

<sup>4</sup> Braun, 'The Russian Military in 2020', 69-72.

<sup>5</sup> Gregory Lannon, 'Russia's New Look Army Reforms and Russian Foreign Policy', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 24 (2011), 1, 45 (26-54).

was hard to decide whether that conflict was won or lost. The rapid development of President Saakashvili's version of the conflict in Western media, and the mixed success of forwarding the Russian narrative of 'forced intervention in response to intolerable genocide' were considered by both sides as a form of evidence to declare victory in the Russo-Georgian armed conflict. In addition, most Russian cyberattacks during the armed conflict had been unsophisticated DDoS-attacks against the Georgian government, media and financial websites that caused little lasting damage and had limited pay-off. The collective Russian opinion in many open sources after the Russo-Georgian armed conflict was that cyber and information operations badly needed improvement.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, the new military doctrine discussed the development of forces and resources for information warfare, acknowledging that future conflict would definitely include the information sphere.<sup>7</sup> The doctrine clarified that information warfare's main purpose is to achieve political objectives without the utilization of military forces and to shape a favourable response from the world community.<sup>8</sup> Another remarkable point in the new Russian military doctrine was the distinction it made between dangers and threats to the Russian Federation. Dangers were considered factors that might lead to a threat, while a threat was deemed as a situation that could possibly cause a military conflict between opposing states. For the first time since the Soviet era, NATO was placed on the list of potential 'Primary External Military Dangers'.<sup>9</sup>

### *(3) Russian Special Operation Forces Command*

Meanwhile, in 2012, the Russian General Staff of the Armed Forces started to form the *Komandovanie sil Spetsial'nalnykh Operatsiy* (KSO), the Russian Special Operation Forces Command, which became operational in 2013. Troops belonging to the KSO are considered Tier 1 Special Operational Forces, like the British Special Air Service (SAS), and the

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<sup>6</sup> Keir Giles, 'Information Troops - a Russian Cyber Command?', in: Christian Czosseck, Enn Tyugu and Thomas Wingfield (Ed), *Conference Paper for 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Cyber Conflict*, (Tallinn (EST): CCD COE Publication, 2011), 46.

<sup>7</sup> The President of the Russian Federation, 'Newly Approved Russian Military Doctrine', Russian Presidential Website, (5 February 2010). [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/2010russia\\_military\\_doctrine.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/2010russia_military_doctrine.pdf), (19 October 2019).

<sup>8</sup> Azhar Unwala and Shaheen Ghori, 'Brandishing the Cybered Bear: Information War and the Russia-Ukraine Conflict', *Military Cyber Affairs: The Journal of the Military Cyber Professionals Association*, 1 (2015) 1, art. 7, 2. <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=mca>, (19 October 2019).

<sup>9</sup> Lannon, 'Russia's New Look Army Reforms', 26-52.

American Delta Forces. The new KSO-troops received a wide range of tasks. Traditionally, the primary mission of the GRU Spetsnaz was deep and special reconnaissance, while the focus of the Special Operation Forces was envisioned to be closer to direct action.<sup>10</sup> However, these tasks were no longer adequate, because the battle space developed into a highly technological, information-supported, people-centric environment. This battle space required new kinds of military action, although the old tasks of the special forces, such as reconnaissance and direct action, were still maintained. In the new organisation, the KSO-troops did not just focus on irregular warfare, but they also had to be able to carry out pinpoint, preferably nonviolent, actions with major strategic effects to impress opponents.<sup>11</sup>

The establishment of the KSO was another indication that Russian authorities started to approach operations in a different way. Warfare should no longer be conducted in a direct and conventional way, because that was costly and caused a lot of victims, generating negative publicity. After all, the ultimate task during conflicts was to influence the virtual and cognitive components of opposing decision-makers, causing them to display different behaviours and to make different decisions that would favour the initiator. Creating and maintaining perceptions, even manipulated ones, gradually became part of Russian security thinking again, just as it was during the Cold War, as shown in section 2.3 ‘Reflexive Control’.

## Information warfare

Before discussing the development of Russian information warfare, it is worth noting that the Russian authorities have a different view on information warfare than the West. The Russian view is broader than that of the West. Russian authorities never used the term cyber in their doctrine, but rather referred to the comprehensive concept of information warfare, including cyber espionage, cyber-attacks, protection against cyber-attacks and strategic communication.<sup>12</sup> The basis for this vision on information warfare had been cautiously created in the first few years of the new millennium, as shown in this section. During the

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<sup>10</sup> Alexey Nikolsky, ‘Little, Green and Polite: The Creation of Russian Special Operations Forces’, in: Colby Howard and Ruslan Pukhov, *Brothers Armed: Military Aspects of the Crisis in Ukraine*, (Minneapolis, MN (USA): East View Press, 2014), 124-125.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Kofman, ‘From Hammer to Rapier: Russian Military Transformation in Perspective’, *Changing Character of War Russia Brief*, Issue 1, (Oxford (UK): Pembroke College / Oxford University, together with Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation, 2018), 4.

<sup>12</sup> Keir Giles, ‘Information Troops’, 46.

Russo-Georgian armed conflict, Russian authorities attempted to conduct information operations for the first time, albeit with varying degrees of success, as was discussed in the previous chapter. After the Russo-Georgian armed conflict the common opinion vented in open Russian sources about the Russian information campaign was that its performance badly needed improvement.<sup>13</sup> As a result the development of information operations gained momentum. The revolutions, associated with the Arab Spring, also brought back memories of the Colour Revolutions to many Russian authorities. This subsection examines the views of the authors Panarin, Lisichkin, Shelepin, Chekinov and Bogdanov, all of whom had great influence on Russian thinking about information warfare. It also shows how Russian authorities were affected by geopolitical developments, like the Arab Spring, in their ideas about information warfare. This subsection deals subsequently with: (1) Igor Panarin's view, (2) Sergei Chekinov and Sergei Bogdanov's view, and (3) the influence of geopolitical developments.

### *(1) Igor Panarin's view*

It would be difficult not to start with the ideas of Igor Panarin, full member of the Russian Academy of Military Sciences, and senior adviser to the highest Russian authorities in the field of information warfare. Former KGB-officer Panarin, with a background in political science and psychology, published a number of articles and books in the period from 2003 to 2010, which provided not only a meaningful insight into information warfare, but were also rather influential. Gradually the Russian authorities started to think about information warfare in the same way that Panarin did. He believed that the stability of a state depends on the availability of information. He considered political activities as informational struggles over the control of the minds of the elites and other social groups. Panarin claimed that the informational dimension constantly plays a decisive role in conflict situations. He was not so much interested in the usual instruments of power, like military force, economy or diplomacy, as well as in the falsification of informational images that enable control over the targeted public opinion, thus gaining certain political benefits. This control can be accomplished by 'information manipulation, disinformation, fabrication of information, lobbying, blackmail or

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

any other way of extracting the desired information, or simply by mere denial of information originating from an adversary.’<sup>14</sup>

Panarin specified that the decision-making process of the opponent should be targeted through manipulation of international as well as domestic public opinion. The state that conducts such information operations will disrupt the balance of power and will subsequently obtain superiority in the global information sphere.<sup>15</sup> Panarin was not the only Russian scholar interested in the powerful use of information. In 2003, Russian academics Vladimir Lisichkin and Leonid Shelepin stated that in warfare information is of vital importance. It creates a perception with direct influence on people’s beliefs. The main purpose for the authorities in war is to coerce domestic masses to act in a desired direction, even against their own will or interest, and on the side of the opponent to create confusion and a discord within the population and force them to compete with or even fight each other.<sup>16</sup>

### *(2) Sergei Chekinov and Sergei Bogdanov’s view*

It was not just the modernisation of equipment and organisational reforms that took place at the tactical level in the Russian Armed Forces. Russian authorities considered a broader range of measures at the strategic and operational level that could also deter NATO. This approach provided a comprehensive attitude towards security situations, also involving psychological, information and deception methods. The Russian military discovered the power of information to influence people. In 2010, retired Colonel Sergei Chekinov and retired Lieutenant General Sergei Bogdanov, both associates of the Centre for Military Studies of the Russian General Staff and Russian specialists on information warfare, set forth in an article in the *Voennaya Mysl* (‘Military Thought’) how informational and psychological operations in future conflicts would be a new tool for operations producing great effect. According to them, the use of information and psychological methods would make Russian operations much more ‘timely, unexpected and clandestine.’<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ofer Fridman, *Russian Hybrid Warfare: Resurgence and Politicisation*, (London (UK): C. Hurst & Co. Publishers Ltd, 2018), 85.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Vladimir Lisichkin and Leonid Shelepin, *Tret’ya Mirovaya Informatsionno-Psikhologicheskaya Voyena (The Third World Information-Psychological War)*, (Moscow (RF): Eskimo-Algorithm, 2003), 17.

<sup>17</sup> Sergei Chekinov and Sergei Bogdanov, ‘A Forecast of Future Wars: Meditation on What They Will Look Like’, *Voennaya Mysl* (Military Thought), No. 10, (2010), 45.

A year later, in 2011, both Chekinov and Bogdanov articulated that information warfare would be the way to conduct the indirect approach, a concept Sir Basil Liddell Hart had introduced.<sup>18</sup> Liddell Hart believed that successful manoeuvre warfare, in combination with unexpected attacks during the preparation phase of a conflict, would interrupt the opponent's coherence and impair his determination to fight before the actual physical battle would start. According to Liddell Hart, the aim of strategy is dislocation, and its result might be either the opponent's dissolution or disruption in battle.<sup>19</sup> A direct approach, being physical frontal attacks, had to be avoided at all times. Actually, it had been Sun Tzu, the Chinese general and military strategist, who made clear in his book *The Art of War* that 'to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is.'<sup>20</sup>

Chekinov and Bogdanov argued that obtaining influence through information can be seen as a form of indirect approach. This approach had become the primary tool for the master strategist in the modern world, where the construction and dissemination of information have reached a level at which they can perform strategic tasks on their own.<sup>21</sup> Chekinov and Bogdanov recognized the importance of information warfare on a strategic level. They emphasized that strategic information warfare is essential for disrupting military and governmental leadership and air and space defence systems, misleading the enemy, forming desirable public opinion, organizing activities directed against the opponent's government, and conducting other measures 'to decrease the will of the enemy'.<sup>22</sup>

In 2013, Chekinov and Bogdanov introduced the term 'new-generation warfare'. This type of warfare is dominated by information and psychological warfare to achieve a form of control superiority, and to decrease the opponent's armed forces' and the public's will to fight in a moral and psychological way. In their article the authors made two important points. First, no goal will be reached in future wars unless one belligerent gains information supremacy over the other. Superior information technologies are needed to provide the necessary intelligence,

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<sup>18</sup> Sergei Chekinov and Sergei Bogdanov, 'The Influence of Indirect Actions on the Character of Modern Warfare', *Voennaya Mysl* (Military Thought), 3 (2011), 3-13.

<sup>19</sup> Basil Liddell Hart, *Strategy: The Indirect Approach*, Reprint: First Indian Edition 2012, New Delhi (IND): Pentagon Press, (1967), 338-346.

<sup>20</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Translated by Samuel Griffith, Originally published in 1963, (Oxford (UK): Oxford University Press, 1971), 77.

<sup>21</sup> Chekinov and Bogdanov, 'The Influence of Indirect Actions', 3-13.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 6.



control, communications, and information warfare capabilities, such as managing perceptions, with greater potential. Second, there is a need to establish information and psychological warfare. This point refers to control over information pressure that can be wielded by an opponent through the media, non-governmental organisations, foreign endowments, religious programmes, propaganda and disinformation designed to stimulate chaos and confusion in a society.<sup>23</sup> In accordance with Chekinov and Bogdanov's view the combination of globalization and the development of modern information technology not only contributes to peace and stability, but also constitutes a massive threat to states. In other words, Chekinov and Bogdanov considered the synthesis of globalization and information technology as a new opportunity for influence.<sup>24</sup> The next step in the development process was to put these conceptual ideas into practice.

### *(3) Influence of geopolitical developments*

The evolution of Russian information warfare was also affected by geopolitical developments. In 2011, the President of the Russian Academy of Military Sciences, General Makhmut Gareev, warned against subversive information technologies of the West being the root cause of disorder in North Africa and the Middle East, also known as the Arab Spring. The West had also used these technologies in Georgia and other former Soviet states, as Gareev stated.<sup>25</sup> Russian authorities were wary that the Arab Spring might spread to their own region, with neighbouring countries and parts of their own country, e.g. the Caucasus, becoming more distanced or even separated from the Russian Federation. The Russian authorities were also deeply impressed by the developments of information operations in the West. President Medvedev was convinced that the West had played a major role in the political upheavals during the Arab Spring, but that it was just a foretaste of what the Russian Federation might have to face. Referring to the Arab Spring, he noted: 'We need to look the truth in the eyes. This is the kind of scenario that they [the West] were preparing for us, and now they will be trying even harder to bring it about.'<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Sergei Chekinov and Sergei Bogdanov, 'The Nature and Content of a New-generation War', *Voennaya Mysl* (Military Thought), 10 (2013), 16.

<sup>24</sup> Franke Ulrik, *War by Non-military Means: Understanding Russian Information Warfare*, (Stockholm (SWE): Totalförsvarets Forskningsinstitut (FOI or: Swedish Defence Research Agency), 2015), 38-39.

<sup>25</sup> Giles, 'Information Troops', 48-50.

<sup>26</sup> The President of the Russian Federation, Дмитрий Медведев провел во Владикавказе заседание Национального антитеррористического комитета (Dmitriy Medvedev provel vo Vladikavkaze zasedaniye Natsionalnogo antiterroristicheskogo komiteta, translated: Dmitry Medvedev held a meeting of the National

Inspired by the first thoughts about information operations and the developments of the Arab Spring, specialists within the Russian Armed Forces worked hard on a new publication focusing on information warfare. This ‘Conceptual Views on the Activity of the Russian Federation Armed Forces in Information Space’ specified that information warfare not only aims to damage information systems and critical infrastructure, but also to subvert political, economic, and social systems, as well as to instigate mass psychological activities amongst the population of the target-area to destabilise their society, and to coerce targets to make decisions against their interests.<sup>27</sup> The new document showed a greater role for the Russian authorities in conducting information war as a central part of future conflicts. They also emphasized that information warfare might often be more effective than the use of force in achieving traditional strategic aims.<sup>28</sup>

## The quasi Gerasimov doctrine

The changes in the way information operations developed did not leave Russia's *Stavka*, the higher military level, unaffected. Russian military top brass placed the developments in information operations in a comprehensive understanding of warfare and thought that changes were needed. In 2013 the new Chief of the Russian Armed Forces, General Valery Gerasimov, held a speech at the Russian Academy of Military Science, which was published as an article, called ‘The Value of Science in Foresight: New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying out Combat Operations’, in the *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* (VPK), the Military-Industrial Courier, which will be explained in this subsection.<sup>29</sup> The subsection is further divided into six sub-subsections: (1) Who is General Gerasimov (2) New-type conflicts, (3) Dissemination of the article, (4) Another article, (5) Reflecting on Western military thinking, and (6) Western overreaction

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Anti-Terrorism Committee in Vladikavkaz), Russian Presidential Website, (22 February 2011). <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/10408>, (19 October 2019).

<sup>27</sup> Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, ‘Концептуальные Взгляды На Деятельность Вооруженных Сил Российской Федерации В Информационном Пространстве’ (‘Konseptual’nyye Vzglyady Na Deyatel’nost Vooruzhennykh Sil Rossiyskoy Federatsii v Informatsionnom Prostranstve’, Translated: Conceptual Views on the Activities of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in the Information Space), (2011). PIR Center Website, <http://www.pircenter.org/media/content/files/9/13480921870.pdf>, (19 October 2019).

<sup>28</sup> Unwala and Ghorl, ‘Brandishing the Cybered Bear’, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Mark Galeotti, ‘The “Gerasimov Doctrine” and Russian Non-Linear War’, In Moscows Shadows Website, (6 July 2014). <https://inmoscowshadows.wordpress.com/2014/07/06/the-gerasimov-doctrine-and-russian-non-linear-war/>, (13 October 2019).

### *(1) Who is General Gerasimov?*

Gerasimov's publication received a lot of attention, not only in the Russian Federation but also in the West. After the annexation of Crimea in 2014, Gerasimov's article was unfortunately poorly translated into English and not well-comprehended by Western military and security experts. If properly understood, the article made clear how this Russian high-ranking general thought about the developments in warfare, the question becomes relevant who Gerasimov really is. In 1955, Valery Gerasimov was born in Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan, located in Russia's Volga Federal District.<sup>30</sup> As an officer in the Soviet and Russian tank troops he made an impressive career. In 1977 he graduated from the Kazan Higher Tank Command School. Ten years later, after finishing the Marshal Malinovsky Armoured Forces Academy, he became a commander of a Soviet tank regiment. From 1993 till 1995 he commanded the 144<sup>th</sup> Guards Motor Rifle Division in the North-Western Group of Forces of the Russian Army. In 1997, after completion of the Military Academy of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia, the senior officers' course, Gerasimov was appointed chief of staff and later as commander of the 58<sup>th</sup> Army in the North Caucasus Military District during the Second Chechen War. From 2003 till 2005 he was Chief of Staff of the Russian Far Eastern Military District, followed by an assignment as Chief of the Main Administration of Combat Training and Troops' Service. In 2006, Gerasimov became commander of the Leningrad Military District, and moved to the Moscow Military District in 2009 in the same capacity. In 2010, he was made Deputy Chief of Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, followed by holding the position of Commander of the Central Military District in April 2012. By Presidential Decree of 9 November 2012, General Gerasimov was promoted to Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, with a simultaneous appointment as First Deputy Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation.<sup>31</sup>

General Gerasimov comes from a traditional military background as a former tank commander. Within the Russian armed forces Gerasimov is not regarded as a revolutionary military theorist, although many Russian civilians consider him a creative thinker.<sup>32</sup>

Gerasimov followed the direction set out by President Putin and Prime Minister Medvedev

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<sup>30</sup> Luis Lázaro Tijerina, 'General Gerasimov and Modern War', Geopolitika Website, (03 August 2017). <https://www.geopolitica.ru/en/article/general-gerasimov-and-modern-war>, (13 October 2019).

<sup>31</sup> Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, 'Biography Valery Gerasimov', Translated by Linguistic Centre of the Russian Federation Defence Ministry, (2017). [http://eng.mil.ru/en/management/deputy/more.htm?id=11113936@SD\\_Employee](http://eng.mil.ru/en/management/deputy/more.htm?id=11113936@SD_Employee), (13 October 2019).

<sup>32</sup> Lázaro Tijerina, 'General Gerasimov and Modern War'.

when they gave *carte blanche* to the Serdyukov-Makarov tandem to launch a huge reform of the Russian armed forces. He was keen to establish himself as a reforming general in support of the new Russian Minister of Defence, Sergey Shoigu, who in turn was eager to continue the military reforms albeit in modified form. Gerasimov decided to return to the subject of a specific Russian view of future warfare. In doing so, he probably wanted to restore the damage the reforms had inflicted on the relations between the Russian officer corps and the leadership of Russia's defence department. Besides, it is a Russian tradition, especially taught at military academies and staff colleges, to study conflicts of the past in detail, not only Russian ones, to glean lessons relevant for present-day operations.<sup>33</sup> This is exactly what Gerasimov did.

Gerasimov published about the Western way of warfare of the last 25 years that started a discussion on how to conduct future operations in a way the Western world already did. It is, therefore, rather ironical that many analysts in the West regard Gerasimov's approach as new and recommend it for imitation, while Gerasimov gained his insights from studying recent Western developments rooted in the so-called Western revolution in military affairs. In 2016, Charles Bartles, Russian linguist and analyst at the Foreign Military Studies Office at Fort Leavenworth, already warned in his article 'Getting Gerasimov Right' that Gerasimov was simply explaining his view of the modern operational environment and the nature of future warfare, rather than proposing a new Russian way of warfare or military doctrine.<sup>34</sup>

## *(2) New-type conflicts*

In his article Gerasimov mentioned the Arab Spring, framing it as the Colour Revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East, which could spark a fierce armed conflict. States could fall victim to foreign intervention and sink into a web of chaos, humanitarian catastrophe and civil war. Gerasimov considered it the new-type of conflicts. He concluded that the role of non-military means in a conflict had surpassed the power of force of weapons in their effectiveness. The role of mobile, mixed types of groups of forces would become vital, while frontal engagements of large military formations would become obsolete. Long-distance, contactless actions against an opponent would be the main way to attain combat and operational aims. The application of high-precision weaponry would increase enormously.

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<sup>33</sup> McDermott, 'Does Russia Have a Gerasimov Doctrine?', 98-101.

<sup>34</sup> Bartles, 'Getting Gerasimov Right', 31.

Asymmetric actions, the use of special forces and the creation of an internal opposition in an opposing state were considered as useful instruments for achieving advantages in a contemporary conflict.<sup>35</sup> It is noteworthy that the idea of controlled chaos is the central element in Russian thinking about modern warfare, the kind of chaos Evgeny Messner previously wanted to achieve with his so-called *myatezh voina*, subversive warfare. It refers to the spreading of disorder and disagreement in a target nation through the use of disinformation, intelligence, diplomatic and other means, including violence. Creating controlled chaos can be used to prepare the stage for further action, such as an invasion, while sometimes achieving strategic goals is possible, even without further action.<sup>36</sup>



Figure 8.1 Gerasimov's article in the *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer*<sup>37</sup>

Gerasimov's view was not entirely new; it was based on previous insights, especially from the West. In 1991, during Operation Desert Storm in Iraq, the United States military had achieved victory through 'global sweep, global power' and 'air-land operations'. Also in 2003, during Operation Iraqi Freedom, the United States military were able to fight over a long-distance

<sup>35</sup> Galeotti, 'The Gerasimov Doctrine'.

<sup>36</sup> Brett Friedman, 'The Russian Understanding of War', RealClear Defense Website, (24 March 2020). [https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2020/03/24/the\\_russian\\_understanding\\_of\\_war\\_115142.html](https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2020/03/24/the_russian_understanding_of_war_115142.html), (26 March 2020).

<sup>37</sup> Valery Gerasimov, 'The Value of Science in Foresight: New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying out Combat Operations', *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* (VPK), the Military-Industrial Courier, (27 February 2013), 1-2.

reaching Bagdad within weeks. Recent conflicts such as the stabilization operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and the presence in Libya in 2011, had shown that conduct of operations was no longer focused on purely military effects. No-fly zones were introduced, sea blockades imposed, and private military contractors were widely used. Gerasimov emphasized that it was of vital importance to the Russian Federation to perfect activities in the information sphere. It would be this information sphere that would open wide asymmetrical options for reducing the fighting potential of an opponent.<sup>38</sup>

In his article Gerasimov also made clear that Russia's operation to force Georgia to accept peace exposed the absence of unified approaches to the use of formations of the Russian Armed Forces and other Russian security organisations outside the Russian borders. The conduct and facilitation of these operations were not yet settled at ministerial level. The Russian Federation needed deliberate recommendations on the use of interagency forces and other means and methods for their self-defence, as well as for combatting terrorism and forces of a potential opponent. Gerasimov ended his article by stating that 'no matter what forces the enemy has, [...], forms and methods for overcoming them can be found. He will always have vulnerabilities and that means that adequate means of opposing him exist.'<sup>39</sup> In light of this article there could be no doubt that the use of information would make all the difference in modern conflicts. Not only used at the tactical level, information would also be a powerful weapon at the operational and strategic level.

### *(3) Dissemination of the article*

Gerasimov chose to publish his article in the *Voyenno-Promyshlenny Kuryer*, a private newspaper owned by the quasi-government-controlled Almaz-Antey company, instead of the traditional *Voyennaya Mysl*, published by Russian General Staff. The *Voyenno-Promyshlenny Kuryer* reaches a much larger Russian-speaking audience than the conventional and strictly military *Voyennaya Mysl*. The intended audience for Gerasimov's article was not only the top of the Russian Armed Forces, but also Russia's senior governmental leadership, which enabled a nation-wide discussion about the status of the Russian Armed Forces and whether they could meet Russia's future threats and challenges.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Galeotti, 'The Gerasimov Doctrine'.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Charles Bartles, 'Getting Gerasimov Right', *Military Review*, January-February 2016, 30-31 (30-38).

Although seemingly unintended, the article was probably also meant to impress foreign military top officials and other experts by showing them the developments in Russian military thinking.

In the Western world, the reception of Gerasimov's article was rather lop-sided.

Unfortunately, Mark Galeotti, researcher and Slavic linguist, produced a quick and rather inaccurate translation of the article. The result was that almost the entire Western world, including experts within NATO, considered Mark Galeotti's translation and interpretation of Gerasimov's article as the explanation of how Russian Armed Forces acted in 2014, at the time of the annexation of Crimea.<sup>41</sup> So what was wrong with Galeotti's translation? The answer is quite simple, there is not one single Russian doctrine. Modern Russian campaigns are dangerous because Russian troops involved in an operation are not organised on the basis of a comprehensive set of principles but rather on opportunism and fragmentation. Their major operations are coordinated with the direct leadership of the presidential administration, but not in accordance with a well-considered campaign plan nor overarching doctrinal standards.<sup>42</sup>

#### *(4) Another article*

Later in 2013, Gerasimov published another article on the future of conducting conflicts. The article, called 'Principal Trends in the Development of the Forms and Methods of Employing Armed Forces and Current Tasks of Military Science Regarding Their Improvement', was published in the *Vestnik Akademii Voyennykh Nauk*, the *Journal of the Academy of Military Science*. In this article Gerasimov explained new trends, forms, and methods for use by the Russian Armed Forces. He started by stating that wars are no longer declared and that non-military methods are often more effective than military ones. Gerasimov presented four new assertions in this article. First, a combination of military and non-military methods is necessary, including protest potential of the population. Second, peacekeeping and what Gerasimov labelled as 'crisis regulation operations' can sometimes be used as an open military utilization of troops to gain specific aims. Third, the principal method in warfare is

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<sup>41</sup> Roger McDermott, 'Does Russia Have a Gerasimov Doctrine?', *Learning From Today's Wars, Parameters*, 46 (2016) 1, 99.

<sup>42</sup> Mark Galeotti, 'I'm Sorry for Creating the Gerasimov Doctrine', *Foreign Policy Website*, (5 March 2018). <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/05/im-sorry-for-creating-the-gerasimov-doctrine/>, (14 October 2019).

non-contact or remote engagement, because information technology has significantly diminished the special and temporal gaps between opponents. Fourth, the use of joint mobile forces operating in the information sphere is growing. Gerasimov completed this *exposé* by emphasizing that the Russian Federation should not copy other nations. Rather than follow the examples set by other nations, the Russian Federation should outrun its opponents and set the tone.<sup>43</sup>

### *(5) Reflecting on Western military thinking*

Gerasimov himself paid more attention to developments in Western military thinking. In his article in the *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* he described the Western, more specifically, the American way of conducting operations over the last 25 years. During a speech at the Third Moscow Conference on International Security, held on 23 May 2014, General Gerasimov repeated his description.<sup>44</sup> In the Russian view, the traditional pattern of United States' forced regime change, among others in Iraq 1991 and 2003, the former Yugoslavia 1992-1995, Kosovo 1999 and Afghanistan 2001, had been as follows. First, deciding to execute a military operation. Second, finding an appropriate pretext, like preventing genocide or seizing weapons of mass destruction. Third, launching a military operation to cause regime change.<sup>45</sup>

Gerasimov assumed that this traditional pattern of regime change would morph into a new one. Instead of an overt military invasion, the first direct hits of an American or a Western attack derive from the creation of political opposition through state propaganda, like CNN and BBC, the Internet and social media, and through non-governmental organisations. The opposition thus generated chaos and confusion in the target-state, while the legitimate government will increasingly have problems to maintain order. As the security situation worsens, separatist movements can be stoked and strengthened, and undeclared special forces, conventional forces and private military companies are likely to take part in the conflict and cause further havoc. Once the legitimate government is forced to use violence, the United States gains a pretext for imposing economic and political sanctions, like no-fly zones and sea blockades, to neutralise the besieged government. As soon as this government collapses and

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<sup>43</sup> Timothy Thomas, 'The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War', *Military Review*, July-August 2017, 37-38.

<sup>44</sup> Bartles, 'Getting Gerasimov Right', 38.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-32.



anarchy reigns, military forces under the guise of being peacekeepers can be employed to pacify the area. The United States, supported by Western countries, can then install a new and friendly government.<sup>46</sup>



Figure 8.2 Gerasimov's reflections about regime change<sup>47</sup>

### (6) Western overreaction

In 2017, four years after the publication of Gerasimov's aforementioned articles, Russian journalists Ilya Plekhanov and Ilya Tsukanov were still astonished by how whole-heartedly the Western world embraced both articles by Gerasimov. It became a true hype in the security domain, but actually also a tragic-comic situation: a Russian general describing what the West had been doing for the last two-and-a-half decades, while many believed that the Russian general described the new Russian way of warfare. Most Western military analysts and media dubbed Gerasimov as the main ideologue behind the concept of hybrid warfare. It is noteworthy, Plekhanov revealed, that Gerasimov never mentioned the term 'hybrid warfare' in either of the two articles. He only refers to forms of asymmetric conflict and the use of informational pressure on the public by the media and political elites. Russian authorities and

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 32-38.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 34.

military experts never used the expression ‘hybrid warfare’; this was clearly a Western invention.<sup>48</sup>

In 2018, Mark Galeotti, who was the first to write about Gerasimov’s doctrine, apologised for creating confusion about it. Galeotti had received a translated transcript from ‘Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty’, the United States funded broadcast service in Russia and other former Soviet nations. It had been this translated transcript, which Galeotti had published, together with comments on his blog in July 2014. His intention had been to give the publication a snappy title in order to get a lot of attention, and he coined the term ‘Gerasimov doctrine’. After the annexation of Crimea, Western mainstream opinion switched from ignoring Gerasimov’s article to appreciate it as the Holy Grail for clarifying Russia’s new way of warfare. It all contributed to the fact that the Gerasimov doctrine, which actually did not exist, became very popular in the Western world, where political leaders and military experts were desperate to find an explanation for Russian activities in Crimea.<sup>49</sup>

### 8.3 The history of Ukraine and Crimea

This section examines developments in the history of Ukraine and Crimea relevant to this dissertation. It gives an impression of the earlier complications between Russia, Ukraine and the Crimea. The section consists of five subsections, starting with ‘Crimean Khanate’, which focuses primarily on the 18th century. Then the ‘Crimean War 1853-1856’ and the ‘Bolshevik-Soviet era’ are discussed, followed by the subsections ‘Ukrainian security forces’ and ‘Russian-Ukrainian disputes’. This section concludes with subsection ‘A new Ukrainian President’.

#### Crimean Khanate

Crimea had left its mark on world history before. The Crimean Khanate<sup>50</sup> had been part of the Ottoman Empire since 1441, before the Russian Empire defeated the Ottoman Empire in the

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<sup>48</sup> Ilya Tsukanov, ‘The Gerasimov Doctrine, Or How a Russian General Became the West Biggest Boogiemán’, Sputnik Website, (01 July 2017). <https://sputniknews.com/military/201707011055151104-gerasimov-doctrine-analysis/>, (14 October 2019). And: Ilya Plekhanov, ‘*Doktrina Gerasimova i Pugalo Gibrinaya Voyenna Rossii*’, (‘The Gerasimov Doctrine and the Scarecrow of Russia’s Hybrid War’), RIA Novosti Website, (28 June 2019). <https://ria.ru/20170628/1497445931.html>, (14 October 2019).

<sup>49</sup> Galeotti, ‘I’m Sorry for Creating the Gerasimov Doctrine’.

<sup>50</sup> A khanate is a political entity ruled by a khan, which is a ruler or a military leader. This political entity is typical for people from the Eurasian Steppe. See: Reuven Amitai, ‘Turko-Mongolian Nomads and the *Iqtā*’

Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774. The Crimean Khanate was the oldest of the Turkic khanates that succeeded the empire of the Golden Hordes, and was largely populated by Crimean Tatars, a Turkic ethnic group, who are the indigenous population of Crimea. In the disarray after the Ottoman defeat, Tatar leader Devlet Giray refused to accept the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji. In this treaty, the Ottoman Empire was summoned to cede sovereignty over the Crimean Khanate, enabling the khanate to continue as an independent state under Russian influence. The Tatars in Crimea had no aspiration for independence and maintained strong emotional ties with the Ottoman Empire. In 1769 Giray consecutively seized the Crimean throne, and Czarina Catherina the Great recognized him as Khan of Crimea.<sup>51</sup>

Later, in March 1783, Russian Prince Grigory Potemkin-Tauricheski, known as Prince Potemkin, encouraged Czarina Catherina to annex Crimea. Just returning from the peninsula, Potemkin told Catherina that many Crimean Tatars would ‘joyfully’ obey Russian rule. It was the incentive she needed. On 19 April 1783 Czarina Catherina proclaimed the annexation of Crimea, which the Tatars did not resist.<sup>52</sup> After a period of turmoil, the Tatars lacked the resources and the will to continue fighting; as a result, many of them fled to Anatolia, nowadays the Asian part of Turkey.<sup>53</sup>

## Crimean War 1853-1856

More than half a century later, in 1853, the Crimean War broke out when the Ottoman Empire declared war on Russia. It became a war between the Russian Empire on one side and an alliance of the Ottoman Empire, France, Britain and Sardinia, on the other. Although a clear cause for the war is hard to determine, one of the most likely causes turned out to be a dispute whether the Greek Orthodox Church should continue to hold exclusive possession of the key of the main entrance to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, the place where Jesus Christ was born. The Roman Catholics had their own key, but this one gave only access to a side entrance to the church. In addition, there was a dispute about a silver star with a Latin

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System in the Islamic Middle East (ca 100-1400AD)’, in: Anatoly Khazanov and André Wink (Ed), *Nomads in the Sedentary World*, (Abingdon (UK): Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2001), 152-171.

<sup>51</sup> Alan Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars*, Studies of Nationalities in the USSR Series, Originally published in 1978, (Stanford, CA (USA): Stanford University, Hoover Institution Press, 1987), 49-69.

<sup>52</sup> Matthew Anderson, ‘The Great Powers and the Russian Annexation of Crimea, 1783-4’, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 88 (1958) 37, 17-41.

<sup>53</sup> Hakan Kırımli, *National Movements & National Identity Among Crimean Tatars (1905-1916)*, (Leiden (NLD): E.J. Brill, 1996), 1-7.

inscription in the same church. The main issue in the conflict was a disagreement over the rights of the Christian minorities in the Holy Land, which at the time was part of the Ottoman Empire. French leadership promoted the rights of Roman Catholics, while the Russian Czar endorsed those of the Eastern Orthodox Church.<sup>54</sup> These disputes began in 1851, and the start of the Crimean war would take another two years. First there was an outburst, which was ‘fuelled by the religious passions that had been building up over centuries.’<sup>55</sup> Alexis Troubetzkoy noticed that the causes of the Crimean War never revealed a greater confusion of purpose. The war became noted for its ‘notoriously incompetent international butchery’.<sup>56</sup>

The Crimean War lasted till February 1856 and ended after growing dissatisfaction of the public had arisen in Britain and other participating countries with the conduct of war, aggravated by reports of fiascos, bungling commanders, and many unnecessary casualties. The Crimean War was one of the first conflicts in which the armed forces used modern technologies, such as explosive naval shells, railways and telegraphs, while Florence Nightingale, also known as the ‘Lady with the lamp’, became the epitome of modern nursing while treating wounded soldiers.<sup>57</sup> It was also the war of the ‘Charge of the Light Brigade’, an action of the British light cavalry led by Lord Cardigan to prevent the Russians from removing guns from overrun Turkish positions during the Battle of Balaclava around Sevastopol on 25 October 1854. The charge became an icon of logistical, medical and tactical failures, miscommunication and incompetent leadership.<sup>58</sup> The legendary war reporter William Howard Russell’s dispatches on the war caused the British government and military a headache, since he was very critical of the shortcomings of the British commanders and the poor provision of welfare to their own troops.<sup>59</sup>

### *Narodnik* period

In 1856 the parties involved signed a Peace Treaty in Paris. The treaty was a serious blow to the prestige of the Russian Empire, as it was no longer allowed to build war ports along the

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<sup>54</sup> Richard Cavendish, ‘The Crimean War: The Events Leading Up to Britain and France’s Declarations of War on Russia on Successive Days on 27 and 28 March 1854’, History Today Website (March 2004). <https://www.historytoday.com/archive/months-past/crimean-war>, (20 October 2019).

<sup>55</sup> Orlando Figes, *Crimea: The Last Crusade*, Originally published in 2010 by Allan Lane, (London (UK): Penguin Books, 2011), 9.

<sup>56</sup> Alexis Troubetzkoy, *A Brief History of the Crimean War*, (London (UK): Constable & Robinson, 2006), 208.

<sup>57</sup> Trevor Royle, *Crimea: The Great Crimean War 1854-1856*, (London (UK): Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 232-260.

<sup>58</sup> Robert French-Blake, *The Crimean War*, (London (UK): Leo Cooper Ltd, 1971), 73-81.

<sup>59</sup> Betz, *Carnage & Connectivity*, 126.

coasts and had to dismantle its Black Sea Fleet. Russia was also forced to relinquish its claim to protect Christians in the Ottoman Empire; this right was assigned to France. After the Russian humiliation of the Crimean War, the Russian populist radical movement, also known as the *Narodniks*<sup>60</sup>, was on the rise. Their purpose was to destroy the power of the Czar and the dismantling of governmental and social structures in the Russian Empire. Their ultimate goals were social justice and social equality. Though the movement achieved little in its own time, it was the prelude to a new era. These Russian populists were the intellectual and political precursors of the socialist-revolutionaries and later the Bolsheviks.<sup>61</sup>

## Bolshevik and Soviet era

In November 1917, the Russian Civil War immediately followed the second Bolshevik Revolution.<sup>62</sup> The Russian Civil War lasted until 1922, during the first phases of which Crimea was ruled by a series of different governments. The Crimean People's Republic existed only for two months, from December 1917 to January 1918, as the first Turkic and Muslim democratic republic in the world. This short-lived attempt to create a new state was quickly overrun by the Bolsheviks and anarchist elements from the Black Sea Fleet, who established the Taurida Soviet Socialist Republic. This republic also lasted only a few months, when forces of the Ukrainian People's Republic, assisted by troops from the German Empire, launched a Crimean Offensive at the end of April 1918. The first Crimean Regional Government was installed on 25 June 1918 under German protection, with Tatar Lieutenant General Maciej Suliewicz as Prime Minister. In April 1919, the Bolsheviks invaded Crimea for the second time. After the Third Ukrainian Red Army overpowered the peninsula, a second Bolshevik government was installed leading to the Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic.<sup>63</sup> This republic was friendlier to the Crimean Tatars than the Taurida government had been.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> The term *Narodniks* means a person with true 'national spirit'. The term 'Narodniks' is related to the word 'narodnost', or 'national spirit', which was used in section 6.3 'Political system of the Russian Federation'.

<sup>61</sup> Isiah Berlin, *Russian Thinkers*, Reprint, Originally published in 1978, (London (UK): Penguin Books, 1994), 211-237.

<sup>62</sup> The First Russian Revolution took place in March 1917.

<sup>63</sup> Laura Engelstein, *Russia in Flames: War, Revolution, Civil War 1914-1921*, Originally published in 2018, (New York, NY (USA): Oxford University Press, 2019), 549-552.

<sup>64</sup> Fisher, *The Crimean Tartars*, 127-128.

In June 1919 forces of the Russian White Army landed in the South-Eastern part of Crimea and took control over the peninsula, forming the South Russian Government in February 1920. In 1921 the Bolsheviks managed to recover Crimea again and created the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.<sup>65</sup> After World War II the Soviet authorities deported the indigenous Crimean Tatars. It was an example of ethnic cleansing carried out by the Soviet NKVD as a collective punishment for the perceived collaboration of some Tatars with Nazi Germany in 1944.<sup>66</sup> The republic was stripped of its autonomous status and downgraded to the category of *Oblast*, a province.<sup>67</sup> In 1954, Crimea changed into a Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, being part of Soviet Ukraine.<sup>68</sup> In 1989, under pressure of *perestroika*<sup>69</sup>, the Supreme Soviet leadership declared the deportation of the Crimean Tartars under Stalin as illegal, and they were allowed to return to Crimea.<sup>70</sup>

In 1990, the Soviet governmental institute of Crimea suggested to become an autonomous republic within the Soviet Union again, as it had been in 1921: the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR). The overall Soviet leadership granted the proposal and the Crimean ASSR was restored in less than a year. Ukraine became independent in August 1991, only one year before the Russian Federation came into existence, which was formalised with a referendum in December 1991. More than 90% of the population supported Leonid Kravchuk as elected president of Ukraine. Following the Soviet Union's collapse, Ukraine and the Russian Federation maintained relations that at times were irritable, but their differences appeared mostly manageable. The end of the Soviet Union left independent Ukraine with four large unsolved issues with the Russian Federation: (1) the destiny of the nuclear weapons systems in Ukraine, (2) the division of the Soviet Black Sea Fleet, (3) economic challenges, such as the responsibility for energy deliveries to third parties, and debts, and (4) Crimea, which had been transformed from the Russian Soviet Federative

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<sup>65</sup> Paul Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, (Toronto (CAN): University of Toronto Press, 1996), 684-713.

<sup>66</sup> Greta Lynn Uehling, *Beyond Memory: The Crimean Tatars' Deportation and Return*, (New York, NY (USA): Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 79-108.

<sup>67</sup> Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, 684-713.

<sup>68</sup> Leonid Ragozin, 'Annexation of Crimea: A Masterclass in Political Manipulation, Opinion', Al Jazeera Website, (19 March 2019). <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/annexation-crimea-masterclass-political-manipulation-190315174459207.html>, (20 October 2019).

<sup>69</sup> *Perestroika* was a political movement for reformation in the Communist Part of the Soviet Union during the 1980s. See: Marshall Goldman, 'Perestroika', The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics Website, (1992). <https://www.econlib.org/library/Enc1/Perestroika.html>, (20 October 2019).

<sup>70</sup> Uehling, *Beyond Memory*, 199-230. And: Michael Birnbaum, 'Crimean Tatars Say Russian Annexation Has Brought Fear and Repression All over Again', *The Washington Post*, (30 November 2014).

Socialist Republic into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1954, but was still considered to be part of Russia by Russian nationalists.<sup>71</sup>

## Ukrainian security forces

The Supreme Council in Ukraine created the *Sluzhba Bezpeky Ukrayiny* or SBU, the Ukrainian Security Service on 20 September 1991. In the 1990s and 2000s this service was focused on counter-intelligence, state protection and counter-terrorism. The *Holovne Upravlinnaya Rozvidki* or HUR, the General Intelligence Directorate, was established on 29 December 1991. This is Ukraine's Military Intelligence Service, which reports directly to the Minister of Defence. In the 1990s, both the SBU and HUR needed the support of the Russian intelligence services. The FSK, and later in 1995 the FSB, established itself as a kind of 'Watch Dog' over the SBU. FSB Generals have openly and frequently visited Ukraine. No wonder, because many former Russian KGB officers became employees in the FSB or SVR while those with Ukrainian roots joined the SBU. Hence, these officers, therefore, knew each other from previous occupations. They shared information pertaining to the political situation and developments in Ukraine, which was passed on to the highest echelons of the Russian authorities, including the head of the FSB, the secretary of the Russian Security Council, the presidential chief of staff and the President of the Russian Federation.<sup>72</sup> In the 2000s both Ukraine intelligence services gradually matured, but they still worked closely together with the Russian FSB and GRU.<sup>73</sup>

In 1992, a special police force, the *Berkut*, meaning the 'golden eagle', was formed under authority of the Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs, initially specializing in fighting organised crime. Later the Berkut transitioned into a gendarmerie force for public security, and increasingly developed a reputation for engaging in politics related violence.<sup>74</sup> An

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<sup>71</sup> Steven Pifer, 'How Ukraine Views Russia and the West', Brookings Website (18 October 2017). <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/10/18/how-ukraine-views-russia-and-the-west/>, (19 October, 20198).

<sup>72</sup> Daniel Mattered, *Ukraine Policy Playbook: Modus Operandi of Russian Security Service(s) in the Ukraine Conflict*, (Washington, DC (USA): Intelligence Community, Inc, 2014), 4.

<sup>73</sup> Gordon Bennett, *The SBU – The Security Service of Ukraine*, Central & Eastern Europe Series 04/25, (Camberley (UK): Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Conflict Studies Research Centre, 2004), 1-25.

<sup>74</sup> Harrison Jacobs, 'Why Ukrainian Berkut Special Police Force is So Scary', Business Insider Website, (27 January 2014). <https://www.businessinsider.com/meet-the-ukraines-brutal-berkut-police-force-2014-1?international=true&r=US&IR=T>, (19 October 2019). And: BBC News, 'Ukraine Berkut Police: What Makes Them Special?', BBC Website, (26 February 2014). <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-25895716>, (19 October 2019).

example was the crushing of mass riots of Crimean Tatars on 25 June 1995. The Tatars had started a turf war<sup>75</sup> against a Crimean gang *Bashmaki*, which resulted in two deaths and seven wounded.<sup>76</sup> In 1992 Ukraine initially respected Crimea's autonomy, allowing it to have its own constitution, but the Ukrainian authorities limited this autonomous status in 1995.<sup>77</sup>

## Russian-Ukrainian disputes

After its independence, Ukraine had 1,900 Soviet strategic nuclear warheads and between 2,650 and 4,200 Soviet tactical nuclear weapons situated on its territory. In total 130 SS-19 ICBMs<sup>78</sup> and 46 SS-24 ICBMs and 44 Tupolev Tu-16 strategic bombers were stationed in the Ukraine.<sup>79</sup> Ukraine's intent was to become a non-allied and non-nuclear state. This decision of the Ukrainian parliament, the *Verkhovna Rada*, was predicated upon the memory of the Chernobyl disaster in 1986, as well as on its desire to break with Moscow and former Soviet traditions.<sup>80</sup> In early January 1994, representatives of the United States, Ukraine and the Russian Federation started negotiations in Washington, DC. Two weeks later, on 14 January 1994, Presidents Boris Yeltsin (Russian Federation), Leonid Kuchma (Ukraine) and Bill Clinton (United States) signed a Trilateral Statement in Moscow.<sup>81</sup>

In December 1994, Ukraine acceded to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and received security assurances from the United States, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom in the Budapest Memorandum.<sup>82</sup> The memorandum stipulated that Ukraine had to hand over its strategic nuclear weapons to the Russian Federation. Although the nuclear arsenal has been

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<sup>75</sup> A turf war is a term used to describe a dispute over territory between rival gangs.

<sup>76</sup> Phil Williams and John Picarelli, *Organized Crime in Ukraine: Challenge and Response*, (Rockville, MD (USA): National Criminal Justice Reference Service, 2002), no page numbers.

<sup>77</sup> Natalya Belitser, 'The Constitutional Process in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in the Context of Interethnic Relations and Conflict Settlement', International Committee of Crimea Website, (7 February 2007). <http://www.iccrimea.org/scholarly/nbelitser.html>, (24 October 2019).

<sup>78</sup> ICBM is an acronym that stands for Intercontinental Ballistic Missile. It is a guided ballistic missile with a minimum range of 5,500 kilometers, and predominantly designed for nuclear warheads delivery. See: John Pike, 'Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles', Federation of American Scientists Website, (25 October 1998). <https://fas.org/nuke/intro/missile/icbm.htm>, (19 October 2019).

<sup>79</sup> Joseph Cirincione, Jon B. Wolfsthal, Miriam Rajkumar, *Deadly Arsenals: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Threats*, (Washington, DC, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), 373.

<sup>80</sup> Mariana Budjeryn, 'Ukraine and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons', Wilson Center Website, (5 October 2018). <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/ukraine-and-the-treaty-the-non-proliferation-nuclear-weapons>, (19 October 2019).

<sup>81</sup> Steven Pifer, 'Ukraine, Nuclear Weapons and the Trilateral Statement 25 Years Later', Stanford University, Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies Website, (14 January 2019). <https://fsi.stanford.edu/news/ukraine-nuclear-weapons-and-trilateral-statement-25-years-later>, (19 October 2019).

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.



surrendered, there is still a uranium mine in the Kirovograd Region in the Ukraine and the country also possesses processing facilities at the *Zholotiye Vody* and *Dniprodzerzhynsk* mills. Moreover, even today, Ukraine manufactures missiles and key components for Russia's strategic ballistic missiles, which shows the interdependence between Ukraine and the Russian Federation.<sup>83</sup> On 17 March 1995, the Ukrainian parliament abolished the Crimean Constitution, all laws and regulations contradicting those of Ukraine. Kiev also removed Yuriy Meshkov, then President of Crimea, and his entire office. After three years, in September 1998, another constitution was put into effect, and Crimea became the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. Remarkably, the Ukrainian authorities ratified it three months later.<sup>84</sup>

## Black Sea Fleet Agreement

Another issue between Ukraine and the Russian Federation was solved in 1997. After five years of negotiations Ukrainian Prime Minister, Pavlo Lazarenko, and Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin signed the Black Sea Fleet agreement in Sevastopol. The agreement included three major elements: First, the nations, Ukraine and the Russian Federation, divide the Black Sea Fleet, on condition that the Russian navy would buy back some of the modern ships in cash. Second, the Russian Federation would lease the ports in and around Sevastopol for the next 20 years at \$ 97.75 million a year. Third, Crimea and the city of Sevastopol were legally and territorially declared a sovereign part of Ukraine. This was quite an issue, as both Ukraine and the Russian Federation initially claimed sovereign control over Sevastopol and the Crimean Peninsula.<sup>85</sup>

This dispute goes back to 1954, when Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev handed Crimea, an area with a large ethnic Russian population, resorts and a naval base, over to Ukraine as a meaningless gesture of friendship to mark the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the union between Ukraine and Russia, at the time both republics of the Soviet Union. The Black Sea Fleet's home base was the port of Sevastopol, the capital of Crimea. A new border dispute arose after the

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<sup>83</sup> Jokull Johanneson, 'Russia-Ukraine Balance of Military Power', *Journal of International Studies*, 10 (2017) 1, 68.

<sup>84</sup> Belitser, 'The Constitutional Process in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea'.

<sup>85</sup> Tyler Felgenhauer, *Ukraine, Russia and the Black Sea Fleet Accords*, Woodrow Wilson School Case Study 2/99, (Princeton, NJ (USA): Princeton University, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, 1999), 1-6.

collapse of the Soviet Union, as Russian nationalists began regular demands that Crimea be returned to the Russian Federation, along with the Black Sea Fleet and its base.<sup>86</sup> The *New York Times* stated that the Black Sea Fleet negotiations were ‘more a political than a strategic issue’, because the fleet no longer had a major impact in the region. It was both small and old, with the most modern of the vessels built during the early 1980s.<sup>87</sup>



Figure 8.3 Decree of Soviet Presidium dealing with the transfer of the Crimea in 1954<sup>88</sup>

## Tensions

After the Ukrainian parliament ratified the Russian-Ukrainian Friendship Treaty, they focused on strategic partnership, recognition of inviolability of existing borders and respect for territorial integrity. In May 1997, the tension slowly increased. At the beginning of the new millennium the Crimean population was divided into Tartar, ethnic Russian, Soviet Communistic and Pan Slavic groups, cutting across national identities of which no group had the absolute majority, but of which every group sought to be in control.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Stephan Erlanger, ‘Russia and Ukraine Settle Dispute Over Black Sea Fleet’, *New York Times*, (10 June 1995), Section 1, 3.

<sup>88</sup> Vedomosty of the Supreme Council of the USSR (Moscow (USSR), 1954).

<sup>89</sup> Tara Kuzio, *The Crimea: Europe’s Next Flashpoint?*, (Washington, DC (USA): Jamestown Foundation, 2010), 16.

From November 2004 to January 2005, Ukraine suffered from a series of protests and political incidents in the immediate aftermath of the presidential election, which was said to have been strongly influenced by corruption, voter intimidation and fraud. Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital, became the focal point of demonstrations and civil resistance involving thousands of protesters every day.<sup>90</sup> This initiated a series of acts of civil disobedience, sit-ins and general strikes all over Ukraine, which came to be known as the Orange Revolution. People shouted: “*Razom nas bahato! Nas ne pdolaty!*”, meaning ‘Together we are strong!’ International election monitors confirmed that the Ukrainian authorities manipulated the run-off election of 21 November 2004 in favour of Viktor Yanukovich, one of the two candidates. The other one was Viktor Yushchenko. Ukraine’s Supreme Court ordered a revote on 26 December 2004. Under strict supervision of domestic inspectors and international observers, the second run-off voting was declared to have been ‘fair and free’. Yushchenko won with 54% of the votes compared to Yanukovich’s 44%, and that made Yushchenko the official winner. On 23 January 2005 he was inaugurated as President of Ukraine in Kiev, which is considered the end of the Orange Revolution.<sup>91</sup>

In 2006 anti-NATO protests broke out in Crimea. Ukraine already had a long-standing ambition to join NATO under Yushchenko’s predecessor Leonid Kuchma, and initiated exercises with NATO-countries. In June 2006, a total of 200 United States marine reservists were in the Russian-speaking part of Crimea to prepare for the Sea Breeze 2006 exercise, NATO manoeuvres at the Black Sea, together with Ukrainian forces. The Crimean parliament declared the region a ‘NATO-free zone’ to support the anti-NATO protesters. Sergei Lavrov, at the time Russia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, warned Ukraine that a possible NATO-membership would damage the relation between the two nations. Russian authorities left no doubt: ‘NATO beware, don’t get too close to Russian territory!’ Lavrov stated that former Soviet nations could decide their own destiny, but he warned against ‘a colossal geopolitical shift’ if they joined NATO.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Andrew Wilson, ‘Ukrainians Orange Revolution of 2004: The Paradoxes of Negotiation’, in: Adam Roberts and Timothy Ash (Ed), *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-violent Action from Gandhi to the Present*, (Oxford (UK): Oxford University Press, 2009), 335-353 (335-353).

<sup>91</sup> Adrian Karatnycky, ‘Ukraine’s Orange Revolution’, *Foreign Affairs*, 84 (2005) 2, 35-52.

<sup>92</sup> Nick Paton Walsh, ‘Russia Tells Ukraine to Stay Out of NATO’, Guardian Website, (8 June 2006). <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/jun/08/russia.nickpatonwalsh>, (24 October 2019).

## Russian passports

In September 2008, Volodymyr Ohryzko, Ukraine's Minister of Foreign Affairs, warned the Russian Federation, because Russian authorities were handing out Russian passports to the population in Crimea. Ohryzko considered this a serious problem, given Russia's declared policy of military intervention abroad to protect Russian civilians.<sup>93</sup> Anatoly Gritshenko, then Chairman of the Ukrainian Parliament's National Security Committee, called the issue of passports by the Russian Federation a 'threat to national security.'<sup>94</sup> The Ukrainian Constitution, adopted during the fifth session of the Verkhovna Rada on 26 June 1996, clearly indicated that only one nationality was possible in Ukraine.<sup>95</sup> Similarly the Law on Citizenship of Ukraine, approved in 2001 with amendments made in 2005, stated without any doubt that dual citizenship was not allowed: 'if a citizen of Ukraine acquires citizenship of another state or states, in legal relations with Ukraine, the person is recognized as a citizen of Ukraine only.'<sup>96</sup> Therefore, Ukraine did not, and still does not, recognize any dual citizenship. On 24 August 2009, anti-Ukrainian demonstrations were held in Crimea, organised by ethnic Russians. Sergei Tsekov, belonging to the political party Russian Bloc and at the time Deputy Speaker of the Crimean parliament, hoped that Russian authorities would treat Crimea in the same way they had treated South Ossetia and Abkhazia.<sup>97</sup>

## A new Ukrainian president

In February 2010, Yanukovich was elected President of the Ukraine, succeeding Yushchenko. Again, domestic and foreign observers monitored the elections, and this time

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<sup>93</sup> Anya Tsukanova, 'Cheney urges divided Ukraine to unite against Russia threat', The Sydney Morning Herald Website, (6 September 2008). <https://www.smh.com.au/world/cheney-urges-divided-ukraine-to-unite-against-russia-threat-20080906-4auh.html>, (24 October 2019).

<sup>94</sup> Adrian Blomfield, 'Russia's distributing passports in the Crimea,' The Telegraph Website, (17 August 2008). <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/2575421/Russia-distributing-passports-in-the-Crimea.html>, (24 October 2019).

<sup>95</sup> *Verkhovna Rada* (Ukrainian Parliament), *Constitution of Ukraine*, Chapter 1, Article 4 (28 June 1996). <https://web.archive.org/web/20110521190059/http://www.rada.gov.ua/const/conengl.htm#r1>, (30 January 2020).

<sup>96</sup> *Verkhovna Rada* (Ukrainian Parliament), *The Law of Ukraine on Citizenship*, Chapter 1, Article 2 (2008). <https://invitation.co.ua/the-law-of-ukraine-on-citizenship/>, (30 January 2020). Also: Oxana Shevel, *Country Report Ukraine*, Revised and Updated April 2013, RSCAS/EUDO-CIT-CR 2013/20, EUDO Citizenship Observatory, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies in collaboration with Edinburgh University Law School, (Florence (ITA): European University Institute, 2012), 7-8.

<sup>97</sup> Clifford Levy, 'Russia and Ukraine in Intensifying Standoff', The New York Times Website, (27 August 2009). [https://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/28/world/europe/28crimea.html?\\_r=1&partner=rss&emc=rss](https://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/28/world/europe/28crimea.html?_r=1&partner=rss&emc=rss), (24 October 2019).

judged them as free and fair.<sup>98</sup> Both sides, Ukraine as well as the Russian Federation, resolved economic issues, like their differences over debts, and while they had occasional quarrels over energy, in particular natural gas contracts, usually they found a solution. Since Ukraine became independent some Ukrainian nationalists held extreme nationalistic ideas, but they were a small minority. The majority of the Ukrainians hoped to get along with the Russian Federation. For many Russian was their first language and they had family or friends in the Russian Federation.<sup>99</sup> In 2010, Ukrainian President, Viktor Yanukovich, emphasized the expediency to tighten the ties with neighbouring Russia, though they had become strained under his predecessor, Viktor Yushchenko. On 25 April 2010, Ukrainian President Yanukovich and Russian President Medvedev agreed to a landmark deal to extend the lease on the Russian Naval Base in Sevastopol, which would last until 2017. Yanukovich and Medvedev agreed to add another 25 years to the lease. In return, Medvedev promised the Russian Federation would cut the price of natural gas sold to Ukraine by roughly 30%, which ameliorated Ukraine's unsteady financial situation.<sup>100</sup>

While Ukraine made deals with the Russian Federation to stabilise their mutual relationship, the international media started speculations about the Ukrainian peninsula as the next likely target of Russian intervention soon after the Russo-Georgian armed conflict had ended.<sup>101</sup> The Russo-Georgian armed conflict had opened the eyes of many journalists, but that was not the case in the Ukraine where the government put a lot of effort in restoring their relation with the Russian Federation. In contrast, many international journalists were of the opinion that Crimea would be an easy target for the Russian authorities, with a Russian contingent and a naval base based on the peninsula. In 2011, William Varettoni, former foreign affairs analyst at the United States' Department of State, warned in his article 'Crimea's Overlooked Instability' that the Russian authorities were going to annex Crimea and were only waiting for the right opportunity. He observed that Russian authorities were concerned about the security

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<sup>98</sup> Luke Harding, 'Yanukovich Set to Become President as Observers Say Ukraine Election Was Fair', The Guardian Website, (8 February 2010). <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/feb/08/viktor-yanukovich-ukraine-president-election>, (24 October 2019).

<sup>99</sup> Pifer, 'How Ukraine Views Russia and the West'.

<sup>100</sup> Clifford Levy, 'Ukraine Woos Russia With Lease Deal', *New York Times* (21 April 2010).

<sup>101</sup> Leon Aron, 'Russia's Next Target Could Be Ukraine', Wall Street Journal Website, (10 September 2019). <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB122100831438617621>, (19 October 2019). And: Deutsche Welle Staff, Putin Denies Imperial Ambitions as Russia Warns Ukraine, Deutsche Welle Website, (11 September 2008). <https://www.dw.com/en/putin-denies-imperial-ambitions-as-russia-warns-ukraine/a-3637615>, (19 October 2019). Also: Askold Krushelnicky, 'Fears That Crimea Could Be Next Flashpoint for Conflict With Russia', RadioFreeEurope / RadioLiberty Website, (24 August 2008). [https://www.rferl.org/a/Crimea\\_Flashpoint\\_For\\_Conflict\\_With\\_Russia/1193380.html](https://www.rferl.org/a/Crimea_Flashpoint_For_Conflict_With_Russia/1193380.html), (19 October 2019).

of their Black Sea fleet, stationed in Sevastopol, and about the protection of the Russian population in Crimea in relation to the very unstable situation in Crimea. According to Varettoni, these security developments were the main reasons for Russian authorities to consider intervening and annexing the Crimea.<sup>102</sup>

Inside Crimea there was a secessionist movement, which was rather divided as it constituted a compromise of two movements. One movement stood for a sovereign democratic Crimean state in union with Ukraine, Belarus and the Russian Federation, while the other, more radical one, favoured the unification of Crimea with the Russian Federation. The nationalist tension never led to major eruptions of violence in Crimea, partly because Ukrainian security forces were able to suppress the secessionists with a firm hand.<sup>103</sup>

Since its independence, Ukraine had been an unstable state, very much relying on the Russian Federation. This dependency not only concerned trade and the economy, but also more specifically the security domain. Ukraine managed to set up security services such as the SBU and HUR, albeit with significant input from Russian security services. Moreover, Ukraine managed to create the Berkut, a ruthless police force for handling internal affairs. Nevertheless, the renewal and development of the armed forces did not take place. That may not come as a surprise, as Ukraine was more focused on economic survival, while an actual security policy was missing. In that respect, Ukrainian leadership was not focused on learning lessons from the Russo-Georgian armed conflict.

## 8.4 Historical overview of the annexation

This overview starts with a description of relevant events in and around Ukraine and Crimea that preceded the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. These developments are described in a subsection, which is called 'A prelude to the annexation'. The following subsection deals with intelligence, information and cyber activities. Subsequently, the annexation itself is elaborated on in subsection 'A quick takeover'. This section concludes with 'International reactions', which gives an overview on how the international community reacted to the Russian annexation of Crimea.

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<sup>102</sup> William Varettoni, 'Crimea's Overlooked Instability', *The Washington Quarterly*, 34 (2011) 3, 87-89.

<sup>103</sup> Jakob Hedenskog, *Crimea: After the Georgian Crisis*, Defence Analysis User Report, (Stockholm: Totalförsvarets Forskningsinstitut, (Swedish Defence Research Agency), 2008), 10-13.

## A prelude to the annexation

In November 2013 Ukraine President Yanukovich refused to sign the Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement, opting for a Russian bailout loan and closer ties between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Russian authorities had offered the Ukrainian President a \$15 billion package for the dire Ukrainian economy and ‘a basic debt-remission agreement between Ukraine and the Russian Federation regarding natural gas deliveries that could have ended up nearing an additional \$2 billion.’<sup>104</sup> In Yanukovich’s constituency in Ukraine there was an extensive ethnic Russian group. His decision sparked a series of protests and civil unrest in Ukraine.<sup>105</sup> During the night of 21 November 2014, Mustafa Nayyem, a Ukrainian journalist of Afghan descent, set up a Facebook account urging people to gather in protest in Maidan Nezalezhnosti, the Independence Square in Kyiv. Consequently, some of the Ukrainian people obeyed his call. At first a couple of hundred assembled, then more and more, mainly students and young people. Most of them demonstrated during daytime, and many slept there overnight, refusing to leave. They wanted their government to listen to them.<sup>106</sup> The protests, later called ‘Euromaidan’, were soon followed by calls for the resignation of the president and his entire government. During the actions the protesters, initially mostly unsatisfied students, gradually became more and more convinced of widespread government corruption and violations of human rights in Ukraine.<sup>107</sup>

The situation escalated after a brutal dispersal of protesters on 20 November 2013, urging even more people to demonstrate. During Euromaidan, protests became increasingly violent, and there were many clashes between protesters and the police, including the Berkut, throughout Ukraine. Meanwhile, protesters began to occupy and barricade the Maidan Square in Kyiv, along with some administrative buildings. Euromaidan erupted after the Ukrainian Parliament approved a package of anti-demonstration laws, which evoked even more anger among the protesters, from then on occupying government buildings all over Ukraine. Mid-February 2014 Euromaidan escalated when riot police advanced towards Maidan and brutally

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<sup>104</sup> Crosston: *Russia Reconsidered*, 70-72.

<sup>105</sup> Yuriy Shveda and Joung Ho Park, ‘Ukraine’s Revolution of Dignity: The Dynamics of Euromaidan’, *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 7 (2016), 85-89. And: Vjossa Musliu and Olga Burlyuk, ‘Imagine Ukraine: From History and Myths to Maidan Protests’, *East European Politics and Societies*, 33 (2019) 3, 639-648.

<sup>106</sup> David Patrikarakos, *War in 140 Characters: How Social Media Is Reshaping Conflict in the Twenty-First Century*, (New York, NY (USA): Basic Books, 2017), 97-101.

<sup>107</sup> Shveda and Park, ‘Ukraine’s Revolution of Dignity’, 90-91. And: Musliu and Burlyuk, ‘Imagine Ukraine’, 639-648.

clashed with the protesters, using live and rubber ammunition. Fierce fighting broke out, which lasted from 18 to 20 February. Snipers from the Berkut, Ukrainian special security forces, were also involved, shooting at the dissenters. A total of 111 protesters were killed, Ukrainian sources often framed them as the ‘Heavenly Hundred’, while 18 police officers were also killed during the confrontation. As a result, Yanukovich, together with the leaders of the parliamentary opposition, signed the ‘Agreement on the Settlement of Political Crisis in Ukraine’, which came about through the mediation of the EU and the Russian Federation. Shortly after signing the agreement, Yanukovich and other Ukrainian government members fled the country, while the protesters occupied his estate and government buildings. Subsequently, the Ukrainian Parliament removed Yanukovich from office. On 21 February Oleksandr Turchynov, a former head of the SBU and member of Verkhovna Rada, became the acting President of Ukraine until Petro Poroshenko was sworn in as the new Ukrainian President on 7 June 2014.<sup>108</sup>

## Intelligence, information and cyber activities

Whereas Russian authorities still denied the involvement of the FSB in any riot incident in the Ukraine and events on Maidan Square from November 2013 till March 2014, it is known that FSB Colonel General Sergei Besada visited Kiev on 21 and 22 February 2014. Besada headed the Fifth Directorate of the FSB, or the ‘Service for Operational Information and International Communications’, the department within the FSB that had been responsible for conducting intelligence activities focusing on the ‘Near Abroad’, the former Soviet republics.<sup>109</sup> This subsection includes: (1) competition among security services, (2) cyber activities, and (3) strategic communication

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<sup>108</sup> Leonid Peisakhin, ‘Euromaidan Revisited: Causes of Regime Change in Ukraine One Year On’, Kennan Cable No.5, (Washington DC (USA): The Woodrow Wilson Center / The Kennan Institute, 2015), 4-6. And: Ivan Katchanovskiy, ‘The “Snipers” Massacre on the Maidan in Ukraine’, Paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of Political American Political Science Association in San Francisco, 3-6 September 2015, SSRN eLibrary / Elsevier Website (August 2015). [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2658245](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2658245) (20 October 2019).

<sup>109</sup> Andrei Soldatov, ‘The True Role of the FSB in the Ukrainian Crisis’, The Moscow Times Website (15 April 2014). <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/04/15/the-true-role-of-the-fsb-in-the-ukrainian-crisis-a33985>, (18 October 2019).



### *(1) Competition among the services*

The FSB saw itself as the leading Russian intelligence service for the neighbouring countries, as explained in section 6.4 ‘Intelligence and security services’. Meanwhile the number of GRU-operators in Ukraine and Crimea steadily increased over time, using fake Ukrainian-owned companies to gain long-term residency in the Ukraine. Known as the GRU ‘fire-starters’, these operators were tasked with exploiting the unstable situation in Ukraine to spread disinformation, incite chaos and confusion, and sometimes spark incidents.<sup>110</sup> The GRU’s influence in Ukraine progressively grew, and the intelligence service installed their own agents of influence in there and in Crimea with these fire-starters.

During the protests that led to the fall of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich and his government hints of a heavy FSB involvement emerged.<sup>111</sup> Ukrainian activists, who were protesting against Yanukovich, claimed that the FSB was supporting the Ukrainian government’s Berkut security forces, which brutally attempted to crush the protests.<sup>112</sup> During the weeks following the Maidan protests, the number of accusations of GRU involvement in the unstable situation in Ukraine and the take-over of Crimea grew fast, which would signify a shift in power because the Ukraine had long been considered the FSB’s territory for gathering intelligence. The media were the first to signal that the GRU got the upper hand over the FSB in Ukraine and Crimea.<sup>113</sup>

### *(2) Cyber activities*

As stated in section 8.2 ‘Russian lessons learnt’, there was a great need amongst the Russian authorities to take major steps in the cyber domain, partly prompted by developments during the Arab Spring and threats from the West in that area. Cyberattacks supporting Russian activities in Georgia were carried out by Russian activists and criminal organizations; most of these activities were linked to Russian Business Network (RBN). Russian authorities did not stop these criminal cyber activities. Although not legally justified, it is not an illogical act of the Russian authorities to control the battle in cyber space, because malicious activities

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<sup>110</sup> Jack Laurenson, ‘Russian Spies in Ukraine Stoke Kremlin’s War, Kyiv Post Website, (28 November 2018). <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/russian-spies-in-ukraine-stoke-kremlins-war.html?cn-reloaded=1>, (16 October 2019).

<sup>111</sup> Stratfor, *Reviving Kremlinology*, (Austin, TX (USA): Stratfor Enterprises LLC, 2015), 15.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

associated with RBN and other Russian criminal organizations represented significant cyber capacity. Russian criminals not only possessed moderately sophisticated technology, but also controlled vast online resources. Given these developments, the three main Russian secret services, the FSB, SVR and GRU, also needed to build up cyber technology and online opportunities and turned this necessity into the actual development of cyber capabilities.<sup>114</sup>

Russia's espionage activities in the years prior to the annexation of Crimea relied on open-sources information collection, as well as interception of Ukrainian telecommunications infrastructure and targeted cyber operations. This interception was logical for the Russian authorities, as, most Ukrainian telecommunication networks rely on Russian companies for the manufacturing of technology and maintenance. Moreover, the most common backdoors to Ukrainian networks used by the Ukrainian government were modelled after Russian KGB and FSB intercept systems. Second, Russian telecommunication companies, such as Vimplecom and MTS, own a significant part of the Ukrainian mobile telephone market, and it is widely suspected that Russian authorities, especially Minkomsvyeyez, the FAPSI, Fancy Bear and Cozy Bear, collaborate with these private companies. Apparently, the Russian authorities owned property rights in most of the Ukrainian telecommunications infrastructure, making it fairly easy for them to access and understand telephone calls. This assumption is supported by a text message received by many Ukrainian participants of an anti-Russian demonstration in Kyiv, reading: 'Dear subscriber, you are registered as a participant in a mass disturbance.'<sup>115</sup> This can be interpreted as a form of microtargeting, not used for political but for security reasons. The method is still the same: sending an influencing tailored message to a specific group, in this case the demonstrators.

The Russian authorities, most probably unit 26165, also employed cyber espionage operations targeting different segments of Ukrainian society. Operation Armageddon began in mid-2013 to target Ukrainian governmental institutions, law enforcement units, military top brass and journalists. This operation occurred just when Ukraine and the EU started negotiations for an Association Agreement, which Russian authorities considered a threat to the Russian Federation. A few months later, in November 2013, when the anti-government protests broke out in Kyiv, an advanced malware named *Snake* infected the Ukrainian Prime Minister's

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<sup>114</sup> Sergei Medvedev, *Offense-Defense Theory Analysis of Russian Cyber Capability*, Master Thesis, (Monterey, CA (USA): Naval Postgraduate School, 2015), 2-3.

<sup>115</sup> Unwala and Ghorri, 'Brandishing the Cybered Bear', 4.

office and several Ukrainian embassies abroad. The timing and construction of the espionage activities indicated the involvement of the Russian secret services, such as unit 26165 as mentioned in section 6.2 ‘Russian authorities involved’. In many cases, the implemented malware was constantly updated in a formal code development environment with Russian time and language settings, and the malware was tailored towards sophisticated, elite targets for use in ‘spear-phishing’<sup>116</sup> and ‘whaling attack’<sup>117</sup> operations. The operations were constructed to avoid discovery and attribution. These advanced espionage techniques provided the Russian authorities with insights into Ukraine strategic thinking. Furthermore, the Russian authorities used targeted journalists to get a better understanding of public opinion, to identify dissidents and to create channels to disseminate disinformation and pro-Russian messaging.<sup>118</sup>

### *(3) Strategic communications*

A central element in Russia’s information engagements with Ukraine was strategic communication, and more specifically the quantity and quality of online communications, distributed by Russian officials, journalists, and other media sources to promote a pro-Russian view. The Internet is one of the few persistent media platforms to express popular disagreement with the Russian Federation, since television, especially the first three Russian channels, are state-controlled and often function as a mouthpiece for the highest Russian authorities.<sup>119</sup> Before the annexation of Crimea, Russian authorities invested heavily in

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<sup>116</sup> Spear phishing is a phishing method that targets specific individuals or groups within an organization. It is a potent variant of phishing, a malicious tactic which uses emails, social media, instant messaging, and other platforms to get users to divulge personal information or perform actions that cause network compromise, data loss, or financial loss. While phishing tactics may rely on shotgun methods that deliver mass emails to random individuals, spear phishing focuses on specific targets and involve prior research. A typical spear phishing attack includes an email and attachment. The email includes information specific to the target, including the target's name and rank within the company. This social engineering tactic boosts the chances that the victim will carry out all the actions necessary for infection, including opening the email and the included attachment. See: Trend Micro, ‘Spear Phishing’, Trend Website (2019). <https://www.trendmicro.com/vinfo/us/security/definition/spear-phishing>, (19 October 2019).

<sup>117</sup> Whaling attacks are specific type of phishing attacks that target high-profile persons, such as a CEO of a business company or a politician, in order to steal sensitive information, as those high-profile persons typically have access to. In many whaling attacks the attacker’s goal is to manipulate the victim into authorizing high-value wire transfers to the attacker. The term ‘whaling’ stems from the size of the attacks, and ‘whales’ are thought to be picked based on their status and authority. See: Margaret Rouse, ‘Whaling Attack (Whaling Phishing)’, Search Security Website (2018). <https://searchsecurity.techtarget.com/definition/whaling>, (19 October 2019).

<sup>118</sup> Unwala and Ghori, ‘Brandishing the Cybered Bear’, 4-5.

<sup>119</sup> Sacha Dov Bachmann and Hakan Gunneriusson, ‘Russia’s Hybrid Warfare in the East: The Integral Nature of the Information Sphere’, *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs: International Engagement on Cyber V*, (2015), 199-200 (198-211).

analysing and influencing online media platforms. In their campaign against Ukraine, Russian authorities, especially Minkomsvayez and unit 74455, which were explained in section 6.3 ‘Intelligence services’, supported journalists, bloggers, and individuals within social media networks to disseminate Russian narratives.<sup>120</sup> The fact that pro-Russian online media imitated anti-Russian sources was also fascinating. The website *Ukrainskaya Pravda* became a pro-Russian version of the popular Ukrainian news website *Ukrains’ka Pravda*, which was often critical of the Russian Federation. These pro-Russian websites spread alternative narratives about actual events and they constantly blamed the West for spreading manipulated information and conducting an extensive information campaign against the Russian Federation.<sup>121</sup> Russia’s strategic communications strategy also endeavoured to alienate Ukraine from its allies. Pro-Russian media spread distorted pictures of Ukrainian armoured vehicles, flags, and soldiers bearing Nazi symbols in an effort to link the Ukrainian government and governmental institutions with burgeoning Nazism. These tactics were provocative but successful as some European countries, like Germany, confronted by their Nazi history, distanced themselves from Ukraine in the period prior to the annexation of Crimea in February 2014.<sup>122</sup>

The actual effectiveness of Russian information operations is sometimes hard to determine, because these operations, including their cyber operations, are designed to be deniable. Cut-outs<sup>123</sup>, front organisations<sup>124</sup> and false flag operations are striking parts of the Russian performance in the information sphere. Hacker groups, sometimes independent ones but often linked with the Russian Security Services, like APT 28 (Fancy Bear) and APT 29 (Cozy Bear), provided Russian authorities with covert, almost non-attributable options for acquiring data and documents that can be used in disinformation campaigns and information operations.

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<sup>120</sup> Jill Dougherty, *Everyone Lies: The Ukraine Conflict and Russia’s Media Transformation*, Discussion Paper Series, #D-88, (Cambridge, MA (USA): Harvard Kennedy School, Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, 2014), 2-29.

<sup>121</sup> Dov Bachmann and Gunneriusson, ‘Russia’s Hybrid Warfare in the East’, 200.

<sup>122</sup> James Coyle, ‘Russian Disinformation Alienates the West from Russian Periphery’, Atlantic Council Website, (2015). <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/russian-disinformation-alienates-the-west-from-russian-periphery?tmpl=component&print=1>, (19 October 2019).

<sup>123</sup> Cutouts are used by intelligence services as mutually trusted intermediary, method or channel of communication to enable exchange of information between agents. Through this method cutouts usually know only the source and destination of the information but no other context or parties involved. It creates the well-known ‘need to know’ basis.

<sup>124</sup> A front organisation is any group or entities set up by and controlled by another organization. A front organization can conduct activities or influence other people for the parent unit without the actions being attributed to the parent organization. Intelligence services, organised crime and political groups often use front organisations.

These groups also conducted DDoS attacks, cyber espionage, data exfiltration and digital sabotage, while information intended to discredit foreign political leaders or government institutions were released to third parties, such as media outlets and *Wikileaks*.<sup>125</sup>

## A quick take-over

The February 2014 revolution in Ukraine ignited a political crisis in Crimea with demonstrations against the new interim government in Ukraine under Arseniy Yatsenyuk. A number of Crimean inhabitants were afraid that Russia's influence would disappear. The situation rapidly deteriorated. The Crimean parliament was divided; some MPs wished to join the Russian Federation while others, including the supporters of President Yanukovich, respected the agreement between the Ukrainian president and the Euromaidan protesters.<sup>126</sup> In a documentary called 'Crimea: Homeward Bound', made by state-run Rossiya-1 television channel, President Putin stated that he became highly concerned about the situation in Crimea. He was also worried about the fate of deposed Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich. On 22 February 2014, Putin organized an all-night meeting with his Chief of Staff, the Secretary of the Russian Security Council, the Minister of Defence, and the chiefs of the Russian intelligence services. The focus of this meeting, which ended on the early morning of 23 February 2014, was to discuss how to extricate former President Yanukovich.<sup>127</sup> Putin also indicated: 'We ended at about seven in the morning. When we were parting, I said to my colleagues: we must start working on returning Crimea to Russia. We cannot leave that territory and the people who live there at the mercy of fate.'<sup>128</sup> The decision about the annexation of Crimea was made, and Russian Special Forces rescued Yanukovich that same

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<sup>125</sup> Connell and Vogler, 'Russia's Approach to Cyber', 23.

<sup>126</sup> Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West*, (New Haven, CN (USA): Yale University Press, 2014), 99-117. And: Richard Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlines*, Updated Edition, Originally published in 2015, (London (UK): I.B. Tauris, 2016), 108-113.

<sup>127</sup> *Крым Путь на Родину* ('*Krym Put na Rodinu*' or '*Crimea: Homeward Bound*'), the Russian Documentary on Crimea by *Rossiya-1*, Director: Sergey Kraus, YouTube Website, (18 March 2015). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68CwJVO8U1k>, (26 October 2019). And: Neil MacFarquhar, 'Putin Contradicts Claims on Annexation of Crimea', The New York Times Website, (9 March 2015). <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/10/world/europe/putin-contrary-to-earlier-assertions-suggests-planning-to-seize-crimea-started-in-early-2014.html>, (26 October 2019). And also: Simon Shuster, 'Putin's Confessions on Crimea Expose Kremlin Media', Time Website (20 March 2015). <https://time.com/3752827/putin-media-kremlin-crimea-ukraine/>, (26 October 2019).

<sup>128</sup> '*Crimea: Homeward Bound*'. And: Neil MacFarquhar, 'Putin Contradicts Claims on Annexation of Crimea'. Also: Simon Shuster, 'Putin's Confessions on Crimea Expose Kremlin Media'.

day. Later Yanukovich discretely reappeared in the southern Russian city of Rostov-on-Don.<sup>129</sup>

Sunday 23 February 2014 was not only the final day of the 2014 Winter Olympic Games, held in Sochi. That same day several demonstrations took place in Crimea, for instance in Simferopol, where a pro-Euromaidan rally took place with approximately 10,000 participants in support of the new Ukrainian government, demanding the resignation of the Crimean Parliament, while simultaneously thousands demonstrated against the new Ukrainian government in Sevastopol. Protesters shouted: 'Putin is our President!' Most probably Russian agents of influence, covertly, and the Russian motor gang *Nochnyye Volki*, 'The Night Wolves', overtly, supported the pro-Russian activists and together they created civilian defence squads.<sup>130</sup> The following days, pro-Russian protesters blocked the Crimean Parliament, demanding the non-recognition of the Ukrainian government, and the Regional State Administration in Simferopol was blockaded with hundreds of activists urging for a referendum on secession. On 26 February 2014 clashes took place near the Supreme Council of Crimea in Simferopol between, on the one hand, Crimean Tatars and supporters of Euromaidan and, on the other, pro-Russian demonstrators. The newly-appointed SBU chief, Valentyn Nalyvaichenko, requested the United Nations to monitor the situation in Crimea around the clock.<sup>131</sup>

## Russian Special Forces and other groups

On 27 February 2014 Russian KSO forces in unmarked uniforms, also known in the Western world as 'little green men', seized the building of the Supreme Council of Crimea and the building of the Council of Ministers in Simferopol. Russian flags were flown from the buildings and outside the buildings. Russian troops erected barricades and cut off all communication with the buildings. They also confiscated the telephones of Crimean members

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<sup>129</sup> The Guardian, 'Vladimir Putin Describes Secret Meeting When Russia Decided to Seize Crimea', *Agence France-Presse*, The Guardian Website, (9 March 2015). <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/09/vladimir-putin-describes-secret-meeting-when-russia-decided-to-seize-crimea>, (26 October 2019).

<sup>130</sup> Howard Amos, 'Ukraine Crisis Fuels Secession Calls in pro-Russian South', The Guardian Website (23 February 2013). <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/23/ukraine-crisis-secession-russian-crimea>, (26 October 2019).

<sup>131</sup> Interfax Ukraine, 'Ukraine Asking UN to Monitor Security Situation in Crimea Round the Clock, Says Security Service Chief', Interfax Website, (26 February 2014). <https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/193029.html>, (26 October 2019).

of parliament. Meanwhile, a Russian Private Military Company (PMC) also appeared in Crimea. These PMC’s, which acted alongside the Russian KSO troops, belonged to *ChVK*<sup>132</sup> *Wagner*, also known as the Wagner Group, led by Dmitry Utkin, a retired lieutenant-colonel of 700<sup>th</sup> Independent Spetsnaz Detachment of the GRU. Formed from the remnants of the ‘Slavonic Corps’, a mercenary unit with a disgraceful fighting record in Syria in 2013, ChVK Wagner is believed to be registered in Argentina.<sup>133</sup> The main training camp of ChVK Wagner is located at the Molokino base in the Russian Federation, in the region of Krasnodor. Remarkably, the Molokino base is the home base of the 10 Spetsnaz Brigade of the GRU.<sup>134</sup>



Figure 8.4 Map of Crimean and Russian Operations, March 2014<sup>135</sup>

Late February 2014, The Crimean Parliament held a meeting to vote on a referendum for increased autonomy set for 25 May 2014 and replaced Crimean Prime Minister Anatolii Mohyliov with Sergey Aksyonov. In 2003 Aksyonov, born in Moldova, had gained Russian

<sup>132</sup> ChVK stands for *Chastnyye Voyennyye Kompanii* (частные военные компании), which means Private Military Company.

<sup>133</sup> Pierre Vaux, ‘Fontanka Investigates Russian Mercenaries Dying for Putin Syria and Ukraine’, The Interpreter Website (29 March 2016). <http://www.interpretermag.com/fontanka-investigates-russian-mercenaries-dying-for-putin-in-syria-and-ukraine/>, (18 February 2020).

<sup>134</sup> Sarah Fainberg, *Russian Spetsnaz, Contractors and Volunteers in the Syrian Conflict*, Russi.Nei.Visions, No. 105, (Paris (FRA): Institut Français des Relations Internationales (IFRI, or: French Institute for International Relations, Russia/NIS Center, 2017), 18.

<sup>135</sup> Michael Kofman et al, *Lessons from Russia’s Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*, RAND RR 1498-2.1, (Santa Monica, CA (USA): RAND Corporation, 2017), 7.

citizenship and represented the Russian Unity Party, which received only 4% of the votes during the last elections. Journalists were not allowed to attend the parliamentary meeting. That same day, Russian troops took control of the main roads to Sevastopol, and a military checkpoint with Russian flags and Russian military vehicles was established on the highway between Sevastopol and Simferopol.<sup>136</sup> Russian Special Forces assisted by local Berkut police set up security checkpoints on the Isthmus of Perekop and the Chonkar Peninsula. Within a few hours' time, Russian Special Forces and Berkut troops isolated Crimea from Ukraine.<sup>137</sup>

## Final activities

On 28 February 2014 Russian MP Sergey Mironov, along with other members of the Russian State Duma, submitted a proposal to change the Russian procedure for adding territory and other federal subjects. The law was meant to ensure a smooth transition of Crimea from Ukraine to the Russian Federation.<sup>138</sup> The State Duma adopted the bill. Meanwhile in Crimea, Russian KSO troops in their unmarked green uniforms increased their control over the peninsula. They placed the airport and state television under pro-Russian supervision. Likewise, they surrounded and blockaded Ukrainian military bases. Ukraine also saw its docked fleet blockaded by Russian naval vessels. Ukrainian headquarters and other command and control hubs, as well as Ukrainian air defence, were seized by Russian troops to ensure the security of additional Russian forces that arrived by air. Concurrently, Russian authorities ordered so-called 'snap inspection' exercises<sup>139</sup> involving large numbers of Russian conventional army troops on Russian territory along the border with Ukraine and close to the

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<sup>136</sup> Mark MacKinnon, 'Globe in Ukraine: Russian-backed Fighters Restrict Access to Crimean City', The Globe and Mail Website, (26 February 2014, Updated 12 May 2018).

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/tension-in-crimea-as-pro-russia-and-pro-ukraine-groups-stage-competing-rallies/article17110382/#dashboard/follows/>, (26 October 2019).

<sup>137</sup> United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), *"Little Green Men": A Primer on Modern Russian Unconventional Warfare, Ukraine 2013-2014*, (Fort Bragg, NC (USA): United States Army Special Operations Command, 2015), 29-31.

<sup>138</sup> Venice Commission, *Draft Federal Constitutional Law "Amending the Federal Constitutional Law on the Procedure of Admission to Russian Federation and Creation of a New Subject of the Russian Federation in Its Composition" of the Russian Federation*, Opinion No. 763 / 2014, 10 March 2014, (Strasbourg (FRA): Council of Europe, 2014).

<sup>139</sup> A snap inspection exercise is an exercise in which Russian units suddenly start moving troops and equipment, often at night, as if they were about to attack their neighbouring countries. In 2013, the Russian Ministry of Defence reintroduced the surprise inspections during these exercises on a wider and systemic scale in order to check the combat readiness of the units. It is also a means to impress and to deter a neighbouring country. See: Johan Norberg, *Training to Fight: Russia's Major Military Exercises 2011-2014*, (Stockholm (SWE): Totalförsvarets Forskningsinstitut (Swedish Defence Research Agency), 2015), 14 and 38. And: Edward Lucas, 'Deterrence and Final Snap Exercises', Centre for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) Website, (6 February 2018). <https://www.cepa.org/deterrence-and-financial>, (26 October 2019).



Crimean peninsula.<sup>140</sup> On 1 March 2014 newly-appointed Prime Minister Aksyonov declared Crimea's authorities in control of all Ukrainian military and security installations based on the peninsula. He also requested President Putin's assistance in safe-guarding peace and public order in Crimea. Putin, authorised by the Federation Council of the Russian Federation, sent in more troops.<sup>141</sup>

In the Russian Federation itself, operational commanders of the Russian Armed Forces located in the Southwestern Military District were instructed to organize Battalion Tactical Groups (BTGs) capable of independent combined arms warfighting during combat missions. Russian brigades, the next higher level to the BTGs, no longer deployed as an entire organisation as a result of the New Look reorganisation.<sup>142</sup> Russian units known or suspected of having participated in the operations in Crimea originated from *Vozdushno-Desantnye Voyska* (VDV), which are the Russian Airborne Forces, a Reconnaissance Regiment, 22 Spetsnaz Brigade belonging to the GRU, and 810<sup>th</sup> Naval Infantry Brigade belonging to Russia's Black Sea Fleet based in Sevastopol. The 'little green men' belonged to the GRU-Spetsnaz. Ultimately, the slimmed-down Russian force deployed in the Crimean Peninsula consisted of units from different parts of the armed forces and intelligence services supplemented with proxy groups, like ChVk Wagner and the Night Wolves, while the exercising troops along the border with the Russian Federation came from conventional Russian Armed Forces. This method of conducting operations requires detailed coordination and central command and control of all the units involved to prevent them from disrupting each other's sub-operations or, ultimately, fratricide. More specifically, firing had to be avoided, also on Ukrainian troops. On 4 March, President Putin ordered to stop Russian exercises at the borders to be stopped, while the following day the Russian Navy blockaded the Ukrainian Navy at Novoozerne. In the following two weeks Russian Special Forces together with pro-Russian local groups, organised by agents of influence, seized additional sites in Crimea and consolidated their positions.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Roger McDermott, *Brothers Disunited: Russia's Use of Military Power in Ukraine*, Monograph, (Fort Leavenworth, KS (USA): United States Army, Foreign Military Studies Office, 2015), 11-12.

<sup>141</sup> USASOC, *Little Green Men*, 29-31.

<sup>142</sup> Aleksy Gayday, 'Reform of the Russian Army', in: Mikhail Barabanov, *Russia's New Army*. (Moscow: Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, 2011), 20-21.

<sup>143</sup> USASOC, *Little Green Men*, 42-52.

## Being part of the Russian Federation

On 6 March 2014 the Crimean Parliament agreed to a decree stipulating that Crimea would be part of the Russian Federation. In preparation of this, the Crimean Parliament proclaimed independence on 11 March 2014, and, two days later, the Crimean Parliament held a highly disputed referendum on Crimea joining the Russian Federation. A large majority of the population of Crimea voted in favour of a connection with the Russian Federation. Polls conducted that evening in Simferopol and Sevastopol showed that more than 90 percent of the Crimean population had voted to join the Russian Federation. Skeptical experts in the Western world later came across contradictory evidence. Their research pointed at a much lower percentage. Russia's President, Vladimir Putin, initially denied any Russian involvement, but by 18 March it was officially announced that Crimea had been annexed by the Russian Federation. Only the Russian Federation and Belarus recognized this annexation, while Ukraine, the EU and its member states, and the United States, did not. To this day they still consider Crimea part of Ukraine. Finally, the Ukrainian government decided to evacuate its Crimean forces.<sup>144</sup> Since 18 March 2014 the Russian Federation distinguishes two different Russian federal subjects in the peninsula: The Republic of Crimea and the Federal City of Sevastopol.<sup>145</sup>

The Russian Federation now had full military control of the peninsula. White, blue and red Russian flags were raised at all 193 military camps, compounds and ships in Crimea. Of its entire fleet Ukrainian leadership was still commanding only a few naval ships that were not in Crimea when Russia's annexation started.<sup>146</sup> On 18 March 2014 Russian and Crimean representatives, including a delegation from Sevastopol, officially signed the Treaty on Accession of the Republic of Crimea to the Russian Federation.<sup>147</sup> A week after signing,

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<sup>144</sup> Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War*, (Washington, DC (USA): Brookings Institution Press, 2015), 161-163. Also: Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 81-147.

<sup>145</sup> ITAR-TASS, 'Putin Signs Laws on Reunification of Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol with Russia', TASS – Russian News Agency Website, (21 March 2014). <https://tass.com/russia/724785>, (20 October 2019).

<sup>146</sup> Anton Lavrov, 'Russia Again: The Military Operation for Crimea', in: Colby Howard and Ruslan Pukhov, *Brothers Armed: Military Aspects of the Crisis in Ukraine*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Originally published in 2014, (Minneapolis, MN (USA): East View Press, 2015), 178.

<sup>147</sup> President of the Russian Federation, '*Договор между Российской Федерацией и Республикой Крым о принятии в Российскую Федерацию Республики Крым и образовании в составе Российской Федерации новых субъектов*' ('*Dogovor Mezhdru Rossiyskoy Federatsiyey i Respublikoy Krym o Prinyatii v Rossiyskuyu Federatsiyu Respubliki Krym i Obrazovaniyu v Sostave Rossiyskoy Federatsii Novykh Sub"yektov*'), translated: 'The Agreement Between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Crimea on the Admission to the Russian Federation of the Republic of Crimea and the Formation of New Entities in the Russian Federation', Kremlin Website (18 March 2014). <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20605>, (20 December 2019).

Ukraine's 22,000 troops in Crimea finally laid down their weapons, exhausted by the annexation, abandoned by their government, and suffering from a severe loyalty crisis. The Ukrainian Armed Forces collapsed like a house of cards, while Ukrainian security forces stationed in Crimea kept very calm.<sup>148</sup> In total, four people died during the annexation of Crimea, two pro-Russians, one pro-Ukrainian demonstrator, and a local Crimean warrior.<sup>149</sup> Furthermore, a Ukrainian soldier was shot by a Russian sniper a few hours after the official signing of the treaty, while another Ukrainian soldier was wounded.<sup>150</sup>



*Figure 8.5 Russian BTR-80 APC from Naval Infantry used in Crimea 2014<sup>151</sup>*

The success of the operation can be measured by the fact that in just a few weeks' time, almost without firing a shot, the morale of the Ukrainian troops was broken and all of their 190 bases on the Crimean Peninsula were surrendered. Instead of relying on a mass deployment of armoured units supported by air power, the Russian authorities deployed less than 10,000 troops, mostly naval infantry that was already stationed in Crimea and supplemented with KSO-troops and some airborne units, poised against more than 22,000

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<sup>148</sup> Lavrov, 'Russia Again', 178.

<sup>149</sup> JC Finley, 'Unrest in Crimea Leaves 2 Dead; Government Buildings Seized', United Press International Website, (27 February 2014). [https://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/World-News/2014/02/27/Unrest-in-Crimea-leaves-2-dead-government-buildings-seized/6371393516263/](https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2014/02/27/Unrest-in-Crimea-leaves-2-dead-government-buildings-seized/6371393516263/), (20 December 2019). And: Heather Saul and Kim Sengupta, 'Ukraine Crisis: Pro-Russian Troops Storm Naval Base as Clinton Warns of "Aggression" from Putin', Independent Website (19 March 2014). <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/ukraine-crisis-pro-russian-troops-storm-naval-base-as-clinton-warns-of-aggression-from-putin-9201317.html>, (20 December 2019).

<sup>150</sup> Gavin Williams, 'Introduction: Sound Unmade', in: Gavin Williams (Ed), *Hearing the Crimean War: Wartime Sound and the Unmaking of Sense*, (New York, NY (USA): Oxford University Press, 2019), vx.

<sup>151</sup> Retrieved from the Online Tank Museum. [https://tanks-encyclopedia.com/coldwar/USSR/soviet\\_BTR-80.php](https://tanks-encyclopedia.com/coldwar/USSR/soviet_BTR-80.php), (29 February 2020).

Ukrainian troops. The Russians heaviest platform, on the other hand, was the wheeled BTR-80<sup>152</sup>, a lightly armoured personnel carrier.<sup>153</sup>

## International reactions

The Ukrainian leadership was enraged, which is, of course, easy to imagine because their territorial integrity was violated. In general, international reactions were divided. It differed per country or alliance how leaders thought and how they reacted to Russia's annexation of Crimea. This subsection comprises three subsections: (1) the reactions of NATO members and other Western countries, (2) of the Middle East, and (3) of the BRICS nations.

### *(1) NATO members and other Western nations*

Many leaders of NATO member states condemned the annexation as a violation of international law. Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper strongly condemned the Russian intervention of the peninsula, urging President Putin to immediately withdraw his troops. Harper also recalled Canada's ambassador from Moscow and pulled out of the G8 process chaired by the Russian Federation.<sup>154</sup> German Chancellor Angela Merkel called Russia's annexation unacceptable as breaking international law. Merkel reminded Russian President Putin that the Russian Federation had vouched to respect the independence of Ukraine and to accept security assurances, which was declared in the Budapest Memorandum of 1994.<sup>155</sup> French President François Hollande reacted angrily to President Putin's signing of a treaty that made Crimea part of the Russian Federation. Hollande stated: 'France will never

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<sup>152</sup> BTR stand for *бронетранспортер* (*Bronyetransporter*) or 'Armoured Transporter'. The BTR-80 is a Russian lightly armored amphibious vehicle with a collective chemical-biological-radiological (CBR) protective system, developed during the Soviet Union in the first half of the 1980s. It has a crew of three men, carrying a squad of seven troops. See: Andrius Genys (Ed), 'BTR-80', Military-Today.com Website, (2013). [http://www.military-today.com/apc/btr\\_80.htm](http://www.military-today.com/apc/btr_80.htm), (29 February 2020).

<sup>153</sup> Jānis Bērziņš, *Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defense Policy*, Policy Paper No. 02, (Riga (LTV): National Defence Academy of Latvia, Center for Security and Strategic Research, 2014), 4.

<sup>154</sup> Susan Ormiston, 'Ukraine Crisis: Harper Recalls Ambassador, Tells Putin to Withdraw', Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Website, (1 March 2019). <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/ukraine-crisis-canada-u-s-tell-russia-to-withdraw-forces-1.2556228>, (20 March 2019).

<sup>155</sup> Der Spiegel, '*Merkel Wirft Putin Verletzung des Völkerrechts Vor*' (Merkel Accuses Putin of Violating International Law), Spiegel Online Website, (2 March 2014). <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/krim-krise-merkel-wirft-putin-verstoss-gegen-voelkerrecht-vor-a-956514.html>, (20 October 2019).

recognize legality of such action.’<sup>156</sup> The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, David Cameron, was deeply concerned and added: ‘No amount of sham and perverse democratic process or skewed historical references can make up for the fact that this is an incursion into a sovereign state.’<sup>157</sup>

President Barak Obama of the United States was furious. On 1 March, he had a telephone conversation with President Putin during which he vented his deep concerns: ‘The Russian invasion was a violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity ... [and] breach of international law.’ Obama called upon Putin to pull the Russian forces back to their base, warning Putin of the risk of greater political and economic isolation.<sup>158</sup> On 6 March, President Obama signed Executive Order 13660 ‘Blocking Property of Certain Persons Contributing to the Situation in Ukraine’, authorizing sanctions against Russians or other persons who violated Ukraine’s sovereignty.<sup>159</sup> Other Western nations, non-NATO members, condemned the Russia’s annexation as well. Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott warned Russian President Putin to ‘back off’ from invading neighbouring Ukraine. ‘This is not the kind of action of a friend and neighbour.’<sup>160</sup>

## *(2) The Middle East*

Although the Western world had the impression that all countries strongly deplored the Russian annexation of Crimea, it turned out not to a different story elsewhere. The Middle East showed a different picture. Syria voted against United Nations General Assembly Resolution 68/262 ‘Territorial Integrity of Ukraine’, which was a response to the Russian

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<sup>156</sup> Kyiv Post, ‘President Hollande: France Doesn’t Recognize Crimea’s Annexation by Russia’, Kyiv Post Website (19 March 2014). <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/ukraine-politics/president-hollande-france-doesnt-recognize-crimeas-annexation-by-russia-339992.html>, (20 October 2019).

<sup>157</sup> Nicolas Watt, ‘Ukraine: UK to Push for Tougher Sanctions Against Russia over Crimea’, The Guardian Website, (18 March 2014). <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/18/ukraine-uk-push-sanctions-russia-crimea>, (20 October 2019).

<sup>158</sup> Karen DeYoung, ‘Obama Speaks With Putin by Phone, Calls on Russia to Pull Forces Back to Crimea Base’, Washington Post Website, (1 March 2014). [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-and-allies-try-to-decide-on-response-to-ukraine-crisis/2014/03/01/463d1922-a174-11e3-b8d8-94577ff66b28\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-and-allies-try-to-decide-on-response-to-ukraine-crisis/2014/03/01/463d1922-a174-11e3-b8d8-94577ff66b28_story.html), (20 October 2019).

<sup>159</sup> The President of the United States, ‘Executive Order – Blocking property of Certain Persons Contributing to the Situation in Ukraine’, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary Website, (6 March 2014). <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/06/executive-order-blocking-property-certain-persons-contributing-situation>, (20 October 2019).

<sup>160</sup> Matthew Knott, ‘Ukraine: Tony Abbott Tells Russia to “Back Off”’, The Sydney Morning Herald (2 March 2014). <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/ukraine-tony-abbott-tells-russia-to-back-off-20140302-33tiy.html>, (20 October 2019).

annexation of Crimea and declared the Crimean referendum as invalid, while Egypt abstained and Jordan voted in favour of the resolution.<sup>161</sup> Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took a neutral stance and did not condemn the Russian Federation, which he considered a friend of Israel. Netanyahu kept aloof, probably having his own West Bank policy in mind and he also did not want to insult the many Russian Jews in Israel. Israel abstained from voting in the United Nations General Assembly, causing the United States to react strongly. While American senior officials in the Obama administration viewed Israel's reaction as ungrateful, in the light of Washington's unwavering support for Israel in the United Nations, the Russian authorities and Russian media welcomed Israel's reaction to the annexation. They considered Israel's stance as support for, or at least a lack of opposition, to the annexation of Crimea.<sup>162</sup>

### (3) *The BRICS nations*

The BRICS nations<sup>163</sup> were also more supportive of the Russian Federation. The Government of India, the *Bhārat Sarkār* led by Manmohan Singh, was the first major country to recognize Russia's annexation of Crimea. India and the Russian Federation have long-standing ties and the latter is India's top arms provider. Moreover, the Russian Federation and its predecessor the Soviet Union have always backed India during crucial moments. The Indian government also believed that the Russian annexation was the best chance of stabilising Ukraine.<sup>164</sup> The South African government, led by President Jacob Zuma, did not join the chorus of condemnations against Russia's annexation of the Crimea either. Instead, the South African government adopted a position that, on the one hand mirrored the language used by Russian authorities to justify the annexation, and, on the other, reflected the key principles of South

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<sup>161</sup> United Nations Spokesperson's Office, 'Ukraine's Territorial Integrity, UN Assembly Declares Crimea Referendum Invalid', UN News Website, (27 March 2014). <https://news.un.org/en/story/2014/03/464812-backing-ukraines-territorial-integrity-un-assembly-declares-crimea-referendum#.UzgPNqLRUdw>, (26 October 2019).

<sup>162</sup> Barak Ravid, 'U.S. Officials Angry: Israel Doesn't Back Stance on Russia', Haaretz Website, (13 April 2014). <https://www.haaretz.com/premium-u-s-angry-at-israel-for-silence-on-ukraine-1.5244919>, (20 October 2019).

<sup>163</sup> BRICS is an acronym that stands for Brazil, Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa. The BRICS nations meet annually and have significant influence on regional matters. All the five BRICS nations are members of the G-20. See: University of Toronto, 'BRICS Information Centre', University of Toronto Website, (October 2019). <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>, (26 October 2019).

<sup>164</sup> Zachary Keck, 'India Backs Russia's "Legitimate Interests" in Ukraine', The Diplomat Website, (8 March 2014). <https://thediplomat.com/2014/03/india-backs-russias-legitimate-interests-in-ukraine/>, (20 October 2019).

Africa's foreign policy.<sup>165</sup> Chinese Ambassador to the United Nations at the time, Liu Jieyi, averred that the situation in Crimea involved a 'complex intertwinement of historical and contemporary factors and that the passing of United Nations Resolution 68/262 would only complicate matters'. This was also the reason why China abstained during voting in the United Nations General Assembly.<sup>166</sup> Brazil did not disapprove of Russia's annexation of Crimea; instead it remained neutral and abstained from voting for United Nations Resolution 68/262, which criticised the Russian Federation. Together with the other BRICS nations, Brazil clearly opposed suggestions to exclude the Russian Federation from the G-20.<sup>167</sup>

## 8.5 Russian efforts

This section focuses on Russian efforts to create deception prior to and during the annexation of Crimea in 2014. As became clear in the previous chapter, during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in 2008 it was complicated to determine who acted as a deceiver and who was the target of deception. Both sides, the Russian authorities and the Georgian leadership, had undertaken activities to influence each other and to affect public opinion. It was judged differently among the experts how the armed conflict had actually started in 2008 and who could therefore be designated as the instigator of the armed conflict. Moreover, both the Russian Federation and Georgia, considered it important to be seen as 'victim', while the other party was made out to be the aggressor. The situation was different during the annexation of Crimea in 2014. It was evident that the Russian Federation annexed a part of Ukraine and thereby violated Ukraine's territorial integrity. President Putin had his reasons for this annexation, and that will be clarified in this section. The paragraph starts with the 'deception elements', and then continues with 'silence and denial', 'active measures and dezinformatsiya', 'reflexive control', and 'maskirovka'. These subsections clarify the role of the Russian intelligence services during the annexation of Crimea.

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<sup>165</sup> Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, *South Africa's Response to the Ukrainian Crisis*, Policy Brief, (Oslo (NOR): Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, June 2014), 1-3.

<sup>166</sup> Zhang Lihua, 'Explaining China's Position in the Crimea Referendum', Carnegie-Tsinghua Website, (1 April 2015). <https://carnegietsinghua.org/2015/04/01/explaining-china-s-position-on-crimea-referendum-pub-59600>, (26 October 2019).

<sup>167</sup> Oliver Stuenkel, *Why Brazil Has Not Criticised Russia over Crimea*, Policybrief, (Oslo (NOR): Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, May 2014), 1.

## Deception elements

The subsection ‘deception elements’ is divided into three different parts. It starts with the intentions of Russia and is followed by how Russian authorities perceived uncertainty in the run-up to and during the annexation of Crimea and whether Russian authorities deliberately tried to create surprise and manipulated perceptions. This subsection comprises: (1) intentions, (2) uncertainty, and (3) surprise and manipulated perceptions.

### *(1) Intentions*

This subsub-section describes the intentions of the Russian authorities and includes four aspects: (1a) compatriots abroad, (1b) Russkiy Mir, (3) Ilyin’s thoughts, and (4) the concepts of Moscow as Third Rome or a New Jerusalem.

#### *(1a) Compatriots abroad*

The previous section, 8.4 ‘Historical overview of the annexation’, clarified that President Putin made his decision to annex Crimea at the end of a long session in the night of 22 to 23 February 2014. He was well-aware of the unrest in Ukraine as well as in Crimea, where large pro- and anti-Russian groups demonstrated on a daily base. President Putin was not only concerned about the Russian Black Sea Fleet, with its main base in Sevastopol and some other bases around Crimea, but he also pretended to be responsible for the security of the ethnic Russian minority and people who were pro-Russian, like most Tatars. The ethnic Russians living outside the Russian Federation, also known as ‘compatriots abroad’ are important for President Putin. In 1989, on the eve of the fall of the Soviet Union, the entire Russian population comprised some 146 million people.<sup>168</sup> Almost 20% of all Russians lived outside the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic, which is comparable to today’s Russian Federation. Yet, most of these Russians had the conviction that the larger state, the Soviet Union, was their country in which they felt privileged to live and saw themselves as the backbone of that state. This belief changed overnight when the Soviet Union collapsed and many of these Russians found themselves in foreign countries that were sometimes even hostile towards the

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<sup>168</sup> Charles Becker, Joshua Mendelsohn and Kseniya Benderskaya, *Russian Urbanization in the Soviet and post-Soviet Eras*, Urbanization and Emerging Population Issues Working Paper 9, United Nations Population Fund, (London (UK): International Institute for Environment and Development / Human Settlements Groups, 2012), 5.



Russian Federation resulting from anti-Soviet sentiments. Many former Soviet states considered their Russian minorities as remnants of Soviet domination or occupation.<sup>169</sup> Ethnic Russians historically migrated throughout the entire area of the Russian Empire, later the Soviet Union. The Czarist and Soviet authorities had sometimes encouraged, and more often, forced these Russians to resettle in borderlands.<sup>170</sup>

Since the start of the Russian Federation in 1991, the situation of the ‘compatriots abroad’ and the identity of the Russians became a political issue. In 1994, Russian President Boris Yeltsin issued a decree on double citizenship, which was an elaboration of article 61 of the new Russian Constitution. The constitutional article stipulated that the state guarantees security and protection of its citizens abroad. Yeltsin’s intention was to provide ethnic Russians, living in other countries, also with Russian citizenship. One year later, the Russian State Duma issued a declaration on the protection of compatriots abroad, being the former citizens of the Soviet Union who maintain spiritual relations with the Russian Federation, regardless of their nationality and legal status in their countries of residence. In 1997, a Russian law came into force that defined three groups of compatriots: (1) citizens of the Russian Federation permanently living outside the Russian Federation, (2) citizens of the former Soviet Union residing in countries that had been part of the Soviet Union, except Russia, and (3) emigrants from the Russian Empire, Soviet Union and Russian Federation and their posterity who no longer had Russian citizenship.<sup>171</sup>

### *(1b) Russkiy Mir*

In the meantime, the Russian authorities commissioned Pyotr Shchedrovitsky and Gleb Pavlovsky, two Russian spin doctors, to write an attractive diaspora programme. This programme introduced the term *Russkiy Mir*, or ‘Russian World’, a term that quickly became appropriated by the Administration of the Russian President.<sup>172</sup> The term *Russkiy Mir* originated from the writing of the Grand Prince of Kyiv, Iziaslav Iaroslavich, who spoke of a ‘Kherson and Russian World’ in a letter to the Roman Catholic Pope Clement. The term

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<sup>169</sup> Mikhail Suslov, “*Russian World*”: *Russia’s Policy Towards its Diaspora*, (Paris (FRA): *Institut Français des Relations Internationales* (French Institute for International Relations) / Russia NIS Center, 2017), 5.

<sup>170</sup> Robert Greenall, ‘Russians Left Behind in Central Asia’, BBC Website (23 November 2005). <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4420922.stm>, (27 October 2019).

<sup>171</sup> Suslov, *Russian World*, 15-19.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

Russkiy Mir was not commonly used in Russian history. In the nineteenth century, Aleksie Khomyakov, the founding father of Slavophilism, mentioned the Russian spirit, later the philosophers Vladimir Solovyev and Nikolay Berdyaev spoke about the Russian idea, while it is equally common in the Russian Federation as in the Western world to come across the notion of the Russian soul.<sup>173</sup>

President Putin soon committed himself to the concept of Russkiy Mir. The Russian Orthodox Church became the epitome of the Russian identity. During President Putin's first terms in office the Russian Orthodox Church's role in educational, social and foreign policies increased gradually.<sup>174</sup> The growing role of the Russian Orthodox Church was a great support to the Russian nation at the time of economic and political instability during Boris Yeltsin's presidency. During Putin's reign religion became much more attuned to the idea of a strong government and a return to the traditional values in Russia's society.<sup>175</sup> The rise and development of the Russian Orthodox Church is a key element in the concept of Russkiy Mir. On August 1, 988, the Great Prince of Kyiv and the ruler of the Kievan Rus, Volodymyr the Great, a member of the pagan Rurik dynasty, were baptized because Volodymyr believed that a monotheist religion would consolidate his power. That year, the remainder of the Russian people of Kiev also slowly converted to Byzantine Christianity, and Volodymyr, no longer an infidel, was able to marry Anna, daughter of the Byzantine Emperor Basil II. The following year, 988, Volodymyr and his troops besieged the city of Chersonese Tauric, the largest city in the north-eastern Black Sea Region, less than 20 kms from what is now Sevastopol in Crimea. Over the past two decades, the Russian authorities have promoted the idea that Crimea is the cradle of Russian Orthodoxy and should unify the Belarusian, Russian and Ukrainian states.<sup>176</sup> Another key element in the concept of Russkiy Mir is Russia's glorious past of, with the Rurik Dynasty, the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation. Not only have factual representations of Russian history appeared, but a multitude of alternative jingoistic histories have also emerged in the Russian Federation since. Each narrative has its own specific focus, its periods of fondness, its way of formulating the

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<sup>173</sup> Marlene Laruelle, *The "Russian World": Russia's Soft Power and Geopolitical Imagination*, (Washington, DC (USA): The Center on Global Interests, 2015), 3-4.

<sup>174</sup> Dmitry Adamsky, *Russian Nuclear Orthodoxy: Religion, Politics, and Strategy*, (Stanford, CA (USA): Stanford University Press, 2019), 234.

<sup>175</sup> Tatiana Indina, 'The Transition of Russian National Identity', *Russia Direct*, A special on National Identity, 4 (2016) 4, 20.

<sup>176</sup> Lada Roslycky, *The Soft Side of Dark Power: A Study in Soft Power, National Security and Political-Criminal Nexus*, PhD-dissertation University of Groningen, (Groningen (NLD): NetzoDruk, 2011), 184-185.

components of Russian identity and its designation of Russia's particular enemies, and they all share the idea that the Russian Federation is 'an empire by nature and destiny'.<sup>177</sup>

While many Westerners believe that *Russkiy Mir* is the traditional Russo-centric way of looking at the world, embraced by President Putin, Nicolai Petro, Professor of Political Science specialized in Russia and the Soviet Union, does not agree. He states that the term *Russkiy Mir* is misunderstood, meaning something quite different for each party. In 2009 the Head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, used the term during the Third Assembly of the Russian World, instructing how *Russkiy Mir*, or 'Holy Rus' as he also called it, should react to the challenges of globalization. The church emphasized the importance of spiritual bonds over the division of national borders. The term *Russkiy Mir* must, therefore, not be seen as a geographical or ethnic concept, but rather as a spiritual identity that refers to the 'Cradle of Civilization' of the Eastern Slavs: 'Kievan Rus. Used by the state, *Russkiy Mir* is typically a political and cultural concept, comparable to national narratives, which are created to shape a moral, representing the nation's better qualities. The greatness of past political leaders takes on mythological proportions in those stories, and the effectiveness of these stories is more important than their authenticity.'<sup>178</sup>

Back in the 1990s, President Boris Yeltsin searched for a 'Russian Idea' with a strong recognizable Russian identity in order to consolidate the nation and promote a new democratic consensus. Members of the Institute of Philosophy at the Russian Academy of Sciences were tasked to develop this concept, but ultimately failed. President Putin believed there was a Russian identity, stating at the 2013 Valdai Club Conference:

Without a doubt, the most important component of a country's success is the intellectual, spiritual, and moral quality of its people [...] All of these contribute to a nation's self-image, and to its national idea. Russia needs to cultivate the best examples from the past and filter them through its rich diversity of cultural, spiritual, and political perspectives.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>177</sup>Marlene Laruelle, *Russian Nationalism: Imaginaries, Doctrines and Political Battlefields*, BASEES/Routledge Series on Russian and East European Studies, (Abingdon (UK): Routledge, 2019), 65.

<sup>178</sup>Yael Tamir, *Why Nationalism*, (Princeton, NJ (USA): Princeton University Press, 2019), 57-58.

<sup>179</sup>Nicolai Petro, 'Russia's Orthodox Soft Power', Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, SSRN eLibrary / Elsevier Website, (23 March 2015). [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3172378](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3172378), (27 October 2019). See also: President of the Russian Federation, 'Заседание Международного Дискуссионного Клуба Валдай' ('*Zasedanie Mezhdunaodnogo Diskussionnogo Kluba Valdai*' or 'Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club'), Kremlin Website (19 September 2013). <http://kremlin.ru/news/19243>, (30 August 2015).

For many Russians, President Putin's 2013 speech was a hopeful and assertive statement of Russian values, even going back to Russia's self-proclaimed Byzantine heritage. The speech showed why Putin felt that Russian influence in the world was bound to grow. Petro considered that the Russian authorities saw themselves as defenders of strategic interests in Ukraine, as well as orthodox core values and honor.<sup>180</sup> Anna Nemtsova, winner of the 2015 Courage in Journalism Award, did not agree with the notion that the concept of Russkiy Mir works as a catalyst for a single Russian identity. She declared that President Putin's rhetoric of strengthening Russkiy Mir was just to camouflage identity questions. Russia with its rich diversity of over 185 ethnic groups was once again facing. The Russian diaspora was spread over 21 different republics, and each Russian group was proud of its own culture and history. Nemtsova cited Aleksei Malashenko, a member of the Carnegie Centre in Moscow, who said in an interview: 'Russkiy Mir becomes something very nationalistic, very xenophobic. Russkiy Mir at the moment means nothing.'<sup>181</sup>

### *(1c) Ilyin's thoughts*

President Putin played a dangerous game, using the fundamentals of the Orthodox Church purely for gaining support for his presidency. According to Putin, an alliance between the Kremlin and the Russian Orthodox Church against perceived spiritual enemies is one of the few remaining mechanisms for bolstering popularity.<sup>182</sup> Moreover, President Putin admired the Russian philosopher Ivan Ilyin, who asserted that Russia and its culture was not merely created by war, but also by the divine love and beauty of the Orthodox Christian faith.<sup>183</sup> Ilyin was born in 1883 and came from an upper-class family, many of whom served in the Russian Imperial Army. Expelled from Soviet Russia in 1922, Ilyin settled in Berlin, where he agitated in publications against Bolshevism, which he considered to be the greatest danger to humanity. Ilyin predicted the dissolution of the Soviet Union, advocating a central position for post-communist Russia under strong and autocratic leadership and with only a few rights

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Anna Nemtsova, 'Rebranding the Land of Mongols Warriors & Ivan The Terrible: From Khanate to Kitsch'. The Daily Beast, Website, (25 December 2014). <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/12/25/rebranding-the-land-of-mongol-warriors-ivan-the-terrible.html>, (27 October 2019).

<sup>182</sup> Geraldine Fagan, *Believing in Russia – Religious Policy After Communism*. (Abingdon (UK): Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 195.

<sup>183</sup> Mark Hackard, 'Ivan Ilyin and Orthodoxy', Soul of the East Website, (07 August 2015). <http://souloftheeast.org/2015/08/07/ivan-ilyin-on-orthodoxy/>, (27 October 2019).

for non-Russian regions, such as Ukraine and the Caucasus. During the 1930s, Ilyin had difficulties with the German *Geheime Staatspolizei*, the Secret State Police or *Gestapo*, and with the help of Russian composer Sergei Rachmaninoff, also a descendant from the Russian upper classes, he moved to Switzerland where he lived until his death in 1954. Putin was personally involved in moving his remains to the Sretensky Monastery in the Russian Federation. In both 2005 and 2006, President Putin quoted Ilyin in his annual presidential speech, and in 2009 Putin, then Prime Minister, ostensibly placed flowers on Ilyin's grave.<sup>184</sup>

The Russian Federation and the Orthodox Church have a symbiotic relationship to which the church and the state are mutually supportive.<sup>185</sup> In short, the fact that in Crimea Putin's compatriots abroad might fall victim to riots was unacceptable to the Russian President, because he wanted the Russians to believe in a strong and inter-connected people who were part of the *Russkiy Mir*. This development is in line with the notion of 'new wars' and conflict in association with weak states and other state and non-state actors involved. The power of many modern autocratic leaders is founded on identity politics instead of on pursuing purely ideological or geopolitical goals.<sup>186</sup>

Unlike the Soviet invasion in Czechoslovakia during the Prague Spring in 1968, when seven demonstrators were arrested in the streets of Moscow, not one Russian civilian protested against President Putin's decision to annex Crimea. Just about every Russian felt that the beautiful Black Sea peninsula, Crimea, was part of their birthright, whatever the conventions and maps say. Most, if not all, Russians harboured this exceptional status of Crimea, even if they otherwise rejected all Soviet nostalgia.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Walter Laqueur, *Putinism: Russia and Its Future with the West*, (New York, NY (USA): Thomas Dunne Books, Saint Martin's Press, 2015), 178-184. Also: David Brooks, 'Putin Can't Stop', Opinion, The New York Times Website, (3 March 2014). [https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/04/opinion/brooks-putin-cant-stop.html?hp&rref=opinion&\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/04/opinion/brooks-putin-cant-stop.html?hp&rref=opinion&_r=0), (26 March 2020).

<sup>185</sup> Martin Halyniuk, 'A New Symphony', Soul of the East Website, (01 August 2015). <http://souloftheeast.org/2015/08/01/a-new-symphony/>, (27 October 2019).

<sup>186</sup> Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era*, Third Edition, (London (UK): Polity, 2013, Kindle Edition, location 81-82).

<sup>187</sup> Masha Gessen, 'Most Russians Believe the Crimea Is Theirs – Putin Has Acted on his Belief', The Guardian Website, (1 March 2014). <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/mar/01/russia-invasion-ukraine-crimea>, (27 October 2019).

### *(1d) Concepts of Moscow as a Third Rome or a New Jerusalem*

Concerning the annexation of Crimea, Russian authorities have never considered Ukraine as an independent, fully-fledged country. In line with this point of view, Russian authorities reckoned Ukraine to be ‘simply a variation of the Russian Federation that had no legitimate reason for existence’.<sup>188</sup> Despite the fact that both nations claimed ‘Kievan Rus’ as their point of origin. Though Kyiv is viewed as ‘cradle of both Russian and Ukrainian civilization(s), it is not an East Slavic Jerusalem’.<sup>189</sup> This statement referred to two old, self-exalted Russian concepts: ‘Moscow as a Third Rome’ and ‘Moscow as a New Jerusalem’. These two concepts need further explanation. To start with the first concept, ‘Moscow as a Third Rome’. In order to demonstrate an impressive Muscovite identity, the religious concept of Moscow as a Third Rome was created. Those, who accepted the concept, believed that monk Filofei from Pskov<sup>190</sup> wrote a letter to Russian Grand Prince Vasili III, urging him to defend true Russian Orthodoxy against profanation. The first two Romes were Rome itself, as the capital of the Roman Empire, and Constantinople, as the capital of the Byzantium Empire. The first and second Romes had moved away from the real Christian belief. Moscow, as the Third Rome, had to protect itself and safeguard the true faith, argued monk Filofei. For Filofei, the concept was not merely an obvious religious case, but also a legitimate one. He regarded Russian Grand Prince Vasili III as the lawful successor to the Byzantine Imperial throne, since Czar Ivan III<sup>191</sup> was married to Sophia Paleologina, the niece of the last Byzantine Emperor, and Vasili III was their eldest son. In the concept of Moscow as the Third Rome, Moscow was regarded as the ‘last bastion of true Christianity’.<sup>192</sup>

Later, after the Union of Florence<sup>193</sup>, the Archbishop of Rostov, Vassian Rylo, wrote a letter to Czar Ivan IV<sup>194</sup>. Rylo made a parallel with the story of Moses leading the Jewish people out of Egypt. He urged Ivan IV to lead the ‘sons of Israel’, a sacred metaphor denoting the

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<sup>188</sup> Eliot Borenstein, *Plots Against Russia: Conspiracy and Fantasy after Socialism*, (Ithaca, NY (USA): Cornell University Press, 2019), 212.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Filofei was a popular short name for Philotheus, which means ‘love for God’. Philotheus was the *hegumen*, or the head of an Orthodox Church community, of the Yelizarov Monastery, near Pskov.

<sup>191</sup> Czar Ivan III, belonging to the Rurik Dynasty, was also known as Ivan the Great.

<sup>192</sup> Serhii Plokhy, *The Origin of the Slavic Nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus*, (Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 2006), 145.

<sup>193</sup> During the Council of Florence, which lasted from 1431 till 1449, the various movements at the time within Christianity tried to solve the Great Schism between Catholic and Orthodox Church and the restoration of Papal supremacy.

<sup>194</sup> Czar Ivan IV, a son of Grand Prince Vasili III who later became Czar Vasili III, was also known as Ivan the Terrible.

Russian population, and created the concept of Moscow as the New Jerusalem or, alternatively, Israel. Boris Gudonov<sup>195</sup> planned to construct Moscow along the lines of Jerusalem, while Nikon, Patriarch of Moscow, had his own vision of Moscow's destiny as the new Jerusalem.<sup>196</sup> Nowadays, the Russian Federation occasionally refers to the sacred concept of Moscow as the Third Rome: being a modern defender of Orthodoxy and the Russian identity.<sup>197</sup> Following Borenstein's reasoning, he was convinced that the Russian Federation did not need the possession of Kyiv to encourage its claims to legitimacy or selfhood. If Moscow was regarded as the 'New Jerusalem' and the 'Third Rome', Kyiv could never have been Rome.<sup>198</sup>

## (2) *Uncertainty*

Although it may not seem so, Russian authorities were faced with uncertainty themselves. The February 2014 revolution in Ukraine sparked a prompt revolutionary process in Crimea. As a result, it seemed that the political influencing process was hardly manageable for the Russian authorities, as they were also concerned about how conflicts were developing and about regime change, which they had observed over the last fifteen years. Regime change was no longer a violent intervention with bloodshed as had often been the case in the past. In recent occurrences the population started a series of protests and was able to organize itself to swiftly take-over power. Public protests against existing governments could be accelerated with the help of social media.<sup>199</sup> The Colour Revolutions and the social movements during the Arab Spring impressed the Russian authorities. Russia's Minister of Defence, Sergey Shoygu, stated that Colour Revolutions increasingly took on the form of warfare and were developed in accordance with the rules of warcraft.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Boris Gudonov was the first non-Rurik Czar of Russia.

<sup>196</sup> Plokhy, *The Origin of the Slavic Nations*, 146. And: Janet Martin, *Medieval Russia 980-1584*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Revised edition, Cambridge Medieval Textbooks, (Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 2007), 288. Also: Kati Parpei, *The Battle of Kulikovo Refought: "the First National Feat"*, (Leiden (NLD): Koninklijke (Royal) Brill NV, 2017), 54-57.

<sup>197</sup> Borenstein, *Plots Against Russia*, 212.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Sergey Sukhankin, 'Russia's Offensive and Defensive Use of Information Security, in: Glen Howard and Matthew Czekaj, *Russia's Military Strategy and Doctrine*, (Washington, DC (USA): The Jamestown Foundation, 2019), 308.

<sup>200</sup> Andrew Korybko, *Hybrid Wars: The Indirect Adaptive Approach to Regime Change*, (Moscow (RF): Institute for Strategic Studies and Predictions, 2015), 10.

These developments evoked the kind of uncertainty among the Russian authorities that arises as a result of not properly understanding what exactly is happening because of the rapid succession of events. Furthermore, the Russian authorities were concerned about the manageability of the situation.<sup>201</sup> These concerns caused some form of aleatory uncertainty, which arises, according to the Natural Science and Engineering approach, as a result of unpredictability of the behaviour of the involved groups of activists, as shown in section 4.2 ‘Uncertainty’. How far will the activists go? And what else will cause reactions? In practice, it turned out not to be as unmanageable as it had seemed to the Russian authorities. They soon came to grips with the situation.

In fact, there were three major programmes instigated by Russian authorities prior to and during the annexation of Crimea, which have certainly contributed to the development of uncertainty among Russia’s opponents. These Russian programmes not only caused uncertainty among Ukrainian decision makers, but also among the pro-Ukrainian part of the population in Crimea, including its politicians. The first programme had started long before the annexation and is named *pasportizatsiya* or the issuing of Russian passports. In the 1990s the Russian authorities started handing out citizenship and passports to members of the Russian minority in Crimea, a campaign they intensified in the 2000s. Ukrainian officials must have known about *pasportizatsiya* but produced no consistent policy response. In the early 2000s representatives of Crimean Tatars provided the Ukrainian officials with evidence that Russian consulates in Simferopol and Sevastopol were handing out Russian passports on a large scale, but nothing was done against it. In 2008 the Ukrainian media reported stories about the *pasportizatsiya*, but the Russian authorities denied any involvement. As a reaction, Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Volodymir Ohryzko confirmed that the two Russian consulates were issuing Russian passports to Ukrainian citizens in unknown numbers. In September 2008, members of the Ukrainian Parliament drafted legislation to toughen penalties for breaking the Ukrainian Law on Citizenship, which forbids dual citizenship, but the bill never passed.<sup>202</sup>

Following the physical occupation of Crimea, estimates suggested that during the month of March 2014 over a million Crimean residents out of a total population of 2.3 million citizens

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Agnia Grigas, *Beyond Crimea: The New Russian Empire*, (New Haven, CT (USA): Yale University Press, 2016), 120-121.



directly received Russian passports during a simplified naturalization process.<sup>203</sup> The pasportizatsiya shows the weakness of the Ukrainian authorities towards their policy on citizenships and the lack of response to this Russian programme. The Russian pasportizatsiya programme caused confusion, resulting in uncertainty. New Russian citizens were recruited through this pasportizatsiya programme without any consultation with the authorities of the country where those new Russians lived. The Ukrainian and Crimean authorities no longer knew where they stood; they had no overview anymore and were no longer in control of their residents.

The second programme was the sudden appearance of the ‘little green men’, the GRU-Spetsnaz, on 27 February 2014 in Simferopol and later all over Crimea. Ukrainian authorities and soldiers initially had no idea what the Russian Spetsnaz were up to and under what kind of mandate they operated. The Russian Spetsnaz and other unrecognizable Russian units created a high level of threat and commotion, making Ukrainian and Crimean authorities, soldiers and population feel threatened. Large snap inspection exercises carried out on Russian territory close to the border with Ukraine by the rest of the Russian forces greatly amplified the sense of threat. In this condition of uncertainty, many assumed that the Russian bear was not just roaring and growling but was about to invade Crimea, or perhaps the entire Ukraine, with a large force.

The third programme was setting up organized pro-Russian civilian groups to assist the Russian Spetsnaz with checkpoints and blocking and occupying government buildings. During the confrontations, for instance on 26 February 2014, between Crimean Tatars supporting the new Ukrainian government and pro-Russian protesters, the latter group was mobilised by Russian Unity, a pro-Russian political party backed by Russian security agents.<sup>204</sup> The GRU also used paramilitary organisations, like Cossacks, while Russian airborne troops dressed in uniforms of the local police, helped the police to maintain order among the Crimean people. Many journalists suggested that the Russian authorities were behind an apparent grassroots mobilisation campaign in Crimea to counter the Euromaidan movement. A faction called Stop Maidan emerged in Simferopol, their messages resonating

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<sup>203</sup> Sam Whrighton, ‘Authoritarian regime stabilization through legitimation, popular co-optation, and exclusion: Russian pasportizatsiya strategies in Crimea’, *Globalization*, 15 (2018) 2, 284.

<sup>204</sup> Olga Zeveleva, ‘How Ordinary Crimeans Helped Russia Annex Their Home’, Open Democracy Website, (14 March 2019). <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/how-ordinary-crimeas-helped-russia-annex-their-home/>, (27 October 2019).

with Russian-media statements, portraying Euromaidan protests as organized from abroad and illegal, and Euromaidan activists as fascist extremists. The faction also used direct appeals to Crimean citizens, suggesting people to sign a government petition demanding greater autonomy in Crimea.<sup>205</sup> All Russian initiatives and sponsored activities led to confusion among both Ukrainian and Crimean authorities and population. It created an ontological uncertainty that originates from rapidly changing circumstances. It was impossible for most Ukrainian and Crimean authorities to follow the deterrent and influencing activities that took place simultaneously, and to trace back who exactly initiated these activities. The Ukrainian and Crimean authorities could no longer see the forest for the trees. They were no longer able to oversee the rapid changes and judge them properly.

### *(3) Surprise and manipulated perceptions*

Not only were Ukrainian and Crimean leaders dumbfounded by what they saw when unidentified troops took over control of Crimea, most world leaders were also in shock, or at least highly surprised. Towards the end of February 2014, out of the blue soldiers with masked faces, weapons, helmets, and with Russian-style dark green uniforms without any insignia, appeared in Crimea. Russian authorities kept aloof during the first few weeks and carefully avoided questions about these masked and armed soldiers. As section 4.3 'Surprise' shows, Noorderwier regarded surprise as a confrontation with the unexpected or with new situations that are not immediately fully understood. This was exactly the case. It was a very quick and smooth action, and initially the whole world population was watching and keeping its breath, because it could not explain what happened.

In late February 2014 Putin was deeply shocked by the 'sudden' overthrow of President Yanukovich when he refused to establish close ties with the EU. For Putin it came like thunder in a clear sky. After his election to the Presidency of Ukraine in 2010, Yanukovich had blocked any inclination among Ukrainian politicians towards NATO-membership. Moreover, during the Autumn of 2013, Yanukovich favoured extensive cooperation between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. These intentions of Yanukovich were in line with President Putin's wishes, who was concerned that NATO would surround the western part of the Russian Federation. The opposite happened during Euromaidan in February 2014, when

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<sup>205</sup> Kofman et al, *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea*, 9-16.

Ukrainians demonstrated against Yanukovich's decisions. Roy Allison is of the opinion that President Putin had a bad wake-up call from a dream in which he hoped that the entire world admired the Russian Federation because of a magnificent edition of the Winter Olympics. Putin and other Russian authorities were outraged; they were convinced that Western leaders, most notably of NATO member states, were the driving force behind this critical political transformation that took place in Ukraine, and something needed to be done about it.<sup>206</sup>

In March 2015, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander (SACEUR) General Philip Breedlove explained to a wide NATO audience that Russia's occupation of Crimea was a massive concern to NATO. He coined the term 'informationally', an adverb, meaning the content as well as the dissemination of information. General Breedlove considered this 'informationally' as the most impressive part of Russia's approach. He emphasized that the Russians were able to exploit a conflict situation and create manipulated perceptions of this situation. All they did was to apply the mechanisms of information manipulation: create a false narrative, get this false narrative out quickly and support that false narrative with all the tools that were there, was Breedlove's opinion.<sup>207</sup> Meanwhile the rest of the world felt that they had been fooled. The situation in Crimea started as a form of civil unrest accompanied by many demonstrations, both for and against the new government in Ukraine, and within a month the Crimean Peninsula was annexed by the Russian Federation.

Magnus Christiansson, research fellow at the Swedish National Defence College, called it 'accumulated surprise', in accordance with the way Ephraim Kam in section 4.3 'Surprise' introduced the concept of surprise whereby something happens that goes beyond or against expectations. In Christiansson's view, it was not one event that caused the surprise. There were three major focal points. The first point presented itself when the Ukrainian President Yanukovich decided to drop out of the negotiations with the EU on 21 November 2013. It opened the eyes of many Ukrainians and Western political leaders, of whom many were taken by surprise. The second point is the Euromaidan massacre that took place after the demonstrations and quickly expanded to other parts of Ukraine. Many experts on Ukraine, social movements, geopolitics and conflicts had not foreseen that the developments during

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<sup>206</sup> Roy Allison, 'Russian "Deniable" Intervention in Ukraine: How and Why Russia Broke the Rules', *International Affairs*, 90 (2014) 6, 1257 (1255-1297).

<sup>207</sup> United States Department of Defense, 'NATO Commander Breedlove Discusses Implications of Hybrid War', DoD News Website, (23 March 2015), <https://dod.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/604334/nato-commander-breedlove-discusses-implications-of-hybrid-war/>, (11 October 2019).

Euromaidan on the Independence Square would follow each other so quickly. The third point is, what Christiansson called, Crimea invasion. Hardly anyone expected the Russian Federation to violate Ukraine's territorial integrity. Christiansson concluded that for none of the three focal points the Ukrainian leadership nor Western experts seemed to have comprehended which strategic, domestic and economic risks Yanukovich and Putin were willing to take. All three individual focal points already caused a certain amount of surprise, but all together they led to an accumulation.<sup>208</sup>

## Silence and denial

The annexation of Crimea was a classic example of Soviet and Russian authorities keeping silent and denying any incident or any involvement in a conflict. Section 2.2 '*Maskirovka*' presents other examples in Soviet and Russian history of keeping silent and denying any involvement, such as the withholding of any information about the Holodomor disaster in 1932-1933, the structural denial of the occupation of Eastern European countries during the Cold War, lies being told by Russian officials and denying facts about surface-to-surface placement of missiles on Cuban soil in 1962, staying aloof during the first phases after the Chernobyl disaster in 1986, and denying the sinking of the Kursk submarine in 2000, for which the Russian authorities rejected any international aid. Keeping silent and denying any form of involvement and responsibility during an incident can be considered as a form of concealment to prevent other nations or the media from revealing delicate political, geopolitical or military matters.

When asked by a Bloomberg correspondent at a press conference on 4 March 2014, President Putin denied that the masked soldiers in green uniforms were Russians, calling them 'local self-defence units', who may have acquired Russian-looking uniforms from local military shops.<sup>209</sup> Six weeks later, on 17 April 2014, President Putin changed his mind and admitted Russia's involvement as a way of protecting the local population in an annual special 'Direct Line with Vladimir Putin'.<sup>210</sup> He specified that he did not hide that Russia's task was to

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<sup>208</sup> Magnus Christiansson, *Strategic Surprise in Ukraine Crisis: Agendas, Expectations and Organizational Dynamics in the EU Eastern Partnership Until the Annexation of Crimea 2014*, (Stockholm (SWE): Försvarshögskolan (Swedish National Defence College), 2014), 12-20.

<sup>209</sup> Steven Piller, Watch Out for Little Green Men, Brookings Website, (7 July 2014), <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2014/07/07-watch-out-little-green-men-pifer>, (11 October 2019).

<sup>210</sup> President of Russian Federation, 'Direct Line with Vladimir Putin', Website of the President of the Russian Federation, (17 April 2014), <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20796>, (11 October 2019).

ensure the conditions for the Crimean people to express of the free will. Later in the interview President Putin stated: ‘It was for this reason that our military servicemen were standing behind the self-defence units of Crimea.’<sup>211</sup> The obscure, masked men in Crimea were dubbed the ‘little green men’ by the Ukrainians, which was taken over by Western news media. The Russians, in contrast, called them the ‘polite people’.<sup>212</sup>



Figure 8.6 Polite people banner<sup>213</sup>, which was shown all over Crimea<sup>214</sup>

One year later, President Putin declared in the documentary ‘Crimea: Homeward Bound’, that he had thought about bringing Russia’s nuclear arsenal into a state of alert during the tension of the Ukrainian conflict.<sup>215</sup> That was a strong and impressive statement, sending a clear message: ‘Don’t trifle with Russia!’, leaving the rest of the world puzzled by his actions and rhetoric. It proved that the Russian Federation was able to impress the rest of the world with its deceitful strategic communications.

<sup>211</sup> Ilya Yashin and Olga Shorina, *Putin. War: Based on Materials from Boris Nemtsov*, An Independent Expert Report, Translated by Catherine Fitzpatrick, (Moscow (RF): Free Russia Foundation, 2015), 13.

<sup>212</sup> Alexey Nikolsky, ‘Little, Green and Polite: The Creation of Russian Special Operations Forces’. In: Colby Howard and Ruslan Pukhov, *Brothers Armed: Military Aspects of the Crisis in Ukraine*, 2nd Edition, Originally published in 2014, (Minneapolis, MN (USA): East View Press, 2015), 124-125.

<sup>213</sup> The text on the banner reads: ‘Politeness conquers cities’, and ‘2014, - A year of culture in Russia.’

<sup>214</sup> Zaxarmant, ‘Вежливость города берет, а хамство разрушает страны’ (Politeness Takes the City, and Rudeness Destroys the Country). Livejournal Website.

<sup>215</sup> ‘Crimea: Homeward Bound’. Also: David Stout, ‘Vladimir Putin Admits to Weighing Nuclear Option During Crimea Conflict’, TIME Website, (16 March 2015). <http://time.com/3745522/vladimir-putin-russia-nukes-crimea-ukraine/>, (11 October 2019).

## Active measures and *dezinformatsiya*

The annexation of Crimea is best-known for the use of active measures and *dezinformatsiya*. Many publications appeared on Russia's use of *dezinformatsiya* from 2014 to the present, but only a few of them demonstrated in-depth knowledge of how the Russian authorities have applied this form of deception. This subsection is divided into four parts: (1) taking over control, (2) Russian media, (3) narratives, (4) conspiracy theories, (5) creating unrest, and (6) Services, units and proxies.

### *(1) Taking over control*

The entire course of events during the annexation of Crimea, from the take-over of the Crimean Parliament in Simferopol to the referendum and the final annexation, was designed in a sophisticated effort to control the flow of information. Russian information warfare emerged across the entire spectrum of communication, targeting physical infrastructure, virtually-created reality as well as knowledge and perceptions of opposing leaders, being the physical, virtual and cognitive elements. During the riots in Ukraine and Crimea leading up to the annexations, telephone company and also Internet provider *Ukrtelecom*, at the time Ukraine's and Crimea's monopolist, reported much damage to their fibre-optic trunk cables, as well as the temporary seizure and occupation of its company offices.<sup>216</sup> Furthermore, Ukrainian government officials' mobile telephones and tablets were subject to 'IP-telephonic' attacks.<sup>217</sup> Whereas Ukrainian government websites and news portals suffered from DDoS-attacks and website defacement, which is an attack that changes the visual appearance of a website or webpage. The success of information warfare is always hard to measure, but these attacks most likely hampered the Ukrainian officials in gaining a clear picture and an understanding of what was happening in Crimea. It is believed that pro-Russian hacker

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<sup>216</sup> Margarita Jainter, 'Russian Information Warfare: Lessons from Ukraine', in: Kenneth Geers (Ed), *Cyber War in Perspective: Russian Aggression Against Ukraine*, (Tallinn (EST): NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, 2015), 91. And: Tim Maurer, 'Cyber Proxies and the Crisis in Ukraine', in: Kenneth Geers (Ed), *Cyber War in Perspective: Russian Aggression Against Ukraine*, (Tallinn (EST): NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, 2015), 80-81.

<sup>217</sup> Jainter, 'Russian Information Warfare', 91. And: Maurer, 'Cyber Proxies and the Crisis in Ukraine', 81.

groups, such as CyberBerkut<sup>218</sup>, supported by Russian authorities, were behind these attacks.<sup>219</sup>

## (2) *Russian media*

The media part of the Russian information campaigns that were conducted during the annexation of Crimea suggested a close and centrally organised coordination of messaging, as well as many outlets to reach all sectors of the target audience. The target audience ranged from the domestic Russian population to Western World public opinion, but the most important target were the Ukrainian officials. Russia Today (currently only RT), Russia Direct and others tailored their sophisticated arguments to the expectations of their intended readers and viewers to serve the interest of the Russian authorities. In this way the media effort ranged from simple abuse, through confusion with half-truths, to refined arguments. It should be emphasized that the English-language reports broadcast on television and Internet or related publications are only part of a broad programme of Russian information warfare. That programme covered multiple languages and included ‘false flag’ media, which are sock-puppet<sup>220</sup> websites set up to resemble genuine media outlets. Many times, their news feeds were richly fed with manipulated or controversial reporting that tied in with the Russian narratives.<sup>221</sup> The concept of *Russkiy Mir* became the essence of Russia’s political narrative, aimed both at domestic and foreign audiences. The dissemination of the narrative started at the top, in the person of President Putin, and descended pyramid-wise through new and traditional media all the way down to the public.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> CyberBerkut is a modern organised group of pro-Russian hacktivists, and named after the Ukrainian security force Berkut, which was notorious for its violent repression. The members of the community tend to remain anonymous. Their goals are fighting neo-fascism and, in their opinion, arbitrary power in Ukraine. See: Andrei Soshnikov, ‘Inside a pro-Russian Propaganda Machine in Ukraine’, BBC News Website, (13 November 2017). <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-41915295>, (27 October 2019).

<sup>219</sup> Jainter, ‘Russian Information Warfare’, 91. And: Maurer, ‘Cyber Proxies and the Crisis in Ukraine’, 81.

<sup>220</sup> Sock-puppet is an online identity with the aim to deceive. The term refers to the manipulation of a simple hand puppet made from a sock. The term also includes: (1) misleading uses of online identities in order to praise, defend or support persons or organization, (2) to manipulate public opinion, or (3) to circumvent a suspension or ban from a website. See: Brad Stone and Matt Richtel, ‘The Hand That Controls the Sock Puppet Could Get Slapped’, The New York Times Website, (16 July 2017).

<https://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/16/technology/16blog.html?ex=1342238400&en=9a3424961f9d2163&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>, (28 October 2019).

<sup>221</sup> Keir Giles, *Russia’s ‘New’ Tool for Confronting the West: Continuity and Innovation in Moscow’s Exercise of Power*, Research Paper, Russia and Eurasia Programme, (London (UK): Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2016), 30-31.

<sup>222</sup> Jainter, ‘Russian Information Warfare’, 92-93.

The Levada Centre in Moscow, one of Russia's last independent research and polling institutions, indicated that in 2014 the Russian population was fully aware of the West's response to what the Russian Federation had done in Crimea. Two contrasting ideas emerged among the Russian population that clashed bitterly. The first idea was that the Russian Federation had done something great and that the annexation of Crimea was justified. The second idea was that the Russian Federation had broken international and moral laws and had overplayed its hands in the annexation. The first idea got the most supporters by far, while proponents of the second idea, who dared to speak out loud, were publicly condemned as traitors.<sup>223</sup>

In March 2014 President Putin addressed Russia's Federal Assembly, consisting of the State Duma, the lower house, and the Federation Council, the Upper House. Putin warned the members of the Assembly that Western politicians threatened the Russian Federation, not only with sanctions but also with increasingly serious problems on the domestic front. 'I would like to know what it is they have in mind exactly,' Putin wondered, 'Action by a Fifth Column, this disparate bunch of national traitors', using the word *предатель* or *predatel*, which is Russian for traitor.<sup>224</sup> In March 2014, a Russian website appeared, *predate.net*, listing traitors along with their statements, most of whom were critical of Russia's actions in Crimea. The main page of the website contains a quote that reads: 'We believe that Russian citizens who insult our soldiers and cast doubt on the need to fight neo-Nazis are traitors, no matter whether they are talented journalists, writers, and directors.'<sup>225</sup>

During the Euromaidan protests the official Russian media, like Rossiya 1 and *Pervyy Kanal*, meaning Channel One, portrayed the protesters as World War II collaborators and radical nationalists getting together in favour of European integration, and ready to carry out ethnic cleansing. After Yanukovich had left office, Russian television channels started to refer to the new Ukrainian leaders as 'the Kiev Junta'.

In an earlier stage the Russian authorities supported by the Russian media devoted a tremendous amount of attention to glorifying actions of the Red Army during the Great

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<sup>223</sup> Alexy Levinson, 'Public Opinion and Propaganda in Russia', Commentary, European Council on Foreign Relations Website, (28 July 2015).

[https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_public\\_opinion\\_and\\_propaganda\\_in\\_russia3080](https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_public_opinion_and_propaganda_in_russia3080), (25 March 2020).

<sup>224</sup> Vladimir Putin, op. cit. in: Dougherty, *Everyone Lies*, 28.

<sup>225</sup> Dougherty, *Everyone Lies*, 28.



Patriotic War. President Putin made this Russian war heroism part of the Russian identity. In 2005, state news agency RIA Novosti created a new tradition, namely the mass wearing of the orange-black Saint George ribbons<sup>226</sup>, for the annual 9 May commemoration, in which the Russians reflect on the end of World War II: ‘I remember, I’m proud!’ The ribbon also became popular in Ukraine, and many Ukrainians wore it during their Victory Day celebrations. In 2014, Russian authorities projected the Great Patriotic War rhetoric and symbolism onto the current political situation. The Ukrainian government became the ‘Nazi’ government, and the Russian Federation was once again fighting fascism. The Saint George ribbon transferred from a symbol of commemoration to an attribute of current resistance. Wearing such a ribbon meant being an advocate of the separation of Crimea from Ukraine and at the same time being an enemy of the Nazi regime in Kyiv.<sup>227</sup>



Figure 8.7 Putin wearing the Saint George ribbon during a victory parade in Sevastopol in May 2014<sup>228</sup>

During the last weeks of March 2014 Russian politicians wore the Saint George ribbon during sessions in the State Duma to signal approval for Russia’s takeover of Crimea.<sup>229</sup> In April 2014 over 100 million Saint George ribbons had been distributed around the world. Many

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<sup>226</sup> The ribbon of Saint George is derived from a famous Russian award, the Order of Saint George, which was introduced by Czarina Catharina the Great in 1769. The Order of Saint George was and still is a Russian military award for distinction in battle. The cross itself contains Saint George on horseback slaying a dragon, while the ribbon has the colours orange and black, symbolising the fire and the powder fumes on the battlefield.

<sup>227</sup> Yashin and Shorina, *Putin. War*, 9-10.

<sup>228</sup> Haaretz, ‘Putin Hails Russian Revival During Visit to Crimea’, Haaretz Website, (9 May 2014). <https://www.haaretz.com/putin-makes-first-visit-to-crimea-1.5247723> (28 October 2019).

<sup>229</sup> Soraya Sarhaddi Nelson, ‘With Ribbons, Russians Show Support for Takeover in Crimea’, National Public Radio Website, (25 March 2014). <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2014/03/25/294336259/with-ribbons-russians-show-support-for-takeover-in-crimea?t=1575208181543>, (28 October 2019).

proud Russians wore the ribbon after the annexation of Crimea as an expression of their Russian identity. As a reaction the Ukrainian government dispensed with the ribbon as a symbol of Ukraine's Victory Day remembrance.<sup>230</sup>

Since the re-election of Vladimir Putin in 2011, the Russian Federation gradually controlled the television channels. President Putin sought to weaken Russia's growing opposition movement by putting pressure on what remained of the independent media. These repressing developments fitted into a broader strategy in which he tried to 'eliminate or marginalize potential alternatives to his rule by manipulating elections, limiting the scope of civil society activities, restricting the independence of the judiciary and critical business interests'.<sup>231</sup>

Media ownership by state or government-friendly business concerns, like Gazprom, became a key characteristic of Russia's media architecture.<sup>232</sup> Control of the media by Russian authorities ensured a systematic control of the narratives.<sup>233</sup> Such control can only be successful as part of an influence operation, which requires deliberate planning and coordination among the parties involved, not only state-owned media outlets but also private businesses and non-governmental organisations for the synchronisation and implementation of information campaigns.<sup>234</sup> Independent Russian polling agency Levada Centre announced in August 2014 that Putin's approval rating stood at a 'solid 64 percent', while after the

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<sup>230</sup> Andrew Foxall, 'Poppies Vs Ribbons: The War of Symbols Between Ukraine and Russia', Forbes Website, (14 May 2014). <https://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2014/05/14/poppies-vs-ribbons-the-war-of-symbols-between-ukraine-and-russia/> (28 October 2019).

<sup>231</sup> Robert Orttung and Christopher Walker, 'Putin and Russia's Crippled Media', Russian Analytic Digest, No. 123, (Zürich (SZ): Center for Security Studies, 21 February 2013), 2.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> The NATO StratCom CoE describes a narrative as follows: a narrative can be considered as 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. See: NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (NATO StratCom CoE), *Analysis of Russia's Information Campaign Against Ukraine: Examining Non-military Aspects of the Crisis in Ukraine from a Strategic Communications Perspective*, Annex 6 'Narrative Control', (Riga (LTV): NATO StratCom Centre of Excellence, 2015), 39.

<sup>234</sup> NATO StratCom CoE, *Analysis of Russia's Information Campaign Against Ukraine*, 16.

annexation of Crimea the approval rating grew rapidly to a 'massive 84 percent'. In the same period, the proportion of the population that thought the country was moving in the right direction increased from 40 to 62 percent.<sup>235</sup>

### (3) Narratives

When used in an influence operation, a narrative is usually based on an unfinished story or an unsolved problem. Such a narrative activates the audience and requires a solution. During Russia's information campaign against Ukraine before and during the annexation of Crimea, the unfinished narrative was based on the notion that 'fascism had not been extinguished', and the audience is called upon to 'defeat and destroy fascists and Bandera-followers'.<sup>236</sup> Stepan Bandera was a controversial Ukrainian political activist and leader of the Ukrainian nationalist movement in Western Ukraine. In the 1930s and early 1940s this movement fought for Ukrainian independence from the Soviet Union. In their fight against the Soviets, the movement collaborated with the Nazis. Bandera thought that Nazi German troops could remove the Soviet Union from Ukraine. In 1941 he and his movement declared an independent Ukrainian State, but Hitler was far from interested in an independent Ukraine. Bandera was arrested and transferred to concentration camp *Sachsenhausen* from which he was released in 1944. Even after the war, he continued to fight for an independent Ukraine. However, one day in 1959 he was poisoned by a KGB-agent in Munich and died the same evening.<sup>237</sup>

Bandera became an icon for those fighting for the Ukrainian national cause, while the Soviet authorities considered him a 'bogeyman' Nazi collaborator. This is the reason why in 2014 the Russian media called the new Ukrainian government *banderovtsy*. Russian authorities hoped to denigrate the idea of Euromaidan and to cause fear amongst Ukrainian audiences about the abuse of human rights of non-Ukrainians.<sup>238</sup> NATO's Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (NATO StratCom CoE) in Riga, Latvia, made an analysis of the Russian

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<sup>235</sup> Sam Greene and Graeme Robertson, 'Explaining Putin's Popularity: Rallying round the Russian Flag', The Washington Post Website (9 September 2020). <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/09/09/explaining-putins-popularity-rallying-round-the-russian-flag/>, (2 March 2020).

<sup>236</sup> NATO StratCom CoE, *Analysis of Russia's Information Campaign Against Ukraine*, 16.

<sup>237</sup> David Marples, 'Stepan Bandera: The Resurrection of a Ukrainian National Hero', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 58 (2006) 4, 555-566. And: Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera: The Life and Afterlife of a Ukrainian Nationalist: Fascism, Genocide, and Cult*, (Stuttgart (GER): Ibidem Verlag (Ibidem-Press), 2014), 91-116 and 241-290.

<sup>238</sup> NATO StratCom CoE, *Analysis of Russia's Information Campaign Against Ukraine*, 16-17.

narratives and came to the conclusion that the Russian media systematically created a feeling of fear and anxiety among ethnic Russian and non-Ukrainian groups. During the start of Euromaidan, the entire Ukrainian society was apprehensive about its future and feared a destabilisation of Ukrainian economy. A possible cooperation between Ukraine and the EU was ridiculed because the EU was thought to be only motivated by self-interest. As the events during Euromaidan escalated, the narrative changed to terrify the Russian-speaking part of Eastern Ukraine: Ukrainian nationalists were brought forward in news reports suggesting that the Russian-speaking population in Eastern Ukraine would be physically ill-treated, properties would be confiscated, the Russian language would be prohibited, etc. These narratives were instrumental in gaining the support of the Russian Federation's population for the policy of the Russian authorities towards Ukraine and Euromaidan.<sup>239</sup>

NATO's StratCom CoE analysed the dominant themes of the Russian narrative, which were:

1. *'Clash of Civilisation'*, referring to the theory introduced by Samuel Huntington, the Russian authorities drew a virtual line of cultural differences between the West and the orthodox civilization of the East, to which Ukraine belonged according to the Russian authorities.
2. *'Ukrainians and Russians: one nation, united under the Russkiy Mir'*, during the opening of the 'Third Assembly of the Russkiy Mir' in Moscow in 2009, Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill stated: "The nations which live on the territory of historic Russian land [including Belarus and Ukraine], must feel that they belong to a common civilisation and perceive the Russkiy Mir as a Project beyond borders," and the Russian authorities adopted Kirill's view.
3. *'Ukraine is not an independent nation'*, although Russian politicians often used the term 'brother nations', in practice there is a strict hierarchy with the Russian Federation at the top and the rights of the Ukrainians to self-determination are ignored,
4. *'The Great Patriotic War continues, Ukrainian fascists have not been eliminated yet'*, the application of a war mentality was not coincidental as it was related to the heroic actions of the Russian population and the Red Army during World War II. The fabrication of a historic narrative fed into certain cultural pre-dispositions, and had to induce an appeal to Russian affection and then incite certain actions,

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 17.

5. *'The West is divided'*, which was an attempt to make the West impotent and risk-averse when encountering the Russian narrative. Germany got special attention; it was claimed that it should support Crimea's integration into the Russian Federation since the Russian Federation fully supported the reunification of Germany.
6. *'Russian actions are legitimate'*, the Russian authorities, taking the lead in Russian civilisation with its own legal norms and interpretation of international law, instrumentalised laws as a means of legitimising their actions, like the 'legal' self-determination of Crimea and making parallels to Operation Allied Force, the NATO operation in Kosovo in 1999.<sup>240</sup>

In addition to the themes mentioned in NATO StratCom CoE's research into the information campaign during the annexation of Crimea, the Russian authorities initially created the myth of Russia's non-involvement in the conflict. Hence, the Russian authorities created and sustained their campaign with the skilful manipulation of mythological tales and glorifications that carried emotionally and historically loaded meanings and references and which also evoked rumours and conspiracy fictions. As explained before, the Great Patriotic War narrative was one of the important narratives with its own lexicon, like *karatel*, meaning punisher, which immediately activates the hideous memory of Nazi atrocities against civilians in occupied territory, as well as fascism, Nazi, anti-Semitism, *banderovtsy* and partisan, the last term to distinguish pro-Russian activists and fighters. The terms anti-Russian and *Russophobic* became part of the official parlance of the Russian authorities, sometimes in combination with Great Patriotic War vocabulary. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov condemned the dismantling of a war monument in Ukraine during Euromaidan and denounced it as a 'barbaric Russophobic action'. Lavrov concluded his speech with the words: 'besmearing of historical monuments in Ukraine is a mockery of the memory of the warriors, who were the liberators of Ukraine.'<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 17-19.

<sup>241</sup> Katri Pynnöniemi, 'The Metanarratives of Russian Strategic Deception', in: Katri Pynnöniemi and András Rácz (Ed), *Fog of Falsehood: Russian Strategy of Deception and Conflict in Ukraine*, FIIA Report 45, (Helsinki (FIN): Ulkopoliittinen Instiyyutti (the Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 2016), 72-78 (71-119). And: Elizaveta Gaufman, 'Memory, Media and Securitization: Russian Media Framing of the Ukrainian Crisis', *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society*, 1 (2015) 1, 141-173.

#### *(4) Conspiracy narratives*

In the run up to the annexation of Crimea, Russian state-controlled media had churned out anti-Western propaganda. The Russian authorities designed this propaganda to convince the Russian-speaking population that the breakdown of the Soviet Union was a mistake and that with all its references about ‘human rights’ the West only wanted to occupy former Soviet nations because of their unexplored natural resources. Prior to and also during the annexation of Crimea, the Russian authorities and their media used many conspiracy theories about topics related to the West and the annexation in order to promote cynicism and a perception of isolationism.<sup>242</sup> Meanwhile the Russian authorities tightened the control of information online in the Russian Federation, in other words, they imposed censorship. An example is the shutdown on Russian-based social networks of thirteen pages of groups linked to the Ukrainian protest movement by Roskomnadzor. This happened on 3 March 2014. A week later, Roskomnadzor issued Lenta.ru, a popular news website, a warning for publishing material of an ‘extreme nature’, citing an interview with one of Ukraine’s far-right leaders. The editor of the website was forced to fire the journalist, who was responsible for the article featuring the interview in question.<sup>243</sup>

Ilya Yablokov, a lecturer in Russian language at the University of Leeds, concluded that Russian politics changed after Vladimir Putin returned as President of the Russian Federation in 2012. The new Putin Presidency marked a strong increase in the application of conspiracy theories by Russian authorities in their communication of the Russian policy. The annexation of Crimea and later the Ukrainian conflict in the Donbas region were an exceptional stage in the development of the creation and usage of conspiracy theories. The increased production and consumption of anti-Western conspiracy theories became the norm in everyday Russian life. The simplicity of conspiratorial explanations with its straightforward separation of the world into tough contrasts, like the ‘righteous Russians’ versus the ‘cunning Americans and Westerners’ supporting the ‘bloody Ukrainian fascists’, helped shape Putin’s notion of the *Russkiy Mir*. The Russian media and public figures, such as commentators, intellectuals and politicians, all loyal to the Russian authorities, interpreted Euromaidan as the outcome of subversive Western actions aimed at brainwashing Ukrainian citizens, while intervention in

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<sup>242</sup> Konstantin von Eggert, ‘All Politics are Local: Crimea Explained’, *World Affairs*, 177 (2014) 3, 51-52.

<sup>243</sup> Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, *The Red Web: The Struggle Between Russia’s Digital Dictators and the New Online Revolutionaries*, (New York, NY (USA): PublicAffairs, 2015), 260-261.

Crimea had been justified by protecting compatriots abroad from Ukrainian fascists backed by the West.<sup>244</sup> The conspiracy theories were meant to strengthen the Russian identity in the Russian Federation, but also to instill fear in Ukrainians in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea, and to scare Ukrainian and Crimean leaders, especially those who favoured Western support.

### *(5) Creating unrest*

Active measures not only include an information campaign with propaganda measures and conspiracy theories, it also contains other influence operations, like the agents of influence programmes that could organise and train local ad-hoc militias and other forms of creating unrest and chaos. It turned out that not only the Russian intelligence services were committed to this task. After the release of the so-called Glazyev tapes in 2016, it became clear that even the highest echelons of the Russian authorities were involved in creating unrest in Ukraine immediately after they had recovered from the shock that Euromaidan had caused.<sup>245</sup> Sergey Glazyev, a Russian politician and advisor to President Putin on economic integration and a full member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, can unmistakably be heard on the tapes orchestrating pro-Russian protests and mass riots in Odessa, Kharkiv and other Ukrainian cities, just after Euromaidan in February 2014.<sup>246</sup> During his telephone calls with a number of people in Ukraine, Glazyev gave clear instructions on how to increase the impact of the riots and extend them to occupying governmental buildings.<sup>247</sup> During the telephone calls, Glazyev also told his collocutors that the riots and demonstrations must look as if they were grassroots and inspired by local residents, despite the fact that they were organised and funded by the Russian Federation.<sup>248</sup> One of the wiretaps contained the following statements by Glazyev:

Specially trained people should knock out “Banderovtsy” from the building council, and then they should arrange the meeting of the regional state administration, gather executive authorities. (...) It is very important for us the Regional State Administration to gather now.

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<sup>244</sup> Ilya Yablokov, *Fortress Russia: Conspiracy Theories in the Post-Soviet World*, (Cambridge (UK): Polity Press, 2018), 183-187.

<sup>245</sup> Alya Shandra and Robert Seely, *The Surkov Leaks: The Inner Working of Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine*, Occasional Paper, (London (UK): Royal United Services Institute, 2019), 36.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Halyah Coynash, ‘Glazyev Tapes Debunk Russia's Lies About the Annexation of Crimea and Undeclared War Against Ukraine’, Website of the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group, (26 February 2019). <http://khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1551054011>, (29 October 2019).

<sup>248</sup> Halyah Coynash, ‘Odesa Smoking Gun Leads Directly to Moscow’, Website of the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group, (26 February 2019). <http://khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1473972066>, (29 October 2019).

And for this it must be provided, as it was done in Kharkiv – in Kharkiv people came into [the regional administration], threw all “Banderovtsy” out, found the ammunition depot, now engage its disposal and will gather Regional State Administration and will also appeal to our President.<sup>249</sup>

Organising local militias and civil riots requires a lot of planning and preparation time. NATO’s AJP-5, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Planning of Operations* indicates that a planning process in combination with the preparation and execution of a major operation, such as the annexation of Crimea, is time-consuming. It takes a lot of time, weeks rather than days. Especially the time-space-force factor is important, which relates to the capability to project forces into a region, and the speed with which such a force can build up decisive capabilities in the given area. The more complicated an operation area is and the more different units and actors with different tasks take part in an operation, the more critical the factor time will be to get all activities orchestrated.<sup>250</sup>

Crimea was a complicated operation area with pro-Euromaidan and pro-Russian demonstrations. It takes time and high-quality intelligence to get a full understanding of the situation in Crimea prior to the annexation. In addition, during the annexation Russian agents of influence, special forces and conventional forces participated in the operation. Their actions had to be well coordinated, and synchronised with all the information operations, which is overall very time-consuming. It is therefore questionable whether President Putin did not order the annexation of Crimea earlier than the night of 22-23 February 2014, as he himself indicated in ‘Crimea, Homeward Bound’. Only a few days later masked soldiers in green uniforms entered the scene, side by side with proxies and armed voluntary citizens. Ostensibly President Putin asked the Russian State Duma to authorise the use of troops in order to ‘protect the ethnic Russian population’, which was approved by the Duma on 1 March 2014. In reality ‘Putin’s stealth invasion’, as Russia’s annexation is dubbed by some Ukrainians in Crimea, must already have been planned long before clashes broke out and

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<sup>249</sup> English Translation of Audio Evidence of Putin’s Adviser Glazyev Involvement in the War in Ukraine, Translation by UA Position, YouTube Website, (26 August 2016).

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=20&v=0w78QuxBUe0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=20&v=0w78QuxBUe0), (29 October 2019).

<sup>250</sup> NATO Standardization Office, *AJP-5: Allied Joint Doctrine for the Planning of Operations*, (Brussels (BEL): NATO Headquarters, 2019), A-2.



buildings were seized, and the masked soldiers in green uniforms had already been around in the peninsula for a few days.<sup>251</sup>

### *(6) Services, units and proxies*

Of the three main Russian intelligence services, the FSB and GRU were the most active both in Ukraine and Crimea. Both services were active in Ukraine before the annexation with targeted killings of dangerous opposition leaders or members, while terrorist attacks were aimed less at specific individual casualties than at creating an atmosphere of fear and insecurity.<sup>252</sup> Spetsnaz-GRU belonging to the KSO, together with units of 810<sup>th</sup> Independent Naval Infantry Brigade belonging to the Black Sea Fleet, seized important choke points and infrastructure. On 27 February 2014, around 50 men belonging to Spetsnaz-GRU of the KSO dressed unrecognizably and pretending to be local militia seized and occupied the Crimean Parliament building. Later they were supported by Russian Airborne troops.<sup>253</sup> These activities created both surprise and manipulated perception, which in turn could lead to chaos and confusion.

Russian KSO units participating in the annexation of Crimea received orders not to open fire unless provoked. They also deployed an unusually large number of ‘normal’ Russian officers who communicated with their Ukrainian counterparts at blockaded military bases in order to resolve tension and to offer preferential terms for surrender, or invitations to join the Russian Armed Forces.<sup>254</sup> The GRU also organised local self-defence volunteers, drawn from locally organised criminal groups and individuals loyal to the pro-Russian Crimean premier-in-waiting, Sergey Aksyonov. These local forces provided much less professional but highly visible gunmen to guard the government buildings, working closely together with pro-Russian proxy groups as the Night Wolves and PMCs like ChVK Wagner.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Constantine Pleshakov, *The Crimean Nexus: Putin's War and the Clash of Civilizations*, (New Haven, CT (USA): Yale University Press, 2017), 63-64.

<sup>252</sup> Galeotti, *Putin's Hydra*, 7.

<sup>253</sup> Galeotti, *Spetsnaz*, 50.

<sup>254</sup> McDermott, *Brothers Disunited*, 15-17.

<sup>255</sup> Mark Galeotti, *Hybrid War or Gibrinaya Voyna? Getting Russi'a Non-linear Military Challenge Right*, (London (UK): Mayak Intelligence Ltd, 2016), 52-63.



Figure 8.8 President Putin with 'The Night Wolves', riding through Crimea in 2019<sup>256</sup>

The GRU also worked closely together with mercenaries from private military security companies, like ChVK Wagner, and other paramilitary and violent groups like the Night Wolves motorcycle gang led by Aleksandr Zaldostanov, 'The Surgeon'. The military value of these mercenaries is often debateable, but they are considerably enthusiastic and idealistic, and a perfect cover for the Russian troops whose presence was denied. They are also great instigators of chaos and confusion, and often cause civil unrest and disobedience that is difficult to attribute to the Russian authorities.<sup>257</sup> Ukrainian military personnel became disoriented and isolated leading to confusion and indecisiveness.<sup>258</sup> At the same time, local police and Berkut in Crimea almost immediately went over to the Russian side.<sup>259</sup> It was a new chapter in the agents of influence programme.

## Reflexive control

Section 2.3 'Reflexive control' showed a checklist for practitioners and researchers of reflexive control with four steps: (1) power pressure, (2) dezinformatsiya, (3) affecting the opponent's decision-making algorithms, and (4) modifying decision-making time. This

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<sup>256</sup> Newsbeezzer, 'Putin Rode with Night Wolves in Crimea, Newsbeezzer Website (19 August 2019).

<https://newsbeezzer.com/hungaryeng/putin-rode-with-night-wolves-in-the-crimea/> (29 October 2019).

<sup>257</sup> Galeotti, *Hybrid War or Gibrinaya Voina?* 52-63.

<sup>258</sup> McDermott, *Brothers Disunited*, 17.

<sup>259</sup> Kofman et al, *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea*, 27.

checklist will now be used step by step to ascertain to what extent reflexive control was applied during the annexation of Crimea.

The first step is power pressure. Power pressure manifested itself as used by Russian KSO forces in green uniforms without any rank insignia or unit badges. The Russian forces also used unknown and easily organised armed local volunteer groups. Both activities created a great deal of disorientation. Within a few days the Russian KSO forces, assisted by Russian navy infantry, seized important infrastructure and key points putting pressure on the Ukrainian and Crimean leadership. Then there was the presence of Russian troops, an exercise along the border with Ukraine, which also constituted a level of power pressure on Ukrainian leaders. Many Western countries pointed a finger at the Russian Federation after they recovered from the initial shock, but Russian authorities continued to categorically deny anything, which also created a form of power pressure internationally.

The second step includes measures to present manipulated information about the situation, or *dezinformatsiya*. Russian domestic and international media used World War II terms, like Nazis, fascism, *karatels*, and *banderovtsy*, to portray the Ukrainians and the new Ukrainian government became the fascist junta. Russian media also claimed that the Ukrainian authorities committed atrocities that never took place, using conspiracy theories.

The third step is affecting the opponent's decision-making algorithms. Russian authorities initially disguised their intentions in Crimea and repeatedly denied involvement. There were unidentifiable masked soldiers in green uniforms, supposedly not Russians, and military activities, such as manning roadblocks and blockades of government buildings. Local armed civilians conducted these activities, working together with these 'nationless' soldiers, who all of a sudden appeared in Crimea. Ukrainian and pro-Ukrainian Crimean leaders did not know how to deal with the situation, and the overwhelming Russian activities incapacitated their operational thinking.

The fourth step is modifying the decision-making time. Russian authorities never issued an official declaration of war. KSO troops without rank insignia or other identifiers suddenly conquered the government buildings in Simferopol, which gave Ukrainian and Crimean leaders no time to respond. Moreover, Ukraine had just installed a new president and government, who did everything to control the situation in Kyiv and other parts of the

Ukraine, while the Crimean Parliament struggled whether to choose the Ukrainian or the Russian side.

Selhorst, who researched Russian perception management, came to similar conclusions. He found that the Russian Federation sought for a quick psychological victory rather than a physical conquest obtained after a prolonged conflict. The Russian authorities wanted to let the reflexive control mechanisms do their job and used the second and third order effects to annex Crimea. Culminating psychological effects, such as disorientation, suggestion and concealment, overcame provocation. In the end, it led to exhaustion, paralysis and a perception of despair among the Ukrainian leadership.<sup>260</sup>

### *Maskirovka*

As explained in section 2.2, *maskirovka* is the backbone of Russian deception warfare. The Russian authorities applied *maskirovka* methods prior to and during the annexation of Crimea in order to deceive Ukrainian leadership and pro-Ukrainian leaders there, and they were to a certain extent effective. First, it is necessary to have an uncertain situation in order to make deception operations possible. From November 2013 to February 2014, Euromaidan had created an uncertain situation throughout Ukraine, subsequently spreading to Crimea, where the differences between opponents and advocates of the new Ukrainian government became increasingly clear. The situation became even more uncertain for Crimea when suddenly unknown masked soldiers in green uniforms who eventually turned out to be Russian military occupied important nodes and buildings. Euromaidan, incidentally, occurred as a response to popular dissatisfaction with President Yanukovich's refusal to sign an agreement with the EU. The Russian authorities did not anticipate these developments. However, it then led the Russian authorities to take their chances and to act opportunistically. The riots that subsequently erupted in Kyiv and in other places in the Ukraine were partly controlled by the Russian authorities. In this way they managed to reinforce the feeling of uncertainty, making it easier for their security forces to use deception.

Second, Russian authorities managed to maintain the appearance that they were not involved in the takeover of Crimea. They initially remained silent, and although the international

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<sup>260</sup> Selhorst, 'Russia's Perception Warfare', 164.

community pointed out their conviction that the ‘little green men’ were indeed military personnel belonging to the Russian Armed Forces, the Russian authorities continued to deny. On 18 March 2014, President Putin suddenly announced that Crimea had by then been annexed by the Russian Federation, although he did not mention the unknown soldiers who had gradually occupied the peninsula during the previous weeks. That changed when he during an annual television programme called ‘Direct Line with Vladimir Putin’ on 17 April 2014, finally admitted that the unknown troops in Crimea were indeed members of the Russian armed forces. The way President Putin and the other Russian authorities played the game caused a lot of additional uncertainty and confusion.

Third, Russian authorities evoked a form of reflexive control, caused by different methods such as denial, the use of initially hard to identify soldiers, speed and intimidating activities. These methods created urgency and a misunderstanding of the situation, which are exactly the elements of reflexive control in order to deceive an opponent. The way Russian authorities shaped their information campaign was also striking. Part of this was, of course, the aforementioned deployment of phantom soldiers and the persistent denial, both of which triggered a manipulated perception by the Ukrainian and Crimean authorities. In addition, they managed to bring many conspiracy storylines into the world, creating fear, and causing the Ukrainian and Crimean leaders to become even more desperate. Russian media used narratives with negative analogies with World War II, using terms like Nazis and fascist junta referring to the Ukrainian government, and made the Western world out to be divided and decadent.

The diaspora of Russian-speaking people in Ukraine and especially Crimea, who still maintained cultural and emotional bonds with the Russian Federation, were Russia’s main allies during the Crimean operation. They were affected by Russian media activities in the information sphere and receptive to Russian propaganda and *dezinformatsiya*. The Ukrainians, including their leadership, and the Western public were less receptive to *dezinformatsiya*. They had not been convinced by Russian argumentation that the annexation had saved Crimea from ‘brutality of the fascist junta in Kyiv and the Banderovtsy’.<sup>261</sup> Obviously, the Russian media, as an extension of the Russian authorities, attempted to influence opinion with agitprop, as explained in section 2.4 ‘*Dezinformatsiya*’, but the non-

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<sup>261</sup> Darczewska, *The Anatomy of Russian Information Warfare*, 34-35.

Russian-speaking public were not susceptible to it. To those who spoke Russian, the annexation referred to sentimental feelings, strengthened by the Russian media's usage of World War II rhetoric. It is, therefore, not surprising that after the annexation Russians started wearing the orange-black Saint George ribbon *en masse* as a sign of pride.

It is impressive how the deceiving part of the annexation of Crimea mesmerised certain audiences, but *maskirovka* was not the only panacea used during Russia's takeover operation. The imposing result of the annexation was achieved through the merger of Russian KSO Special Forces, hackers, Kremlin trolls, armed civilians and paramilitary organizations. Russian Special Forces disrupted cable communication between Ukrainian forces in Crimea and their central command in Kyiv<sup>262</sup>, while Russian hackers from FSB's FAPSI, GRU's ATP 28 Fancy Bear and SVR's ATP 29 Cozy Bear coordinated their efforts by launching DDoS-attacks against Ukrainian government and media outlets. Kremlin trolls from IRA/Glavset flooded the social networks with pro-Russian messages, such as '#CrimeaIsOurs', mobilising Crimean volunteers and puzzling Ukrainian opponents. Ukrainian military commanders at Crimea were stalked and threatened, mob-style. When threats did not convince a Ukrainian commander to desert, defect or surrender, paramilitary groups like the Night Wolves stepped in and finished the job by terrifying Ukrainian soldiers. These activities marked a huge change in Russian security operations. While in 2008, during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict, information operations still supported physical operations, in 2014, during the annexation of Crimea, the roles were reversed significantly. Information operations, including active measures and detrence, were the main operations supported by physical actions, if needed.

## 8.6 The Ukrainian receptiveness and responses

This section focuses on developments in Ukraine before and during the annexation. Ukraine at the time was neither a 'failed state' nor ruled by a 'fascist junta', as Russian media tried to make us believe. The new Ukraine government had just started and was pummelled by Euromaidan during the annexation of Crimea. The next subsection 'Geopolitically battered' displays how conditioned Ukraine was; it is followed by 'No keyboard warriors', explaining

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<sup>262</sup> Pleshakov, *The Crimean Nexus*. 50-53.

Ukraine government's avoidance of cyber, and 'Dealing with propaganda', describing how the Ukrainian leadership and others perceived the Russian media.

## Geopolitically battered

Although not a failed state, Ukraine had been badly governed since its independence in 1991. It gained its independence mainly because the Soviet system imploded. The Ukrainian state has been weak and vulnerable since then, and a willing victim to local clans, oligarchs and even organized crime. Ukraine is divided into different ethnic, political and cultural groups and it has always been difficult to form stable governments with coherent reform programmes.<sup>263</sup>

Once in office, in 2010, President Yanukovich, reputed to be pro-Russian from the start, was not averse to the West. A large proportion of the Russian-speaking voters had voted for him, whereas, in contrast, his elected predecessors, had mainly been focused on the West. Yanukovich' government dropped the plans to join NATO, but still had the intention to intensify the cooperation with the EU. The Ukraine-EU Association Agreement was formulated in 2012 and supported by the Verkhovna Rada, the Ukrainian Parliament. On 29 November 2013, the agreement was to be signed at the EU summit in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania.

Russian authorities opposed the idea. In 2013, President Putin declared that the Russian Federation had changed the customs regulations for Ukrainian imports. It caused more than a 10% drop in Ukrainian business, a hard blow for a country with a deplorable economy. President Yanukovich came under pressure, but he did not cave in. What made him change was the EU offer: \$838 million in loans while the International Monetary Fund promised \$4 billion in total. President Putin responded with an annual financial injection of around \$ 3 billion to prop up Ukraine's economy. In the meantime, the EU did not offer Ukraine the full membership many Ukrainians hoped for, but rather an association agreement. This meant that Ukrainian citizens still did not have free access to the EU, a disappointment for those, who wanted to find a job in the EU. On 21 November 2014, the Yanukovich government initially postponed the deal with the EU. Later that day, Yanukovich unilaterally cancelled the deal,

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<sup>263</sup> Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 39.

an action that led to Euromaidan. In February 2014 Euromaidan ended with the signing of a deal to reinstitute order and stability in the country, followed by Yanukovich's flight abroad. As a result, a new temporary government was installed.<sup>264</sup>

Against this background, the temporary Ukrainian leadership did not gain situational awareness, not within Ukraine's borders, and certainly not in Crimea. They were extremely worried as to how their own population would react after Euromaidan. Many protesters left the occupied buildings only weeks after the signing of the agreement in February 2014. The new Ukrainian leadership did not understand the political situation in Crimea, lacking the right contacts, information and insights. They were also unsure how the Russian Federation would react to Euromaidan and the situation in Crimea. Therefore, it is no wonder that the rapid annexation of Ukraine came as a surprise. Internationally, President Putin's concern of responsibility for compatriots abroad gradually became clear, something that brother state Ukraine had felt before. Not only were they led astray by the Russian authorities, they also had trouble getting a grip on the situation.

Meanwhile the Ukrainian Armed Forces were in a deplorable state. In 1991-1992, they were the fourth largest conventional force in the world, behind the United States, China and the Russian Federation. Since the 1990s they hardly received any funding for new investments, maintenance of equipment and troop training, due to Ukraine's faltering. Although reforms took place, there were no initiatives to replace the aging Soviet materiel.<sup>265</sup> During the annexation the regular Ukrainian army was unreliable, under-manned, ill-equipped and poorly-trained.<sup>266</sup> The Ukrainian units, which were based in Crimea, were unable to cope with the highly-trained Russian KSO Special Forces, the naval infantry and paramilitary organizations. On top of that, the communication lines with their central command in Kyiv were cut off. Many Ukrainian soldiers, including their officers, surrendered without a fight, or even switched to the Russian Armed Forces.

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<sup>264</sup> Pleshakov, *The Crimean Nexus*, 50-53.

<sup>265</sup> Dmitry Gorenburg, 'Russia and Ukraine: Not the Military Balance You Think', War on the Rocks Website, (10 November 2014). <https://warontherocks.com/2014/11/russia-and-ukraine-not-the-military-balance-you-think/>, (30 October 2019).

<sup>266</sup> Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine*, 96.



## No keyboard warriors

The annexation of Crimea included proxy activities on the Internet as well. This could have been expected, given the presence of significant cyber capabilities and knowledge in private hands, for instance CarderPlanet, a Ukrainian cybercrime organisation, and Samsung had one of its largest R&D centres in Kyiv. However, the Ukrainian government lacked the capacity and the strategy in place to coordinate all the activities, including the ones on the Internet. The Ukrainian Cyber Force had been amongst the most prominent Ukrainian hacktivist groups, led by Eugene Dokukin and a group of volunteers he recruited through social media. The Ukrainian Cyber Force combined a series of different activities, which ranged from unauthorised monitoring of cameras in the Russian Federation to reporting its troop movements to other web companies in an effort to shut down all Russian military accounts of Russian troops and leaking sensitive information from the Russian government. Remarkably enough, prior to and during the annexation of Crimea, the Ukrainian government did not cooperate with this Ukrainian Cyber Force, nor was it able to make any other connections to compete jointly with Russian activities in the information sphere.<sup>267</sup> This finding is in contrast with an investigation by the Finnish cyber security firm F-secure, whose conclusions showed that Russian authorities especially used hacktivist groups to influence opponents. A Russian hacker group called *Quedagh*, probably linked to APT 28 and 29, were just starting to use *BlackEnergy* malware, designed in 2007 and used for criminal profit-driven purposes. Quedagh also applied this malware to harass the Ukrainian authorities.<sup>268</sup>

## Dealing with propaganda

Russian propaganda during the annexation of Crimea was produced in incredibly large quantities and was disseminated through a wide range of channels, including print and broadcast media, social media and the accounts of Kremlin trolls of IRA/Glavset. Russian propaganda was rapid, continuous, repetitive, inconsistent and also characterized by ‘a shameless willingness to spread partial or outright fictions’.<sup>269</sup> The propaganda efforts of Russian authorities had a dichotomous effect in Ukraine, as indicated in previous sections. On

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<sup>267</sup> Maurer, ‘Cyber Proxies and Crisis in Ukraine’, 82-86. (79-86)

<sup>268</sup> F-Secure, ‘BlackEnergy & Quedagh: The Convergence of Crimeware and APT Attacks’, (2014).  
[https://www.f-secure.com/documents/996508/1030745/blackenergy\\_whitepaper.pdf](https://www.f-secure.com/documents/996508/1030745/blackenergy_whitepaper.pdf), (30 October 2019).

<sup>269</sup> Christopher Paul and Miriam Matthews, ‘Russian “Firehose of Falsehood” Propaganda Model: Why It Might Work and Options to Counter It’, Perspective, RAND Corporation Website, (2016).  
[https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE100/PE198/RAND\\_PE198.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE100/PE198/RAND_PE198.pdf), (31 October 2019).

the one hand, there was the Ukrainian population, which was not influenced by all war rhetoric and other fantastic stories. They found Russian propaganda too much over the top, resulting in hardly anyone taking it seriously. The intended effects were seriously overestimated; as in deception warfare, these efforts were largely unsuccessful: very few recipients were deceived.<sup>270</sup>

On the other hand, the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine, who felt akin to the Russian Federation, showed a different picture. They were sensitive to Russian propaganda, because it fulfilled Russian sentiment and other feelings of pride. Another reason is that the Russian-speaking Ukrainians received almost 90% of their news information through Russian television. Russian news programmes have a history of spreading manufactured information. Christopher Paul and Miriam Matthew, two distinguished social researchers at RAND Corporation, indicated that ‘Russian news channels are more like a blend of infotainment and disinformation than fact-checked journalism, though their formats intentionally take the appearance of proper news programmes.’<sup>271</sup> Instigated by Russian authorities, Russian TV Channel 1, attracted viewers by making Russian versions of popular Western shows and reality. During these TV-programmes hidden messages on the annexation were broadcast.<sup>272</sup> This is regarded as a new element in the media representation of conflicts. These influential TV-programmes contain a high degree of performativity and a blurred line between entertainment and news information. The audience hardly sees the difference between facts and fiction anymore.<sup>273</sup>

The developments within the government and the armed forces and the lack of an adequate cyber policy show that Ukraine was extremely vulnerable at the time of the annexation of Crimea. The government lacked situational awareness, both in homeland Ukraine and in Crimea. It seems obvious, therefore, that *maskirovka* found a fertile breeding ground for deception in the newly-appointed Ukrainian leadership.

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<sup>270</sup> Lawrence Freedman, ‘Ukraine and the Art of Limited Warfare’, *Survival*, 56 (2014) 6, 23.

<sup>271</sup> Paul and Matthew, ‘Russian “Firehose of Falsehood” Propaganda Model’, 5.

<sup>272</sup> Lucas and Pomerantzev, *Winning the Information War*, 117.

<sup>273</sup> Michal Shavit, *Media Strategy and Military Operations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Mediatizing the Israel Defence Forces*, (London (UK): Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 178.

## 8.7 Energy

Another matter is whether Russian authorities have put pressure on Ukraine, or potential opponents of the annexation of Crimea, by threatening with energy abstention. Although this kind of threat does not belong to deception operations, it is a form of exerting influence. In section 7.5 ‘Georgian receptiveness and responses’ it was stated that some European nations, most notably Germany, acknowledged Russia’s narrative about the cause and course of the Russo-Georgian armed conflict out of concern for their continued access to Russian gas and other energy and for other business relations. That is the reason why the following question is considered: to what extent did a possible Russian energy embargo or threat also affect the stance of states towards the annexation of Crimea?

During the Russo-Georgian armed conflict, the threat of gas closure and abstention from further trade played a role in supporting Russia’s story. Countries like Germany were sensitive to this form of deterrence. The annexation of Crimea showed a different picture. The EU-Russia energy relationship does not seem to have suffered serious consequences from Russia’s annexation of Crimea. The Russian Federation pursued a policy of energy supply diversification, designed to increase the dependence of the largest energy importers and consumers of Russian supplies. Within the EU there is no overall policy for energy transactions. Each country within the EU made its own deal with Russian energy suppliers, like Gazprom, Lukoil and Rosneft, resulting in different levels of dependency on the Russian Federation. Many EU member states, Eastern as well as Western, have been connected to Russian fossil fuel supplies for decades. They also imported coal from the Russian Federation, and Rosatom’s nuclear power stations even supplied nuclear fuel. These connections and transactions for gas, oil, coals and nuclear fuel created a mosaic of energy interdependence between EU member states and the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation is dependent on the income from energy supply to the EU.<sup>274</sup> Hence, the Russian Federation did not benefit from putting pressure especially on EU member states by threatening to cut them off from their energy supply.

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<sup>274</sup> Anke Schmidt-Felzmann, ‘Between Geopolitics and Market Rules: The EU’s Energy Interdependence with Russia’, in: Kristi Raik and András Rácz (Ed), *Post Crimea Shift in EU-Russia Relations: From Fostering Interdependence to Managing Vulnerabilities*, Translations by Martin Rickerd, (Tallinn (EST): International Centre for Defence and Security, 2019), 142-144.

During the annexation of Crimea there was only one minor issue. In February 2014 Ukraine's energy company Naftogaz sued Crimean gas company Chornomornaftogaz in the Economic Court of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea for delayed payments of almost € 1 billion. In March 2014 the Crimean authorities announced the nationalisation of Chornomornaftogaz, while Rustam Temirgaliev, the Russia-born Deputy Prime Minister of Crimea, revealed that Russia's energy giant Gazprom would become its new owner. A group of Gazprom employees had already been working in the Chornomornaftogaz headquarters since the beginning of March 2014.<sup>275</sup> A few weeks later, on 1 April 2014, Russia's Minister for Energy Alexandr Novak announced that Gazprom would finance an undersea gas pipeline from the Russian homeland to Crimea.<sup>276</sup> As a reaction the United States Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control announced on 11 April 2014 that it had added Chornomornaftogaz to the Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List. The EU followed suit on 13 May 2014.<sup>277</sup>

Following the annexation of Crimea, Gazprom's plan to construct Nord Stream 2, a second set of gas pipelines from Russian territory to Germany through the Baltic Sea became a source of conflict within the EU and even between the United States and some of the EU member states. Germany and Austria, among others, hailed the project as a means of increasing EU-Russian interdependence, while reducing geopolitical tensions. For Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel, this stance is part of her *Ostpolitik*, the German Eastern politics. Other EU member states, like Denmark, Sweden and Poland, supported by the United States, have criticised the plans. Some of these countries believe that it is impossible to impose sanctions, on the one side, while, on the other, colossal deals for more energy transactions are facilitated. The ones against Nord Stream 2 considered the sea pipeline system as a security issue, fearing an increase of Russian influence over the EU and its member states.<sup>278</sup> It leads to division in the EU, which is something that suits the Russian Federation. It probably had no intentions to do so, because in other cases it always dealt very carefully with its energy

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<sup>275</sup> Interfax Ukraine, 'Crimea to Hand Over Chornomornaftogaz to Russia's Gazprom-deputy CEO', Interfax – Ukraine News Agency Website, (18 March 2014). <https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/economic/196641.html>, (30 October 2019).

<sup>276</sup> Arshad Mohammed, 'UPDATE 1 – U.S. Sanctions Crimea Gas Company', in Move Aimed at Gazprom', Reuters Website (11 April 2014). <https://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-usa/update-1-u-s-sanctions-crimea-gas-company-in-move-aimed-at-gazprom-idUSL2N0N31IN20140411>, (30 October 2019).

<sup>277</sup> Laurence Norman, 'EU Modesty Expands Sanctions on Russia', The Wall Street Journal Website, (12 May 2014). <https://www.wsj.com/articles/eu-set-to-expand-sanctions-on-russia-1399890512?tesla=y>, (30 October 2019).

<sup>278</sup> Blandine Malvault, 'Nord Stream 2 Splits the EU', Eyes on Europe Website, (28 November 2017). <https://www.eyes-on-europe.eu/nord-stream-2-the-eus-divide/>, (30 October 2019).

transactions with Western countries. Moreover, the Russian Federation desperately needs these transactions to keep its economy going.

## 8.8 Concluding remarks

This chapter furnished an answer to the seventh secondary research question of this dissertation. How were the Ukrainian decision-makers deceived during the annexation of Crimea in 2014? It is striking how quickly Russian authorities were able to adapt to new circumstances, while their vertical power structure made rapid decision-making and coordination possible. After the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in 2008, it was necessary for the Russian authorities to make the necessary changes. With the 'New Look' programme in 2008 Russian authorities ordered major transformations in their armed forces, but that was not all. Subject matter experts in information warfare, such as Panarin and the duo Chekinov and Bogdanov, provided new insights, such as the use of information as part of a comprehensive indirect approach. Compared to the Russo-Georgian armed conflict the use of social media was a new phenomenon. In addition, Russian companies like Vimplecom controlled most of the telephone market in Crimea. These companies were probably manipulated by Russian security forces, who tried to influence the people with personal text messages during the demonstrations. The snake malware also did its job well. It was striking that, just as during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict, criminal cyber organizations supported the operations of the Russian authorities.

Meanwhile, the Chief of Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, General Gerasimov, turned his attention to the West and published an article about the Western way of waging war. Remarkably, after the annexation of Crimea, this article became widely-known in the West and was initially regarded as the new Russian doctrine. The Western world badly needed an explanation for the rapid annexation of Crimea, and embraced Gerasimov's article as the explanation of new Russian warfare, dubbing it the Gerasimov doctrine.

The three largest Russian intelligence services, FSB, SVR and GRU, maintained close ties with their Ukrainian counterpart, the SBU, and assumed a mentoring role. Also, within these services the use of the information atmosphere for influencing and espionage became increasingly important. Russian authorities had taken into account, perhaps unintentionally, the factors of uncertainty, surprise and manipulated perception. Years before Euromaidan,

which started in November 2013, Russian authorities issued passports to ethnic Russians in Crimea, which encouraged the dichotomy of a pro- and anti-Russian population on the peninsula. During Euromaidan, Russian authorities, even at the highest echelons, managed to increase the uncertainty among the Ukrainian leadership, using what seems spontaneous demonstrations to provoke chaos and unrest within the Ukrainian population. Besides, the Ukrainian leadership was uncertain about the Russian reaction, as President Putin became more and more outspoken in taking responsibility for his compatriots abroad. Evocation of uncertainty among the Ukrainian leadership, one of the main targets of the Russian authorities, was not new nor unique in the way Russian authorities conducted their conflicts. Euromaidan had created an atmosphere of confusion and gradually merged into annexation of Crimea, creating even more confusion and uncertainty, while Russian authorities initially denied any involvement. The emerging uncertainty created the necessary condition for deception.

The sudden invasion of Russian troops came as a surprise. These troops were unrecognizable and were supported by organisations of the sort of Private Military Companies, like ChVK Wagner, and the paramilitary, like the Night Wolves. The Ukrainian leaders stood aghast, and with them many political leaders worldwide. Russian intelligence services FSB and GRU played a major role in the annexation. Long before it took place GRU fire starters and other Russian agents of influence were able to create and arm pro-Russian civil groups that created unrest. President Putin's statement that he already made his decision for the annexation during a meeting in the early morning of 23 February is highly debateable. Perhaps it was the final 'GO', but the planning and preparations for the annexation had been initiated long before he gave his final permission to start the annexation.

Initially, Russian authorities kept silent, and for many weeks denied any accusation. For many in Crimea, Ukraine and the Western world, it was the confrontation with a novel situation, and nobody knew for sure where those masked soldiers in green uniforms came from. It was something unexpected, and in military terms the combination of the unexpected and the speed of the surprise operation was vital. It certainly ensured that the Russian Federation took and kept the initiative, which is always a fundamental requirement in military operations. The new Ukrainian leadership had become vulnerable through Euromaidan, but this rapid surprise action paralysed the new Ukrainian leadership completely. It did not have a clear strategy and it was not able to order effective counter-measures. Such a rapid Russian surprise campaign

was unique and had never been seen before. It was also unique that Russian authorities were able to maintain the manipulated perception for weeks.

The performance of masked soldiers in green uniforms, later identified as Russian KSO troops and Naval Infantry, evoked a manipulated perception. Apart from their origin and identity, it was unknown, also to Ukrainian and Western intelligence services, what exactly they intended. They popped up each time at another place all over the Crimean Peninsula. Fragments of images were created, but the entire story, which could be a possible explanation for the Russian action, remained obscure. Ukrainian leadership, followed by Western leaders and their media, wanted ready explanations. In the mosaic of information, they created their own stories, and thus they unintentionally applied Gestalt psychology, as it is explained in section 4.4 'Manipulated perception.' Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that leaders and experts within NATO and other Western countries started to believe in the Gerasimov doctrine. Ergo, it was a unique Russian performance.

Russian propaganda referred to the 'Great Patriotic War', in terms of World War II, portraying Ukraine as a Nazi state, on the one hand, and noticing the evil Western world moving territorially further and further towards 'Mother Russia' on the other. With this form of agitprop and stereotyping, they tried to induce emotions, but only the Russian-speaking populace was susceptible to it. It responded to the confirmation bias whereby existing perceptions of the Russians were reinforced rather than rejected. The rest of the population and the T thus, the Russian propaganda campaign was only effective for the Russian-speaking Ukrainians, having strong ties to the Russian Federation, and for the Russia's domestic audience. On the other hand, regarding the media coverage in the West, most Western news programmes and governments were fixated on the unlawfulness of Crimea's annexation. Hardly any effort of Western leaders and media went into understanding Russia's historical context and internal situation, which meant that the Russian Federation was easily portrayed as a bad actor.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> James Pearce, 'Hybrid and Information: New Labels, Old Politics', in: Ofer Fridman, Vitaly Kabernik and James Pearce, *Hybrid Conflicts and Information Warfare: New Labels, Old Politics*, (Boulder, CO (USA): Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc, 2019), 255.





# Chapter 9 A New Version?

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## 9.1 Preamble

After studying the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in 2008 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the next step is to look at the extent to which the deception approach of the Russian authorities is unique and different from what was already known in the field of deception. This chapter answers the eighth secondary research question:

Is there a modern Russian version of deception warfare?

The insights of the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea, as presented in chapters 6 and 7, respectively, have been compared and analysed. The differences between, and similarities of, the conflicts will be discussed, as well as some distinctive Russian deception methods. This chapter also points out the usefulness of the framework, presented in chapter 5, based on earlier insights into Russian deception warfare and supplemented with concepts of deception warfare in general, in order to find out whether Russian authorities used new deception methods during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea.

This chapter consists of four other sections. Section 9.2 ‘Overview of the two conflicts’ provides a succinct overview of the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in 2008 and of the annexation of Crimea in 2014. This section also takes a closer look at the differences and similarities between the two conflicts, which are highlighted to bring about a profound understanding of Russian developments in warfare, and more specifically, in deception warfare. Section 9.3 ‘Utilisation of deception methods’ reviews the analytic framework, while section 9.4 ‘Modern Russian deception methods’ lists the techniques of modern Russian deception. Inevitably, questions are waiting to be answered, such as: ‘were these deception methods ever used before by the Soviet or Russian authorities?’ and ‘were these deception methods used by others, like nations or regional organisations?’ Section 9.5 ‘Application of the framework’ verifies whether the framework, introduced in Chapter 5, was able to explain modern Russian deception warfare. In this section, more questions deserve an answer, like: ‘was the framework comprehensive enough to analyse Russian deception warfare?’, and ‘was the framework appropriate or not?’, or ‘did the framework miss any relevant deception elements?’ The chapter ends with a resume in section 9.7.

## 9.2 Overview of the two conflicts

This section consists of three different parts. It starts with a paragraph that gives a brief overview of the course of the two conflicts. The next section deals with the difference between these conflicts. The third paragraph explains the nature of the two conflicts; while the Russo-Georgian armed conflict was still purely physical warfare supported by information operations, the annexation of Crimea was much more a conflict fought in the information sphere. The last section takes a closer look at the role of the Russian security services. These services have played a role in both conflicts. Although their role was still supportive and

indispensable for the success of the Russian Armed Forces during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict, the services played a leading role in Russian operations before and during the annexation of Crimea. In short, the aim of this entire section is to clarify that the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea differed significantly in approach, intensity of violence, the use of cognitive mechanisms and other information methods.

### A brief review

To freshen up the insights about the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea, the following paragraphs will briefly dwell on the highlights of the two conflicts. Before the Russo-Georgian armed conflict, Russian authorities issued Russian passports to citizens in the breakaway regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. They tried to buy the loyalty of these ethnic Russians and those in Georgia itself. This led to confusion and times of uncertainty for the Georgian authorities. It is a form of radical uncertainty, as mentioned in section 4.2 ‘Uncertainty’, because the Georgian leadership no longer had an overview of the nationalities of the citizens within Georgian borders and in the breakaway regions. They could not oversee where their loyalties lay and what the consequences were of adding another nationality to their already existing Georgian citizenship. During the armed conflict, Russian authorities attempted to deceive Georgian leadership, but were not very successful. Russian efforts, such as new railroads in Abkhazia and a troop build-up with heavy weapons, caused some pressure on the Georgian leadership, but it was not enough to make them fall victim to reflexive control. Reflexive control causes an adverse state of mind among the opponent’s leadership due to time and power pressure, frequent exposure to dezinformatsiya, and manipulated decision-making algorithms. Likewise, strong public statements of Russian authorities hardly affected Georgian leadership. Russian media used propaganda and spread conspiracy plots, pretending that Georgia was the aggressor and portraying President Saakashvili as a modern Hitler. Although the Georgian leadership and population were not affected by these conspiracy narratives, the ethnic-Russians were! This Russian-speaking minority of the Georgian populace believed that the United States manipulated the situation in the breakaway regions and that Israel was also involved in the conflict. Many Russians in the Russian Federation also believed that the Georgian leadership together with small radical cells would start a series of terrorist bomb attacks in major Russian cities.

After the Russo-Georgian armed conflict, Russian authorities were able to adapt quickly to new circumstances, and their power vertical made rapid decision-making possible. The 'New Look' programme of the Russian Armed Forces included a major transformation, while the use of information became an integral part of a new Russian strategic approach. It was an indirect approach, avoiding conventional military operations and physical frontal attacks, with pinpoint actions of Special Forces and supported in the informational sphere. Prior to the annexation of Crimea, the FSB and GRU were able to organise, arm and train pro-Russian civilian groups in Crimea. The sudden presence of little green men came as a surprise, and after a few days they were supported by a Russian motorcycle club, the Night Wolves. Ukrainian leaders and many political leaders worldwide were shocked and had no explanation for the actions in Crimea. Russian authorities initially kept silent, and for many weeks denied any involvement, which created even more uncertainty.

The appearance of Russia's masked soldiers in green uniforms, who later turned out to be KSO troops, being Russian Special Forces, and Naval Infantry, evoked a manipulated perception. They carried out a rapid and almost non-violent occupation of the Crimean Peninsula, which was something unexpected and exceptional. However, now that this trick is known to the world, it will be difficult to repeat it and to evoke a similar surprise effect and to create alternative perceptions again. What will clearly be remembered is that Russian authorities were able to maintain this forced perception for several weeks. Russian media depicted Ukraine as a Nazi state and spoke about a weak Western world. Only the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine turned out to be receptive to this form of propaganda. To the rest of the Ukrainian population and the rest of the world this kind of propaganda was not very convincing. Some European states such as Germany with its sensitive past and some European media kept aloof from all Russian propaganda, insinuations and Nazi comparisons. Consequently, the Russian propaganda campaign was only effective among the Russian-speaking Ukrainians with ties to the Russian Federation and for Russia's home front.

## Different conflicts

Many publications assume that the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea are the same types of conflict, but is that the case? The answer is 'NO', there are essential differences, one of them being the overall aspects of the two conflicts, especially the cause, the course and end result.

### *(1) Russo-Georgian armed conflict (2008)*

The cause, the course and the end result of the Russo-Georgian armed conflict were not clear to many researchers and experts. To start with the cause: four major approaches arose about who started the armed conflict. First, some researchers thought that Georgia made a miscalculation by giving orders to enter South Ossetia by force without considering any military consequences. Second, other researchers thought that it was the Russian Federation that provoked Georgia and started the armed conflict. Third, there were also researchers that believed quite the opposite. In their opinion, it was Georgia that provoked the Russian Federation. Fourth, the last group of researchers concluded that there was not one predominant reason; both parties, the Russian Federation and Georgia, had some minor reasons for starting the armed conflict. These examiners did not single out just one 'guilty' party. All in all, the most plausible cause is a combination of these approaches. It was Georgia that started the physical fighting in August 2008 with their bombardment of the South-Ossetian capital Tskhinvali. However, long before this Georgian artillery barrage Russian authorities had already started to build up their forces in the breakaway regions in order to gain more influence in the area. Russian authorities were hoping to mislead the Georgian leadership, so that they did not notice the steady Russian troop build-up.

During the armed conflict both the Russian Federation and Georgia tried to portray the other party as the instigator of the conflict and as the aggressor, while delineating itself as the victim of the armed conflict. Russian authorities pretended they had no other option but to invade Georgia for the protection of the human rights of Russian citizens and peacekeepers. Russian media accused the Georgian leadership and soldiers, who were supported by the United States and NATO, of committing war crimes. Russian troops were depicted as a peacekeeping force with humanitarian intentions, whose invasion of Georgia rescued the Abkhazians and South-Ossetians from a possible genocide. Georgian leadership was not much impressed by Russia's information campaign. Georgian President Saakashvili quickly found his way to the Western press. He stated that Georgian troop movement into South Ossetia did not violate any international rule, while Russia's invasion did, violating, for instance, the Sochi and Moscow Peace Agreements. Saakashvili accused the Russian Federation of aggression, because Russian troops crossed international borders without any permission. Many Western governments supported Georgia, while some European nations

accepted Russia's narrative, out of fear their business relations might fall through. To many researchers it is therefore undecided who had benefited the most from the armed conflict.

## *(2) Annexation of Crimea (2014)*

The cause, course and end result of the annexation of Crimea were different. In February 2014 it seemed that Euromaidan, a protest against the policy of Ukrainian President Yanukovich, was the precursor of the annexation of Crimea. All of a sudden, little green men without any rank insignia or any other indications showed up all over the Crimean Peninsula. Initially, Russian authorities denied any involvement, but after a couple of weeks Russian President Putin confirmed that Russian troops, especially Special Forces, had taken over control of Crimea. The unidentifiable soldiers with their green uniforms, and the denial of the Russian Federation initially raised some doubts. Overall, it was clear that the Russian Federation had annexed Crimea. The Western nations, particular the NATO member states and Australia, strongly condemned the Russian activities in Crimea and Ukraine in 2014. The United States, Canada and EU subsequently imposed sanctions on the Russian Federation, the majority of which are still in effect.<sup>1</sup>

## The nature of the two conflicts

Essentially, the Russo-Georgian armed conflict was an example of a physical clash, supported by some efforts in the information sphere. It was the Georgian artillery that started shelling smoke grenades into South Ossetia during the late evening of 7 August 2008, followed by Georgian troop movements into South Ossetia, advancing to the capital Tskhinvali. The Russian Federation already had a large contingent of 'peacekeepers', supported by heavy artillery, on the ground in the breakaway region, but Russian authorities responded with air strikes on targets in South Ossetia and Georgia. Later that day on 8 August 2008, Russian authorities sent advanced columns with tanks and armoured vehicles into South Ossetia. Meanwhile the Russian Air Force repeatedly attacked military infrastructure around the Georgian capital of Tbilisi, while the Russian Black Sea Fleet blockaded the coast of

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<sup>1</sup> Dianne Rennack and Cory Welt, 'U.S. Sanctions on Russia: An Overview', United States Congressional Research Service Website (23 March 2020). <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10779>, (24 April 2020). And: European Council, 'EU Restrictive Measures in Response to the Crisis in Ukraine, Council of the European Union Website (13 March 2020). <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/ukraine-crisis/>, (24 April 2020).

Abkhazia. Russian troops, deployed as peacekeepers, conducted raids into Abkhazia, opening a second front. Later, Russian land forces came to support poorly equipped Abkhazian forces, and advanced into western Georgia. Altogether, the physical confrontation between the Russian Federation and Georgia lasted five days. In total the Georgian losses were 170 servicemen and 288 civilians, while sixty-seven Russian servicemen and 365 South-Ossetian fighters and civilians were killed.

The Euromaidan in February 2014 sparked a political crisis in Crimea with pro- and contra-Russian protesters. The demonstrations spread over the entire Crimean Peninsula. On 27 February 2014 Russian special forces, supported by Russian Airborne Forces units, flown into Crimea, and the Crimean based 810 Naval Infantry Brigade, collectively also known as the little green men, occupied government buildings in Simferopol, confiscated telephones of Crimean politicians, cut off all buildings' communication and set up road blocks and barricades. The same day they took control of the main roads to Sevastopol. Russian Special Forces continued their activities and were soon assisted by local Berkut, special Ukrainian police forces, and armed civilian groups. They subsequently placed the Crimean airport and state television under Russian supervision, and blockaded Ukrainian military bases. Vessels of the Russian Black Sea Fleet blockaded the Ukrainian docked fleet, while Russian conventional troops held extensive snap inspection exercises on Russian territory close to the Crimean Peninsula. All this happened with hardly any bloodshed.

Compared to the Russo-Georgian armed conflict, the use of social media in Crimea and Ukraine was a new element in Russian warfare. In addition, Russian authorities undoubtedly manipulated the Crimean telephone market. During the demonstrations in Crimea that followed Euromaidan, Russian authorities tried to influence the Crimean population with personal text messages. The activities in the cyber sphere were now more extensive and much more sophisticated in design than during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict. Russian snake malware injected into Ukrainian government computers and Internet systems worked well, while Russian state-sponsored organizations supported the operations of the Russian authorities. The annexation of Crimea was by nature a completely different encounter in that Russian authorities dictated the confrontation and had the initiative. They hardly used any violence, but they impressed and overwhelmed the Ukrainian authorities with manipulated perceptions, deterrence messages, cyber activities and the use of paramilitary organizations and pro-Russian armed civilians.

## The role of the Russian intelligence and security services

Although it was never officially confirmed, the GRU was undeniably following developments in the breakaway regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, prior to the Russo-Georgian armed conflict. The GRU had staffed key positions in the Ossetian secret service, while other officers of Russian intelligence services gathered information about the capabilities and intentions of the Georgian armed forces. Meanwhile, Russian intelligence services managed to mask their own intentions. It is also likely that the FSB, perhaps assisted by the SVR, played a major role in the issue of Russian passports to citizens in the isolated regions, which gave them Russian citizenship. During the combat phase of the armed conflict, it was a GRU-Spetsnaz unit with armed vehicles that acted as the spearhead of a Russian column on its way to South Ossetia and Georgia. Besides, it is also likely that the FSB and GRU have played an important role in Russian hacker activities.

The intelligence services of the Russian Federation were also active before and during the annexation of Crimea. Since the founding of Ukraine in 1991 and the creation of the SBU, the Ukrainian civilian intelligence service, and HUR, the Ukrainian military intelligence service, the FSB and GRU, respectively, have maintained close ties with the SBU. This way, they were well-informed about the capabilities and intentions of the Ukrainian armed forces and security services. In the years prior to the annexation, the GRU had a number of agents setting up and running small businesses in Ukraine and Crimea to serve as a cover for their fire starter programme, the GRU counterpart of the SVR agents of influence programme. The purpose of the programme was that GRU agents recruited, armed and trained pro-Russian locals to act as armed civilian groups that were able to properly support Russian KSO-forces during the conflict. The GRU also maintained contacts with paramilitary and violent organizations, such as the Night Wolves motorcycle gang. The cyber units of the GRU and SVR, respectively APT 28 or Fancy Bear and APT 29 or Cozy Bear, clearly played a role in the cyber sphere and may have cooperated with criminal cyber organizations.

The difference between the role of the intelligence services in the two conflicts is that during the annexation of Crimea the fire starter programme, leading to armed and trained civilian groups, worked very well, as a result of which Russian authorities could continue to deny any involvement in the annexation. Russian authorities did not start a similar programme during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict; it was exclusively used during the annexation of Crimea.



In short, these differences between the two conflicts are significant, so that the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea are somewhat difficult to compare. The annexation of Crimea should not be considered as similar to, but rather as a further development of, the experiences of the Russo-Georgian armed conflict.

### 9.3 Utilisation of deception warfare in the two conflicts

Although the conflicts were different in nature and just succeeding each other, the two conflicts also had a number of similarities. For instance, there were similarities in the way the Russian authorities applied deception warfare, both during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea. Using the framework of Chapter 5, this section will give a summary of the deception methods used by the Russian authorities in the two conflicts.

#### The analytical framework

To determine the extent to which the Russian authorities applied deception methods during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict of 2008 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014, an analytical framework was formulated in chapter 5. The framework consists of four different phases. The first phase, the planning, examines whether the Russian authorities planned and initiated certain activities that could cause uncertainty, which is the necessary condition for deception to take place. The second phase, the execution, assesses whether the Russian authorities deliberately applied maskirovka methods. The third phase, the outcomes, is necessary to explore whether these methods have indeed led to deception effects. The fourth and final phase of this framework, feedback, investigates whether the Russian authorities organised any feedback to determine whether changes had to be made in the deception methods to maintain the surprise and deception effect for as long as possible.

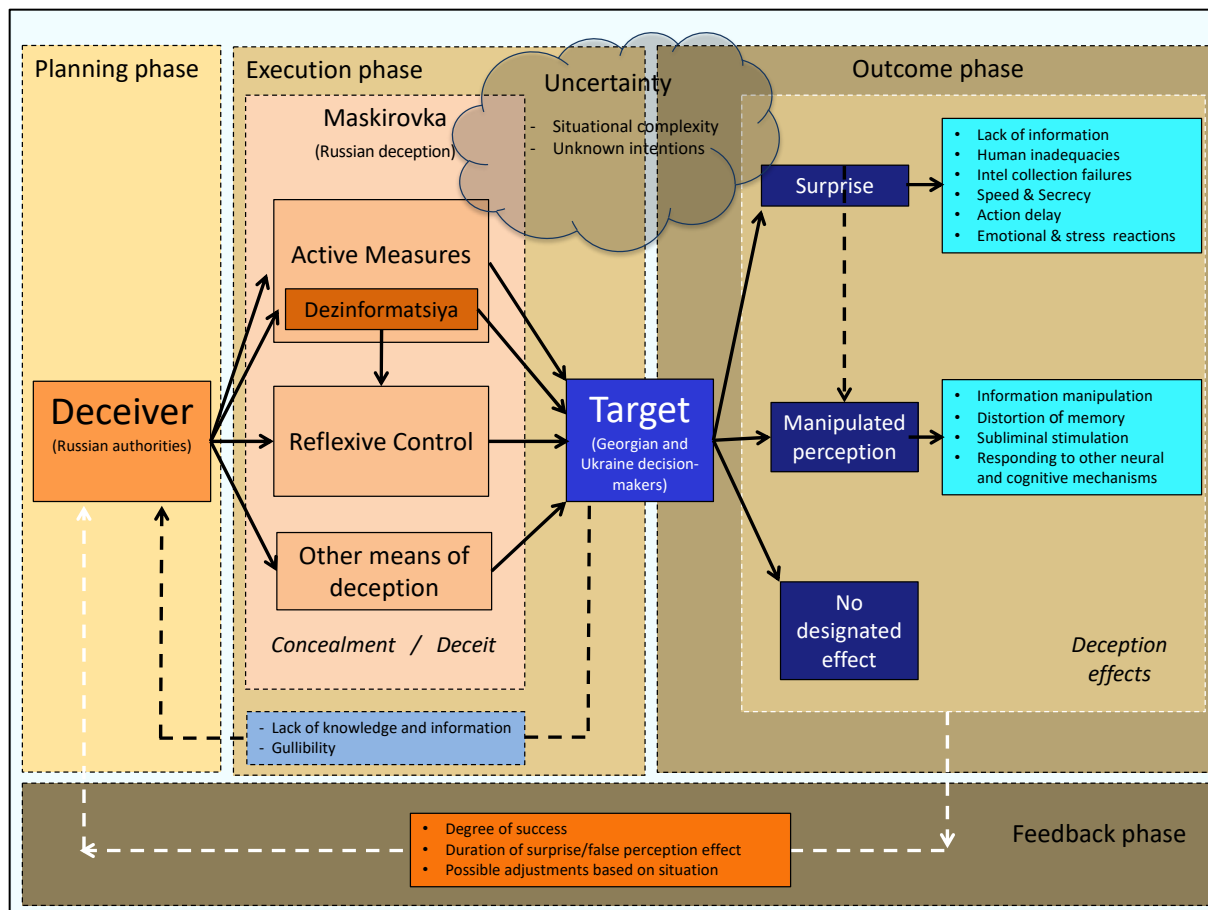


Figure 9.1 Schematic overview of the framework, as shown in chapter 5

### Additional remarks

The framework contains three more aspects that need further explanation and clarification, namely: (1) uncertainty, (2) maskirovka methods, and (3) deception effects and feedback

#### (1) Uncertainty

This part of the framework consists of two aspects, namely ‘situational complexity’ and ‘unknown intentions’. These aspects are reflected both in the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea. In either case, Russian authorities tried to create a situation in which the local population and political leaders no longer exactly knew what was going on. Leaders no longer had an overview of which of their residents possessed two passports and to whom their loyalties belonged to. The local leadership probably would have asked questions, such as who exactly carried out actions on their territory, but Russian authorities concealed their intentions. The afore-mentioned aspects of issuing Russian passports, the use of world

events as cover and the initial silence of Russian authorities, during and immediately after the annexation of Crimea, were additions to ‘situational complexity’ and ‘unknown intentions’.

### *(2) Maskirovka methods*

Maskirovka was mainly used during the annexation of Crimea; on the other hand, the Russo-Georgian armed conflict was from the Russian point of view, much more a physical targeted action with some support from the information sphere. During the annexation of Crimea 'silence & denial' worked well, as the Ukrainian leaders and local people, as well as the rest of the world, had no idea what exactly was going on. Initially, the Russian Federation was accused of the annexation, but Russian authorities persisted in going out of their way to deny it. This made it uncertain for a long time as to who was behind the rapid take-over of the Crimean Peninsula.

The active measures also contributed to the surprisingly rapid takeover of Crimea. While reflexive control was not sufficiently developed during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict, Russian authorities were much more meticulous with this concept during the annexation of Crimea. They were able to exert power pressure by acting unexpectedly and quickly, and impress with major military exercises. However, the use of *dezinformatsiya* is debatable. The use of agitation propaganda and comparing the acts of Ukrainian authorities with Nazi crimes and methods positively affected only the Russian population. Other target audiences, such as the Ukrainian leaders and population and the rest of the world could not be convinced. In this context, the use of conspiracy theories, disseminated during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict as well as the annexation of Crimea, complemented the afore-mentioned issues. The Russian population, including ethnic Russian populations of Ukraine and Crimea, was affected by the conspiracy narratives. Lastly, during the annexation of Crimea, the fire starter programme of the GRU, also considered to be an active measure, functioned well. Prior to the annexation, officers of the GRU had covertly been able to set up, arm and train pro-Russian population groups, acting alongside the ‘little green men’ during the annexation.

### *(3) Deception effects and feedback*

During the annexation of Crimea, Russian authorities were utterly successful in creating a surprise effect as well as maintaining manipulated perception. Ukrainian leaders, and indeed

the rest of the world, were aghast when insignificant numbers of unidentifiable soldiers gradually took over control of the peninsula. Who were they? And where did they come from? It certainly took a few weeks to discover who these soldiers really were and their origin. This worked to the advantage of Russian authorities. Meanwhile the Crimean population had decided in a referendum that the peninsula would become part of the Russian Federation. This gave credence to the assertion of Russian authorities that the takeover of Crimea was the will of the local population and that the decision had been taken democratically. A 'lack of information', 'speed and secrecy' encouraged a surprise effect at the time of the annexation of Crimea, while 'intelligence collection failures' and 'human inadequacy' had mainly negatively affected the Georgian leadership in their decision-making. Especially during the annexation of Crimea, the surprise had a crippling effect on the response of the Ukrainian leadership. Their ability to respond quickly and adequately was seriously hampered.

The fact that Russian little green men were elusive and kept popping up all around and all the time during the annexation of Crimean contributed to the successful application of Gestalt psychology. The media only reported fragments and incomplete images of Russia's operations, while the whole account of the situation was missing. The Ukrainian leaders, followed by many Western leaders, wanted a quick explanation for the events. So an artificial narrative came into being, constructed from information particles and observations, some of which even without further explanation, while large chunks of information were missing. In this way leaders from Ukraine and across the globe applied the Gestalt psychology unintentionally. In using allusions to Nazism, Russian media, publicists and various authorities tried to put Georgian and Ukrainian leadership in a bad daylight. It was an attempt to link the past to the present, focusing on the distortion of history and trying to manipulate people's memories. It is suspected that perhaps not many people outside the region knew or remembered exactly what had happened during World War II. Maintaining a manipulated perception was also well taken into account in these Russian actions. It was only six weeks later that President Putin admitted that the Russian Federation was behind the annexation of Crimea.

The next section now examines the Russian methods of deception that mainly occurred during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea.

## 9.4 Modern Russian deception methods

The previous sections pointed out that during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea, Russian authorities used overlapping methods of deception. In addition, it has been confirmed that Russian authorities used additional deception methods during the annexation. This section is particularly related to the seventh secondary research question: 'Is there a modern Russian version of deception warfare?' Taking the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea into consideration, the answer is: 'Yes!' The afore-mentioned overlapping and additional Russian deception methods during, respectively, the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation can be considered modern Russian deception warfare. The most notable of these methods are described in this section. Some of these methods fit into the analytical framework, others have not been anticipated before and can therefore be seen as additions to the framework. These methods were: creating uncertainty by issuing Russian citizenships and using a world event as distractor for intervention, using Nazi symbols and terminology, conspiracy narratives, carrying out a rapid and stealth intervention, large scale exercises, increasing activities in cyber space, and keeping up manipulated perception.

### Creating uncertainty

An important condition for creating deception is uncertainty, as discussed in section 4.2 'Uncertainty'. Both before and during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea, Russian authorities were able to create periods of great confusion and chaos, resulting in a high level of uncertainty among the local population and the authorities in the country involved. There are many reasons for the emergence of uncertainty, but when the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea are compared in relation to the commencement of uncertainty, two aspects stand out that occurred in both cases. First, prior to both the Russo-Georgian armed conflict as well as the annexation of Crimea, Russian authorities issued passports to ethnic Russian citizens, which caused immense uncertainty. The authorities involved no longer had a clear picture of who now had what nationality and what this meant for their citizens' loyalty. These authorities could not oversee the consequences of the random issue of passports. It could, in many cases, lead to the change of a person's nationality without the officials knowing.

Second, the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea took place during the Olympic Games of 2008 and 2014 respectively. These events created a combination of ontological and aleatory uncertainty. This particular uncertainty can be dubbed ontological, because the Olympic Games created a parallel arena where athletes from all over the world competed in sports and defended the honour of their countries. Then suddenly the Russian Federation invaded a neighbouring country, which was a huge wake-up call for the real world, leading to surprise and unbelief. These reactions to sudden unexpected actions and events are exactly the characteristics of uncertainty, which makes the uncertainty ontological. The uncertainty is also aleatory, because under the cover of the Olympic Games Russian authorities suddenly gave orders to their armed and security forces to move into in a neighbouring country. Everyone was initially groping in the dark about Russia's real intentions, and that precisely describes the essential feature of aleatory uncertainty. These observations about citizenship and the Olympic Games are further explained below.

### *(1) Russian citizenship*

After the Soviet Union collapsed in December 1991, more than 25 million ethnic Russians became 'compatriots' in new post-Soviet republics. From that moment on, they were living outside the borders of their nominal homeland.<sup>2</sup> Though Georgia and the breakaway regions on the one hand, and Ukraine and Crimea, on the other, show different numbers of ethnic Russians in relation to each other; and generally speaking, both had significant numbers at the time. In the years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, about 68,000 ethnic Russians lived in Georgia,<sup>3</sup> of which 17,000 in Abkhazia and 1,500 in South Ossetia, comprising 1.5% of the total population of Georgia and the breakaway regions. This figure in itself does not seem to be a lot, but after the collapse of the Soviet Union many Russians moved away from Georgia. The reason for this exodus was that Russian as the official language was abolished by the new Georgian government. Furthermore, during the first few years, Georgia suffered from economic hardship and ethnic tensions, which also led to the extensive emigration of Russians. Ukraine had a far larger Russian population, and harboured almost 8.3 million ethnic Russians, which was 17% of the total Ukrainian population. Nearly 1.5 million ethnic

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<sup>2</sup> Jeff Diamant, 'Ethnic Russians in Some Former Soviet Republics Feel a Close Connection to Russia', Pew Research Center Website, (24 July 2017). <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/07/24/ethnic-russians-in-some-former-soviet-republics-feel-a-close-connection-to-russia/>, (14 December 2019).

<sup>3</sup> The ethnic Russians include Russians born in the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation, and those born in Georgia, who are descendants of Russian parents.

Russians lived in Crimea, which was 67% of the total Crimean population.<sup>4</sup> For President Putin the Russian Diaspora was an eyesore. Since he took office as president for the first time, step-by-step, Putin wanted a strong and inter-connected Russian people who were part of the Russkiy Mir, the epitome of the strong Russian identity.



Figure 9.2 Crimean woman showing her Ukrainian and her new Russian passport<sup>5</sup>

Russian authorities were looking for gentler methods to influence Russian minorities in neighbouring countries that were also affected by Western countries, instead of gaining more influence by eliminating those neighbouring countries through physical warfare. In the past, Russian authorities used to solve this in different ways. The Russian Czarism (1547-1721) and the Russian Empire (1721-1917) both had a merciless reputation for seizing territory by force. Within four centuries the Russian Czarism and Russian Empire conquered neighbouring states and areas under the protectorate of other states. Only Ukraine, a large part of Kazakhstan and Georgia, respectively, in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, were relatively peacefully joined to the Russian Czarism and Russian Empire.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Zvi Gitelman, 'Nationality and Ethnicity in Russia and the Post-Soviet Republics', in: Stephen White, Alex Pravda and Zvi Gitelman, *Developments in Russian and Post-Soviet Politics*, 3d Edition, Originally published in 1990 as 'Development in Soviet Politics', (London (UK): The MacMillan Press, Ltd, 1994), 238-246.

<sup>5</sup> Gareth Davis, 'Passport as Privilege? Forced Assimilation in Russian Crimea', Warscape Website, (14 May 2015). <http://www.warscapes.com/opinion/passport-privilege-forced-assimilation-russian-crimea>, (15 December 2019).

<sup>6</sup> Roman Levita and Mikhail Loiberg, 'The Empire and the Russians: Historical Aspects', in: Vladimir Shlapentokh, Munir Sendich and Emil Payin (Ed), *The New Russian Diaspora: Russian Minorities in the Former Soviet Republics*, Originally published in 1994 by M.E. Sharpe, (Abingdon (UK): Routledge, 2015), 3-5.

The issuing of passports can be considered a modern, non-violent solution for getting more influence in the neighbouring region, which happened both in Georgia and Ukraine. After the Russo-Georgian armed conflict, Scott Littlefield, researcher from the Department of Political Science at the University of Cambridge, concluded Russian passports were handed out for geopolitical interests rather than humanitarian reasons.<sup>7</sup> This not only applied to Georgia, but also to Crimea. Littlefield stated that it would increase the Russian Federation's leverage over the state where the passports were issued, and it consolidated Russian supremacy in regional affairs. More importantly, the issuing of passports provided an excuse to the Russian Federation to intervene as soon as ethnic-Russian citizens, also known as 'compatriots', wherever they lived, were threatened by powers considered to be unfriendly by the Russian government.<sup>8</sup>

## *(2) Olympic Games*

Both the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea took place during the Olympic Games. In 2008, the Summer Olympics were held in Beijing and started on 8 August and ended 24 August.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, the Russian Federation and Georgia were waging war. In 2014 the Winter Olympics took place in Russian summer resort of Sochi. It was a prestigious project for the Russian Federation, with which they wanted to make a big impression worldwide. The total budget of this edition of the Winter Olympics exceeded \$ 50 billion and they were the most expensive Olympic Games ever. On 7 February 2014, President Putin opened the 2014 Winter Olympics with a sparkling show, which closed with an equally brilliant ceremony on 23 February 2014.<sup>10</sup> It was also on 23 February that several demonstrations were taking place in Crimea, and Russian President Putin gave his final approval for its annexation. With their fire starters programme, the GRU had already been committed to organizing, arming and training pro-Russian citizens, and additional KSO-troops, later known as the little green men, were transported from Russia's homeland to

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<sup>7</sup> Scott Littlefield, 'Citizenship, Identity and Foreign Policy: The Contradictions and Consequences of Russia's Passport Distribution in the Separatist Regions of Georgia', Discussion article, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 61 (2009) 8, 1478.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Simon Rabinovitch, 'Beijing Games To Be Costliest, But No Debt', Reuters Website (5 August 2014). <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-olympics-cost/beijing-games-to-be-costliest-but-no-debt-legacy-idUSPEK25823820080805>, (14 December 2019).

<sup>10</sup> Oleg Golubchikov, 'From a Sports Mega-event to a Regional Mega-project: the Sochi Winter Olympics and the Return of Geography in State Development Priorities', *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, (2017), DOI: 10.1080/19406940.2016.1272620.



Sevastopol. Approximately \$ 2 billion of the total budget of the Sochi Olympics was spent on security issues. In total more than 120,000 men of the security forces, military, police, FSB were mobilized for the security of the Winter Olympics.<sup>11</sup> A number of these troops moved directly from Sochi to the events in Crimea.



Figure 9.3 Announcement of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics<sup>12</sup>

It might be pure coincidence that the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the beginning of the annexation of Crimea coincided with the Olympic Games. However, the Games were of course a perfect distraction for carrying out activities that had to remain hidden from the rest of the world for as long as possible. After all, the Olympic Games always get a lot of attention from the global audience and reports about the Olympic sports temporarily overshadow other news items. It is the global sports competition that dominates the news for weeks; winning athletes receive hero status and the public at home temporarily lives in a different world. It is in the shadow of this parallel world that Russian authorities carried out the interventions in Georgia in 2008 and in Crimea in 2014. This phenomenon is what Lamont and Wiseman, as shown in section 3.5 ‘Different models and theories’, called ‘misdirection’, a situation in which the human attention is drawn to another object, because this object attracts more attention than any other one. The world was shocked when it discovered that the Russo-

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<sup>11</sup> Robert Orttung and Sufian Zhemukhov, *Putin’s Olympics: The Sochi Games and the Evolution of Twenty-First Century Russia*, (Abingdon (UK): Routledge, 2017), 63-64.

<sup>12</sup> YouTube, ‘2014 Sochi Olympic Opening Ceremony’, YouTube Website, (3 February 2018). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygluZ0tB8S4&t=8100s>, (15 December 2019).

Georgian armed conflict and the beginning of the annexation of Crimea were already underway, while all eyes were focused on the Olympic Games.

### The use of Nazi symbols and terminology

At the time of the conflicts, Russian media tried to portray opposing political leaders, like Georgian President Saakashvili as a modern version of Adolf Hitler, and later the new Ukrainian government after President Yanukovich had left office as the Nazi regime or 'banderovtsy'. For Russian media World War II, or the Great Patriotic War as the Russians themselves call this war, was still continuing in 2008 and even further in 2014. Blaming the opponent of Nazi sympathies had to induce an appeal to Russian emotions and to spark certain action. It is a way of manipulation that appeals to the cognitive mechanism of negative association and also to a form of information manipulation, both discussed in section 4.4 'Manipulated perceptions'. It can even be argued that the use of Nazi symbols and terms is a form of memory distortion. Using these symbols and terms, the Russian authorities respond to the fact that fewer and fewer people know exactly what happened in World War II. Many witnesses have since died and only a few people really delved into the role of the Russians, Georgians and Ukrainians during the Second World War.

However, in 2008 and 2014, the Russian authorities were not very successful in manipulating the Georgian and Ukrainian citizens. Russians in their homeland and ethnic Russians in Ukraine were sensitive to this defamation, but the Georgian and Ukrainian leaders were not. It can also be seen as a form of agitation propaganda, as the Russian authorities tried to revive old sentiments and suspicions projecting Nazi symbolism on the Georgian and Ukrainian leaders of 2008 and 2014, respectively. Remarkably, Russian media continued their agitation propaganda, although after the Russo-Georgian armed conflict Russian authorities soon deduced that the war rhetoric of the Russian media did not impress non-Russians. They were the perfect audience to influence and to convince of the 'good' Russian intentions, but the excessive use of Nazi symbolism had the opposite effect, Russian media caused disgust amongst the Georgian and Ukrainian non-Russian population. The use of anti-Nazi symbols and terminology in 2008 and 2014 in order to verify if government could be suspected of fascist sympathies may well be considered as unsuccessful attempts.

## The use of conspiracy narratives

During the Russo-Georgian armed conflict, Russian authorities used several conspiracy narratives, as shown in both sections 7.4 and 8.4. However, the literature researched on Russian deception, as discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, does not address conspiracy narratives. It has been established that the Russian authorities did use these conspiracy stories to cause deception during their conflict with Georgia and the annexation of Crimea. It is therefore essential to clarify what conspiracy narratives are. It is for this reason that this section pays attention to the phenomenon of conspiracy narratives.

Conspirators are often on the ‘weakest’ or the ‘losing side’ of society, and for them a belief in conspiracy is therapeutic, explaining why so much misfortune and bad luck has befallen on them. Human beings are uncomfortable with unpredictability and chance, causing aleatory uncertainty as explained in section 4.2 ‘Uncertainty’. If something happens, there must be a reason, a cause and someone to blame. A conspiracy narrative is an effort to explain a certain event or practice by referring to the secret machinations of powerful organisations or people who have also managed to conceal their role.<sup>13</sup> A lack of interpersonal trust is an important aspect in believing conspiracy theories. People who believe conspiracy narratives tend to trust others to a lesser extent. This not only concerns established institutions, such as the government, media or other social institutions, but also people in general, such as family, friends, neighbours and colleagues. Conspiracy narratives are considered a manifestation of healthy interpersonal suspicion pertaining, for instance, to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the Apollo-11 moon landing and 9/11.<sup>14</sup>

Conspiracy is the created filter through which each side viewed the other.<sup>15</sup> One of the used methods is stereotyping, which is relevant to belief in conspiracy narratives and conforms to prejudices. Likewise, people are especially sensitive to the unethical attitudes of authorities in times of epistemic uncertainty due to the lack of proper knowledge about the situation.

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<sup>13</sup> David Aaronovitch, *Voodoo Histories: The Role of the Conspiracy Theory in Shaping Modern History*, Originally printed in 2009 by Jonathan Cape, (New York, NY (USA): Penguin Books, 2010), 5-49.  
. And: Cass Sunstein, *Conspiracy Theories and Other Dangerous Ideas*, (New York, NY (USA): Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2014), ix-x

<sup>14</sup> Michael Wood and Karen Douglas, ‘Conspiracy Theory Psychology: Individual Differences, Worldviews, and States of Mind’, in: Joseph Uscinski, *Conspiracy Theories & the People Who Believed Them*, (New York, NY (USA): Oxford University Press, 2019), 246-248.

<sup>15</sup> Russell Muirhead and Nancy Rosenblum, *A Lot of People Are Saying: The New Conspiracism and the Assault on Democracy*, (Princeton, NY (USA): Princeton University Press, 2019), 19.

Perceptions of immorality and the presence of hidden motives may provoke suspicion, which is a state of ambiguity. When situations are ambiguous, people are not sure what to think and often come to negative conclusion about others instead of postponing their judgment and look for further information. In this way, conspiracy narratives become a devastating cocktail of stereotyping, confirmation bias in combination with the earlier-mentioned fundamental attribution error. This cocktail evokes negative feelings and gloom in people who do not know what is going on. Complot narratives are always surrounded by an atmosphere of non-specificity and vagueness.<sup>16</sup>

The dissemination of conspiracy narratives is not exclusive to present-day Russian authorities as it was also used in Western-Europe, the United States and the Middle East. Yet the idea of a possible alternative to the official discourse and the accusation of conspiracy against powerful groups or individuals had always been present below the surface in Russian and Soviet history.<sup>17</sup> Two examples of this are, the ‘Doctor’s Plot’ of 1952-1953, which was presented in section 6.3, and the notorious anti-Semitic pamphlet of ‘The Protocols of the Elders of Zion’, a conspiracy narrative, which was Russian in origin. These protocols sketch the image of a number of powerful Jews discussing world domination and were considered a reaction to the first Zionist World Congress in Basel in 1897.<sup>18</sup> The exact origin of the protocols has never been discovered, but they are attributed to the Russian mystic Sergei Nilu, who might have edited the protocols in 1903. In the 1920s, Russian émigrés spread the protocols to Western Europe and the United States, and thus the protocols found their way in history.<sup>19</sup> Nazi Germany was, of course, receptive to anti-Semitic and conspiracy narratives. Even today, some of the protocols are still part of the Arab narratives on the Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>20</sup> New discoveries about the protocols are still hot news in Russian media.<sup>21</sup> The

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<sup>16</sup> Michael Wood and Karen Douglas, ‘Conspiracy Theory Psychology: Individual Differences, Worldviews, and States of Mind’, in: Joseph Uscinski, *Conspiracy Theories & the People Who Believed Them*, (New York, NY (USA): Oxford University Press, 2019), 249-253.

<sup>17</sup> Marlène Laruelle, ‘Conspiracy and Alternate History in Russia: A Nationalist Equation for Success?’, *The Russian Review*, 71 (2012) 4, 565-567. And: Martin Kragh, Erik Andermo and Liliia Makashova, ‘Conspiracy Theories in Russian Security Thinking’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, (2020), 3-4.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Hagemester, ‘The Protocols of the Elders of Zion: Between History and Fiction’, *New German Critique*, No 103, Dark Powers: Conspiracies and Conspiracy Theory in History and Literature, 35 (2008) 1, 83-95. And: Steven Lazaroff and Mark Rodger, *History’s Greatest Deceptions and Confidence Scams*, (Saint Laurent, Quebec (CAN) RodgerLaz Publishing S.E.N.C. 2018), 89-91.

<sup>19</sup> Hagemester, ‘The Protocols of the Elders of Zion’, 83-95.

<sup>20</sup> Esther Webman, ‘Adoption of the Protocols in the Arab Discourse on the Arab-Israeli Conflict, Zionism, and the Jews’, in: Esther Webman (Ed), *The Global Impact of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion: A Century-old Myth*, Routledge Jewish Studies Series, (Abingdon (UK): Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), Kindle E-book, Chapter 11.

<sup>21</sup> Hagemester, ‘The Protocols of the Elders of Zion’, 83-90.

second example may indicate how long such conspiracy stories continue to have an effect on history.

Russian history shows that there are two different categories of the conspiracy narratives that were spread. On the one hand, there were the narratives that were distributed by the Russian authorities themselves, such as the Doctor's Plot, in order to create suspicion about groups and thus have a reason to take action against them. On the other, there were conspiracy narratives, which came from the population or the media, but were not contradicted by the Soviet or Russian authorities, such as 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion'. Russian authorities often do not undertake action against conspiracy narratives or look away, since these narratives do not affect the Russian interests or identity.

Russian authorities also proceeded to use these conspiracy narratives during the two conflicts. In Georgia as well as in Crimea, they tried to blame the United States with conspiracy stories, suggesting that it had already planned both conflicts. They managed to evoke a certain degree of epistemic uncertainty by spreading stories that Russian minorities in neighbouring countries were victims of violence and that their human rights were at stake. Though never mentioned before in earlier publications on Russian deception warfare, these conspiracy narratives must be regarded as an essential part of Russia's *dezinformatsiya* activities. They are carefully constructed to deceive and manipulate decision-makers as well the general public.

### A rapid and stealth intervention

After the annexation of Crimea, the Western world struggled to find an explanation for the quick take-over of the peninsula. For those who delved deeper into Russia's approach during the annexation, it became obvious that its authorities embraced a new 'style of warfare' and adopted, in their view, successful elements of Western warfare.

A new element was the sudden intervention of phantom troops, unidentifiable, unassailable, and frightening. The Russian authorities denied any involvement, initially at least. The speed of the operation also played a role in the surprise effect, as was recognized in section 4.3 'Surprise'. This effect was further enhanced by a large-scale exercise in Russia's homeland. It was a stealth land operation in the Crimean Peninsula; nobody knew what was happening or

could officially attribute any action to the Russian Federation. Private Military Companies (PMCs), paramilitary organizations and pro-Russian civilians supported unknown troops and that also made it very difficult to attribute the annexation activities and responsibility to Russian authorities. Always having been very interested in PMCs and paramilitary organisations, Putin, at the time Russia's Prime Minister, had attempted to legalise PMCs in 2012.<sup>22</sup> In an interview with Russian news agency RIA Novosti, the Prime Minister indicated that PMCs 'constitute an instrument for achieving national [Russian] interests without the direct participation of the authorities'.<sup>23</sup>

At an earlier stage, the pro-Russian civilians were recruited, organised, equipped and trained by the GRU, which ran a fire starter programme, an equivalent of the agents of influence programme. The unidentifiable troops, later exposed as Russian KSO-troops and Naval Infantry, created manipulated perception every time they appeared at a new location all over the Crimea Peninsula. This had a huge surprise effect. The question is to what extent this action is repeatable and still produce the same surprise effect? In any case, since the annexation the West has been fully awake, although Western experts are still finding it difficult to get their heads around the Russian way of warfare.

## Large-scale exercises

The large-scale exercises along the border with Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, respectively, contributed to the overwhelming stealth effects of the Russian offensive operations. These exercises were either meant as cover for troop build-up, as took place on the eve of the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in 2008, or to look threatening, as if the Russian Armed Forces were about to attack the Crimea and the Ukraine in 2014 on a large scale. Although they were obvious, and intended as cover or a deterrent, these exercises were not specifically mentioned in the publications used for Chapter 2 'Russian Deception'. However, they certainly appeared in publications used in Chapter 3 'Deception Warfare'. The Russian exercise in 2014 were a show of force and can be considered as a military demonstration, as such it is listed by Whaley and Monroe as one of the forms of deception.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Emmanuel Dreyfus, *Private Military Companies in Russia: Not So Quiet on the Eastern Front?*, Research paper No. 63, (Paris (FRA): *Institut de Recherche Stratégique de l'École Militaire* (Strategic Research Institute of the French Military Academy), 2018), 9.

<sup>23</sup> Vladimir Putin, op. cit. in: Dreyfus, *Private Military Companies in Russia*, 9.

<sup>24</sup> Whaley, *Stratagem*, 7-9. And: Monroe, *Deception*, 44.

These exercises, when used as demonstrations, are a way of frightening and impressing others in order to evoke an alternative perception. They belong to the concept of maskirovka. For example, in 2008, after the KAVKAZ 2008 exercise in the Russian homeland along the border with Georgia, Russian authorities left two battalions on the border with Georgia. These battalions were later deployed during the advance to the Georgian capital Tbilisi. During the annexation of Crimea, Russian authorities managed to revive the misleading effect caused by actions of the Russian Special Forces in the peninsula with the snap exercise along the border with Ukraine and close to the Crimean Peninsula. As a result, Ukrainian and Crimean authorities no longer knew where they stood. What were the Russian Federation's intentions? And to what extent were the Russian authorities involved? It was not the first time that Russian authorities used large-scale exercises as a cover for their operations. Prior to the Soviet invasion at the time of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 and the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 by the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet Union held major exercises that served as a cover for these invasions. In addition, just before the Yom Kippur War in the Middle East, the Egyptian Armed Forces, assisted by the Soviet GRU-spetsnaz and regular Soviet personnel, held large-scale exercises to create a deceptive effect to mask the imminent attack on Israel.<sup>25</sup> The Russian Federation has since built a reputation for large scale exercises held prior to, or during military operations it was actively or passively involved in.

## Increasing activities in cyberspace

Over the last two decades the use and abuse of cyberspace has increased exponentially. During the Russo-Georgian armed conflict Russian authorities used a hacker community with a dubious criminal reputation (RBN) to hack the websites of Georgian government organisations and the embassies of Western countries or to take these websites temporarily out of service by DDoS attacks. During the annexation of Crimea, the application possibilities on the Internet had increased considerably, and other social media platforms were also actively used. The Russian authorities again managed to use vague shadow organizations with criminal reputations, such as CyberBerkut. Now, the methods before and during the

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<sup>25</sup> Tal Tovy, 'From Maneuvers to War: The Egyptian Deception Plan on the Eve of the Yom-Kippur War', in: Christopher Rein, *Weaving the Tangled Web: Military Deception in Large-Scale Combat Operations*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS (USA): Army University Press, 2018), 178. Also: Isabella Ginor and Gideon Remez, *The Soviet-Israel War 1967-1973: The USSR's Military Intervention in the Egyptian-Israel Conflict*, (London (UK): C. Hurst & Company Ltd., 2017), 327-346.

annexation were a sophisticated form of microtargeting, by which demonstrators were personally contacted on their mobile phones during Euromaidan and later during the protest activities in Crimea. Vague on-line criminal organisations using social media make it difficult to link these cyber activities with the Russian authorities, which add to uncertainty and deception.

## Maintaining the manipulated perception

As mentioned before, former Supreme Allied Commander in Europe (SACEUR), General Philip Breedlove was deeply impressed by the Russian authorities' ability to maintain the manipulated perception about the annexation of Crimea. KSO-troop without any insignia were not directly attributed to the Russian Federation and the Russian authorities kept silent and denied their involvement in the quick take-over of the Crimean Peninsula, making it even harder to understand the situation in Crimea. The Russian authorities were able to constantly confront the rest of the world with unexpected activities and to provide only pieces of information. As Gestalt psychology already recognised that hyper-sensitivity to patterns and causes of situations serves mankind well. Humans are able to weave seemingly unrelated and inexplicable anomalies into a coherent narrative. It is a form of narration as explained in section 4.4 'Manipulated perceptions'. People try to make sense of the world from one moment to the next. Every situation is overflowed with dots or rather information packages. To make sense of it, the human brain quickly figures out how these dots are connected.<sup>26</sup> Particularly in the security environment, narratives are deliberately created with the purpose of activating a certain feeling, emotion or opinion.<sup>27</sup> This was what Russian authorities did over time, providing the rest of the world with dots, and the Western world was very keen to turn them into its own perception. Therefore, the Russian authorities managed to sustain the deception effects during and after the annexation of Crimea for at least another month and a half, before Russian President Putin himself gave a confirmative answer.

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<sup>26</sup> Rob Brotherton, *Suspicious Minds: Why We Believe Conspiracy Theories*, Originally published in 2015, (New York, NY (USA): Bloomsbury Sigma, 2016), 161-173.

<sup>27</sup> Beatrice de Graaf, George Dimitriu and Jens Ringmose, *Strategic Narratives, Public Opinion and War*, (Abingdon (UK): Routledge, 2015), 7-8.



## 9.5 Application of the framework

The previous section showed the most notable elements of modern Russian deception, namely (1) creating uncertainty through issuing Russian citizenships and use of a world event as distractor for the intervention, (2) the use of Nazi symbols and terminology, (3) the use of conspiracy narratives, (4) a rapid and stealth intervention, (5) large scale exercises, (6) increasing activities in cyber space, and (7) maintenance of the manipulated perception. These seven elements, which stem from the investigation of the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea are first and foremost an addition to the existing framework for analysing Russian deception during an armed conflict. This observation immediately raises two main questions. First, which of these elements are presented in the framework? Second, which elements are not? In addition, there are two subsidiary questions, namely, ‘Does the framework have other limitations?’ and ‘Which elements were missing or insufficient to explain the described events?’ These questions are answered in the next three subsections.

### Perpetuation

This subsection focuses on the question: which elements that played a role in the framework for the analysis of Russian deception during an armed conflict can be continued? The development of the Russian-Georgian armed conflict in 2008 into the annexation of Crimea in 2014 is particularly interesting in this respect. A distinction must be made between elements effectively applied by the Russian authorities and those that were less successful, because both elements are included in the framework.

The framework shows four different phases, applied by the Russian authorities. They planned their deception activities before the execution, applied *maskirovka* in the execution phase, caused surprise and certain perceptions in the outcome phase, and during the feedback phase they continued to deceive the Ukrainian authorities and the rest of the world for a month and a half. Almost more than a month after the referendum, Putin declared that the Russian Federation was behind the annexation. It shows the degree of success, and that the Russian authorities have long been able to sustain the surprise effect and to nurture and retain certain perceptions. Overall, the Russian authorities were able to create situational complexity and for a long time it was vague and unclear what their intentions were. These elements contributed to uncertain circumstances. More specifically, Russian authorities deliberately used *maskirovka* methods like active measures, including the use of fire starters, and reflexive

control. The spread of propaganda and the use of Nazi symbols and terminology were less successful, simply because the target population were not suffering from gullibility. On the other hand, the spread of conspiracy narratives and fire starters, both part of the active measures used, were efficacious. These *maskirovka* methods bring about misleading effects. The targets, the Georgian and Ukrainian leadership, had a lack of information, and were initially impacted by the speed and unexpected activities of the Russian troops in their countries, caused, among other things, by a lack of sound intelligence. Russian authorities used information manipulation and tried some simple forms of memory distortion. They also tried to appeal to other neural and cognitive mechanisms, like negative association, stereotyping, narration, and biases and heuristics.

## Limitations

It turns out that the framework has its limitations. In section 6.3 ‘Historical overview of the armed conflict’ it became clear that the framework only has a unilateral focus: the deceiver deceives the target, while the target is suffering its fate. The model does not take into account an opponent, who may have taken countermeasures, such as Georgia did with a number of international press moments during the armed conflict to inform the rest of the world and to influence public opinion. In other words, the deceived does not necessarily have to be a helpless victim without an agenda of his own. Now, after their conflict with Georgia, Russian authorities have taken a number of measures in their armed forces and intelligence services to improve their methods. Moreover, they have started to focus much more on the use of the information environment. The amount of resources provided by Russian authorities during the annexation of Crimea was considerably more extensive than in 2008. The Ukrainian and Crimean leaders did not use counter-measures during the annexation. As a result, there clearly was a one-sided deception activity by the Russian authorities, and that can easily be explained by using the framework.

## Redundancy

Much has been reviewed during the previous paragraph. As expected, Russian authorities used many elements of the framework during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea. Nevertheless, a few elements of the framework were less applied by Russian authorities or less visible during these two conflicts, because they were not noticed in

the analysis of the armed conflict in 2008 and the annexation. This concerns one sub-element of the manipulated perception effect. 'Subliminal stimulation' did not appear in the results of the investigation into deception during the armed conflict in 2008 and the annexation of Crimea. As far as can be ascertained, Russian authorities have not attempted to influence their opponents in their subconscious minds, on the other hand, as mentioned before, the Georgian and Ukrainian leadership and population did not suffer from gullibility.

## 9.6 Concluding remarks

This chapter answered the eight secondary research question: Is there a modern Russian version of deception warfare? The Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea turned out to be two different types of conflict. The Russo-Georgian armed conflict was a physical encounter between two parties that was supported to a limited extent by information operations. The annexation of Crimea, in contrast, was primarily a conflict in which the opponent of the Russian Federation was negatively influenced by creating a surprise effect and manipulated perceptions. On the one hand, there were dissimilarities between the two conflicts, such as the overall view and the nature of the conflict, and the three main Russian intelligence services, the FSB, SVR and GRU, had different roles during the two conflicts. On the other, there were prominent similarities as well, like creating uncertainty through the distribution of Russian passports and the use of an eminent global event as a distraction while starting the intervention. Furthermore, both conflicts had in common that Russian media used Nazi symbols and terminology to stigmatise the opponent as an evil system in order to create support for their intervention, and that they used conspiracy narratives. Meanwhile, the Russian authorities tried to legitimize their intervention by indicating that they had no other choice but to intervene because Russian compatriots abroad were threatened and even physically attacked.

The six most notable elements of modern Russian deception warfare are (1) creating uncertainty through issuing Russian citizenships and use of a world event as distractor for an intervention, (2) the use of conspiracy narratives, (3) a rapid and stealth intervention, (4) demonstrations in the form of large scale exercises, (5) increasing activities in cyber space, and (6) maintenance of the manipulated perception. The framework for the analysis of Russian deception during armed conflict was very useful, only 'predictable behaviour' and 'subliminal stimulation' were not found in the investigation into deception during the Russo-

Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea. Together with the new and unique elements of modern Russian deception during an armed conflict, the following adjusted overview of modern Russian deception can be presented.

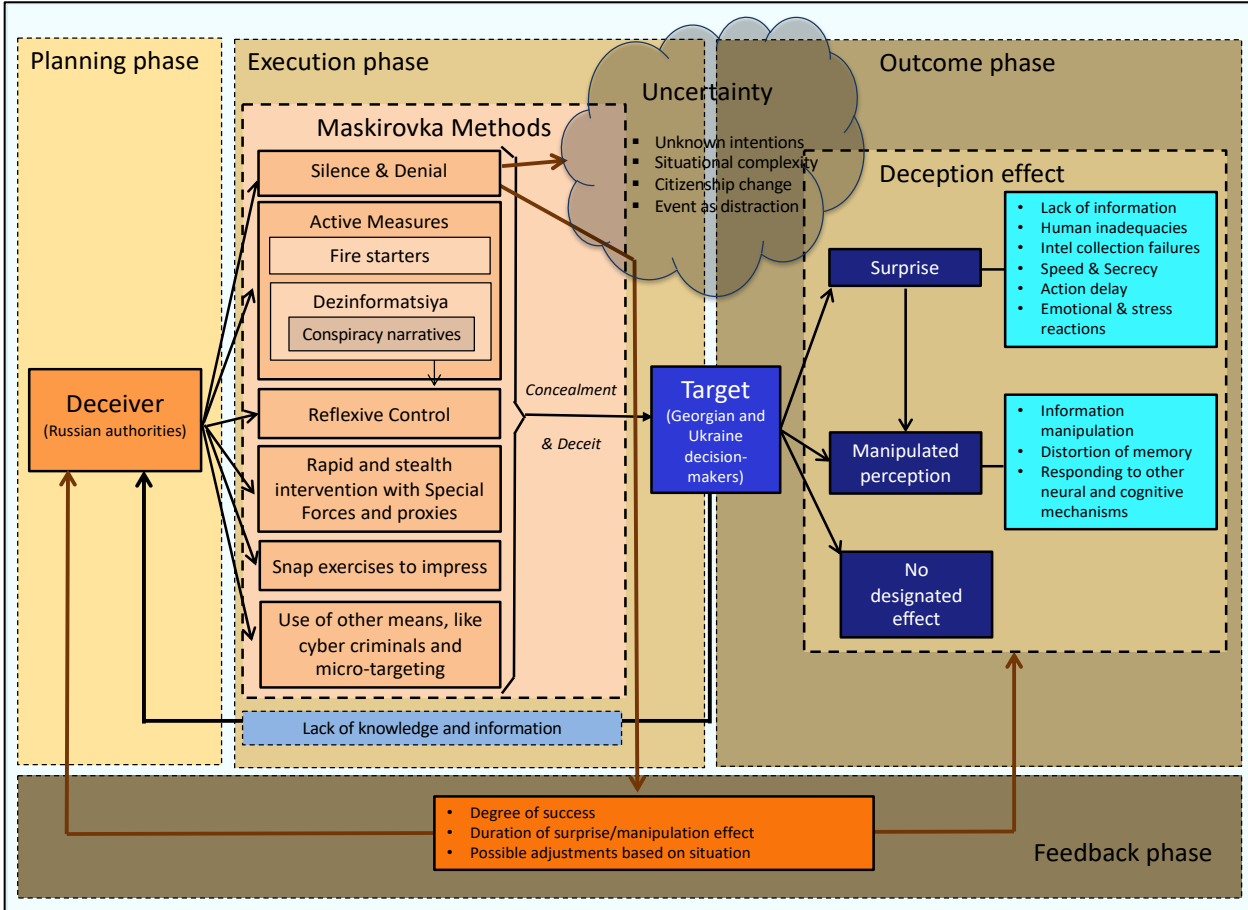


Figure 9.4 Adjusted framework for analysing modern Russian deception warfare

These seven most notable elements of modern Russian deception warfare mentioned make it necessary to revise the framework, as it was presented in section 5.4 ‘Amalgamation of deception factors’. The adjusted framework for analysing modern Russian deception warfare, see Figure 9.4, is a variation on a communication model with a transmitter, a channel, a receiver and the desired effect, in this diagram referred to as a deceiver, a method, a target and deception effects. The adjusted framework still consists of four phases: (1) planning phase, during which not only the deception activity is planned but also activities are set in motion to create an uncertain situation, (2) execution, during which maskirovka methods are used, (3) the outcome phase which shows the deception effects, and (4) the feedback phase, which is aimed at gauging success and possibly adjusting and maintaining the deception activities. Uncertainty may arise from situational complexity and unknown intentions. These were the classical causes of uncertainty. Uncertainty can be reinforced by silence and denial, so

nobody knows what exactly is going on. Following the investigation of the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and annexation of Crimea, the issuing of Russian passports, in spite of the fact that citizens already had Georgian or Ukrainian nationality, and the use of major world events to divert attention have been added as elements that cause uncertainty. Silence and denial can also be considered as a maskirovka method, inducing people form another impression of an event, and as a means to maintain the deception effect. The maskirovka methods now include, in addition to the already known active measures, fire starters recruiting and training pro-Russian civilians, dezinformatsiya and conspiracy narratives, and reflexive control, a rapid and stealth intervention with special forces and proxies, like motor cycle gangs and armed civilian groups, snap exercises to deter the opponent, and the use of other means like cyber criminals and micro-targeting methods by sending dedicated messages to protestors. The final deception effects are surprise, which is related to lack of information, human inadequacies, intelligence collection failures, speed & secrecy, action delay and other stress reactions. Manipulated perception is another deception effect, and it consists of information manipulation, including the use of Gestalt psychology mechanisms, distortion of memory and responses to other neural and cognitive mechanisms. Maintaining the deception is accomplished by silence & denial of the Russian authorities. It determines the duration of the effect and indicates whether adjustment is necessary.



# Chapter 10 Final Remarks

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### 10.1 Preamble

This chapter marks the end of this research into modern Russian deception warfare. In the previous chapters, Russian deception and the deception process and elements, as Western researchers analysed it, have been compared and put in a framework for analysing Russian deception during armed conflict. The framework was then used to study the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea in order to find out what kind of deception methods were used by Russian authorities. This present chapter focuses on the conclusion of this study. The chapter consists of three other sections, namely 10.2 'Summary', 10.3 'Conclusion', 10.4 'Discussion', and 10.5 'Recommendations'.

### 10.2 Summary

This research can be summarised in eight steps. Step 1 (chapter 2) discusses the traditional kinds of Russian deception, such as *maskirovka*, reflexive control, active measures, agents of influence programme, agitation propaganda, *dezinformatsiya* and *kompromat*. During the analysis of these classical Russian methods of deception, it became noticeable that there was no clear explanation of a concept, such as *maskirovka*. This research assumes that *maskirovka* encompasses all Russian methods of deception, including reflexive control, active measures and *dezinformatsiya*, evoking concealment and deceit, ultimately leading to surprise and manipulated perception.

Step 2 (chapter 3) places the research into deception in a broader context. This step focuses on the deception process and its elements as regarded by Western researchers. Notably, the West, especially Western armed forces, showed little interest in applying deception to operations.

This can partly be explained by the fact that during the Cold War, Western armed forces were mainly aimed at physically stopping the massive operational manoeuvre groups of the Warsaw Pact, and after its collapse the Western armed forces began to focus on peacekeeping and stabilization operations, with the primary parties in the conflict striving for transparency, which is at odds with deception. Moreover, research has shown that Western nations, once involved as a warring party in an armed conflict, usually prefer ‘cumulative destruction’, a physical devastation and defeat of the opponent, instead of ‘systemic disruption’, a style of warfare that also includes non-physical means to take advantage of an opponent’s weaknesses.

By and large, it should be noted here that deception during an armed conflict is not the exclusive privilege of armed forces, as security and intelligence services can also play a major role in deception operations at the strategic level. From a Western macro perspective, it can be stated that the fighting power of a state consists of three components: (1) the conceptual component, (2) the moral component, and (3) the physical component. In case of deception warfare, it means that the conceptual component provides doctrine and an advanced plan for deception, the physical component comprises manpower and equipment to deploy in deception operations, and the moral component stands for the enthusiasm among political, civil service and military leadership to apply deception during operations. The latter component often prevents Western deception operations at the strategic level, because many Western leaders do not think it fits in an open and democratic society. Additionally, performing deception operations is still considered neither fair nor chic. It does not seem to fit in structure of current Western ethical awareness.

It was remarkably that in earlier studies of deception the circumstances under which deception takes place, namely uncertainty, and the effects to be achieved with deception, namely surprise and manipulated perceptions, were conspicuously lacking. That is why step 3 (chapter 4) further elaborates on these three elements. Step 4 (chapter 5) then consists of putting together a framework to further analyse Russian deception during armed conflicts. This framework was a combination of Russian insights and the results of steps 2 and 3. Insights into Russian deception warfare were the foundation for the analytical framework and insights into a deception process and its elements together with a better understanding of uncertainty, surprise and manipulated perceptions were added to this foundation. Step 5



(chapter 6) provides an overview of Russian authorities, how their political system works, how they are structured and how they were involved in the deception methods.

In the application of the framework to the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in 2008 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014, it is primarily the intention to discover new elements in Russian deception methods. That is why step 6 (chapter 7) and in step 7 (chapter 8) analyse the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea, respectively, while step 8 (chapter 9) examines the kind of deception elements used by Russian authorities. This leads to an amplification of the analytic framework presented in chapter 5, resulting in the final framework, as shown in Figure 10.1 'Final framework for the analysis of modern Russian deception warfare'.

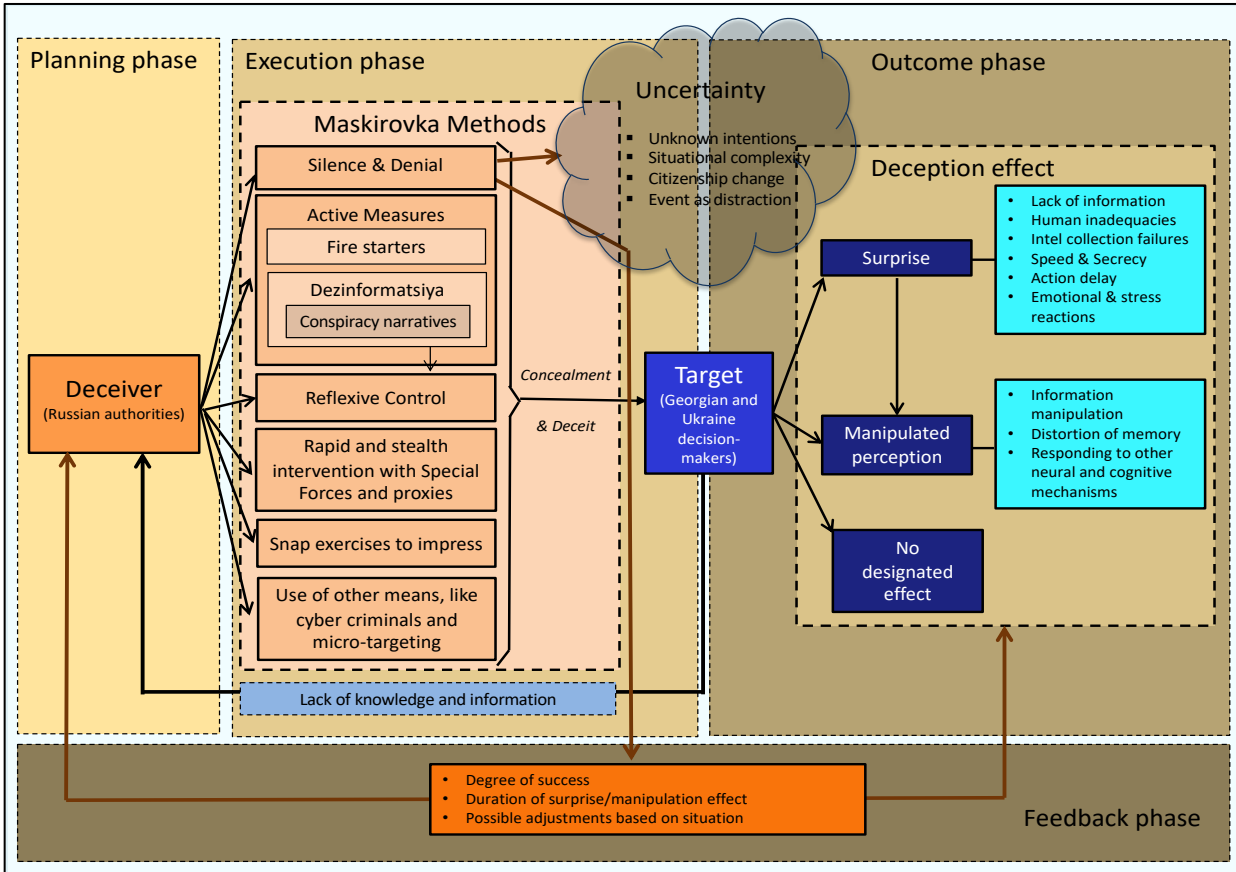


Figure 10.1 Final framework to analyse modern Russian deception warfare

### 10.3 Conclusion

The main research questions of this research were:

How did Russian authorities use deception warfare to deceive the decision-makers of Georgia and Ukraine during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in 2008 and Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014? Can it be said that there is a modern Russian version of deception warfare?

The answer to the first part of the main research questions is that Russian authorities used successful and unsuccessful deception methods during the conflicts mentioned. The deception methods include different maskirovka methods. Whereas the Russo-Georgian armed conflict was mainly a physically-oriented and conventional conflict supported by activities in the information sphere, the annexation of Crimea was a much more sophisticated take-over, predominantly focused on evoking surprise and manipulating perceptions. The time between the two conflicts showed a strong development in Russian thinking about warfare, which helped to shape the afore-mentioned six new elements in Russian deception warfare.

Both in 2008 and 2014 Russian authorities tried to use reflexive control mechanisms, like power pressure, and the manipulation of the opponent's decision-making algorithms and time. In 2008 the Georgian leadership was hardly affected, while reflexive control was more successfully applied during the annexation of Crimea in 2014. The active measures applied in the two conflicts, including agents of influence and *dezinformatsiya*, showed a mixed picture. *Dezinformatsiya*, like agitation propaganda and the comparison of Georgian and Ukrainian leaders to the evil Nazi regime, only found a ready ear with ethnic Russian audience. It did not catch on with the Georgian and Ukrainian leadership and the rest of the world. In the case of the Russo-Georgian armed conflict, Russian authorities under the leadership of President Medvedev were reactive in their initial official statements, and the nature of the conflict meant that Russian authorities could not apply the method of silence and denial. The agents of influence programme worked well during the annexation of Crimea. It was the SVR, but the GRU that managed with their fire starters to recruit, arm, organise and train several pro-Russian civilian groups that assisted KSO-troops during the annexation of the peninsula. During the annexation of Crimea, Russian authorities were also able to apply the method of silence and denial in a very cautious manner, as a result of which Ukrainian leadership did not know where it stood. Also, Russian authorities managed to keep their opponent ignorant for weeks, leading to a surprise effect and manipulated perceptions amongst the Ukrainian leadership and the rest of the world that lasted for more than six weeks.

The answer to the second part of the main research questions is that there is no modern Russian deception warfare. A number of deception methods undertaken by Russian authorities have been noticed, but not all of them can be seen as modern. Russian history, for example, shows many examples of the use of maskirovka methods. Nevertheless, during the two conflicts researched, six notable elements of modern Russian deception warfare could be distinguished: (1) creating uncertainty through: (1a) issuing Russian citizenships and (1b) using of a world event as distractor for an intervention, (2) the dissemination of conspiracy narratives, (3) rapid and stealth intervention, (4) demonstrations in the form of large scale exercises, (5) increasing activities in cyber space, and (6) maintaining manipulated perception. Ergo, Russian deception warfare is not new, but some of the elements are new, such as issuing Russian citizenship, the use of a world event as distractor and increasing activities in the cyber space, while other elements have been revamped like speed during the quick and stealth interventions, demonstrations in the form of large-scale exercises and the maintenance of certain perceptions. Conspiracy narratives have been around for a long time in Russian and Soviet history, but they have actually never been classified as deception methods while they do try to create a certain perception. That is why they are considered as methods of deception in this dissertation.

## 10.4 Discussion

This section deals with a number of issues that occurred while this research into modern Russian deception warfare was being done. These issues have not been further elaborated in order to stay focussed on answering the central research question. However, they are relevant deception-related issues, as they put certain insights and conclusions in a different perspective. This section consists of seven topics, which may seem many, but probably they are only the top of the iceberg.

First, although this research has focused solely on two cases, namely the Russo-Georgian armed conflict and the annexation of Crimea, it is clear that the presence of Russian ‘compatriots abroad’ living in former Soviet republics are a strong motivation for the Russian authorities to intervene. According to Russian authorities, their compatriots abroad are an essential part of the inter-connected Russian people. This fervent government desire for a common identity for all Russians fits in with the inclusive Russkiy Mir idea. The urge to expand, which the Russian authorities cherish, will be aimed at former Soviet republics that

can easily be influenced, whereby the alleged injustice against Russian compatriots abroad is used as a call for action. Therefore, it is less likely that Russian authorities also want to invade any territory outside the area of the former Soviet Union.

Second, this research has been limited to the deception methods used by Russian authorities during armed conflicts. The researched conflicts happened to take place in neighbouring countries. The Russian authorities themselves admitted their involvement. This does not alter the fact that Russian authorities may also have used deception in other cases, not necessarily armed conflicts. In Chapter 1 'Introduction', it is stated that there is a strong suspicion that Russian authorities also played a misleading role in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, in the conflict in the Ukrainian Donbass region, in the downing of MH-17, in the 2016 Brexit referendum, in the 2016 American elections and in leaking correspondence of Macron's political party. These accusations contributed to much attention for, and research into, the working and effects of deception, disinformation, fake news and alternative facts worldwide.

Third, Western military and security experts are all too quick to state that the Russian Federation is a society in which deception is pre-eminently applied, and that deception fits into Russian culture in particular. On the contrary, the West, with mostly open democracies, would not lend itself to that. That appears not to be true. The West has indeed frequently applied deception, such as military deception during both World Wars and other forms of deception by Western security forces during the Cold War. Western countries have only lost much of their interest in the application of deception during operations in the last 50 years, as explained in section 3.2 'Lost appetite'.

Four, the rapid and stealth intervention methods with unidentifiable KSO troops in combination with the silence and denial method of Russian authorities, which were applied during and immediately after the annexation of Crimea, have since been recognized and intensively investigated by many experts. It is, therefore, unclear if this method can successfully be applied again in the same intensity and with the same sequence of activities in the future.

Five, the model that describes the entire deception warfare process is actually a variant of a standard communication process. Such a process starts with a sender, who sends a certain

message through a certain channel to a receiver, ultimately resulting in an effect. The deception warfare process is really no different. It starts with a deceiver who wants to mislead a target through certain channels and with certain methods, eventually resulting in surprise and manipulated perception. Nowadays, authorities often make use of so-called strategic communication, whereby certain target audiences are influenced with certain messages and activities at a strategic level to allow these target audiences to ultimately make desired decisions or show desired behaviour. From this explanation it follows that deception warfare can be seen as a form of strategic communication.

Sixth, a deception process is not a one-way model. Many deception investigations assume that the impostor has a deliberate plan to cheat, while the target always undergoes deliberate deception. However, that is by no means the case in practice. For example, this study shows that a target does not necessarily have to wait passively and can have its own agenda, as demonstrated by the Georgian President during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict in 2008. Moreover, the target may be able to quickly identify deception patterns, allowing it to take firm measures to counteract the deception, as happened with the hosting of the Georgian government website by foreign servers during the Russo-Georgian armed conflict.

Seven, after the annexation of Crimea the West accused the Russian Federation of being a major aggressor, violating the UN Charter by invading neighbouring countries at its discretion. It was a major wake-up call for NATO and its member states, which were still in the process of winding down operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. On the other hand, many political and military experts were initially unable to explain Russia's annexation. There was an urgent need among Western nations to find out as quickly as possible what exactly those Russian authorities had done in Crimea. An article by Russian Chief of Staff, General Valery Gerasimov, describing Western operations over the last 25 years was considered by many to be a formulation of the new Russian military doctrine. Meanwhile many publications on the annexation of Crimea and the Russian method of warfare have been published over the past six years, some with interesting insights but many with only superficial analyses. This created a certain ghost image about Russia's performance in Crimea, and what the Western world could expect from the Russian Federation in the future. It seems that many Western experts collectively suffered from forms of expression and mechanisms that can be explained by the Gestalt psychology, such as the hypersensitivity in wanting to recognize patterns and connecting the dots. Most Western experts only had chunks

of information at their disposal and filled in the blanks between those pieces of information with assumptions, being views and estimates that were obvious but had not been tested for factual matters. Filling in the blanks was done as a form of narration with the purpose to create their own narratives about the Russian Federation. It is therefore that Russia's performance in Georgia in 2008 and in Crimea in 2014 caused apprehension among Western leaders. An alliance such as NATO, and its member-states, must be wary of the Russian method of deception warfare. They cannot afford to sit back and relax, because Russian authorities possess a large arsenal of deception methods and the application of it is not limited to the annexation of Crimea! Prior to the annexation, Russian authorities had studied and discussed the Western approach to operations of the last 25 years. Some of the confusion in the West could have been prevented if experts had critically analysed their own military operations and had taken their own 'classics' seriously.

An example of rousing public sentiment in the West occurred during the fall of 2017 when the annual Russian strategic exercise was held. The exercise, ZAPAD 2017, carried out by troops from the Russian Federation and Belarus took place within a short distance from the Baltic States. Although NATO was not explicitly mentioned in the scenario, there was a Western Alliance, which supposedly had occupied part of Belarus. The scenario of ZAPAD 2017 anticipated that the combined Russian-Belarusian forces would first recapture the lost area, and then defeat the opponent with a major ground offensive on the alliance's territory.<sup>1</sup> In the run-up to the exercise, the then German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen stated in an interview that possibly 100,000 soldiers would participate, which turned out to be grossly exaggerated.<sup>2</sup> Estimates about the size of Russian and Belarusian contributions diverge. A Swedish officer, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Möller, who was observer during the ZAPAD-2017 exercise, claimed that the numbers of troops mentioned in the official statement about the exercise by Belarussian leadership were correct: 2,700 Russian and 10,000 Belarusian soldiers.<sup>3</sup> Other experts, such as the American analyst Michael Kofman, came up with estimates of around 45,000 soldiers, of whom some 23,000 were active in the training area,

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<sup>1</sup> Emily Ferris, 'The True Purpose of Russia's Zapad Military Exercise: Why Moscow Wanted to Send a Message to Minsk', Foreign Affairs Website (4 October 2017). <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2017-10-04/true-purpose-russias-zapad-military-exercises>, (19 December 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Robin Emmott, 'Germany Disputes Size of Russian Wargames, Predicts 100,000 Troops', Reuters Website, (7 September 2017). <https://www.reuters.com/article/russia-nato-wargames/germany-disputes-size-of-russian-wargames-predicts-100000-troops-idUSL8N1LO1W4>, (19 December 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Roman Goncharenko, 'Zapad-2017: Normal Military Business', Deutsche Welle Website, (27 September 2017). <https://www.dw.com/en/zapad-2017-normal-military-business/a-40710010>, (19 December 2019).

while the rest provided logistical support from locations in Belarus and the Russian Federation. Russian authorities were initially silent about the scope and the purpose of the ZAPAD-2017 exercise, making the Western media wonder and start speculating. It led to alarming reports and rumours about the true scope and purpose of the exercise, all of which became increasingly far from reality. It even affected the German Defence Minister and that was exactly what Russian authorities wanted to achieve.<sup>4</sup> So, NATO members should ponder over how to respond to Russian actions, because recent Western responses only play into the hands of the Russian authorities.

## 10.5 Recommendations

After having contemplated many aspects of modern Russian deception warfare, four recommendations can justifiably be made. They are presented below.

First, it is noteworthy that most of the deception studies used for this dissertation hardly pay any attention to cultural patterns. Deception always harbours differences in cultural experience between the deceiver and his target. Although this research refers to cultural aspects in some instances, such as the comments about the concept of *Russkiy Mir*, cultural differences were not within the scope of this research. Nevertheless, it is advisable to further examine the cultural circumstances that play a role in deception. After all, it is very important for the deceiver to fully understand his target, including all cultural aspects involved, to evoke a successful deception effect, just as potential targets should also carefully study their opponents' culture to avoid being misled.

Second, as discussed in this study, there is not overmuch enthusiasm in the Western world for planning and performing deception operations, while in other parts of the world there certainly is a lot of interest for it. That lack of interest in deception warfare is perhaps the reason why only a few relevant deception studies have been undertaken in the last 50 years. It is, therefore, recommendable to conduct much more deception research to get a better understanding of deception methods and the underlying mechanisms. Especially those elements, such as uncertainty, surprise and manipulated perception should be further explored

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<sup>4</sup> Keir Giles, 'Russia Hit Multiple Targets with Zapad-2017', Carnegie Endowment Website, (25 January 2018). <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/01/25/russia-hit-multiple-targets-with-zapad-2017-pub-75278with-zapad-2017-pub-75278>, (19 December 2019).

from a psychological and a sociological angle. This actually is a rather pressing advice, since deception is part of everyday life, playing a role in politics, sports, movies, television, theatre and the advertising industry. People are constantly being misled and they realize that... but as soon as deception is used for security reasons Westerners tend to have no interest.

Third, it is also suggested that more research should be conducted into current Russian military and security actions, not only in relation to deception warfare. Many developments in the security domain are currently taking place and the Russian Federation is certainly involved. Urgent questions are waiting to be answered: what exactly is the role of Russian units in Syria? What role does the Russian Federation play in the on-going conflict in the Donbas region in Ukraine? What is its relationship with Turkey? Or with Libya? Of course, it is also relevant to investigate current Russian deception methods, because within domain of international relations a number of questions related to Russian deception are also still unanswered, such as: what role did the Russian Federation play in the MH-17 disaster and its aftermath, perhaps using deception mechanisms? How are Russian authorities currently influencing the Western world? And most poignantly, to what extent do the Russian authorities seek to infiltrate and slowly disrupt the societies and political systems of NATO member states? Although there may be many more questions to think about, these are only a few that call for follow-up research into Russian deception warfare.

Fourth, it is important for Western nations and their armed forces and security services to devote more time to studying deception warfare. If only it were to gain more insight into how potential opponents use deception. After all, performing deception operations is not very expensive; it often involves acting differently and creatively with simple and current means in order to create surprise and manipulated perceptions. It will not take huge investments, knowing that the results of deception are often priceless. After all, did not the Chinese general and strategist Sun Tzu already say more than 2,500 years ago: the supreme art of war is to subdue the opponent without fighting?<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas Phillips, *Roots of Strategy*, Part I, (Mechanicsburg, PA (USA): Stackpole Books, 1985), 27.



# Annexes

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### Introduction

Several researchers have sought to develop models and theories and generated new ideas about deception. This annex summarizes the leading theories and models on deception developed over the last fifty years. This specific period of time has been chosen for a survey of modern methods of deception. A total of 18 studies have been used for chapter 3 Deception Warfare, starting with a research on stratagem from 1969 and ending with a report on information disorder in 2018. The choice of a time frame covering the last fifty years is by no means arbitrary. It not only provides the latest insights into the development of research into

deception in general and the use of deception in conflicts specifically, but since the 1960s there has been an influx of deception-related research. After World War II the economies in Western nations were growing again. As a result, researchers of the humanities became more interested in economic mechanisms, such as decision-making, which happens to be a central element of deception warfare as well. Likewise, in the sixties of the last century the contradictions between the United States and the Soviet Union were becoming increasingly apparent during the Cold War period. Slowly but steadily, Western academics studying international relations and intelligence became interested in the performances and working methods of secret services. Nevertheless, the yield of 18 studies cannot be called substantial, due to a 'lost appetite', explained in section 3.3.

Historical accounts on deception campaigns have been chronicled, elucidating the activities of individuals and organizations involved in these events. A fundamental aspect of deception warfare is uncertainty, the importance of which was underlined by Richard Betts, Professor of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University. A target does not know and is not convinced of what his possible opponent will do, whether, 'if', 'when', 'where' and 'how' this potential opponent will strike or deceive.<sup>1</sup> Deception is always the result of uncertainty. In other words, deception is not possible when a target exactly knows the desired goals, preferences, judgments and abilities of its suspected deceiver. Likewise, uncertainty is a significant feature of deception during a conflict, so uncertainty is likely to be found as a basic principle in the following publications.

Deception can be examined in many different ways. Researchers like Whaley, Daniel & Herbig, Lamont & Wiseman, Gewehr & Glenn, Shulsky, Carson and Monroe, chose the deceiver as the subject of their research, while others like Handel, Greenberg and Mitchell, looked upon the target as research object. Still, a few researchers, some employed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and others such as Anderson, Bennet & Walz, and Wardle & Derekhshan, took a more neutral stance and described deception as a process with different phases. Many deception researchers tried to create a theory or a model to understand what deception is and how it works. The theories and models not only represent research focusing on the consequences or the appearance of deception during conflicts, they also include a variety of recipes for deception in general, such as a mathematical or a systemic approach, a

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<sup>1</sup> Betts, *Surprise Attack*, 4.

scientific approach and an ethical approach. In total nine of the researchers were positivists, such as Whaley, Daniel & Herbig, Anderson, Shulsky, Bennett & Waltz and Wardle & Derekhshan. These researchers assumed that there is an absolute truth against which they can test information and classify it as either false or true information. Only one researcher, Bowyer Bell, found that there was no absolute truth. He preferred to speak of perceived reality, the world as interpreted by human beings.

Remarkably, there is only one study that deals with disinformation as a means of deception. In 2017 Claire Waddle and Hossein Derakhshan published a report on information disorder, dealing with contemporary views on disinformation. In the 1980s many publications on Soviet disinformation appeared, but they were highly descriptive and none of them provided reflective explanations about the disinformation phenomenon. Today many articles are written about disinformation and fake news, especially focused on recent Russian operations and American politics, but most of them are based on gut feeling of the author instead of extensive scientific research. The one selected for this section is based on a profound academic approach, and it has been supplemented with a few other well-founded insights into disinformation. Besides, a research of magicians and illusionists is also included. Magic is perhaps not the first subject that comes to mind in a study about deception in conflict, but the art of jugglery and deception in conflict have many similarities. The synopses are shown in order of publication, which are presented in Figure A.1.

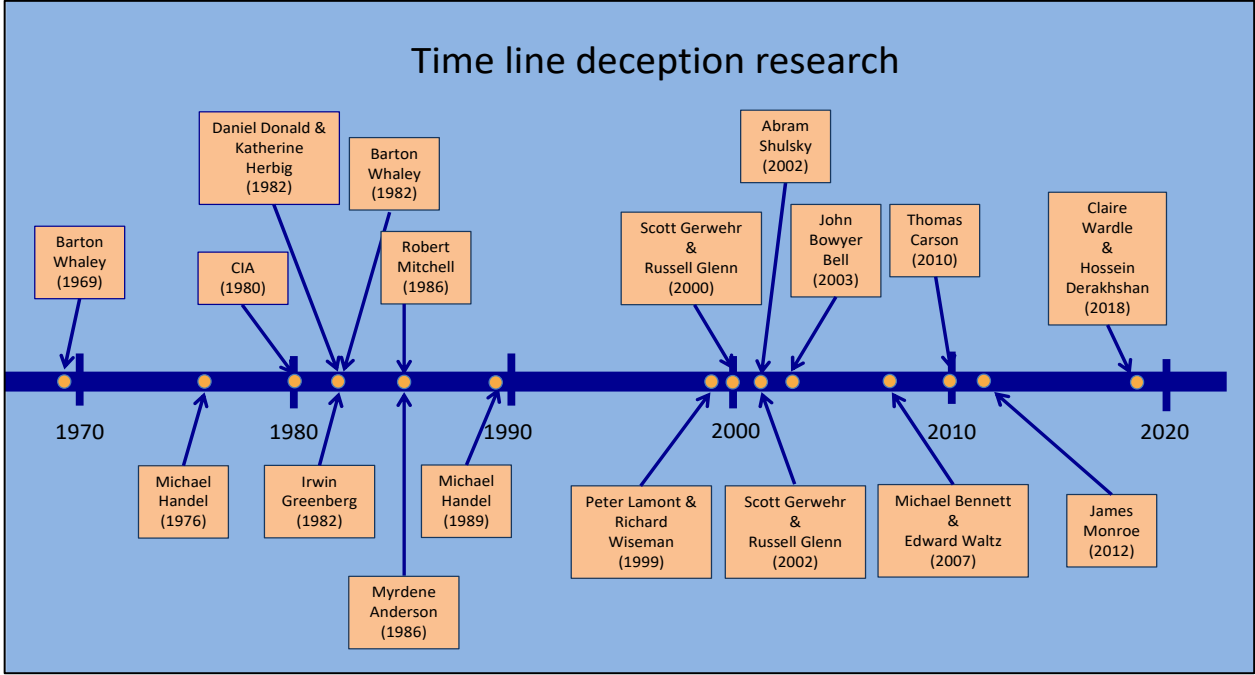


Figure A.1 A timeline with leading deception research used for this dissertation

Figure A.1 shows a timeline of the 18 deception studies used. What is conspicuous is that the 1970s and 1990s hardly produced any new studies of deception. The 1980s is a different story, because during this decade the Cold War came to a climax. At the time a great deal of attention was devoted to how armed forces should operate as effectively as possible, but also on how security services could further influence an opponent, including by deception. As a result, more distinguished books and articles on deception were published in the 1980s. In the 1990s, as shown previously, the attention of Western security experts was drawn to other types of operations carried out by Western armed forces, such as peace and stability operations in which no deception was applied.

New deception studies were conducted in the 2000s. During the first decade, 9/11 and the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East, such as in and around Israel, took place. It was also the period in which the Internet and social media were booming. Public opinion in Western countries was not always entirely convinced of what they were officially told by the government about participation in the aforementioned wars, or what they learned about it in the mainstream media. People became more suspicious and began to wonder if what they perceived was true. Moreover, 9/11 has had a huge impact, not only in the United States but also throughout the Western world. How was it possible that Western security services with their advanced investigation methods, had not foreseen this catastrophe? Had they been fooled? Moreover, during the aforementioned operations in Afghanistan, which started in 2001, and in Iraq, in 2003, Western military units and security services units had often been taken by surprise.

There were no resounding Western victories during the operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, despite the technological and material force majeure of the Western armed forces involved, comprising among others, the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, France, Germany, Scandinavia, the Baltic States, the Netherlands and other NATO countries as troop contributors. Therefore, one may wonder whether capabilities other than technology and superior equipment also play a role in such stabilization operations. How do local OMF, with very limited financial resources and often only equipped with small arms, know how to effectively resist state-of-the-art Western units? Of course, there is no overriding explanation for these developments, but it certainly begs for more research into the origin of strength of

the OMF in Afghanistan and Iraq and other relatively small and poorly equipped groups. What is more, gaining more insights into contemporary deception warfare is part of it.

As mentioned before, the 18 deception studies used can be grouped into those that took the deceiver as focal point, those that took the target as central element, and those that were neutral in their stance. However, another way of organizing and grouping the 18 studies chosen is to divide their results into three groups.

The first group of research results focuses on the taxonomy of deception, or partial elements of deception, such as stratagem or misdirection, with associated ramifications, such as intended and unintended deception, simulation and dissimulation or intentions and capabilities. To this group belong Whaley's stratagem categories (1969), Daniel & Herbig's concept of deception (1982), Daniel & Herbig's A-type and M-type versions of deception (1982), Whaley's typology of deception (1982), Anderson's typology of deception (1986), Handels's typology of deception (1989), Lamont & Wiseman's misdirection framework (1999), Shulsky's different deception methods and channels (2002), Bennet and Waltz's deception method matrix (2007), Monroe's taxonomy of deception (2012), and Wardle & Derekhsan's information disorder (2017).

The second group of deception study results concentrates on the deception process, e.g. how the process is structured and what steps a deceiver should take. To this group belong Whaley's theory of stratagem (1969), Handel's three barrier model (1976), Daniel & Herbig's deception process model (1982), Mitchell's levels of deception activities (1986), Gerwehr & Glenn's deception planning process (2000), and Bowyer Bell's deception cycle (2003).

The third group consists of other results of deception studies that cannot be linked to the other two categories, because they researched either very general or just very specific characteristics of deception or related subjects, such as lying, different viewpoints on deception or requirements for the occurrence of deception. To this group belong the CIA Maxims (1980), Gewehr & Glenn's three perspectives on deception (2002), Shulsky's requirements for deception (2002), Bennett & Walz's principles of deception (2007), and Carson's relationship between lying and deception.

A Grouping of Deception Research Results		
Taxonomy	Process	Other results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whaley’s stratagem categories (1969),</li> <li>• Daniel &amp; Herbig’s concept of deception (1982),</li> <li>• Daniel &amp; Herbig’s A-type and M-type versions of deception (1982),</li> <li>• Whaley’s typology of deception (1982),</li> <li>• Anderson’s typology of deception (1986),</li> <li>• Handels’s typology of deception (1989),</li> <li>• Lamont &amp; Wiseman’s misdirection framework (1999),</li> <li>• Shulsky’s different deception methods and channels (2002);</li> <li>• Bennett and Waltz’s deception method matrix (2007),</li> <li>• Monroe’s taxonomy of deception (2012),</li> <li>• Wardle &amp; Derekhshan’s information disorder (2017).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whaley’s theory of stratagem (1969),</li> <li>• Handel’s three barrier model (1976),</li> <li>• Daniel &amp; Herbig’s deception process model (1982),</li> <li>• Mitchell’s levels of deception activities (1986),</li> <li>• Gerwehr &amp; Glenn’s deception planning process (2000),</li> <li>• Bowyer Bell’s deception cycle (2003).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CIA Maxims (1980),</li> <li>• Gewehr &amp; Glenn’s three perspectives on deception (2002),</li> <li>• Shulsky’s requirements for deception (2002),</li> <li>• Bennett &amp; Walz’s principles of deception (2007),</li> <li>• Carson’s relationship between lying and deception.</li> </ul>

Figure A.2 Matrix with a grouping of deception research results

The classification in Table 2 is based on the most common aspects of the results of research on misleading. Some of the studies came up with more than one conclusion or insight and therefore these studies are shown in different columns. This concerns the researchers Whaley, Daniel & Herbig, Handel, Gewehr & Glenn, and Bennett & Walz. None of the aforementioned researchers could be placed in all three columns. The second part of this section is dedicated to a further clarification of all 18 deception and deception-related researches.

## Barton Whaley (1969)

In his book *Stratagem: Deception and Surprise*, first published in 1969, Barton Whaley, then Research Professor of Intelligence and Deception at the Naval Postgraduate School, reintroduced the word stratagem to represent strategic deception in a conflict situation.<sup>2</sup> Whaley did not mention uncertainty in his book. His research initially appears to be neutral, but that classification is erroneous. When taking a closer look, it becomes clear that Whaley made the deceiver the focal point of his research. He described that stratagem consists of a variety of ruses, which he divided into three main categories: (1) diversion, (2) camouflage, and (3) disinformation.

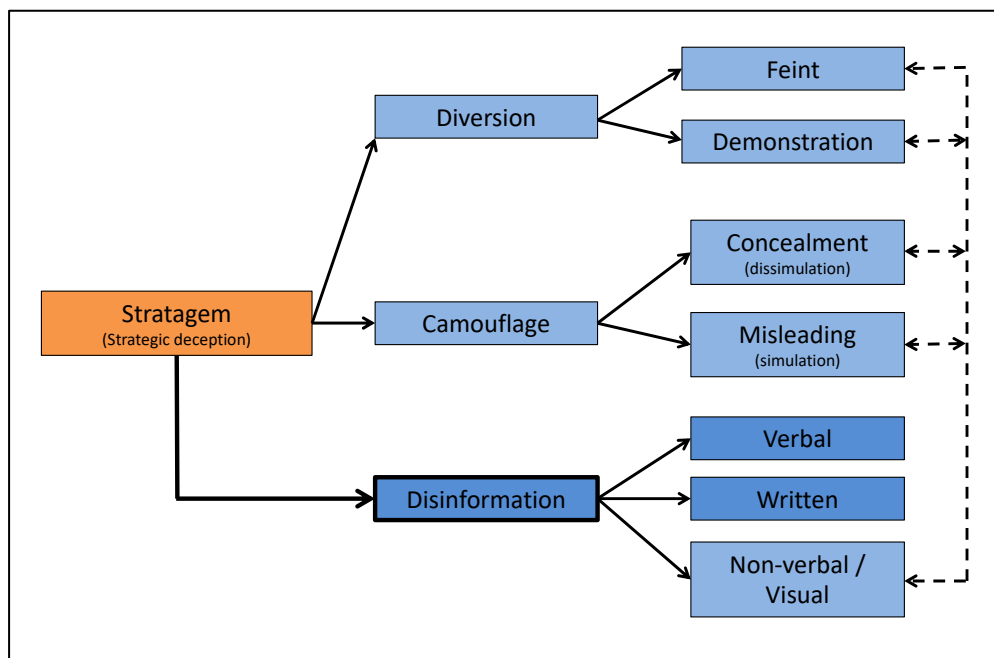


Figure A.3 Whaley's Stratagem<sup>3</sup>

Diversion is any movement of military units intended to suggest a main attack. It has two categories: feints and demonstrations. A feint is a mock attack made at a place other than that of the main attack and it involves physical contact with the opponent. A demonstration is a show of force that threatens an attack at another location, but it does not include enemy

<sup>2</sup> General Sextus Julius Frontius wrote already a book *Strategemation* at the end of the first century AD. The book comprises a collection of examples of military ruses from both Greek and Roman history, superficially for the use of military leaders. In the second century AD the Macedonian author Polyaeus wrote a series of books that were called *Strategemata* or *Stratagems in War*. The first six books of this series covers accounts of stratagems of well-known Greek generals, the book contains stratagems of non-Greeks and non-Romans, and the eighth book deals with stratagem of the Romans and of illustrious women.

<sup>3</sup> Whaley, *Stratagem: Deception and Surprise in War*, Originally published in 1969, (Norwood, MA (USA): Artech House, 2007), 7-9.

contact. It is executed by an actual or simulated composite of combat power. Whaley called demonstration a ‘sacrifice operation’.

The second main type of ruse is camouflage, a word that derives from the French language and means ‘to disguise’. Its function is to conceal personnel, materiel and infrastructure, which is called negative or dissimulative camouflage. The other function is misleading the opponent by a display of dummy objects, called positive or simulative camouflage. The third type of ruse is disinformation, which, according to Whaley, is the most important category of ruses. Whaley created a tri-modal categorization of information, explaining that any communication channel is able to transmit relevant and truthful information, but also irrelevant information and relevant but inaccurate information. Disinformation is the term that comprises all verbal or written forms of information that feed the target’s information collection systems for the purpose of deception while, in contrast, camouflage and diversion cover the non-verbal and visual forms of disinformation.<sup>4</sup>

Whaley created his own theory of stratagem in which stratagem is best imagined as a decision-making model. This model is a simple procedure for planning political-military operations, thus this procedure can substantially increase the chance of gaining surprise. The major elements in Whaley’s stratagem model are: (1) the goal of the deceiver, which is to guarantee that the target is overwhelmed with an ambiguous situation, followed by a choice for a false or opposed option. (2) the alternative expectations of the target, and (3) the methods, the stratagem, used by the initiator to achieve his goals and by which the target’s expectations are manipulated. A target is preferably provided with two or more alternatives from which he can choose and is thus faced with an ambiguous situation. When the target knows the deceiver’s preferred goal, the deceiver applies at least one plausible alternative.<sup>5</sup>

In the figure below the target is confronted with two possible options, A and B. If the deceiver does A, the target reacts with X in order to provide the deceiver with a negative outcome. If the deceiver does B, the target wants to do Y producing the reaction as in option A-X. The deceiver’s intelligence service found out that both A and B are plausible for the target. Thus, the target is faced with an ambiguous situation: A or B? Now the deceiver presents the target with alternative solutions to enlarge his dilemma. In the figure below the deceiver’s highest

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 67-75.



pay-off is realized when the target assumes that the deceiver will do A, while, in reality, the deceiver is going to do B. The deceiver will use the stratagem's three main types of ruses, being diversion, camouflage and disinformation, in order to make the target believe that he needs to choose A. The target perceives the false alternative A as credible, and the real option, which is B, as implausible. As a result, the target selects option X, the option that suits the deceiver best.<sup>6</sup>

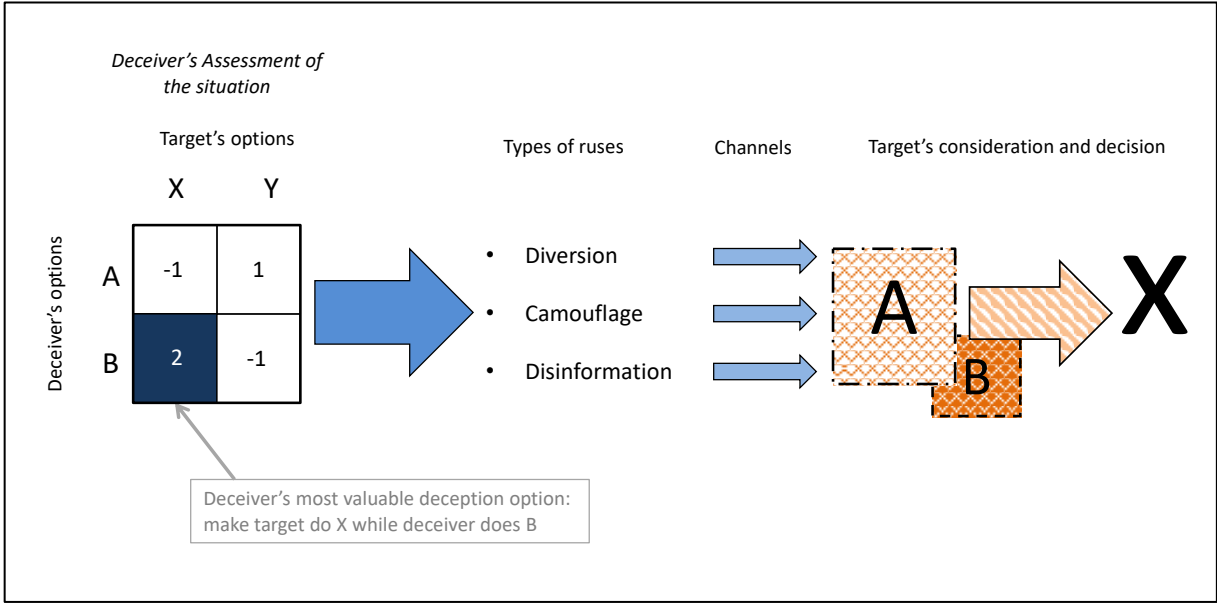


Figure A.4 Whaley's theory of stratagem by Bennett and Waltz<sup>7</sup>

Michael Handel (1976)

Michael Handel, one of the leading thinkers on intelligence analysis, surprise and deception during the late twentieth century, published a monograph in 1976 on perceptions, deception and surprise during the Yom Kippur War, which took place in October 1973. Handel's overall research aim of this monograph was the integrity and security of the State of Israel, and consequently he used a target perspective. Taking 'the certainty of uncertainty' as his starting point, he presented a framework for the evaluation of strategic and military intelligence in order to avoid surprise.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 22-23. And: Whaley, *Stratagem*, 73-75.  
<sup>7</sup> Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 22.  
<sup>8</sup> Handel, *Perception, Deception and Surprise*, 9

Handel’s framework described the flow of information, both signals and noise, through three noise barriers: (1) noise barriers created by the deceiver’s behaviour, like secrecy and deception, (2) the conflict environment, being the international and regional background against which received signals are interpreted, and (3) noise generated by the intended target, such as concepts, perceptions, mind-structures, doctrine and also organizational aspects like bureaucratic politics. The intelligence information that passes each barrier will have a changing noise-signal ratio. The amount of noise increases after each barrier. At the end decision- and policymakers receive a weak signal and much noise, and they will therefore try to improve the signal-noise ratio.

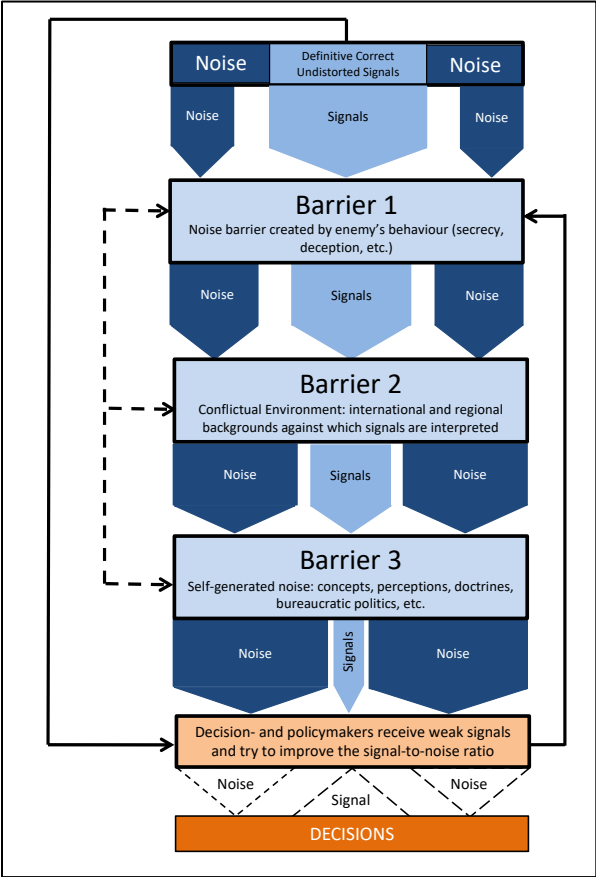


Figure A.5 Handel’s three-barrier model<sup>9</sup>

Handel admitted that secrecy is a problem. The opponent is often expected to hide his capabilities, intentions and plans in a cloud of mystery. Curiously, even the simple truth can deceive, in Handel’s opinion. For if the opponent’s secrets are obtained too regularly and too effortlessly, as Handel stated, they are too good to be trusted and deception is predictable.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 10.  
<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 14.

Intelligence services need to be wary of deception. They have to examine every indication very carefully, assuming that every warning received has passed all three barriers. These warnings contain correct signals as well as lots of noise. Intelligence services need to separate the wheat from the chaff. A potential pitfall for any intelligence service is when they misjudge correct signals and consider them as noise, which often happens in barrier three because of a misperception of the situation. There is no marked difference between ‘signal’ and ‘noise’, only in hindsight. ‘There are no true and false data; in a deeper sense all strategic warning data are noise.’ Handel’s final conclusion is that there is no certain way to prevent deception.<sup>11</sup>

### Central Intelligence Agency (1980)

Together with three other research organisations the Office of Research and Development of the CIA researched a wide variety of deception themes in the late 1970s and early 1980s. They called it the ‘Deception Research Programme’, and it included ten publications, ranging from case studies to a literature study on misperception. The report that was published and widely disseminated was titled *Deception Maxims: Fact and Folklore*. The aim of the report was to combine different fields of research, such as political science, sociology and psychology, with more practical post-World War II understandings of deception and surprise. The intention was to publish a wide range of information about deception, misperception, assessment failures and cognitive biases and merge it into a unified body of knowledge. The final result was a set of ten maxims that served as hypotheses for further discussion. The maxims do not represent a formal model of deception. Instead, they demonstrate ten common deception concepts that appeared in practice and in publications about deception.<sup>12</sup>

Some of the CIA deception maxims speak for themselves, but a few need further explanation, especially those with rather unknown descriptions in their title. First, the term ‘Magruder’s principle’ in maxim 1 derived from the American Civil War. Major-General John Magruder, serving in the Confederate States Army, remarked during the battle at Gaines’ Mill on 27 June 1862, that he and his men merely had to persuade their opponent to continue to believe

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 14-18.

<sup>12</sup> Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), *Deception Maxims: Fact and Folklore*, A Research Paper as part of Deception Research Program, Originally published in 1980, (Washington, DC (USA): Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Research and Development, 2016), 1-4.

what he already wanted to believe.<sup>13</sup> This Magruder principle, to reinforce basic concepts of a target, was also mentioned by Sheffy, as referred to in section 3.5 ‘Manifestion’. The CIA used this sentence to explain that it is better to reinforce already existing ideas. Secondly, the phrase ‘Jones’ Lemma’ in maxim 4 descended from Professor Reginald Jones, who was a key figure in British scientific intelligence during World War II. At that time, Jones was focused on the detection of forgeries. He stated that the ease of detecting was much greater when different channels of investigation were used at the same time. Jones’ conclusion was that it was better to use several independent means of detection, instead of putting the same total effort into the development of only one.<sup>14</sup> The CIA made an analogy of Jones’ principle in their deception research. Third, Axelrod’s contribution, which is maxim 6, referred to American political scientist Robert Axelrod. In an article in *World Politics*, Axelrod discussed the value of means and the moment at which they should be used to cause the maximum deception effect.<sup>15</sup> Fourth, the expression Monkey’s Pawn in maxim 9 derived from a short story from the author William Jacobs. In it, three wishes are granted to the owner of the monkey’s pawn, but the wishes come at a huge price for interfering with destiny.<sup>16</sup> The CIA used this metaphor for unwanted side effects.

In general, the CIA deception maxims are a mixture of different approaches. Some have a deceiver or a target starting point, while other maxims are general statements. In fact, there is no common denominator. The same can be said about the use of uncertainty. CIA deception maxims assume in some cases the uncertainty of a deceiver and in other cases the uncertainty of a target. Maxim 1, Magruder’s principle, and maxim 4, Jones’ dilemma, are based on a deceiver who is not sure how his target will react. Alternatively, Maxim 3, the multiple forms of surprise, is grounded on a target that does not know, and perhaps does not even understand, what happens to him.

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<sup>13</sup> Bruce Catton, *This Halowed Ground*, Originally published in 1955, (New York, NY (USA): Random House / Vintage Books, 2012), 142.

<sup>14</sup> Reginald Jones, ‘The Theory of Practical Joking – Its Relevance to Physics’, *Bulletin of the Institute of Physics*, (June 1967), 7.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Axelrod, ‘The Rational Timing of Surprise’, *World Politics*, 31 (1979) 2, 228-246.

<sup>16</sup> William Jacobs, ‘The Monkey’s Pawn’, in: William Jacobs, *The Lady of the Barge*, (New York, NY (USA): Dodd Mead, 1902).

Maxims	Explanation
1. <b>Magruder's Principle:</b> Exploitation of Preconceptions	It is generally easier to induce an opponent to maintain a pre-existing belief than to present notional evidence to change that belief. It is therefore fruitful to examine how an opponent's existing belief can be turned to advantage.
2. <b>Limitations to Human Information Processing</b>	Several limitations to human information processing can be exploited in the planning of deception, like the law of small numbers (the frequent incompetence to detect small change)
3. <b>Multiple forms of surprise</b>	Surprise can be achieved in many forms: location, strength, intention, style and timing.
4. <b>Jones' Lemma</b>	Deception becomes more difficult as the number of channels of information available to the target increases. However, within limits, the greater the number of controlled channels the greater the likelihood of deception being believed.
5. <b>Choice Among Types of Deception</b>	The deception planner needs to reduce the ambiguity in the mind of the target to make him more certain of a particular falsehood rather than less certain of the truth.
6. <b>Axelrod's contribution:</b> the Husbanding of Assets	Under certain circumstances deception assets need to be husbanded, despite costs of maintenance and risk of waste or exposure, awaiting more fruitful use.
7. <b>A sequencing rule</b>	Deception activities should be sequenced so as to maximize the persistence of incorrect hypothesis(es) for as long as possible.
8. <b>The importance of feedback</b>	A scheme to ensure accurate feedback increases the chance of success in deception.
9. <b>The Monkey's Paw</b>	Deception efforts may produce subtle and unwanted side effects. Deception planners should be sensitive to such possibilities and, where prudent, take steps to minimize these counter-productive aspects.
10. <b>Care in the design of planned placement of deceptive material</b>	Great care must be taken in the design of schemes to leak notional plans. Apparent windfalls are subject to close scrutiny and are often disbelieved. Genuine leaks often occur under circumstances thought improbable.

Figure A.6 CIA's deception maxims<sup>17</sup>

Some of the maxims are built on earlier deception themes. Barton Whaley already discussed the information processing and the use of channels in his publication in 1969, and Michael Handel previously deliberated on surprise in his monograph from 1976. Actually, both studies were used together with others as input for these CIA deception maxims. New in these maxims is the value of feedback and the undesired collateral damage that might be caused. Also new are those axioms that originate from psychology, like the reinforcement of already existing ideas with the opponent in order to achieve a beneficial effect, and the manner in which the effects of deception need to be sustained, otherwise the deception result is only a very temporary one.

### Irwin Greenberg (1982)

Later, in 1982, Irwin Greenberg, at the time a computer researcher, applied Whaley's insights into stratagem from 1969 to examine the role of deception in decision theory. Greenberg used

<sup>17</sup> CIA, *Deception Maxims*, 4-47. And: Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 35.

a mixture of qualitative and mathematical approaches to find out how deception may affect decision-making. The focal point of Greenberg's research was the target that had to make a decision on how to deploy his troops. His underlying postulation, although not explicitly discussed in his article, was uncertainty within the target, which would lead to ambiguous decision-making on the target's part. The decision-makers of a target were not sure about which option the deceiver would use.

A decision-maker, when applying a rational decision-making model, will select one of a set of alternatives. The pay-off will depend on the situation set by a malicious opponent. The opponent looks upon the decision-makers as his target and might use deception to cause the target to misperceive the likelihood that a specific situation was set by the opponent. Greenberg's idea is based on the assumption that the decision-maker will choose the alternative that maximises his expected pay-off with respect to his subjective assessment of the probabilities that his opponent will follow the various strategies open to him. The value of this deception is defined in terms of the pay-off matrix and these misperceived likelihoods.<sup>18</sup>

Greenberg's mathematical approach was new in the research of deception, but not new to the comprehensive study of international relations. In 1928 the Hungarian-American mathematician John von Neumann published his paper 'On the Theory of Games of Strategies'. Sixteen years later, in 1944, the same author published the book *The Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*, co-authored with Oskar Morgenstern, a German-born American economist. Game theory is the study of mathematical models of strategic interaction between rational decision-makers. Originally it addressed zero-sum games, in which one actor's gains result in the other contenders' losses.<sup>19</sup>

Greenberg took the Allied invasion of the beaches of Normandy in June 1944 as an example, together with the earlier-mentioned Operations Fortitude North and South. He grossly simplified reality into a model of one the most effective deceptions in history. The German High Command, as the decision makers, recognized three possible Allied strategies: (1) an invasion in Normandy, (2) an invasion through Pas de Calais, or (3) an invasion in Norway.

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<sup>18</sup> Irwin Greenberg, 'The Role of Deception in Decision Theory', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 26 (1982) 2, 139.

<sup>19</sup> Philip Mirowski, 'What Were Von Neumann and Morgenstern Trying to Accomplish?', in: E. Roy Weintraub, *Toward a History of Game Theory*, (Durham, NC (USA): Duke University Press, 1992), 113-147.

The reality of World War II was that Normandy became the invasion location. For clarity reasons, Greenberg assumed that the German High Command had different options to spread their land forces. He used aspects, such as the size and strength of the invasion forces, the deployment possibilities of the defender, and other quantitative and qualitative features, such as input for a battle model to generate estimates of the probability of a successful assault.

Greenberg presumed that the German High Command would realize that an invasion was not a gamble for the Allied forces, while the Allied Command would employ deception to disguise it. Fake indications pointed to Pas de Calais or Norway as the main choice of the Allies, while noise, either secrecy or ambiguous signals, would try to keep the German High Command from deducing the Allies' true intent. Greenberg decided that every form of deception has its own weight. It enabled Greenberg to make a calculation of how the German High Command would decide.<sup>20</sup>

### Donald Daniel and Katherine Herbig (1982)

In 1982, Donald Daniel and Katherine Herbig published the book *Strategic Military Deception*, in which they took the deceiver as point of departure in their research. Daniel and Herbig perceived deception as an aspect of strategy and tactics. In their view deception is the result of a deliberate misinterpretation of reality in order to gain a competitive advantage. The concept of deception comprises four circular subsidiary concepts. At the core is 'cover', which is a combination of secrecy and camouflage. It is the deceiver's negative side, because he wishes to protect the existence of some truths by denying access to, or withholding, information, such as the capabilities and deliberations about the use of a certain weapon.<sup>21</sup>

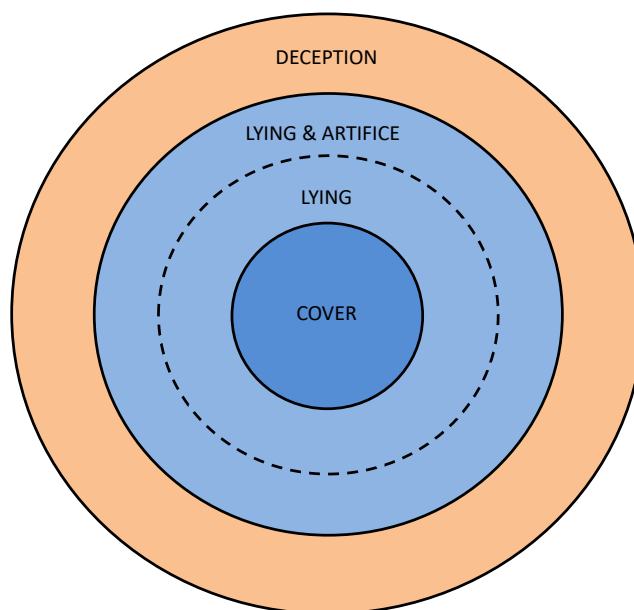
The next level is lying, which incorporates cover. Daniel and Herbig consider lying as a form of withholding information, but they see it as something beyond that as well: a liar endeavours to draw his target away from the truth. This is the positive side of deception. Liars produce and commit untruths and seek to draw a target's attention to them. Lying is nothing more than making an untrue statement, and, in the broader sense, it can also involve manipulating the context surrounding the statement to prop up the statement's reliability. Artifice is the manipulation of the context that surrounds the lie to increase its credibility. In

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<sup>20</sup> Greenberg, 'The Role of Deception', 139-152.

<sup>21</sup> Daniel and Herbig, 'Propositions on Military Deception', 3-5.

comparison with lying, deception is a concept with a wider scope. It also intensifies the reactions of the target of those dishonesties.<sup>22</sup>



*Figure A.7 Daniel and Herbig's concept of deception*<sup>23</sup>

Daniel and Herbig distinguished two versions of deception, namely producing different effects and operating in different directions. Either version only works in an uncertain environment, but Daniel and Herbig did not specifically mention this aspect in their book. The first version is 'ambiguity-increasing' or A-type deception, also known as the less elegant version that puzzles a target to such an extent that he is unsure as to what to believe. By guaranteeing an impact, A-type deception requires that the deceiver's lies are plausible and coherent enough to the target's comfort that he cannot ignore them. Once a deceiver enhances uncertainty by providing extra information, a target may delay decision-making, thereby giving the deceiver wider freedom to arrange resources and take or retain the initiative. By assuring a high level of ambiguity concerning the deceiver's intentions, the target is forced to spread his resources 'to cover all important contingencies' and thereby reducing the opposition the deceiver can expect at any time. The other version, branded as 'misleading' or M-type deception, is much more complicated. M-type deception is designed to only reduce uncertainty by offering an attractive, but wrong alternative the target is bound to believe in. It causes a target to concentrate its resources on a single result, maximizing the deceiver's

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 3.



chances of prevailing in all others.<sup>24</sup> The essence of M-type deception is captured by the phrase that ‘the ultimate goal of stratagem is to make the enemy quite certain, very decisive and wrong’.<sup>25</sup>

Daniel and Herbig drafted a process model of deception, comprising three main components: (1) the deceiver, (2) the channels, and (3) the target. The deceiver’s side encompasses decision-makers, planners and implementers. Regardless of the initiation, a deception only starts with the approval of the decision-maker, which can be the political level. The model also describes the basic steps that have to be made during the planning and the execution. Although Daniel and Herbig admit that it is very hard to measure the levels of success of deception, there will be feedback from the target to the deceiver to indicate the effect of the deception. There is a risk that when the target discovers the entire deception plan or parts of it, he will use the feedback channel for counter-deception.<sup>26</sup>

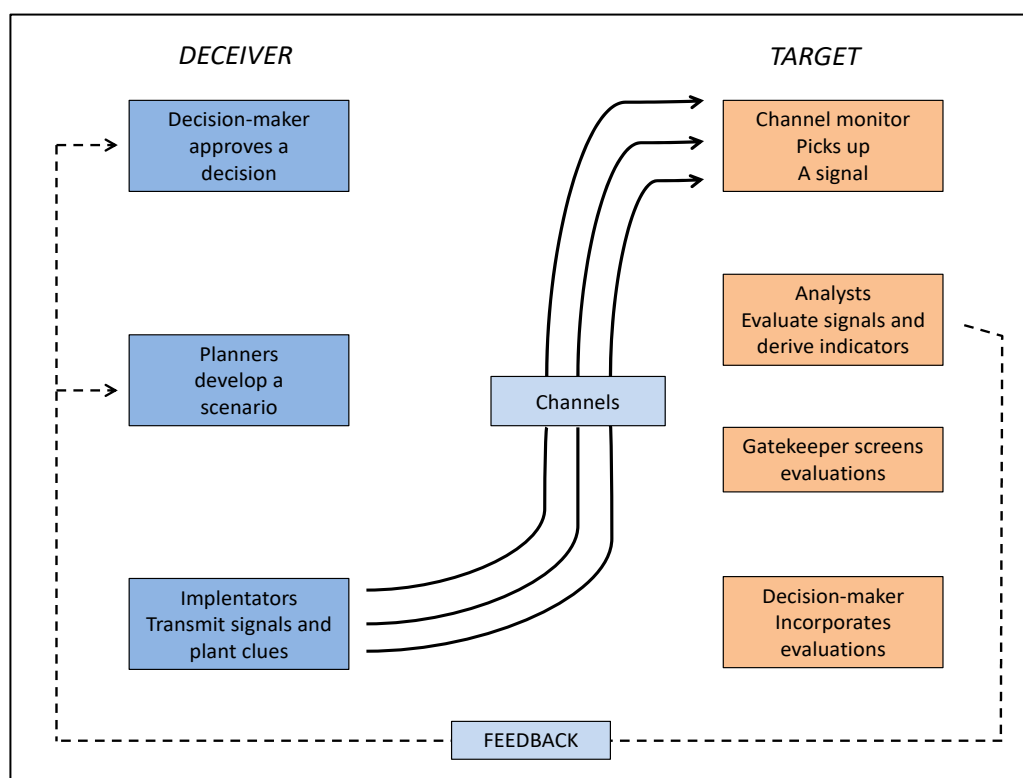


Figure A.8 Daniel and Herbig's deception process model<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 5-7;

<sup>25</sup> Barton Whaley, op. cit. in: Michael Handel, 'Intelligence and Deception', in: John Gooch and Amos Perlmutter (Ed), *Military Deception and Strategic Surprise*, (London (UK): Frank Cass and Company Ltd, 1982), 131.

<sup>26</sup> Daniel and Herbig, 'Propositions on Military Deception', 8.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 7-26.

Barton Whaley (1982)

In 1982 Barton Whaley came with a ‘preliminary general theory of deception’. This theory elaborated on his earlier research from 1969 and focussed on the deceiver who tried to understand his target. Whaley saw it as a pragmatic model, which presented: (1) a teaching tool for persons concerned with deception and counter-deception, either deceivers or potential targets, (2) an analytic tool or model for deception operations. Whaley’s new theory was based primarily on inclusive analyses of two different fields in which deception predominates: war and magic. He concluded that deception, like magic, is applied psychology, especially the psychology of misperception. With this idea in mind Whaley created a theory for deception, which shows that deception is the result of a target’s misperception as opposed to accurate perception.<sup>28</sup>

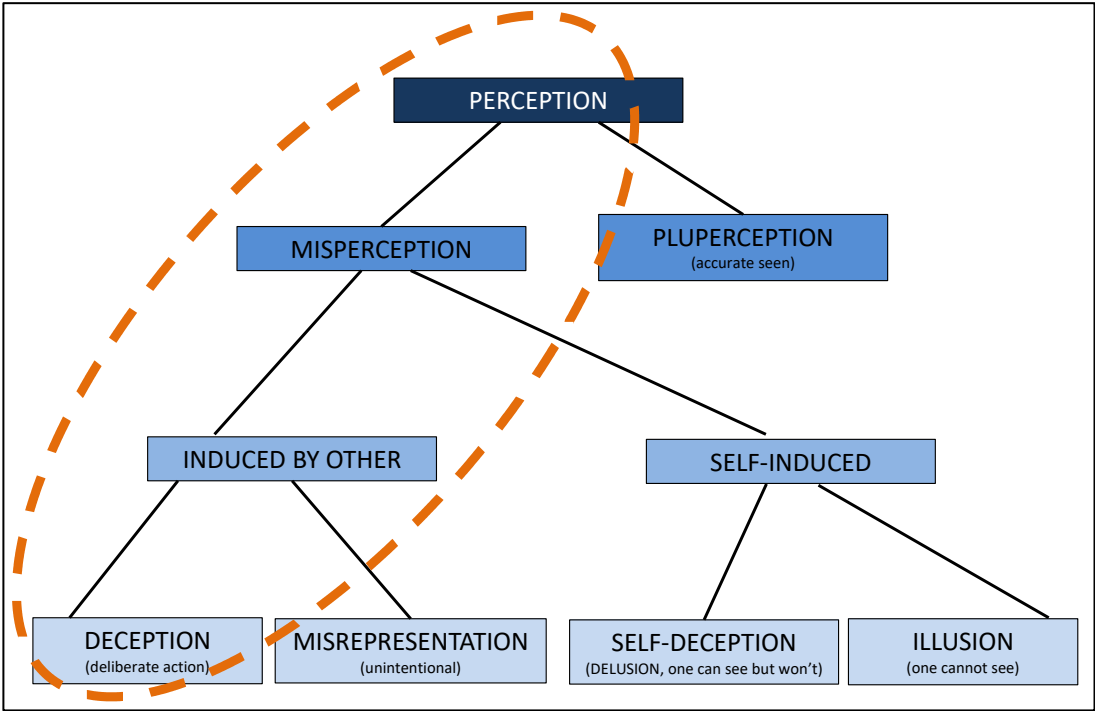


Figure A.9 Whaley’s typology of misperception<sup>29</sup>

Whaley considered misperception, and thus deception, as a psychological phenomenon that takes place in the ‘eye of the beholder’. Whaley is convinced that men are not deceived by others, but merely by themselves. The deceiver is only attempting to provoke deception, by revealing a false picture of reality. In order to be deceived, one must both perceive this

<sup>28</sup> Whaley, ‘Toward a General Theory of Deception’, 178-180.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 180.

attempted portrayal and accept it on the terms intended and projected. Misperception can be self-induced in two ways. First, there is a form of self-deception in cases where one can see through the deception but refuses to do so. This is also called a delusion. Second, an illusion occurs when one cannot see nor discover the deception due to one’s own shortfalls. Situations in which others caused misperception are of much greater importance for this chapter. Misperception induced by others can be divided into deception, when it is intended, and misrepresentation, when it is unintentional.<sup>30</sup>

THE STRUCTURE OF DECEPTION	
DECEPTION (distorting reality)	
DISSIMULATION (hiding)	SIMULATION (showing)
<b>Masking</b> Concealing one’s own or matching another’s characteristics to eliminate an old pattern or blend it with a background pattern.	<b>Mimicking</b> Copying another’s characteristics to create an old pattern, or imitating it.
<b>Repacking</b> Adding new or subtracting old characteristics to modify an old pattern by matching another.	<b>Inventing</b> Creating new characteristics to produce a new pattern.
<b>Dazzling</b> Obscure old or add alternative characteristics to blur an old pattern, reducing its certainty	<b>Decoying</b> Create alternative characteristics to provide an additional, alternative pattern, and increase its certainty.

Figure A.10 Whaley’s structure of deception<sup>31</sup>

Whaley also composed a structure of deception with the starting point that deception is regarded as the distortion of perceived reality. Deception is conducted by changing the pattern or structure of distinguished characteristics of the object or event detected by the sensory system of the target. The deceiver needs to profess the false in the face of the real, as Whaley described it. Every deception consists of only two basic parts: (1) dissimulation or ‘hiding the real’, and (2) simulation or ‘showing the false’. There are three ways of ‘hiding’. The first one is by ‘masking’, making reality invisible by interposing a screen to cover it or by integrating it with its environment so it is overlooked. The second way of hiding is by

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 179-182.  
<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 186.

‘repackaging’, i.e. hiding reality by masquerading it and changing its appearance. The third way is causing confusion through ‘dazzling’, which puzzles, confounds, baffles, and perplexes people, reducing certainty about the real nature of anything. Just as simulation and dissimulation are opposites, their separate sub-categories also stand opposed to one another. Thus, masking has its counterpart in mimicking, repackaging in inventing and dazzling in decoying. Despite the contradictions, both simulation and dissimulation always occur together in any single deception operation.<sup>32</sup>

Dissimulation, or hiding the truth, comes in different shapes and sizes. The most intensive form mentioned by Whaley is masking, which means that a deceiver either interposes a screen to cover something or integrates it with its environment, so it is overlooked. A milder form of dissimulation is disguising something or change its appearance. The less intense form of dissimulation is causing confusion through dazzling which bewilders, confounds, baffles and perplexes humans. Whaley clarified that simulation also comes in three different versions. The most intense form is mimicking, which shows falseness by having one thing imitate another. It needs to represent an adequate imitation, otherwise it is obvious that the deceiver is actually deceiving. The second and milder form is inventing, which tries to show another reality. Unlike mimicking, inventing creates something new, albeit false. The third and mildest version is decoying, which distracts attention. It offers a misleading option and is therefore a type of misdirection.<sup>33</sup>

### Robert Mitchell (1986)

In 1986 Robert Mitchell, Psychology Research Fellow at Clark University, put the target centre stage in his research on deception and discovered that the target was confronted with uncertainty, although the latter was not mentioned in his publication. In his point of view, deception can be defined as any phenomenon that fulfils three criteria:

1. Target R registers something Y from deceiver S, where S can be described as benefiting (or desiring that) when
2. R believes Y, and acts appropriately towards Y, because Y means X, and
3. It is untrue that X is the case.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 183-186.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 183-186.

In this case the deceiver is not mentioned, because Mitchell believed that deception can occur without anyone presenting it. Mitchell noticed that deception is used to characterise a type of interaction between two actors, one of whom, target R, is described as ‘receiving’ or ‘registering’ something, such as an event, perception or a message. The other one, deceiver S, ‘sends’ or ‘provides’. S, in most cases, will benefit when R is deceived, or at least S’s intent is to deceive R. In those cases, S desires to deceive R. In the second criterion R’s proposed belief must be acted upon by R, and previous to a manifestation of deception, Y has to mean something for R. When responding to Y, R expects, or often discovers, that X is the case. It does not mean that R already knows all probable consequences of his actions. Instead, it realises that Y, being R’s action aligned with Y, and X are correlated. To say ‘Y means X’, must be seen from R’s point of view. To R, Y is attended by or associated with X, or Y signifies or represents X. Deception works when R generally acts appropriately towards Y. This appropriate action is what deception depends on. The final criterion, ‘it is untrue that X is the case’, simply means that Y is not attended by, or does not indicate, X in this case.<sup>34</sup>

Level	Basis for deception	Deception rule	Examples
I	Appearance	Always do X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Batesian mimicry<sup>35</sup></li> <li>• Protective colouring and patterns</li> </ul>
II	Coordination of perception and action	Do X when Y is registered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defensive of aggressive mimicry in response to a stimulus</li> </ul>
III	Learning	Do any X given that X resulted in some desired consequence Y in the past	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actors learn through trial and error, conditioning or observation, that it benefits from certain behaviours.</li> </ul>
IV	Planning	The deceiver constantly changes his strategy to be successful. The changes depend on experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most prevalent</li> <li>• Found in all aspects of activities</li> </ul>

Figure A.11 Mitchell’s levels of deception in relation to psychological functioning<sup>36</sup>

Using this explanation Mitchell divided deception into four different levels, based on the motivations of the deceiver and the target. Each level has its own basis for deception and represents the degree of control over the emerging phenomena X and Y by the earlier-

<sup>34</sup> Robert Mitchell, ‘A Framework for Discussing Deception’, in: Robert Mitchell and Nicholas Thompson (Ed), *Deception: Perspectives on Human and Nonhuman Deceit*, (Albany, NY (USA): State University of New York, 1986), 18-21.

<sup>35</sup> Batesian mimicry is a form of imitation where a harmless species has evolved to imitate the warning signals of a harmful species directed at a predator of them both. This form of mimics is named after the English naturalist Henry Walter Bates, after his research on butterflies in the rainforests of Brazil.

<sup>36</sup> Mitchell, ‘A Framework for Discussing Deception’, 29. And: Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 39.

mentioned deceiver R and target S. It starts with the lowest level of psychological functioning, which is called 'appearance', and it ends with planning.<sup>37</sup>

Mitchell suggested that humans as well as animals share a common set of principles, of which five are relevant to the study of strategic deception:

1. All deception requires simulation. The deceiver generates signals that imitate other signals or that distract or confuse the target. Mitchell considers camouflage as a form of simulation.
2. Predictability in the target's responses stimulates the deceiver to use deception while unpredictability discourages it.
3. All deception works within the context of honesty.
4. Most deception targets are capable of learning. Both deceiver and targets can evaluate their actions and improve their performance.
5. Deceivers can develop their ability to deceive, and targets can develop their ability to detect deception.<sup>38</sup>

### Myrdene Anderson (1986)

Myrdene Anderson, anthropologist at Purdue University, discussed deception from the perspective of systems theory in 1986, and she maintained a neutral posture in her research. According to Anderson, deception can be understood as sending and/or receiving false information in open cybernetic systems. Any information management system denotes energetic restrictions and support. Energy and information can be conceptually differentiated, although both are symbiotic. A systems approach of deception will include any overthrow of informational and energetic circuits from one path to another.<sup>39</sup> In other words, deception involves the undermining of communication and physical processes.<sup>40</sup> The modification of information, as in deceit, and the repression of information, as in secrecy, are counterparts in any system. Anderson referred to American science-fiction author Robert Heinlein, who created a typology of lies. This typology displayed varying combinations of deceit and secrecy: a person lies by not telling the truth, by telling only part of truth, or by telling the

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 21-28.

<sup>38</sup> Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 39-40.

<sup>39</sup> Myrdene Anderson, 'Cultural Concatenation of Deceit and Secrecy', in: Robert Mitchell and Nicholas Thompson (Ed), *Deception: Perspectives on Human and Nonhuman Deceit*, (Albany, NY (USA): State University of New York, 1986), 322-323.

<sup>40</sup> Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 40-41.

truth in such a way that no one believes it. There are also other ways to reveal and conceal fact or fiction. Pure secrecy amounts to no information, unless it contradicts reality, it hardly costs any energy. However, secrecy may involve the costs of storage. In deceit, information is distorted or constructed; by increasing uncertainty in this way, the value of this information to the target decreases, either immediately or eventually, when deception becomes common and thereby less controlled. This latter option increases the energetic and informational costs/benefits ratio for the deceiver.<sup>41</sup> This approach generates a matrix of methods for manipulating information and objects or processes in reality in order to reveal or conceal either facts or fiction.

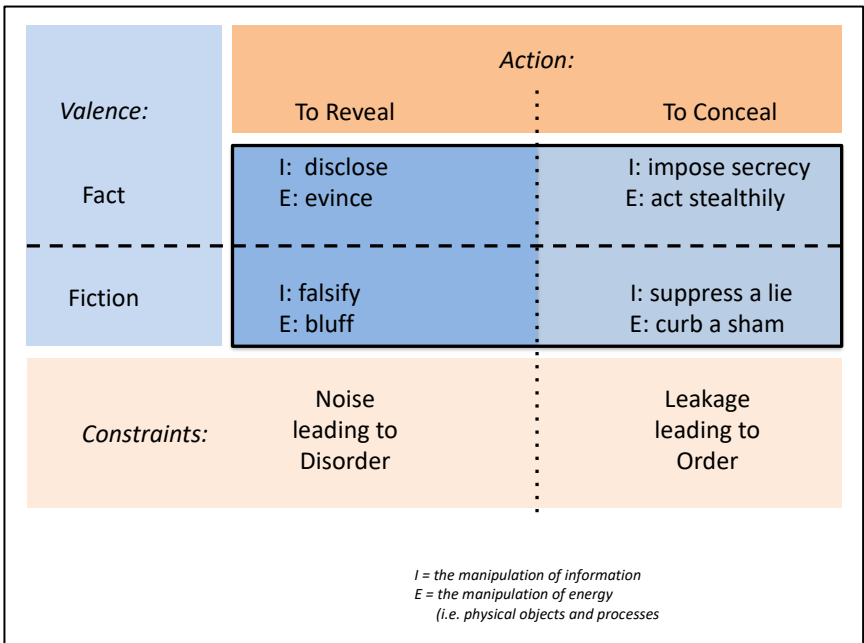


Figure A.12 Anderson’s system management matrix<sup>42</sup>

Anderson not only created the system management matrix, but she also presented a typology of deception that addresses not only the sender’s deception and the target’s reaction but also the feedback from target to deceiver. In this typology, deception is the result of intended and unintended distortion or suppression of information. Anderson is convinced that deception can be non-intentional. The target decodes the deceiver’s signals and accepts the deception if it is believable or rejects it when it is unbelievable. If the deception is believable, the target has three options: (1) he can believe it, (2) not believe it, and (3) doubtful. On the other hand, if the deception is unbelievable, the target may not believe it or may expect a completely

<sup>41</sup> Anderson, ‘Cultural Concatenation of Deceit and Secrecy’, 322-323.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 325.

other meaning. The target’s reactions, both positive and negative, can be overt or covert. The deceiver’s response to the feedback could be: (1) maintain, (2) stop, or (3) escalate the deception. If the target ignores the deceiver’s signals, the deceiver is in the difficult position of having to blindly decide what option to take.

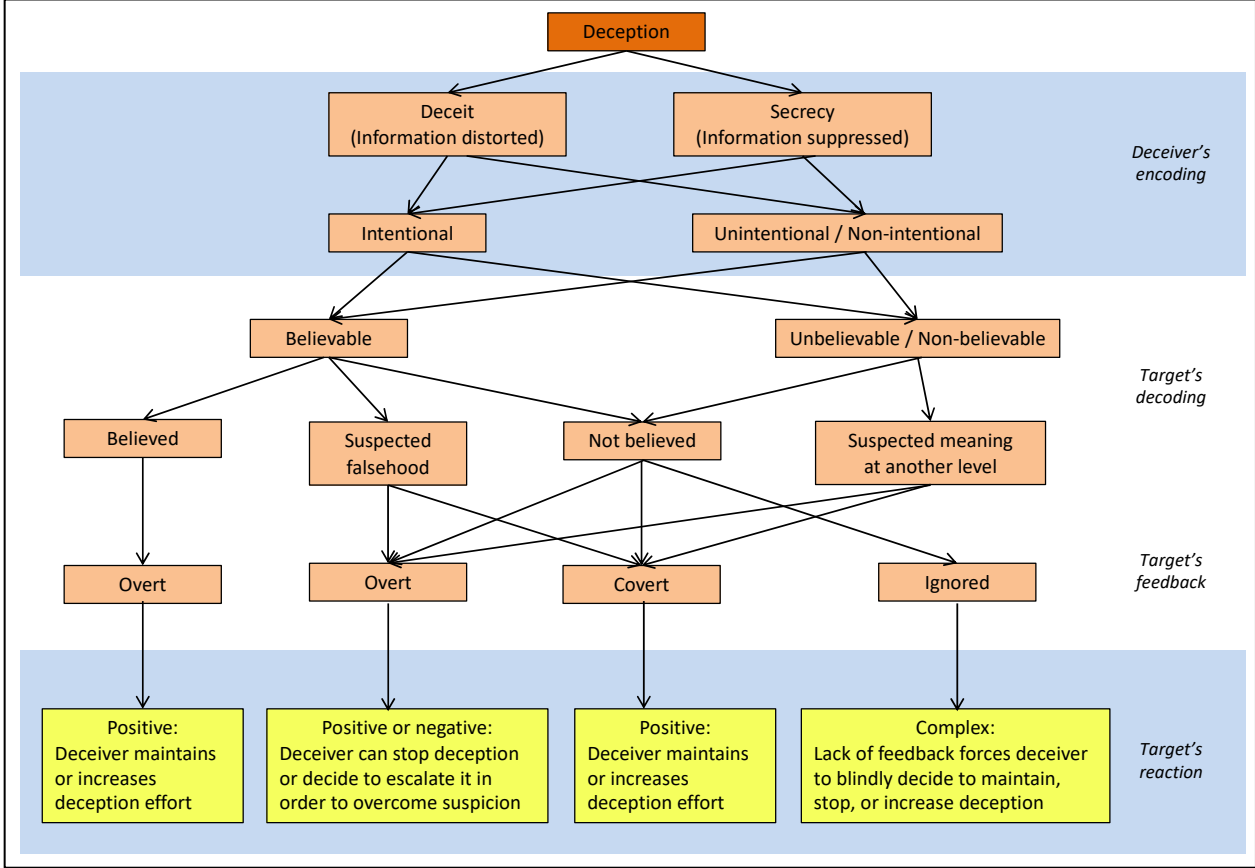


Figure A.13 Anderson’s cybernetic typology of deception<sup>43</sup>

Michael Handel (1989)

In his book *War Strategy and Intelligence*, published in 1989, Michael Handel emphasised the informational and intelligence aspects of deception. A deceiver conducts a deception operation with the aim to deceive a target, who is confronted with an uncertain situation, with only two categories of intelligence information, namely, (1) intentions, and (2) capabilities. The purpose of a deceiver is to confuse, mislead or misinform the opponent regarding both categories of intelligence information. Handel created a typology for deception based on the two categories of intelligence information, further broken down into passive and active modes

<sup>43</sup> Anderson, ‘Cultural Concatenation of Deceit and Secrecy’, 327. And: Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 41.



of deception. He avowed that this distinction between passive and active deception is useful. Passive deception largely depends on secrecy and camouflage, on hiding one’s intentions and capabilities from the opponent. Handel explained that some experts perceive passive deception as inferior and not likely to succeed against a highly-skilled intelligence organization, but thinking that this is not necessarily true. Although not as glossy and intellectually challenging as active deception measures, passive measures can be very effective. Moreover, active types of deception depend on the effectiveness of passive operations. Crucially, passive deception can become dramatically complicated, leading to more costs for intelligence services in terms of money, time and the like.<sup>44</sup>

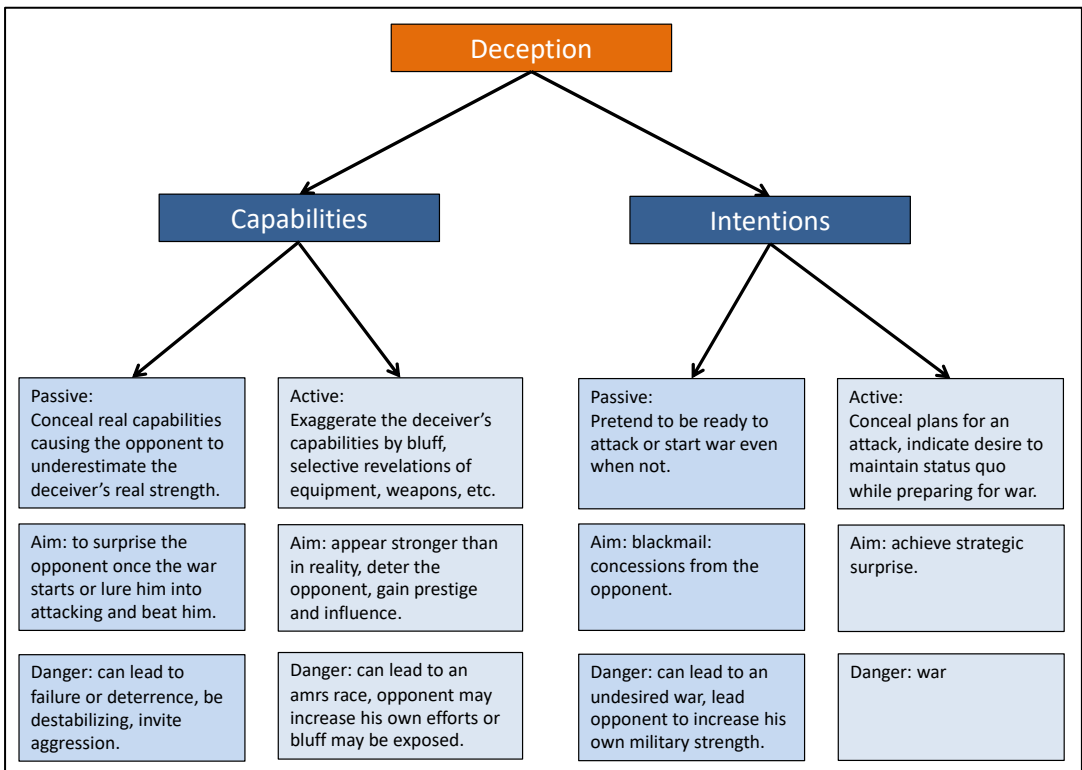


Figure A.14 Handel’s typology of deception<sup>45</sup>

Dissimilar to its passive equivalent, active deception usually involves a calculated policy of disclosing half-truths supported by verifiable information and other evidence. Handel stated that at least 90% of the information fed to the opponent should be truthful. There must be an insistence on the prime necessity for truth whenever truth is possible. A lie when it is needed will only be believed if it is interlaced with factual information. Handel also believed in the

<sup>44</sup> Michael Handel, *War, Strategy and Intelligence*, (London (UK): Frank Cass and Company Ltd, 1989), 314-334.  
<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 315.

paradox: the more one has a reputation for honesty, the easier it is to lie convincingly. For capabilities this dichotomy means to conceal the deceiver's real capabilities and to exaggerate the deceiver's capabilities. As is also applicable to intentions, the active deception measures include to mislead the target concerning the deceiver's intentions, while the passive one is focused on the concealment of the deceiver's real intentions.<sup>46</sup>

Handel assumed that the rational use of deception would lead to different results. In the first place, one type of deception attempts to misdirect the opponent's attention, causing him to concentrate his forces in the wrong location. A related type of deception is to make the opponent believe that he must commit his manpower, materiel, ammunition, fuel, and even time on fictional targets and in trivial directions. Another type of deception, which is related to the afore-mentioned ones, has the intention to surprise the opponent in order to create a situation in which he will be caught off guard and rendered unable to react.<sup>47</sup>

### Peter Lamont and Richard Wiseman (1999)

In 1999, Peter Lamont and Richard Wiseman, psychology researchers at the University of Edinburgh and Herefordshire, respectively, investigated magic as magicians and illusionists perform it. Key in magic is misdirection, and the way an audience is misled in what they see and what they do not see. It has a massive overlap with deception warfare, and it is therefore useful for this research into the different studies of deception warfare and associated subjects. Lamont and Wiseman labelled misdirection as an agility of the magician who directs the audience towards the effect and away from the method. They partitioned misdirection into two broad categories. The first category is the physical misdirection, in which the magician wants to control the spectator's attention. This category depends on the fact that, although one's eye captures tens of millions of bits of information each second that a human eye is open it selectively attends to only a miniscule portion of it and effectively discards the rest.<sup>48</sup> In the cognitive psychology this phenomenon is called 'change blindness'. During a performance a magician uses change blindness with another symptom, which is called

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 312-313.

<sup>48</sup> Peter Lamont and Richard Wiseman, *Magic in Theory: An Introduction to the Theoretical and Psychological Elements of Conjuring*, Originally published in 1999, (Hatfield (UK): University of Herefordshire Press, 2008), 31.

'inattentional blindness' to distract the audience. It is a trick to point the audience's attention in the wrong direction.<sup>49</sup>

Physical misdirection can be achieved using passive or active methods. Passive methods rely on the psychological mechanism that our attention is diverted by acts of the magician. Passive misdirection comprises three types: (1) novelty, because new, unexpected or unfamiliar things always attract a person's attention, (2) movement, rapid and unforeseen motion attracts more attention than routine, slow or no motion, and (3) contrast, which is any action, object or act that is perceived differently from the usual patterns and environment. Lamont and Wiseman describe active methods as 'the creation of primary and secondary interest through social interaction'. This active type relies on the magician's social interaction with the audience, which starts with eye contact to direct the audience's attention to a certain object. Then he can start talking about the object to reinforce the attention. In the meantime, the magician can do just about anything during that time. Body language and body contact are another technique of directing attention. Likewise, magicians are aware of the fact that a person's attention level is not constant, it fluctuates over time. Skilled magicians play with this mechanism. The principal technique of reducing attention outside the magical effect is to make the audience think that the trick has not started yet or that it is already over. Reducing attention inside the effect consists of many techniques, like repetition, confusion, dreariness or 'off-beat', which is a moment of relaxed attention in the form of a well-timed joke or a staged small 'incident'.

The second category is psychological misdirection. In this type of misdirection, the magician aims to shape what the audience thinks is occurring by controlling its suspicions. The magician can do so either by reducing or by diverting the distrust. There are three methods for reducing suspicion: (1) maximizing naturalness, based on consistency with the audience's preconceptions of reality, and necessity, which encompasses accepted necessary actions with no unusual gestures, (2) making the unnatural appear to be natural, which can be achieved by ruse, and (3) by raising the audience's firmly held beliefs regarding the effect. This latter method, which can be labelled as conviction, can be raised by way of three methods. The first one is the charisma of the magician himself. He must be both authoritative to, and liked by, the audience. The second one is the conviction of the magician himself. If the magician is convinced and shows self-confidence, the audience is less likely to be suspicious of the

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<sup>49</sup> Christof Koch, *The Quest for Consciousness: A Neurobiological Approach*, (Englewood, NJ (USA): Roberts and Company Publishers, 2004), 153-157.

method. The third and final one is reinforcement, meaning reinforcing the audience's perception of the situation.<sup>50</sup>

Misdirection			
Physical		Psychological	
Directing <i>where</i> the audience is looking	Directing <i>when</i> the audience is looking	Reducing suspicion	Diverting suspicion
<i>Passive</i> – the use of natural conditions of primary and secondary interest: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• novelty</li> <li>• movement</li> <li>• contrast</li> </ul>	<i>Reducing attention during the trick:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outside the effect</li> <li>• Inside the effect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Naturalness               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- consistency</li> <li>- necessity</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Justification               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- familiarization</li> <li>- ruse</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Conviction               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- charisma</li> <li>- self-conviction</li> <li>- reinforcement</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• False solutions</li> <li>• False expectations</li> </ul>
<i>Active</i> - the creation of areas of primary and secondary interest using: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• eye contact</li> <li>• voice: speech</li> <li>• body language</li> <li>• External sources</li> </ul>	<i>Increasing attention during the trick:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Separating the moments of effect and method</li> <li>• Reinforce the moment of effect</li> </ul>		

Figure A.15 Lamont-Wiseman's misdirection framework<sup>51</sup>

### Scott Gerwehr and Russell Glenn (2000 and 2002)

At the start of a new millennium, in 2000, Scott Gerwehr and Russell Glenn, researchers of military affairs at Rand Corporation, acknowledged that deception will not take place in a vacuum. The following features can be part of the environment, in which deception will take place. First, there are two or more actors in a dispute. This is not necessarily an open conflict; it can be unfriendly rivalry. It is assumed that the actors are individually seeking advantageous solution(s). It does not necessarily demand a zero-sum game, but it might look like it does. Second, information may be acquired, processed, and utilised by all actors. Information forms their respective perceptions. Most decisions are at best shaped in some manner by information about other actors and the environment. A blind, unthinking decision-maker is hard to deceive. Third, information may be transmitted between actors. This can take place in an indirect way, but if transmission is impossible then deception will not take place.

<sup>50</sup> Lamont and Wiseman, *Magic in Theory*, 31-67. And: Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 43-48.

<sup>51</sup> Lamont and Wiseman, *Magic in Theory*, 31-67. And: Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 45.

Fourth, actors operate under conditions of uncertainty, that is, without complete knowledge. A party in possession of almost all relevant facts, or one thoroughly convinced of the accuracy of its perceptions, is extremely unlikely to be persuaded by contra-indicators. Actors have some flexibility in their options. Deception comes into its own when the target takes, or abstains from, some action that the deceiver can exploit.<sup>52</sup>

Remarkably, Scott and Gewehr were two of the first authors to acknowledge that actors involved in deception operate in an uncertain environment. They recognized that doubt and ambiguity with the deceiver about the target's intentions, capabilities and worldview need to be addressed with a deliberate planning process for deception. Gerwehr and Glenn explained that the deception planning process is a 'backward-planning' procedure, which begins with the desired end state, being the objective. The top foremost outcome in the mind of a planner is: what should the friendly force accomplish? This could be as simple as getting the opponent to concentrating on point A instead of point B at a critical moment.<sup>53</sup>

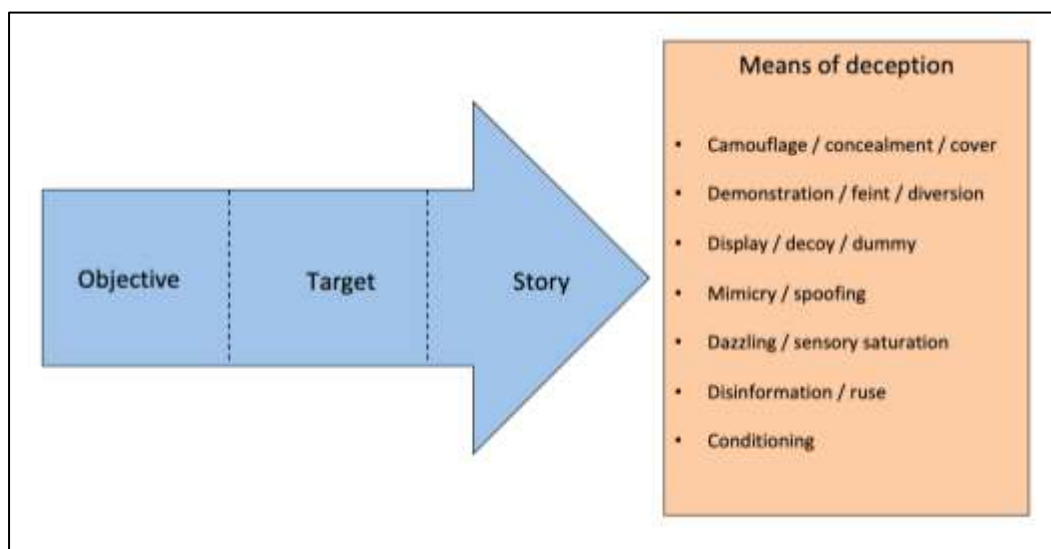


Figure A.16 Gerwehr and Glenn's deception planning process<sup>54</sup>

As soon as the deceiver knows what the opponent will do, the next step is to galvanize that action: this actor will be the deception target. The deceiver will gather intelligence about the target and create a profile of that person's preconceptions, beliefs, intentions and capabilities. A well-constructed deception is built around that intelligence and exploits it. With this profile

<sup>52</sup> Gerwehr and Russell, *The Art of Darkness*, 26-27.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

the deceiver formulates the story that must be told to the target through a variety of media to generate misperceptions. This story is told by means of deception; the classic instruments, such as camouflage and disinformation, which are part of the deceiver's collection. In deception plans the ends dictate the means.<sup>55</sup>

Gerwehr and Glenn distinguished seven means of deception:

1. *Camouflage and concealment*. The former is the use of natural or artificial material on or about the deceiver to avoid detection. The latter is the careful use of cover and terrain by the deceiver to hide from observation.
2. *Demonstration, feint and diversion*. The act of drawing the attention of a target away from an area or activity the deceiver chooses. Demonstrations make no contact with the adversary while feints do.
3. *Display, decoy and dummy*. The placement of a natural or artificial construction away from a deceiver to depict a construction of substance to the target.
4. *Mimicry and spoofing*. The use of natural or artificial construction by the deceiver allowing him or her to depict a construction of substance to the target.
5. *Dazzling and sensory saturation*. Overloading the sensory processing capacities of the target with a surplus of impetuses. The primary idea is to elevate the noise level to such an extent to drown out the target signal.
6. *Disinformation and ruse*. The doctoring of media, such as print, broadcast and Internet, photography, passed to the target.
7. *Conditioning and exploit*. It means generating and exploiting or only exploiting a target's pre-existing bias, belief or habit. Whether the habit is naturally acquired or induced by the would-be deceiver previous to operation is incidental.<sup>56</sup>

In a later RAND report, available in 2002, Gerwehr and Glenn came up with a new model, which they called the 'three perspectives on deception'. The first perspective of this model is the 'level of sophistication' that comprises a range of elements including the target's expectations and preconceptions, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, as well as the overall environmental and situational factors. Gerwehr and Glenn considered this perspective as a diagnostic measure for planning and uncovering deception. They perceive the

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 27-28.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 30-31.

level of sophistication as a spectrum, ranging from static deception, to dynamic and adaptive deception and ultimately ending with premeditative deception as its most sophisticated form. The second perspective on deception is ‘effect sought’, which is the type of effect the deceiver would like to generate to affect the target’s perception of the situation. Gerwehr and Glenn discovered three different categories of effect, namely masking, misdirecting, and confusing. The third perspective on deception is the ‘means of deception’, comprising two categories. A form-based category, which is called morphological, has material characteristics that can achieve deception, such as shape, structure, coloration or temperature. The functional category is referred to as behavioural aspects that also cause deception like the timing or location of activities or a pattern of events.

Three perspectives on deception		
Level of sophistication	Effect sought	Means of deception
<b>Static:</b> deceptions that remain static regardless of the state, activity, or histories of either the deceiver or the target	<b>Masking:</b> concealing a signal. Examples include camouflage, concealment, and signature reduction.	<b>Morphological:</b> the part of deception that is primarily a matter of substance or form such as shape, coloration, or temperature.
<b>Dynamic:</b> deceptions that become active under specific circumstances. Nevertheless, the ruse itself and the associated trigger do not change over time, nor do they vary significantly by circumstance or opponent.		
<b>Adaptive:</b> Same as the dynamic category except that the trigger or ruse can be modified with experience. This category covers deceptions that improve through trial and error.	<b>Misdirection:</b> transmitting a clear and unambiguous false signal. Examples are feints and demonstrations, decoy and dummies, disguises, and disinformation.	<b>Behavioural:</b> the part of deception that is primarily a matter of implementation or function such as timing, location, or patterns of events or behaviour.
<b>Premeditative:</b> deceptions that are designed and implemented on the basis of experience, knowledge of the deceiver’s capabilities and vulnerabilities, and knowledge of the target’s sensors.	<b>Confusing:</b> raising the noise level in order to create uncertainty or paralyze the target;s perceptual capabilities. Examples comprise voluminous communications traffic, conditioning, and random behaviour.	

Figure A.17 Gerwehr and Glenn’s perspective on deception<sup>57</sup>

Gerwehr and Glenn merely saw this ‘three perspectives’ model as a first step toward the development of a more ‘comprehensive and useful’ deception model. They identified a

<sup>57</sup> Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 41.

minimum of four ways in which individual applications of deception methods may be accumulated to generate an even more extensive deception effect. The four ways are combinations of methods, that can either be different or similar in nature, and applications, which can take place in time or space:

1. Use multiple, similar deception methods,
2. Use multiple, different deception methods,
3. Employ selected deception methods at different points in time,
4. Employ selected deception methods at different points in space.<sup>58</sup>

### Abram Shulsky (2002)

At the time Gerwehr and Glenn published their second report on deception and urban warfare in 2002, Abram Shulsky, former intelligence consultant and former member of the United States President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, investigated the elements of strategic denial and deception. Shulsky branded 'strategic' as a sneaky word with which he wanted to indicate a high level of importance. Strategic denial and deception are aimed at the highest levels of government or military chain of command. More generally 'strategic' denial and deception deals with major government policies rather than details of the tactical implementation.<sup>59</sup>

Shulsky focused on the deceiver and used the term 'denial and deception' instead of just 'deception'. The reason is that he regarded denial and deception as separate terms that can be distinguished conceptually, although closely connected in practice. Denial is the attempt to block all information channels by which an opponent could learn some truths, and, therefore, to make it impossible for him to respond in time. Denial includes all methods to safeguard 'classified' information. Deception, by contrast, is the effort to cause an opponent to believe something that is not true, to believe a cover story rather than the truth, with the purpose of directing him to respond in a way that serves the deceiver's interest, rather than the target's. Deception cannot function without denial, and vice versa.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Scott Gerwehr and Russell Glenn, *Unweaving the Web: Deception and Adaptation in Future Urban Operations*, Research report for the United States Army, (Santa Monica, CA (USA): RAND, 2002), 31-41.

<sup>59</sup> Abram Shulsky, 'Elements of Strategic Denial and Deception', in: Roy Godson and James Wirtz (Ed), *Strategic Denial and Deception: The Twenty-first Century Challenge*, Originally published in 2002, (New Brunswick, NJ (USA): Transaction Publishers, 2005), 17-18

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.



Shulsky detected different methods and channels to cause strategic denial and deception. The term channel identified the specific ways in which information about a given subject reaches an audience, while a discrete piece of information that travels along or through such a channel is labelled as a signal. Conflicts and wartime lead to a blockade of communication channels between contending actors. Closed societies, such as North Korea, and denied areas also attempt to regulate as many of these channels as possible, but the development of the economy and globalization have made this aspect almost impossible. Industrial democracies became increasingly open in terms of cross-border procedures, freight traffic and different forms of communication. In terms of channels, denial comprises blocking all channels by which signals revealing the truth might be transmitted. Deception involves the manufacturing of false signals that can be fed into those channels. The five different channels are:

1. *Intelligence channels.* Using technical intelligence channels to pass false signals might sometimes be easier, but in other cases even harder than using human intelligence channels.
2. *Diplomatic channels.* A diplomat could be an honest person sent abroad to lie for his or her country. A foreign diplomat is assumed to be loyal to his government, so officials of a target nation ought to be aware that anything a diplomat says could be meant to deceive.
3. *Propaganda channels.* New means of spreading propaganda, such as via the Internet, allow a deceiver to reach his target audience through several channels. Many of these channels may remain relatively hidden to the public at large. Some experts think that deception and propaganda are almost the same kind of phenomenon, but Shulsky differentiated between the two. The aim of deception is to induce a target to do something that is in the deceiver's interest, but not necessarily in the target's. Propaganda attempts to affect a target's beliefs more generally and is not only directed at the target but also at the populace at large rather than at the nation's leadership.
4. *Agents-of-influence.* These agents are persons who are able to get close to important government officials and influence their views and actions with respect to major issues. Usually, the target is unaware of the loyalty of the agent-of-influence; in the most favourable case from the deceiver's point of view the target considers the agent as a good friend, who has the target's best interest at heart, whereas the agent is loyal to the opponent. Such a complete misunderstanding of the agent's loyalty is not necessary for

him to operate successfully as agent-of-influence. An agent might be able to gain the confidence of the target although he openly holds other ideas than the target.

5. *Other* overt channels, like occasional agents-of-influence. This group contains travellers, businessmen or relief workers who were temporarily recruited to work for an intelligence service.<sup>61</sup>

Shulsky made a distinction between wartime and peacetime objectives for strategic denial and deception. In wartime and during conflicts the objectives of a strategic denial and deception effort determine the success of an entire campaign. In a peacetime context, strategic deception deals with major national decisions concerning essential matters of foreign policy and assessments of threats a nation sometimes faces. The pressure in peacetime is different. It is not always a matter of winning or losing, but more often a matter of obtaining versus not obtaining. In general, it is more difficult to express the kinds of objectives that a state might follow in peacetime, as opposed to the objectives pursued in wartime.<sup>62</sup>

Shulsky also illustrated the five main requirements for the conduct of strategic denial and deception:

1. *Strategic coherence.* Especially deception operations in peacetime are vulnerable to falling apart or to a change of mind by participants in the deception team. In peacetime there must be an element of longevity in the plan, because implementing strategic deception takes time. The deceiver cannot change his plan on a weekly basis.
2. *Understanding the opponent.* The deceiver needs to understand what kinds of misinformation are likely to mislead and initiate a target to act in the desired way. The deceiver should have a thorough understanding of the target's biases and weaknesses, how to exploit them, and of how the target will react.
3. *Organizational infrastructure for deception and security measures.* Deception involves coordinating messages on many channels, and a deceiver needs to orchestrate the deception effort. Information about the deception plan must be carefully controlled and compartmented in order to avoid leaking.
4. *Channels to reach the opponent.* There might be many available channels. Therefore, a deceiver needs to have a comprehensive understanding of the target's intelligence

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 19-26.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 26-28.

collection efforts. The deceiver should also have the imagination to develop new channels on an ad hoc basis to the extent that the deceiver has good security; the number of uncontrolled channels from which a target can receive information can be reduced.

5. *Feedback.* The deceiver must have an insight into how the target assesses the misinformation and how he responds to it. This allows the deceiver to know what kind of information has been missed by the target, and which channels are auspicious to use.<sup>63</sup>

### John Bowyer Bell (2003)

In 2003, just before his death, American historian and artist, Bowyer Bell published an article in which he tried to construct a theory of deception. Bowyer Bell deemed deception as a conscious process that combines psychology with, in some cases, physiology to offer a target an alternative reality – if accepted, an illusion – to achieve an advantage. Although not made explicit in his publication, Bowyer Bell took the deceiver as focal point of his research. Bowyer Bell made a distinction between objective and perceived reality. Objective reality is the physical world as it is. In other words: what is really? Perceived reality is the world as interpreted by a human being. The interpretation can be identical to the objective reality, or completely different, which is called an illusion, or a mix of both. This perceived reality is a result from the Thomas Theorem, as mentioned in section 3.5 ‘Manifestation’. In all cases, humans seek steadiness, want patterns, continuity and certainty. They prefer to see what they expect to see, so much so that at times, when a ruse is discovered, they persist in believing the illusion. The familiar perspective of a person has an enormous hold on his perception. Even novelty is appropriate to be adjusted to an amiable and known pattern or simply ignored. So perceived reality can repel hard evidence. The pattern expected is the pattern perceived.<sup>64</sup>

Bowyer Bell was especially interested in the ruse-channel combination. while some ruses are offered nearly spontaneously without great thought, many others require detailed planning. The planner of the deception should have an insight into what ruse would be the most effective to reach the desired goal, not merely to have the ruse channelled, and accepted as illusion. The channel that will be used, is as important as the ruse itself, because it needs to impose the ruse within the decision arena. The combined impact of the channelled ruse, no

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 28-32.

<sup>64</sup> John Bowyer Bell, ‘Toward a Theory of Deception’, *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 16 (2003) 2, 247-248.

matter how complex, is always found in the response. Contradictory ruses may be taken as authentic, because they are inconsistent, and so the target accepts the complete illusion. A ruse may be intended to create an illusion that, for the target, will be unnoticed, benign, desirable, unappealing or dangerous. Each illusion can initiate a desired response. First, to be unnoticed, an illusion needs to integrate the illusion into existing patterns of perceived reality. Then all continues to appear as normal. Second, deception is often used to transform something into an irrelevant form, rather than simply hide one’s means or intentions. Third, a mirage of an oasis is an illusion that offers salvation to the desperate desert traveller. Fourth, a planner of deception can operate through a ruse intended to create an unappealing illusion, i.e. a channel may be coded but easily penetrated to give further authenticity. All in all, the planner of deception may also seek the acceptance of an illusion that will be perceived as dangerous by the target and so generate a desired response, such as by spreading the ruse of a false secret weapon.<sup>65</sup> Bowyer Bell created a deception cycle with ten different steps, which is presented in Figure A.18.

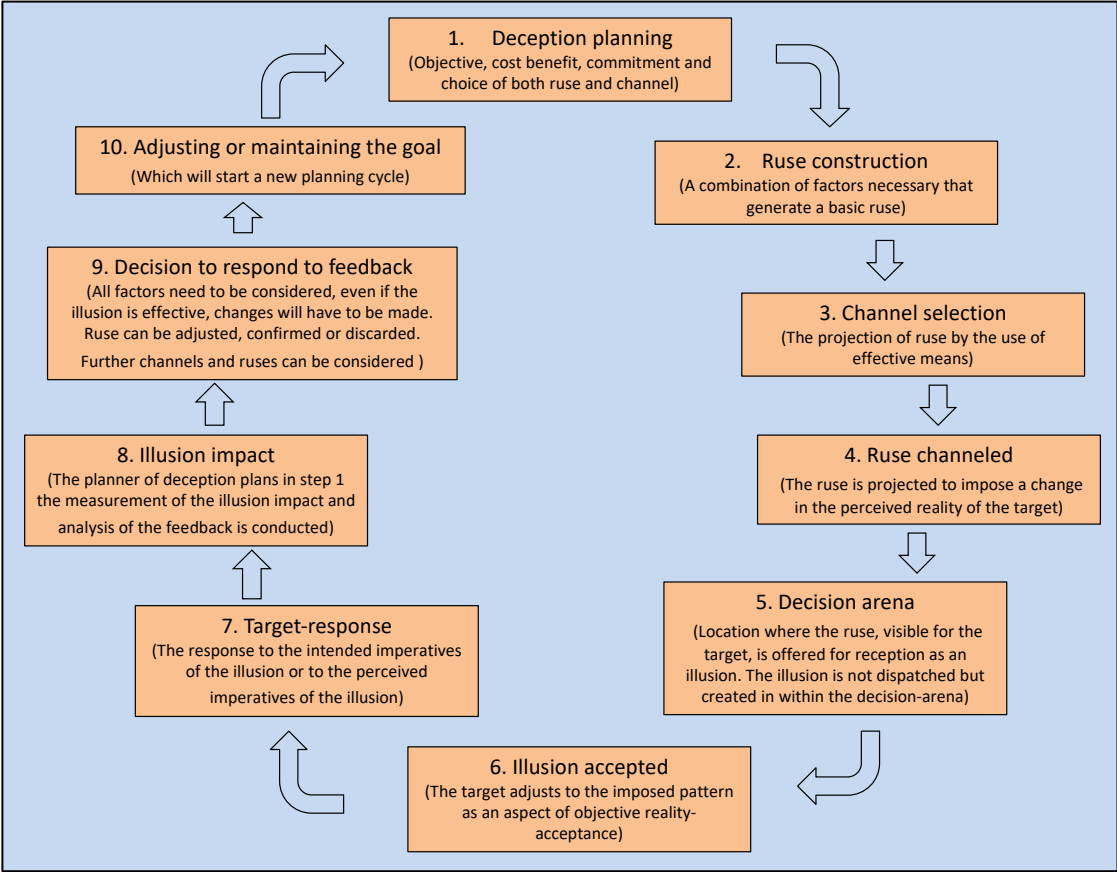


Figure A.18 Bowyer Bell’s deception cycle<sup>66</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 258-259.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 253.

Michael Bennett and Edward Walz (2007)

Michael Bennett and Edward Waltz, both information and intelligence experts, conducted an extensive research into the shadowy subject of counter-deception in relation to national security. In order to address counter-deception, they made a profound study into deception principles and used more than 15 articles and books on deception, from various authors, such as Barton Whaley, Donald Daniel & Katherine Herbig, Michael Handel, Myrdene Anderson, and Scott Gerwehr & Russell Glenn.

<p style="text-align: center;">Reveal facts</p> <p>Information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Release true information that benefits the deceiver</li> </ul> <p>Physical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Display real equipment or facilities</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Conceal facts (dissimulation)</p> <p>Information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secrecy</li> <li>• Withholding information to create a false or misleading impression</li> </ul> <p>Physical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Camouflage, concealment, signal reduction, disguises, dazzling</li> <li>• Non-verbal deceit</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;">Reveal fiction (simulation)</p> <p>Information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disinformation, which includes             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Lying (providing untrue info)</li> <li>✓ Dazzling (large volume of info)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Physical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decoys, diversions (feints and demonstrations), duplicates, disguises, dummy positions, equipment and facilities</li> <li>• Nonverbal deceit</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Conceal fiction</p> <p>Information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suppress a lie</li> </ul> <p>Physical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hide a sham</li> </ul>

Figure A.19 Bennett and Waltz's deception method matrix<sup>67</sup>

Bennett and Waltz created a deception methods matrix. They used Myrdene Anderson's system management matrix, made in 1986, to organize the great diversity of thoughts regarding deception methods. This matrix describes ways to reveal or conceal either fact or fiction. They did not only use Anderson's division between facts and fiction, but they also amalgamated Anderson's couple of information and energy together with Scott Gerwehr and Russell Glenn's distinction between morphological means, being substance, and behavioural means, being immaterial. It led to a composition of two different means: information and

<sup>67</sup> Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 52.

physical methods. Bennett and Waltz also used Barton Whaley’s distinction between simulation and dissimulation, which corresponds with the two orange squares in the matrix.<sup>68</sup>

Bennett and Waltz also produced an overview with the fundamental principles of deception. Their opinion, considered in relation with deception, is that a principle is a fundamental truth upon which the various theories and models of deception are based. The principles recognized by Bennett and Waltz are all related to how a target of deception acquires, registers, processes, and ultimately perceives information about his environment. They discovered four basic principles:

1. *Truth*: all deception works within the context of what is true.
2. *Denial*: denying the target access to the truth is the prerequisite to deception.
3. *Deceit*: all deception requires deceit.
4. *Misdirection*: deception depends on manipulating what the target registers.<sup>69</sup>

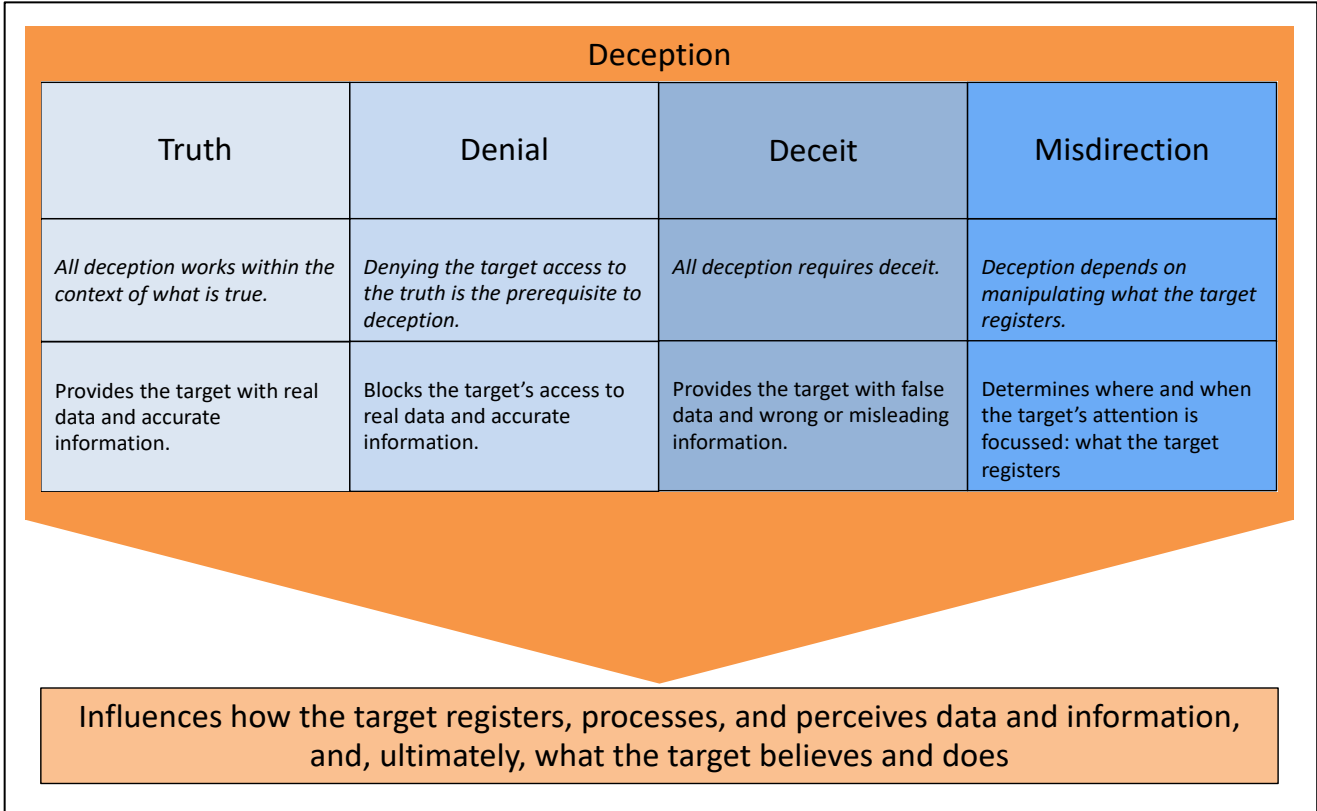


Figure A.20 Bennett and Waltz’s principles of deception<sup>70</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 51-52.  
<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 58-59.  
<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 59.

Thomas Carson (2010)

In 2010 Thomas Carson made a comparison between lying and deception, concluding that lying differs from deception in two important respects. Firstly, lying is the equivalent of making a false statement. Deception, in contrast, does not require that the deceiver, makes a false statement or any statement at all. True statements can be deceptive, and some forms of deception do not include making statements, because deception is achieved with other means. Carson’s example was a car sale. ‘Consider’, he stated, ‘that I am selling a used car that frequently overheats, and I am aware of the problem. You are a potential purchaser and asks me whether the car overheats. If I say “no”, I am lying. If I answer by making a true statement, like “I drove the car across the Mojave Desert on very hot day and had no problems”, I am not lying. Even though the statement is true, and I believe it is true, it might still be deceptive – perhaps I drove the car across desert years ago and have had trouble with it overheating since then. Since my statement is true, I do not deceive you about the fact that I once drove the car across the desert. I do deceive you about whether the car is now prone to overheating.’<sup>71</sup>

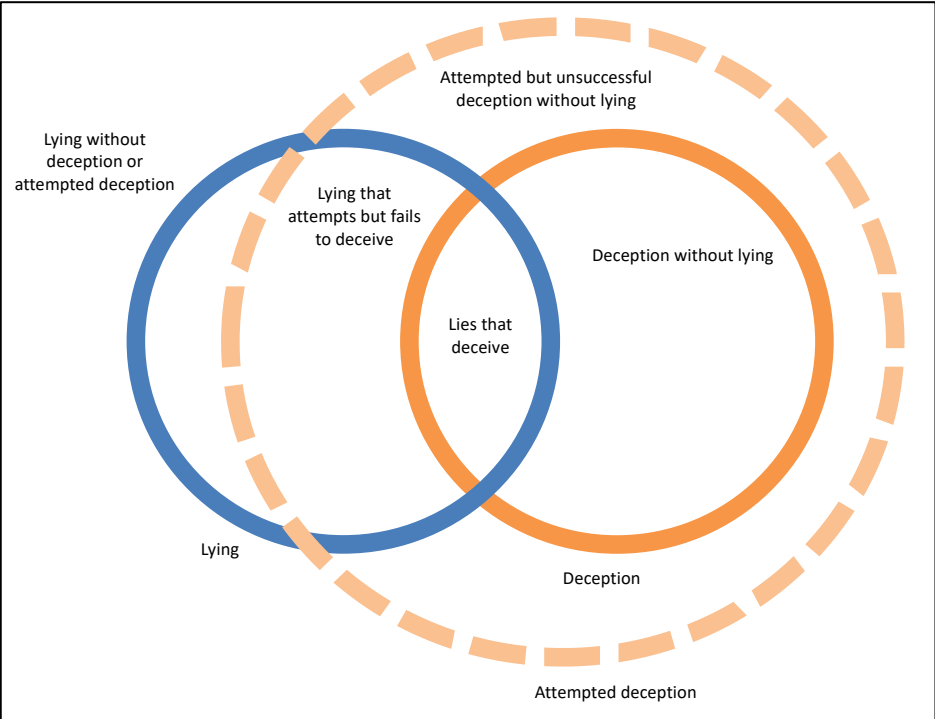


Figure A.21 Carson’s relationship between lying, deception and attempted deception<sup>72</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Thomas Carson, *Lying and Deception: Theory and Practice*, Originally published in 2010, (Oxford (UK): Oxford University Press, 2012), 55-56.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

Secondly, unlike lying, the term deception connotes success. An action or act must actually mislead someone, cause someone to have false beliefs, if it is to count as a case of deception, while many lies are believed and do not succeed in deceiving anyone. There is a clear difference between refusing to provide information and deception or attempted deception. The refusal is a deliberate attempt to withhold from someone the necessary information that would help him to acquire true or correct false beliefs. A seller who withholds information from a buyer about the price of the product the buyer would like to buy, does not thereby deceive. Nevertheless, withholding information can generate deception if there is a clear expectation, promise, or professional obligation that such information will be provided. To conceal information is taking action to hide information from someone in order to prevent someone from discovering it. In many cases information can cause deception. Carson again used the example of selling a car: 'I am selling a used car that has extensive body rust. I smooth out the rust, do not remove it, and paint over it, matching the original colour. I am trying to convince the potential buyer falsely that the body of the car is free of rust. If I succeed with my action, I have deceived the buyer.' It is also possible to conceal information without deceiving anyone. In the case of selling the car with rust on the body, this rust might not have been a big deal for the buyer. He was not focused on corrosion of the body of the car during the inspection of the car, he was only interested in the model, speed limitation and the quality of the tyres.<sup>73</sup>

Carson also examined cases in which political leaders told lies or were engaged in deception as a pretext for fighting wars or to deter an opponent in conflict situations. Most examples of lying and deception by political leaders about official public policy have to do with the following two categories:

1. Lying and deception to manipulate public opinion and generate support for actions, causes, policies, and political objectives that one wants to promote.
2. Lying and deception to promote one's personal interests, for instances a politician lying to increase his chances of winning an election.

The two categories are not mutually exclusive. A political leader might lie to increase his chances for an election victory or to support his policy objectives. However, both categories,

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 56-57.



lying and deception, are strongly contrary to the fundamentals of the democratic constitutional state. The public is supposed to have accurate and relevant information on every policy issue. The choices of the population in democratic societies are valuable only if they possess correct information and can make reliable and independent judgments about whether candidates will pursue the policies that they adhere to. Lying and deception by political leaders are great betrayals of trust in democratic societies; they oppose, frustrate and undermine their voters. Remarkably, this hardly affects the credibility of those political leaders in other countries. The authority and jurisdiction of governments or political leaders to control and affect the media and its access to official governmental information often gives political leaders the power to prevent the population from learning the truth.<sup>74</sup> Carson cited Plato, who said that rulers of a state frequently need to make use of falsehood and deception for the benefit of those they rule. Plato called these forms of falsehood ‘noble lies’.<sup>75</sup>

### James Monroe (2012)

In 2012 the earlier-mentioned James Monroe, a student at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, took the U.S. Army’s definition of deception as a starting point. This definition, in use since at least 1969, distinguished deception as an ‘activity designed to mislead an enemy by manipulation, distortion, or falsification of evidence to induce him to react in a manner prejudicial to his interest’.<sup>76</sup> Monroe had three objections against this U.S. Army definition. Initially he felt that the verb ‘induce’ was an imprecise term for what deception does: manipulating the enemy’s decision-making process. Secondly, Monroe was of the opinion that the best deceptions were embedded in truth to reinforce and support the falsehood, a notion the definition of the U.S. Army seems to ignore with modifiers used to define the evidence. Lastly, Monroe considered the term enemy too narrow, since deception can be applied against any target. Monroe came up with a new description of deception: ‘deception is the deliberate misleading of a target into actions prejudicial to the target’s interests by manipulating the target’s decision-making processes through the communication of true, manipulated, distorted and/or falsified information.’<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 208-209

<sup>75</sup> Plato, op. cit. in: Carson, *Lying and Deception*, 209.

<sup>76</sup> United States Army, *Training Circular No 30-1: Tactical Cover and Deception*, (Washington, DC (USA): Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1969), 3.

<sup>77</sup> Monroe, *Deception*, 40-41.

The revised definition needs some elaboration, Monroe remarked. Deliberate misleading does not compel practitioners to conduct a formal planning process. Rapid ad hoc planning by a nimble practitioner can also achieve the objective in time-constrained or fluid situations, though mostly with an increased risk of failure. Monroe did not agree with most experts on deception, like Barton Whaley, that deception is merely focused on perception and misperception. Successful deception is more than creating a perception; it is about the target taking action or taking no action at all where it was actually necessary to take action.<sup>78</sup>

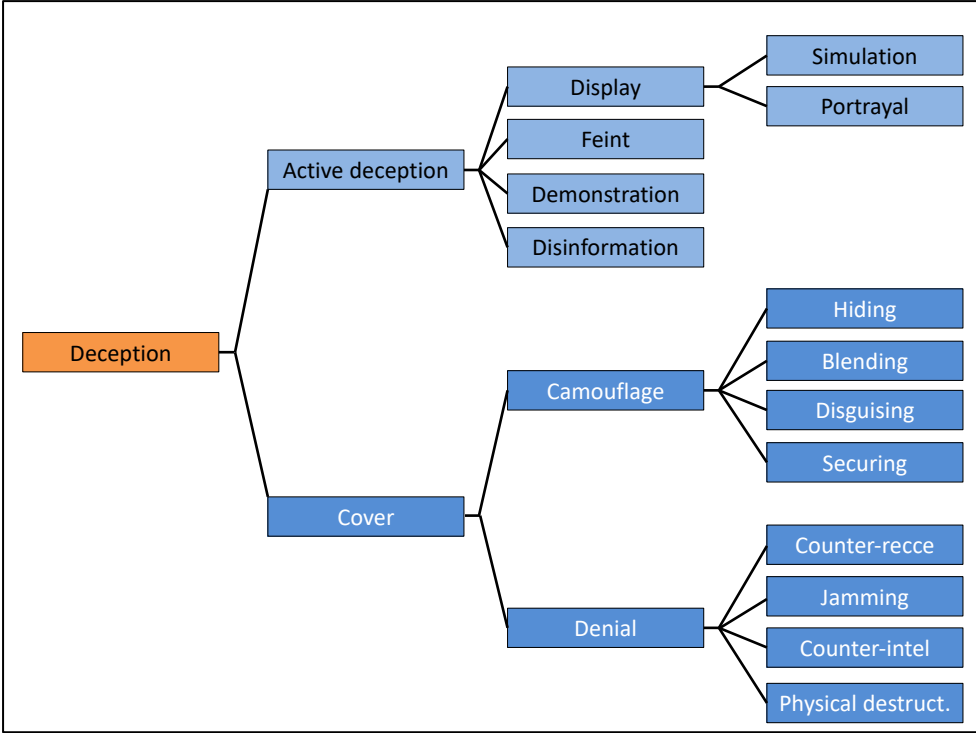


Figure A.22 Monroe's taxonomy of deception<sup>79</sup>

Monroe made a taxonomy and divided deception into two categories: (1) active deception, and (2) cover. Active deception methods are actions designed to convey deceptive indicators to the target, also referred to as 'simulation' or 'showing the false', and include all kinds of modified military deception actions, like displays, feints, demonstrations and disinformation. Displays are static representations of activities, forces or equipment for the aim of deceiving the target's collection apparatus. Monroe provided two different types of display: simulation and portrayal. Cover, the other broad category of deception, is the set of actions intended to mask indicators and to prevent the target access to the signs constructing an appropriate

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 44.

understanding of the situation and therefore a prerequisite for pertinent decision-making. Cover consists of two subcategories: camouflage and denial. Camouflage tries to prevent indicators from being detected by the target's collection assets. There are four methods: (1) hiding, (2) blending, (3) disguising, and (4) securing. Denial degrades target collection channels so that the opponent is either unable to receive indicators or is directed onto a smaller set of channels. Denial includes four methods: (1) counter-reconnaissance, (2) jamming, (3) counter-intelligence, and (4) physical destruction of collection tools.

### Claire Wardle and Hossein Derekhshan (2018)

In 2018 Claire Wardle, research fellow at the Shorenstein Centre of Harvard University, and Hossein Derekhshan, Iranian-Canadian writer and researcher, portrayed the misleading impact of malicious information on daily life activities. Politicians in Western democracies have forever made unrealistic promises during election campaigns, and their voters still believe them. Organisations and business corporations have always affected people to think in a certain way, and the media have long disseminated misleading stories for their shock value in order to increase the circulation and the audience ratings. Wardle and Derekhshan called it 'information pollution'. They ascertain that the rise of the Internet has brought about fundamental changes in the way information is produced, communicated and dispersed. The modern information environment has four major characteristics:

1. Information is widely accessible and inexpensive and sophisticated platforms have made it easy for everyone with access to the world wide web to create and disseminate content;
2. Information consumption that was a private matter, has become public because of social media
3. The speed at which information is dispersed and made available has been amplified by fast-tracked new cycles and mobile handsets;
4. Information is passed in real-time between trusted users, and almost any piece of information is far less likely to be challenged and checked.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Claire Wardle and Hossein Derekhshan, *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making*, 2nd Revised edition, Originally published in September 2017, (Strasbourg (FRA): Council of Europe, 2018), 10-12.

A critical point in the use of social media is that people find it difficult to judge the credibility of any message. Posts from respected newspapers like the *New York Times* and a malicious conspiracy website look almost identical. This means that people became increasingly reliant on friends, colleagues and family members to guide them through the information ecosystem. Wardle and Derekhshian noticed that ‘this ecosystem is dominated by increasingly partisan radio, television and social media; exaggerated emotional articulations of the world; quick delivery via algorithmically derived feeds on smartphones, and audiences that only skim headlines to cope with floods of information.’<sup>81</sup>

Wardle and Derekhshian discovered seven categories of information disorder on a wide spectrum of problematic content in media that can deceive people: (1) Satire or parody, no intention to cause harm, but audiences can misinterpret the message, (2) False connection, when headlines, visuals or captions do not support the content, (3) Misleading content, which is the misleading use of information to frame an issue or an individual, (4) False context, when genuine content is shared and mixed with false contextual information, (5) Imposter content, when genuine sources are mimicked, (6) Manipulated content, when information or imagery is manipulated to deceive, and (6) Fabricated content, when new content is 100% false, designed to deceive and do harm.<sup>82</sup>

Wardle and Derekhshian created a framework for explaining information disorder that comprises three parts: (1) three types, (2) three elements and (3) three phases. The three types of information disorder distinguish messages that are true from those that are false, and messages that are on purpose generated to do harm:

1. *Misinformation*. This is information that is false, but not created with the intention of causing harm. This includes unintentional mistakes, like inaccurate photo captions, dates, statistics, translation or when satire is taken seriously.
2. *Disinformation*. This is information that is false and deliberately created to harm a social group, an organization or a country. This form of information comprises false context, imposter content, manipulated content and fabricated content. It also includes conspiracy theory and rumours.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 16-18.

3. *Malinformation*. This is information that is based on reality and is used to inflict harm on a person, social group, organization or country. Examples are leaks, harassment and hate speeches. People are often targeted because of their belief, history or social associations, which considerably affect people in their feelings and emotions.<sup>83</sup> *Kompromat*, which was introduced in section 2.5 ‘*Dezinformtsiya*’ can also be seen as an example of malinformation.

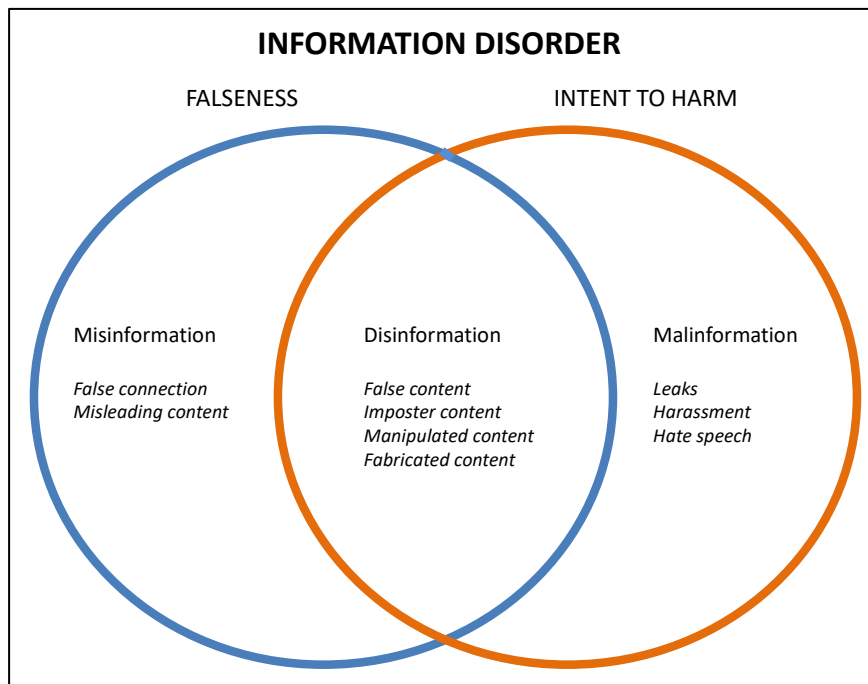


Figure A.23 Information disorder venn diagram by Wardle and Derakhshian<sup>84</sup>

In short, there is misinformation when false information is shared but no harm is intended. Disinformation is when false information is consciously distributed to deceive an opponent in order to cause harm, while malinformation occurs when genuine information is shared to cause harm by bringing private information into the open.

There are three elements that stimulate an information disorder: agents, messages, and interpreters. The first element is the agent, who creates, produces and distributes all kinds of information. It is of interest to a nation that is targeted to find who the agents are, but it is often difficult to attribute the origin of the information. According to Wardle and

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 5

Derakhshian, the features of agents can vary over time. In order to find out who the involved agent or agents are, seven different aspects are relevant:

1. *Category*. There are different types of agents. An agent can have an official capacity, representing a government or a society, like intelligence services or news organizations, or unofficial capacity in groups of citizens that have become advocates for a subject.
2. *Structure*. Agents can act individually, in organisations or in prompt groups gathered around a specific theme.
3. *Motivations*. Agents can be driven by several motivating factors, for instance, financial ones, when an agent takes advantage of information disorder through marketing. Or political motives, when an agent discredits some candidates or attempts to affect public opinion. There are also social motives, when an agent is trying to make a connection with a certain group online or offline. Other motives might be psychological: seeking status or reinforcement for ideas or to encourage others to think, behave and act differently.
4. *Intended audience*. Audiences can vary from an organisation's internal mailing list to social groups based on the same ideals, to an entire society.
5. *Use of automated technology*. The creation and distribution of a message can be automated. Bots, being Internet accounts on social media that post more than 50 times a day on average, are often automated, but could conceivably be run by human beings. Cyborgs, accounts that are operated jointly by people and software, also contain a certain amount of automated technology.
6. *Intention to mislead*. The agent may have the intention to mislead a target.
7. *Intention to harm*. The agent may have the intention to cause harm to the target.

The second element is the message, which is the actual information that is disseminated. Messages can be communicated in person, through gossip, speech, etc., in texts, through newspapers, magazines, articles, etc. or in audio-visual material, such as images, videos, motion-graphics, memes, etc. In order to get more insight into messages, Wardle and Derakhshian mentioned five relevant aspects of messages:

1. *Durability*. Some messages are designed to stay relevant for a long time, e.g. a war, while others are made for the short term, like elections.

2. *Accuracy*. Malinformation is truthful information but used to cause harm to a target. For incorrect information there is a scale ranging from false connection, e.g. a mismatching headline, to 100% fabricated and manipulating information.
3. *Legal*. A message can be illegal, like hate speeches or privacy infringements or harassment. The legality of a message is determined by jurisdiction.
4. *Imposter content*. The message may unofficially use formal branding or authorisation, or it may steal the name or image from an individual, or use manipulated and untrue content in order to appear credible.
5. *Intended target*. The agent has an audience in mind, albeit different from the target of a message. An audience in mind can be the one the agent wants to affect, and the targets of messages are those who are being discredited. The target can vary in size, from individuals to an entire society. There are four characteristics that make a message more tempting and therefore more likely to be accepted and shared: (1) it provokes a strong feeling or response, (2) it has a powerful visual component, (3) it has a strong narrative, and (4) it is repeated, making it stick in people's minds.

The third element is the interpreter, who picks up the message and translates it into understandable information or even places it in a context creating an opinion for his or her social group. Messages are encoded by producers and decoded by interpreters in one of three ways:

1. *Hegemonic*, that is accepting the message as it was encoded.
2. *Negotiated*, accepting pleasing aspects of the message, but not all of it.
3. *Oppositional*, which is declining the way the message was encoded.

Audiences can rarely be passive recipients of information. The type of information that is digested vary, and the way in which the audience makes sense of it is significantly impacted by self-identity and the culture of tribes the target audience is associated with. Through different social media, the entire world can observe what individuals do, like, share or comment on. Wardle and Derekhshan explain that regardless of how persuasive a message may appear to a neutral observer or for a human being in general, it is difficult to accept

information that opposes the individual or globally recognised opinion. Fact-checks tend to nudge individuals' knowledge, but they do not replace mis- or disinformation completely.<sup>85</sup>

The three phases of information disorder are:

1. *Creation*. The time period when the content of the message is created.
2. *Production*. The stage during which the message is turned into a media product, using the appropriate format and considering which platform is most suitable.
3. *Distribution*. The stage whereby the message is distributed or made public.

Wardle and Derekhshan clarify that the different phases need to be considered alongside the elements, because an agent that creates the content is often different from the one who produces it. For instance, the motives of a creator of a state-sponsored disinformation campaign can be very different from those low-paid 'trolls', who were tasked to turn the campaign into specific posts. Once a message is disseminated it can be reproduced and redistributed endlessly. The role of the mainstream media as agents in intensifying fabricated or misleading content is crucial to understanding information disorder. Quality journalism always used verification and fact-checking, but hoaxers and those who spread disinformation never do. Newsrooms, increasingly relying on the social web for ideas, input and content, make them extremely vulnerable to absorbing and distributing fabricated and manipulated content.<sup>86</sup>

All three forms of information, being misinformation, disinformation as well as malinformation, can deceive a target. In the case of misinformation there is no intention to do so, but it is often caused by inaccuracy or lack of attention. Malinformation can deceive an opponent, when the leaked private information or hate speeches create a form of surprise or false perception. In most cases deception is a form of by-catch. Disinformation, though, is meant to deceive a target and to create false perceptions that can damage that target.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 25-42.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 23-25.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.



## Other tactical deception research

Jock Haswell, Michael Dewar and Jon Latimer, all former British Army officers, used a historical approach to deception research and focused for the most part on the tactical level. They described different deception events and operations, and deduced insights and conclusions regarding military tactical deception from these cases.<sup>88</sup> Their focus on this lower level of warfare makes that these researches are only mentioned together, since the focus of this dissertation is aimed at the strategic level and at conflict situations in general. Nevertheless, the three authors displayed the same aim, methods and practices, only differing in their historical contexts. All three emphasized that the overall goal of deception is surprise. Latimer added that the ultimate intention of deception is to gain advantage over one's opponent.<sup>89</sup> The threesome described what they call 'principles of deception', but these principles are much more a checklist for the planning of deception operations. They presented altogether five common principles:

1. *Preparation*: effective deception operations start with an exhaustive intelligence process in order to get a profound insight into and understanding of the opponent and the opponent's likely reaction to the deception activities.
2. *Centralised control and coordination*: uncoordinated deception activities might cause confusion among friendly forces, and this will reduce the effectiveness of the deception.
3. *Credibility*: the deception, whether it is information or a pattern of events, should be aligned with the target's prejudices, preconceptions and expectations.
4. *Multiple information channels*: manipulated information must be conveyed to the target through as many channels as possible without arousing his suspicion.
5. *Security*: Access to the deception plan must be carefully restricted.<sup>90</sup>

## Communal and notable topics

A total of 18 publications on deception or subjects related to deception have been researched, and at the end three other publications were discussed jointly since they were more focused

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<sup>88</sup> Jock Haswell, *The Tangled Web: The Art of Tactical and Strategic Deception*, (Wendover (UK): John Goodchild Publishers, 1985). And: Michael Dewar, *The Art of Deception in Warfare*, (Newton Abbot, Devon (UK): David & Charles Publishers, 1989). Also: Latimer, *Deception in War*.

<sup>89</sup> Latimer, *Deception in War*, xxxii.

<sup>90</sup> Bennett and Waltz, *Counterdeception*, 36-37.

on the tactical, and even technical, level of deception. Many observations, among others, have been reviewed. The most remarkable insights and ideas are clustered around four different topics. Topic 1 is about deception research itself, Topic 2 focusses on deception in all its appearances, Topic 3 is about the relationship between deception and information, and Topic 4 reflects other observations on deception.

### *(1) Topic 1 Deception research*

First, this dissertation captures a time frame of 50 years of research into deception warfare, from which a total of 18 publications were used. One would expect those publications to build on each other, but that was hardly the case. Both Barton Whaley, in 1982, and Michael Handel, in 1989, elaborated on their own insights from 1969 and 1976, respectively. Only Irwin Greenberg and Myrne Anderson used earlier insights from another researcher, in this case Barton Whaley. Bennett and Walz researched several deception studies, like the ones from Whaley, Daniel and Herbig, Handel, Mitchell and Anderson. Monroe built his research, among other understandings, on the insights from American military doctrine. Most of the researchers, independently, came up with roughly the same results: showing the false (different forms of deceit) and hiding the truth (different forms of concealment).

Second, the majority of the researchers, comprising Whaley, Daniel & Herbig, Lamont & Wiseman, Gewehr & Glenn, Shulsky, Carson and Monroe, chose the deceiver as the subject of their research, while others, such as Handel, Greenberg and Mitchell, took the target as their research object. A few researchers, for instance the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) staff, Anderson, Bennet & Walz, and Wardle & Derekshyan, took a neutral stance and described deception as a process with different phases. Some other researchers, notably Shulsky and Bennett and Walz, used the term denial. Denial is considered as blocking information, while deception provides information, which is often false information.

Third, the results of the 18 deception studies used can be divided into three groups: The first group focuses on the taxonomy of deception, or partial elements of deception. To this group belong Whaley's stratagem categories, Daniel & Herbig's concept of deception, Daniel & Herbig's A-type and M-type versions of deception, the different typologies of deception as used by Whaley, Anderson and Handel, Lamont & Wiseman's misdirection framework, Bennet and Waltz's deception method matrix, Monroe's taxonomy of deception, and Wardle

& Derekhshan's information disorder. The second group of deception study results concentrates on the deception process. To this group belong Whaley's theory of stratagem, Handel's three-barrier model, Daniel & Herbig's deception process model, Mitchell's levels of deception activities, Gerwehr & Glenn's deception planning process, and Bowyer Bell's deception cycle. The third group consists of other results of deception studies that cannot be traced to the other two categories. To this group belong the CIA Maxims, Gewehr & Glenn's three perspectives on deception, Shulsky's different deception methods and channels, Shulsky's requirements for deception, Bennett & Walz's principles of deception, and Carson's relationship between lying and deception. Some studies show different results and researchers can be divided into different groups. This concerns the researchers Whaley, Daniel & Herbig, Handel, Gewehr & Glenn, and Bennett & Walz. None of the individual studies is presented in all three groups.

## *(2) Topic 2 Deception in all its capacities*

First, deception takes place in an uncertain environment, but almost none of the researchers mentioned this uncertain environment. Deception is focused on the assumption and preconceptions of this situation of an opponent in order to affect him and to change his thoughts, attitude, behaviour and activities. It is often better to induce an opponent to maintain a pre-existing belief than to present him with far-fetched evidence to change that belief.

Second, deception is an activity that is based on the interaction between two or more actors. It is a variant of a simple communication model, like the one that was shaped by Harold Laswell in 1948. One party, the deceiver, is sending information or is initiating the activities. The other party or parties are the targets and they are at the receiving end. Many authors took the deceiver as their research object; only a few researchers were interested in the balancing of interests of a target or had a neutral attitude toward deception.

Third, deception and lying have an overlap but are neither equivalents nor synonyms. Lying is regarded as making false statements, while deception is more than that. Deception also comprises withholding information or exaggerating to create an incorrect impression. Exaggerating is a matter of magnifying (part of) the situation.

Fourth, a number of researchers divided deception into two parts. Some, like Anderson, created a contrast between intended and unintended deception, while others, like Lamont & Wiseman and also Bennett & Waltz, mentioned that deception was based on physical or on information or psychological measures. Handel related deception to intelligence and generated a dichotomy for deception consisting of two categories of intelligence information: intentions and capabilities. Whaley identified another contrast in deception: simulation versus dissimulation. From his positivist point of view, deception is a matter of showing the false (simulation) and hiding the truth (dissimulation). Other researchers followed in the footsteps of Whaley and called 'reveal' versus 'conceal'. Daniel and Herbig distinguished two different types of deception. The A-type (A stands for ambiguity) which causes confusion and often leads to uncertainty and a delay in decision-making. The M-type (M stands for misleading) is much more a pinpointed action, to provide a target with false information to convince him that he is making the right choice, which in reality is beneficial to the deceiver.

### *(3) Topic 3 Information in deception*

First, even though this dissertation uses a constructivist approach, some researchers discussed in this annex, advise that 'false' information should be mixed with topical and accurate information (they called it true) for an optimal deception effect. Merely false information may arouse suspicion among the target. Information used for deception purposes can be divided into verbal, written or visual information. Deception is based on information that can range from spoken messages or forged printed documents to manipulated images of objects. The information involved in deception creates a dual reality, which is the believed reality and the perceived reality.

Second, information disorder can be the result of three different types of information. The first type, misinformation, is false, but not created with the intention to cause harm, while the second type, disinformation, and third type, malinformation, are deliberately created to cause harm. The former is false, while the latter is based on facts that are believed. Disinformation is primarily a national security problem, varying from nation to nation. The intent of disinformation is often undermining legitimate institutions and democratic processes.

Third, information channels that can reach the opponent are crucial for successful deception. The more a target receives manipulated information through different channels, the better the

deception works. The target when he receives more information becomes increasingly convinced that his perception is right. Information channels can also form so-called noise barriers that affect the information. Barriers arise through opponents' behaviour, the conflict environment or self-generated noise.

#### *Topic 4 Other observations on deception*

First, feedback on deception activities can provide the deceiver with insights into the effectiveness of the planned and executed deception. The deceiver needs to be flexible to correct his deception methods and to take additional measures. Remarkably, the fact that a deception effect does not last forever clearly did not get the attention of the earlier deception researchers. At some point, a target will find out that he or she has been misled. The question for the deceiver is, therefore, how long the deception effect will last. When is the turning point? What needs to be done just before the turning point in order to stretch the deception effect as long as possible? Planners of deception need to think not only in first-order effects, but also in second- and third-order effects. Some deception quickly causes unwanted effects or side effects.

Lastly, only a few researchers, such as Whaley, Bowyer Bell and the research team of the CIA, mentioned the importance of psychology in deception warfare, but none of the researchers investigated deeper human explanations and the use of psychological mechanisms in deception warfare. They were only interested in the deception phenomenon and attributed it to psychological science. They have not further investigated explanations why human beings are deceived and why they believe things that are not true or do not exist. That is a remarkable finding, because human beings are the central elements of most deception.



## Annex B Gestalt Psychology

Gestalt psychology explains how human brains organise unaffected stimuli into perceptions. This idea originated from the paper *Über Gestaltqualitäten* or ‘On the Qualities of Shape’, published by Austrian philosopher Christian von Ehrenfels in 1890. The paper postulated the view that the ‘whole is greater than the sum of its parts’. Von Ehrenfels’ *Gestaltqualitäten* cannot be explained by merely associating elementary sensations because they require mental interaction. The German word *Gestalt*, commonly translated as holistic or pattern, describes a form or configuration that is unified by the human brain that actively organises elemental stimuli from the outside world.<sup>1</sup>

In 1912, Max Wertheimer, a student of Von Ehrenfels’, founded the Gestalt approach in psychology by publishing his monograph *Experimentelle Studien über das Sehen von Bewegungen* or ‘Experimental Studies on the Perception of Movements’, which focused on apparent rather than real motion. In his monograph Wertheimer described the ‘phi-phenomenon’, which is an illusory motion that is observed when two adjacent optical stimuli are presented, alternated with relative high frequency. Wertheimer used two discrete lights flashing at different positions.<sup>2</sup> It became an important observation, because it made Wertheimer aware that perception of movement was a direct sensation not necessarily deduced from the separate sensation of two optical stimuli in temporal and spatial distance. Wertheimer’s thoughts became a trigger for the Gestalt theory.<sup>3</sup>

The two other founders of Gestalt psychology were the Estonian-born Wolfgang Köhler, and German-born Kurt Koffka, who proposed several principles of organisation that the mind evokes whenever it encounters elemental stimuli. Although over the years Gestalt psychologists have added more than 100 laws to their psychology approach that explain how perceptual information is arranged, Köhler and Koffka came up with seven rather ordinary principles that still apply today:

1. *Principle of proximity*. Items that are close to each other in time or space lead to a

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<sup>1</sup> E. Bruce Goldstein, *Encyclopedia of Perception*, (Thousand Oaks, CA (USA): SAGE Publishers, 2010), EBSCO e-Book: letter G.

<sup>2</sup> Max Wertheimer, ‘*Experimentelle Studien über das Sehen von Bewegungen*’ (Experimental Studies on the Perception of Movements), *Zeitschrift für Psychologie* (Magazine for Psychology), (1912), 162-265.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Steinman, Zygmunt Pizlob and Filip Pizlob, ‘Phi is not Beta, and Why Wertheimer’s Discovery Launched the Gestalt Revolution’, *Vision Research*, 40 (2000), 2257-2264.

perception of togetherness. In the figure below there are four columns of squares instead of four rows, or three white pillars instead of three white layers. This grouping occurs entirely in a human mind. Proximity produces two effects. First, it groups elements together, which is named ‘belongingness’, and second, it separates elements that do not unite in proximity, e.g. across columns.

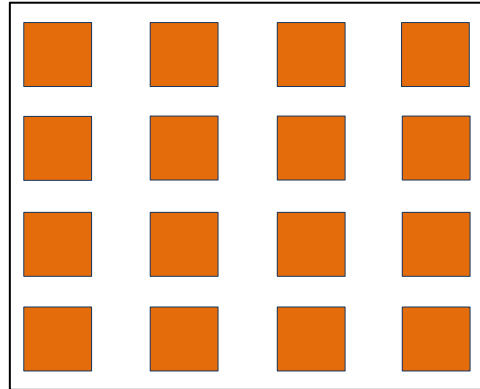


Figure B.1 Principle of proximity with the togetherness effect<sup>4</sup>

2. *Principle of similarity.* This principle asserts that similar forms tend to be grouped together. In the figure below the columns and rows have the same proximity, humans will group the stimuli into columns of similar elements: circles versus squares. Increasing the spacing between the rows decides when the principle of proximity prevails over the principle of similarity.

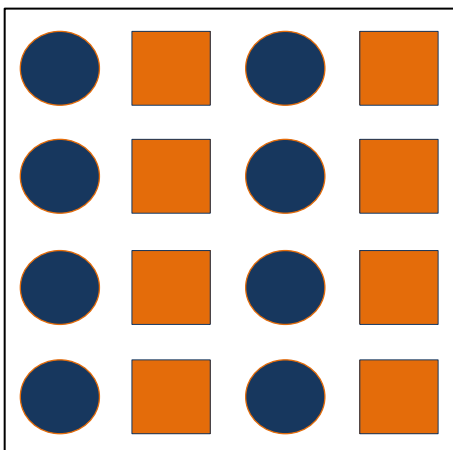


Figure B.2 Principle of similarity<sup>5</sup>

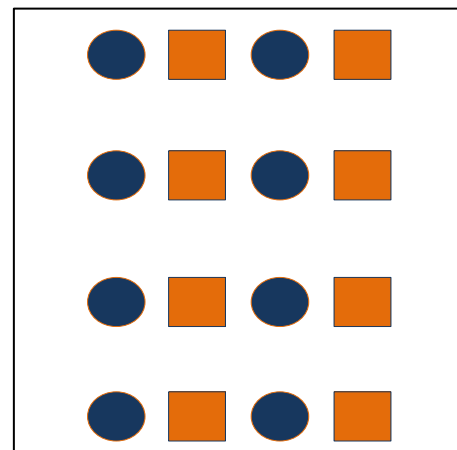


Figure B.3 Proximity prevails similarity<sup>6</sup>

3. *Principle of closure.* Humans tend to complete figures that are incomplete; they fill in

<sup>4</sup> Goldstein, *Encyclopedia of Perception*, EBSCO e-Book: letter G.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



the gaps and missing parts. In the figure below humans tend to see a triangle rather than a series of disconnected lines purely because of the mind's active processing.

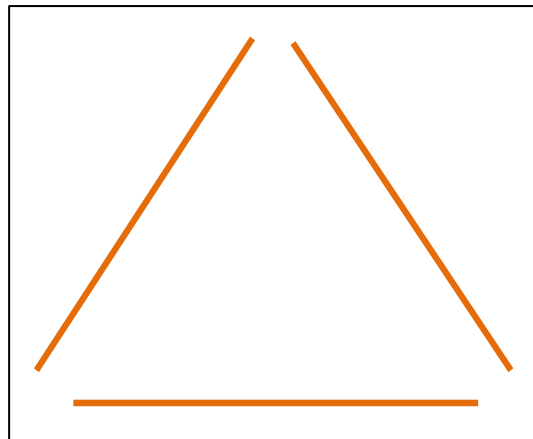


Figure B.4 Principle of closure<sup>7</sup>

4. *Principle of symmetry.* Humans lean to have a strong preference for symmetric shapes. The figure below shows that humans favour the perception of a diamond on the top image, even though a circle occludes part of the diamond. Humans like to exclude the bottom three options because of the principle of symmetry.

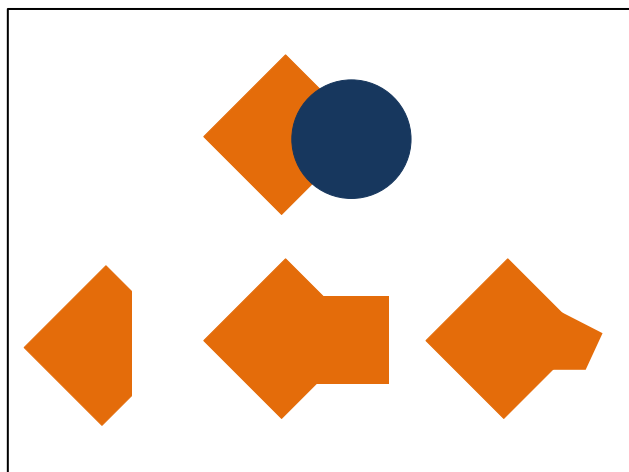


Figure B.5 Principle of symmetry<sup>8</sup>

5. *Principle of common fate.* This principle states that objects that move in the same direction are perceived as groups. In the figure below, there is an array of dots. Half of them are on the left side and the other half are on the right side of the figure. Because of the principle of fate, it seems that one group of dots is moving to the left while the

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

other group of dots is moving to the right.

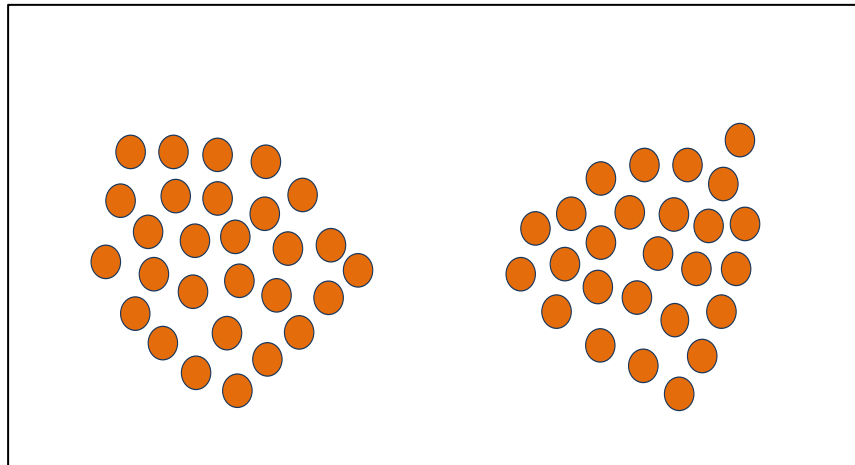


Figure B.6 Principle of common fate<sup>9</sup>

6. *Principle of continuation.* In the figure below, humans tend to group the aligned pieces into a slanted line, while the other pieces appear to be disconnected, as if randomly positioned.

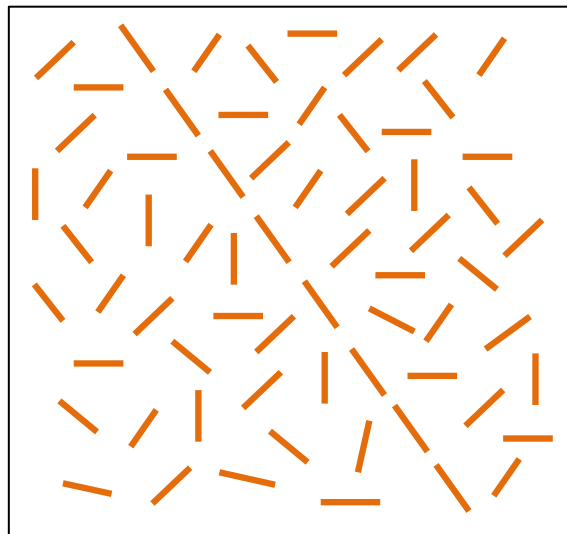


Figure B.7 Principle of continuation<sup>10</sup>

7. *Principle of succinctness.* This principle introduces the most general grouping principle, which Max Wertheim called the *Prägnanz Wette* (Law or principle of Succinctness). This principle is based on the fact that the least cognitive effort takes precedence during information processing in the human mind. Thus, looking at the figure below humans tend to see two overlapping rectangles rather than a combination

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

of triangles and much more complicated forms.<sup>11</sup>

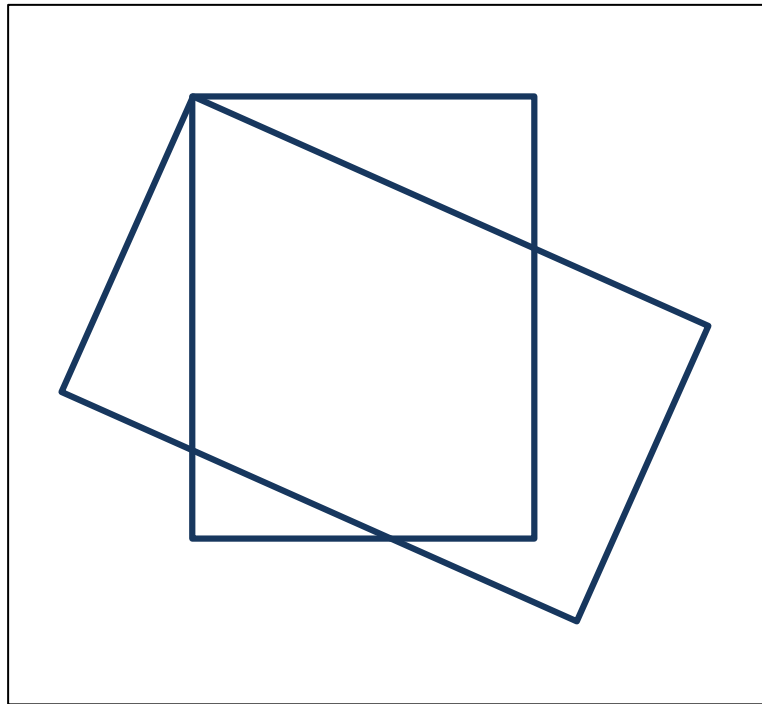


Figure B.8 Principle of succinctness<sup>12</sup>

One of the later followers of the Gestalt psychology was Edgar Rubin, a Danish psychologist, who considered the two components of meaningful perceptual relations as figure and ground. Rubin created such stimuli as his famous reversible faces/vase to show that figure and ground are mutually exclusive. When the faces appear as the figure, the vase appears as the ground or background, but when the vase appears as the figure, the faces retreat into the background. Rubin took this result as evidence of integration and segregation of meaningful entities that appear to exist in the world.<sup>13</sup>

The Rubin effect can also take place with other types of information. E.g. ending an e-mail for an appointment for a business transaction with the words: “We will see what happens” might evoke different perceptions between sender and receiver of this e-mail. While the sender was thinking factual, the appointment was scheduled for lasting an hour and maybe, if there is no arrangement, it might take half an hour longer, and hoping for a good business result, the receiver was thinking idealistic, maybe the receiver is striving for an outstanding

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<sup>11</sup> Kurt Koffka, *Principles of Gestalt Psychology*, The International Library of Psychology Vol VII, Originally published in 1935, (London (UK): Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2001), 69-305.

<sup>12</sup> Goldstein, *Encyclopedia of Perception*, EBSCO e-Book: letter G.

<sup>13</sup> Goldstein, *Encyclopedia of Perception*, EBSCO e-Book: letter G. And: Koffka, *Principles of Gestalt Psychology*, 183-184.

business deal and is opening up for more cooperation, while factually he is not interested in how the meeting will take place.



Figure B.9 Rubin's faces/vase model with 'figure and ground'<sup>14</sup>

Kurt Lewin, a German-born American psychologist and a pioneer in social and applied psychology, gave one of his students at the Humboldt University in Berlin, Bluma Zeigarnik, the task to start a research into the phenomenon that a waiter had better recollections of still unpaid orders than paid ones. After everyone had paid, the waiter was unable to remember any details of the order. Bluma Zeigarnik, a Lithuanian-born Russian psychologist, designed a series of experiments to discover the mechanisms underlying this phenomenon. Her research report was published in 1927 and contained the so-called Zeigarnik effect. This effect implies that people remember uncompleted tasks better than completed tasks.<sup>15</sup> Lewin, her mentor, explained that a task that has already been started generates a task-specific tension, which enhances cognitive accessibility of the relevant substances. The tension is relieved upon completion of the task. If the task is interrupted, the reduction of the tension is obstructed.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Goldstein, *Encyclopedia of Perception*, EBSCO e-Book: letter G.

<sup>15</sup> Bluma Zeigarnik, 'Über das behalten von erledigten und unerledigten Handlungen' (On retention of Completed and Uncompleted Activities), *Psychologische Forschung* (Psychological Research), 9 (1927), 1-15.

<sup>16</sup> Kurt Lewin, *A Dynamic Theory of Personality*, Selected papers, Translated by Donald Adams and Karl Zener, First edition, Ninth impression, (New York, NT (USA): McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1935), 243-244.

## Annex C Overview of Russian Security Services

Overview of Russian and Soviet Secret Services and Units		
Period	Name	Tasks
1565 - 1572	Oprichnina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secret police: suppression of Russian citizens.</li> <li>• Bodyguard of the Russian Czar.</li> </ul>
1882 - 1917	Okhrana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secret police: suppression of Russian citizens.</li> <li>• Foreign and domestic intelligence service.</li> </ul>
1917 - 1922	Cheka / VChK (Vserossiyskaya Chrezvychaynaya Komissiya)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secret police: suppression of Russian citizens.</li> <li>• Fighting against saboteurs and counter-revolutionaries, like any civil or military servicemen loyal to Imperialistic Russia, clergy, and bourgeois.</li> </ul>
1922 - 1923	GPU (Gosudartsvennoye Politicheskoe Upravleniye)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secret police: suppression of Soviet citizens.</li> <li>• Foreign and domestic intelligence service.</li> </ul>
1923 - 1934	OGPU (Obyedinennoye Gosudartsvennoye Politicheskoe Upravleniye)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secret police: suppression of Soviet citizens.</li> <li>• Foreign and domestic intelligence service.</li> <li>• Since 1926: anti-state terrorism.</li> </ul>
1934 - 1946	NKVD (Narodniy Kommissariat Vnutrennikh del CCCP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secret police: suppression of Soviet citizens (known for its role in the Great Purge in 1936-1938).</li> <li>• Foreign and domestic intelligence service.</li> <li>• Anti-state terrorism.</li> <li>• Normal police work.</li> <li>• Fire fighting.</li> <li>• Management of and securing prisons and labour camps.</li> <li>• Protection of the borders of the Soviet Union.</li> </ul>
1941 - 1953	MGB (Ministerstvo Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secret police: suppression of Soviet citizens.</li> <li>• Foreign and domestic intelligence service.</li> <li>• Counterintelligence.</li> <li>• Managing Soviet public opinion and loyalty.</li> </ul>
1943 - 1946	NKGB (Narodniy Kommissariat Gosudartstvennoi Bezopasnosti)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secret police: suppression of Soviet citizens.</li> <li>• Foreign and domestic intelligence service.</li> <li>• Counterintelligence.</li> <li>• Penetration and liquidation of anti-Soviet elements in the Soviet Union.</li> <li>• Protection of Communist Party and government officials.</li> </ul>
1953 - 1991	MVD (Ministerstvo Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigating into certain categories of crime and criminality.</li> <li>• Supervising Soviet passport system.</li> <li>• Maintaining public order.</li> <li>• Combating public intoxication.</li> <li>• Supervising parolees.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management and securing prisons and labour camps.</li> <li>• Fire fighting.</li> <li>• Controlling traffic.</li> <li>• Management of special psychiatric hospitals.</li> </ul>
1954 - 1991	KGB (Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopastnosti)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secret police: suppression of Soviet citizens.</li> <li>• Foreign and domestic intelligence service.</li> <li>• Counterintelligence.</li> <li>• Operative-investigatory activities.</li> <li>• Protection of the borders of the Soviet Union.</li> <li>• Protection of Communist Party and government officials.</li> <li>• Ensuring government communication.</li> <li>• Implement active measures to ensure Soviet Union's security.</li> <li>• Running 'agents-of-influence' programme.</li> <li>• Combating Russian nationalism, opposition, and anti-Soviet activities</li> </ul>
1991 - present	Russian Procuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prosecution in court on behalf of the Russian Federation.</li> <li>• Investigations into all legal matters.</li> <li>• Starting indictment procedures of Russian residents and citizens, which in practice turned out to be an instrument of repression.</li> </ul>
1991 - present	SVR (Sluzhba Vneshnei Rezvedki)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreign intelligence service.</li> <li>• Implement active measures to ensure the Russian federation's security.</li> <li>• Running 'agents-of-influence' programme.</li> <li>• Conduct strategic, economic, scientific and technology espionage.</li> <li>• Protection of employees of Russian institution outside the Russian Federation.</li> <li>• Conduct electronic surveillance in foreign countries.</li> <li>• Negotiation of arrangements, like anti-terrorist cooperation and intelligence sharing, with foreign secret services.</li> </ul>
1991 - 1994	FSK (Federalnaya Sluzhba Kontrrazvedki)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic intelligence service.</li> <li>• Counterintelligence.</li> </ul>
1991 - 2003	FAPSI (Federal'noye Agentstvo Pravitel'svennoy Sviazi i Informatsiy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signal Intelligence</li> <li>• Security of government communications</li> </ul>
1995 - present	FSB (Federalnaya Sluzhba Bezopastnosti)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic intelligence service.</li> <li>• Counterintelligence.</li> <li>• Cyber security.</li> <li>• Investigations into certain grave crimes and law violations.</li> <li>• Fight against organised crime, terror and drug smuggling.</li> <li>• Intelligence gathering in CIS states.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection of Russian 'compatriots abroad' in CIS states.</li> <li>• Export control and economic security.</li> <li>• Protection of the borders of the Russian Federation.</li> <li>• Information and international relation service.</li> </ul>
1996 - present	FSO (Federalnaya Sluzhba Okrany)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection of the President and Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, and other high-ranking state officials.</li> <li>• Protection of federal properties.</li> </ul>
2003 - present	Spetssviaz (Sluzhba Spetsial'noy Svязi I Informatsiy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main function crypto analysis</li> <li>• FSO became parent unit</li> </ul>
2003 - present	Unit 71330	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electronic surveillance</li> <li>• FSB became the parent unit</li> </ul>
2008 - present	Advanced Persistent Threat 29 (APT 29) (Also known as 'Cozy Bear')	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offensive Hacker Group.</li> <li>• Cyber espionage of embassies (not confirmed).</li> <li>• Targeting commercial companies and government organisations in Germany, Uzbekistan, South Korea, Norway, the Netherlands, the United States, the United Kingdom (not confirmed).</li> <li>• Related to SVR</li> </ul>

Overview of Russian and Soviet Military Secret Services and Units		
Period	Name	Tasks
1683 - 1917	Preobazhensky Lifeguard Regiment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secret police: suppression of Russian citizens.</li> <li>• Bodyguard of the Russian Czar.</li> <li>• Infantry regiment.</li> </ul>
1683 - 1918	Semyonovsky Lifeguard Regiment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secret police: suppression of Russian citizens.</li> <li>• Bodyguard of the Russian Czar.</li> <li>• Infantry regiment.</li> </ul>
1918 - 1926	Registrupravlenie/Registupr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Military intelligence service.</li> </ul>
1926 - 1942	Fourth Department of Soviet Defence Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Military intelligence service.</li> </ul>
1941 - 1945	Razvedchik	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Military scouts that stayed behind enemy lines for intelligence and sabotage activities.</li> </ul>
1942 - present	GRU (Galvnoye Razvedyvatel'noye Upravleniye)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main military intelligence service.</li> <li>• Since 1992: officially GU (Galvnoye Upravleniye)</li> <li>• Conducting offensive cyber activities.</li> </ul>
1943 - 1946	SMERSH (Smyert' Shpionam)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection of Red Army units against German infiltration.</li> <li>• Track down of enemy military spies.</li> <li>• Combating anti-Soviet elements, traitors and deserters in the Red Army.</li> <li>• Improving discipline in Red Army</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Track down of Adolf Hitler.</li> </ul>
1950 - present	Spetsnaz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Umbrella term for special purpose units, controlled by the GRU</li> </ul>
2005-present	Advanced Persistent Threat 28 (APT) (Also known as 'Fancy Bear')	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducting offensive cyber activities</li> <li>• Unit 26165:</li> <li>• Unit 74455:</li> </ul>
2016 - present	Rosgvardia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection of the borders of the Russian Federation.</li> <li>• Take charge of gun control.</li> <li>• Combat terrorism and organised crime.</li> <li>• Protect public safety and order.</li> <li>• Cyber security and cyber intelligence.</li> <li>• Guarding important state facilities, like the Kremlin.</li> </ul>



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## Nederlandse samenvatting (Dutch summary)

Het promotieonderzoek, zoals weergegeven in dit proefschrift, had als doel enerzijds een beter inzicht te geven in de wijze waarop Russische autoriteiten hun opposenten beïnvloeden met misleidingmethoden op strategisch niveau en anderzijds in kaart te brengen welke rol misleiding heeft gespeeld in recente conflicten waarbij de Russische Federatie betrokken was. Twee gewapende conflicten, waarvan de Russische autoriteiten zelf hebben aangegeven dat de Russische Federatie één van de conflictpartijen was, vormen de casuïstiek voor het promotieonderzoek: het Russisch-Georgische gewapend conflict in 2008 en de annexatie van de Krim in 2014.

Het onderzoek bestond uit acht stappen. Tijdens de eerste stap (hoofdstuk 2) is gekeken naar vormen van misleiding zoals die door de Russische autoriteiten in het verleden zijn toegepast, hierbij zijn de concepten *maskirovka*, *reflexive controle* (*reflexieve controle*), *active measures* (actieve maatregelen), *agents of influence* (beïnvloedende actoren), *spetspropaganda* (speciale, ontwrichtende propaganda), *agitprop* (agitatie-propaganda), *dezinformatsiya* (desinformatie) en *kompromat* (compromitterend materiaal) nader onderzocht. Het viel op dat er geen eenduidige definiëring was van *maskirovka*. In veel publicaties wordt *maskirovka* op steeds verschillende manieren beschreven. Vaak gebruiken publicisten begrippen als *maskirovka*, *active measures* en *desinformatie* door elkaar. Het onderhavige onderzoek gaat ervan uit dat *maskirovka* het overkoepelende begrip is van alle Russische misleidingmethoden, inclusief de eerdergenoemde *reflexieve controle*, *actieve maatregelen* en *desinformatie*, die door middel van verhulling en bedrog uiteindelijk leiden tot verrassing en/of gemanipuleerde beeldvorming.

De tweede stap in het onderzoek (hoofdstuk 3) plaatste het begrip misleiding in een bredere context. Deze stap richtte zich op het misleidingsproces en de bijbehorende elementen zoals die door Westerse publicisten nader zijn onderzocht. Opvallend is dat westerse staten, vooral ook de westerse krijgsmachten, in het recente verleden weinig interesse toonden in de toepassing van misleidingmethoden. Dit kan gedeeltelijk worden verklaard door het feit dat de westerse strijdkrachten tijdens de Koude Oorlog vooral gericht waren op het fysiek uitschakelen van de massale aanvalsgolven van het Warschaupact. Na de Koude Oorlog zijn

westerse staten en hun strijdkrachten zich gaan toeleggen op vredes- en stabilisatie-operaties, waarbij men naar transparantie streefde, een gedraging die haaks staat op misleiding. Bovendien heeft onderzoek aangetoond dat westerse staten die ooit als strijdende partij bij een gewapend conflict betrokken waren een sterke voorkeur hadden voor 'cumulatieve vernietiging', de volgtijdelijke, lineaire, fysieke slijtage van de tegenstander, in plaats van 'systemische ontregeling'. Dit laatste is nu juist een stijl van conflictvoering die zich naast beperkte fysieke uitschakeling ook richt op niet-fysieke methoden en effecten om zodoende de zwakheden van een tegenstander uit te buiten.

Er is nog een ander punt waardoor er in het Westen aversie bestaat tegen misleiding. Het 'samenhangend vermogen' van een land om militaire operaties uit te voeren bestaat, zoals ook in de Nederlandse Defensie Doctrine is omschreven, uit drie verschillende componenten, die alle kunnen bijdragen aan misleiding: (1) de conceptuele component, zoals het hebben van doctrine en een plan voor misleiding, (2) de mentale component, dat wil zeggen de wil en het doorzettingsvermogen om misleiding toe te passen, en (3) de fysieke component, bestaande uit mankracht, uitrusting en materieel noodzakelijk voor uitvoering van misleidingsoperaties. Vooral de mentale component, waaronder de bereidheid valt van politieke, ambtelijke en militaire gezagsdragers om misleiding toe te passen tijdens operaties, zet in het Westen vaak een rem op dergelijke operaties, vooral op strategisch niveau. Westerlingen zijn tegenwoordig veelal van mening dat misleiding niet past bij een open en democratische samenleving. Zij beschouwen het uitvoeren van misleidingsoperaties als oneerlijk of niet 'erg chique' en daarmee lijkt misleiding niet te passen in het huidige westerse ethische bewustzijn.

Gedurende stap twee van het onderzoek kwam naar voren dat misleiding valt te omschrijven als een activiteit die verrassing kan veroorzaken of de beeldvorming kan manipuleren, waardoor een opponent die is aangemerkt als het doelwit van misleiding op een dwaalspoor wordt gebracht. In veel gevallen zal op deze wijze de besluitvorming van een opponent worden beïnvloed, waardoor een situatie ontstaat die voordelig is voor de misleider. Het misleidingproces, zo werd vastgesteld, bestaat uit vier fasen. Fase 1 is de planningsfase, waarbij de misleider zorgvuldig zijn doel bepaalt en een plan opstelt om het beoogde doel te misleiden. Fase 2 is gericht op de uitvoering en bestaat uit de methoden en kanalen die een misleider aanwendt. De methoden zijn gegroepeerd rondom vijf thema's: (a) ontkenning, (b) aandacht afleiden, (c) etaleren of verbergen, (d) creëren van chaos en dubbelzinnigheid versus gerichte misleiding, en (e) desinformatie. Een misleider kan hierbij diverse kanalen

gebruiken, zoals diplomatie, de ambtelijke en militaire omgeving, inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten, media of gelegenheidsactoren. Fase 3 betreft de resultaten van misleiding, waarbij vooral verrassing en gemanipuleerde beeldvorming de besluitvorming van een opponent op een voor de misleider voordelige wijze beïnvloeden. Fase 4 omvat de feedback van de misleiding, waarbij de misleider het effect van de misleiding nagaat en beziet of hij de misleidingsactiviteiten dient aan te passen, te stoppen of te continueren.

Het is opmerkelijk dat in eerdere onderzoeken de omstandigheden waaronder misleiding plaatsvindt, namelijk een bepaalde mate van onzekerheid, en de met misleiding te bereiken effecten, te weten verrassing en gemanipuleerde beeldvorming, niet of nauwelijks aan bod kwamen. Daarom richtte stap drie (hoofdstuk 4) van het onderzoek zich op de drie eerdergenoemde menselijke elementen, te weten onzekerheid, verrassing en gemanipuleerde beeldvorming. Daarbij werd ervoor gekozen deze menselijke elementen vanuit verschillende wetenschapsdisciplines te benaderen, namelijk de economie, exacte wetenschappen, de leer der internationale betrekkingen, krijgswetenschappen en gedragswetenschappen. Al deze disciplines richten zich op de bestudering van één of meer van deze drie menselijke elementen.

Bij stap vier (hoofdstuk 5) is op basis van de tijdens de voorafgaande stappen verworven inzichten een conceptueel raamwerk geconstrueerd dat in het verloop van het onderzoek moest helpen de werking en vormen van misleiding, die de Russische autoriteiten in recente gewapende conflicten hebben toegepast, te analyseren. De inzichten in Russische misleidingsmethoden tijdens conflictvoering, zoals verkregen tijdens stap één van het onderzoek, vormden de basis van het raamwerk. Het is aangevuld met algemene inzichten in een misleidingproces, zoals verkregen tijdens stap twee van het onderzoek. Bovendien hebben de menselijke elementen, onzekerheid, verrassing en gemanipuleerde beeldvorming, zoals in stap drie zijn onderzocht, ook een plaats in het analytische raamwerk gekregen.

Stap vijf (hoofdstuk 6) diende om een overzicht te geven van de Russische autoriteiten, hoe het Russische politieke systeem werkt, hoe de autoriteiten zijn gestructureerd en welke Russische instanties nu precies betrokken waren bij de misleidingsmethoden toegepast tijdens het Russisch-Georgische gewapend conflict in 2008 en de annexatie van de Krim in 2014. Het is duidelijk dat de Russische strijdkrachten niet het alleenrecht hebben op misleiding, aangezien voor inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten en andere overheidsinstanties eveneens

een belangrijke taak kan zijn weggelegd bij misleidingsoperaties op strategisch niveau. Sinds het afgelopen decennium spelen de zogeheten Kremlintrollen van Glavset een grote rol bij het bespelen van de publieke opinie via het internet en sociale media. Bovendien is de *inner circle* van President Poetin betrokken bij misleidingsoperaties. Voorheen werd deze groep vooral gevormd door *siloviki*, voormalige inlichtingen- en veiligheidsofficieren, maar de laatste jaren neemt de invloed van de *siloviki* af.

Bij de toepassing van het analytische raamwerk op het Russisch-Georgische gewapende conflict en de annexatie van de Krim was het de bedoeling na te gaan of de onderkende misleidingselementen in het raamwerk ook daadwerkelijk door de Russische autoriteiten tijdens de genoemde conflicten werden toegepast. Er is ook onderzocht of tijdens beide conflicten andere (nieuwe of hernieuwde) Russische misleidingmethoden zijn toegepast. Daartoe is tijdens stap zes van het onderzoek (hoofdstuk 7) het Russisch-Georgische gewapende conflict nader onderzocht. Het Russisch-Georgisch gewapend conflict vond plaats in augustus 2008 en duurde in totaal vijf dagen. Inzet van de strijd was de controle over de afvallige regio's Zuid-Ossetië en Abchazië, die zich wilden afscheiden van Georgië. Net voor middernacht, op 7 augustus 2008, vuurde de Georgische artillerie veelvuldig granaten af op doelen in Zuid-Ossetië. In de loop van 8 augustus voerde de Russische luchtmacht aanvallen uit op Georgische doelen in Zuid-Ossetië, terwijl Russische landeenheden in colonnevorm oprukten naar Zuid-Ossetië en later richting de Georgische hoofdstad Tbilisi.

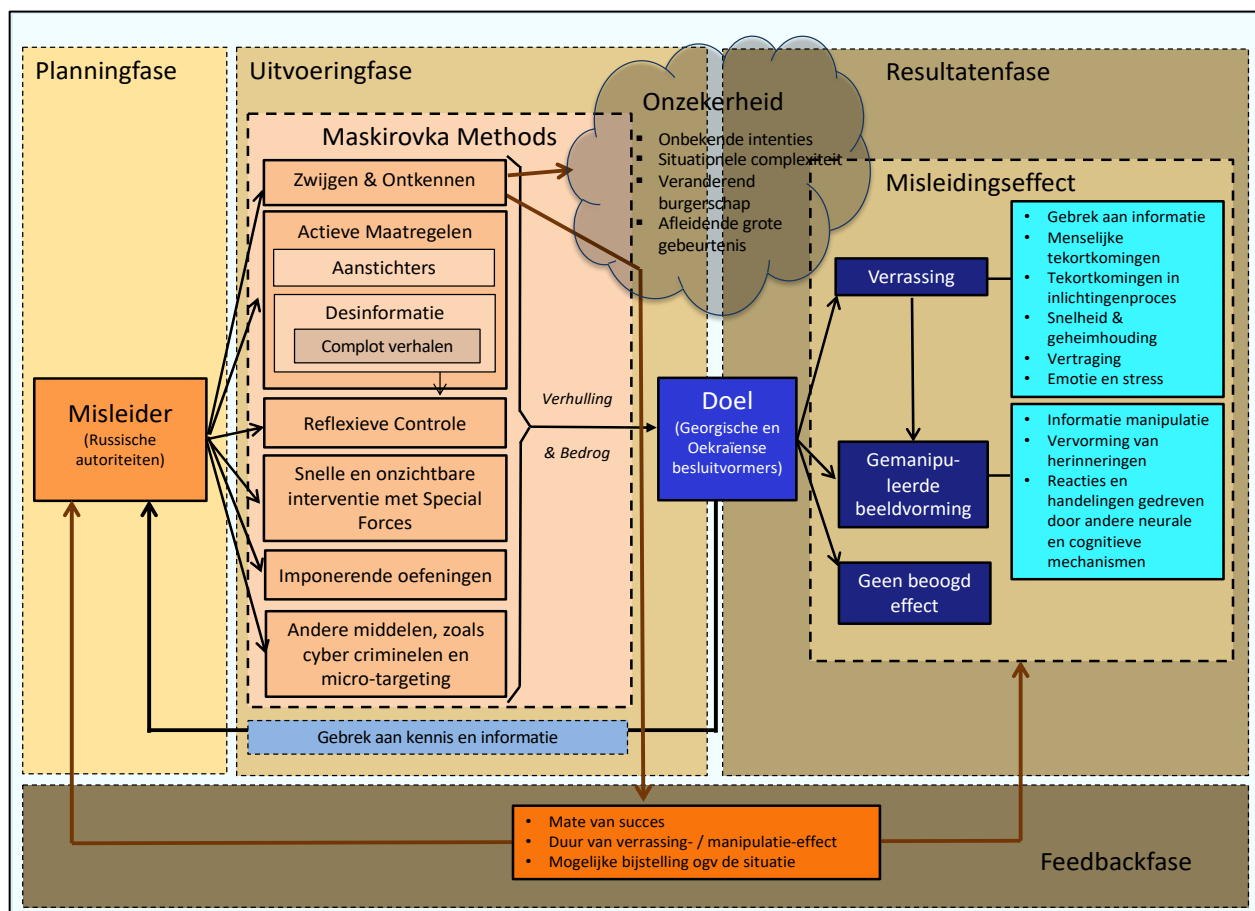
De aanleiding van het Russisch-Georgische gewapend conflict is nog steeds een punt van discussie, waarbij vier verschillende denkrichtingen zijn onderkend. De eerste richting gaat ervanuit dat het Georgische leiderschap een verkeerde inschatting van de situatie en van een mogelijke Russische reactie heeft gemaakt. Een tweede richting stelt dat de Russische Federatie het Georgische leiderschap heeft uitgedaagd, terwijl een derde richting het tegenovergestelde beweert en van mening is dat Georgië juist de Russische autoriteiten heeft uitgedaagd. De vierde richting kiest voor een meer afstandelijke benadering en beziet het conflict op een meer genuanceerde wijze.

In stap zeven (hoofdstuk 8) is de annexatie van de Krim in 2014 geanalyseerd. Nadat in november 2013 op het Maidanplein in Kiev betogingen gericht tegen het beleid van de Oekraïense President Janoekovitsj plaatsvonden, breidden deze betogingen zich al snel uit over geheel Oekraïne, zo ook naar het schiereiland de Krim. President Poetin heeft achteraf aangegeven dat hij het nodig vond in te grijpen, omdat Russische minderheden mogelijk



gevaar liepen. Naast het beïnvloeden van het Oekraïense leiderschap en de bevolking met informatieoperaties hebben Russische eenheden, later door de westerse media aangeduid als de ‘Groene Mannetjes’, ondersteund door allerlei paramilitaire groepen, met een bliksemactie het schiereiland geannexeerd. Vervolgens is op 11 maart 2014 een referendum op de Krim gehouden waarbij de meerderheid van de stemmers zich uitsprak voor aansluiting bij de Russische Federatie. Pas na zes weken van stilzwijgen en ontkenning door de Russische autoriteiten gaf President Poetin toe dat de Russische Federatie achter de annexatie zat. Voor Oekraïne en het Westen kwam de plotselinge annexatie van de Krim als een verrassing.

Ten slotte is in stap acht (hoofdstuk 9) vastgesteld welke misleidingmethoden de Russische autoriteiten in beide conflicten hebben toegepast, waarbij specifiek is gekeken naar reeds eerder onderkende methoden, zoals die bij stap één waren vastgesteld, en naar nieuwe of hernieuwde misleidingmethoden tijdens beide of een van beide gewapende conflicten. Dit heeft geleid tot een uitbreiding van het eerdergenoemde analytische raamwerk, dat in zijn definitieve vorm in figuur S1 is te zien.



Figuur S1 Het analytische raamwerk voor Russische misleiding tijdens conflicten

Concluderend kan worden gesteld (hoofdstuk 10) dat de Russische autoriteiten tijdens de genoemde conflicten zowel succesvolle als niet-succesvolle misleidingmethoden hebben gebruikt. De toegepaste misleidingmethoden bestonden uit verschillende maskirovka-methoden. Terwijl het Russisch-Georgische gewapende conflict in 2008 voornamelijk een conventioneel conflict was dat werd ondersteund door activiteiten op het gebied van informatie, was de annexatie van de Krim in 2014 een veel geavanceerdere vorm van conflictvoering, waarbij verrassing en het manipuleren van percepties een voorname rol hebben gespeeld. De periode tussen beide genoemde conflicten liet een sterke ontwikkeling in het Russische denken over oorlogsvoering zien, waarbij het gebruik van de informatieomgeving in belang toenam.

Zowel in 2008 als in 2014 probeerden de Russische autoriteiten reflexieve controlemechanismen te gebruiken, zoals het uitoefenen van mentale druk op de besluitvormers, de manipulatie van de besluitvormingsalgoritmen van tegenstanders en het creëren van een gevoel van urgentie. In 2008 was het Georgische leiderschap nauwelijks onder de indruk van de Russische methoden, terwijl reflexieve controle met meer succes werd toegepast tijdens de annexatie van de Krim in 2014. De toegepaste active measures tijdens beide conflicten, waaronder het agents of influence programma en desinformatie, lieten een gemengd beeld zien. Alleen het etnisch-Russische publiek in Georgië en Oekraïne was vatbaar voor vormen van desinformatie, zoals agitatiepropaganda en de vergelijking van Georgische en Oekraïense leiders met het kwaadaardige naziregime. Het sloeg niet aan bij de Georgische en Oekraïense leiders en de rest van de wereld. In het Russisch-Georgische gewapende conflict waren de Russische autoriteiten reactief in hun eerste officiële verklaringen. Het conflict verliep op een dusdanig openlijke wijze dat de Russische autoriteiten hun bekende methode van stilzwijgen en ontkenning niet konden toepassen. Dit optreden van de Russische autoriteiten maakt nog eens duidelijk dat de misleider soms te weinig rekening houdt met een beoogd doelwit, dat niet passief hoeft te blijven, maar op zijn beurt kan terugslaan en wellicht daarbij ook misleidingmethoden gaat inzetten waardoor de voorgenomen misleiding heel anders kan uitpakken.

Het agents of influence programma werkte daarentegen goed tijdens de annexatie van de Krim in 2014. De GROe, de Russische militaire inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdienst, slaagde erin met zogeheten *fire starters* (aanstichters) een aantal pro-Russische burgergroepen te rekruteren, te bewapenen, te organiseren en op te leiden die de Russische *Special Forces*

tijdens de annexatie van het schiereiland hebben bijgestaan. Tijdens de annexatie van de Krim waren de Russische autoriteiten ondanks alle openheid, zoals sociale media, wel in staat om hun methode van stilzwijgen en ontkenning toe te passen, waardoor het Oekraïense leiderschap in het ongewisse bleef over de toedracht van de annexatie en de vraag wie daarachter zat. De Russische autoriteiten slaagden er dus in hun tegenstander meer dan zes weken lang in onwetendheid te houden, wat leidde tot verrassing en gemanipuleerde beeldvorming over het verloop van de annexatie bij zowel de Oekraïense leiding als de rest van de wereld. Iedereen bleef zich afvragen wat gaande was en wie erachter zat, kwesties waarover veel speculatie in de westerse media plaatsvond.

Uit het onderzoek is naar voren gekomen dat er tijdens beide onderzochte conflicten zes opvallende elementen van Russische misleiding waren, die een aanvulling vormden op het eerder onderkende analytische raamwerk: (1) onzekerheid creëren door: (1a) het uitgeven van Russisch paspoorten en (1b) het gebruik van een grote wereldgebeurtenis, in casu de Olympische Spelen, als afleider voor een interventie, (2) het gebruik van complotverhalen, (3) een snelle en heimelijke interventie, (4) grootschalige oefeningen om een troepenopbouw te camoufleren of af te schrikken, door militairen aangeduid als demonstraties (5) toenemende activiteiten in *cyberspace* (de digitale ruimte) waarbij mensen gericht werden beïnvloed, en (6) de wijze waarop de Russische autoriteiten de gemanipuleerde beeldvorming lang in stand wisten te houden.

Ten slotte, de Russische misleiding tijdens recente gewapende conflicten kende nieuwe elementen, zoals het uitgeven van Russische paspoorten, het gebruik van een wereldgebeurtenis als afleider en toenemende activiteiten in de informatieomgeving, inclusief de digitale ruimte. Andere misleidingselementen zijn vernieuwd, zoals een overrompelende operatie door middel van snelle en heimelijke acties, demonstraties in de vorm van grootschalige oefeningen langs de landsgrenzen en het langdurig in stand houden van bepaalde beelden. Als laatste valt op te merken dat complotverhalen in staat zijn bepaalde percepties op te roepen en zo bij te dragen aan het veroorzaken van misleiding. Opvallend genoeg bestaat dit soort verhalen al lang, juist in de Russische en Sovjetgeschiedenis, maar zijn ze eigenlijk nooit eerder in onderzoek naar Russische misleiding aangemerkt als een vorm van misleiding. Dit proefschrift, daarentegen, beschouwt ze wel degelijk als een vorm van misleiding.

Behalve het aanmerken van complotverhalen als misleiding heeft het onderzoek voor dit proefschrift meer duidelijkheid verschaft in het concept maskirovka. Studies naar Russische misleiding in het verleden lieten geen eenduidig beeld zien van maskirovka. Dit proefschrift gaat ervan uit dat maskirovka het overkoepelend begrip is voor alle Russische misleidingsmethoden, waaronder niet alleen militaire misleidingsmaatregelen (van camouflage en schijnaanval tot geheimhouding), active measures, desinformatie, reflexive control vallen, maar ook stilzwijgen en ontkennen van autoriteiten, snelle en onzichtbare interventies van Special Forces, het uitvoeren van imponerende oefeningen en gerichte cyberactiviteiten om mensen te beïnvloeden. Het was bovendien opvallend dat de onderzoeken naar misleiding in het verleden nauwelijks tot geen aandacht schonken aan de drie menselijke elementen, die van wezenlijk belang zijn bij misleidingsactiviteiten, te weten (1) onzekerheid, (2) verrassing, en (3) gemanipuleerde beeldvorming. Dit proefschrift heeft meer helderheid gegeven in deze drie menselijke elementen in relatie tot misleiding. Voorts is de laatste decennia nauwelijks relevant academisch onderzoek uitgevoerd naar misleiding. Dit proefschrift vult deze leemte op, en geeft ook duiding aan de ontwikkeling van de Russische misleidingsmethoden in de periode 2008-2014.

## Acknowledgement

Even before I was contemplating undertaking this hefty task, the subject of '*Krym nash*' had been on my mind for quite a while. Having lectured on the subject of recent Russian operations for several years, I was invited to write a chapter on modern Russian deception methods for the *Netherlands Annual Review of Military Studies 2017*. This chapter became the foundation for this PhD-dissertation.

Writing a PhD-dissertation is never an easy task. Considering the vast amount of time that normally goes into such a profound exercise, it is inconceivable to accomplish such research without the help of others. I am grateful first and foremost to many of my colleagues, fellow-lecturers at the Netherlands Defence Academy, but certainly no less to my family, friends and acquaintances. As it is a sheer impossibility to mention them all, and at the unavoidable risk of forgetting someone, allow me to name just a few.

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At long last, having come at the end of this protracted scientific journey, I would like to dedicate this PhD-dissertation to someone who has been special for me: Lieutenant Menno Lodders of the Dutch *Regiment Huzaren van Boreel* (Hussars Regiment Boreel). Menno and I were not only fellow-cadets at the Royal Netherlands Military Academy (1984-1988), but also the best of friends, who scarcely needed words to communicate with each other. Menno was a gifted person, spoke fluent Russian, and inspired me to read about Russian and Soviet historical, political and military subjects during our time at the military academy. Sadly, Menno died in a helicopter crash during a humanitarian mission in Saint Petersburg in 1992 in an effort to provide aid to the Russian population. I will never forget him. *Semper Fidelis!*

# Curriculum vitae

## Curriculum vitae

Colonel AJH (Han) Bouwmeester, born in 1962, started his military career in the Royal Netherlands Army as a conscript in an armoured battalion in West Germany. In 1984 he enrolled in the initial officers' training course at the Royal Netherlands Military Academy at Breda, to be commissioned, four years later, as a junior officer in the Artillery. He then served for more than 10 years in different operational positions in the Netherlands Field Artillery and Horse Artillery, subsequently, at battery, battalion and brigade level.

From 1994 on Han studied political science at the Free University in Amsterdam, which he rounded off with a Master's Degree. After completing the General Staff Officers' Course of the Netherlands Defence College in 2001, he became Military Assistant to the Commander of the Royal Netherlands Army. From 2003 to 2005 Han was an overseas student at the Command and General Staff College and the School of Advanced Military Studies, both in Fort Leavenworth (United States), followed by an appointment as lecturer at the Netherlands Defence College in The Hague.

From 2007 to 2010 he commanded the Netherlands Horse Artillery Regiment, after which he moved to the United States for the second time to work as a concept developer at NATO's Allied Command Transformation in Norfolk (United States). Back in the Netherlands in 2013 Han accepted the post of Associate Professor of Military Strategy in the War Studies Department of the Faculty of Military Science at the Netherlands Defence Academy in Breda, which is the appointment he currently holds.

In the course of his military career Han has served in two operational tours: one during the Bosnian conflict (1995-1996) and another one during the Dutch military involvement in Afghanistan (2009). During the latter tour he was commander of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in the Afghan province of Uruzgan.

Han is married with two children.