SUMMARIES IN ENGLISH

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Informational Aspects of the Zapad 2017 Exercise

Yevhen Mahda

Russia's quadrennial war games, taking place on the territories of Russia and Belarus under the banner "Zapad" (meaning "west" in English), date back to Soviet times and have become a tradition. More recently, the Zapad drills have also become a part of an informational strategy bolstering the supranational Union State of Russia and Belarus. As for the informational campaign that accompanied the Zapad 2017 exercise, it was devised as part of larger informational warfare targeting Ukraine and NATO.

In order to ensure that the Zapad exercise was received in the West as the Kremlin intended, everything that was related to the exercise was amplified and blown out of proportion. Quite often, media reports led to hysteria, and were sometimes promoted for that exact purpose, helping Russia generate and promote the following narrative – the inadequate and alarmist nature of Western societies.

During the Zapad 2017 exercise, there were a series of events that could be deemed as elements of information warfare. The most substantial being the information manoeuvre carried out by the Russian Ministry of Defence (MoD) in the first hours of the exercise. On September 14, 2017, at 11.00 in the morning, the website of the Russian MoD announced that units of the 1st Panzer Army of the Western Military District had been alerted and were marching on Belarusian polygons. An hour later, there was another announcement that Pskov, Ivanovo and Tula paratroopers had also been alerted. Four hours later, journalists received a public denial of this information from the press service of the Belarusian Ministry of Defence. However, it was not enough to contain the panic that had been unleashed.

What goals were set and reached as a result of the Zapad 2017 exercise?

1. The external goals focused on creating an image of powerful and invincible Union troops (mainly Russian); sowing fear and panic; misinforming and obfuscating in order to complicate the process of analysis; demonstrating Belarus's dependence on the Russian Federation.

2. The internal or domestic goals were to boost Putin's approval rating before the 2018 presidential elections in Russia, and to demonstrate to the Russian people that "we are feared, and we should not be underestimated".

Ultimately, Russia managed to reach all those goals. Particularly effective was the demonstration of Belarus's helplessness and dependence on Russia. However, the truth is that Russia's primary goal had been reached far before the Zapad 2017 exercise even began. Manipulation, misinformation and other elements of informational aggression led to confusion and panic, and that is exactly what Russia was aiming for.

Creating a Culture of Fear in Modern Hybrid Warfare: The Case of Russia's Zapad 2017 Military Exercise

Holger Mölder

The growing role of information warfare has had a significant impact on contemporary international conflicts and is redefining national military strategies. The widespread development of various forms of communication (i.e. internet, social media) over the past decades has created a favourable environment for information warfare to proliferate, offering influential international actors an alternative to achieve their strategic goals at a relatively low cost. Consequently, future conflicts may largely be based in a war of narratives, with limited military operations performing only a supportive function to extensive information warfare. Instead of traditional armed conflicts, battles between adversaries can be conducted in different media environments and, instead of tanks and cannons, emotions and beliefs can be used as weapons.

Every four years since 2009, Russia has been holding military exercises called "Zapad" (meaning "west" in English) that are always accompanied by an intensified information campaign on the potential military conflict between Russia and NATO in the Baltic Sea Region. This kind of demonstration of power (incl. large-scale military exercises) has become a tool that often shapes the perception of threats related to the anticipated hostile intentions of other actors in the context of a security dilemma. This article examines how the security dilemma in the Baltic Sea region affects the spread of fear, including how large-scale military exercises create an image of an unstable security environment that could at any moment erupt into a full-scale war between the Russian Federation and the West. The article also examines the

possible domestic impacts of these military exercises that reinforce the willingness of Russian citizens to defend themselves against anyone who may presumably harbour hostile intentions towards them.

The Role of Russia's Intelligence Agencies in Influence Operations of Information Warfare: What is Known and What Can be Assumed

Ivo Juurvee

Due to limited access to relevant sources, the influence activities of the secret services of authoritarian countries are a complicated subject to study. However, as the article shows, it is not impossible in the light of new materials made available to the researchers only recently and especially with the application of cross-temporal comparison. In the case of Russia, we can use the legal regulations governing its Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) and Federal Security Service (FSB) that mention 'support measures' as one of their core activities. The analysis shows the connection, if not equivalence, between these measures and Soviet 'active measures' of the Cold War era, on which there are volumes of primary and secondary source material. The recent legal measures taken against Russia's influence activities in the West provide researchers with long-awaited additional material, as does the opening of Western security services that provide more information for the public domain than they used to do. The analysis presented in this article offers not only an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the influence operations of Russia's intelligence agencies – which is, of course, academically interesting as well – but also insights on how to design countermeasures.

Mechanisms of Fear in Russia's Strategic Narratives about Zapad 2017

Andreas Ventsel, Sten Hansson, Mari-Liis Madisson, Vladimir Sazonov

Modern military training exercises often include an information warfare component. Combat manoeuvres and weapon tests may be combined with large-scale information operations, including attempts at mass deception and persuasion via strategic uses of media narratives. In this article, we analysed

the largest recent Russian war games on NATO's eastern borders, the Zapad 2017 military exercise, by identifying and analysing three strategic narratives that were presented in journalistic representations of the exercise in the Estonian media scape. These narratives serve multiple functions: they cast NATO in a negative light, induce fear among Western audiences, and represent Russia as a 'victim' rather than a potential aggressor.

One of the ways Russia spread confusion and fear was through manipulation with ambiguous messages and inconsistent numbers. Although Russia's representatives tried to ridicule Western speculations about the size of the troops, the continuous amplification of the message and keeping it on the media agenda helped fuel the assumption that Russia was disguising its actual military capacity. The mounting fears, coupled with ambiguous information, pushed the audience into a state of anxious uncertainty. Russia managed to create an image of itself in the Western media as an intimidating and militarily dangerous adversary, and, in turn, the emergent atmosphere of precariousness propagated the discourse of Russia's military might.

The discrediting of Western politicians, experts and the press is another example of significant manipulation of the strategic narratives described in this article. Through news stories, the Russian media attempted to foster an impression that it was, in fact, the Western media that was fearmongering by spreading speculations and 'Russophobic' views. Influenced by such narratives, the target audience is at serious risk of starting to doubt its judgment. However, in a critical situation that requires an adequate and prompt reaction to urgent unfolding processes, any hesitation may prove fatal.

The Discursive Construction of Russia's Military Capabilities

Priit Tamm, Sten Hansson

In this article, the authors identify the ways in which Russia's military capabilities were discursively constructed in the Estonian online news media during 2017–2018.

The authors put forward a framework for analysing discursive representations of military capabilities in terms of linguistic references to or markers of (1) size/numbers of troops and equipment, (2) technology/modernization of forces, (3) mobility/activity of troops, and (4) money/resources available to achieve military objectives.

The resulting analysis demonstrates the use of these linguistic resources to construct an image of Russian forces either as a threat to the West or to downplay/ridicule Russia's military power. In the presented textual data, the perception of Russia's military capabilities was primarily magnified via references to large numbers of troops and weapons.

The Discursive Construction of Military Exercises as 'Newsworthy'

Inna Siik, Sten Hansson

This article analyses the representations of Russia's military exercise Zapad 2017 in Estonian online news media from the perspective of the discursive construction of newsworthiness. Drawing on Bednarek & Caple's novel analytical framework, the authors describe the uses of eight kinds of linguistic resources in news stories covering the Zapad exercise: (1) references to stereotypical attributes or preconceptions, (2) assessments of significance/impact, (3) intensifiers and quantifiers used to establish 'superlativeness', (4) negative lexis and references to negative emotions, (5) personalization and references to 'ordinary people', (6) linguistic markers of geographical proximity, (7) temporal references used to establish 'timeliness', and (8) evaluations of unexpectedness.

The results demonstrate how these resources were employed to construct and propagate a confrontation between Russia and NATO, and to incite fear by depicting Zapad 2017 as a military threat to the Baltic States.

Phobophobia: The Discourse of Cyber Threats and Information Warfare in the Media Coverage of Zapad 2017

Mari-Liis Madisson, Andreas Ventsel

This article analyses various cyber threats that were discussed in media texts that focused on Russia's military exercise Zapad 2017. The discourse of cyber threats is full of loaded and controversial meanings because, on the one hand, the domains of electronic and information warfare remain intangible for average readers who do not have expert knowledge in ICTs. On the other hand, these issues presume deliberate deception and clandestine activities executed

by the Kremlin. The wider aim of this paper is to demonstrate how the topic of Russia's electronic and informational warfare capabilities can be covered by the media without fuelling unsubstantiated anxiety and unwarranted threat scenarios or supporting Russia's strategic narratives about the growth of its high-tech military might. The theoretical basis combines the frameworks of the Copenhagen School of security studies and notions of cultural semiotics. We explain the logic of phobophobia (i.e. the abstract concern about the devastating impacts of the collective feeling of fear and vulnerability that is often related with biased usages of new ICTs) that is characterized by a significant reliance on analogies, drawing vague demarcation of reference objects and the dominance of negative emotional tonality.

The resulting analysis demonstrates that during the Zapad 2017 exercise the media discourse depicted Russia as an advanced military power that has gained a lot of practical skills and experience in previous incidents of electronic and informational warfare. At the same time, the West was portrayed as a rather passive victim that was often anxious and unnerved by unanticipated attacks coming from Russia. The main sources of threat were associated with: 1) Russia´s electronic and informational warfare capabilities; 2) the low capability of NATO´s experts to foresee electronic and informational attacks, 3) the vulnerability of everyday technology, particularly smartphones.

The Coverage of the Zapad 2017 Military Exercise in the Russian Media Scape

Aleksandr Gontcharenko, Vladimir Sazonov

The authors have analysed several articles published in different Russian media outlets in 2017, mainly focusing on the topics related to the Russian-Belarusian joint military exercise Zapad 2017 that took place in September 2017.

The analysed articles derive mainly from four different Russian media outlets – *Baltnews.ee*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda, RuBaltic.ru,* and *TV Zvezda*. These media outlets covered different topics and subjects that were widespread and popular with regard to fears raised in Baltic countries in relation to the Russian-Belarusian military exercise Zapad 2017.

Russian news portals *Baltnews.ee* and *RuBaltic.ru* are local Kremlin-controlled media channels whose target audience is the Russian-speaking population of the Baltic region. *Komsomolskaya Pravda* is a widely circulated

Russian daily newspaper, targeting not only the people living in Russia, but also all Russian-speaking people outside Russia, incl. the Baltic countries, Ukraine, Central Asia, Belarus, etc. The most distinctive among the chosen media outlets is *TV Zvezda*, because it is run by the Russian Ministry of Defence and its coverage mostly focuses on military topics. Although the target audiences and objectives of these four media outlets differ to some degree, they all share the same objective - spreading and amplifying various fears and panic in the West in general, and among the Baltic countries in particular, with regard to Russia's military might, its armed forces, and weaponry, especially before, during and after the Zapad 2017 military exercise.

Most of the analysed articles carried quite negative tonality towards NATO, the West and the Baltic countries. Often, the Baltic countries, NATO and the West were ridiculed and portrayed as paranoid alarmists who exaggerate the Russian threat to the Baltic States. Russian media also used sarcastic and ironic tonality to humiliate and discredit the military and political elite of NATO and the Baltic countries.

These channels used different topics and subjects to propagate their agenda, e.g. the Baltic countries were portrayed as the weakest link in the North Atlantic Alliance or that Russia is not dangerous at all and the military exercises serve only a defensive function, therefore the Baltic countries are simply paranoid because the Russian military threat is non-existent. There were also many other topics and issues that these Russian channels covered and put into circulation.