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**RUSSIA'S USE OF ACTIVE MEASURES AGAINST FINLAND
FROM THE WINTER WAR PERIOD TO THE PRESENT DAY**

Master's thesis

International Relations and European-Asian Studies

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I hereby declare that I have compiled the thesis independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors have been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading.

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ABSTRACT

Russian state-sponsored active measures campaigns are an ongoing threat to the democracy of the Western nations. The use of information as a method of influence has a long legacy that can be traced back to the early days of the Soviet Union. As the methods of communication and global information sharing have developed and expanded, information operations have evolved to become a crucial aspect for Russia to achieve strategic and geopolitical objectives. A qualitative approach with a comparative case study research design was chosen to investigate the broader phenomenon of Russia's active measures as a critical domestic and foreign policy tool. Specifically, the use of active measures and information operations against Finland were examined. Three case studies from essential periods in the Finno-Russian relations were analysed based on objectives, target groups, narratives, and the means of influence. It is argued that while the means and techniques of Russian active measures operations have changed with the nation, the primary objectives and aims regarding Finland have remained the same. The analysis showed a positive continuation of the objectives from Soviet times to modern-day Russia. The importance of keeping Finland under Russian influence, while the nation seeks to strengthen its global power, was and still is a prominent factor of Russia's foreign policy aims.

Keywords: Russia, Finland, active measures, information operations, information influencing

INTRODUCTION

Influencing others through various types of information media is not a new phenomenon. Diplomacy, marketing, lobbying, and journalism are all acknowledged components of democratic communication used to inform and influence domestic and foreign audiences. Changes in communication technologies has given new possibilities to those seeking to influence others. (Prime Minister's Office 2019). In the current information environment, populations are continually being bombarded with data from multiple sources. Although there is a range of organisations known to have a good reputation for the integrity of their output, a growing number of consumers are turning to social media for their information. (Nafees *et al.* 2019). Developments in technology have made it easier to publish manipulated information. Not just written documents but also images, audio, and video can be altered to present something completely different from their original context. Information can be easily used to exploit the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of chosen targets, in order to change their behaviour to gain advantages. Public discussions can be swayed with a range of techniques to create division within and between nations. (Conley *et al.* 2020; Prime Minister's Office 2019). **This thesis presents a comparative case study of Russia's active measures and its use against Finland from the Winter War period to the present day.**

Active measures¹ (*активные мероприятия*) have been a crucial component of Russian influence operations against the West. These operations have been used alongside traditional instruments of political influence to affect behaviours, policies, and decision-making in other nations. (Galeotti 2017). As Pynnöniemi & Saari (2017) explain, modern Russia's hybrid methods have a legacy in the active measures of the Soviet Union. The spread of disinformation and the use of front organisations in the West were integral elements of the nation's Cold War foreign policy. Pynnöniemi & Saari (2017) argue that even if some of today's tactics have similarities to those used in the Soviet era, the information revolution has made their use more complex and efficient. The growth of social media and other online platforms has given Russia a target-rich environment to conduct covert information operations against foreign nations. (Weiss 2017). Fedchenko (2016) argues that Russia's active measures operations aim to violate the central values of liberal Western societies. Democracy and its main elements, free media, fair elections, effective governance, and

¹ Active measures – operational activities aimed to influence the political environment and foreign policy of another nation, carried out in favour of Russia. Active measures operations have been used since the 1920s, more in-depth since the Cold War. (Alexander 2017; Mitrokhin 2002, 13).

the right to self-determination, are being attacked. Fedchenko (2016) also claims that the Kremlin takes full advantage of social media and other online platforms to propagate its messages and foreign policy objectives. With new fast-paced media, it is easier for Russia to target wider audiences. The anonymity of these platforms provides a foundation for information to be easily manipulated and used in a hostile manner.

Purpose of the study

Russia's use of active measures against foreign nations is an active area of research. For example, the Mueller Report (2019) exposed Russia's use of a range of methods to influence the outcome of the 2016 US Presidential election. Also, many regional organisations publish yearly reports regarding the topic. Several studies have been made about Russia's use of active measures in European countries. The novelty of this thesis is that its subject matter has not generated much research from the chosen perspective and period. Most of the existing studies focus on understanding either the Soviet-era active measures or modern-day operations. This thesis aims to understand the differences and similarities of the phenomenon from the Finnish perspective. The purpose is to contribute to a broader understanding of Russia's use of active measures operations against a small Northern European nation that historically has not played a major role in world politics. Since its independence, Finland has tried to secure its political place as a country positioned between the West and the East. Finding its balance between global Western operations and maintaining bilateral relations with Russia moulded the nation's foreign policy. It has affected how Finland views European integration and global cooperation, especially in the field of security. The West can be seen as a variable in the Finno-Russian relations that influences how the two nations cooperate with each other.

The main goal of this thesis is to examine Russia's use of active measures operations against Finland in three significant periods from the Winter War to the present day. Russia's strategic objectives and means of influence are explored in the study to understand how the operations have evolved throughout this time. The focus is also on how the changing foreign relations of the two nations have affected these operations. The periods chosen are crucial in the developments of the Finno-Russian relations and affect how Finland operates today. The research questions composed for the study create the basis for understanding the changes in the execution of Russian

active measures before and after the collapse of Soviet Union. More specifically, this thesis will answer the following two research questions:

1. How have the objectives, means of influence, and target groups of Russian active measures against Finland changed from the Soviet era to today?
2. Based on historical examples, what are the likely aims, motivations, and methods expected for future Russian active measures operations against Finland?

The author claims that even though the ways of influence have changed with the Russian state, the primary objectives of the active measures against the West and Finland have stayed the same. Another argument is based on Russia's influence on Finnish political life. It is claimed that from the Soviet era to today's society, Russian information operations have and will continue to influence the Finnish political debates and decision-making. However, it is claimed that the type of influence has adapted throughout the years to reflect changes in Finnish society.

Methodology

Methodologically, to understand the motives and means behind a country aiming to influence another, an analytical approach is required. It is also vital to examine past events to understand potential future operations. This thesis presents a qualitative study of active measures operations against Finland, focusing on Russia's strategic objectives, motivations, and means of influence. A comparative case study with historical and narrative research methods was selected as the research design. The selection was based on the aim to identify, explore, and analyse the use of the chosen phenomenon throughout different periods.

According to Yin (2003, 1, 13), a case study can be seen as a suitable method when trying to answer questions "why" or "how" within the context of real-life phenomena. As Bukhari (2011) explains, comparative studies are used to determine relations between two or more subjects, variables, or periods. With this method, it is easy to determine if the subject matters are contradictory or seen as extensions of each other. Bukhari (2011) and Goodrick (2014) emphasize that comparative case studies are used to examine the patterns, similarities, and differences of two or more cases sharing a common basis.

Narratives play a vital role in understanding different phenomena. As Cepurītis & Keišs (2021) state, narratives reduce the complexity of the phenomenon, making the comprehension easier. The importance of narratives in active measures operations is acknowledged in the research methods. According to Carless & Douglas (2017), narrative research can be used to gain insights into lived experiences or concrete events. The method makes it possible to explore developments of real-life events through different types of documents and information sources.

As the subject matter of the research is multifaceted and widely connected to the developments of technology, the sources used have varied significantly depending on the period. The research incorporated a wide range of media sources used for information campaigns, from print to broadcast to digital. When analysing the past active measures operations, the sources varied from diplomatic correspondence to war propaganda leaflets and online media posts. Official state documents and reports from organisations dedicated to detecting and countering information operations, academic articles and journals, and historiographic literature were used for the research. The case study materials were selected based on how well they presented the active measures operations and the information environment in each period. The collected data was analysed based on four themes: used narratives, chosen target groups, means of influence, and strategic objectives. The themes were chosen as they were closely connected to answering the research questions and the presented claims.

The limitations of the research were taken into account during the production of this thesis. For example, one critical limitation was the possibility only to use historical information available today. This could lead to possible validity issues, as some sources are not as profoundly recorded as others. Also, as Yin (2003, 10) argues, the case study design could carry a problem of generalization. The thesis is necessarily limited due to length and time constraints, which affected the chosen study period and the number of case studies. These limitations make it harder to provide broader generalizations and global recommendations of the subject matter.

Besides the introduction, this thesis comprises five chapters, followed by conclusion, list of references and appendices. The first chapter, after the introduction, presents the framework and literature review describing Russian active measures from the Soviet era to modern time. The main features of Russia's influence operations and examples of the nation's strategic and geopolitical objectives are introduced. Chapter two presents the information and security environment in

Finland through official state documents. The importance of foreign relations, the critical factor of the Russian diaspora in Finland, and Russia's 'compatriot policy' are acknowledged. Also, the current most popular Russian narratives in Finland are discussed. This is followed by three case studies in chapter three. The first showcases the road to the 1939 Winter War and disinformation regarding the shelling of Mainila. War propaganda from the period is analysed. The second case study is based on the post-war period, where Finland suffered from severe censorship operations under the Soviet sphere of influence, affecting Finnish society and its foreign relations. The last case study revolves around the multiple child custody cases from the 2010s onwards. In chapter four, Finland's strategy of countering active measures operations is discussed. Chapter five is the discussion, where the author makes further claims based on the analyses of the outcomes and findings from the historical data and case studies. The final part concludes the thesis, answering the research questions and the initial research claims. Further study recommendations are given in this section to reflect to continuously evolving nature of the subject.

1. RUSSIA'S ACTIVE MEASURES

Mitrokhin (2002, 13) describes active measures as undercover operations aimed to influence nations' foreign policies and global political events. These campaigns are used to weaken the economic, ideological, or political positions of other countries, undermining the confidence of leaders and institutions and disrupting relations between different states. According to Godson & Shultz (1985), covert active measures include a wide range of information techniques to manipulate the beliefs of target groups with disinformation and agent-of-influence operations. Overt active measures have been carried out through sponsored propaganda channels, diplomatic relations, and international cultural activities. Russia also uses paramilitary operations and military manoeuvres to support deception, insurgency movements, and proxy groups. The KGB and the Russian military establishment were significant actors in conducting political and military deception operations.

Gioe *et al.* (2020) claim that the primary goal of active measures was to ensure the continuation of the ideology and political system using strategic narratives². These narratives were reinforced with the use of the West as a buffer. The 'near abroad' Eastern European countries bordering Russia were especially favourable for the communist regime. According to Galeotti (2019), Soviet leaders had an ongoing fear that the West was trying to undermine its institutions and power. The West's support of liberal democracy, institutional transparency, and civil society created an assumption that it was engaged in subverting the Soviet state and its allies. Information coming to the Soviet Union from foreign nations needed to be either discredited or framed to fit the communist narrative to protect the ideology. Active measures were an essential part of preserving the communist system, spreading it, and defending its legitimacy. (Thomas 2020).

1.1 Evolution of active measures operations

Traditional active measures have a close link to the establishment of the Soviet Union. During the seizure of power, Bolsheviks relied primarily on propaganda and political influence techniques combined with armed power. Later techniques presented a coherent development from those times.

² In the context of International Relations theory, strategic narratives are messages political actors use to construct shared meanings of the past, present, and future. Strategic narratives are used to broaden influence, advance arguments, and shape behaviours of domestic and international operators. (Miskimmon *et al.* 2013, 2).

Godson & Shultz (1985) state that influence tactics and active measures became central instruments of achieving Russian foreign objectives. Military presence with maximum subversion operations was part of the Soviet ideological struggle with the West.

Today's Russian leaders were raised and socialized with the Soviet worldviews that aimed to achieve needed goals to ensure the nation's security and continuation of the regime. Their experiences in the post-World War II era have shaped their views of the world. According to Gioe *et al.* (2020), this is a crucial part of understanding how active measures have developed and are used in modern-day Russia. Many old tactics are combined with newly developed technologies, expressing Russia's strategic culture with a long traditional legacy.

1.1.1. Information operations as a part of Soviet foreign policy

The first Soviet security and intelligence agency, the Cheka, was founded quickly after the Russian Revolution and was highly influenced by the pre-Revolution experiences of the Bolsheviks. Gioe *et al.* (2020) state that Lenin knew that controlling the working class would not be possible without the use of strong narratives. These were disseminated through Bolshevik-controlled newspapers, quickly gaining mass support. It was known that if the ideology faded, so would the communist state. As competing ideologies from the outside would affect the state, active measures were used to protect and promote the regime.

Before WWII, the most significant successes in influence operations were achieved by intelligence officers, the so-called 'great illegals', sent to foreign nations. The KGB established a network of illegal and legal residencies operating under diplomatic and other official covers. (Andrew & Mitrokhin 2000, 11). During the years leading to WWII, and especially in the time after it, Russia took more of an active role as an influencer of world events. This was when foreign policy and the importance of allies started to be seen holistically, increasing the importance of active measures. From the 1960s onward, Russia was highly active when it came to disinformation operations abroad. (Gioe *et al.* 2020). Covert techniques were used to increase the effectiveness of overt propaganda and other political efforts. Covert operations had long-term capabilities, and because of their nature, they were hard to identify and categorize at the time. Nevertheless, it can be seen that from the 1960s to 1980s, a vast number of secret operations, including disinformation, agents of influence, and the use of front organisations, were conducted against the West. (Godson & Shultz 1985).

George F. Kennan (1946) has claimed that Russia has always been more of a security-seeking nation. It tended to isolate itself from the outside world's narratives that could threaten its ideological stability. He has also stated that the nation needed specific narratives to retain its global power. Active measures were produced to be a non-violent and low-cost approach to counter these outside threats. However, the chosen techniques, especially information influencing and disinformation, needed to be continuously reinforced in order for them to gain momentum. When the KGB would publish fabricated or false information, it would be disseminated using various other platforms, including the international press, radio, or front organisations in target countries. These elements can still be seen in modern active measures campaigns.

1.1.2. Contemporary Russia's active measures

Galeotti (2019) argues that the Kremlin views active measures as the most logical and efficient response against the West's undermining campaigns. This way, Russia can use its strengths against the weaknesses of the West. From written to audio-visual to online platforms, the changes in media have given Russia new means to achieve its objectives. As technology developed, and with the new possibilities offered by the broader use of the Internet, it is now a lot easier to gain the attention of mass populations.

During President Putin's regime, foreign policy narratives and active measures reached a similar level as they had during the Soviet era. While the worldview has been morphing drastically, the importance of controlling and shaping global and domestic narratives remains. The content of the narratives and the techniques used have been moulded to fit modern Russia's strategic and geopolitical ambitions. With new media types and continually developing communication technologies, active measures have become more accessible and cheaper to conduct. According to Juurvee (2018), one significant change is that there is no need for direct involvement from Russian intelligence services. The responsibilities have diversified and expanded from state actors to civilians and patriotic groups, making it extremely hard to know who the real actors behind these operations are.

Allen & Moore (2018) argue that Russian information operations maintain a continuous activity since the nation is always in a declared or undeclared state of war. With platform control, Russia can easily reach domestic and foreign audiences while eliminating information sources that differ

from the official state line. Many, now global media platforms, including Sputnik News and RT, are used to spread information from the Russian perspective. To reach the target audience, actors manipulate individuals into propagating the state's views, often using emotionally appealing stories. As Allen & Moore (2018) state, the primary tool is to create information fatigue, making it harder to identify accurate information.

Hayden (2018) describes modern-day Russia's use of information operations as a three-layer structure. The bottom layer is the so-called 'post-truth' culture in which the West is currently living. In today's Western society, decision-making is based less on factual data and more on feelings, emotions, and preferences. The second layer of the structure is an actor who recognizes the first and uses it to gain advantages. This actor can be, for example, a politician, presidential candidate, or an expert. Actors in the second layer use social media and other fast-spreading media platforms for advertising wanted information. This drives recipients even more towards non-fact-based decision-making. The third layer, in this case, Russia, recognizes the first two layers. As the 'post-truth' culture deepens, media platforms can be used as a tool to create tension and influence opinions. The third-layer actor uses the existing issues in society, polarising them in different platforms by technological means.

Russia recognizes the threats that developed information technologies contain. Necessary measures are taken to deliver information on international issues, foreign policy initiatives, developments, and cultural achievements from the Russian perspective. This is seen as an essential element of Russian foreign policy activities. Emphasized in the 2016 Foreign Policy Concept, Russia aims to develop effective ways to promote its heritage in the global information space, ensuring that the world has a positive image of the country. Technological, economic, legal, and information capabilities are used to pursue geopolitical interests and settle disputes by peaceful means. Alongside traditional methods of diplomacy, soft powers have become a vital part of achieving foreign policy goals.

1.2. Russia's strategic and geopolitical objectives

As information is such an essential part of today's society, Russian leaders see active measures operations as pivotal power tools. Coordinated efforts are made to achieve foreign policy ambitions using state and non-state actors and various means. Even though the use of different

media outlets has changed drastically over the last century, it could be argued that the objectives of Russian influence operations have stayed the same. The more target-focused aims depend on the nation and the operation region, but the major principles are still somewhat coherent today.

1.2.1. Securing the regime in the Soviet era

The objective to protect and strengthen the regime in Russia's neighbouring regions consolidated before WWII. During this time, Finland sought to establish its political status as a neutral Nordic state (Rusi 2017). Russia's aim to secure the pre-war foothold in the region led to failed negotiations with Finland, starting the Winter War in 1939. (Anzulovic 1968). The events in Mainila leading to the war have been among the most extensive disinformation campaigns in the history of Finland's independence.

After the Continuation War, Finland's national security was widely connected to the relations with Russia and the military balance between the West and the East (Rusi 2017). One of the most significant objectives for Russia was to secure and create a favourable environment for spreading the communist agenda. The Finno-Soviet treaty in 1948 was the basis for securing Finland into the nation's sphere of influence. The KGB started to intensify its covert operations with the use of active measures. Foreign public opinions needed to be moulded into positive ones regarding communist policies. Opinion shaping was conducted in specific nations to subvert the governments that were not aligned with the Soviet regime. (Gioe *et al.* 2020). For example, Finland suffered from severe media censorship and political operations in the post-war period.

Because of the different political systems, Russia saw the United States as a significant opponent post-WWII. Active measures were used to influence public opinions within the US and in other Western countries. The aim was to label the US as an aggressive and imperialist power, creating discord between the nation and its allies. NATO and the European Community were also big targets of the Soviet-era campaigns. Information activities were used to divide NATO allies by challenging opinions and generating mistrust. (Gioe *et al.* 2020). Russia aimed to influence Finland to stay out of NATO, the European Community, the Council of Europe, and other Western alliances. This affected the neutral image Finland wanted to put forward. A fight against anti-communism and the promotion of pro-Soviet sentiments were also significant parts of the operations. (Rusi 2017).

1.2.2. Challenging the world order after the collapse of the Soviet Union

Galeotti (2017) argues that the US, being one of the world's great superpowers, can still be considered a threat to modern-day Russia. Similar to the Soviet times, active measures are used to weaken the US from within. For example, the nation widely interfered with the 2016 US Presidential elections using troll and bot accounts (Mueller 2019). The growing reach of regional organisations, such as NATO and the EU, is also an increasing threat to the Russian regime. One of the biggest goals is to protect the political system and consolidate the dominance in the sphere of influence in the near-abroad nations.

According to the 2015 National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation, the nation's long-term national goal is to strengthen its leading role in the international environment. Russia sees cooperation and mutually beneficial partnerships as crucial in the current world order. For example, the state is ready to build relationships based on equality with NATO to ensure security in the Euro-Atlantic region. It also sees open discourse with the EU as a possibility for European security. However, according to the 2016 Foreign Policy Concept, Russia maintains its negative perspective towards NATO's expansion. The approach of the Alliance's military infrastructure and growing military activity in the neighbouring nations is seen as a violation of the principle of equal and indivisible security.

Regarding the Northern European countries, it is stated in the Foreign Policy Concept (2016) that Russia aims to develop practical cooperation, including joint projects within multilateral frameworks. The goal is to maintain an area of trust and stability in the region. On a global level, Russia tends to focus on the security issues the West currently has, framing them as results of US and NATO dominance. For example, in Russian eyes, European refugee crisis has showcased the inability of the EU and NATO to solve global security problems. In the 2007 Munich Security Conference, President Putin stated that the unipolar world order is unacceptable and impossible to maintain because of the lack of a moral foundation. The world has insufficient military, political, and economic resources. To counter this, Russia aims to influence the current world order.

The NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (StratCom CoE) conducted four studies between 2016 and 2017 on Russia's objectives in the Nordic-Baltic region (NB8 countries). In the studies, the objectives were divided based on the four instruments of power: diplomatic, economic, military, and information.

Russia's diplomatic and political objectives are surrounded by the nation's need to become one of the world's superpowers again, challenging the unipolar world order. Russia aims to fight against the Western-dominated system and become an essential political player equal to other great powers. Creating vital global partnerships would lead to the fact that no critical international decisions could be made without Russia. The nation aims to counter the global competition of values, morals, and ideologies by subverting the unity of liberal Western states. This is done by promoting its own democratic style, not measurable by Western standards. (Bērziņa & Cepurītis 2018).

When the NB8 countries make geopolitical choices favouring partnerships with the West, Russia sees this as a justification to intervene with various means. The same mindset is associated with issues of Russian diaspora abroad. Russia sees any violation against its compatriots as a justification to interfere in the internal matters of another sovereign nation. (Bērziņa & Cepurītis 2018). Narratives about severe discrimination are often used. Usually, the emphasis is on children and the lack of rights they have in foreign countries. Finland has suffered several active measures campaigns regarding the issue.

The economic objectives focus on the Arctic region and the interdependence with other nations. As Bērziņa & Cepurītis (2018) state, Russia sees Europe's sanctions against it as unnecessary. This has led to Russian countersanctions that negatively affect NB8 countries' economies. For example, the sanctions after the annexation of Crimea have had significant effects on the dairy industry in Finland. Russia has used strategic narratives to influence opinions in the Finnish industry about the anti-Russian sanctions. It is stated that the sanctions should be lifted in order for the economies to grow in these countries. Also, the importance of Russian cooperation is broadcasted widely.

In the military dimension, the main objectives are based on NATO and its possible expansion towards Russian borders. In the 2015 National Security Strategy of Russia, NATO's growth is seen as a threat to national security that could lead to military conflicts. A big issue in the Nordic region is the possible NATO memberships of Finland and Sweden. Galeotti (2017) explains that in 2016 Finland faced coordinated information attacks from Russia to ensure that any NATO membership bids would be blocked. During the time, online trolling and disinformation spiked strikingly. For example, narratives about Finland's independence not being real were made. Putin also stated in *RT* (2016) that the nation would respond accordingly if Finland decided to join the Alliance. Later

in 2016, immediately after Finland signed a bilateral defence cooperation pact with the US, Russian warplanes made an incursion in the Finnish airspace. (Bērziņa & Cepurītis 2018). It is stated in the most recent StratCom CoE report (Marnot & Juurvee 2021) that currently Russia views NATO as a destabilising and incompetent operator in the region. Russian narratives claim that NATO is a threat to Europe's regional stability, leading to new arms races.

The objectives in the information dimension are based on creating a global media system that can promote the perspectives and ideologies of the nation. StratCom CoE (2018) refers to Russian strategic doctrines. In the 2016 Information Security Doctrine, it is claimed that foreign nations actively use information technologies against Russia, forcing them to react with suitable countermeasures. It is also stated that the national media agencies face discrimination in foreign nations, making it impossible for journalists to do their work properly. To fight against the information war and biased opinions the West is presenting, Russia aims to develop its own media system that promotes the Russian worldview and heritage.

2. THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT IN FINLAND

Finland's foreign and security policies are based on accountable governance, democracy, and well-functioning institutions. According to the Prime Minister's Office (2016), Finland's 2025 vision is to be a caring and safe country, where the society is based on trust between its citizens and the authorities. It is also stated that Finland aims to be international, open, and rich with languages and different cultures. In the 2016 Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy, it is stated that one of the main goals is to strengthen the nation's international position. This includes securing the state's independence and improving the well-being of Finns and the foreign population residing in Finland.

In the 2016 Government Report, it is explained that as the number of significant global actors grows, the respect for universal values diminishes. These changes in the global community directly impact how Finland is developing internally. The most crucial external variables are global trends, developments in the political and security areas important to Finland, foreign actors, and international rules. One significant factor impacting Finland's national developments is Russia and its aim to regain strategic balance and influence globally. As Russia pursues its objective to increase its power status, Finland's operating environment becomes increasingly unstable. The 2016 Government Report claims that Russia has sought to destabilise the security regime in Finland's vicinity during the last decade. It can be seen that Russia has abandoned the security thinking that has been widely based on cooperation and is now seeking to challenge the Western system.

In recent years, the importance of understanding information operations at the government level has increased. In the 2016 Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy and the 2017 Government's Defence Report, Russia's influence has been seen as one of the most significant factors affecting Finland's security environment. Following the annexation of Crimea, the war in Ukraine, and the military intervention in Syria, Finnish officials have stated that similar threats against Finland cannot be wholly excluded. Even though the probability of military force against Finland is low, the threat of hybrid operations has grown exponentially. Attacks in cyber domains and environmental threats need to be taken into account in the global sphere. In the Report on Foreign and Security Policy (2016), the rapid growth of different social media platforms as an instrument of influence is recognized and considered in decision-making.

According to the National Security Reviews (2018-2020) by the Finnish Security Intelligence Service (*Suojelupoliisi – SUPO*), Finland is a target of ongoing active measures operations targeting the national sovereignty. It is stated that dozens of foreign intelligence officers reside in the country, with some agents conducting short-term operations. In the 2020 National Security Review, it is claimed that the traveling restrictions posed during the COVID-19 pandemic have had only a minor effect on the issue. SUPO (2019) acknowledges the intelligence activities coming from China and Russia. These operations aim to predict Finland's future policies, influence decision-making, and acquire information about Finnish technology expertise. Long-term interests are in foreign and security policy and relations between Finland, NATO, and the EU. In 2018 and 2019, the main topics were Finland's position as an EU member and its actions during the EU Presidency. (SUPO 2019).

According to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (2020), attempts to influence elections and undermine democratic structures are increasing. Therefore, the nation must focus on reducing these threats as Finland is holding municipal elections in 2021, parliamentary elections in 2023, and presidential elections in 2024. SUPO (2018) concludes that foreign information campaigns will also remain active in the future. New challenges to counter these operations arise as advances in communications media have changed the operating environment, offering entirely new ways of influencing. Manipulation of public discussions on social media and harmful reinterpretations of history will continue to become common in disinformation operations.

2.1. Finland's relations and active measures operations

2.1.1. Finland and the West

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Finland consolidated its Western ties by joining the EU and adopting the Euro currency. However, the nation continued to stay neutral towards NATO even when few of its neighbours joined in the early 2000s. According to Michel (2011), Finland sees EU membership as an essential security policy element. Many non-military areas, such as immigration, energy, and the fight against environmental issues, are widely based on EU regulations. It is also stated that Finland has been a crucial contributor to the EU's crisis management structure. Border-crossing cooperation is a vital element in a globalized world. When it comes to the relations between Finland and the EU, influencing opinions is challenging since

the nation has secured its place as a member state. If Finland was a new member or the question of the nation leaving the Union was more discussed, active measures operations could happen to a broader extent.

Although not a member, Finland is actively cooperating with NATO. The nation has participated in the Partnership for Peace program since 1994 and became a member of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in 1997. In 2014, Finland was invited to join NATO's Enhanced Opportunities Program as an advanced partner country. This has been a crucial opportunity for Finland to maintain and strengthen its relations with NATO. The goal has been to develop military and security performances for national defence and international crisis management. Finland promotes open discussion and information exchange about the security environment and military preparedness, which is especially vital for the stability and security in the Baltic Sea region. (Finnish Defence Forces n.d.). As Michel (2011) claims, a broad spectrum of Finland's training, exercises, and strategy development are covered by the Nordic Defence Cooperation with NATO-led operations. The country's role in these exercises demonstrates the transformation since the Cold War era. Active cooperation and partnership with NATO benefits Finland in terms of defence and security policies. It also secures the development, maintenance, and use of military capabilities. With the partnership, Finland can develop its national operations with an international mindset. On a governmental level, cooperation is seen to reinforce security in the region and strengthen defence capabilities. With added technologies, cybersecurity represents a new area of future cooperation. (Ministry of Defence n.d.).

Even though cooperation between Finland and NATO has been increasing and strengthening, the Finnish general public has been hesitant about the Alliance membership. According to the *Helsingin Sanomat* poll in 2019, almost 56% of respondents were against joining, and only 20% were pro-NATO. 24% did not have an opinion about the issue. Opposition is prominent in almost every demographic group, education level, age, sex, and geographic location. Also, there is hesitation towards the membership in almost every political group. When comparing to 2017, 59% of the respondents were against the membership, 22% towards it, and 19% did not have an opinion. (Kervinen 2019).

On the issue of Finland and NATO, there are strong narratives on both sides of the subject matter. Opponents argue that Finland should not rely on others for its defence. Joining NATO would only

weaken Finland's national security as it would be 'fighting wars of others'. It is also stated that since Finland already has good relations with NATO, no advantages would be gained from joining, but the membership would adversely affect relations with Russia. On the other hand, it is seen that NATO is a crucial instrument of multinational cooperation and Finland's current partnership is too constrained. It is stated that Finland would gain more security since there have been conflicts in the neighbouring states. NATO's Article 5 is seen as a strong guarantee of transatlantic protection. (Michel 2011).

2.1.2. Finland and Russia

The Northern European countries are a traditional link between Russia and the West. The policies towards the Baltic and Nordic regions are crucial to Russia's general approach to Europe. According to Trenin (2011), Russia aims to keep a stable security environment in those regions to achieve its political ambitions and access resources and technological capabilities. Russia is an essential economic partner for Finland, with the trade links expanding in the last decades. According to the Bank of Finland Institute for Economies in Transition (2020), around 70% of Finnish imports from Russia have consisted of oil and gas in the last few years.

Standish (2016) states that President Putin has praised Finland's stance on its current foreign policy. The chosen model can be seen as optimal for having good relations with both Russia and the West. However, Standish (2016) claims that these comments could be seen as threats against Finland's possible pursuit of NATO membership. As represented in the *Foreign Policy* (2016) article, at the beginning of 2016, when the NATO membership was discussed in Finland, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov stated his concern over the issue. It was claimed that Russia sees the possible NATO membership as an end of the neutral Finnish foreign policy, affecting the bilateral relations.

Russia's compatriot policy has been tailored to support the Russian-speaking diaspora in foreign nations. Native Russian speakers are the second most prominent language minority in Finland, after Swedes. The number of Russian speakers in the nation has grown steadily since the fall of the Soviet Union. For example, in 2001 the number was a little over 30,000 people, in 2011 almost 60,000, and in 2020 over 84,000 (OSF, 2020). As Viimaranta *et al.* (2018) argue, the Russian-speaking minority in Finland is hard to categorize under one definition. People have moved not only from Russia but from former Soviet Union countries. While this minority group is diverse

based on cultural self-identification, they are usually labelled as ‘Russians’ in Finland. Throughout history, the general public has had a suspicious attitude towards Russia and its policies, which is also connected to the Russian minority in Finland. It is claimed (Viimaranta *et al.* 2018) that some Finns think that the growth of the Russian population in Finland could potentially increase foreign influence in the nation.

The Finnish mass media often presents Russia in a negative light. The recent global conflicts surrounding the nation have been major subjects in the Finnish media platforms, which have also affected other domestic debates. For example, discussions about people with dual citizenships being ineligible for certain public office professions have been widespread. Likewise, a study about discrimination in the Finnish labour market was published by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy in 2012. It showed those job seekers with Russian-sounding names needed to send twice the number of applications before obtaining an interview compared to applicants with general Finnish names. Other minority groups also faced the same problem. (Viimaranta *et al.* 2018). Issues like these are easily exploited in active measures operations.

2.2. Popular Russian narratives in modern-day Finland

Following the recent Russian active measures operations in the US and central Europe, the Western public has accepted that the nation is actively interfering with sovereign states in the information sphere. However, these operations are not always about coercive tools and hard power. In many cases, soft power strategies are used. Russia acknowledges that influencing public opinions in Finland is difficult because of the shared history, political issues, and societal differences. (Pynnöniemi & Saari 2017).

According to StratCom CoE (2018), multiple Russian media platforms present refugees and immigrants as a destabilising factor in Finland and other Nordic countries. Many reports claim that the Nordic countries welcomed refugees with open arms, only to see crime rates grow because of the newcomers. Also, statements about the nations aggressively opposing immigration were made. It was claimed that countries were forced to accept immigrants because of the soft liberal values of the EU. When spreading information about refugees and immigration to Nordic countries, Russian media presents Western societies unable to maintain control over the issue, making themselves vulnerable to asymmetrical terrorist attacks. Marnot & Juurvee (2021) state that

narratives about the NB8 countries being aware of problems have been made. The political divisions of the countries are often included in the narratives. Kaljula & Juurvee (2018) claim that this is how Russia aims to deepen the divisions between different social groups. Also, the promotion of narratives about multiculturalism not being possible in Western countries and the rise of far-right nationalist movements in Finland is often combined in the discussion.

A key component of Russia's international objectives is to weaken NATO's power and military reach, especially in its close neighbouring regions. Russia often uses narratives in which NATO is presented as an aggressive organisation that tries to expand towards peaceful Russia's borders (Kaljula & Juurvee 2018). In 2018, *RT* made articles about NATO's joint military exercises. The articles stated that even though the exercises were presented as transparent and defensive, that was not the case. With a specific writing style and use of headlines such as "Now this is transparency! NATO to deploy 45,000 troops near Russian border, calls it 'defensive'" *RT* hinted that the exercise was done to aggravate Russia. It was stated, for example, that drills simulating attacks by 'fictional aggressors' in Norway, Sweden, and Finland left little to the imagination.

The support of Russian narratives promoted in Finland varies based on topics. For example, according to StratCom CoE 2016/2017 studies, 63% of respondents fully agreed or somewhat agreed that refugees and immigrants are a destabilising factor in Europe. There is a positive correlation with the presented narrative. However, as the overall trust in Russian media is so low in Finland, the explanation for the answers most likely is not Russian influencing. Instead, the answer comes from other ongoing issues in society. There is a polarisation of opinions when it comes to NATO being a threat to Russia. 48% of Finnish respondents fully agreed or somewhat agreed with the statement, while 51% completely disagreed or somewhat disagreed with it. The explanation for the polarisation again could be seen coming from the internal debates of the society. It is relatively equal to the opinions about Finland's need to join NATO. As Russia's threat to Finland was discussed, most of the respondents stated that the possibility of international terrorism is a greater risk to national security. 73% of the Finns either fully agreed or somewhat agreed with that statement.

Regarding positive narratives in Finland, Kaljula & Juurvee (2018) acknowledge that Russia tends to advertise good relations between the countries. In order to create positive connotations, the importance of economic ties and cultural similarities are often emphasized. According to Marnot

& Juurvee (2021), several positive narratives have also highlighted Finland's role in hosting meetings between the US and Russian state officials. Kaljula & Juurvee (2018) claim that Russia wants to confirm that beneficial and peaceful relations are possible, and Finland does not need to see the country as a threat. The spread of positive images is also used as an example for other Western countries.

In more recent times, Russia and Finland have maintained good relations. Russia has become a significant economic partner for Finland in the last 30 years. According to Standish (2016), top officials from the Finnish Government have stated that any country bordering Russia needs to find a way to stand up to the provocations without provoking it in return. Some nations have called this policy appeasement towards Russia, similarly to what happened in the Cold War period. Former Foreign Minister Soini explained in the 2016 *Foreign Policy* interview that for a small nation, it is better to step back than fight with big countries. Nevertheless, Finland still sees Russia as a threat in a particular light. It can be seen from the chosen narratives that Russia tends to focus on debates that are popular at that moment. This way, influencing can be done more covertly, not creating excessive attention to the activities. As Russian media does not have a prominent profile in Finland, the operations need to be done using other platforms, such as social media.

3. CASE STUDIES

3.1. Shelling of Mainila & propaganda during the wartime

The Mainila shelling led to the start of the Winter War in 1939 and laid the foundation for Finland's relations with Russia and the West in the 20th century. As stated in the Finnish Ministry of Defence website (2009), it took decades for Russian officials to acknowledge that the Finnish troops were not responsible for the incident. However, in modern-day Russia, some commentators continue to attribute the start of the war to the Finnish leaders of the time or choose to ignore the issue entirely (Tikka 2018).

As Anzulovic (1968) argues, the Mainila shelling could be linked with the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939, in which Finland was included within the Soviet sphere of influence. In September 1939, Russia sought to sign Mutual Assistance Treaties with the Baltic States and Finland to establish its presence in the region. In the negotiations with Finland, requests were made to adjust the border to protect Leningrad. It was also proposed that the Finnish Government sell four islands in the Gulf of Finland and lease Hanko as a naval base. During the negotiations, the Finnish leaders were ready to adjust the borders to a certain extent and consider a deal about the islands. However, they were unwilling to discuss the Hanko naval base as it was perceived that it would weaken the nation's ability to maintain its self-determination and military strength. As no compromises were found, the talks ended in Moscow on the 13th of November 1939. (Anzulovic 1968).

3.1.1. Disinformation in the diplomatic correspondence

After the negotiations with Russia ended, the number of propaganda campaigns against Finland increased (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 1940, 81). On the 26th of November, multiple Soviet newspapers reported that soldiers were met with artillery fire from the Finnish side in the proximity of the border village Mainila. Seven rounds were fired, killing and injuring troops. (Anzulovic 1968). Following the incident, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs V. M. Molotov issued a note to the Finnish Government stating that the attack was seen as a hostile act towards the whole Soviet Union, and it needed to be condemned. Demands were made for the Finnish troops to withdraw from the proximity of the border to prevent further provocations and threats against Leningrad. (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 1940, 19, 67-68).

The Finnish officials responded that the artillery fire could not have come from the Finnish side. During the event, the area was primarily manned by border guards who were not equipped with artillery. Instead, Finland suggested that the incident could have been a military training accident on the Russian side. A mutual withdrawal was proposed to ensure that the incident could be investigated according to the Non-Aggression Pact, signed in 1932 and extended in 1934. The Finnish officials received a new note on the 28th stating that the denial of the whole incident was made to mislead the general public's opinions and mock the victims. It was further stated that since Finland refused to withdraw its troops, Russia had no other option than to renounce the Non-Aggression Pact. On the 29th, another note was sent falsely stating that the attacks against Russian troops had continued. Based on this, Russia broke off all diplomatic relations with Finland. On the 30th of November 1939, the Red Army crossed the border at 8:30 am after a 30-minute artillery bombardment, starting the Winter War. (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 1940, 68-73).

When analysing the diplomatic notes from the period, a clear distinction is made by Russians between the 'peaceful' Red Army troops and the 'ill-mannered' Finns. As the goal was to verify that the distinction was real, specific strong and indisputable narratives needed to be created. Also, the following claims were made in the official correspondence by the Russian leaders:

- *“the sole responsibility lies with the Finnish Government...”*
- *“the respond reflects the deep-rooted hostility that the Finnish Government has towards the Soviet Union...”*
- *“the denial made by the Finnish Government... cannot be explained with other than an intent to mislead the public opinion and ridicule the victims.”*
- *“if the Finnish Government rejects this minimum proposal, it means that it intends to keep Leningrad under immediate threat...”* (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 1940, 67-73).

The emphasis of the narrative is constantly on the Finnish Government and its inability to take responsibility for the issue. Worth noting is that the Finnish general public was barely mentioned in the diplomatic notes. This could be a tactic of influence against the government, presenting that their wrongdoings are the reason for the war. The narrative distinction between the government and population can also be noticed in the war propaganda during the Winter War. According to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (1940, 67), Molotov used previous negotiation themes to strengthen the Russian narrative. During the November negotiations, the concentration of Finnish troops in

the proximity of Leningrad was raised as an issue. However, as it is now widely acknowledged that the Finns did not initiate the incident, it can be argued that disinformation was used purely to justify the start of the war. These claims allowed the Russian leaders to detach the nation from the bilateral agreements.

The initial Russian objective in the shelling of Mainila was to secure the border areas against foreign military attacks amidst the growing global tensions of WWII. As Spring (1986) argues, both Finns and Russians knew the importance of the Gulf of Finland for the defence of Leningrad. He also states that the Russian leaders did not have any options other than taking action after the failed negotiations to ensure their security in the uncertain times. Finland needed to stay under Russian influence to ensure the nation its security. It could be argued that in order to justify their actions, Russia needed to gain *casus belli*³, leading to the false flag operation in Mainila. However, according to Semiryaga (1992), another vital but more hidden political goal for Russia was to liberate the Finnish people. It was claimed that the Finnish general public was oppressed by capitalists and landowners. Semiryaga (1992) argues that as the Winter War started, the Red Army emphasized the liberation mission over ensuring the security of the region. This is also tightly linked with the propaganda on the battlefield.

When analysing Molotov's notes, it can be argued that the aim was to primarily influence the political leaders. This can be based on the objective of securing the region around Leningrad. Because of the period's possibilities with media, diplomatic correspondence could be seen as the leading way to influence the leaders' opinions. When the negotiations did not work out, the notes and the propaganda following those could be seen as a way to gain justification for the war. The notes were also used to increase acceptance from the public and global community to these operations.

3.1.2. Propaganda at the battlefield

During the Winter War (1939-1940) and the Continuation War (1941-1944), both Finns and Russians used various types of propaganda. While it was in some cases meant to strengthen the unity between home and the battlefield, it was also used to demoralise the enemy. The themes of Russian wartime propaganda changed significantly as the Winter war migrated to the Continuation War. In the *Rare Historical Photos* (2016) website, it is stated that propaganda during the Winter

³ an action or event that justifies or allegedly justifies a conflict or war (Merriam-Webster n.d.).

War was mainly about the liberation of the Finnish people from the capitalist oppressors. Initially, the Soviet press presented the narrative of the Finnish people as being oppressed under the rule of 'Helsinki clique' (Anzulovic 1968). This was based on the theme of showcasing Finland as the provocateur in the hostilities. It was also often presented that the Finnish people would welcome the Red Army with open arms since their leaders had handled the pre-war negotiations poorly. The themes changed during the Continuation War when more aggressive and defamatory propaganda was used. This aimed to showcase how the Red Army would easily destroy the small nation that had become 'Hitler's puppet'. (Rare Historical Photos 2016).

The Finnish National Library (2015) has a collection of Russian wartime propaganda leaflets showcasing the type of language and narratives used. Particular messages were repeated throughout almost all the leaflets. For example, it was often claimed that the Winter War started purely because of the incompetent government that did not care about its people. It was also often promoted that the best for Finland was to wait for the Red Army to free the people from the government. In the battlefield leaflets (National Library Archive 2015), the Red Army was presented as a friend that did not want to occupy the smaller nation. Statements about the war being useless for the protection of the nation were made. This was used as a reason for the soldiers to surrender as soon as possible, as they would get proper housing, food, and meaningful work in the camps meant for the prisoners of war (POW). It was also widely stated that it would be possible for the soldiers to go home when the war ended.

Figure 1 below presents a Russian propaganda leaflet found in June 1940 after the end of the Winter War. It combines many of the popular narratives used to influence the minds of Finnish soldiers. The images present death, poverty, and destruction that would happen if the war was not stopped. The text states that there is no hope for Finnish soldiers in the war and explains how they should surrender to the Red Army. Commander-in-Chief Mannerheim is presented as an executioner who does not care about the well-being of his troops or people. Psychological warfare is used, stating that mothers, wives, and children struggle with hunger that is the fault of an incompetent elite. (National Library Archive 2015). A complete translation of the leaflet is provided in Appendix 1.



Figure 1. Example of a Soviet war propaganda leaflet written in Finnish from 1940
Source: National Library Archive (2015)

According to the Finnish National Library (2015), during the Continuation War, it was often presented that the Finnish troops were fighting in a conflict that was not theirs. In many cases, the Red Army's success stories from the front were presented whilst any significant losses were hidden. Caricatures of the leaders and images of broken families and crying children were used to influence the soldiers' minds to get them to desert the battlefield.

Throughout both wars, letters and personal statements were used in propaganda, showcasing the alleged treatment of the POWs. It was stated, for example, that if the people of Finland and the soldiers joined the Russian side, there would not be any blood or poverty in the nation, and the war would end in no time. Figure 2 below is signed by Corporal Antero Hannu, who was captured in January 1944 by the Red Army. Dated March 1944, the letter stated that his wounds were taken

care of, and he was being fed more than enough. It is claimed that the Finnish officers had lied about the conditions of the POWs in the camps and that he hoped that the war would end soon. This, he states, could happen if the Finnish troops surrendered to the Red Army or decided to leave the battlefield as soon as possible. (National Library Archive 2015). A full translation of the letter is provided in Appendix 2.

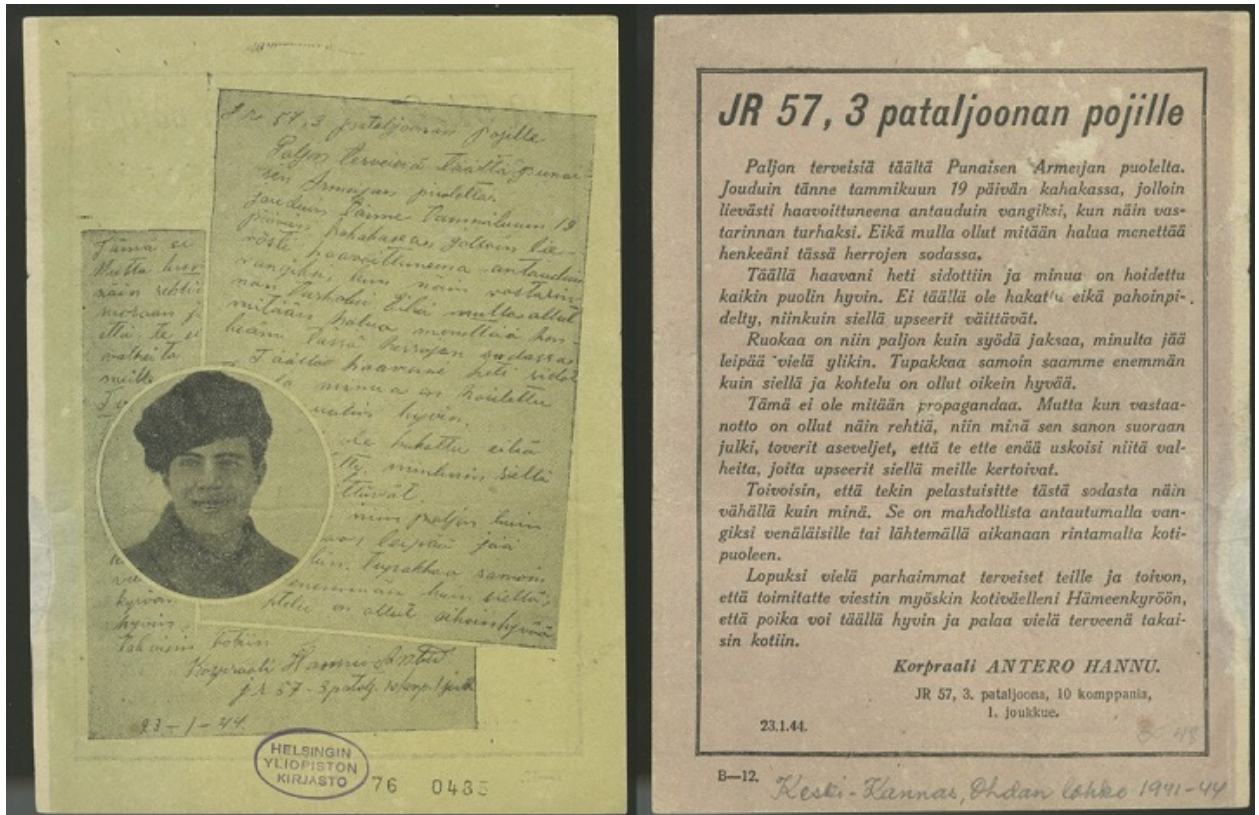


Figure 2. Example of a Soviet propaganda letter from the Continuation War
Source: National Library Archive (2015)

The falsehoods presented in this propaganda campaign have been exposed multiple times. One example is an interview with a Finnish war veteran and POW Arvi Nyman in 2016. Nyman was captured in June 1941 and mainly incarcerated in a coal mine camp in Kazakhstan. He explained that the living conditions and working hours were inhumane and that prisoners were only provided with minimal food or no food at all. While the weather was close to -40 degrees and the officials wore thick winter clothes, the POWs were only provided with thin military uniforms. From around 300 Finns that entered the camp in Kazakhstan, only 27 returned home in 1944. According to Himberg (2017), of around 5000 Finnish POWs captured during both wars, only around 3000 were still alive at the end of the Continuation War. The treatment of prisoners directly contravened the Geneva convention. Paananen (2016) refers to Nyman stating that the officials often forced the Finnish POWs to write material that was subsequently used in leaflets and the propaganda

magazine *Sotilaan Ääni* (Soldier's voice). However, in many cases, the Finnish soldiers viewed their contribution to the propaganda leaflets purely as means to inform those at home that they are still alive.

The main target groups in the presented influence campaigns were the soldiers on the front line and the general public at home. On the battlefield, leaflets and magazines were among the most used methods to influence the soldiers stationed, purely because of the easy distribution. Casey (1944) argues that the main objective of war propaganda is to break down the enemy's will to fight and lower its will to resist. This can be done in multiple ways with the aim to promote power and successes or claiming the superiority of the fought cause. Often propaganda was aimed to create tension between the leaders and people, presenting evidence of deception or mistrust of the elite. The goal was also to turn the mindset of captured soldiers towards a pro-Soviet and anti-capitalist mentality. Paananen (2016) claims that to gain a solid foundation for the propaganda, old photographs of the POWs were used to showcase them as healthy and living a reasonably normal life.

3.2. Cold War & Finlandization

The two wars fought between Russia and Finland created the foundation for Finland's future foreign policy. The nation's leaders knew that the country could not survive another military conflict without risking possible occupation. Therefore, a neutral political stance was seen as essential for survival (Törnudd 2005). Based on the Moscow Armistice of 1944, the nation had been obliged to pay for war reparations and had Red Army military bases on its territory. During this time, Finland was placed under the power of the Allied Control Commission, which significantly affected its decision-making capability. According to Nevakivi (1985), it was widely assumed that Finland would remain under Russia's influence, as had happened with several other nations, like the countries in the Baltic region. In 1944, British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden claimed that although some cultural and commercial independence would be left in Finland, the primary influence would come from Russia. Kähönen (2006, 51) argues that one of the leading objectives regarding Finland after the wars was to strengthen the foothold of the Communist Party. This way, the party could be used as the main channel for more direct foreign influence within the nation.

3.2.1. Media censorship during the period

The time under the Control Commission led to an atmosphere of broad censorship. Lilius (1975) argues that even though Finland had a strong base for freedom of expression, it had limitations regarding Russia. These permeated multiple layers of Finnish society, from politics to education and mass media. Arter (1998) refers to Salminen's identification of two forms of self-regulation in Finland during the Cold War period. Passive self-censorship was used to avoid any critique against Russia because of the genuine fear of military intervention or other possible risks to the nation. As Lilius (1975) claims, almost anything that could have been seen as critical towards Russia or communism was left unpublished to maintain good relations. Multiple books and other releases from the time were published only after the fall of the Soviet Union. It became a regular occurrence that communist organisations would accuse the press or politicians of anti-Soviet propaganda. For example, a 'Black Book' was given to the Foreign Ministry by the socialist student association. The book contained samples of university study materials that had so-called hostile information about the Soviet Union. The association suggested that these materials should be prohibited from schools and replaced with translated Soviet textbooks. (Lilius 1975). On the other hand, active self-censorship involved more tactical self-regulations in consideration of global politics. According to Arter (1998), it was widely seen as a competition between political parties and the party members for the favour of Kekkonen and Moscow. The deep self-censorship kept its place in Finnish society throughout the decades until the 1990s.

3.2.2. Finnish political life under Russian influence

Even after the Control Commission left Helsinki in 1947, Russian influence did not decrease. Finland was offered Marshall Plan aid, but as Kähönen (2006, 52) claims, Russia did not allow the nation to join. The Finnish refusal, along with the Warsaw Pact nations, was widely seen as appeasement towards the East. Another feature that affected the nation's neutrality was the Finno-Soviet Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance (FCMA) signed in 1948. This significantly influenced Finland's foreign relations with Russia and the West for the coming decades. As Törnudd (2005) argues, the Finnish foreign policy of political neutrality during the Cold War was a struggle of balancing relations between the West and the East. The ongoing Cold War affirmed the need for influence over Finland. It was vital for Russia to secure the FCMA treaty, as it felt that Finland was orienting too much towards the West. (Kähönen 2006, 53; Nevakivi 1985).

According to Nevakivi (1985), Finland's domestic policies were influenced by both sides of the Cold War in the 1950s. However, the years of Russian influence led to 'Finlandization', which affected multiple dimensions of Finnish society over the following decades from the late 1950s onwards. As Nissinen (2010) claims, there is no formally acknowledged definition for the term, but it was initially used as an accusation of Finland's foreign policy of appeasing Russia. Later, the term was generally used to describe Finland's political culture concerning the Soviet state during the Cold War. Laqueur (1980, 7) describes Finlandization as a process where the sovereignty of a nation reduces while trying to maintain friendly relations with a great power.

Russia's influence over Finnish political life during the Cold War years culminated with the nation's ability to break up governments that were not seen pro-Soviet. From 1946 to 1956, Finland had nine different government coalitions (Solsten & Meditz 1988). The so-called 'Night Frost Crisis' in 1958 showcased how effectively Russian leaders could react to government coalitions that were not perceived as favourable. (Wiberg 2011, 632). This also displayed how limited the Finnish policy of neutrality was in reality. In 1961, another political crisis afflicted the relations of the two nations. During the 'Note Crisis', Russian leaders presented a note to the Finnish Government, asking for a direct military consultation regarding the ongoing Berlin Crisis. While the note on the 30th of October presented mostly commentaries about the threat of Germany and NATO, few statements were made about the foreign policy line of Finland. It was stated, for example, that some of the Finnish newspapers were supporting the dangerous activities of NATO while making unfriendly comments about the Soviet Union. Russians saw this as a contradiction to the FCMA treaty. It was also stated that these Finnish actors were aiming to spread 'war psychosis' while distorting the peaceful proposals of the Russians. (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 1961; Solsten & Meditz 1988). It has been later argued that the Note Crisis was made in an agreement between the Finnish and Russian leaders. As the government got dissolved, Russia secured its tight influence over the nation for years, as Kekkonen was seen a favourable actor towards the nation. After the event, Kekkonen secured a win in the following elections and governed until 1982. (Hulden 1991). According to Holsti (1964), the 'Note Crisis' had similar indications as the 1939 negotiations.

Arter (1998) claims, the Russian influence over Finnish domestic policies could be seen as a contravention of Article 6 of the FCMA. The article states that the parties should respect the non-interference of internal affairs of the other state. When analysing the influence campaigns during

the post-War and Cold War eras, the main target groups range from the general public to leaders and decision-makers. Russian officials viewed the Finnish policies through their own political framework with persistent self-censorship affecting what the public could see and hear about the regime. Attempts of creating a free flow of information were highly influenced by Russians and their Finnish supporters, which in many instances created a greater mistrust towards the Eastern neighbour. As Arter (1998) states, in a survey about the Finnish media made in 1978, the respondents claimed that the national media was too favourable towards the Soviet Union. It was also stated that more than one-third of the respondents thought that the Finnish foreign policy was too linked with the East. While this does not present the whole image of the period, it shows mild indications that the active measures operations did not profoundly influence the general public. However, as the years of Finlandization progressed, influencing gravitated more towards state officials. Kähönen (2006, 55-61) explains that Russia aimed to strengthen its sphere of influence and secure the continuation of the political agenda. To do that, its neighbouring countries could not be allowed to gravitate towards the West. Securing suitable political leaders at the highest level was seen as a mean to mould the domestic and foreign policy objectives of Finland.

3.3. Child custody cases in modern-day Finland

A significant number of modern-day active measures operations are conducted online because of the easy production and dissemination to global audiences. To lever the advantages of the Internet, Russia has created several methods to manipulate public opinions in foreign nations to achieve its objectives. As EU vs. DISINFO (2018) states, historically Finland has been somewhat absent from Russian state-controlled media, making it relatively easy to detect any campaigns against the country. However, since the beginning of the 21st century, Finland has faced multiple coordinated disinformation operations from Russia.

Many of these campaigns are related to the welfare of Russian children in Finland. It has been widely presented that the Finnish social authorities aggressively target Russian immigrant families by removing children without proper explanation. For a period in 2012, Finland was mentioned almost daily in multiple Russian press releases, TV channels, and online platforms. At that time, anti-Finnish disinformation operations originated from outside and inside Finland. Also, Russian state officials often issued statements based on one-sided information. While some online articles presented the cases purely from the Russian perspective, others were apparent disinformation.

In some articles, the Finnish child welfare authorities were portrayed as monsters trying to steal Russian children from their families, aiming to make them forget their ethnic backgrounds. Narrative promoting Finland as a dangerous country for Russians has been widely presented. (Kudashkina 2014).

One example of the disinformation operations was a list of 35 Russian families that were said to be targeted by the Finnish social services. The list was presented on multiple platforms and stated that the families were ‘victims of Finnish fascism’. However, according to *Ilta-Sanomat* (2012), at least 13 families were on the list based on wrong grounds. Some of them were customers of social services, but their children were never taken into custody. Others had never had any contact with said authorities. According to the former Russian Children’s Ombudsman Pavel Astakhov, from 2011 to 2014, there were over 70 unclear child custody cases regarding Russian families (Sputnik 2014).



Figure 3. Two examples of Russian disinformation articles about child custody cases
Sources: Сегодня (2012), Русская народная линия (2012)

Specific narratives have been re-used in multiple disinformation campaigns during the years. For example, it has been claimed that the Finnish social services forbid children from speaking Russian to ensure that they forget their native language and families completely. (Kudashkina 2014).

Figure 3 presents two examples of Russian disinformation articles from 2012. In the articles,

multiple false statements are made. For example, emergency placements are compared to political terror, torture, and genocide against Russians. Some state-provided temporary housings are claimed to be ‘special Finnish prisons designed to destroy Russian families’. It is also widely promulgated that these actions aim to transfer Russian children to the ownership of the Finnish nation. In order to do that, it is claimed that the authorities change the names and citizenships of children, making sure the parents will not be able to find them anymore. (Сегодня 2012; Русская народная линия 2012).

The issue of child welfare of ethnic Russians in Finland was the subject of bilateral talks in 2010. This has also been recognized by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (2010) when they offered Russian journalists a roundtable discussion on the Finnish-Russian family issues. Open communication improved the relations of the two nations, as in late 2012 Astakhov stated that there had been a distortion of information before. According to him, the lack of communication between the nations during the incidents had led to multiple mistakes in news reports and articles. Astakhov has also emphasized that some public statements had not been entirely factual. (Manninen 2012). For example, it was stated that one of the Russian mothers was put in prison following the emergency placement. However, when Astakhov contacted the mother, it was made known that she was not in police custody, but rather she thought that the safe shelter was like a prison. It was also stated that the state officials do not think that the Finnish authorities are targeting Russians. However, despite this progress, Astakhov is still on record as stating that Finland can be a dangerous country for foreign families to live in. (Manninen 2012).

Although the issue of child welfare appeared to be solved, a few years later, in 2014, new disinformation campaigns started. It was again stated that the Finnish authorities were trying to make the ethnic Russian children forget their families and cultural backgrounds. Figure 4 below illustrates two of these reports. There were claims that a child was force-fed psychoactive drugs to brainwash them at the temporary housing. (Sputnik News 2014a). Another statement was that children are taken away from their families without explanation because of the low birth rate of Finland and other Scandinavian countries. (Sputnik News 2014b). This can be linked to earlier false claims about Finnish authorities changing children’s names and citizenships to hide them from the parents.

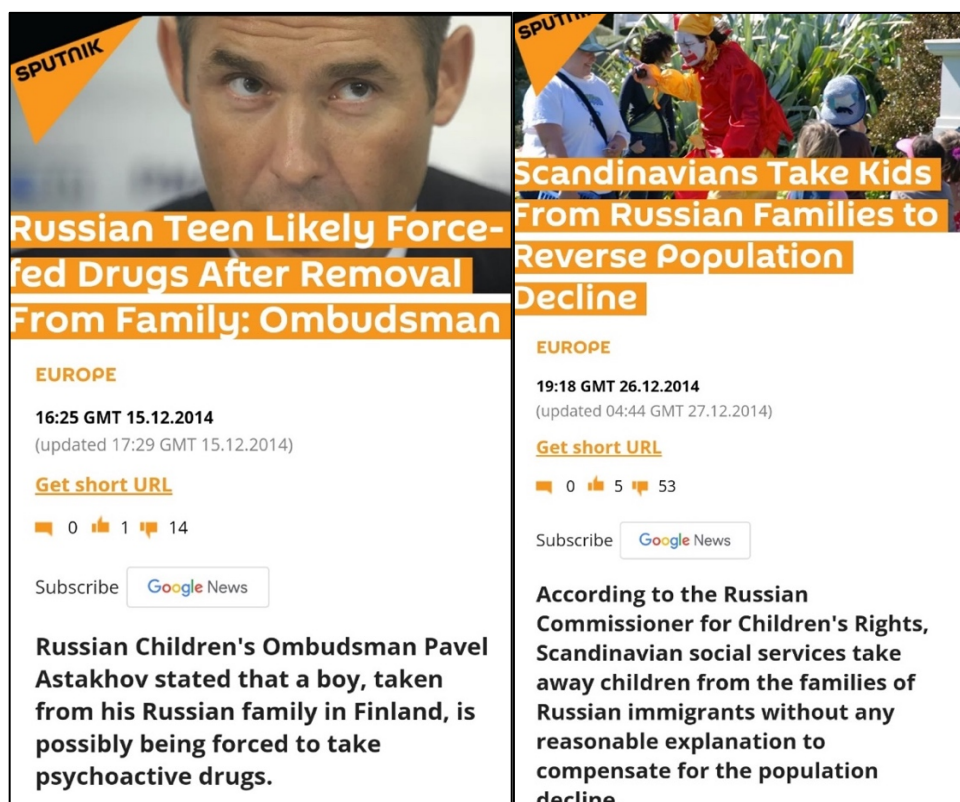


Figure 4 Two Sputnik News disinformation articles from 2014
 Source: Sputnik News (2014a; 2014b)

There are several reasons why information campaigns about children are so popular when it comes to Finland. According to the Finnish privacy legislation, state officials cannot argue publicly why individual placement decisions are made. The officials can present only general principles of child welfare and related legislation. This is one of the reasons why custody cases are easily prone to foreign and domestic disinformation operations. (EU vs. DISINFO 2018). The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (2016) emphasizes that the authorities always base their decisions on the child’s best interests. Nationality is not a factor of an emergency placement, and the decision to take a child from its family is always seen as the last option. The main principle of the Child Welfare Act (2007) is to intervene with only the mildest possible means in family affairs. According to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (2016), the most common reasons for families to receive assistance are mental health problems, domestic violence, or the use of intoxicants. These criteria apply throughout all nationalities and are not based on any specific ethnic background. In Finland, children have a right to physical integrity, meaning any violence is against the law.

According to Jäppinen (2017), Russian leaders use these public custody cases as a part of their domestic and foreign policy operations. This type of disinformation is not used to target the majority of the Finnish population but is instead designed to influence the opinions of the Russian

minority and other minorities. When presenting Finland as a dangerous nation for Russian families, it is easy to create tension between the growing community and the Finnish Government officials. These campaigns can also influence the minds of other minorities that might feel as though they are not fully integrated into Finnish society. This gives Russia an opportunity to influence Finland from within. Another objective is to change Finland's positive image in Russia. This could decrease immigration to Finland, ensuring that more working-age people and students stay at home. Without strong counternarratives from Finland, there is a danger that this may affect the country's global reputation, partnerships, and international cooperation. EU vs. DISINFO (2018) explains that Russia uses the same types of narratives in other Western countries, e.g., Norway, France, and Germany.

4. FINLAND'S STRATEGY OF COUNTERING INFORMATION OPERATIONS

Finland has based its strategy of countering active measures operations on educating the population and state officials. Education in media literacy and widespread critical thinking skills, combined with effective government responses, makes it harder for foreign actors to undermine the faith in institutions (Standish 2017). In 2015, President Niinistö publicly acknowledged that information operations are a real threat to Finland. He emphasized in the *Yle News* article (2015) that different layers of society need to combat these operations together. In 2016, Jed Willard, the director of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Center for Global Engagement at Harvard University, was hired by the Finnish Government to teach about information influencing. The aim was to help officials across multiple governmental levels to identify why and how fabricated information goes viral and how to counter these operations. According to Willard, the best way of countering information attacks is not by correcting the false information. Instead, the nation should have a positive national narrative and firmly stick to that. (Halminen 2016). Likewise, Standish (2017) argues, that as Finland routinely ranks at the top of the many social, economic, and welfare meters, the nation should utilize these in the fight against disinformation.

Finland has experienced Russian information activities before, during, and after the Cold War, and as a result, has created a reasonably strong resilience to these operations. As the former Finnish ambassador to Moscow, René Nyberg (2018) claims, resilience to cyber operations is one of the critical answers to the challenges that the weaponization of information has created. The basis of Finland's resilience comes from its history and national experiences. Creating productive relations between the East and the West while protecting its independence has affected the Finnish national identity. The unique setting Finland had among Russia's neighbours after WWII created a solid base upon which to build on. (Nyberg 2018). Jussi Toivanen, the Chief Communications Specialist for the Finnish Prime Minister's Office, stated in 2020 that Finland has a comprehensive approach to national security. The foundation is that security belongs to everyone, making it vital to strengthen cooperation between different societal layers and actors. When it comes to active measures operations, the government is not the only target; all parts of society can be attacked. The concept of comprehensive security was developed from the experiences during and after WWII and now focuses on educating the general public on information security as a whole. (CDA Institute 2020).

Pynnöniemi & Saari (2017) claim that while Russian information operations in Finland have been relatively modest, officials understand the need to counter these campaigns in a quick and coordinated manner. Therefore, it is essential to increase general awareness by communicating the risks to the masses as directly and transparently as possible. An educated and alert society is the best way to counter active measures operations. Cross-governmental action has taken place to ensure that society stays protected. In 2014, the Finnish Government launched an initiative to counter fake news in the country. One extensive part of this was to embed media literacy education as a part of the school curriculums. Media literacy has been taught in Finnish schools since the 1970s, but now the critical importance is even more emphasized. While teaching is primarily state funded, many non-governmental organisations offer opportunities to learn about cyberspace and technological literacy. Older people are taught how to use modern technologies, and libraries assist them with essential information needs. Small children are educated to use the Internet and computers already in kindergarten. (US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations 2018). A fundamental factor of Finland's strategy, according to Toivanen (2020), is to make sure that the general public understands how the information environment works. It is vital for solid understanding that people see how easily statistics and images can be manipulated. Toivanen (2021) states that there has been an apparent increase in disinformation activities targeting Finland after the Crimean annexation. However, people have become more critical and aware of possible attempts and foreign campaigns because of education.

Another significant element in countering active measures operations is to strengthen people's trust in government and institutions. Negativity and views about a dark information future can only create more suspicion, paranoia, and distrust. As Toivanen (2020) explains, it is almost impossible to know the actors behind information campaigns. He states that instead of knowing every actor, it would be more helpful to understand the objectives and aims behind the operations while basing future responses on them. Toivanen (2020) also states that the government should not debunk false information. Instead, citizens should be taught to detect and understand what disinformation is and how it is used.


Galeotti (2017) argues that in order to counter Russian information activities, there needs to be a clear understanding of how the operators work. It is also vital for the nations to know their societal vulnerabilities (Prime Minister's Office 2019). In the future, from the national point of view,

Finland needs to ensure the continuation of good relations with Russia. There needs to be a balance between protecting the nation from influencing campaigns and ensuring that relations stay as strong as possible. At the same time, Finland should strengthen its own strategic narratives that are promoted to the outside world. Focusing on the facts and promoting the possibilities, equality, and the way of life Finland can offer is a concrete tool against malicious and hostile operations. This information should also be provided to the minority groups already living in Finland who might not have fully embraced the culture. The creation of new independent platforms, news channels, and educational opportunities for language minorities is a cost-effective way to ensure that vital information is understood. Also, transparency of institutions and organisations is an effective way to strengthen trust. Finland's method of media education is already a huge victory but improving critical thinking skills only works to a certain extent. According to Nemr & Gangware (2019), research has shown that excess emphasizing of critical thinking skills can have counterproductive effects that create more doubt about the credibility of information in general. They base this on the idea that disinformation consumers already see themselves as critical thinkers who challenge the status quo.

Democratic freedoms, structural tensions within and between countries, and the impact of current anti-authority movements are easily attacked subject matters. In the current world order, the vision of European security needs to broaden and become more systematic. It needs to include the nations that have weaker institutions and lower trust in European governance. (Galeotti 2017). As several EU members are also part of NATO, it would be ideal to deepen the cooperation between the two organisations. It would be crucial to provide precise criteria and terminology to enhance the EU's capabilities in the fight against information operations. For example, assessments about threat levels and the significance of attacks need to be coherent for the cooperation to work. This also applies to the collection of evidence and management of information. The lack of common ground affects how quickly and easily the EU and its members can respond to information operations. (Pamment 2020). The current state of lack of shared understanding, goals, and trust weakens the European Union and its member states.

5. OUTCOMES, FINDINGS, AND DISCUSSION

This thesis has examined Russia’s active measures operations against Finland during significant periods in Finno-Russian relations from the Winter War to the present day. The focus of the research has been to understand the evolution of Russian operations regarding Finland. The study showcased changes in the means on influence, target groups, and used narratives, while the primary objectives of Russia’s active measures operations stayed the same. Figure 5 below summarises the results of the study.



Winter War & Continuation War	Cold War & Finlandization	Present day
OBJECTIVES		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protection of borders • protection of the regime • influence in the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protection of the regime • weakening the West, NATO, and the EC • pro-Soviet sentiments • securing the sphere of influence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protection of the regime • weakening the West, NATO, and the EU • pro-Russian sentiments • power and influence in the region
MEANS OF INFLUENCE		
diplomacy, print media	diplomacy, education, print media	social media, online media platforms
TARGET GROUPS		
government, military	government, public	minorities, public
PRESENTED MESSAGES		
<p><i>“Cooperate or we will invade”</i> <i>“The government is the reason the war started”</i> <i>“Let us free you”</i></p>	<p><i>“Communist revolution”</i> <i>“Finland’s domestic and foreign affairs are being intervened”</i></p>	<p><i>“Russians are persecuted by the Finnish state”</i> <i>“The West is weak, let us help you”</i></p>

Figure 5. Main results of the research

By analysing the historical evidence and the data from the comparative case studies, the following six primary outcomes of the research have been identified:

1. Overt and covert active measures are a core component of Russia's domestic and foreign policies.
2. Russia uses active measures to strengthen the nation's position against the West.
3. The primary objective of Russia's information operations has been to ensure the continuation of the state's ideology and political regime.
4. The growing use of online platforms and social media has changed the target groups, techniques, and methods of Russian active measures operations.
5. Russia continues to use active measures to influence Finnish political life.
6. Finland's effective strategy of countering Russian information operations is based on education and strong government responses.

From analysing the outcomes above and combining them with the existing literature, the following findings have been derived:

A. Active measures are regarded as an instrument of achieving Russian foreign policy goals

During Soviet times, Russia needed to create a favourable environment for the advancements of its foreign policy goals. One of the main objectives was to ensure the continuation of the political regime by spreading it to the nations within Russia's sphere of influence. Active measures were seen as a low-cost and non-violent way to strengthen the regime. The nation used a wide range of methods to lay the foundations for long-term operations in its neighbouring regions. With entirely different political systems, the Western nations were seen as a significant threat that needed to be countered with active measures operations. Using its immediate neighbouring countries as a buffer, it was easier for Russia to reinforce its narratives, and to control and shape both domestic and global information environments.

In Finland, Russia's aim to protect itself and seek global power was achieved through a variety of different forms of influence. Historically, the nation conducted a range of political and societal operations. From direct coercive influence, to more covert incorporation, Russia has used Finland to achieve its wider foreign policy objectives against the West.

B. The narratives and targets of Russian active measures operations in Finland have evolved as new technologies have emerged

The main target groups of Russian operations in Finland have changed with the development of technology. In the past, the primary means of influence included diplomatic correspondence, print media, and radio broadcasts. Before the advent of mass communications media, the population as a whole exerted little influence on domestic politics and, the focus was on smaller, more defined groups, such as state leaders, decision-makers, and military officials. Modern-day disinformation and propaganda can reach a wider and more influential audience more easily with the use of online platforms. This has led to the methods adapting to follow the social media trends and changing from fixed to mobile, focusing on the vulnerabilities of the nations. Nowadays, Russia uses multiple actors utilising different techniques and platforms to exploit people and international organisations, with the aim of undermining Western democracy.

The change in target groups has also affected the types of narratives promoted. During the Soviet times, influence operations used to directly target the political decisions foreign leaders made. With the increasing reach of modern-day operations, active measures seek to exploit opinions about large-scale societal issues rather than more specific political matters. As the focal points in modern operations are directed to promoting specific narratives that are already part of public discussions, it is possible for Russia to use covert online media activities without creating excessive attention.

Although the reach of Russia's current information operations is greater than during the Soviet period, the overall effectiveness has not been reflected in the increased audience. This is a result of media consumers having to process more information than ever before from multiple sources thereby diluting the impact of each message. Therefore, to achieve the same impact as before, Russia has had to increase the number and variety of its campaigns. In Finland, the operations that were conducted during the Winter War period and Finlandization had the most effect. More recently, despite repeated campaigns, the same level of success has not been achieved. Understanding this is an essential factor in being able to predict how future campaigns may be conducted and what countermeasures can be employed to mitigate the effects.

C. Russia's primary strategic objectives in Finland have not changed since the Winter War period

From the Soviet era to present-day Russia, the nation's strategic objectives have stayed relatively similar. It can be seen that Russia's primary foreign policy objective towards Finland has always been to keep the nation under its influence. This has led to Russia having a continuous and significant impact on Finland's foreign and domestic policies. From the information operations leading to the Winter War, to the time of Finlandization and the high levels of censorship, to today's online disinformation campaigns, Russia has always sought to affect how Finland operates. Russia views the Western institutions as weak but still a threat to the nation's aspiration for global power. In the case of Finland, Russia sees NATO as a challenge and aims to influence decision-making to ensure the country remains outside the Alliance.

Historically, Finland has decided not to join a number of Western institutions to secure better relations with Russia, which can still be seen in some political discussions. When the topic of NATO membership is debated, one of the main questions presented is how this would affect Finland's bilateral relations with Russia. Likewise, it is also questioned if membership would bring additional security to the nation. Russia sees Finnish membership as a threat as it would bring NATO's military infrastructure closer to its borders on another front. This has resulted in Russia repeatedly stating that it would act accordingly if Finland decided to join the Alliance. From one perspective, if Finland decided to join, it would gain additional security from NATO troops in the region and the protection of collective defence. However, it could also be predicted that Russian active measures operations would most likely grow more extensive and harmful in nature. As a result, the current state, in which Finland is working in close cooperation with the Alliance and has good relations with Russia is often seen as an ideal compromise. Finland is still a target of ongoing information operations, but the scale and success have been modest. However, if a military attack was to happen, Finland would not have the security NATO could provide. Discussions on the issue are multidimensional with positives and negatives on both sides. However, overall, it indicates that Russia still can influence public opinions, political discussions, and decision-making in modern-day Finland.

On the topic of EU membership, Finland's position is currently firm. This is one reason why active measures campaigns regarding the subject matter appear to be unsuccessful. However, Russia's exploitation of foreign nations' vulnerabilities and the use of emotionally appealing stories has

been seen as one facet of these operations. A prominent theme has been for Russia to promote its strengths against the perceived weaknesses of the liberal Western nations and their alliances. In the case of Finland and the EU, immigration and the refugee crisis with their associated issues of social cohesion are often promoted in influence campaigns. Presenting immigration in a negative light could be used to not only weaken the national government but also to create mistrust toward the EU as a whole. For example, future information operations could be used to present the narrative that Finland cannot choose its own immigration policy because of EU's directives. This could also be tied with themes about the Finnish Government being incapable of making good decisions for the nation. With the continuing use of the same types of strategic messaging, it is possible that the Finnish general public may change its opinions about EU membership.

D. Russia uses active measures to promote its reputation, heritage and culture abroad

Russia has been seen to use active measures to enhance its reputation by promoting its culture and heritage internationally. By advancing the narrative of the West as weak, the nation can propagate pro-Russian sentiments in its neighbouring countries. This is seen as a necessary part of the strategy to increase the nation's global power. It could also help to promote social cohesion and cooperation between Russia and Finland. Positive narratives of the economic partnership and friendly relations between the two countries have been a way to enhance Russia's reputation in Finland. Also, presenting the differences between Finnish and immigrant cultures, while emphasizing the unity between Russian and Finnish ones, could in future be used to shape the opinions of a wider population. As the Finnish general public is highly homogeneous, narratives about cultural differences and multiculturalism being a threat with the promotion of disinformation could resonate in people with a nationalist mindset.

E. Russia actively uses its diaspora abroad in active measures campaigns

Modern-day active measures operations have highlighted Russia's use of its expatriate communities as powerful means to influence foreign nations and, in this study, in Finland. In the presented child custody cases, Russian operators have shown a deep understanding of how easily the issue of child protection can be exploited due to Finnish privacy legislation. By presenting the Russian diaspora as suffering due to the actions of Finnish state officials, there is an opportunity to mould opinions in Finland, Russia, and other countries. With the easy promotion of emotive but

false narratives, the nation can have a strong hold on those that consider that the Finnish state has abused its power. With these campaigns, Russia may aim to strengthen its covert influence over the nation by affecting decision-making from within through multiple ongoing operations. Another factor could be to decrease Russian immigration to Finland. The constant promotion of Finland being a dangerous country to Russians might affect the nation's overall image in the long run if the information campaigns continue in their present theme. It could also influence how other nations and global partners view Finland.

F. Resistance to Russian active measures by the Finnish population is high

Russia's strategic and geopolitical objectives towards Finland have transformed only a little through the period investigated by this research. It could be argued that this is one of the reasons why educating the Finnish population and government officials on countering information operations has been so successful. The importance of education and critical thinking skills has been recognized as Finns are generally resistant to foreign influence operations. The general public has rarely resonated with the narratives promoted by Russian information operations. Also, the overall awareness has made people more critical of information from unconfirmed sources. There is a general understanding of how these operations are designed to attack the population and the nation's societal cohesion. Finland has had an opportunity to analyse the effects of past activities and to determine which countermeasures have been successful.

Both the public and decision-makers in Finland know that information operations are ongoing issues that they will most likely continue for the foreseeable future. The state acknowledges that Russian influence operations are one of the most significant factors affecting the security and stability of the country. The nation must understand which parts of society are the most vulnerable as the trend in the past decades has been to focus on those areas. Identifying these targets is a key factor in being able to counter active measures. However, these campaigns are likely to continue to evolve in the future. That is why Finland should not focus on only one aspect of the operations, but instead understand Russia's wider strategic ambitions. As techniques evolve, it is likely that information operations will become more refined and harder to recognize in the future. This would also mean that it could be more challenging to counter the narratives promoted in these operations.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has sought to understand the concept of Russia's active measures and how they have been used against Finland from the Winter War period to the present day. Two claims about the research topic were initially made by the author. Firstly, while the communication technologies have developed, Russia's strategic objectives towards Finland have not changed from Soviet times to today. Secondly, Russia still influences Finnish political discussion and decision-making. The research of this thesis was based on the following research questions:

3. How have the objectives, means of influence, and target groups of Russian active measures against Finland changed from the Soviet era to today?
4. Based on historical examples, what are the likely aims, motivations, and methods expected for future Russian active measures operations against Finland?

As a result of combining the analysis of the case studies with the existing literature, the author has made following conclusions regarding Russia's use of active measures against Finland.

1. Russia is agile and adaptive in its information activities against Finland

The techniques and methods used in information operations have developed with technology, globalization, and societal changes. These changes have affected how Russia's active measures operations have evolved in and after the Soviet era. During the Winter War period, the nation used primarily coercive and hard power tools combined with military force to influence foreign actors. Information influencing was seen as more of an instrument to enhance other methods. In the Cold War period, the significance of active measures operations grew. The influence changed more towards behaviour shaping while still maintaining the threat of military intervention. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, it could be seen that the Russian influence over Finland changed forms most drastically, moulding into a more modern and covert in strategy. Historically, the tactics of direct, coercive influence contributed to the growth of Finland's information environment and resilience. Today, Russia continues to be part of Finland's political discussions even without direct or coercive influence. Certain foreign policy decisions are still made with bilateral relations in mind, meaning the influence is achieved more from within the society through opinion and behaviour shaping.

Social media and other online platforms have revolutionized active measures operations, providing rapid and cost-effective means to reach a wide audience. Also, the number of state and non-state actors in the information space has grown significantly. Even though new and more effective countermeasures are being developed, the possibilities future technologies will provide may increase the global threat posed by influence operations. It could also be concluded that the main target groups will continue to change in the future. While it is easy to access a broad audience with current technology, it may not be the most effective way to influence opinions, especially in Finland. Russia most likely understands this and will change how and why certain groups are targeted. This is something that needs to be considered when future countermeasures are discussed and developed.

2. Russian information activities against Finland will continue

Russia will likely continue to use information as a mean to influence domestic and international politics. It can even be argued that information operations will assume more of a primary role in world politics. Ideology was and is still the core part of Russian information operations, and the primary objectives regarding the nature of the relationship between the West and Finland have stayed the same. From the Soviet protection of communism to today's strengthening of the Russian worldview, active measures have been a vital tool for the nation. Modern-day Russia views the West and regional cooperations as threats to its national security. This will most likely affect the types of information operations directed at Finland in the future. Another important consideration is that Russia may influence opinions in Finland as a tool to shape its global campaign against increased cooperation with the West. Influence over its neighbouring nations gives Russia the sense of security it believes that it needs.

While it is impossible to predict the future, based on historical examples some conclusions can be made regarding the possible motivations and aims of Russia's future information operations against Finland. Russia will most likely aim to continue to weaken the West and its regional organisations in an attempt to increase its relative global power. This will also affect Finland as a member of the EU and a partner nation of NATO. The desire to keep Finland out of NATO is most likely going to be a motivation for future disinformation operations whenever the topic forms part of Finnish political discussions. Russia's growing use of active measures operations to influence foreign elections needs to be taken into account across government as several elections are due in

the next five years. This may manifest itself in efforts to influence voters to support candidates with anti-NATO or anti-EU views. While the operations regarding Finnish elections will most likely not be the same as in the US or other European nations, they would still be attacks against the democratic foundation of the nation and should be condemned.

Russian active measures operations regarding Finland's domestic political life will most likely continue to follow the same trends that they have previously, focusing on and exploiting the existing polarisation of society. The Russian diaspora has been a significant part of modern-day information operations and Russia's compatriot policy will continue in the future, providing a template for interference in other countries. Narratives about nationalist movements, immigration, and cultural clashes will probably be combined with disinformation about the EU and other international organisations. Disinformation about the COVID-19 pandemic and future pandemics, vaccines, as well as other large-scale global issues are also likely to be used to strengthen Russia's national narrative.

3. The Finnish strategy of countering active measures operations must evolve to match the threat

As for Finland, a crucial aspect of countering information operations is to have an educated and transparent society. However, education needs to follow and adapt to the changing operations, as the subject matter is constantly evolving. What works now most likely will not work in 5 or 10 years. Understanding new technologies has to be a priority from the beginning of the development process in countering adversary influence operations. It is vital to produce factual information at the government level in languages other than Finnish, Swedish, and English. This presents a cost-effective way to increase trust in government and state institutions in the most vulnerable groups that might not feel that they are part of Finnish society. Action to facilitate the full integration of minorities into society will also provide a solid foundation to counter different types of information operations. This would contribute to the development of broader government initiatives to get the public more involved with countering the threat of active measures in everyday life. Finally, encouraging further cooperation between European nations and global organisations will strengthen the whole region.

The possible connection between the success of influence campaigns and the target group's size needs to be appreciated when considering future active measures operations. Russia likely has

acknowledged this regarding the conduct of future operations. This could mean that planned activities against Finland will target smaller, carefully chosen groups to gain a more solid basis for promoting the chosen narratives.

4. Future research areas

As this research has had a limited framework, recommended further work would seek to undertake a larger-scale study examining the use of active measures operations against Finland. This would provide a more in-depth analysis of the subject matter with more case studies. It would also contribute to a deeper understanding of the subject to include other state actors besides Russia to acknowledge differences in motivations, methods, and techniques.

With elections due in Finland from 2021-2024, it would be of interest to conduct a comparative study on the levels of information operations during the period. This research could provide information about the similarities and differences between the activities seen in municipal, parliamentary, and presidential elections.

Regionally, it would be valuable to examine if differences exist in Russian active measures operations against Sweden, Finland, and Estonia and how they are mitigated at the national level. These nations have many similarities but have very different relations with the West. A comparative study could provide information on how different variables affect public opinions, behaviours, and decision-making, and what measures are taken nationally to counter them.

Finally, another long-term research area could be an in-depth analysis of the relations between NATO, Finland, and Russia. This would form the basis of an investigation into how any changes in the status quo could affect the future nature of information operations in Finland and its neighbouring regions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Translation of the war propaganda leaflet 1



Source: National Library Archive (2015)

Translation is done by the author.

“Soldier! End this hopeless WAR for you! Join the side of the People's Government of Finland led by Otto Kuusinen!

Soldier! The blood thirsty group of generals has separated you from your family and relatives, sent you to the battlefield to die...

Soldier! Think about why you are part of a hopeless war!

WAR BRINGS YOU DEATH, HUNGER TO YOUR RELATIVES, POVERTY AND MISERY TO YOUR HOMELAND.

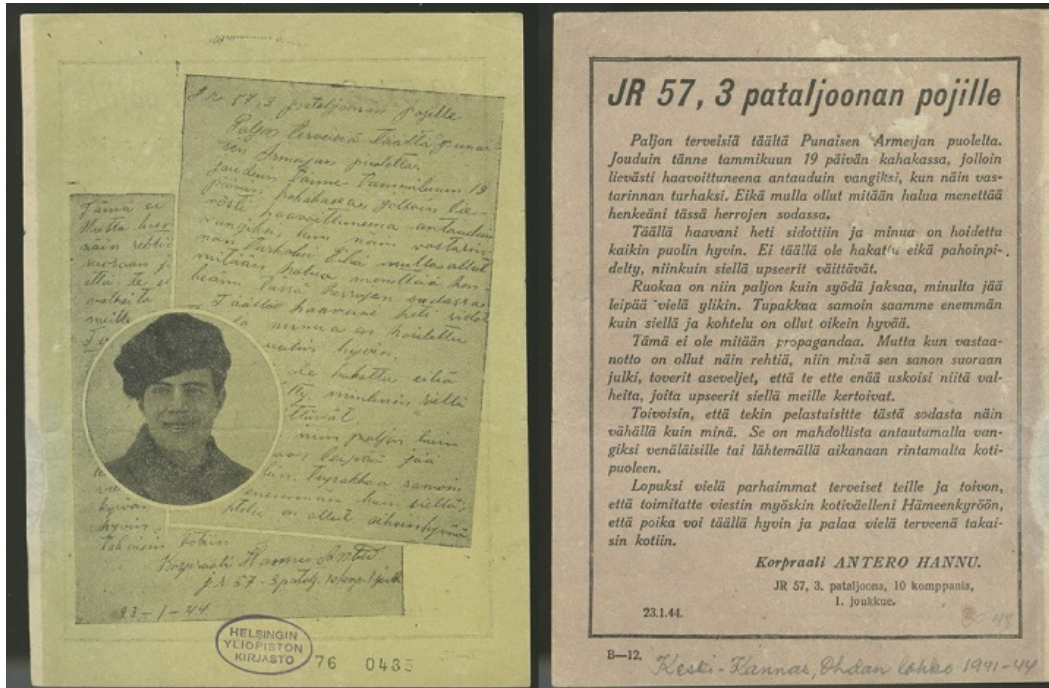
SOLDIER, SURRENDER TO THE RED ARMY! YOU ARE GUARANTEED YOUR LIFE AND FULL SAFETY.

Soldier! Look closely at these starved faces! Among these may be your child, mother, wife or sister? At the command of executioner Mannerheim, they have been driven out of their homes and homelands.

Soldier! This may be your family being evicted from their beloved home by the coves of Mannerheim! Your house may be on fire. Look! Is that your cow that the guards are taking to be slaughtered?

Soldier! If you want to return to your family soon and save your life, then surrender to the Red Army.”

Appendix 2. Translation of the war propaganda leaflet 2



Source: National Library Archive (2015).

Translation is done by the author.

“JR 57, for the boys of the 3rd Battalion

Many greetings here from the Red Army’s side. I got here in a skirmish on January 19, when being slightly wounded, I surrendered when I saw that the resistance was in vain. And I had no desire to lose my life in this war of the upper-class.

Here, my wounds were immediately bandaged, and I have been treated well in all respects. There has not been any beating or abuse here, as the officers claim there.

There is as much food as I can eat, I even have much bread leftover. We also get more tobacco than there and the treatment has been very good.

This is not propaganda. But when the reception has been so honest, I say it outright, comrades in arms, that you would no longer believe the lies that the officers there tell us.

I wish you would be saved from this war with as little as I have. It is possible by surrendering to the Russians or, in due course, leaving the battlefield home.

Finally, best regards to you and I hope that you will also send a message to my family in Hämeenkyrö that your boy is doing well here and will return home healthy.

Corporal Antero Hannu,
JR 57, 3rd Battalion, 10th Company
1st Platoon”

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