42

POINT OF VIEW

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THE ANATOMY OF RUSSIAN INFORMATION WARFARE

THE CRIMEAN OPERATION, A CASE STUDY

Jolanta Darczewska

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Contents

INTRODUCTION

The Crimean operation has served as an occasion for Russia to demonstrate to the entire world the capabilities and the potential of information warfare. Its goal is to use difficult to detect methods to subordinate the elites and societies in other countries by making use of various kinds of secret and overt channels (secret services, diplomacy and the media), psychological impact, and ideological and political sabotage. Russian politicians and journalists have argued that information battles are necessary for "the Russian/Eurasian civilisation" to counteract "informational aggression from the Atlantic civilisation led by the USA". This argument from the arsenal of applied geopolitics has been used for years. This text is an attempt to provide an interpretation of information warfare with the background of Russian geopolitical theory and practice.

All the federal television and radio channels, newspapers and a multitude of online resources have been employed in the recent disinformation campaign regarding the situation in Ukraine, which is being waged on an unprecedentedly large scale. The information front was supported by diplomats, politicians, political analysts, experts, and representatives of the academic and cultural elites. This front, though, was many years in the making. At the time of the Ukrainian crisis (the Euromaidan), it was combined with ideological, political and socio-cultural sabotage, provocation and diplomatic activity. In short, multidirectional and complex measures were taken. Following the military occupation and incorporation of Crimea into Russia, the disinformation mechanisms were aimed at lending credibility to Moscow's intentions and concealing the gaps in the argumentation for the military moves and annexation of Crimea itself. These arguments were absurd, such as: it was feared that "Banderivtsy could storm into Crimea", "the Black Sea Fleet bases could be taken over by NATO", "Ukrainian citizens could be de-Russified", and so on and so forth.

The anti-Ukrainian information battles which had been seen for many years entered a tough phase of information warfare at the beginning of this year. They have been aimed primarily at destabilising the situation in Ukraine and placing pressure on its government and citizens to adopt solutions regarding their country's political system as proposed by Russia so that Ukraine could be controlled by Russia and remain within its sphere of influence. Another goal was to 'obscure' public opinion at home and worldwide using a multitude of information channels.

Public opinion outside Russia had to choose between "Russian dominance in the post-Soviet area" or a "global Maidan" (total chaos). The spin doctors at home were asking whether Crimea should become another US state or an entity of the Russian Federation. In effect, the Kremlin's informational aggression affected the Russian public most strongly and "the world's greatest divided people", i.e. Russian-speaking citizens of the states which were set up following the disintegration of the USSR. Western public opinion turned out to be the most resistant to Russian propaganda, although it has resonated with some people here as well. Some Western media and politicians agree with part of the arguments raised by Russian propaganda, including "Russia's right to arrange the post-Soviet area" in line with its interests. **The Crimean operation perfectly shows the essence of information warfare: the victim of the aggression – as was the case with Crimea – does not resist it. This happened because Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine who had undergone necessary psychological and informational treatment (intoxication) took part in the separatist coup and the annexation of Crimea by Russia.**

MAIN POINTS

- Russia's information warfare theory has been developed in opposition to the new generation Western warfare concepts. This method of warfare is also used as an argument for the need to "respond with war to the information war waged against Russia." In practice, information battles clearly draw upon the psychological warfare conducted in Soviet times and the techniques for influencing and leading the public tested at those times.

- The geopolitical doctrine treats information as a dangerous weapon: it is cheap, it is a universal weapon, it has unlimited range, it is easily accessible and permeates all state borders without restrictions. The information and network struggle, as well as its extreme forms, such as information-psychological warfare and netwars, are means the state uses to achieve its goals in international, regional and domestic politics and also to gain a geopolitical advantage. Representatives of geopolitical thought have to be given credit on the one hand for popularising this topic, and on the other for their personal participation in information warfare as opinion leaders. This in particular concerns the key representatives of the two Russian geopolitical schools: Igor Panarin and Aleksandr Dugin, academic teachers and mentors of the young generations of geopoliticians.

- Furthermore, geopolitics offers ideological grounds for information battles. In opposition to the ideology of liberalism, it promotes "a neo-conservative post-liberal power (…) struggling for a just multi-polar world, which defends tradition, conservative values and true liberty." The "Russian Eurasian civilisation" is set at contrast to the "Atlantic civilisation led by the USA" which allegedly intends to disassemble Russian statehood and gain global hegemony. The internal crisis in Ukraine followed by the need to annex Crimea have been presented in the context of the rivalry between these two civilisations.

- The information strategy of the rivalry between Russia and the West is a product of both information geopolitics, which has been developed since the late 1990s, and the consistently pursued policy for strengthening the state and building its research and scientific, organisational, media, diplomatic, and social bases, et cetera. It is already used for both internal (mobilisation of society) and external purposes (reconstructing Russia's spheres of influence in the post-Soviet area and Russia's dominance in Eurasia). The information space where the Russian language is used and the existence of the Russian diaspora (who are receptive to the Kremlin's propaganda) are the key factors which make successful action possible.

- Western public opinion is more resistant to Russian propaganda, although it has resonated with some people here as well. Moscow's informational aggression is set to intensify: Russia has a sense of impunity on information battlefields. Furthermore, it is constantly modifying and perfecting its propaganda techniques, taking into account new media tools and introducing innovations, such as activity in social networking services, etc.

I. RUSSIAN INFORMATION WARFARE THEORY

1. The revival of the topic

Russian information warfare theory has a long tradition in Russia. It is derived directly from *spetspropaganda* (special propaganda) theory, which was first taught as a separate subject in 1942 at the Military Institute of Foreign Languages. The history of this institute is a spectacular example of the change in the Russian government's approach to this subject. *Spetspropaganda* was removed from the curriculum in the 1990s to be reintroduced in 2000 after the institute had been reorganised. The institute is now known as the Military Information and Foreign Languages Department of the Military University of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation. It trains specialists in 'organising foreign information and military communication,' 'information analysis' and the 'monitoring and development of military information.' Research in the area of *spetspropaganda* is also continued by the information security chair, whose students are primarily military personnel, and also journalists and war correspondents.

The institute underwent this thorough reform as a consequence of a rapid increase in interest in information security issues initiated by the work on the Information Security Doctrine of the Russian Federation announced in 2000. The reform above all covered the education facilities and research institutes which report to the ministries in charge of law enforcement (the Institute of Cryptography, Telecommunications and Computer Science at the Federal Security Service (FSB) Academy, the State Science and Research Experimental Institute of Technical Information Protection Problems of the Federal Service for Technical and Export Control (FSTEC), the Federal Protective Service (FSO) Academy in Orel, the Voronezh Research Institute of Telecommunications, the Academy of the Russian Internal Affairs Ministry in Volgograd and Rostov-on-Don, etc.). Information struggle theory has also been included in the curricula of higher education facilities which do not report

to those ministries and in projects conducted by research and science institutes. This is coordinated by the FSB Academy's Institute of Cryptography. The Scientific and Methodological Association of Higher Education Facilities of the Russian Federation Covering Information Security, which is formed by 74 research and scientific institutions, was established upon the FSB Academy's initiative[1]. As a result, diplomat training courses at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) and the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, as well as the curricula at sociology, philosophy and political science departments of other universities now include such subjects as: situation analysis, network communication technology, and information and network wars, and the subject of information warfare has been given the status of an academic science.

2. Building the 'information front' base

Russian information warfare theory also has traits of an interdisciplinary applied science. This is because it covers a very broad range of actions (political, economic, social, military, intelligence, counterintelligence, diplomatic, propaganda, psychological, informational, communication technologies, educational, etc.). The numerous research centres created over the past decade are meant to deal with precisely defined issues. The Information Security Institute established in 2003 at the Lomonosov Moscow State University specialises for example in information security as part of Russia's international co-operation, i.e. it is intended to resolve problems at a global level. The institute's organisational form, as described on its website, is appropriate to the interdisciplinary nature of information security and the interministerial nature of the tasks being solved by it. The institute is headed by Vladislav Sherstyuk, former director of the

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[1]   This association is chaired by Professor A. P. Kovalenko from the FSB Academy's Cryptography Institute (http://www.isedu.ru/sostav/vuzi.htm – accessed on 20 February 2014).

Federal Agency of Government Communications and Information (FAPSI).

The human resources required to resolve regional problems are trained for example by the Information and Analytical Centre for Studying Socio-Political Processes in the Post-Soviet Area, which was created as part of the Chair for Near Abroad History at the Lomonosov University. In addition to studying the contemporary political and economic history of the countries which emerged following the collapse of the USSR, the centre's key research areas include: studying the Russian-speaking diaspora, their political parties and social movements and how they co-operate with Russian parties and social movements, as well as the historical analysis of post-Soviet ethnic issues. In turn, its defined priority areas of activity are: applied research projects, information space monitoring and ensuring information security to the operation of state structures. The centre is directed by Yefim Pivovar, rector of the Russian State University for the Humanities. This proves that the intellectual effort of various academic centres is being united and coordinated. Pivovar's major areas of research are: the history of the Russian emigration, the history of countries in the near abroad and integration processes in the post-Soviet area. It is worth noting that Maxim Meyer (a specialist in media strategies, who since 2007 has served as the executive director of the Russkiy Mir Foundation, which supports ethnic Russians living outside Russia) has given lectures at the Chair for Post-Soviet Abroad Countries, which is directed by Mr Pivovar.

3. General characteristics of information warfare theory

The Russian theory has been built in opposition to cyber security theory developed in the United States and Western Europe primarily concerning the use of new computer technologies for military and intelligence purposes, i.e. activity in cyberspace. This involved transferring Western terminology across to the Russian

world. When it was being adapted to Russian reality, strong emphasis was put on the "defensive" nature of the Russian theory. The Russian terminology is confusing as a consequence of this manipulative trick. This has been confirmed by a critical review of the key terms. They cannot be made to fit in with any of the definitions used in the West. The terms **'cybernetic warfare', 'information warfare' and 'network warfare'**[2] have completely different meanings in Russia. Only few theoreticians make the distinction between 'cyberwar' and 'netwar' as manifestations of the technological and social dimensions of fourth generation warfare. However, this generally concerns publications which discuss Western publications. In turn, most **Russian authors understand 'information warfare' as influencing the consciousness of the masses as part of the rivalry between the different civilisational systems adopted by different countries in the information space by use of special means to control information resources as 'information weapons'.** They thus mix the military and non-military order and the technological (**cyberspace**) and social order (**information space**) by definition, and make direct references to 'Cold War' and 'psychological warfare' between the East and the West.

In effect it is a term usually placed in two contexts: **(1)** the tasks set as part of the Information Security Doctrine of the Russian Federation and **(2)** the geopolitical rivalry between Russia and the West (above all, the USA and NATO), and it has a political, an ideological and a cultural dimension.

Its technological dimension is marginalised and pushed out of public space. One proof of this was the debate taking place in 2012 and 2013 on the **'Cybersecurity Strategy'** put forward by

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[2]   See for example: Основы информационно-психологической безопасности, под ред. В.А. Баришпольца. Москва, Знание, 2012; Атаманов Г.А., Информационная война: экспликация понятия (http://naukaxxi.ru – accessed on 13 March 2013).

Senator Ruslan Gattarov[3]. According to specialists from the Russian Security Council and secret services, this strategy excessively narrowed down the information security topic. Cyberspace security is seen as a fragmentary term, although it is emphasised that new technologies have expanded the arsenal of means used to influence public opinion. The technological aspect (cyber-), which is underrepresented in the public space, is evidently kept confidential.

4. Information warfare in Russian geopolitical doctrine

The functional ("war on information warfare against Russia") and the geopolitical contexts are closely interrelated. The geopolitical doctrine treats information as a dangerous weapon (it is cheap, it is a universal weapon, it has unlimited range, it is easily accessible and permeates all state borders without restrictions). The information and network struggle (more frequently, the information-psychological struggle), including its extreme forms, such as information-psychological warfare and netwars, are means the state uses to achieve its goals in international, regional and domestic politics and also to gain a geopolitical advantage. Representatives of geopolitical thought have to be given credit on the one hand for popularising this topic, and on the other for their personal participation in information warfare as political technologists[4] and opinion leaders. This in particular concerns the key representatives of the two Russian geopolitical schools: Igor Panarin[5] and Aleksandr

[3] Ruslan Gattarov (born 1977), an activist of the Young Guard of United Russia, later elected as the chairman of the Chelyabinsk committee of United Russia. He served as senator from 2010 and the chairman of the Commission for the Progress of Information Society at the Federation Council and the chairman of the Council for Work on Blogosphere, which was established at United Russia's presidium. He stepped down as senator in February 2014 and was then nominated deputy governor of Chelyabinsk Oblast.

[4] A political technologist is a specialist in the practical application of political technologies, political management, image-building campaigns and election campaigns.

[5] Igor Panarin (born 1958), holder of a higher doctoral degree in political sci-

Dugin[6], academic teachers and mentors of the young generations of geopoliticians. They have obvious links to the secret services and see the 'mirror' moves of the opponent as organised and channelled actions and more sophisticated than those used during the Cold War period. While sensitising the Russian public to external informational threats, they are also formatting the Russian information counteraction system. They are both theoreticians and practitioners of information warfare: they take an active part in publicist and analytical programmes on Channel One, Rossiya, NTV, Ren-TV and TV RT, and also on the radio (Panarin, for example, hosts his own programmes 'Global politics' and 'The window to Russia' on the Voice of Russia radio station, where he comments on current affairs in international politics).

5. The Panarin school

The early writings of Professor Igor Panarin of the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation[7]

ences and PhD in psychology, full member of the Military Academy of Sciences of the Russian Federation and numerous expert bodies attached to the president and the Federation Council. He started his professional career in the Soviet Union's KGB in 1976. After 1991, he worked at FAPSI; in 1999–2003, he was the head of the analytical department of the Central Election Committee. At present, he is a professor at the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. He also teaches at MGIMO and the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

[6]   Aleksandr Dugin (born 1962), a political scientist, geopolitician, philosopher and historian of religion. In the early 1990s, he was the editor-in-chief of *Elementy* and *Milyi Angel* magazines and the editor of the manifesto of the Arctogeia publishing house. At present, he serves as professor at the sociology and philosophy department of the Moscow Lomonosov University and the director of the Centre for Conservative Studies at Moscow State University. He has written more than ten books and hundreds of articles published in the Russian and foreign press. He is a leading representative of Russian geopolitics. Dugin is the main ideologist of integral traditionalism, Eurasianism, neo-imperialism, National Bolshevism and Russian conservatism. All the theories he throws to the ideological market share the underlying geopolitical thesis of the existence of two "superior civilisations": the Land and the Sea civilisations, which are doomed to rivalry. He is the founder of the Eurasian Youth Union and the International Eurasian Movement.

[7]   'Психологичекие аспекты обеспечения национальной безопасности Рос-

laid the foundations for the Information Security Doctrine of the Russian Federation. His later works[8] provided grounds for Russia's need to counteract the West on the information front. Professor Panarin distinguishes two great waves of information aggression against "Russia-Ruthenia": the first one began with perestroika and ended in the collapse of the USSR; and the second one commenced at the start of this millennium and in his opinion will last until 2020, when the Good (i.e. the Russian Eurasian idea) will win.

In his book 'Information World War II – War against Russia'[9], Panarin claimed that all the so-called 'colour' revolutions in the CIS area and the 'Arab Spring' were a product of social control technology and information aggression from the United States. In his opinion, the protest movement on Bolotnaya Square in Moscow after the recent parliamentary and presidential elections was also a manifestation of this aggression: *de facto* a result of the Western operation codenamed 'Anti-Putin' controlled from abroad. In the context of the 'velvet revolutions', he defines the basic terms used in information warfare technology for Russian purposes. In practice these are operations of influence, such as: **social control**, i.e. influencing society; **social manoeuvring**, i.e. intentional control of the public aimed at gaining certain benefits; **information manipulation,** i.e. using authentic information in a way that gives rise to false implications; **disinformation**, i.e. spreading manipulated or fabricated information or a combination thereof; the **fabrication of information**, i.e. creating false information, and **lobbying, blackmail** and **extortion of desired information.**

сии' (ч. 1, 1995; ч. 2, 1996); 'Психологическая безопасность войск' (1996); 'Информационная война и Россия' (2000).

[8] 'Технология информационной войны' (2003); 'Информационная война и Третий Рим' (2005); 'Информационная война и дипломатия' (2004), 'Информационная война и геополитика' (2006); 'Первая информационная война. Развал СССР' (2010).

[9] 'Вторая мировая информационная война – война против России' (2012).

Panarin's books also provide an **outline of the basic instruments of the information struggle, which he divides into the categories of secret and open.** These include: **propaganda** (black, grey and white), **intelligence** (the service which collects information about the opponent), **the analytical component** (media monitoring and current situation analysis), **the organisational component** (coordination and steering channels, secret agents influencing the media which shapes the opinion of politicians and mass media to take the shape desired by the state involved in information warfare, and **other combined channels**, including special operation forces (sabotage operations conducted under a foreign flag). Complex operations managed from a single centre, which the author calls 'the information KGB', are organisational forms of information warfare. They are conducted by 'information *spetsnazes*'.

Panarin distinguishes the following stages in the **process of information operation management**:

(1) forecasting and planning,

(2) organisation and stimulation,

(3) feedback,

(4) operation adjustment,

(5) performance control.

"The national information warfare system which both secretly and openly controls communication processes must be adequate to the modern global reality. Based on the best Soviet experiences, it must be enriched by the US and Chinese experiences," he said during the presentation of his latest book 'Information Warfare and Communications'[10]. Referring to the recent developments

[10] See: Презентация книги Панарина 'Информационная война и коммуникации' (http://ria.ru/ announce/20140303/).

in Ukraine, he claimed that the Ukrainian public protest (the Euromaidan) was an element of the anti-Russian campaign artificially planned by the West.

Panarin announced his geopolitical project in his book 'Information Warfare and Geopolitics' (2006). Analysing Russian history from the point of view of global geopolitics, he concluded that the success of all geopolitical projects was inextricably linked to advantage in information warfare. The "US-British empire" has had this advantage in contemporary history (since the collapse of the USSR). Panarin believes that this empire is now on the edge of the abyss and is doomed to collapse. He proposes a new union of states, extending from Egypt to China, as a counterbalance to this falling empire. The Eurasian Ruthenia would be at the core of this union of states.

6. The Dugin school

The 'colour revolutions'[11] have also contributed to the stunning career of the term **'netwar'**. They are viewed in Russia as "artificial processes plotted in the West aimed at destabilising entire regions in the post-Soviet area," "a disassembly of Russian statehood" and also as "socially the most dangerous form of encounter between intelligence services"[12]. This term was introduced in Russia by Aleksandr Dugin in his work 'Post-modern Geopolitics'[13], where he gave a closer look at the US concept of net-centric warfare. Using the base term **'net-centric warfare'**, which means the creation of a new information military infrastructure involving interactive elements and fast communication means, he created the 'Eurasian' netwar model. The 'Eurasian network' would

[11] This term has been used to describe the social movements in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004) and Kyrgyzstan (2005), which brought about socio-political changes in these countries.

[12] See for example: Манойло А.В., 'Государственная информационная политика в особых условиях', Москва 2003, page 293.

[13] Александр Дугин, 'Геополитика постмодерна' (rossia3.ru).

offer a symmetric response to the 'net-centric challenge from the US.' According to Dugin, a "special group consisting of senior officials, the best 'mission-oriented' (Russian *пассионарные*) staff from the Russian secret services, intellectuals, scientists, political scientists and the corps of patriotically-oriented journalists and culture activists" must be created for this purpose. The 'Eurasian network' model in opposition to the 'Atlantic network' is expected to combine the basic elements of US postmodernism and net-centric approach with Russian reality. The symmetric Atlantic-American vectors of "information offensive" would be oriented in the precisely reverse direction. This model could be successful on the condition that the Russian armed forces, secret services, political institutions, information and communication systems, etc. were 'postmodernised'. "Unless Russia makes this effort, it will be doomed to further defeats in clashes with the orange network technologies." A netwar can only be won if the country uses network means, and these need to be adapted to Russia's own reality and goals, and effective technologies, according to Dugin's diagnosis.

7. The ideological 'engine' of information struggle

These two geopoliticians offer ideological foundations for the struggle to gain an informational advantage. The neo-conservatism ideology proposed by Dugin in his book 'The Fourth Political Theory'[14] can be summarised as follows. There is only one predominant ideology in the West. This ideology is liberalism which is based on individualism, technocracy and globalism. Geopolitically, this ideology is inherent in Americentrism and Atlantic partnership (NATO). When the USSR collapsed, liberalism defeated the last 20th century ideology (communism) to remain the sole ideology on the global arena. Today liberalism has come to the end of its capabilities, and the sole reason for its existence is its struggle against Russia: Russia as the enemy gives meaning to

[14]   Александр Дугин, 'Четвертая политическая теория', 2009.

the struggle for open society and makes it possible for the liberals to become consolidated.

The fourth theory (as opposed to liberalism, communism and fascism, which were the predominant ideologies in the 20th century) is expected to set up a neo-conservative post-liberal ideological superstate. "Russia is not and will not be a pre-liberal power. It is a post-liberal revolutionary force struggling for a just multipolar world, for genuine dignity and freedom. In its war on liberalism Russia will defend tradition, conservative values and true liberty."

Panarin's ideological thought is less subtle. He agrees with Dugin's thesis that the theory of liberalism and the 'liberal empire' have run their course and the thesis of Russia's leadership in the 21st century global political processes. However, as a matter of fact, his ideological component of the geopolitical doctrine is based on the "state-building and superpower dominants in the awareness of Russians. In his work 'Information Warfare and the World' he openly admits that the Russian idea was formulated by Vladimir Putin in 1999 in his manifesto 'Russia at the Turn of the Millennium'. President Putin based it on Russian patriotism, its superpower status and social solidarity[15]. Panarin is also less consistent than Dugin as regards ideological issues. Initially, he presented them as the triad of spirituality, super power status and dignity. However, during the presentation of his latest book, he suggested a new ideological triad: spiritual-, state- and cyber-sovereignty.

The term **'netcode'** is inherent in the ideological dimension of information warfare. One of Dugin's students writes, for example: "Those who understand the netcode manage the processes, the motivation of ethnic groups and entire populations of countries,

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[15]   И. Панарин, Л. Панарина, 'Информационная война и мир'. Москва 2003, page 350.

and foment the conflict for their own purposes"[16]. The US netcode (global hegemony and disassembly of Russian statehood) is opposed to the Russian netcode. At present, the triumph of the 'Russian code' is frequently ascertained (the symbolic expressions of which are the political myths, such as the 'Russian march' or the 'Russian spring'). The well-known blogger, Nikolai Starikov, co-president of the Velikoye Otechestvo party[17], wrote recently[18]: "Our 'Russian code' works perfectly owing to President Putin's achievements which (…) have woken up people's layers of the subconscious mind (…) and have led to the building up of a critical mass of citizens of Russian Civilisation."

"Making ideology part of psychological warfare was a Soviet innovation, turning this into a massive and universal warfare. Another innovation was the incessant use of psychological weapons. The point is that peacetime never exists for the government in Moscow," Pierre Nord wrote in 1971.[19] The words of this French specialist in disinformation and psychological intoxication appear to still be valid today.

8. The Eurasian project vs. the Ukrainian issue

Russia has been incessantly engaged in information and psychological war against Ukraine for years. From the very beginning this has been a war against the 'orange plague' (a widespread propaganda stereotype). It ensured support for the blue team of Viktor Yanukovych in 2003/2004, and helped him win the presidential election (2010). This war has a geopolitical background: Russia, while building Eurasia as its vast sphere of influence (if possible, stretching from the Pacific to the Atlantic), with Moscow in the

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[16] Валерий Коровин, 'Сетевая война США в Чечне', Северный Кавказ, № 46-47, November 2008.

[17] The Great Fatherland Party.

[18] See: *Zavtra*, 13 March 2014.

[19] Pierre Nord, 'L'Intoxication'. Quotation from Vladimir Volkoff, 'La désinformation – arme de guerre', Paris 1986.

centre, has faced the problem of a sovereign Ukraine, whose location has left it suspended between the East and the West. Dugin has been ostentatiously calling for Ukraine to be divided for years, treating it as a seasonal and lame state. In his opinion, there are peoples who represent opposing geopolitical orientations: ethnic Great Russians and the culturally identical Little Russians, oriented towards links with Russia versus the culturally distinct Western Ukrainian people who are representatives of the Western European cultural area. "Cultural differences do not always coincide with territorial divisions; in this case the division line will cut through the territory, the land. We have always wanted this line to run as close to the west as possible, while the geopoliticians in Washington are trying to find a way to push it as much to the east as possible. This is what the Ukrainian issue is like. Anyone who says it is not like this is either being diplomatic or is not sufficiently informed,"[20] he wrote in 2009.

He outlined three concrete strategies for the integration of Ukraine already in 2013:

Scenario 1.
Ukraine is divided into two zones: western and south-eastern. He argued that this was due to the risk of civil war which was allegedly imminent in Ukraine.

Scenario 2.
This scenario envisages a complicated game with a pragmatic Ukrainian government aimed at convincing it to join the Eurasian integration project either under duress of circumstances or tempted by promises of political, economic and energy benefits (in Dugin's opinion, this would be a bloodless scenario, possible to implement during a socio-economic crisis in Ukraine).

[20] 'Dugin radzi – bracia Ukraińcy, podzielcie się' (http://www.eprudnik.pl/dugin-radzi; http://kresy24.pl/45590/podział-ukrainy-juz-przesadzony).

Scenario 3.

This is a "vanguard" scenario as defined by Dugin or, to use Cold War terminology, a "subversive scenario". It envisages using Western Ukrainian nationalists. "Western Ukrainians by definition and in line with the traditional classification do not share the values of liberalism, individualism, tolerance, multiculturalism, human rights ideology and other post-modernist standards predominant in modern Western society. Ukrainian nationalism is the main obstacle to the implementation of the Eurasian integration project. However, the attempt has to be made to turn the poison into a cure and the enemy into a friend, since the Eurasian Union is conceived of as being a model which respects the tradition and the cultural distinctiveness of individual communities and peoples"[21].

The internal crisis in Ukraine, as a consequence of the Euromaidan, has been viewed by both Dugin and Panarin as a turning point giving Russia a sudden stimulus to embark on its 'geopolitical march' as Dugin put it.

[21] Александр Дугин, 'Евразийский проект и его украинская проблема' (http://odnako.org/magazine/material/evraziyskiy-proekt-i-ego-ukrainskaya-problema/)

II. INFORMATION WARFARE IN GEOPOLITICAL PRACTICE

1. 'The technology of victory'

During the formal meeting held at the Kremlin on 18 March 2014 on the occasion of the incorporation of Crimea into the Russian Federation, President Putin spoke about "unprofessional and cynical Western moves destabilising the situation in Ukraine" and contrasted it to "peaceful action taken by Russia." Along with carefully selected members of both houses of parliament, those present at the meeting also included the heads of the secret service, members of the Security Council, diplomats led by Sergey Lavrov, the two leading representatives of geopolitics: Dugin and Panarin, as well as Dmitry Kiselev and other representatives of the media who had served the government well, secret service veterans, including Yevgeny Primakov, and representatives of cultural and academic circles. All politicians and officials who had contributed to the success of the 'Crimean operation' were present there. This was symbolic confirmation of the fact that secret and open sabotage and diplomatic channels as well as a successful media strategy had been in play in taking control over Crimea and its annexation. On the same day, Professor Panarin addressed a note entitled 'The Technology of Victory' to his discussion group on VKontakte portal (Panarin VK, 18 March 2014), in which he instructed his students as follows:

1. "It should be especially strongly emphasised that, in comparison to August 2008, Russia took many precautions in Crimea to prevent the planned violent scenario from being implemented.

2. Russia has found a recipe to counteract the colour revolutions which take the form of political coups.

3. The world has been offered an alternative path of development, which is based on spiritual and ethical values.

4. The Spirit of Valour has become crystallised: it has been possible to direct the accumulated impulse of Berkut's valour into the right channel.

5. Russia's comprehensive actions on all fields of the counteraction of information (diplomatic, financial and economic, military, etc.) have been conducted in close coordination with and directed personally by Vladimir Putin."

Panarin consistently classified the Crimean operation as an element of 'defensive' information warfare. He admitted that this had been a combined (media, diplomatic, financial-economic and military), planned and coordinated operation. He suggested indirectly and metaphorically that there should be a consolidation of the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine, emphasising as he did so Berkut's engagement and 'valour' in this operation. He emphasised in the header of his 'Technology of Victory' note that Russia had not encountered any major obstacles while implementing its plans.

Representatives of the Russian media and secret services have made statements in a similar vein. Dmitry Kiselev announced on Channel 1 and on Rossiya-24 TV stations that "Barack Obama turned grey with fear." He also boasted that "Russia is the only power capable of turning the United States into radioactive dust." General Aleksandr Mikhailov, former head of the FSB's Directorate for Contacts with the Public, summed up the operation by stating the precise date of the opponent's defeat: 16 March (the date of the Crimean referendum)[22]. He specified the key elements of the 'Crimean' information war: the psychological factor, President Putin's personal involvement, blackmail and sanctions. "Information warfare has a multitude of components, both in real life and in virtual reality, elements of blocking the oppo-

[22] 'Генерал-майор Михайлов об инфвойнах: Собака лает, караван идет, но мы не верблюды' (http://www.pravda.ru/news/society/21-03-2014/1201182-war-0/?m...).

nent's influence and elements of pressure (creating influence)," he concluded. **The quotations provided above confirm the opinion expressed by Western theoreticians: the balance of profits and losses sustained as a consequence of information warfare is inessential; instead, it is important how this result is presented.** The propaganda message was clear: President Putin fulfilled his plan with success; and this was success on the global scale.

2. Propaganda as the basic instrument of information operations

Influence blocking and the application of pressure are notions used in information struggle technology and social control. *Spetspropaganda,* as we may see for ourselves, is the key instrument of this struggle: recent Russian information battles make clear references to those fought during the Cold War. They have also been conducted in line with the sociotechnical principles of successful propaganda, such as the **principle of massive and long-lasting impact** (the 'orange plague' and 'Banderivtsy' propaganda stereotypes have been incessantly reiterated since 2003), the **principle of desired information** (Russians and Russian-speaking people expect that their rights should be protected, so they believed the manipulated information that the Russian language had been banned), the **principle of emotional agitation** (bringing the recipients of the message to a condition in which they will act without much thought, even irrationally), the **clarity principle** (the message is simplified, uses black-and-white terms, and is full of loaded keywords, such as Russophobe), the **principle of supposed obviousness** (causing the propaganda thesis to be associated with created political myths: the Russian spring equals patriotism, Banderivtsy equals fascism, Maidan equals chaos, etc.).

Given Russian reality, where the state controls most of the traditional media (television, radio and newspapers), propaganda techniques can be used without any major obstacles. The news

presented in them is moderated by political technology specialists, who decide which information could help achieve certain goals, and which should be blocked as harmful. The situation in online social networking media, where the users themselves can create information, is quite different. Independent information can be found on blogs, discussion forums, Twitter, Facebook, etc. These sources provide information in real time and have become influential opinion-forming media, since they enable interaction between the users. Computer tools also enable automatic replication of information and propaganda memes to any posts and addresses.

3. Network propaganda operations

Social networking media are viewed as the main sector of 'anti-Russian' propaganda since they offer the possibility to post alternative information and to exchange opinions in public. The portals and online discussion groups on Runet are an object of organised action, which has been a known fact for a long time[23]. One example of this action is the netwar portal http://rossia3.ru/. On 10 March, Aleksandr Dugin posted a text entitled 'The Rules of Polemics with the Internal Enemy', instructing that: "It is obvious that we have two camps in our country: the patriotic camp (Putin, the people and US) and the liberal-Western camp (THEY, you know who). WE want a Russian Crimea and a Russian Ukraine, and oppose the USA, NATO and liberalism. If necessary, we will also support war (although the softer way is better to secure our strategic interests). THEY declare themselves against war, for a free Ukraine (free from us), against Putin (as a patriot), for liberalism, the 'civilised West', the USA and the EU. We are Russians and we support Russians, while THEY are against Russians. A system of synonyms to be used in polemics should be developed. However, it should be kept in mind that such synonyms need to be symmetrical. For ex-

[23] See for example: Анна Полянская, Андрей Кривов, Иван Ломко, 'Виртуальное око старшего брата. Попытка исследования' (2003) – royallib.ru, gramoty.com; 'Цепные собаки зоны Ру', *Новая газета*, 23 October 2009; 'Где живут тролли. И кто их кормит', *Новая газета*, 7 September 2013.

ample, THEY call us 'patriots', and WE in response use the terms 'liberals' and 'Westerners' (Russian *западники*). If THOSE WHO ARE NOT US call us 'nationalists', communists', 'Soviet', then our response will be: 'agent of US influence' and 'fifth column'. If they use the term 'Nazi' or 'Stalinist', our cold-blooded response should be 'spy', 'traitor', 'how much did the CIA pay you?' or 'death to spies'. If THEY start immediately from the 'Russian fascist' or 'Stalinist' level, let novice but aggressive polemists respond to them. Such arguments are used by intellectually limited people, so entering into a discussion with them is a waste of time. An automatic patriotic trolling software, demotivators, memes and virus video showing Navalny in front of the US embassy or the ugly mugs of the editors of Echo Moskvy or similar visual agitation materials for beginner level patriots could also be used against them."

The analysis of this instruction and opinions expressed by participants of the 'information front' online provide even greater grounds for the conclusion that the rules of online propaganda are the same as the ones used in traditional media. Net propaganda is based on the disinformation, manipulation, information fabrication, verbal provocation and intimidation techniques described by Panarin. Emotional and hateful language is used in online news and polemics. They contain numerous obscenities and abusive vocabulary, such as 'pederast' or 'liberast'. Biased and tendentious interpretations of events are also highly prominent in them. The cult of Putin as Russia's successful leader and defender is clearly visible. The picture of the world is simplified and painted in black and white (where the diabolic West is black, and Russia is white). The image of the ideological opponent is clear and deprived of empathy. The opponent is discredited not only ideologically but also aesthetically ('that Bandera creep', 'the editors' ugly mugs'). Propaganda also performs discrediting (opponents) and the accrediting (inspirer) functions. These functions have an impact on its role in image-building (PR), agitation and propaganda. It needs to be stated in this context that **Russian strategic innovations concern primarily the 'organisational component': since**

there is no civil society in Russia, informational **'***spetsnazes***'** (as defined by Panarin) **are formed by** polittechnologists **and so-called 'opinion leaders'**. The aforementioned 'netwar portal' is at the same time the portal of the Eurasian Youth Union, a paramilitary youth organisation founded by Dugin in 2008. Network Headquarters is its chief authority.

4. 'The Dugin network'

The netwar portal http://rossia3.ru/ is linked to the International Eurasian Movement's portal http://evrazia.org/ and the netwar portal of the National Bolshevik Party http://nbf.rossia3.ru. This in turn contains links to http://nb-info-ru, i.e. the information portal of the National Bolshevik Party and its numerous network clones [http://nppinfo.com, http://nbpinfo.com, http://nazbol. org, http://нацболру.рф, http://nbkurs.ru], and to http://oprich-nsk.narod.ru (the website of Ivan the Terrible Brotherhood's 'Oprichnina') and http://patriot-af.livejournal.

The news and analytical portal evrazia.org contains links to other portals of the Eurasian Movement (http://evrazia.info/), Vehi TV portal (http://vehi.tv/index.php?module=main); Eurasia TV portal (http://www.evrazia.tv/) and Knigi Evrazii portal (http://www.evrazia-books.ru/). All of them contain links to Dugin's publications and publish recent announcements made by the leader and his associates.

In turn, Dugin's academic achievements can be accessed on the websites http://konservatizm.org/ and http://ru-neokons.livejournal.com/ (the site of the Centre for Neoconservative Studies), the analytical portal http://geopolitika.ru and the multimedia portal http://www.socium.tv/node/40. His articles and announcements are also tweeted and posted to social networking services (Twitter, Facebook, Odnoklassniki, VKontakte), where he has created his discussion groups. Dugin was an especially active opinion leader during the Russian intervention in Crimea.

His geopolitical analyses provided grounds for all the theses put forward by official propaganda: for example, he claimed that the de-Russification problem had emerged in Ukraine, and appealing that Russian patriotism should be accorded the rank of 'scientific patriotism' (such as that of 'scientific communism'), etc.

The extensive network of online contacts has helped Dugin gain a great number of fanatic supporters (judging from the opinions expressed by them online), which are grouped into a form of 'spiritual colonies' – from fascism-inclined 'Natsbols' through sociology and philosophy students from Moscow University to foreign fans of his fourth theory and Eurasianism (for example, the Polish portal xportal.pl). They form separate chains of information impact, and these chains form a homogenous communication network. They are mobilised to act, and their online actions are extremely dynamic, aggressive and uncompromising.

5. Network institutionalisation

There is a huge gap between online civil society and information *spetsnazes.* Instead of spontaneously formed discussion groups, these are organised and hierarchical structures controlled by headquarters and commissioners. Part of the formal and informal movements and organisations which share Dugin's views established the 'Russian Spring' Coalition on 13 March 2014. The founding declaration was signed by: Valery Korovin (Centre for Geopolitical Expertise), Aleksandr Notin (head of the Cultural and Education Association 'Pereprava'), Aleksandr Bovdunov (federal commissioner of the Eurasian Youth Union), Vladimir Khomyakov (co-president of the Velikoye Otechestvo party), Andrei Kovalenko (leader of the Eurasian Youth Union and the Natsionalny Kurs party), Alexey Zhilin (leader of the Conservative-Right Association), Aleksandr Shtilmark (head of the Black Hundreds organisation), Anton Yermolayev (leader of the National Alliance), Aleksandr Matyukhin (leader of the Samoderzhavnaya Rossiya movement) and Dragan Stanojevic (leader of the United

Serb Diaspora of Eurasia). The list of signatories proves that this is quite an eclectic alliance: of conservative radicals with leftists, nationalists and monarchists, and of experts with militants.

Institutionalised forms of operation of the organisations which fit in with the Eurasian ideological trend make it possible **to use the so-called 'swarm technology' online.** The network headquarters guides 'its' people, controls them, corrects their statements and gives them instructions. They are used for the Kremlin's political purposes, motivated by the patriotic mission. This technology is also successful because it has massive coverage: Dugin's network is just one of a multitude of similar 'swarms' which sing the Kremlin's propaganda songs written for many voices. In this context, it is worth mentioning the portal which specialises in the information warfare topic – http://ruxpert.ru. A long list of pro-Kremlin internet forums (http://aftershoc; http://avanturist. org; http://vmestepobedim.org; http://kontra20.ru; http://odna-ko.org, http://ruska-prawda.com, http://politrash.ru) and blogs written by so-called 'patriots' (see for example: http://nstarikov. ru/blog/9558) can be found on this portal.

A great deal of attention has recently been given to Russian diaspora portals which have joined in Russia's information warfare (http://baltija.eu, http://glagol.in.ua, http://imperiya.by and others). Yuri Baranchik, an ethnic Russian from Belarus, who until recently presented himself as an administrator of the imperiya. by portal, now signs his texts as "executive director of the Information Warfare Institute, Moscow." Many new news agencies and portals have been created. For example, the agencies Rex, ostkraft.ru, cominf.org and probably also regcomment.ru, zapadrus.su, iines.org and stoletije.ru originated from Regnum, the news agency targeted at countries in the near abroad and Russia's north-western neighbours. They are linked in that they share the

same group of experts (opinion leaders), a long list of whom can be found on IA Rex website[24].

6. Innovations in real life

Innovations can also be observed in real life. Disinformation through action is an equivalent of verbal disinformation used for propaganda purposes. For example, two 'peace marches' were seen in Moscow on 17 March 2014: a demonstration of opponents of the incorporation of Crimea and a 'peaceful' demonstration, as Russian television branded it, held by the paramilitary organisation 'The Essence of Time' led by the fascist-leaning Stalinist, Sergey Kurginyan. Participants of the 'competitive' peace march were wearing red jackets with military-styled shoulder boards, with stars and the letters SV embroidered on them (standing for "The Essence of Time", which is *Суть Времени* in Russian). Around 15,000 people participated in this demonstration according to estimates made by the daily, *Moskovsky Komsomolets*. Other media reported that the office of the Moscow mayor had granted consent to a demonstration of 4,000 people. Young people and war veterans were marching in equal columns – they evidently hold drills before such events. After the parade, the participants of the march stopped at Revolution Square to listen to a speech by Kurginyan. Among what he said was: "The government in Kyiv is formed by Bandera scum, who extend their dirty hands as a Nazi salute. (...) There will be no Maidan in Moscow. We shall not allow this."

The so-called **'nice men'**, the armed military officers wearing uniforms without insignia, who came to Crimea at night between 1 and 2 March, were also engaged in active disinformation. They occupied the airport in Sevastopol in order to defend it, as they explained, from an "air assault by Bandera commandos from Kyiv." The airport's press service announced in the morning that the "soldiers were very nice, and when they had made sure that the

24   See: http://www.iarex.ru/experts/ – accessed on 26 March 2014.

airport was under no risk of air assault, they apologised and left the airport." When this news was spread across the globe, they came back to the airport and occupied other strategic facilities in Crimea. The 'nice men' have also been used in propaganda as an example of bloodless solutions to the problems in Crimea. President Putin has also mentioned them: "Around 100 people were killed during the 'peaceful Maidan', while no one was even injured at the time of the so-called 'military intervention' in Crimea."

Some of the elements designed to reinforce propaganda (the red jackets, Saint George ribbons and the 'flag holiday') belong to the symbolic and socio-cultural sphere which unites Russians and the Russian-speaking citizens of the countries which emerged following the collapse of the USSR.

CONCLUSION

State policy

The incorporation of Crimea and the information warfare that accompanied it were an effect of the policy aimed at strengthening the state, reconstructing Russia's spheres of influence and mobilising the public; this has been consistently applied for years now. It has also been conducted in tandem with the policy outlined in the Information Security Doctrine in 2000, which lists among the key threats "the spread of disinformation about Russia and the federal state authorities." The presidential programmes launched over the past few years have also been used to neutralise 'information warfare' waged against the Russian Federation. These programmes include "Building a positive image of the Russian Federation," "Improving Russian information security" and "Building a single information space in Russia", and have been employed by President Putin to serve the purposes of reinforcing the civil identity of the multi-ethnic population of the Russian Federation[25].

The external dimension of this policy is an effect of the Kremlin's belief that attempts are being made to influence the processes taking place in Russia and the post-Soviet area. The 'scientific' grounds for this belief are provided by the geopolitical doctrine which calls for informational aggression to be directed mainly against Russia's geopolitical opponents (the West – above all, the USA and NATO).

This policy is also strongly influenced by the power elite whose careers started in the secret services; they have adopted a strategy of rivalry with the external world. Manifestations of this strategy include: the act on non-governmental organisations funded by foreign entities, which must be listed in the register of 'foreign

[25]   Kremlin.ru, 12 February 2013, volgapress.ru, 9 February 2013.

agents' (2012), the anti-gay act (2013), and above all the consistent building of the scientific and research base dealing with information warfare, as well as developing the base to ensure organisational, media, ideological, legislative, diplomatic, social, academic and culture circles' along with other support.

An old product in new packaging

The recently observed Russian information and network warfare should be viewed as a product of traditional political technologies which have been in use for years and which were inherited from the USSR. The contemporary Russian informational geopolitics, which uses in its theoretical deliberations a kind of 'ideological newspeak', clearly draws upon Soviet psychological warfare and Soviet mental stereotypes. It had to take into consideration new media tools (the Internet). However, these innovations primarily concern the organisation of activity within the network. Propaganda remains the key instrument of information warfare. Its distinctive features are language (the language of emotions and judgments, and not of facts), content (compliance with the Kremlin's official propaganda) and function (discrediting the opponent). One might wonder whether this instrument could make it possible for Russia to launch a new ideological crusade in the West. The Russian propaganda message is rather incredible and easy to verify in the era of new technologies. Furthermore, the propagated ideas are not appealing. However, the ideological newspeak based on disinformation falls on fertile socio-cultural ground in the East.

Russia's allies

The Russian-speaking diaspora, who have maintained cultural and emotional bonds with Russia, was Russia's main ally during the Crimean operation. The linguistic space where Russian is used was also one of the factors which contributed to the successful action. This is also a convenient information and media space,

and one receptive to Russian propaganda. Furthermore, the post-Soviet area (including Ukraine) is also thoroughly reconnoitred and permeated with the aid of agents of influence originating from the multitude of Russian diaspora organisations. The viewpoint of Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine facilitated Russia in the achievement of its goals during the Crimean operation. They have been won over as a consequence of long-lasting propaganda backed with sabotage actions in Crimea. However, Russia has resorted to military solutions, forcing those unconvinced into obedience, even here, where the public is receptive to its ideas.

The Western public is less receptive to Russian disinformation: they have not been convinced by Russian argumentation that the annexation has saved Crimea from the cruelty of "Banderivtsy and fascists from the Maidan." They are fully aware that the 'new' project of 'conservative revolution', i.e. de-Americanisation of the world, including Europe, being promoted by Russia, is unattractive, nothing new and in fact means setting the partition lines between the spheres of influences.

It is however worth noting the fact that the message addressed to the West is modified and spread via specialist media (The Voice of Russia and TV RT). The official websites of Russian institutions, for example the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which interprets current affairs in a more sophisticated manner, are also targeted at the Western audience. Disinformation provided here has been and will continue to be more difficult to decipher. In the case of the Voice of Russia radio station and TV RT, disinformation is also spread by local opinion leaders. Different wording is used here, but manipulation is also inherent in this wording ("Russians have the right to be patriots, as well," "the government wants Russia to be rich and free," "the power of Putin and the Kremlin is based on the people's choice"). This wording draws upon generally respected values. Russians also play on the various motivations of various social groups in the West (using pacifists' fear of war, politicians' fear of unpredictability and entrepreneurs' fear of losses;

and explaining to experts why Western models will not work for example in Ukraine). Furthermore, public opinion is not aware of the fact that they are the object of a planned and coordinated information struggle.

The future of information warfare

Russian information warfare is set to continue since Putin's new doctrine has crystallised. This doctrine is geopolitical, Eurasian, anti-liberal and oriented towards rivalry with the West and Russia's dominance in Eurasia. For this reason, the key tasks of rational public debate is and will continue in the immediate future to be to set limits on the space available to Russian political myths and ideologised propaganda actions, and to explain the mechanisms and goals of such actions.