Active Measures Concept Deconstruction Through the Lenses of Information Influence

Dekonstrukce konceptu aktivních opatření optikou informačního ovlivňování

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Abstract: This study deconstructs the concept of active measures through the prism of information influence. It understands it as sophisticated methods of influencing public opinion and political decisions, originally used by the Soviet Union and now adapted to cyberspace by the Russian Federation. In the analysis, the concept is contrasted with the general abstraction of information influence. This helps to better understand the proximity of active measures to similar concepts. We conclude that abstractions of information influence are also valid for conceptual understanding and practical examples of contemporary Russian active measures. Active measures are subsidiary to information influence, serving as tactical means to achieve the latter's strategic goals. Furthermore, the author states that the information environment is the operational theatre for active operations, cyber operations can be its manifestation, information operations support as a key component of a broader information operations strategy, and psychological operations are its critical element.

Abstrakt: Studie dekonstruuje koncept aktivních opatření prizmatem informačního vlivu. Chápe jej jako sofistikované metody ovlivňování veřejného mínění a politických rozhodnutí, které původně používal Sovětský svaz a jež Ruská federace přizpůsobila kyberprostoru. V analýze je tento koncept konfrontován s obecnými abstrakcemi informačního vlivu s cílem lépe pochopit vztah aktivních opatření a podobných konceptů. Autorka dochází k závěru, že abstrakce informačního vlivu jsou platné i pro konceptuální pochopení a praktické příklady současných ruských aktivních opatření. Aktivní opatření jsou vůči informačnímu ovlivňování subsidiární a slouží jako taktický prostředek k dosažení strategických cílů druhého jmenovaného.

Keywords: Information Influence; Active Measures; Russian Federation.

Klíčová slova: Informační vliv; aktivní opatření; Ruská federace.

INTRODUCTION

Many concepts framing contemporary information influence activities are used by academics, journalists, and experts. There is a need to differentiate them and produce a basis for a better understanding of the topic, which is taking practical form essentially by Russian Federation malicious information influences. The need for research on the topic increased with the events of the Ukrainian Euromaidan in 2013, the subsequent Russian occupation of the eastern parts of the country and the Crimean Peninsula, and the occupation of Ukraine in 2022. In 2012, Russia transferred part of the warfare to cyberspace. In the following years, attackers used malicious cyber and information operations in Ukraine, the Baltics, Central Europe, the so-called West, and the US.

In recent years, Russian malicious information influences have remained the same. On the contrary, they have become a daily reality, and the procedures against them have reached actual institutional measures in Europe (task forces, legal actions, new scientific, intelligent, and offensive institutions, etc.). To create them and make them effective, it is necessary to continue the pursuit of scientific knowledge and to constantly adapt research to the new technologies used by attackers in the dynamically developing sphere of cyberspace.

The main goal of informational influence is to gain an advantage, exploiting the opponent's weaknesses. The influence process is based on intelligence gathering and analysis, dissemination, and emphasis of false and misleading information, as well as planning, command, and policy decision-making. Information influence can occur anywhere on the spectrum of war and peace.

In this context, we often encounter concepts and approaches such as information or hybrid warfare, information operations, disinformation, fake news, weaponization of information, grey zone warfare, or active measures. Miah Hammond-Errey discusses information influence as a general construct under which most concepts can be subsumed.[1] The authors developed a conceptual framework that highlights the relationships between these concepts and provides a better understanding of information influence in society's information environment. This paper analyses the last-mentioned concept – active measures – in the context of information influence with the objective of a more profound understanding of both concepts in society's information environment.

Soviet Russia first used active measures in the 1920s. However, they are still used today in response to the geopolitical structure of the contemporary world, the domestic situation in Russia, and Russia's defence capabilities. This information influence model aims to erect barriers between nations, cultures, economies, states, identities, minorities, and individuals. The media, politicians, or parties, cultural or religious groups, the military, the economic world, and especially the intelligence agencies are the most frequent actors of active measures. Active measures, currently primarily implemented

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[1] HAMMOND-ERREY, Miah. 2019. Understanding and Assessing Information Influence and Foreign Interference. *Journal of Information Warfare*. roč. 18, č. 1., s. 1–23.

by transferring measures into cyberspace, benefit significantly from technological improvements.

Finding a concise definition of active measures is a complex undertaking. At best, attempts at defining active measures are descriptive; many are contradictory, and those that aren't contradictory are rarely consistent. These predominantly reflect the recollections and historical accounts of Soviet intelligence defectors, CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) and FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) operatives (past and present), congressional inquiries and investigations, and scholarly interpretations. A standard open-source definition for active measures does not exist.

The tradition of the Russian intelligence agencies and its political and strategic culture constituted active measures. Active measures generally alternate between open (white) propaganda and terrorism; its scope is broad. Its conceptual proximity is recognizable to hybrid warfare, where active measures can be understood as a source for contemporary debate about hybrid warfare. Also, we see relative proximity with the destructive reflexive control concept, which describes Antti Vasara's model[2]. This method targets the decision-makers's command and control systems, plans, and staff processes; it takes the forms of maskirovka, disrupting or degrading communications and keeping authorities confused about intentions' true scope and limits.

1   RESEARCH GOALS, QUESTIONS, AND METHODOLOGY

The study aims to explain and deconstruct the concept of active measures through the lenses of information influence. The article is conceived as an overview study. The research aims at a deeper conceptual understanding of the issue of active measures. The research design is based primarily on working with the literature, where individual descriptions of concepts are compared to answer the research question.

Since the thesis operates with concepts such as information or hybrid warfare, psychological operation or influence operations, the author will primarily operate with NATO´s understanding of concepts. At the same time, it will be supplemented with information from the academic literature.

In the case of the concept of information influence, the author uses a conceptual basis from Mustonen-Ollila, Lehto, and Heikkonen[3]. Their research concludes that information influence is a complex phenomenon that involves various interrelated concepts. The authors developed a conceptual framework that highlights the relationships between similar concepts and provides a better understanding of information influence.

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[2] VASARA, Antti. 2020. *Theory of Reflexive Control: Origins, Evolution and Application in the Framework of Contemporary Russian Military Strategy.* Finnish Defence Studies. Helsinki, Finland: National Defense University.

[3] MUSTONEN-OLLILA, E, MJ LEHTO, and J HEIKKONEN. "Information Influence in Society's Information Environment: An Empirical Analysis Using the Grounded Theory." Journal of Information Warfare 19, no. 4 (2020): 70–88. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27033646

The working hypothesis argues that information influence is a general construct under which the concept of active measures can be subsumed.

For active measures deconstruction, the author uses practical examples and available theoretical data from well-established authors.

We ask the following research questions:

In which abstractions does concept of active measures meets with concept of information influence?

What is the relationship of the active measures concept with similar and interrelated concepts?

A working conceptualization of the active measures is needed for the study. The author proposes it at the end of the following part, which focuses on active measures literature review, history, and characteristics.

The analysis focuses on the contemporary practice of active measures, which is taking place primarily in cyberspace. The author chooses this approach because of the definition of information influence, which is also focused on cyberspace. The aim is to compare compatible data.

Limitations of the Study

Since the author combines military terminology presented especially by NATO and academic sources, slide discrepancies between understanding of particular concepts might appear. NATO's approach is practical and aimed at enhancing operational efficiency and strategic decision-making. In contrast, academic research explores the broader implications of information systems, seeking to understand and improve the interface between technology and users in various contexts. The author stresses them and tries to find a synthesis to eliminate these issues.

2   LITERATURE REVIEW ON ACTIVE MEASURES

When going into more profound history, active measures are explained in a series of books by former and later defected agent Ladislav Bittman[4] and an expert text by

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[4]   BITTMAN, Ladislav. 1972. *The Deception Game: Czechoslovak intelligence in Soviet political warfare by Ladislav Bittman*. Syracuse University Research Corp.; BITTMAN, Ladislav. 1981. *The Deception Game*. New York: Ballantine Books.; BITTMAN, Ladislav. 1985. *The KGB and Soviet disinformation: an insider's view*. Washington: Pergamon-Brassey's.; BITTMAN, Ladislav. 1992. *Špionážní oprátky*. Praha: Mladá fronta.; BITTMAN, Ladislav. 2000. *Mezinárodní dezinformace*. Praha: Mladá fronta.

Dennis Kux[5], the first chairman of the Active Measures Task Force (Active Measures Working Group) under the administration of US President Ronald Reagan. Kux conceptualizes types of operations under active measures and divides them according to severity and legality into white, grey and black. Jolanta Darczewska[6] summarises the historical understanding of active measures in the context of contemporary scientific debate, focusing in particular on Dennis Kux's ideas[7]. Authors Kragh and Asberg[8] examine the narratives employed by Russian active measures in Sweden in the Journal of Strategic Studies, and finally, the author of this paper and Jan Hanzelka, writing in the Slovak journal Political Science, compare the Russian approach to applying active measures against three European Union countries with different political, cultural, historical, and economic realities.[9] We may also locate an article by Martin Slávik in the same journal that examines how the Czechoslovak StB (Státní bezpečnost – State Security Service) operates within the context of active measures.[10]

Thomas Rid[11] and Olga Bertelsen[12] are two additional modern authors who target readers outside of academia with their works. The 2020 book by Thomas Rid, which chronicles the history of Soviet and, more recently, Russian active measures, includes some examples of active measures currently being used in cyberspace. However, the book is written with a readership other than professionals in mind and sometimes reads like fiction when describing specific incidents.

Stephanie K. Whittle[13] took a similar approach to active measures study as this paper does. In her thesis from 2015, she compares active measures with the current US doctrinal framework of Unconventional Warfare to develop a better understanding of an irregular strategy increasingly evident in the contemporary operational environment on the part of both state and non-state adversaries.

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5   KUX, Dennis. 1985. "Soviet and Disinformation: Overview and Assessment". *The US Army War College Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 1. Available from: https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters/vol15/iss1/17/. Laurelle, Marlene. 2015. *The"Russian World" Russia's Soft Power and Geopolitical Imagination*. Center on Global Interests.

6   DARCZEWSKA, Jolanta. 2018. "Active measures as the Russian hybrid aggression in a retrospect. Chosen aspects". *Przegląd Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego*, vol. 18, no. 10, pp. 244–265.

7   KUX 1985; ref. 5.

8   KRAGHM, Martin a Sebastian ÅSBERG. 2017. "Russia's strategy for influence through public diplomacy and active measures: the Swedish case. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 40, no. 6, pp. 773-816. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2016.1273830.

9   PAVLÍKOVÁ, Miroslava a Jan HANZELKA. 2019 „Nástroje ruských aktivních opatření ve vybraných zemích EU". *Politické vedy*. Banská Bystrica: Fakulta politických vied a medzinárodných vzťahov UMB Banská Bystrica, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 108–131.

10   SLÁVIK, Martin. 2020. "Ku koreňom dnešných dezinformačných kampaní. Aktívne opatrenia rozviedky komunistického Československa". *Politické vedy*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 178–201.

11   RID, Thomas. 2020. *Active Measures: The Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare*. London: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

12   BERTELSEN, Olga ed. 2021. *Russian Active Measures – Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*. ibidem Press .

13   WHITTLE, Stephanie K. 2015. *Conquest from Within: A Comparative Analysis between Soviet Active Measures and United States Unconventional Warfare Doctrine*. US Army Command and General Staff College Fort Leavenworth.

The fundamental limits in the resource base are based on the need for official Russian documents focusing on active measures. Denial and manipulation are essential components of active measures. Thus, the author can assume that a significant part of the current active measures comprises secret information and secret service activities. Academics do not have access to sources of a classified nature. The current clandestine nature of operations is understandable, but even the KGB (Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti - Committee for State Security), the leading measures organization in the past, has not opened its most secret archives.[14] Furthermore, it is also necessary to perceive shortcomings in the resource base on the part of Western sources, as some operations that can be classified as active measures are visible only to the secret services. According to the current discussion in intelligence studies, access to relevant government data, the institutionalization of intelligence studies at a higher level, periodic scientific meetings, and closer links between science and research and practitioners could be solutions.[15]

3   DEFINING ACTIVE MEASURES

The individual characteristic variables do not change over time; they merely adapt to new possibilities brought about by technological developments, especially in cyberspace.

Active measures combine overt and covert techniques that represent a sophisticated system of Russian ways to influence public opinion to further domestic and international objectives. The methods used to accomplish these objectives target the fundamental flaws in Western democracies, such as freedom of speech and open society, as well as the West's most crucial defensive measure, notably Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.[16] Whittle[17] operations have a subversive character; they aim to weaken the West, to drive wedges in the Western community alliances of all sorts, particularly NATO, to sow discord among allies, and to weaken the United States in the eyes of the people of Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and thus to prepare the ground in case the war occurs.

The most thorough definition of active measures was initially published in the KGB's counterintelligence lexicon (Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti, or Committee for State Security).[18] If we shorten it, it only refers to active measures regarding KGB operations, namely, processes to foresee the opponent's moves and prevent his subversive actions from being used offensively. These actions use obfuscation and disinformation,

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[14] RID 2020: 364; ref. 11

[15] VAN PUYVELDE, Damien, WIRTZ, James J, HOLEINDRE, Jean-Vincent, OUDET, Benjamin, BAR-JOSEPH URI, Kotani, KEN, Matei, FLORINA Cristiana and Antonio M DÍAZ FERNÁNDEZ. 2020. "Comparing National Approaches to the Study of Intelligence". *International Studies Perspectives*, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 298–337.

[16] GALEOTTI, Mark. 2019. "Active Measures: Russia's Covert Geopolitical Operations". *George C. Marshall European Center For Security Studies*, no. 31. Available from: https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/ publications/security-insights/active-measures-russias- covert-geopolitical-operations-0.

[17] WHITTLE 2015, ref. 13.

[18] NIKITCHENKO, V. F. et al., eds. *Kontrrazvedyvatelnyjj slovar KGB*. 1972. Moskva, SSSR.; DARCZEWSKA 2018: 252; ref 6.

as well as the locations of agents within the inner sanctum of the adversary. According to former KGB operative Vasily Mitrokhin, the concept of active measures is broader. It includes acts intended to influence the opponent's political life and foreign policy, misleading him, undermining his position, or sabotaging his objectives.[19]

In addition to the limited number of dictionary explanations available, a source of Information on Soviet active measures is the testimony of Ladislav Bittman, a former Czechoslovak State Security agent with a practical focus on active measures, compiled in several volumes (1972, 1981, 1985, 1992, 2000), who in 1968, he moved to the West. Bittman defines active measures as political, military and economic disinformation and covert actions designed to manipulate public opinion, government and influential private organisations' personalities.[20]

Today's Russian scholarly sources do not define active measures. Contextual expressions can be found exceptionally in the media (e.g. RIA Novosti 2019). Individual aspects can be found in texts devoted to soft power, information warfare, hybrid warfare or analysis of individual tools typical for the content of active measures. When active measures are mentioned in Russian media, they usually refer to Soviet practices or labels used by the West to describe Russian activities.[21]

Based on a study of mainly contemporary Western sources, the author finds that active measures are most often explained and described concerning the tools used, the role of the secret services, Soviet terms, and finally, the methods of warfare. References to the past also play a significant role, which is understandable given the long history of the concept, but often overshadows the present, an equally important form to understanding the politico-diplomatic reality.

The easiest way to explain active measures is through typical tools. Some authors foreground or explain active measures using one dominant instrument, such as Fedorov, who relates them to achieving political goals by so-called agents of influence.[22] Most texts operate with multiple tools; these are often divided into so-called overt and covert ('overt' and 'covert') methods[23] or white, grey ,and black operations[24], or according to

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[19]　MITROKHIN, Vasili a Andrew CHRISTOPHER. 2018a. *Mitrokhin Archive. The KGB in Europe and the West.* Penguin Books Ltd.; MITROKHIN, Vasili a Andrew CHRISTOPHER. 2018b. *Mitrokhin Archive II.* Penguin Books Ltd.

[20]　BITTMAN 2000: 51; ref. 4.

[21]　(e.g. ALEXEYEV, Alexey. 2020. "Mezhdu Andropovym i Kissindzherom. Kak SSSR vyigral prezidentskie vybory vChili, aSS HA osporili ikh rezultaty (Между Андроповым и Киссинджером. Как СССР выиграл президентские выборы в Чили, а США оспорили их результаты)". Коммерсантъ, 31. 10. 2020. Available from: https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4556649?query=активныемероприятия; KLIMOV, Andrej. 2017. "Vnešnepolitičeskie aspekty kul'turnogo liderstva v global'nom mire". *Meždunarodnaja žizn* (Международная жизнь), no. 6.; LITVINOVA, Marta a Anna LUŠNIKOVA. 2019. "Bor'ba ni s čem»: v Evroparlamente opasajutsja «aktivnyh meroprijatiï» Rossii protiv ES". *RT na russkom*, 18. 6. 2019.

[22]　FEDOROV, Yurij. 2016 *Hybrid War a la Russe*. Kyiv: Center for Army, Conversion and Disarmament Studies.

[23]　e.g. DARCZEWSKA 2018; ref. 6, LUTOVINOV, Vladimir I. 2009. "Razvitie iIspol'zovanie Nevoennykh Mer Dlya Ukrepleniya Voennoi Bezopasnosti. Rossiiskoi Federatsii". *Voennaya Mysl (Военная мысль)*, no. 5, 2009, pp. 2–12.

[24]　e.g. KUX 1985; 6.

the areas or sectors where they are applied, e.g. economic, informational, cyber and diplomatic measures.[25]

So-called open methods characterize sponsoring by official propaganda sources and involve diplomacy or cultural relations. Conversely, covert activities include written and verbal disinformation, operations of agents of influence, secret broadcasts or activities of so-called fronts. These are primarily directed by the secret services, which prepare the operational background.[26]

Some authors then refer to only semi-secret, covert, or grey and black methods as active measures.[27] The exclusion of overt methods and white operations is a more radical definition.

Among the leading tools, contemporary definitions include those often associated with methods of political struggle, such as social engineering, psychological influence, and manipulative techniques to achieve political goals[28], and less so with military or paramilitary operations, such as the use of camouflage, proxy actors, deception, or terrorist attacks.[29]

The emphasis on political activities is, to some extent, a reflection of the current image of Russian foreign policy activities, especially in the media. Thus, the most frequently cited are the establishment of so-called fronts, the establishment of relations with ideologically close political parties, and the dissemination of disinformation[30]. This raises the question to what extent the current form of active measures oscillates between political warfare and military warfare or, according to Sante[31], between instruments of politics and instruments of war. According to Babbage, political warfare is a set of operations aimed at influencing nation-states, organizations or individuals by the opponent's strategic interests without using kinetic force outside the framework of armed conflict. Operations that involve armed violence cannot be a political struggle. Galeotti[32] calls using military means as adjuncts in political struggle' heavy metal diplomacy'. Complementarity occurs on both sides - just as political struggle can be enhanced by military tools, military operations can be complemented by means of political struggle, such as disinformation.

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[25] (e.g. PYNNÖNIEMI, Katri. 2019. „The Asymmetric Approach in Russian Security Strategy: Implications for the Nordic Countries". *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 31, no. 1, p. 3.

[26] DARCZEWSKA 2018: 245; ref. 6

[27] HUGHES, John. 1985. *Active Measures*. Christian Science Monitor.; Galeotti 2019, ref. 17

[28] DARCZEWSKA, Jolanta a Piotr ŽOCHOVSKI. 2017. *Active Measures: Russia's Key Export*. Warsaw: Center for Eastern Studies.; U.S. Information Agency. 1992. *Soviet Active Measures in the „Post-Cold War" Era 1988-1991*. A Report Prepared at the Request of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations by the United States Information Agency.

[29] BAGGE, Daniel. 2019. *Unmasking Maskirovka: Russia´s Cyber Influence Operations*. Defense Press.; DARCZEWSKA, and ZOCHOVSKI 2017; ref. 32.

[30] GALEOTTI 2019, ref. 16.

[31] SANTE, Alejandro. 2018. *Countering Russian Active Measures*. Diploma master thesis. Joint Forces Staff College. Virginie: Norfolk, p. 11.

[32] GALEOTTI, Mark. 2016. "Heavy Metal Diplomacy: Russia's Political Use of its Military In Europe Since 2014". *European Council on Foreign Relations*. Available from: http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/Heavy_Metal_Diplomacy_Final_2.pdf.

Based on the literature, it can be concluded that the importance of political warfare is increasing today. Among the leading causes are new technologies that make political struggle more aggressive and effective.[33] According to Babbage[34], Russia currently exploits the grey zone between war and peace through the tools of political struggle, or, as Sante[35] puts it, active measures; thus, it understands them as synonymous with political struggle. Propaganda, political and economic influence are at the forefront, while military threats (and official diplomacy) complement each other. Escalation into formal conflict will not occur because fighting before the brink of war is more advantageous for Russia.[36]

A third crucial definitional level is the role of intelligence agencies (e.g. Juurvee[37]), which the Cold War literature considers almost synonymous with active measures. This narrower conception derives from intelligence analytical practice in the US during the Cold War. The essence is the prioritization of intelligence activities and their framing as the main characteristics of active measures. The model originates in the intelligence activities of the CIA and the administration, which responded to hostile foreign intelligence activities in this way.[38] Conversely, Bittman[39] considers the KGB and the International Department, along with the Communist Party, as the two main components of active measures, whose activities had a more significant impact than those directed by intelligence.

4   SIMILAR AND INTERRELATED CONCEPTS

4.1 Information Warfare

NATO does not specifically define information warfare, however it can be described contextually through its official documents. Information warfare is defined as the deliberate use of information to achieve a competitive advantage over an adversary. This

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[33] PATERSON, Thomas a Lauren HANLEY. 2020. "Political warfare in the digital age: cyber subversion, information operations and 'deep fakes'". *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 74, no. 4, p. 440

[34] BABBAGE, Ross. 2019. *Winning Without Fighting.* vol. 1. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.

[35] SANTE 2018: 16; ref. 31

[36] WARRELL, Helen. 2020a. "Russia and China waging 'political war', says UK military chief". *Financial Times*, 30. 9. 2020. Dostupné z: https://www.ft.com/content/8103dcc2-fbb7- 4d5d-b5f9-ee9f0db1f1ed

[37] JUURVEE, Ivo. 2018. "The resurrection of 'active measures': Intelligence services as a part of Russia's in influencing toolbox. Strategic Analysis". The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats. Finland: Helsinki.

[38] ABRAMS, Steve. 2016. Beyond Propaganda: "Soviet Active Measures in Putin's Russia." *Connections*, vol. 15, no. 1, p. 11.

[39] BITTMAN 1985: 44; ref. 4.

includes both the protection and exploitation of information and information systems in a way that influences the decision-making process of adversaries while safeguarding NATO's decision-making capabilities.

Regarding the relationship between information warfare and active measures, the former concept can be seen as superior to the latter.[40] Bagge[41] considers active measures as one of the three sources of the Russian approach to information warfare, alongside the military-technical revolution and cybernetics. Miller[42], in turn, notes that contemporary Russian information warfare is a natural outcome of Soviet active measures.

4. 2 Hybrid Warfare

NATO does not provide a single, fixed definition of hybrid warfare[43] but acknowledges it as a strategy that combines military and non-military means, including cyber attacks, misinformation, economic pressure, and political campaigns, to achieve strategic goals. This approach is designed to exploit vulnerabilities, sow confusion, and operate in the gray zone between peace and war.[44]

Pynnöniemi[45], argues that the current discussion on the concept of hybrid warfare replicates the debate on active measures in the 1980s, which aimed at understanding of Soviet strategy for the Western expert community. Miller[46] considers active measures as a critical component of hybrid warfare. Active measures reflect the complexity of hybrid warfare and bring together different techniques and actors.[47]

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[40] e.g. BERTELSEN 2021; ref. 12.

[41] BAGGE 2019: 39; ref. 33.

[42] MILLER, Nash. 2022. Adaptive Russian Information Warfare in Ukraine. In: MILLER, Nash, Jessica, BRZESKI, Jacqueline. EVANS, Jesse CLARKE, Francie DAUCÉ and Benjamin LOVELUCK. Russian Information Warfare: Russian Analytical Digest No. 282 [online]. ETH Zurich, 2022, pp. 13–16 [cit. 2022-10-13]. Available from: https://www.research-collection.ethz.ch/bitstream/handle/20.500.11850/541999/RAD282.pdf?sequence=3&isAllo wed=y

[43] More on the scope of hybrid warfare defining BÍZIK, Vladimír, Dominika KOSÁROVÁ, Adam POTOČŇÁK and Richard STOJAR. 2022. "Hybrid Interference: From the Particular to a Continuum. Empirical Test of the Multi-Dimensional Concept of "Hybrid"." *Obrana a strategie* 22(1): 075-088. DOI: 10.3849/1802-7199.22.2022.01.075-088.

[44] BILALA, Arsalan. "Hybrid Warfare – New Threats, Complexity, and 'Trust' as the Antidote." *NATO Review,* 30. 11. 2021, Available from https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2021/11/30/hybrid-warfare-new-threats-complexity-and-trust-as-the-antidote/index.html

[45] PYNNÖNIEMI, Katri. 2019. „The Asymmetric Approach in Russian Security Strategy: Implications for the Nordic Countries". *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 154–167.

[46] MILLER 2022; ref. 50

[47] DARCZEWSKA 2018: 245; ref. 6.

According to Lloyd[48], Russian active measures[49] are part of the Russian hybrid warfare strategy adopted by President Vladimir Putin as a tool to achieve foreign and domestic political goals. The relationship between the two concepts is thus similar to that of information warfare; active measures are a resource that complements the current hybrid warfare strategy.

5   OPERATIONALIZATION OF ACTIVE MEASURES

To be designated as active measures for analysis, operations should meet the following conditions. These are based on the main theoretical findings presented in the theoretical section.
- Operations take the form of political or military struggle and are manipulative, create political or social pressure, and influence political decision-making;
- Operations pursue Russian foreign policy interests;
- Operations have a subversive character; it aims to weaken the West, to drive wedges in the Western community alliances of all sorts, particularly NATO, to sow discord among allies and to weaken the United States in the eyes of the people of the world, and thus to prepare the ground in case the war occurs.

6   INFORMATION INFLUENCE

NATO does not have a specific definition for "information influence" as a standalone term. As stated in the introductory part, information influence is a complex phenomenon that involves various interrelated concepts[50] such as information or hybrid warfare, information operations, disinformation, fake news, weaponization of information, grey zone warfare or active measures. Paper by Mustonen-Ollila, E. B., Lehto, M., and Heikkonen presents a conceptual framework of thematic and item categories related to information influence in society's information environment. The authors used the Grounded Theory approach to collect and analyse. The paper's unique result is the 13 higher levels of abstractions of statements in the conceptual framework. Overall, the paper contributes to a better understanding of information influence and its interrelationships with other related concepts. In the following analysis, the author of this paper confronts Mustonen-Ollila's, Lehto's and Heikkonen's outcomes with the working concept of active

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[48] LLOYD, Gabriel. 2021. "Hybrid Warfare and Active Measures". *Small Wars Journal*, 10. 10. 2021. Available from: https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/hybrid-warfare-and-active- measures

[49] According to Galeotti, active measures reflect the Russian mentality of a permanent state of war, which corresponds to both information as well as hybrid warfare. GALEOTTI 2019, ref. 16.

[50] MUSTONEN-OLLILA, E. B., LEHTO, M., and HEIKKONEN, J. 2020; ref. 3

measures to understand better its relationship to other related concepts and well as its role in contemporary malicious usage in the realm of the irregular warfare.

In their analysis of information influence, authors came to the number of characteristics of information influence as following 13 higher-level abstractions. Author of this paper added short headlines.

1. Uncertain Beginnings and Targets

It is very difficult to know when a specific information influence has started, what its goals are, and who it is targeting;

2. Indistinct Targeting

In a certain action, either an activity or a person can be the target of any kind of information influence, and the targets may not even know that someone is influencing them;

3. Obscured Driving Forces

It is difficult to see what background forces are driving the influences and operations and what their political goals are;

4. Undermining Societal Structures

Society's information environment, decision-makers, and people are being undermined by information influences and information[51];

5. Cyber Operations Impact

Cyber operations have led to questioning the ability of society to handle the crises that cyber operations cause;

6. Crisis in Decision-Making

Crises test decision-maker's abilities to do things correctly when the critical infrastructure is hacked;

7. Influencing Decision-Makers

The conflicts caused by the moods of politicians, decision-makers, and influential people can prevent them from making proper decisions;

8. Warfare Objectives

During wartime, the goal of information influences is to affect enemies directly by weakening their spirit to fight.

9. Domestic Influence

Information influences, information operations, and psychological operations may also be targeted at one's citizens and can either directly or indirectly influence information influence;

10. Societal Division

The aim is to shape the IE so that society will divide against itself and external forces can rule politics and the economy;

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[51] MUSTONEN-OLLILA, E. B., LEHTO, M., and HEIKKONEN, J. do not explicitly define information in the provided sources.

11. Media Manipulation

The actions of social media and the normal media are critical because, in social media, news spreads extremely fast, and the other media does not always check the truth or reliability of the social media information;

12. Psychological Pressure

In psychological operations and influences, the goal is to influence citizens so that they give in to psychological pressure and give up unless they have enough support, criticality, and common sense to trust their situation awareness and understanding of things;

13. Covert Actors

The actors are somewhat hidden while working at different levels of society or outside society, coordinating these influences and operations carried out at different levels and aimed at different types of people in society. However, they do exist and try to influence strongly.

Since the authors operate with several concepts that have not yet been defined in the text, they will be introduced in the following section. Priority definitions are taken from the understanding of NATO and at the same time complemented by the authors' understanding of the above abstractions.

6.1   Information Environment

In their study. authors understand IE as the societal context in which information is disseminated, accessed, and utilized. It encompasses networks, infrastructures, and social media platforms. They do not use any further definition. However, in their next paper, Mustonen-Ollila, E. B., Lehto, M., And Heikkonen define information environment (IE) as "*Information, aggregate of individuals, organizations and systems that receive, collect, process and convey/disseminate the information, or act on information, and the cognitive, virtual and physical space in which this occurs*", which corresponds with the definition of NATO from 2012[52]. They emphasize that the definition includes both military and non-military information operations (IO) and information warfare (IW). Only slight changes appear to compare with 2023 version (AJP-10. 1[53]). NATO defines it as "*An environment comprised of the information itself, the individuals, organizations and systems that receive (...).*"

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[52] MUSTONEN-OLLILA, ERJA B., M. LEHTO, and J. HEIKKONEN. 2020. „Components of defence strategies in society's information environment: a case study based on the grounded theory". Security and Defence Quarterly 28 no. 1: 30. doi:10.35467/sdq/118186. p. 20.

[53] NATO. 2023. Allied Joint Publication-10.1 Allied Joint Doctrine for Information Operations. Ministry of Defence, United Kingdon. https://assets.publishing.service. gov.uk/media/650c03bf52e73c000d9425bb/AJP_10_1_Info_Ops_UK_web.pdf

6.2   Cyber Operations

Mustonen-Ollila, E. B., Lehto, M., And Heikkonen[54] operate with cyber operations and define them relatively vague. "*Cyber operation can use cyber weapons, which form military-grade, world-class malicious software in information networks and cause a great deal of damage to enemies. Cyber weapons use code clusters, which make it possible to bring down foreign states' electronic networks by attacking them through information networks. They can bring down net banks and information networks by adjusting the control logistics of oil transport, in order to cripple states and their critical infrastructures*." NATO (AJP-10. 1)[55] defines them as an activities that project power to achieve military objectives in or through cyberspace. These operations can have effects in the physical dimension (e.g.computer hardware destruction) and cognitive (thoughts, beliefs, interests, and perceptions of individuals and groups), which expands from the definition of authors above. NATO also uses phase "offensive cyber operation", which can be used to inflict permanent or temporary effects, reducing an adversary's confidence in their networks, information, or other capabilities for a specific period and can be conducted in isolation or in conjunction with other capabilities. Information operations is important at the operational-tactical level of operations.

6. 3   Information Operations

Mustonen-Ollila, E. B., Lehto, M., and Heikkonen[56] define information operations as integrated military operations that use information to influence decision-making and achieve desired effects on the will of enemies, defend against enemies, and impact cultural groups and international communities. Information operations are a crucial aspect of countering information influence in the information environment. NATO[57] defines IO similarly, however with stronger emphasis on operational dimension and is more specific. IO represent comprehensive approach that encompasses activities in peace, crisis, and conflict situations throughout the continuum of competition. It involves understanding the information environment and specific audiences, planning activities for cognitive effect, and supporting the planning of all engagement space activities. Information operations focus on three interrelated activity areas, which include protecting friendly command and control systems and communication and information systems, countering adversary information activities, and supporting the achievement of objectives through cognitive effects.

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[54] MUSTONEN-OLLILA, ERJA B., M. LEHTO, and J. HEIKKONEN. 2020, ref. 3, pp. 74.

[55] NATO. 2023, ref. 65, pp. 33.

[56] MUSTONEN-OLLILA, ERJA B., M. LEHTO, and J. HEIKKONEN. 2020, ref. 3, pp. 70-71.

[57] NATO. 2023, ref. 65, pp. 19 and 24.

6.4   Psychological Operations

Authors[58] define psychological operations as a component of information operations that aim to influence people's emotions, attitudes, and behaviors through the use of various techniques such as propaganda, social engineering, and control. Psychological operations are considered a form of soft psychological operations. Psychological operations are often employed in warfare to achieve strategic objectives by exploiting psychological vulnerabilities and creating psychological effects on the target audience. They are an important tool in countering information influence and achieving desired outcomes in the information environment. NATO´s definition is similar, it contributes with the stress on strategic communications within the NATO military. These operations can be conducted in conjunction with other capabilities, such as cyber operations, to create desired effects and support deterrence.[59]

6.5 Interrelation of Concepts

In essence, while information influence and the information environment provide the overarching goals and battlefield, information operations serve as the primary means of achieving these goals, with cyber and psychological operations acting as critical, though subsidiary, tactics within this framework.
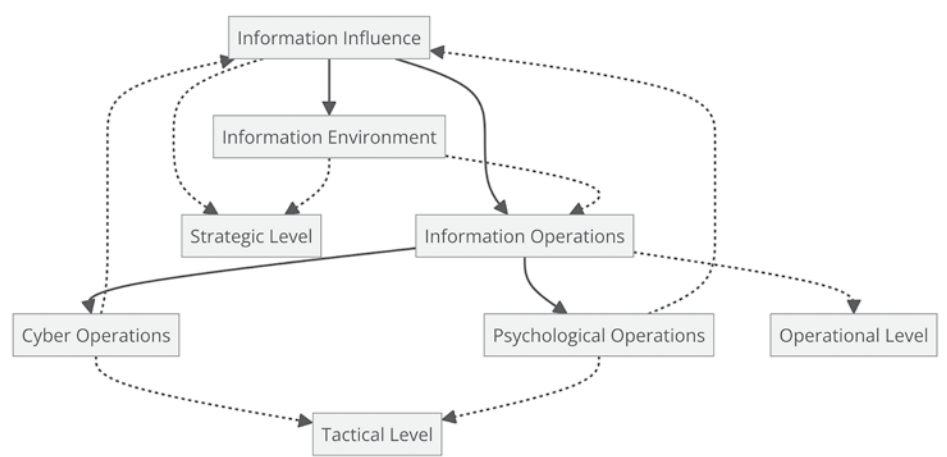

Figure 1: Interrelation of concepts

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58 MUSTONEN-OLLILA, ERJA B., M. LEHTO, and J. HEIKKONEN. 2020, ref. 3, pp. 70 and 83.

59 NATO. 2023, ref. 65, pp. 9 and Lex. 11.

7   ANALYSIS: ACTIVE MEASURES AND INFORMATION INFLUENCE ABSTRACTIONS

The following part analyses the concept of active measures in the context of the abovementioned abstractions of information influence.

7.1   Uncertain Beginnings and Targets

Active measures often start covertly, making it hard to pinpoint their inception, objectives, and targets, aligning with the elusive nature of these operations. Past and current active measures are characterized by the long-term nature of operations, which may have their origins deep in the past. Soviet propaganda operated on selected targets over extended periods, with varying intensity across campaigns[60] and the form of the channels through which they were disseminated. Bittman[61] speaks of long-term targets that were set for a period of 5 to 7 years. Of the current active measures, this can be illustrated by cyber espionage campaigns using cyber tools known as advanced persistent threats, which are sophisticated and long-term in nature.

7.2   Indistinct Targeting

Similar to active measures, which often subtly influence individuals or groups without their awareness, this abstraction emphasizes the covert and broad-reaching nature of these campaigns. Operations of secret services, which are essential for active measures, are naturally based on covert actions. About „certain action, either an activity or a person" as a target of any kind of information influence is also typical for active measures taking place in cyberspace, where each person can be targeted due to the networked character of society.

7.3   Obscured Driving Forces

This abstraction aligns with the hidden agendas and political motives often found in active measures, where the true instigators and their goals are concealed. Contemporary Russian active measures have a highly decentralized character. There are also wide variations in the degree of involvement of the centre in individual operations. It can

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[60] PYNNÖNIEMI 2018: 7; ref. 41.

[61] BITTMAN 1985: 44; ref. 4

directly lead operations but also intervene with minimal (e.g. financial) or no support. According to Galeotti[62], the center's role is inspirational, curatorial, and, in some operations, initiatory. Multiple actors can then be motivated and influenced by various factors. The executive actors are either directly part of the state, can come from the state and private business sphere, or can be non-state actors or proxies.[63]

7.4   Undermining Societal Structures

Active measures aim to destabilize society, decision-making processes, and people's trust, similar to the impact of information influence.

Individuals are indispensable in active measures, especially those active in public life or politics. Decision-makers can be undermined by cyberespionage operations, which lead to, for example exposure of secret governmental or political documents. Also, their position or politics could be sabotaged by malicious information influence, as stated above, which can lead to particular election results.

7.5   Cyber Operations Impact

Active measures now frequently incorporate cyber tactics to create societal or infrastructural crises. Sophisticated cyber threats that disrupt critical infrastructure systems and cause widespread economic and societal damage. The blackout of national power grids is one of the most real threats, especially with the ransomware attack already underway against targets in Europe, where significant economic damage can occur on a national level.

7.6   Crisis in Decision-Making

Active measures, through information influence and cyber operations, can create environments that test and challenge decision-makers, especially in crisis situations.

From the attacker's point of view, decision-makers' abilities could be undermined by the attack on critical infrastructure and, therefore, attack not only citizens but also political authorities and their trustworthiness. It contributes to one of the objectives of active measures, which is producing chaos in society. If decision-makers fail to respond to the crisis adequately, they contribute to society's ongoing chaotic situation.

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[62] GALEOTTI 2019, ref. 16

[63] SANTE 2018: 16-17; ref. 31

7.7   Influencing Decision-Makers

The aim of active measures is often to create conflicts and influence the moods and decisions of politicians and leaders, as highlighted in this abstraction.

One of the aims of the active measures is to sow distrust between states, allies, politicians, and decision-makers. By provoking a conflict, these authorities can make an erroneous and harmful decision with a societal impact.

7.8   Warfare Objectives

Similar to the goals of active measures during conflict, this point focuses on demoralizing the enemy, a common tactic in psychological warfare.

Since the invasion, Russia used some traditional tools of active measures against Ukraine, especially disinformation and fake news. Following Bergengruen[64], Russia used a dazzling array of strategies to defend its actions, seed doubts about the news from the ground. It pushed false or misleading narratives to weaken support for Ukraine. Atlantic Council Digital Forensic Research Lab is talking about causing the loss of morale and confusing people, which can weaken the spirit to fight.[65]

7.9   Domestic Influence

Active measures can be directed inward, influencing a nation's own citizens through information and psychological operations, for control or to achieve internal objectives.

While active measures are often associated with foreign objectives, they can also be directed inward for domestic control or to bolster a government's position. This might represent a slight divergence, as traditional active measures focus more on foreign adversaries, but modern interpretations acknowledge domestic applications.

This abstraction can be illustrated by the very beginning of the active measures in 1919 during the Soviets started to gain power. The newly created active measures were aimed not at foreign enemies but domestic ones (see, for example, Andrew and

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[64] BERGENGRUEN, Vera. 2023. "Inside the Kremlin's Year of Ukraine Propaganda". *Time*, 22. 2. 2023. Available from https://time.com/6257372/russia-ukraine-war-disinformation/

[65] OSADCHUK, Roman and Andy CARVIN. 2023. *Undermining Ukraine: How the Kremlin Employs Information Operations to Erode Global Confidence in Ukraine*. Atlantic Council Digital Forensic Research Lab. Available from: https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Undermining-Ukraine-Final.pdf

Mitrokhin).[66] The focus on internal enemies continued later in the Soviet Union. As Bertelsen[67] mentions, KGB-led measures had two dimensions: domestic and foreign.

Currently, active measures on Russia's citizens can be illustrated by Russian state media coverage right before the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. By Daukas[68] there were two phases of Russia's activities in the domestic information environment - the military conflict escalation phase (from 01.10.2022) and the actual war phase (from 24.02.2022 until 31.03.2022). In the first phase, the Russian citizens were being prepared for the upcoming invasion by information operations. The budget on information operations against its citizens has arisen, and narratives oriented on tensions between Russia and Ukraine. Right after the invasion, much information arose with narratives orienting in support of invasion. We can perceive this as a direct influence on the information environment. Indirectly, the Ukrainian information environment was influenced. Ukrainians were well prepared for various information operations as well as reacting to narratives about war spread by the Russian government.

7. 10 Societal Division

One of the goals of active measures is to fracture societal cohesion, making it easier for external forces to exert influence and control, as noted in this abstraction.

According to Bittman, one of the fundamental theorists of active measures, they can be divided into three forms of operations –white, grey and black. According to Bittman[69], who Pfaltzgraff, Ra'nan and Milberg paraphrase[70], the ultimate goal of black operations is manipulating the entire society, which can be related to the general purpose of Russian active measures. This form of subversion is typical for information influence and active measures. Russia aims to weaken the West, to drive wedges in the Western community alliances of all sorts, particularly NATO; to sow discord among allies, to weaken the United States in the eyes of the people of Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and thus to prepare the ground in case the war occurs. political strength or morale of a governing authority." The Soviets simply defined subversion as the strategy of "conquest from within".[71]

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[66] MITROKHIN, Vasili a ANDREW Christopher. 2018b. *Mitrokhin Archive II.* Penguin Books Ltd.

[67] BERTELSEN 2021:14; ref. 12.

[68] RAIMUNDAS Jareckas,Viktoras DAUKSAS, Vera MICHLIN-SHAPIR, and Neville BOLT. 2023 *Analysis of the Kremlin's comms strategy towards RUS audiences before and after invasion of Ukraine.* NATO StratCom COE Conference: How to Loose the Information War: Case Study of Russia.

[69] BITTMAN 1972, 1981; ref. 4.

[70] BITTMAN 1981: 213; ref. 4.

[71] WHITTLE 2015; ref. 13.

7.11   Media Manipulation

Active measures often exploit social and traditional media to spread misinformation rapidly, leveraging the lack of verification processes.

Two variables are critical for the contemporary active measures and the usage of media 1) its renaissance by Vladimir Putin and the rise of authoritarianism in modern Russia, 2) new communication technologies, especially those which enable faster and more effective spread of propaganda. These are primarily social media and normal media, which also went online. Also, it is necessary to mention the role of hybrid trolling, as Spruds et al.[72] refer to. The abstraction is also valid for local language-specific media; their existence and functioning are usually controlled from below, and editors use their ideological convictions. Links to the centre are minimal. The content of the media outlets where the editors operate resembles a combination of opinion pieces and news coverage, often taken from other disinformation, social media or pro-Russian websites. If we look at such media outlets in the Czech Republic, the abovementioned formula is fulfilled, for example, by Aeronet, AC24 or Rukojmí. These actors can also be found in Slovakia, Hungary or the Baltic countries.[73]

7.12   Psychological Pressure

This mirrors the objectives of psychological operations within active measures, aiming to break the will and resistance of citizens and adversaries through psychological stress.

This category copies the statements from abstractions 4 and 10, where citizens are influenced by active measures operations, leading to distrust of their government and institutions. Active measures often target those who already distrust the system and lack critical thinking. These are usually readers of disinformation media, members of online groups with anti-system, extremist or pro-Russia content, and voters of non-liberal, anti-systemic, pro-Russia or non-democratic political parties. According to Crilley et al.[74], the targeted audience are citizens with anti-establishment stands, corporativism and the West.

[72] SPRUDS, Andris, Anda ROŽUKALNE, Klavs SEDLENIEKS, Marns DAUGULIS, Diana POTJOMKINA, Beatrix TÖLGYESI a Ilvija BRUGE. 2016. *Internet Trolling as Tool of Hybrid Warfare: the Case of Latvia*. NATO Stratcom Centre of Excellence.

[73] see e.g. SOLIK, Martin a Lukáš HOLAŇ. 2019. „Prokremelské propagandistické „alternativní" mediální weby na Slovensku". *Politologická revue*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 27–64. ; Investigative Journalism for Europe. 2020. "Who's Financing Fake News in the Baltics?" Available from: https://www.investigativejournalismforeu. net/projects/whos-financing- fake-news-in-the-baltics/.

[74] CRILLEY, Rhys, Marie GILLESPIE, Bertie VIDGEN a Alistair WILLIS. 2022. Understanding RT's Audiences: Exposure Not Endorsement for Twitter Followers of Russian State – Sponsored Media. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, vol. 27, no. 1. pp. 220–242.

7.13 Covert Actors

The hidden nature of the actors behind active measures corresponds to this point, emphasizing their influence across different societal levels and their efforts to remain undetected. In today's active measure with cyberspace as a central arena, everyone can be an actor of active measures, no matter on what level of society he stands. These can be decision makers, military, politicians, actors from the business sphere, non-state actors, proxies[75], and citizens. For example, the Latvian Security Service[76] mentions Russian intelligence that recruits the decision-makers of middle management of political parties.

Decentralization is typical for contemporary active measures; coordination is blurred and often hidden.

Active measures: fulfilment of the characteristics of information influence

According to analysis, most of the information influence abstractions are also valid for conceptual understanding and practical examples of contemporary Russian active measures. Therefore, we can confirm the that information influence as a general construct under which the concept of active measures can be subsumed.

However, some of the abstractions remained in the hypothetical presence. There might be two main reasons 1) the data about some variables (e.g. particular tool, interference, attack) are not available as an open source, they might be known only to secret services or specific authorities, 2) an attacker was not able to perform particular active measure in full scale or the ideal form. In practice, these are primary large-scale disinformation campaigns leading to social divisions, chaos in society or influencing of elections. For example, one of the biggest threats emerging from contemporary active measures is cyberattacks on critical infrastructure, which significantly impact societies' functioning. Also, large-scale information operations with sophisticated propaganda tools (AI, micro-targeting) have not occurred yet to occur. If so, some of the disastrous consequences that abstractions describe could occur.

About the relationship and interrelated concepts, we conclude that information influence, being the broader concept, encompasses the strategic use of active measures to shape perceptions and manipulate information. Active measures are subsidiary to information influence, serving as a tactical means to achieve the strategic goals of the latter.

The information environment is the operational theatre for active measures. Active measures exploit the various components of the information environment (cognitive, informational, and physical) to disseminate manipulated information and influence public perception. The information environment is the domain within which these measures are executed.

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[75] SANTE 2018: 16-17; ref. 31

[76] Latvian Security Service. 2016. "Annual report for 2015". Available from: https://vdd.gov.lv/en/useful/annual-reports/

Cyber operations can be a form of active measures, utilized to disrupt, damage, or manipulate information systems. Active measures often incorporate cyber operations to achieve specific disruptive or influential effects within the information environment.

Information operations encompass a wider array of activities (including cyber operations and psychological operations) aimed at influencing, disrupting, or exploiting decision-making. Active measures align closely with information operations, often serving as a key component of a broader information operations strategy.

Active measures can be considered a subset of information operations, particularly in their focus on covert influence and manipulation. Psychological operations, which aim to influence attitudes and behaviors, are a critical element of active measures.

Active measures often use psychological tactics to create misinformation, sow confusion, and influence public opinion. Psychological operations, when used as part of active measures, are a tactical approach within the broader strategy.
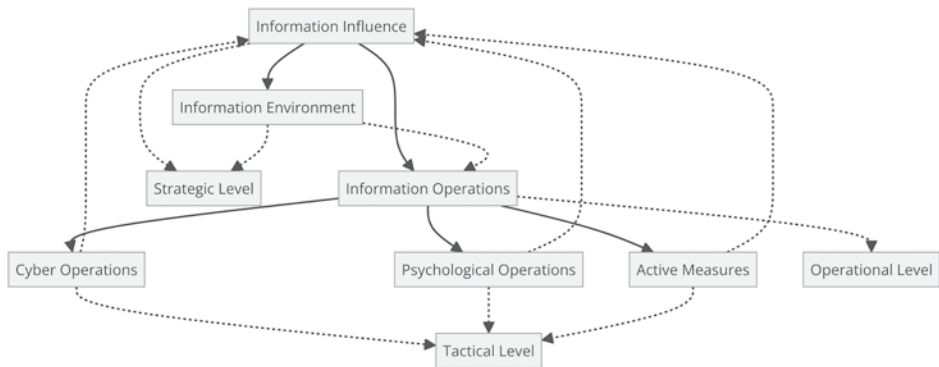
Figure 2: Relation of active measures to information influence and other concepts

SUMMARY

Active measures are a critical component in the arsenal of modern information influence, often interwoven with information operations, cyber operations, and psychological operations to achieve strategic goals within the information environment. They serve as both a method and a subset within these broader concepts, emphasizing the complexity and interdependency of these operations in contemporary geopolitical contexts. The relationship between active measures and these concepts is characterized by a strategic synergy where active measures provide the tactical means to influence and manipulate, thereby achieving the broader objectives of information influence. The information environment is the operational theatre for active measures. Cyber operations can be a form of active measures, utilized to disrupt, damage, or manipulate information systems. Active measures align closely with information operations, often serving as a key component of a broader information operations strategy. Psychological operations, which aim to influence attitudes and behaviors, are a critical element of active measures.

Upon review, the 13 abstractions largely align with the concept and operational tactics of active measures, reflecting the covert, manipulative, and destabilizing aims of such operations. While most points directly support the traditional understanding of active measures, the application to domestic audiences (point 9) could be seen as a slight divergence for those who strictly view active measures as foreign-targeted operations. However, in modern contexts, the distinction between foreign and domestic targets has blurred, with many states employing similar tactics internally to maintain control or suppress dissent.

This work with the conceptual distinction and clarity could serve as a basis for future research focusing on practice. It could be useful to examine how active measures are adapting to advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and micro-targeting, and how these tools may change information influence tactics. Further research could also explore international responses to active measures and the effectiveness of countermeasures. It would also be important to examine the impact of active measures on democratic processes and public opinion in different geopolitical contexts.

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