



## RUSSIAN INFLUENCE IN THE COMPETITION PERIOD



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## OVERVIEW

U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command explains that, in a state of continuous competition, Russia exploits the conditions of the Operational Environment to achieve its objectives without resorting to armed conflict by fracturing alliances, partnerships, and resolve (TP 525-3-1).

This framework helps identify Russian influence in the competition period. It is developed from the Russian military perspective to enhance situational awareness and critical thinking for professional military education. It can be used in conjunction with other material, but does not replace nor update similar products on this topic.

Russian influence can come from planned operations but also from accepted geopolitical practice, spontaneous civic activities, and many other actions and events that contribute to Russian objectives.

The goal of these influence actions and events, from the Russian military perspective, is to have an adversary “self-disorganize” and “self-disorient.”

*Russian military science describes key methods in the competition period:*

- Political, Economic, Informational, and Psychological pressure
- Disorient the political and military leadership
- Spread dissatisfaction among the population
- Support internal opposition
- Preparing and deploying armed opposition
- Deployment of special operations force
- Subversive acts
- Employment of new weapon systems

The following are curated examples to demonstrate Russian influence actions and events within their military’s thinking paradigm, but it is not a complete model of Russian decisionmaking or planning.

## POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, INFORMATIONAL, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESSURE

Political, economic, informational, and psychological pressure as an influence method can include commonly practiced military engagements and multilateral exercises that Russia uses to develop and shape political and military relations and partnerships. For instance, military advancements in robotics and increased presence in the Arctic encourage a sense of competitive advantage to outsiders. This is classic, effective military propaganda in accordance with the Russian definition.



Source: Tsentr 2019 <http://eng.mil.ru/en/multimedia/photo/gallery.htm?id=69319@cmsPhotoGallery>. Public domain.



Source: <http://eng.mil.ru/en/multimedia/photo/gallery.htm?id=69319@cmsPhotoGallery>. Public domain.

## **DISORIENTATION OF THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY LEADERSHIP**

In disorienting the adversary's political and military leadership, most major Russian media remains quasi-controlled by the Kremlin, and thus serve to disseminate the Kremlin-approved message at home and abroad. Each of the major TV and radio stations also offer military-themed programs, many of which are Ministry of Defense supported and not only highlight the latest military developments and promote the image of the military but also inculcates the Kremlin's threat portrayal. President Putin's descriptions of new "invincible" weapon systems promotes a sense of Russian strength and an alternative strategic security environment in which they have advantage. These activities have propaganda value in promotion of Russian objectives but can also disorient outside observers and decision-makers.

## **SPREADING DISSATISFACTION AMONG THE POPULATION**

In spreading dissatisfaction among the target population many Russian influence activities have made headlines. One such event is the infamous shoot-down of the Malaysian airliner (MH-17) over separatist-controlled territory of Ukraine. In this case, the Russian military establishment supported their government's response with the use of outdated satellite imagery, dubious weapons transfer documentation, and simulations of a fabricated Ukrainian SAM or military aircraft attack. Today, not only a majority of Russians believe that their country was blameless, but also some Ukrainians and even the Malaysian Prime Minister stated his support of Russia's "no proof" position. Overall this effort could be seen as an array of decoy actions that fragmented unifying condemnation of Russia.

## SUPPORT OF INTERNAL OPPOSITION

One way Russia supports internal opposition abroad is with state-sponsored paramilitary organizations. The use of these quasi-state forces develops pro-Russian constituency, discredits other narratives, and they can act as an instigating force or alternative police. This could be considered a disorganizing activity. Cossacks that were deployed as alternative, pro-Russian police forces in the immediate aftermath of the Crimean seizure are an example of these citizen militias coordinating and integrating in Russian military operations. In the current Russian military encyclopedia, the Union of Cossacks of Russia is specifically noted as a legitimate organization of the “defensive work of the masses.”



Source: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/29482> CCA-4.0 Intl

## PREPARING AND DEPLOYING ARMED OPPOSITION

In preparing and deploying armed opposition within the targeted state, the support of separatist militias in Eastern Ukraine has many examples. In late May 2014, for instance, a group of outside fighters that supported Ukrainian separatists, calling themselves the Vostok Battalion, led a series of attacks in and around Donetsk. The fighters, many of whom said they were Chechen, appeared in Ukraine less than one month after Chechen head-of-state, Ramzan Kadyrov, threatened to send troops to fight in Ukraine. Chechnya is a federal territory of Russia.



Source: Yana Amelina. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Battalion\\_Vostok\\_1.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Battalion_Vostok_1.jpg) CCA SA 3.0

## DEPLOYMENT OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

The deployment of special forces may include a range of military forces, so “special” in this case means more than just special operations forces. The iconic “Polite Men,” who facilitated the take-over of Crimea, are one example. Others include regular armed forces soldiers deployed in deception, such as those Russian military members in support of Ukrainian separatists groups. More recently, the notion of special forces can be seen in its broadest, inter-agency sense during November 2018 when Ukrainian ships were seized enroute to a Ukrainian port on the Sea of Azov. The coordinated operation included forces from several agencies and services including the Russian military. In Syria, the Russian Military Police troops, as the principle force in securing and delivering humanitarian aid, support the strategic Russian image in this conflict. This demonstrates the whole-of-government part of New Type War and might be considered “specially packaged information” aimed to reflexively influence the opinions of other states.



Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Black\\_Sea\\_map.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Black_Sea_map.png) CCA SA 3.0 Unported

## CONDUCTING SUBVERSIVE ACTS

Russia will conduct subversive acts such as its role with GRU (the General Staff's Main Intelligence Directorate) officers in a spate of assassination, sabotage, and other mokroye delo ("wet operations") abroad. Besides achieving objectives of the attack, the informational and influencing aspects of these operations also serve to disorient, fragment, and disorganize in accordance with Russian operational art.



Symbol of GRU (Main Intelligence Directorate).  
Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GRU\\_\(G.U.\)#/media/File:Emblem\\_of\\_the\\_GRU.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GRU_(G.U.)#/media/File:Emblem_of_the_GRU.svg)

## EMPLOYMENT OF NEW WEAPON SYSTEMS

Russia has been employing new weapons systems to achieve influence in the competition period. The Russian military's cyber hacking Unit 26165 is one well-known example. Other cyber/software spying and attacks that anonymously contacted adversary soldiers on their cell phones to intimidate or persuade them into quitting their posts was widely noted in the Ukrainian conflict. Russia has also jammed GPS signals during NATO military exercises, conducted provocative proximity and laser operations against various commercial and military satellites. Although obviously offensive, the tests of hypersonic munitions fit the New Type War paradigm by informationally "defending" Russia in the competition period.



The US Army Training and Doctrine Command G-2, whose mission is to understand, visualize, describe, deliver, and assess operational environment (OE) products and services in support of leader development, training and education, and concept and capabilities development.

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