

# Analytic Perspective on Russian Influence Operations Against Ukraine



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## Analytic Overview

The primary actor in this scenario is the Russian state, utilizing its intelligence services, military apparatus, and state-controlled media outlets to conduct influence operations. The target of these operations is Ukraine, including its government, military, and civilian populations.

The operations encompass a wide range of activities designed to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty, destabilize its political and social systems, and manipulate public perception domestically and internationally. These activities include disinformation campaigns, narrative control efforts, cyber-attacks, economic coercion, and the support of separatist movements.

The significance of these operations lies in their ability to disrupt Ukraine's democratic processes, erode trust in public institutions, and sow discord within society. These efforts threaten Ukraine's stability and security and challenge the international order, demonstrating the potential of non-kinetic means to achieve strategic objectives.

While the most visible aspects of these operations have been in Crimea and the Donbas region, their impact extends throughout Ukraine and has repercussions in the broader international community, affecting public opinion and policy decisions in other countries.

These operations have been ongoing since the onset of the Ukraine crisis in 2014 but are part of a more extended history of Russian influence activities in the post-Soviet space. The tactics and strategies employed have evolved, reflecting technological advancements and shifts in the geopolitical landscape.

Russia's motivations are rooted in a desire to reassert its influence in the post-Soviet space, counter NATO expansion, and protect its strategic interests. By undermining Ukraine, Russia seeks to prevent its further integration with the West and to demonstrate its power and reach.

The how involves a layered approach that combines traditional espionage with modern cyber capabilities, psychological operations, and the strategic use of media. Russia employs covert and overt tactics to use existing societal divisions, historical grievances, and economic vulnerabilities to further its objectives.

The impact of these operations has been significant, leading to the annexation of Crimea, the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine, increased political polarization within Ukraine, and heightened tensions between Russia and the West. The erosion of trust in media and political institutions within Ukraine and abroad has undermined democratic processes and contributed to a fragmented international response.

The likely continuation of these influence operations suggests ongoing challenges for Ukraine's stability and sovereignty. The evolving nature of cyber and information warfare tactics will require continuous adaptation by Ukraine and its allies. The international community's response to these tactics will shape the future landscape of global security and democracy.

## Practical and Pragmatic Gaps

There is a significant gap in the coordinated international response to Russian influence operations. Divergent policies and priorities among Western allies have often led to fragmented efforts that fail to address the comprehensive nature of the threat. While strides have been made in enhancing cyber defenses and combating disinformation, many countries, including Ukraine, remain vulnerable to sophisticated cyber-attacks and influence operations. The rapid evolution of technology and tactics

outpaces current defensive measures. Efforts to increase public awareness and media literacy have been inadequate in counteracting the effects of disinformation. A comprehensive educational approach is required to equip citizens with the skills to evaluate information sources critically. The absence of a cohesive and proactive strategic communication strategy to counteract Russian narratives allows disinformation to fill the information vacuum. Developing and disseminating compelling counter-narratives is crucial. Existing legal and regulatory frameworks are often ill-equipped to address the challenges posed by hybrid warfare tactics. Revising these frameworks to reflect the contemporary security environment is necessary.

## Recommendations and Opportunities

To enhance the strategic response to Russian influence operations and bolster international security and democratic resilience, the implementation of the following goals and objectives, accompanied by methods to measure progress, is crucial:

### Strengthen International Collaboration

- Goal: Achieve a seamless exchange of intelligence and cybersecurity resources among NATO members, the EU, and other partners.
- Objective: Establish a unified platform for real-time coordination and response to influence operations by Q2 2025.
- Progress Measurement: Track the number of collaborative operations conducted, the frequency of intelligence-sharing sessions, and the reduction in successful influence operations.

### Invest in Cyber Defense Initiatives

- Goal: Enhance national cyber defense capabilities across governmental and critical infrastructure systems.
- Objective: Increase the annual cybersecurity budget by 20% for the next fiscal year, conduct quarterly cyber exercises, and establish a 24/7 rapid response cyber team.
- Progress Measurement: Evaluate the decrease in successful cyber-attacks and breaches alongside an increase in thwarted attacks reported by the rapid response team.

### Foster Public Resilience

- Goal: Cultivate a public that is critical, informed, and resilient to disinformation.
- Objective: Integrate media literacy into school curriculums by the next academic year and launch national public awareness campaigns by Q3 2024.
- Progress Measurement: Assess changes in the public ability to identify disinformation through pre- and post-campaign surveys and an increase in critical media consumption practices.

### Develop Counter-Narratives

- Goal: Create and disseminate persuasive counter-narratives to combat and neutralize disinformation.

- Objective: Develop a strategic communication task force by Q1 2025 to craft and distribute tailored counter-narratives across media platforms.
- Progress Measurement: Monitor the reach and impact of counter-narratives through engagement metrics, audience sentiment analysis, and shifts in public discourse.

## Support Civil Society and Independent Media

- Goal: Strengthen the role of civil society and independent media in upholding truth and journalistic integrity.
- Objective: Allocate \$50 million in grants and technical support to qualifying organizations and outlets by the end of 2025.
- Progress Measurement: Evaluate the increased investigative reporting outputs, the breadth of disinformation topics covered, and the sustainability of supported organizations.

## Legislative and Regulatory Measures

- Goal: Update legal and regulatory frameworks to address hybrid warfare and influence operations effectively.
- Objective: Review and propose amendments to existing laws and regulations by the end of the legislative session 2024.
- Progress Measurement: Track the enactment of new laws, the frequency of enforcement actions taken against violators, and improvements in legal recourse for influence operation victims.

## International Legal Mechanisms

- Goal: Foster a global legal environment that holds states accountable for malicious influence operations.
- Objective: Spearheaded an initiative at the UN to draft and adopt an international convention on state-led influence operations by 2026.
- Progress Measurement: Measure the number of countries endorsing the convention, establishing monitoring mechanisms, and instances of sanctions or legal actions taken under the new framework.

## Technology Sector Engagement

- Goal: Encourage technology companies and social media platforms to detect and mitigate disinformation proactively.
- Objective: Formalize partnerships with at least five major technology platforms by Q2 2025 to implement advanced content moderation and user education programs.
- Progress Measurement: Analyze the reduction in disinformation spread on platforms, user reporting mechanism improvements, and content moderation policies' effectiveness.

## Diplomatic Engagement

- Goal: Reduce tensions and promote dialogue to address underlying conflicts and grievances.
- Objective: Initiate bi-annual dialogue sessions with Russian representatives to discuss security concerns and cooperation opportunities by 2024.
- Progress Measurement: Assess the reduction in hostile rhetoric, the establishment of joint security measures, and progress in conflict resolution efforts.

## Enhance Economic Resilience

- Goal: Minimize European dependency on Russian energy and bolster economic stability in Ukraine.
- Objective: Support developing and implementing alternative energy projects and economic reforms in Ukraine over the next five years.
- Progress Measurement: Evaluate the diversification of energy sources, improvements in Ukraine's economic indicators, and the resilience of European economies to external economic coercion.

Implementing these strategic goals and objectives and rigorous monitoring and evaluation enhances the collective ability to counter Russian influence operations effectively. The approach not only safeguards the sovereignty and democratic integrity of targeted states but also contributes to the stability and security of the international order.

## Abstract

In modern warfare, cognitive warfare and influence operations have emerged as pivotal strategies that extend beyond traditional military confrontations to encompass the manipulation of information and public perception. The following brief is originally attributed to Russian intelligence officials, delineating a strategic framework prioritizing the human mind as the principal battlefield in contemporary conflicts. Their approach to warfare intends to subvert societal cohesion and influence the decision-making processes of adversaries through sophisticated narrative control, psychological manipulation, and systematic disinformation campaigns. By exploiting vulnerabilities within cultural, historical, and societal contexts, these operations seek to destabilize nations from within, eroding trust in institutions and undermining the fabric of democratic societies.

The brief expresses a methodical approach to influence operations, employing historical narratives and moral arguments to justify aggressive actions and delegitimize opposition, revealing how state-controlled media and social platforms become conduits for disseminating tailored narratives that rally domestic support, create discord in foreign societies and legitimize state actions on the global stage. Narrative control is a cornerstone of Russia's broader strategy to conduct hybrid warfare, seamlessly integrating conventional military power with subversive non-kinetic tools. Such an approach exploits the interconnectedness and vulnerabilities of the modern information ecosystem to achieve strategic objectives while circumventing traditional military engagement.

From a counterintelligence perspective, the brief underscores the imperative to comprehend and mitigate the threats posed by cognitive and informational warfare. It advocates for bolstering societal defenses by promoting critical thinking, literacy, and the development of resilient information networks capable of

withstanding external manipulation efforts. Effective counterintelligence strategies are essential for identifying, neutralizing, and countering foreign influence operations to infiltrate and destabilize democratic institutions and societal structures.

The analysis elucidates the comprehensive and layered nature of modern warfare as outlined in the brief, emphasizing the shift towards cognitive dominance and the strategic manipulation of information as central elements of conflict in the 21st century. Understanding these tactics is crucial for developing robust countermeasures that ensure the integrity of national security, societal resilience, and preserving democratic values in the face of evolving global threats.

## Keywords

Targeted nations, Ukraine, allies, counter, Russian influence operations, cybersecurity defenses, public awareness, international collaboration, cyber threats, disinformation, narrative manipulation, critical infrastructures, government networks, electoral systems, intrusion detection systems, security audits, end-to-end encryption, cybersecurity alliances, NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, European Union Cyber Rapid Response Teams, Computer Emergency Response Teams, media literacy programs, social media partnerships, joint intelligence-sharing, technical indicators of compromise, unified counter-disinformation frameworks, diplomatic measures, economic sanctions, civil society support, independent media, capacity-building initiatives, democratic resilience, external manipulation, safeguarding democratic institutions, societal cohesion,

## Introduction

The contemporary theater of war transcends the physical battlegrounds that history has familiarized us with, venturing into the complex and shadowy domains of the human psyche and the global information ecosystem. The strategic brief purportedly crafted by Russian intelligence officials, serving as the basis of this analysis, illuminates the forefront of modern conflict strategies—where the manipulation of perceptions, beliefs, and societal structures plays a pivotal role in achieving geopolitical goals. The evolution in warfare philosophy underscores a change in thinking towards cognitive warfare and influence operations, positioning them as essential tools in statecraft and military strategy arsenal.

At the heart of this modern warfare doctrine lies the assertion that the most consequential battles are no longer solely fought with conventional arms but are increasingly waged within the minds of global populations. The brief elaborates on a sophisticated framework to destabilize adversaries by eroding the social fabric and manipulating public opinion to serve strategic ends. Through the deliberate dissemination of disinformation, exploitation of societal vulnerabilities, and manipulation of narrative structures, states endeavor to sow discord, diminish trust in democratic processes and institutions, and ultimately exert influence over the decision-making processes of individuals and governments.

Strategic maneuvering in the cognitive domain highlights the importance of narrative control and psychological operations as instruments of power. The brief details how historical narratives, cultural levers, and moral arguments are co-opted to justify aggressive policies, delegitimize opponents, and galvanize domestic and international support for state actions. Such efforts are designed to advance specific geopolitical objectives and foster an environment of uncertainty and mistrust that is exploited to weaken adversaries from within.

Introducing these tactics signifies a broader adoption of hybrid warfare strategies, blending conventional military force with a suite of non-kinetic measures tailored to exploit contemporary societies' open and interconnected nature. The approach uses the global information ecosystem to conduct operations that blur the lines between war and peace, intending to achieve strategic goals while avoiding the full-scale mobilization of military resources.

Understanding the implications of these strategies for national security, democratic integrity, and international stability necessitates a comprehensive analysis of the methods and objectives articulated in the brief. The brief dissects the layered nature of cognitive warfare and influence operations outlined by Russian intelligence, providing insights into the challenges and countermeasures essential for safeguarding democratic institutions and societal cohesion in the face of these emerging threats.

## Cognitive Warfare and Influence Operations

The brief under review casts cognitive warfare and influence operations as central pillars in the architecture of contemporary conflicts, highlighting a strategic shift towards manipulating perceptions and beliefs at individual and societal levels. The approach underscores a deliberate effort to infiltrate the psychosocial fabric of target societies, intending to erode their internal cohesion and resilience. By "hacking" into the collective consciousness, the strategy seeks to reconfigure societal beliefs and norms that align with the perpetrating state's strategic goals.

Russia's application of these tactics emerges as a case study in executing cognitive warfare, demonstrating a broad and sophisticated employment of disinformation campaigns and psychological operations. These efforts are not random or opportunistic but highly systematically orchestrated to capitalize on specific societal vulnerabilities. These operations aim to amplify existing divisions, create confusion, and undermine trust in institutions by tapping into the cultural, historical, and societal fault lines within nations. The goal is to weaken an adversary not through direct military confrontation but by corroding the foundations upon which societal solidarity and collective defense mechanisms rest.

The methodology of such operations involves a nuanced understanding of the target population's psyche, including its values, fears, aspirations, and historical narratives. Operatives effectively sow discord and disillusionment by crafting messages that resonate with or provoke the target audience. For instance, disinformation campaigns may propagate fabricated stories that stoke fear or anger towards specific ethnic or social groups, exacerbating tensions and diverting attention from the external manipulator's actions.

Moreover, the strategic deployment of psychological operations extends beyond mere disinformation, encompassing a broader spectrum of activities designed to manipulate public opinion and decision-making processes. These may include the covert support of fringe political movements, the orchestration of fake grassroots campaigns, and the manipulation of media narratives to discredit political figures or policies opposed to the manipulator's interests. Such operations leverage the interconnectedness of the modern information ecosystem, allowing for the rapid and wide dissemination of tailored messages that reach a global audience with unprecedented speed and scale.

The effectiveness of cognitive warfare and influence operations hinges on their ability to remain undetected or plausibly deniable. As such, these tactics represent a form of hybrid warfare that operates in the grey zone between peace and conflict, exploiting the ambiguity and complexity of the international

legal and political landscape. The ambiguity allows the perpetrator to advance their objectives while avoiding the direct repercussions that might result from more overt forms of aggression.

Cognitive warfare and influence operations signify a profound transformation like conflict, emphasizing the strategic importance of the information space as a battleground. The sophistication and scale of these operations demand equally nuanced counter-strategies that seek to protect the integrity of information and reinforce societal resilience against such insidious forms of manipulation. As these tactics evolve, understanding their mechanisms, intentions, and vulnerabilities remains a critical challenge for national security professionals, policymakers, and the international community.

## Narrative Control and Psychological Manipulation

Narrative control and psychological manipulation are pivotal strategies within the brief, underscoring a nuanced approach to shaping public perception and molding the geopolitical discourse. The analysis delineates how historical narratives and moral arguments become instrumental in justifying specific actions while delegitimizing those of adversaries. The narrative manipulation has multiple strategic purposes, from consolidating internal support to altering the international community's perceptions and responses.

The efforts of Russia to control narratives, especially regarding its involvement in conflicts, illustrate a sophisticated understanding of narrative power in contemporary warfare. By casting itself as a bulwark against Western aggression or as a protector of Russian-speaking minorities, Russia not only crafts a self-image of righteousness but also works to fracture opposition by appealing to shared cultural and historical bonds. The narratives propagated through a meticulously controlled media landscape and across various social platforms are not merely disseminated but are embedded within the consciousness of domestic and international audiences.

Strategic narrative control accomplishes several objectives simultaneously. Domestically, it galvanizes support by appealing to nationalistic sentiments and perceived historical injustices, thereby fostering a unified front facing external pressures. The portrayal of Russia as defending its people and interests against Western encroachment legitimizes the state's actions, securing its citizenry's acquiescence, if not outright support.

Internationally, the manipulation of narratives seeks to sow discord among adversaries and within the global community. By framing conflicts in terms that resonate with universal principles of self-defense and the protection of vulnerable populations, Russia intends to undermine the moral authority of its opponents and create fractures within international coalitions. The strategic division makes it more challenging for opponents to mount a unified response, thereby diluting the effectiveness of diplomatic, economic, or military pressures against Russia.

Moreover, the international dissemination of these narratives through state-controlled media and platforms intends to influence the global discourse on Russia's actions. By flooding the information space with its version of events, Russia attempts to create ambiguity, doubt, and debate regarding the legitimacy of its actions and the motives of its adversaries. The confusion benefits Russia by delaying international responses, weakening the resolve of its opponents, and potentially garnering support from third parties swayed by its narratives.

The strategic use of narrative control and psychological manipulation thus emerges as a cornerstone of modern geopolitical strategy, reflecting a deep appreciation for the power of narratives in shaping realities on the ground. The approach requires a layered response that not only counters misinformation but also strengthens the resilience of societies against such manipulation. The response underscores open societies' need to cultivate critical media literacy among their populations, promote transparency and accountability in information dissemination, and foster a diverse and robust media ecosystem capable of challenging and debunking manipulative narratives. As narrative control and psychological manipulation become increasingly central to geopolitical strategy, navigating, countering, and transcending these tactics become paramount in preserving democratic values and the integrity of the international order.

## Hybrid Warfare Strategies

The analysis delineates the sophisticated amalgamation of conventional military power with various non-kinetic tools, marking a strategic pivot towards hybrid warfare. The composite approach signifies a nuanced evolution in warfare tactics, where the distinctions between states of war and peace become increasingly ambiguous. Russia exemplifies a comprehensive hybrid warfare strategy through the strategic deployment of cyber-attacks, the dissemination of disinformation, and the application of economic coercion alongside traditional military operations. The method capitalizes on the vulnerabilities inherent in open societies, particularly those enhanced by the global interconnectedness characteristic of the current era, to further its strategic objectives without resorting to overt military aggression.

Hybrid warfare strategies manifest a deep understanding of the layered nature of power in the modern world, recognizing that influence and control extend far beyond the mere capacity for physical domination. By engaging in cyber warfare, states infiltrate critical infrastructure, steal sensitive information, and disrupt the normal functioning of a society without a single soldier crossing its borders. When executed effectively, these cyber operations compromise national security and sow uncertainty and fear within the target population, eroding trust in government institutions.

Simultaneously, the strategic dissemination of disinformation confuses, distracts, and divides domestic and international audiences. By crafting and spreading false narratives, states manipulate public opinion, destabilize political processes, and weaken the cohesion of adversarial societies. Hybrid warfare exploits the freedom of expression and direct access to information characteristic of democratic systems, turning these strengths into vulnerabilities by inundating the information space with fabricated or misleading content.

Economic coercion further complements these tactics, serving as a powerful tool for exerting pressure and influencing the policies of other nations. States inflict significant economic pain on adversaries without the risks associated with traditional military engagement through sanctions, trade restrictions, and manipulation of energy supplies. The coercion leads to economic instability, exacerbates social tensions, and compels governments to alter their policies to favor the aggressor state.

The hybrid warfare strategy's potency lies in its ability to operate within the "gray zone" – aggressive actions that fall short of triggering a conventional military response. The ambiguity complicates the decision-making process for responding states, often leading to delayed or inadequate responses that further embolden the aggressor. Moreover, integrating these tactics with conventional military operations creates a multifront challenge that strains the resources and attention of the target state, diluting its ability to counter any single threat effectively.

In response to the challenges posed by hybrid warfare strategies, it becomes imperative for targeted states to adopt a holistic defense posture that encompasses not only military readiness but also cyber defense capabilities, information integrity safeguards, and economic resilience measures. Strengthening alliances, enhancing inter-state cooperation on cybersecurity, and investing in public awareness and education on information literacy emerge as crucial components of a comprehensive strategy to counter the layered threats of hybrid warfare.

As states navigate the complexities of the 21st-century geopolitical landscape, understanding and countering hybrid warfare strategies demand a concerted effort that integrates diplomatic, military, technological, and informational dimensions. The evolution of warfare necessitates adaptive strategies that protect the open society's virtues while mitigating its vulnerabilities against the cunning exploits of hybrid warfare tactics.

## Counterintelligence Implications

From a counterintelligence standpoint, there is a critical need to grasp and mitigate the challenges posed by cognitive and informational threats, underscoring the essential nature of defensive strategies aimed at bolstering societal defenses against the nuanced tactics of modern warfare. The strategies encompass a broad spectrum of measures, including promoting critical thinking among the populace, enhancing literacy, and establishing robust information ecosystems that are resilient to attempts at external manipulation.

The emphasis on fostering critical thinking and enhancing literacy transcends mere educational initiatives. It represents a foundational approach to empowering individuals to critically navigate and scrutinize the information landscape. By equipping citizens with the tools to question and analyze the veracity of the information they encounter, societies cultivate a more discerning and less susceptible populace. Empowerment is a bulwark against the pervasive spread of disinformation, reducing the potential for public opinion to be swayed by manipulative narratives designed to sow discord and undermine trust in democratic institutions.

Building resilient information ecosystems involves fortifying the technical infrastructure against cyber intrusions and ensuring that the flow of information within these ecosystems adheres to principles of accuracy, transparency, and accountability. Such ecosystems support a diverse and vibrant media landscape where multiple sources of information provide checks and balances against misinformation and propaganda. Developing these ecosystems requires collaborative efforts between governments, the private sector, and civil society to foster environments where truthful and reliable information flourishes.

Moreover, the brief delineates the paramount importance of counterintelligence operations in identifying and neutralizing foreign influence operations that aim to infiltrate and destabilize societies from within. These operations, sophisticated in their execution, often exploit social, political, and economic vulnerabilities to instigate unrest, erode confidence in governmental institutions, and manipulate the political discourse. Counterintelligence efforts, therefore, extend beyond traditional espionage activities to encompass a wide array of tactics, including cyber surveillance, financial tracking, and the monitoring of social media platforms to detect and disrupt these influence operations.

Proactively engaging in counterintelligence activities necessitates a layered approach integrating intelligence gathering, law enforcement, cybersecurity measures, and public education. Intelligence

agencies play a crucial role in the early detection of foreign influence campaigns, leveraging advanced technologies and international partnerships to monitor threats and preemptively address them in coordination with intelligence services. Law enforcement agencies take legal action against individuals and entities engaged in subversive activities, disrupting their operations, and deterring future attempts.

The counterintelligence implications highlighted in the brief underscore the need for a comprehensive and proactive stance in defending against the sophisticated spectrum of cognitive and informational threats characteristic of contemporary geopolitical conflicts. The practical implementation of these countermeasures requires a concerted effort across various sectors of society, underpinned by a commitment to safeguarding democratic values and the integrity of the information space. As threats evolve, so must the strategies employed to counter them, ensuring that societies remain resilient despite attempts to manipulate and destabilize.

## Russian Actions

Russian influence operations against Ukraine illustrate a broad and complex strategy aimed at undermining the country's sovereignty, manipulating public perception, and destabilizing its political and social systems. These operations leverage a variety of tactics, including narrative control, disinformation, and sophisticated counterintelligence efforts, tailored to exploit vulnerabilities and achieve strategic objectives.

One prominent example of narrative control involves the portrayal of Russian-speaking populations in Ukraine as oppressed minorities in need of protection. Russia has systematically disseminated narratives intending to defend the rights and freedoms of these communities, thereby justifying its actions and interventions in regions like Crimea and the Donbas. The narrative has multiple purposes: it rallies domestic support in Russia by appealing to nationalistic sentiments, creates divisions within Ukrainian society, and seeks international sympathy and justification for its aggressive maneuvers.

Disinformation campaigns have been a hallmark of Russian efforts to destabilize Ukraine. A notable instance was the false reporting on the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 in 2014. Russian media outlets and social media channels propagated various unfounded theories to deflect responsibility from Russian-backed separatists, attempting to confuse the international investigation and sow doubt about Russia's involvement. These efforts aimed to discredit the Ukrainian government, portray it as incapable of protecting its airspace and shift the blame onto Ukraine or Western countries.

The annexation of Crimea showcased Russia's adept use of hybrid warfare tactics, blending military action with psychological operations. Before the military intervention, Russian state media and online platforms flooded the information space with narratives emphasizing historical ties between Crimea and Russia, alongside claims of neo-Nazi influences in the Ukrainian government threatening the local population. The prelude of misinformation softened the ground for the subsequent annexation, facilitating the portrayal of Russia's actions as a rescue operation rather than an act of aggression.

In the field of counterintelligence, Russia has employed sophisticated measures to infiltrate Ukrainian security services, sow discord among military ranks, and gather intelligence critical to its strategic goals. Russian operatives have used cyber espionage and human intelligence to undermine Ukraine's defense capabilities, leak sensitive information, and disrupt military operations. These activities aim to weaken

Ukraine's response to aggression and create an atmosphere of mistrust and paranoia within its security apparatus.

Moreover, Russia has targeted Ukrainian political processes to influence election outcomes and support pro-Russian candidates. Using social media bots and trolls, Russia has amplified divisive content, spread false narratives about candidates, and attempted to erode public trust in the electoral system. These operations seek to install favorable leadership in Ukraine or, at the very least, weaken the government's mandate and reduce its effectiveness in opposing Russian interests.

Lastly, the cultivation of proxy forces and the support of separatist movements in Eastern Ukraine represent a direct application of Russian influence to create sustained instability and challenge Ukrainian sovereignty. By providing military, financial, and logistical support to these groups, Russia maintains a persistent source of pressure on the Ukrainian state, further complicating efforts to restore peace and territorial integrity.

## Structured Techniques

Analyzing this situation requires a multidimensional perspective and structured techniques to assess its various components.

### Key Assumptions

We first need to outline the key assumptions underlying the scenario to structure an analysis of the Russian influence operations against Ukraine using a structured analytic technique, specifically a Key Assumptions Check. Next, potential indicators of these assumptions used in the field will be identified. The approach helps critically evaluate the assumptions' validity and prepare for various operational outcomes.

1. **Russia Uses a Layered Approach for Influence Operations:** It assumes that Russia employs a combination of disinformation, cyber-attacks, economic coercion, and support for separatist movements to achieve its objectives in Ukraine.
2. **Operations Aim to Undermine Ukraine's Sovereignty:** Assumes that the primary goal of Russian influence operations is to destabilize Ukraine's political and social systems and manipulate public perception to undermine the country's sovereignty.
3. **Influence Operations Have Significant Impact:** Assumes that Russian operations successfully disrupt Ukraine's democratic processes, erode trust in public institutions, and considerably impact societal discord.
4. **Narrative Control Is Central to Influence Operations:** Assumes narrative control through media and cyberspace is essential for Russia to manipulate public opinion and justify its actions domestically and internationally.
5. **International Response Is Fragmented:** Assumes a significant gap in a coordinated international response to Russian influence operations, making countries vulnerable to these tactics.

Potential Indicators

1. Increase in Disinformation Campaigns: An uptick in false narratives or misleading information spread across social media platforms and state-controlled media targeting Ukraine's political stability and international image.
2. Cyber Attacks on Critical Infrastructure: Reports of cyber intrusions targeting Ukraine's energy sector, government databases, or electoral systems traced back to Russian origins.
3. Economic Pressures on Ukraine: Evidence of economic coercion, such as sudden changes in energy supplies to Ukraine or the imposition of trade barriers, destabilize Ukraine's economy.
4. Support for Separatist Movements: Tangible support, including military supplies or financial aid, was provided to separatist groups in Eastern Ukraine, indicating direct Russian involvement in fueling regional conflicts.
5. Fragmented International Policy Responses: The lack of unified sanctions or policy measures from Western allies in response to Russian operations indicates a fragmented international stance.

Key Assumptions Check Table

Key Assumption	Potential Indicators	Observed? (Yes/No)	Comments
Russia uses a layered approach.	Increase in disinformation campaigns and cyber-attacks.		
Operations aim to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty.	Evidence of narrative manipulation; support for separatism		
Influence operations have a significant impact.	Disruptions in democratic processes; societal discord		
Narrative control is central to operations.	Spread of pro-Russian narratives; manipulation of historical facts		
The international response is fragmented.	Lack of cohesive sanctions or policies against Russia		

The structured approach allows analysts to systematically assess the validity of their assumptions about Russian influence operations against Ukraine and adjust their analysis based on observed indicators. Identifying gaps between assumptions and observed realities enables a more nuanced understanding of the situation and informs more effective counter-strategies.

### Indicators Matrix for Russian Influence Operations Against Ukraine

In the indicators Matrix for tracking and evaluating the effectiveness of Russian influence operations against Ukraine, we will use the potential indicators identified in the previous analysis. The Matrix is a dynamic tool for intelligence analysts, policymakers, and security professionals to monitor developments, evaluate trends, and anticipate strategic shifts in the ongoing conflict. The Matrix is structured to facilitate periodic review and adjustment based on emerging data and changing operational landscapes.

Indicator	Description	Data Source	Frequency of Review	Trend (Up/Down/Stable)	Implications
Disinformation Campaigns	Increase in false narratives targeting Ukraine's stability and alliances.	Social media analysis, state media monitoring.	Bi-weekly		Reflects active efforts to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty and international standing.
Cyber Attacks	Reports of cyber intrusions targeting critical infrastructure and government systems.	Cybersecurity reports, government alerts.	Monthly		Indicates a strategic use of cyber warfare to destabilize Ukraine and erode public trust in institutions.
Economic Coercion	Changes in energy supplies and trade restrictions affecting Ukraine.	Energy market analysis, trade data.	Quarterly		Suggests using economic pressure to influence Ukraine's policies and destabilize its economy.
Support for Separatist Movements	Evidence of military or financial aid to Eastern Ukrainian separatists.	Intelligence reports, satellite imagery.	Monthly		Direct involvement in fueling conflict, intending to weaken Ukraine's territorial integrity.
Fragmented International Response	Cohesion and effectiveness of	Policy analysis, diplomatic communications.	Quarterly		Indicates the success of Russian operations in avoiding unified international countermeasures.

Indicator	Description	Data Source	Frequency of Review	Trend (Up/Down/Stable)	Implications
	international policy measures against Russia.				

#### Operationalization of the Matrix

- **Data Source:** Identifies where information regarding each indicator is sourced, enabling a focused collection effort.
- **Frequency of Review:** Specifies how often each indicator should be reviewed to maintain an up-to-date assessment. The frequency may vary based on the fluidity of the situation and the availability of new data.
- **Trend:** A critical component that tracks whether the activity related to each indicator is increasing, decreasing, or remaining stable over time. Trend analysis helps in understanding the effectiveness and scale of influence operations.
- **Implications:** Provides an analytical assessment of what changes in each indicator mean for Ukraine's security posture, the effectiveness of Russian influence operations, and the international community's response.

#### Application of the Matrix

- **Proactive Monitoring:** Regularly reviewing the indicator's Matrix allows analysts to monitor Russian activities and proactively anticipate strategic moves.
- **Trend Analysis:** Tracking the trends of each indicator over time helps identify patterns of behavior, effectiveness of operations, and potential shifts in strategy.
- **Strategic Adjustment:** Based on the observed trends and implications, policymakers and security professionals adjust their strategies and responses to counter Russian influence operations more effectively.
- **Early Warning:** The Matrix is an early warning system for unexpected changes, enabling quicker response and adaptation to emerging threats.

When used effectively, this Indicators Matrix provides a structured and systematic approach to understanding and countering Russian influence operations against Ukraine. The Matrix is a foundational tool in the broader strategic effort to safeguard Ukraine's sovereignty, promote stability, and ensure a coordinated international response to the challenges posed by modern hybrid warfare.



## Scenarios

In the evolving landscape of geopolitical conflict, the practical application of Russian cognitive warfare, disinformation, influence operations, narrative control, manipulation, and hybrid warfare tactics presents a series of scenarios with varying degrees of likelihood. These scenarios, devoid of speculative language and articulated in an active voice, reflect the strategic continuum of Russia's engagement in the informational and cognitive domains.

**Energy Sector Manipulation:** Russia initiates a disinformation campaign targeting Europe's alternative energy projects that are failing and causing economic distress. Simultaneously, it reduces natural gas supplies to Europe during a peak demand season. The action intends to create panic, influence energy policies, and reassert dependence on Russian energy, undermining European unity and economic stability.

**Election Interference:** Ahead of pivotal elections in a neighboring country leaning towards EU integration, Russia amplifies divisive social issues through targeted social media campaigns. It fabricates narratives of electoral fraud and disseminates them through covert social media accounts and overt Russian state media, intending to delegitimize the electoral process, sow discord, and support pro-Russian candidates.

**Cyber Operations Against Critical Infrastructure:** Russia launches sophisticated cyber-attacks on the electrical grids and communication networks of countries perceived as adversaries. While temporarily disrupting services, these attacks serve a dual purpose: they demonstrate Russia's cyber capabilities and resilience and instill a sense of vulnerability and instability within the target country.

**Support for Separatist Movements:** In countries with significant Russian-speaking populations or historical ties to Russia, Russia escalates its support for separatist movements. It supplies them with military equipment, intelligence, and financial resources, while state media portrays these groups as freedom fighters against oppressive regimes. The goal is to destabilize the regions, distract the central governments, and potentially annex territories under the guise of protecting ethnic Russians.

**Manipulation of International Organizations:** Russia uses its position in international bodies to spread disinformation and manipulate discussions. It presents misleading reports and data to international organizations to influence global opinion and policy, especially concerning conflicts involving Russia. The scenario intends to create a narrative of moral equivalence between aggressor and victim, diluting international resolve and complicating response efforts.

**Cultural and Historical Revisionism:** Through state-funded cultural initiatives and media, Russia embarks on a revisionist portrayal of historical events to foster a narrative of historical grievances and justify its contemporary policies. The narrative control effort targets domestic and international audiences, intending to galvanize support for Russian actions and undermine the legitimacy of opposing states' territory.

**Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Mimicry:** Russia establishes or supports NGOs that ostensibly promote democracy and human rights but serve to spread pro-Russian narratives and disinformation. These organizations operate in foreign countries, attempting to influence policy, disrupt civil society cohesion, and gather intelligence on opposition to Russian interests.

**False Flag Operations:** In a highly covert operation, Russia conducts or sponsors military or cyber-attacks on its assets, falsely attributing these actions to another country or entity. The scenario intends to justify retaliatory measures, rally domestic support under the banner of national security, and vilify perceived adversaries.

Each scenario underscores Russia's layered approach in its cognitive warfare and influence operations. The success of countering these tactics hinges on the international community's ability to recognize, expose, and mitigate their effects through coordinated defense mechanisms, public awareness, and resilience-building efforts.

## Alternative Future Analysis: Russian Influence Operations Against Ukraine

Alternative Future Analysis is a structured analytic technique to explore potential futures by changing variables or assumptions within a given scenario. The approach helps understand possible outcomes and prepares decision-makers for various contingencies. For the context of Russian influence operations against Ukraine, we will outline two distinct alternative futures based on different developments in the geopolitical landscape and internal dynamics within Russia and Ukraine.

### Future 1: Escalation of Russian Influence Operations

**Description:** In the future, Russian influence operations against Ukraine intensify significantly due to heightened tensions between Russia and NATO countries. Russia uses this geopolitical friction to justify an increase in cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, and support for separatist movements within Ukraine. The operations become more sophisticated, utilizing advanced AI technologies for creating deepfakes and conducting cyber-espionage, intending to destabilize the Ukrainian government and incite social unrest.

#### Assumptions

- NATO expansion continues, with more countries near Russia's borders seeking membership.
- Technological advancements in AI and cyber capabilities are increasingly harnessed to influence operations.
- Internal political divisions within Ukraine deepen, making it more susceptible to external influence.

#### Key Indicators

- Increase in cyberattacks targeting Ukraine's critical infrastructure and government databases.
- Proliferation of deepfake videos and sophisticated disinformation campaigns.
- Visible support for an escalation of armed conflict by separatist movements in Eastern Ukraine.

#### Implications

- The Ukrainian government struggles to maintain control and public trust, leading to significant political instability.
- NATO and EU countries respond with stronger sanctions against Russia, further isolating it from the international community.
- The conflict in Eastern Ukraine intensifies, with increased casualties and a humanitarian crisis.

## *Preparatory Actions*

- Ukraine and its allies invest heavily in cyber defense and AI detection technologies.
- A concerted international effort to combat disinformation through public awareness campaigns and media literacy programs.
- Strengthening of international alliances and support mechanisms for Ukraine to deter further aggression.

## *Future 2: De-escalation and Diplomatic Engagement*

Description: In this alternative future, a change in political leadership in Russia leads to a strategic pivot towards de-escalation and diplomatic engagement with Ukraine and the West. Recognizing the economic and diplomatic costs of continued aggression, the new Russian administration scales back influence operations, seeks to resolve the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, and initiates dialogue for lifting sanctions and restoring relations with the EU and NATO countries.

## *Assumptions*

- A significant shift in Russian domestic politics leads to more moderate leadership.
- Economic pressures and international sanctions impact Russia significantly, prompting a reevaluation of its foreign policy.
- Ukraine successfully reforms its political and economic systems, reducing internal vulnerabilities.

## *Key Indicators*

- Reduction in cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns directed at Ukraine.
- Initiatives from Russia to engage in peace talks regarding Eastern Ukraine.
- Lifting or easing of international sanctions on Russia as a gesture of goodwill.

## *Implications*

- Improved stability and security within Ukraine, fostering economic growth and European integration.
- A gradual normalization of relations between Russia and Western countries, potentially reshaping the security landscape in Eastern Europe.
- Strengthening of democratic institutions within Ukraine, bolstered by decreased external interference.

## *Preparatory Actions*

- Ukraine continues its path of political and economic reforms to solidify its sovereignty and resilience.
- The international community prepares frameworks for the gradual reintegration of Russia into the global economic system, contingent on its adherence to international norms.

- Investment in confidence-building measures and cooperative security arrangements to prevent future escalations.

The alternative futures highlight the possibilities in the evolving situation between Russia and Ukraine. By preparing for different outcomes, Ukraine and its allies better navigate the complexities of modern geopolitical conflicts, ensuring readiness for escalation and opportunities for de-escalation and peace.

To visualize the alternative futures on a four-quadrant, X/Y axis graph, we will define the axes as follows:

- X-Axis (Horizontal): This represents the level of Russian aggression in influence operations against Ukraine, ranging from "Low" to "High."
- Y-Axis (Vertical): This represents the level of international (primarily Western) engagement and support for Ukraine, ranging from "Low" to "High."

Each quadrant will reflect a combination of these two dimensions, visually representing the alternative futures.

#### Four Quadrant Graph Description

##### Quadrant I: High Russian Aggression, High International Support

- Top Right Quadrant
- Future Scenario: Escalation of Russian Influence Operations with Strong International Response
- Description: In this scenario, Russian influence operations against Ukraine intensify, prompting a robust response from international actors, including NATO and the EU, who increase their support for Ukraine, leading to heightened tensions but also solidifying Ukraine's political and economic ties with the West.

##### Quadrant II: Low Russian Aggression, High International Support

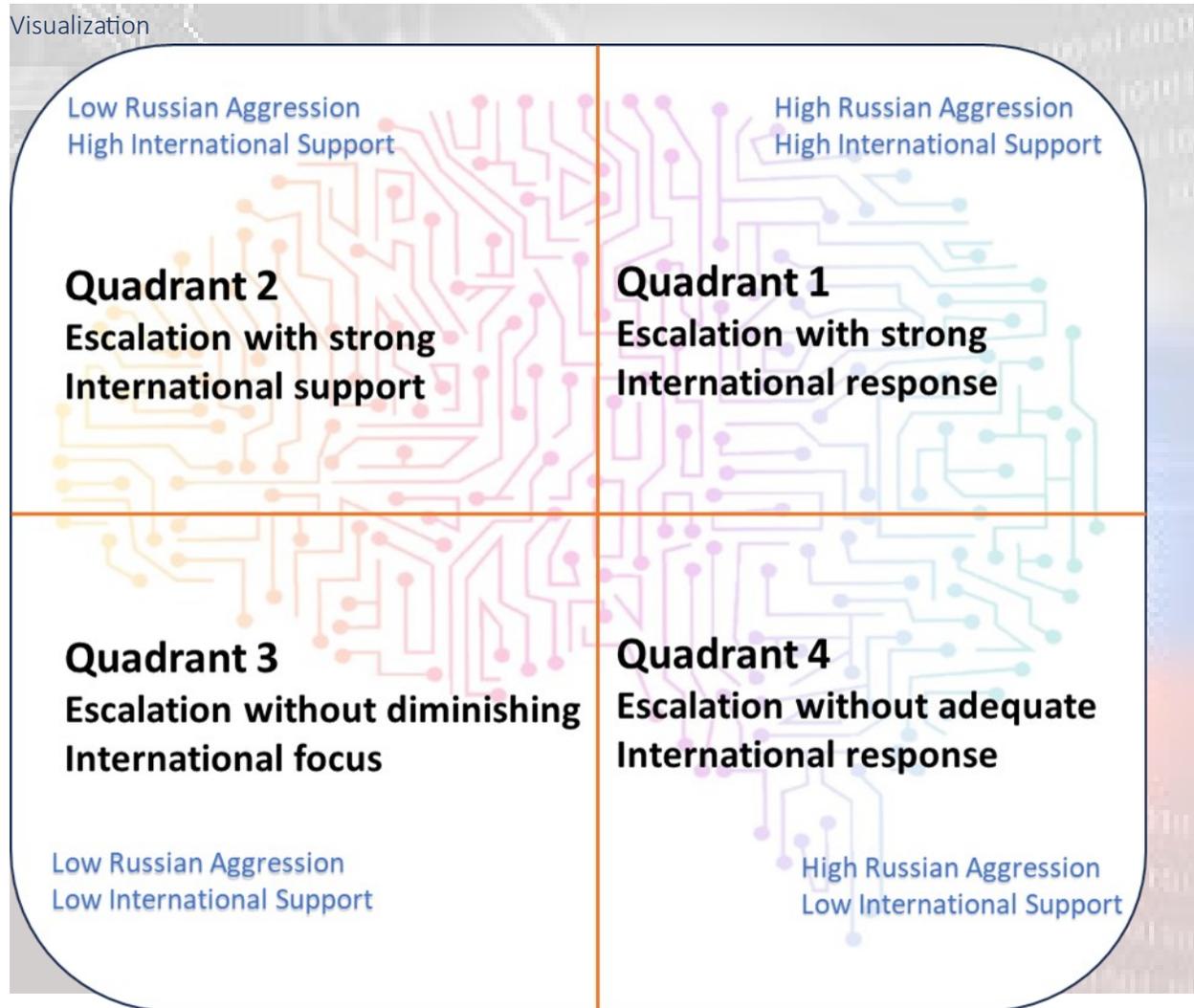
- Top Left Quadrant
- Future Scenario: De-escalation and Diplomatic Engagement with Ongoing International Support
- Description: Russia adopts a more conciliatory approach towards Ukraine, scaling back its influence operations. Simultaneously, international support for Ukraine remains strong, fostering an environment conducive to diplomatic resolutions and bolstering Ukraine's resilience and integration with the West.

##### Quadrant III: Low Russian Aggression, Low International Support

- Bottom Left Quadrant
- Future Scenario: De-escalation with Diminishing International Focus
- Description: Both Russian aggression and international support for Ukraine diminish. This scenario might emerge if global attention shifts to other crises, potentially leaving Ukraine to navigate its security and political challenges with reduced external assistance.

Quadrant IV: High Russian Aggression, Low International Support

- Bottom Right Quadrant
- Future Scenario: Escalation Without Adequate International Response
- Description: Russia intensifies its influence operations and possibly military actions against Ukraine, but the international response is fragmented or insufficient, leaving Ukraine more isolated to face these challenges.



This graph helps stakeholders visualize potential futures and strategize accordingly, focusing on resilience, diplomatic engagement, and strengthening international alliances to navigate the complexities of Russian-Ukrainian relations.

## Quadrant Crunching

For the scenario of Russian influence operations against Ukraine, we will use Quadrant Crunching to examine the impact of two key variables: the intensity of Russian influence operations and the international (Western) response level. This examination will help us identify potential outcomes and strategic considerations.

### Variables for Quadrant Crunching

- X-Axis (Horizontal): Intensity of Russian Influence Operations

- Ranges from "Low Intensity" to "High Intensity."

- Y-Axis (Vertical): Level of International (Western) Response

- Ranges from "Weak Response" to "Strong Response."

### Quadrant Definitions

1. Quadrant I (High Intensity, Strong Response):

- Scenario: Escalation with Countermeasures
- Description: Russia intensifies its influence operations, leading to a strong and coordinated international response to counter these operations through sanctions, support for Ukraine, and cyber defense initiatives.

2. Quadrant II (Low Intensity, Strong Response):

- Scenario: Preemptive Stability
- Description: Russian operations are limited or subtle, but the international community responds proactively with staunch support for Ukraine, enhancing its resilience and deterring further aggression.

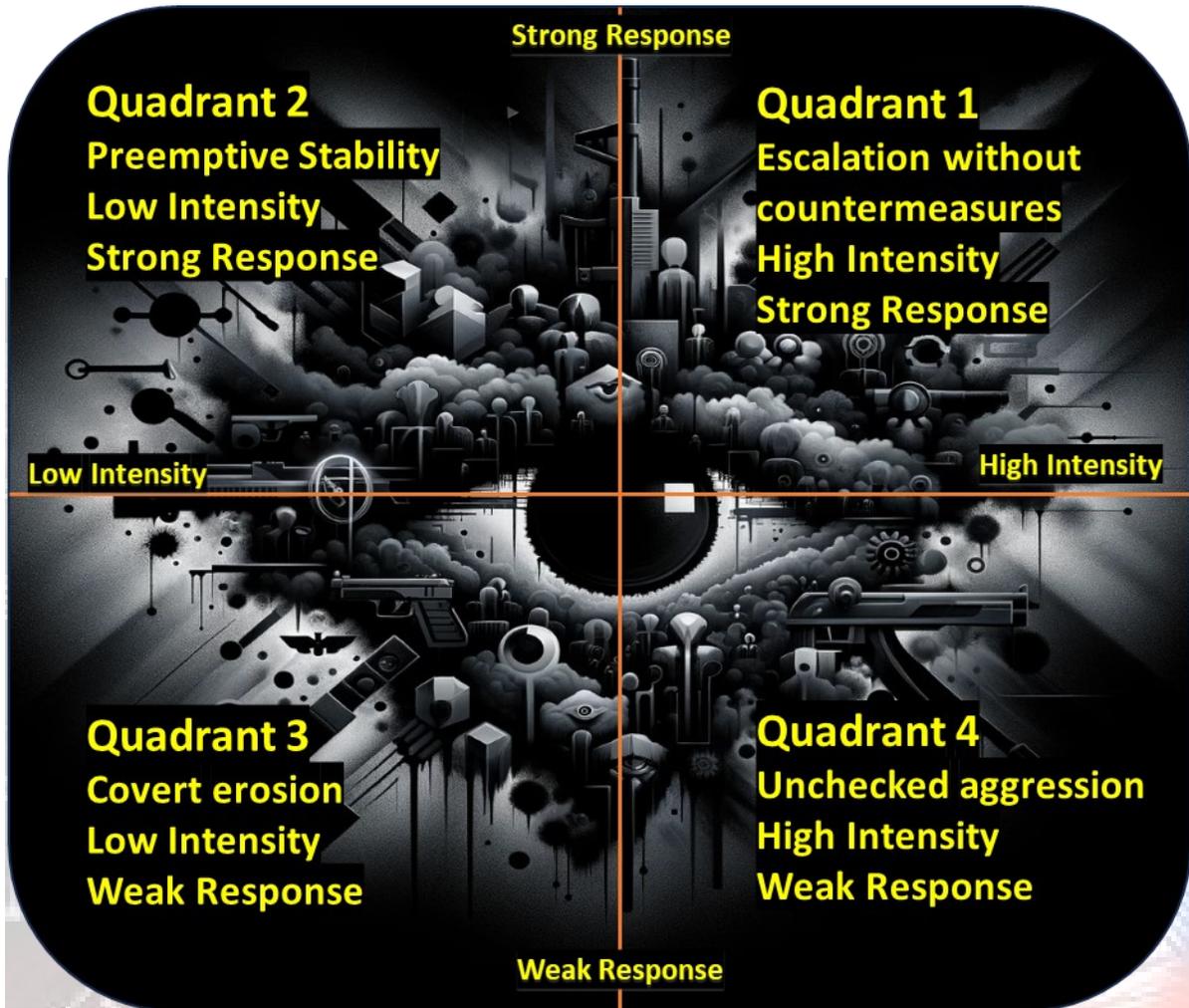
3. Quadrant III (Low Intensity, Weak Response):

- Scenario: Covert Erosion
- Description: Russian influence operations are low-key and possibly overlooked, with minimal international response, allowing Russia to undermine Ukraine's stability and Western alliances gradually.

4. Quadrant IV (High Intensity, Weak Response):

- Scenario: Unchecked Aggression
- Description: Russia aggressively pursues influence operations against Ukraine, facing a fragmented or ineffective international response, leading to significant destabilization of Ukraine and potential territorial gains for Russia.

Diagram and Graph



Quadrant Crunching Analysis

- Assumption Challenge: The technique challenges the assumption that high-intensity operations always lead to a strong response or that low intensity can go unnoticed. It highlights the need for vigilance even in seemingly low-threat situations and the importance of a strong response regardless of the perceived threat level.
- Implications: Each quadrant reveals strategic consequences for Ukraine and the international community, from bolstering defenses and alliances (Quadrant I) to not underestimating subtler forms of influence (Quadrant III).
- Strategic Considerations: The analysis underlines the importance of international solidarity and proactive measures in supporting Ukraine, the necessity of constant vigilance against covert operations, and the potential consequences of inaction.

Quadrant Crunching is a strategic tool to anticipate various outcomes based on the dynamic interplay of Russian influence operations and international responses. It emphasizes the need for adaptable strategies for overt aggression and more subtle forms of influence.

## Pre-Mortem Assessment: Russian Cognitive Warfare Against Ukraine

### Objective

Proactively identify potential failures in responding to Russian cognitive warfare against Ukraine, allowing stakeholders to implement preventive measures and strategies.

### Scenario

One year from now, the international community and Ukraine have found their strategies to counter Russian cognitive warfare largely ineffective. Russian influence operations have significantly undermined Ukraine's political stability, eroded public trust in democratic institutions, and weakened international alliances supporting Ukraine.

### Assumed Causes of Failure

- **Underestimation of Russian Tactics:** Analysts and policymakers failed to fully appreciate the sophistication and adaptability of Russian cognitive warfare strategies, leading to inadequate countermeasures.
- **Fragmented International Response:** The international community's response was disjointed, with NATO and EU countries not aligning their strategies effectively, giving Russia the advantage of exploiting these divisions.
- **Inadequate Public Awareness Programs:** Efforts to increase public awareness and media literacy in Ukraine and among its allies were insufficient, leaving the population vulnerable to disinformation and propaganda.
- **Cyber Defense Shortcomings:** Cyber defenses did not keep pace with the evolving threat landscape, allowing Russian cyber operations to infiltrate critical infrastructure and disseminate false narratives unimpeded.
- **Neglect of Internal Divisions:** Internal divisions within Ukraine were not adequately addressed, making it easier for Russian influence operations to exacerbate them and weaken Ukraine's societal cohesion.
- **Failure to Update Legal Frameworks:** Legal and regulatory frameworks were not revised in time or to an extent that could effectively counter hybrid warfare tactics, leaving a gap in the legal counteraction against Russian operations.
- **Lack of Proactive Counter-Narratives:** The development and dissemination of compelling counter-narratives to Russian propaganda were neglected, failing to challenge or neutralize Russian disinformation campaigns effectively.

- Insufficient Support for Independent Media: Financial and technical support for independent media and civil society organizations in Ukraine was lacking, limiting their capacity to counteract Russian narratives and ensure a resilient information space.

## Recommended Preventive Actions

- Enhance Analytical Capabilities: Invest in training and tools to better understand and anticipate Russian cognitive warfare tactics.
- Strengthen International Cooperation: Foster a unified and strategic approach among Ukraine's allies to present a coordinated response to Russian aggression.
- Expand Public Awareness Initiatives: Implement comprehensive media literacy and public awareness campaigns focusing on critical thinking and the identification of disinformation.
- Bolster Cyber Defenses: Allocate resources to improve cyber defenses and develop rapid response teams to address cyber intrusions and misinformation spread.
- Address Societal Divisions: Initiate dialogue and reconciliation processes within Ukraine to build societal resilience against external influence operations.
- Update Legal Frameworks: Revise legal and regulatory measures to address the challenges posed by cognitive and hybrid warfare effectively.
- Develop Effective Counter-Narratives: Create and promote narratives that counter Russian propaganda, emphasizing truth, transparency, and democratic values.
- Support Independent Media: To ensure a pluralistic and resilient information environment provide sustainable funding and resources to independent media outlets and civil society.

This pre-mortem assessment aims to highlight potential vulnerabilities and guide strategic planning to counter Russian cognitive warfare efforts against Ukraine and its allies more effectively.

## Emergency Theories

The emergence theory from the comprehensive analysis of various documents on Russian cyber operations, information warfare, disinformation campaigns, and the strategic influence exerted displays a comprehensive approach designed to exploit vulnerabilities within target nations' societal, political, and technological spheres. This theory encapsulates the dynamics of hybrid warfare, integrating traditional military power with cyber operations, psychological warfare, and the strategic manipulation of information. It underscores the shift in global power dynamics, emphasizing non-linear warfare strategies where the distinction between war and peace becomes increasingly blurred.

## Theory of Adaptive Disruption in Information Ecosystems

### Premise 1: Multidimensional Cyber Operations

- Russian cyber units and state-sponsored actors engage in a broad spectrum of operations ranging from direct cyberattacks on infrastructure to sophisticated disinformation campaigns. These

operations are not isolated but are part of a coherent strategy aimed at undermining trust, exacerbating social divisions, and destabilizing political systems in target countries.

#### Premise 2: Strategic Use of Information as a Weapon

- Information is weaponized through carefully curated narratives designed to exploit societal fractures, manipulate public opinion, and sway political outcomes. This approach leverages the global information ecosystem's interconnectedness and the vulnerabilities inherent in open societies' reliance on communication platforms.

#### Premise 3: Hybrid Warfare as a Continuum

- Blending conventional military tactics with cyber warfare, economic pressure, and psychological operations reflects a strategic doctrine that intentionally obscures the lines between war and peace. This continuum of conflict allows for the persistent engagement of adversaries without crossing thresholds that would traditionally provoke a military response.

#### Premise 4: Evolutionary Adaptation of Tactics

- Russian strategies exhibit high adaptability, reflecting an evolutionary approach to cyber warfare and information operations. Tactics are continuously refined based on the effectiveness of past operations, changes in the global information environment, and technological advancements. This adaptability ensures sustained relevance and effectiveness in a rapidly changing global landscape.

The emergence theory of adaptive disruption in information ecosystems posits that state actors like Russia employ a dynamic, multidimensional strategy to erode the foundational elements of target societies. This strategy is characterized by its fluidity, adaptability, and integration of cyber operations with broader geopolitical objectives. The aim is to reshape the international order, diminish the influence of traditional powers, and create a multipolar world where information warfare enhances strategic positioning and influence.

This theory highlights the imperative for targeted nations to develop comprehensive counter-strategies that address the technological aspects of cyber defense and the social, political, and psychological dimensions of information warfare. The resilience of democratic institutions, the integrity of the information ecosystem, and the cohesion of societal bonds emerge as critical fronts in this ongoing struggle.

Creating a Hybrid Warfare Strategy Matrix involves organizing the various methods and approaches used in hybrid warfare along two specific dimensions: the nature of the action (kinetic vs. non-kinetic) and its visibility (overt vs. covert). This Matrix can help illustrate the comprehensive strategies employed in modern conflicts, particularly by Russia, highlighting the blend of traditional and non-traditional warfare tactics.

### Hybrid Warfare Strategy Matrix

	Kinetic	Non-Kinetic
<b>Overt</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conventional military operations in Crimea</li> <li>- Deployment of "little green men" in Ukraine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public political support for separatist movements</li> <li>- Economic sanctions</li> </ul>
<b>Covert</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unmarked military activities in Eastern Ukraine</li> <li>- Assassinations of political figures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cyberattacks on infrastructure</li> <li>- Disinformation campaigns</li> <li>- Election interference</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Military exercises near borders to intimidate neighboring countries</li> <li>- Deployment of advanced military systems in strategic areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Official government propaganda through state-run international broadcasting</li> <li>- Public withdrawal from international treaties to signal discontent or threaten neighbors</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support to insurgent groups in foreign conflicts with arms and training</li> <li>- Sabotage operations against critical infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of social media to covertly mobilize protests against foreign governments</li> <li>- Stealthy acquisition of foreign critical tech companies for espionage and influence</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Undercover military operations to gain control over key territories without official engagement</li> <li>- Covert assassination programs against foreign nationals deemed threats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deepfake videos and audio recordings to discredit political figures or incite unrest</li> <li>- Covert financial support to fringe political parties or movements aligned with strategic interests</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Proxy warfare, utilizing non-state actors to achieve military objectives without direct involvement</li> <li>- Placement of mines in international waters or territories without acknowledgment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Manipulation of international legal frameworks and organizations to block or delay actions against state interests</li> <li>- Cyber espionage targeting intellectual property and sensitive government communications</li> </ul>

#### Descriptions

##### *Overt and Kinetic*

- The annexation of Crimea, where military forces were deployed openly but without official insignia to maintain a degree of deniability. The presence and actions were clear, but the attribution was blurred.
- Characteristics: Visible use of force or military power that can be directly observed but might lack explicit state acknowledgment.

## *Covert and Kinetic*

- Examples: Support for the separatist movements in Eastern Ukraine through unmarked troops and military equipment. Assassinations or poisoning of dissidents and political figures abroad.
- Characteristics: Use of physical force or military actions intentionally hidden or denied, avoiding direct attribution and international repercussions.

## *Overt and Non-Kinetic*

- Examples: Economic sanctions against neighboring countries to exert political pressure. Official statements supporting separatist regions in neighboring countries to undermine their territorial integrity.
- Characteristics: Actions that do not involve physical force but are publicly acknowledged or utilized as part of state policy. These actions aim to influence or coerce without direct violence.

## *Covert and Non-Kinetic*

- Examples: Cyberattacks on critical infrastructure aimed at disrupting services without revealing the attacker's identity. Disinformation campaigns are designed to sway public opinion or interfere in elections while originating from anonymous or disguised sources.
- Characteristics: Non-violent actions concealed or conducted under pretenses to manipulate, destabilize, or gather intelligence without direct attribution.

The Matrix helps clarify the complex interplay of tactics employed in hybrid warfare, demonstrating how states like Russia blend overt and covert operations across kinetic and non-kinetic domains to achieve strategic objectives. By categorizing these tactics, analysts and policymakers can better understand and anticipate the comprehensive approaches used in modern conflicts, allowing for more effective counter-strategies to be developed.

## Summary

In an assertive response to Russian influence operations, Ukraine and its allies have systematically developed and executed a comprehensive strategy that spans cybersecurity enhancements, the amplification of public awareness, and robust international collaborations. This strategy aims to shield against overt cyber assaults but also against the covert and pervasive spread of disinformation. By significantly fortifying the cybersecurity of pivotal infrastructure and networks, deploying cutting-edge detection technologies, and engaging in global cybersecurity alliances, these nations have demonstrated a united front against cyber adversaries.

Parallel efforts have been directed towards elevating the public's discernment through widespread media literacy initiatives and campaigns designed to demystify the tactics of influence operations. Partnerships with key social media platforms have been crucial in curtailing the spread of disinformation, marking a pivotal shift towards a more informed and resilient public sphere.

At the core of this comprehensive defense mechanism is joint intelligence-sharing among allies, fostering a deeper understanding of the cyber battlefield. The formulation of counter-disinformation frameworks and the strategic application of diplomatic and economic countermeasures exemplify a global stance against the machinations of state-sponsored cyber aggression.

Supporting the fabric of civil society and the independence of the media has emerged as a cornerstone in the battle against disinformation, reinforcing the pillars of democratic resilience. Through these multifaceted strategies, Ukraine and its allies are not only defending their sovereignty and security. However, they also set a precedent for the international community in the ongoing struggle to uphold democratic integrity and unity in the face of external threats.



## Appendix A

### High-Level Defensive Strategies

The exploration of countermeasures and defensive strategies against Russian influence operations highlights the comprehensive efforts of Ukraine and its allies. These nations have significantly fortified their cybersecurity defenses, heightened public awareness, and strengthened international collaborations to defend against cyber threats and disinformation. Critical infrastructure, government networks, and electoral systems have seen substantial security enhancements, including deploying sophisticated intrusion detection systems, regular security audits, and adopting end-to-end encryption for sensitive communications.

Countries have united under cybersecurity alliances, sharing intelligence best practices and coordinating responses to cyber threats. Noteworthy initiatives like the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence and the European Union Cyber Rapid Response Teams symbolize a collective defense strategy. The formation of national and sector-specific Computer Emergency Response Teams marks a pivotal advancement in cyber resilience, enabling swift responses to cyber incidents and raising domain-specific awareness and training.

Parallely, an extensive push towards elevating public consciousness through media literacy programs and awareness initiatives has been made. These measures aim to arm citizens with the skills to assess information sources and critically reduce susceptibility to manipulative narratives. Engagements with social media platforms to combat disinformation underscore the importance of this strategy, with platforms undertaking various degrees of policy implementation to mitigate state-sponsored disinformation campaigns.

Joint intelligence-sharing among allied nations has deepened the understanding of adversaries' tactics and intentions on the international front. This collaborative effort extends to sharing technical indicators of compromise and strategic threat assessments, underlining a united defense against cyber threats and influence operations. Establishing unified counter-disinformation frameworks by entities such as the European Union and the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism exemplifies a concerted effort to institutionalize a coordinated approach to combat disinformation globally.

Targeted nations and their allies have resorted to diplomatic and economic measures, including sanctions and public attribution, in response to identified influence operations and cyberattacks. They intend to deter adversaries and hold them accountable for their actions. Support for civil society, independent media, and non-governmental organizations in frontline states has fostered democratic resilience against disinformation.

These countermeasures and defensive strategies collectively represent an integrated approach to combating the sophisticated threat posed by Russian influence operations. Despite the evolving nature of tactics and technologies, these strategies' continuous adaptation and refinement are essential in protecting democratic institutions and societal cohesion from external threats.