Governing through strategic communication

How the EU governs through the problematization
of "disinformation" in Russian media

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Abstract

This thesis studies how strategic communication is introduced by the EU as an approach to managing “disinformation” in Russian media.

Through a problematization of the Russian media system, the EU legitimizes its emerging use of strategic communication as a foreign policy practice towards Russia. In this way ”disinformation” in Russian media is both perceived as a threat to EU governance, and as a possibility to extend EU governance within its Eastern neighbor regions and within the Union itself.

The analysis draws on a governmentality analytical framework. It aims at studying strategic communication as a unifying practice, which encourages the formation of strategically communicating diplomats with greater abilities to bridge the gaps between national and EU foreign policy. The study is based on EU policy papers and empirical material, primarily about the EU’s East StratCom, and interviews with EU practitioners working with strategic communication in Russia (diplomats from the EU delegation and national EU embassies).

Table of contents

1 Introduction

1.1 Motivation

1.1.1 Europe in an information war?

Ever since the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis in the fall of 2013, dialogue between the EU and Russia has been tense. In the public debates opinion makers in both Russian and EU based media have even labeled the situation an "information war" (BBC 16.09.15, RT 01.10.15). Leaders and opinion makers in the EU have claimed that Russian journalists do not report 'objective' and trustworthy news, but are being used to disseminate the Russian government's political propaganda – or as the EU officially says: "Russia's ongoing disinformation campaigns" (East StratCom 1). This allegation is not only presented as a problem because it contradicts the EU's values for independent media (IFJ Declaration 1954), but as a prominent EU diplomat in Moscow states also because it threatens the legitimacy of the EU itself:

"We have seen a continually more intense campaign, which has also distorted and misrepresented what the EU has done" (Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016).

One of many noticeable examples he gives is a news story that flourished in several Russian news sites and bigger media, informing that the EU was funding concentration camps for Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine. The pictures that accompanied the story portrayed EU funded buildings in Ukraine. In reality, however, they showed a construction site of an EU-funded project for temporary housing of illegal immigrants (Stopfake 26.04.15; Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016).

The perceived increase in discrediting stories about the EU in Russian media has urged the EU to act. On 19-20 March 2015, the European Council invited High

Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission (HRVP), Federica Mogherini, to develop a strategy on how to minimize the influence of the so-called "disinformation" stemming from the Russian media. The answer to the perceived threat of "disinformation" became strategic communication (stratcom), which can theoretically be defined as *"the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission"* (Hallahan et. al 2007: 3). Supporting this, the EU presents it as *"an important tool in furthering the EU's overall policy objectives",* especially through the communication of the EU's values and successes in order to change the negative picture of the EU often promoted in the Russian media (East StratCom Action Plan 2015).

1.1.2 The EU's problematization of Russia's "media campaign"

The East Stratcom Team implementing the strategy works through three overall objectives: 1) To enhance information about the EU's policies and values, 2) to produce and spread factual information against disinformation, and 3) to support the development of independent Russian language media in post-Soviet countries. Although its work especially addresses the Russian speaking minorities in the EU Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine), the Russian population and Russian speakers in EU member states are also defined as target groups (East StratCom Action Plan; Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016).

Studies have shown that most Russian speakers, no matter where they live, use Russian state controlled media as their primary source of information (Gallup 2014), which makes Russian state controlled media very influential among Russian speakers globally. Furthermore, this influence is strengthened by the fact that pro-Kremlin (Russian government friendly) editors have taken seat in many smaller media outlets within the last years (Vartanova 2012). The high degree of state intervention and elite interests in the Russian media is presented as one of the main reasons for the spread of "disinformation" by diplomats from

the EU and EU member states working in Russia (Diplomat interviews 2015-2016). State control over Russian media has caused a relatively high degree of media distrust among Russian populations (Vartanova 2012, Gehlbach 2010). The distrust is not just confined to the Russian media, but also brings into question the independence of EU based media, which some Russian based media accuse of being Western propagandists trying to *"persuade everyone to hate Russia and its policies"* (SputnikNews 14.08.15). Similarly, Russian State media has framed the East StratCom Team as being founded as part of upscaling *"the information war against Russia"* (TV Rossiya 30.03.16).

This critical narrative against 'the West', including EU member states, is not just strong inside Russia, but also in Russian state media broadcasting outside of Russia. The Russian state has recently up-scaled the support for these global news services, and other national state media have received substantial budget increases as well. This has raised the budget for Russian state media to approximately 1.3 billion USD in 2016 (Moscow Times 11.10.15; ibtimes 10.12.15). In the EU, these huge investments in media productions are perceived as a part of the Russian "disinformation campaign" against the West. The most skeptical voices within the EU have been expressing the concern that the Russian president Vladimir Putin can utilize the media to legitimize future military actions that violate international law - as was the case with the Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014, which gained huge public support among Russian speakers (EUobserver 23.06.15, Gallup 2014).

1.1.3 Strategic communication – A resolution to challenged governance?

The media's ability to set agendas and frame political issues has given them a distinguished position to influence foreign policy (Gilboa 2005, Robinson 2001). In this way, critical narratives about the EU in Russia and the Eastern Partnership countries is feared to have a negative impact on the EU's cooperation with these countries, including on high-priority issues such as border and conflict management and democracy promotion (Barbé & Johansson-

Nogué 2008). Also within the EU itself negative media coverage can have a substantial influence, *"since ordinary citizens usually do not have 'first- hand' experience of the EU, but depend on mass media coverage for information"* (Maier&Rittberger 2008: 245, Koopmans&Statham 2010).

Within the EU, free media and journalism are stressed as being *"an important gauge of democracy",* since the media play a "leading role" for the European integration process (EU Parliament 1). Therefore, critical media narratives that contradict the EU's fundamental values and own narrative of the EU as "a force for good" might constitute a threat to EU governance itself (Barbé & Johansson-Nogué 2008). Correspondingly, the EU sees disinformation and state control over media content as opposing and threatening the dissemination of the EU's fundamental values. The "disinformation" spread through Russian media – especially the stories related to the EU – is therefore something the Union finds important to be *"prepared to anticipate and respond to"* (East StratCom Action Plan 2015). In order to deal with "disinformation" the EU has introduced strategic communication as a legitimate way to counter the Russian narratives spread through the media.

This thesis argues that the implementation of strategic communication practice in the EU's foreign policy towards Russia is not only a matter of concrete "disinformation"-management, it is also an act of legitimizing and conducting EU governance in itself. In order to study these processes of governance in the EU's foreign policy, and the role of media and strategic communication in this process, the thesis takes its point of departure in governmentality theory developed by Michel Foucault and elaborated by Mitchel Dean. Within this poststructuralist framework, human conduct is something that can be regulated and created through governance processes, and the form of identities they animate (Dean 2009: 18ff). The production of knowledge that for example takes place through the media must then be seen as a part of governance, since *"To govern (…) is to structure the possible field of action of others"* (Foucault 2003 [1982]: 128 in Torfing&Sørensen 2005: 115ff). In line with this, strategic communication can be studied as a governance practice underpinned by different rationalities and

technologies involved in the processes of shaping perceptions and actions of populations into a governable entity (Dean 2009).

1.2 Research question

The outset for this thesis was to study the implementation of the EU's East StratCom-strategy in Russia, and outline how critical allegations by prominent EU politicians and other influential EU opinion makers against the Russian media was actually turned into concrete foreign policy initiatives and implemented into a Russian context. But in order to understand how EU actors articulate and legitimize the application of strategic communication as a foreign policy practice towards Russia, governmentality theory was chosen as a theoretical framework, through which the interconnectedness of the concepts of foreign policy practice, media systems, press norms, disinformation, and strategic communication could be investigated.

The central aim of the thesis is to study how discourses on "disinformation" in the Russian media are used to legitimize EU governance through foreign policy practices, specifically through strategic communication related to Russian "disinformation". This study of EU foreign policy thus places itself in the interplay between the role of the media as a crucial structure for the opinion formation process among the populations, and strategic communication as the EU's way to influence this process and legitimize EU governance.

The above considerations and areas of interest have led me to the following research question, which guides this study:

RESEARCH QUESTION

How does the EU govern through strategic communication with the aim to diminish the effects of perceived "disinformation" in the Russian media?

1.2.1 Sub-questions

1. How do utopian assumptions and a problematization of "disinformation" in the Russian media construct a field for legitimate EU governance?

2. How is strategic communication practice implemented among diplomats in Russia, and how does it enable governance through The StratCom Regime?

1.2.2 Clarification of concepts

In order to enhance the understanding of the research question three central concepts will be presented briefly, before they are applied and elaborated throughout the thesis: "Disinformation", the Russian media system, and strategic communication.

Disinformation:

The official strategy documents from the EU's East StratCom use "disinformation" as a broad term to describe the information spread by Russian media, politicians or officials etc., which it finds misleading, nonfactual, and/or discrediting the EU on a false premise (EU Actions Plan; East StratCom Q&A).

Disinformation as a concept will be further elaborated in chapter 3. For now, the term "disinformation" will be defined as forms of journalistic productions that differ from the press norms and media ethics promoted by e.g. the European Federation of Journalists (IFJ Declaration 1954).

This thesis does not seek to evaluate or judge if or to what extend there is disinformation in the Russian media. Thus, the term "disinformation" is presented in double quotation marks in order to stress that this refers to a discursive concept, which is used to legitimize certain policy practices.

Strategic communication:

Within recent studies, strategic communication is concerned with the ways in which an organization communicates purposefully to advance its mission (Hallahan et al. 2007: 4). But within the thesis' governmentality framework, strategic communication will not just be studied as a 'neutral' policy tool. Instead the thesis will examine how the concept is composed of powerful rationalities, tools, and practices, which underpin the EU's introduction of strategic communication as a legitimate foreign policy practice towards Russian "disinformation".

The StratCom Regime:

Within this thesis governance will be understood within the governmentality-framework presented in chapter 2. In line with Mitchell Dean's study of 'regimes of practices' this thesis sets of to construct and study the constitution of the regime of practices that has emerged as part of the EU's problematization of "disinformation" within the Russian media. The full name of this regime is "The Regime of Diplomatic Strategic Communication towards "Disinformation" in the Russian media " with from now on will be referred to as The StratCom Regime. This regime is constituted by diplomatic practices and actors targeting "dinsinformation" in the Russian media. As described in the introduction the Russian media are also influential in especially Eastern Partnership countries, and in this way this study could also have included diplomats in e.g. Ukraine,

Moldova, Georgia etc. But since Russia in the case for this thesis the diplomats in Russia will provide the empirical basis for this thesis. Throughout the thesis East StratCom will be referring to the EU's East StratCom-strategy as it is formulated through the Action Plan describing the strategy implementation. When I refer to the East StratCom Team (comprised by 9 staff within the EEAS in Brussels) this will we states explicitly.

Throughout the thesis quotations of other sources, will be presented in double quotations marks. New concepts will be presented in single quotations marks in order to state that they represent terms that have a conceptual function in the text or words that can only be understood according to subjective judgment as 'right', 'wrong' or 'the truth'.

Chapter 3 will elaborate on the hegemonic understandings of the EU as a foreign policy actor. Here two dominant definitions of EU's foreign policy identity is introduced: *EU as a supranational vs. EU as an intergovernmental actor* (Jørgensen 2004: 12).
Throughout the thesis 'EU actors' will be used to describe all actors taking direct part of the constitutions of the EU in its broadest sense, which both includes EU institutions, member states, and individuals working for the EU or EU member states. 'EU practitioners' refers to individuals specifically engaged in policy formulation and execution within the EU institutions. The label 'diplomats' will be referring to diplomats from both the EU Delegation in Moscow and diplomats from embassies of individual member states in Moscow working with the implementation and development of strategic communication in Russia. If nothing else is specified, 'the EU' within this study will be referring to the sum of EU institutions and member states engaged in EU affairs or policy.

1.3 The scope of the thesis

1.3.1 Structure of the thesis

The following section provides a brief overview of the structure of the thesis. While Table 1 contains a very stylized overview of the structure, a more detailed project design is available in the end of this chapter.

Table 1. Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1	Introduction
Chapter 2	Analytical framework & Research methods
Chapter 3	Analysis 1
Chapter 4	Analysis 1
Chapter 5	Analysis 2
Chapter 6	Analysis 2
Chapter 7	Reflections
Chapter 8	Conclusion

Chapter 1: Introduction to the field of research, the research question, and the central concepts of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Presentation of the analytical and methodological framework departing in poststructuralism and governmentality theory. The analytical dimensions of Dean's regime of practice analysis, *episteme, visibility, techne,* and *identity formation* are presented among other theoretical concepts guiding the analysis. Moreover, the empirical material used for this thesis is presented along

with some central analytical considerations regarding this thesis' construction of The StratCom Regime.

Chapter 3: Chapter three constitutes the first part of Analysis 1, which aims to answer sub-question 1. This is done through the analysis of the first analytical dimension, *episteme.* This chapter outlines the underlying forms of knowledge and values underpinning EU practitioners' strategic communication practice and their problematizations of the Russian media system.

Chapter 4: This chapter provides the second part of Analysis 1 through a study of the dimension *visibility*. It studies how "disinformation" in the Russian media system has become problematized by the EU after the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis, and how this has enabled the construction of the Russian media system as a target for EU foreign policy.

Chapter 5: By studying how strategic communication has been introduced as a legitimate foreign policy response to "disinformation", and by outlining the central rationalities and practices which underpin this response, this chapter contains the first part of the answer to sub-question 2. This include the study of the analytical dimension *techne* (Analysis 2).

Chapter 6: Through a study of the *identity formation* dimension, this chapter constitutes the second part of Analysis 2. In this chapter, the processes of legitimizing strategic communication as a foreign policy practice is studied based on the way diplomats in Moscow adapt to the role as 'the strategically communicating diplomat'.

Chapter 7: This chapter presents some reflections on what consequences the institutionalization of strategic communication into the EU foreign policy can have for diplomatic work.

Chapter 8: The last chapter provides the overall conclusion, which answers the research question. Here the analysis of the four dimensions of The StratCom

Regime are placed within the scope of the governmentality framework, in order to see *how* the EU's initiation of strategic communication as a foreign policy response to Russian "disinformation" is enabling hidden EU governance.

1.3.2 Delimitation

The current diplomatic relations between EU countries and Russia is the point of the point of departure for studying the interrelatedness of foreign policy and strategic communication. Due to the limitations of the thesis format, the study is limited to the EU-Russia relations of greatest relevance for the discourse on "disinformation" within Russian media. Other policy areas relevant for the general relations and perceptions of each other ("the other"), will only be included to the extent they take direct part in the discourse, practice and identity creation among EU actors. The inclusion and exclusion of concepts, knowledge, and practices are results of the analytical "guidelines" provided by the governmentality-framework and my own points of view as researcher, which have affected the selection of central elements of the analysis. Similarly, important theoretical and empirical elements for the development of foreign policy perceptions and discourses about Russia as "the other" have been excluded due to their limited influence on strategic communication practice. These areas include the trade relation between the EU and Russia and the current impact of economic sanctions (Bagheri & Akbarpour 2016; Shirov & Yantovskii 2015), the energy dependency on Russia among EU countries, Ukraine and other post-Soviet states (Tsakiris 2015), or the incipient military re-escalations between NATO and Russia (Hooker 2015; Zadra 2014; Diesen 2016; Sakwa 2014).

Departing in poststructuralist science the thesis does not dwell much on institutional functionalists' accounts of the procedures behind EU foreign policy and the East StratCom concerning legislature, economic and material resources, policy decision procedures etc. The focus of my governmentality study does not include scrutinizing the concrete implementation of the East StratCom Action

Plan. Instead the strategy is studied as a part of the formation and legitimization of foreign policy practice.

An important goal of the thesis is to study how the EU problematizes the Russian media system. As described by Bacchi 2012 (p.6) the study of problematization across different cultures, geopolitical spaces, and time enable us to do comparative studies on *"how an issue looks quite different in different locales"*. Due to the limitations of the thesis' focus will be on the EU's perceptions of and discourses about Russian "disinformation". However interesting a comparison of the respective perceptions might be, the thesis will not study these same aspects from a Russian perspective. For detailed observations on the Russian narratives and perspectives, reference is made to a range of other studies, which focus on how Russia constructs its identity and foreign policy vis-à-vis the EU as "the other"; Prozorov 2007; Wilson & Popescu 2009; Averre 2009; Sakwa 2011 etc.

Even though the 'conduct of populations' (Dean 2009) is a central part of a traditional governmentality study, this thesis delimits itself from studying the direct target groups for strategic communication. Within the field of the East StratCom these are defined as the Russian speaking populations in and outside of Russia. This exclusion has been made due to limited resources, and not least due to language barriers. Instead the Russian targets groups will be included when they influence on how the EU practitioners form their strategic communication practices.

1.3.3 Research design

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">RESEARCH QUESTION
How does the EU govern through strategic communication with the aim to diminish the effects of perceived “disinformation” in the Russian media?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Sub-question 1

How do utopian assumptions and a problematization of “disinformation” in the Russian media construct a field for legitimate EU governance?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Chapter 3
EPISTEME</td><td>Chapter 4
VISIBILITY</td></tr>
<tr><td>Realization goals
- How is the EU constructed as a foreign policy actor?
- How is the EU using ‘utopias’ to legitimize its foreign policy, and which utopis are underpinning the East StratCom?
- How does the exclusion of the term propaganda in the EU East StratCom seek to bridge a ‘gap’ within the field of episteme?</td><td>Realization goals
- How has the conflict narrative on Russia as a ‘revisionist’ state been strengthen within the EU since the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis?
- How does the EU construct “disinformation” in the Russian media as a part of a staterun “disinformation campaign”?
- How are the diplomats articulating strategic communication as a legitimate response towards “disinformation”?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Analytical approach
- Analyze central elements in the field of episteme</td><td>Analytical approach
- Analyze central elements in the field of visibility</td></tr>
<tr><td>Findings
The utopias underpinning the EU help bridging the contradictions in the EU’s foreign policy identity. The utopias of press norms and independent media is central for the legitimization of the East StratCom. The term propaganda is excluded from the East StratCom as an attempt to strengthen the EU’s ability to act as a unified policy actor through the East StratCom.</td><td>Findings
Through the conflict narrative of Russia as a ‘revisionist’ state the EU is problematizing “disinformation” within the Russia media as being a part of “disinformation campaign” by the Russian state targeting the EU.
Through a problematization of Russia’s ‘neo-authoritarian media system’ the EU has introduced the East StratCom as a legitimate defensive response to “Russia’s campaign”.</td></tr>
</table>

Sub-question 2 How is strategic communication practice implemented among diplomats in Russia, and how does it enable governance through The StratCom Regime?	
Chapter 5 **TECHNE**	Chapter 6 **IDENTITY FORMATION**
Realization goals - Which main rationalities are underpinning strategic communication? - Which diplomatic practices are underpinning strategic communication as diplomatic? - How does the EU govern through network creation?	**Realization goals** - How is 'conduct of conduct' working through the formation of a new diplomat role? - How is this identity enabling the diplomats to enhance correspondence between the national and the EU foreign policy level?
Analytical approach - Analyze the central elements of the *field of techne*	**Analytical approach** - Analyze the dimension *identity formation*
Findings *The rationalities of "strategic aims" are enabling strategic communication to emerge as a diplomatic practice subjecting other diplomatic practices into a unified practice. This qualifies the member states' diplomats to contribute to the East StratCom without giving a lower priority to the "mission" of their member states. The EU encourages this through 'fit' creation between the strategic communication of the EU and member states, which enhance the EU's ability to act as a unified supranational actor. By obtaining a central position within The StratCom Regime the EU promotes strategic communication as an emerging diplomatic practice through which the EU extends the realm of governance.*	**Findings** *Through adaption to the role as 'strategically communicating diplomats' the diplomats are increasing synergy and correspondence between the foreign policy communication done by the EU and their national representations. Through 'conduct of conduct' the EU is manifesting The StratCom Regime as not only a way to manage the effects of "disinformation" within Russia, but more importantly the EU is enhancing its own governance capabilities towards the member states. The 'strategically communicating diplomats' are generally adapting management-strategies, which encourage their likeliness to implement political communication in the communication practices.*

2 Analytical framework and research methods

At first glance, when studying strategic communication, e.g. as expressed in the East StratCom Action Plan, strategic communication might look like merely an expression of deliberate strategic planning, which can be connected to the concrete descriptive actions of *"setting objectives and goals, developing targets and performance indicators, and allocating resources"* (Ansoff 1991). But through the analysis of diplomatic strategic communication from a governmentality analytical perspective (Dean 2009), the deeper dynamics of the power and meaning which guide the practices and roles of the diplomats involved in strategic communications can be scrutinized.

In this chapter, I present my analytical and methodological point of departure in governmentality theory. I will primarily draw on Mitchell Dean's contributions to governmentality studies through his analysis of 'regimes of practices'. I will include Michel Foucault through the work of other scholars, and furthermore I will include the concept of 'problematizations' as elaborated by Carol Bacchi.

This chapter will also elaborate on the methods and analytical choices and their implications.

2.1 Governmentality Analysis

In its broadest definition governmentality can be described as a framework to analyze governance dynamics (Kangas 2015). More specifically, Foucault developed his governmentality theory as a framework for studying the emergence of neoliberal governance technologies and rationalities in Western welfare states. This enabled him to study how governance forms were tightly connected with the bureaucratic control of populations and the logic and rationalities of the market (Joseph 2012: 262). The emergence of

governmentality is historically connected with the economic crises of the 1970s and the market restructurings that caused them. In this way governmentality indicates both a way to understand government as a tendency for governance to play out in certain ways, and as a historical process of the rise of characteristically neoliberal forms of government in the second half of the 20th century (Foucault 2008 in Kangas 2015: 483; Dean 2009). Within this perspective, governmentality is concerned with the 'mentalities' of 'government':

> "*Thus to analyse mentalities of government is to analyse thought made practical and technical"* (Dean 2009: 24f; 27)

In this way a Foucauldian understanding of governance should not be seen as a top down process of applying legislation and exercising vertical power over populations, but rather as a collective process of governance formation (Dean 2009: 24; Fahnøe 2006: 15).

Instead, the governmentality perspective sees governance as a special form of conduct working through decentralized processes and mentalities, which shape populations' self-perception and the way they act in society. This takes place through the processes of making individuals and populations conduct themselves according to a greater common goal (Torfing&Sørensen 2005: 115ff).

2.1.1 Governing through the 'conduct of conduct'

In the sense that conduct can be understood as a regulation of the behavior of oneself, governmentality is particularly working through processes of 'conduct of conduct'. This describes the kind of conduct that seeks to make others conduct themselves in certain directions. This conduct of conduct is enabled through the creation of common perceptions of 'right' or 'wrong' ways of behavior, taking point of departure in certain norms, forms of knowledge, desires, interests and beliefs (Dean 2006: 43). Following this, governance is not merely a vertical act of power stemming from a sovereign body, as the state. Indeed, governmentality

conduct describes much more sophisticated forms of power: *"To govern (…) is to structure the possible field of action of others"* (Foucault 2003 [1982]: 128).

While 'domination power' describes the asymmetrical institutionalized forms of power that makes individuals act in certain ways by imposing power technologies as legislation and punishment measures (Merlingen 2006: 191), governmentality inversely work upon individuals who are free to act as they please. The conduct of conduct can be described as a hidden form of power working through the attempt to make individuals use their freedom of action in a specific, desired way. From this point of view, governance constantly takes place among a multitude of actors who apply governance techniques and rationalities on populations or target groups for specific policies, but also upon themselves:

> *"Government is any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through the desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs of various actors, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes."* (Dean 2009: 21)

Drawing upon the governmentality framework this thesis studies the rationalities, techniques, and forms of knowledge which make EU diplomats engage in certain ways of self-conduct and conduct of others, which make them legitimize certain practices and adopt certain identities rather than others.

2.1.2 Discourse, knowledge and power

Since a big part of the perceptions of what populations see as 'right' or 'wrong' are formed through articulations, the concept of 'discourse' plays a central role for the conditions in which governance can play out. Within Foucault's understanding of the concept, discourse can be studied as ways of structuring, presenting, and not least making sense of information about a particular topic in a particular historical moment (Mayr 2008: 8). Accordingly, discourse cannot be

reduced to mere articulations through text and speech, but must be studied as *"practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak"* (Foucault 1972: 49 in Mayr 2008: 8) – a process containing and forming conduct. In this way a discourse "constructs the topic", and can thus be described as a "language above the clause", which guides the individuals' interpretations of certain words, concepts, frames etc.:

> *"[Discourse] governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others. This in turn means that discourse (or discourses in the social theoretical sense) can limit and restrict other ways of talking and producing knowledge about it."* (Mayr 2008: 8)

In this way the formation of discourses becomes integrated in the mentalities of governance. Since these mentalities are "*not readily amenable to be comprehended from within its own perspective"* (Dean 2009: 25) the study of discourse becomes a way to study the underlying discursive formations forming what we see as the 'reality' and through which we engage in certain forms of practice and knowledge production. This understanding of discourse becomes central for the study of how unwritten 'rules' get to guide and regulate what EU diplomats can say about strategic communication and Russian "disinformation", how they can say it meaningfully, who can speak, and who has the power to decide what can be talked about (Howarth&Torfing 2004: 7). The creation of meaning will constantly be redefined by hegemonic powers through the processes of construction of contemporary 'truths' through inclusion and exclusion of knowledge and narratives. Here 'information' is understood as raw data used as parts of as discourse construction, while 'knowledge' is the *"interpretation of information by the knower"* (Bicchi 2013: 241). In this way knowledge and power are mutually constitutive, since "*there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge* that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (Foucault, 1977: 27 in Mayr 2008: 15).

In relation to this thesis discourses are studied as a part of the ways EU policy practitioners define and redefine policy areas and construct legitimate policy responses to them. This implies that choices made by e.g. EU diplomats might be presented as "rational" and "strategic", but only within the dominant discourses which effect the diplomats and their institutions, and into which they *"routinely embed their own self-understanding"* (Knights & Morgans 1991: 254). In this way the study of powerful discourses becomes central for studying how the EU actors legitimize the use of strategic communication and actions which seek to manage the perceived "disinformation" stemming from the Russian media.

2.1.3 Problematizations

The outset for studying governmentality within the EU was encouraged by the observation of how criticism of the Russian media within and by the EU after the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis led the EU to introduce strategic communication as a policy response. In order to understand how strategic communication emerged as a policy practice, it is important to understand how certain elements are constructed as 'problems', which EU actors can – and should - act upon. This aligns this study with a Foucauldian inspired approach which puts the processes of how certain things become articulated as problems as the central elements of study (Bacchi 2012: 1).

In order to study public policies from a critical approach, Carol Bacchi (2012) introduced her 'What's the problem represented to be?'-approach (WPR-approach). In this approach a public policy, as for example the East StratCom, always takes point of departure in a 'problematization' of something that needs to be changed. In this way "policies and policy proposals contain *implicit* representations of what is considered to be the 'problem' ('problem representations')" (Bacchi, a 2012: 21). This approach is useful for the study of how EU governance is taking place through particular problematizations (Bacchi 2012: 5):

"In this view the 'public', of which we are members, is governed, not through policies,

> *but through problematisations—how 'problems' are constituted."* (Bacchi, a 2012: 22).

In order to scrutinize problem representations, Bacchi sets up a list of questions encouraging investigationS of how a specific identification of a problem has occurred, what effects it produces, what presuppositions or assumptions are underpinning this representation of the problem, and which aspects are not included in the problematization (Bacchi, a 2012: 21).

According to Dean, a starting point for the analytics of government is similarly "*the identification and examination of specific situations in which the activity of governing comes to be called into question"* (Dean 2009: 38). Similarly, the way EU governance becomes problematized through "disinformation" in Russian media becomes this thesis' point of departure for studying EU governance. In this way both the problematization of EU governance constructed through Russian media, and subsequently the EU's problematization of the Russian media system becomes my point of departure for studying EU governance, because it allows me "*to examine the different and particular contexts in which governing is called into question, in which actors and agents of all sorts must pose the question of how to govern."* (Dean 2009: 38)

2.1.4 Regimes of practices

I order to be able to study how the concepts and processes of conduct of conduct, discourse formation and problematizations are interlinked and co-constructing the conditions for governmentality among a "*plurality of governing agencies and authorities*", Mitchel Dean has introduced the study of 'regimes of practices' (Dean 2009: 8):

> *"Regimes of practices can be identified whenever there exists a relatively stable field of correlation of visibilities, mentalities, technologies and agencies, such that they constitute a kind of taken-for-granted point of reference for any form of problematization."* (Dean 2009: 37)

In this way, regimes of practices can be studied as "institutional practices" in the sense of being practices and ways of thinking which have been routinized and ritualized within "certain places and at certain times" (Dean 2009: 31) Due to the non-subjective character of governmentality, these interconnected ways of thinking and acting are more than just expressions of actors' intentions and interests, and according to this, a regime of practices constitutes a field of its own logics and rationalities on which a wide range of actors are both co-constructing and become constructed. In this way, regimes of practices are the organized practices through which people are governed and through which people govern themselves (Dean 2009: 28). Here, the analysis of certain regimes of practices becomes pivotal for the study of governmentality by scrutinizing different governmental techniques, practices, forms of knowledge and rationalities, in order to expose and reveal the processes of conduct and self-conduct forming states and societies (Dean 2009: 40; Torfing&Sørensen 2005: 115ff):

In accordance with Dean's characterization, this thesis seeks to study the emergence of The StratCom Regime. This is done by studying the central processes that have been decisive for what has been included and excluded into practices and identities of the diplomats working with strategic communication in Russia. A central part is also to show, which kinds of knowledge and rationalities have been institutionalized into the EU, and which have become decisive for the way EU diplomats engage in strategic communication practices and ascribe meaning to and legitimize them. Thus, this analytical framework will provide the basic theoretical categorizations structuring the analysis within the thesis.

In order to examine the practices of conduct within a regime, Dean sets up four independent but overlapping analytical dimensions, which constitute the core of the analysis of regimes of practices In the following, these are presented shortly together with a presentation of how they are applied in the analyzes throughout the thesis.

2.1.4.1 The episteme of government

The dimension of the *episteme of government* is concerned with the forms of knowledge that arise from and form the activity of governance (Dean 2009: 42). This episteme constitutes the underlying assumptions and forms of knowledge that the governing practitioners legitimize their governance practices and problematizations through. This generally consists of knowledge and implicit assumptions underlying certain practices, and thus the analytical interest within this dimension is "to discover the logic of such practices" of governance (Dean 2009: 41). Concluding, the analysis of episteme thus raises the question of what kind of knowledge and strategies policy practitioners are employing in practices of governing, and how these are used to legitimize governance (Dean 2009: 42).

Chapter 3 of this thesis studies the fundamental assumptions, forms of knowledge, and "utopias" (Dean 2009: 44f) that underpin the EU's governance through foreign policy practices in general and the East StratCom in particular. Here, especially underlying assumptions about the democratic role of journalism, the media, and public sphere will be revealed to guide the EU diplomats' legitimation of strategic communication activities in Russia. In this way this dimension enables me to study the fundamental assumptions and values that guide the policy formulation and conduct within the EU, and which, by doing this, become central in the formation of e.g. the diplomats' discourses on what is 'good'/'bad' and 'right'/'wrong' etc.

2.1.4.2 Fields of visibilities for government

While the dimension of episteme constitutes the underlying assumptions and forms of knowledge on which the governing practitioners legitimize their governance practices and problematizations, the *dimension of visibility* shows what fields are becoming objects of governance. Within this dimension the process of governance can best be illustrated by the image of a source of light

that illuminates and defines different objects, while letting others hide in the dark (Dean 2009: 41). Described in other words the detection of this 'field for government' is concerned with what is becoming the "target" of conduct; who and what is to be governed and why (Dean 2009: 87). In this way, this dimension is tightly connected with the process of problematization, which in this thesis means the problematization of Russian media, thereby constructing this field as a legitimate target for EU foreign policy. According to Dean, this field should encourage the study of, *"how different locales and agents are to be connected with one another, what problems are to be solved and what objectives are to be sought"* (Dean 2009: 41).

Chapter 4 of the thesis explores, how the recent historical developments within the Russian media system, and the increased political tension following the Ukraine crisis have been determining for the problematization of Russian media within the EU. Correspondingly, the study of the field of visibility reveals how the problematization of Russian media mutually challenges and enables EU governance.

2.1.4.3 The techne of government

In order to study how certain forms of knowledge and rationalities are applied on a certain field of visibility, it is necessary to study the actual techniques, mechanisms, vocabularies, and technologies through which actors in a certain regime is operating and realizing goals (Dean 2009: 31; 42).

> *"The analysis of government is concerned with thought as it becomes linked to and is embedded in technical means for the shaping and reshaping of conduct and in practices and institutions"* (Dean 2009: 27)

In this way, government's *field of techne* is studying how exercising authorities draw upon certain forms of *"expertise, vocabulary, theories, ideas, philosophies and other forms of knowledge"* in the processes of governance (Dean 2009: 25).

In order to study how the EU governs through the The StratCom Regime, strategic communication will be presented as a diplomatic practice comprising certain rationalities, tools and activities, and building upon other institutionalized diplomatic practices and discourses. Through this dimension the analysis scrutinizes how the processes of governance promotes the realization of certain values though technical means, which in this way becomes a means of conduct and a part of constituting the condition of governance itself (Dean 2009: 42). In line with this, chapter 5 analyzes which rationalities and practices are underpinning strategic communication as foreign policy practice and hereby enabling governance to take place through the implantation of strategic communication in the Russian context.

2.1.4.4 Formation of identities

The last dimension is concerned with the forms of individual and collective identity which specific practices and programs of government try to form, and through which governing operates (Dean 2009: 43). Through the 'conduct of conduct' the self-perception of the governed and governing are formed. This happens as part of the processes where subjects internalize certain truths, interests, and wishes above other, which guide the ways we as subjects see ourselves and others, and how we conduct ourselves (Torfing & Sørensen 2005: 115ff; Dean 2009: 27). According to this, the dimension of *formation of identities* focuses on governance through the processes of 'self-government' (Dean 2009: 26).

Within the scope of this thesis this imply the study of how governance takes place through the creation of roles, responsibilities, and self-perceptions of diplomats within the EU. Chapter 6 will detect how the emergence of strategic communication as governance practice conducts the diplomats to adapt their identities accordingly. In this thesis the identities of *"those who are to be governed"* (Dean 2009: 43) are indirectly included through the policy practitioners' definitions of target groups. In this way we can see, how the

processes of identity creation help the EU to divide people into categories that can be governed.

2.1.5 Governmentality in EU studies

Following the above presentation, the framework of governmentality has been developed to reveal the complex governance techniques used to manage populations and regulate social conduct in neoliberal welfare societies (Lindgren 2007: 341, Joseph 2012: 3). The supranational character of the EU enforces a level of conduct above the states, a form of international governance, which can aim at not just the conduct of conduct of populations, but also the conduct of conduct of decision makers in other governmental bodies, like the politicians and the officials of nation states (Joseph 2012: 19). Thus governmentality in an international context is still a governance rationality that seeks *"to govern at a distance through the mobilization and regulation of self-regulating individuals, organizations and networks"* (Torfing & Sørensen 2006: 39f), but while producing *"governance of spaces above, beyond, between and across states" (*Larner & Walters in Dean 2009: 229).

Especially within recent years, a growing number of scholars have studied how governmentality has taken form in the global or international sphere, among others at the supranational EU-level (e.g. Dean 2009, Münch 2010, Kurki 2011, Joseph 2012, Kangas 2015). In a Foucauldian perspective the EU institutions must be studied as operational authorities, which integrate and reproduce existing discourses and power relations (Lindgren in Andersen & Kaspersen 2007: 335, Mayr 2008: 1) and form certain regimes of practices through the creation of governance networks and institutional forms. These governance processes within the EU become defining for *"what can be said and what can be done, which rules to impose and which reasons to give and what to take for granted in the interaction between a multiplicity of actors"* (Foucault 1991b: 75 in Torfing&Sørensen 2006: 39f). Governmentality analysis on the EU level thus provides a conceptual tool-box for more *"practice-oriented, fine-grained and*

decentered analysis of relations of power and the knowledge implicated in them than is found in much of the IR and EU literatures" (Merlingen 2003: 377, 192). This enables me to engage in the more complex study of governance between different levels and actors within the EU.

2.2 Realization goals and analytical approach

2.2.1 Poststructuralism and the temporality of regimes of practices

Governmentality theory is based on a poststructuralist theory of science, which this thesis is also aligned with. Poststructuralism has broken with the substantialist understanding of structures as unconscious, but logical, systems forming the observable historical events and actions (Hastrup 2007: 299). Instead of understanding structures as closed entities with a center, poststructuralists argue, that structures must be seen as decentralized and intertwined with continuous and ever-changing processes of knowledge production and power struggles (Esmark et al. 2005: 27).

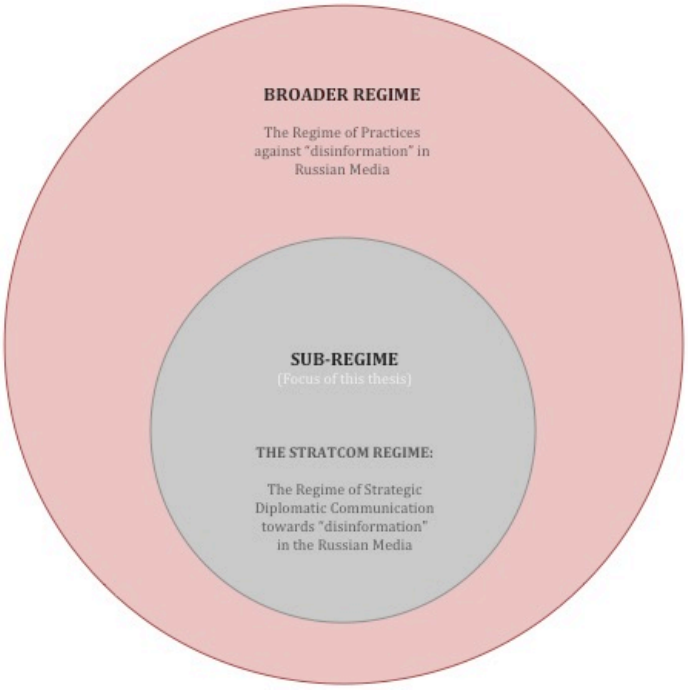
This outset has fundamental influence on the kind of knowledge and argumentations put forward throughout this thesis. For example it means that regimes of practices are not considered as fixed entities that can be studied in the same way at different times. Instead, regimes of practices are seen as fluid constellations between the production of knowledge, values, identities, problematizations, and solutions, among a variety of actors being contingent on the specific historical and sociocultural context in which they occur. In line with this, the present study does not seek to reveal fixed structures guiding the behavior of EU policy practitioners or Russian media. Instead the scientific interest lies in social and historical discursive processes, which allow strategic communication as a policy practice, and a form of governance to occur within this specific historical period, from the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis to the present. Following this, the The StratCom Regime must be seen as a temporary "snapshot" – not a description of a closed unchangeable structure.

2.2.1.1 The construction of The StratCom Regime

Through this thesis *the Regime of Strategic Diplomatic Communicaiton towards "disinformation" in the Russian media* is constructed and analyzed. From now in this regime will be referred to as *The StratCom Regime*. The actors included into the regime are actors within the EU and the member states' embassies in Moscow. This regime of practices also comprises the EU actors working with strategic communication in other countries targeted through the EU's East StratCom. However, due to the limitation of this thesis, the diplomats working with strategic communication in Russia will serve as a 'case' by providing the empirical basis for the study of strategic communication as a foreign policy practice.

According to Dean "*[i]t is important to realize that regimes of practices exist within a milieu composed of mentalities of rule, without being reducible to that milieu"* (Dean 2009: 28). In this regarding, one must understand that regimes of practices cannot be seen as separate entities, but entities which will be overlapping and intertwined with the practices and rationalities of other regimes. As an example, the present regime of study can also be studied as a sub-regime within a broader regime of practices, which is also targeting Disinformation in Russian Media, but through a broader range of practices than merely diplomatic. The broader regime will not be elaborated within the scope of this these, but works as an illustrative example of the interconnectedness between different regimes of practices. Figure 1. provides a stylized illustration of these regimes.

Figure 1. The Regime of Strategic Diplomatic Communication towards Russian "Disinformation"



Source: Figure by the author of this thesis

It is important to make clear, that the characterization of The StratCom Regime, and the EU actors included herein, is always a product of the researchers' – in this case my – construction. The inclusions/exclusions could have been different if different empirical data and analytical concepts were included in the study. For example, I have included the concept of media systems as a categorization tool for the different levels of the problematization of the Russian media. Other categorizations might have highlighted other relevant aspects.

Since the EU diplomats' point of perspective is the focus of study, I have favored their state-centric point of view, which for example entails that I have centered my study around the EU actors and their internal relations and narrower

network formation. Hereby this study has placed the EU as a predominating actor in the regimes of practices, which havsled to the construction of the The StratCom Regime. Other studies focusing on the broader regime of practices could for example emphasize the role of non-state actors, such as NGO's, academia, journalists etc.

As a central part of my analyzes of the different dimensions of The StratCom Regime a range of concepts occurred as central for the emergence and constitution of the regime. These are presented in Appendix 1.

2.2.1.2 Limited genealogy

According to Dean, one of the aspects of an analytics of a particular regime of practices at minimum should seek "*to identify the emergence of that regime"* (Dean 2009: 31). This encourages the study of how regimes have been constructed and restructured over time by continuous processes of inclusion and exclusion, which is in line with Foucault's 'genealogy analyses' *(Foucault 2008 : 36 in* Joseph 2012: 256*).* The thesis will not engage in a chronological genealogical analysis of the emergence of the regime of practice. Instead it draws up some historical lines and discursive categorizations, which are useful for the analysis of the present day regime as I study it through my empirical material. Here, the illumination of the inclusion of central concepts, rationalities, values, and knowledge into the regime, enable me as a researcher to take a critical distance to the discursive phenomena of for example "disinformation", "propaganda", "strategic communication", "independent media" etc. Similarly the developments of discourses on strategic communication is traced in order to detect which understandings of strategic communication form the diplomats' understanding of the emerging foreign policy practice towards "disinformation". Hence, the aim is not to reveal broader processes of inclusion/exclusion, but to only to bring in historical developments when absolutely necessary for the analysis of the present day regime.

2.2.2 Empirical material and analytical levels

Through the analysis of how the EU governs through strategic communication in its Russian foreign policy, the analysis is constructed on two main levels, which enable me to draw a conclusion based on the empirical material from the Russian context and the broader EU institutional level:

Analytical level 1: Strategic communication by EU diplomats in Russia is studied as both a part of the implementation of the East StratCom in Russia and the broader implementation of strategic communication as foreign policy practice towards "disinformation".

Analytical level 2: Strategic communication as a foreign policy practice in The StratCom Regime is studied as a case of governmentality.

Since the empirical material is focusing on the strategic communication towards Russia, the thesis will not conclude on how strategic communication can be seen as a governance practice within the EU in general – this aspect will instead be left to a part of the discussion encouraging further studies. Instead, the two levels above will provide the understanding of how strategic communication towards Russian "disinformation" is implemented in Russia as a part of strengthening the institutionalization of strategic communication within the EU.

In order to conduct the analysis, the thesis bases itself on different empirical sources. Since the East StratCom is a strategy, which is engaging many other actors in its implementation in Russia, I needed to draw on empirical material from several actors in order to study the East StratCom in Russia. Especially The East StratCom Actions Plan and The Communication and Information Report for 2015 and the strategy plan for 2016 (EU Delegation 2015) by the EU Delegation in Moscow have been important written sources. Furthermore, the internal newsletter by the East StratCom Team (East StratCom Weekly Digest) and internal status emails about the East StratCom, the team's weekly Disinformation Reviews, and a broad variety of online sources, such as official homepages and

different social media accounts (as e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Vkontakte etc.) from both the EU and EU members states, have been studied. This empirical material comprised communication of official statements, cultural and public information, 'myth busting', videos, info graphics on political issues etc. Furthermore this empirical material has been supplemented with reports, articles, and analytical papers by several other actors within the broader regime of practices.

As illustrated in Table 2., all these sources have contributed to the study of the implementation of strategic communication as a diplomatic practice in Russia.

Table 2. Empirical sources - Levels of strategy implementation

Broader EU & EEAS	East StratCom Team Brussels	EU Delegation Moscow	EU member state embassies Moscow	Like-minded actors
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Implementation of strategic diplomatic communication in Russia				

2.2.2.1 Theory as object of study

The empirical material comprises a large amount of academic literature on EU foreign policy, diplomacy, press norms and media theory, propaganda, public diplomacy, strategic communication, EU-Russia relations etc.

Since academic work plays a central role for the constructions of 'reality', also theories in themselves play a role in this construction (Bacchi 2012: 6). Accordingly, this thesis also includes several theoretical concepts as a part of the empirical material constituting the regime of practices.

Many scholars working with governmentality theory argue that governmentality should rather be seen as an analytical perspective than an actual theory, since it allows us to challenge different basic ontological assumptions presented as 'truths' by different theoretical schools (Kangas 2015: 482). In this way poststructuralism does not fit within the categorizations of the big theoretical paradigms, since it can be perceived more as a critical attitude than a theory. Instead of making a distinction between theory and practice, it sees *theory as practice*, since we all constantly engage in creating the interpretations of 'the world' (Campbell 2010: 214, 216).

The distinctions between governmentality as an analytical framework incorporating empirical material consisting of both theoretical concepts, academic analysis, and reports, strategies, statements etc. is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Theoretical and empirical levels

Theoretical framework	**Governmentality**
Theoretical and empirical concepts	**Strategic communication, independent media, disinformation, propaganda, media systems**
Empirical data on EU level	**EU values and foreign policy** **East StratCom Team's strategy/objectives/tools**
Empirical data on Russia level	**Strategic communication by EU diplomats in Russia**

2.2.2.2 Qualitative interviews

An extensive part of the empirical material enabling me to analyze how the EU diplomats construct the Russian media system as a problem, and how they

construct strategic communication as a legitimate policy resolution, is based on qualitative interviews conducted with six EU diplomats in the period November 2015 to March 2016. I quote the informants as follows based on the individual agreements with the informants:

- Diplomat from EEAS, East StratCom Team, *background*
- Spokesperson and head of Information and Press Department, EU Delegation Moscow, *quoted by title*
- Four diplomats from embassies of bigger EU member states in Moscow, *quoted anonymously.*

The interviews took place as dinner or coffee meetings in restaurants or cafés in Moscow, which is how diplomats often arrange informal and non-diplomatic meetings. They generally lasted between 45 minutes to 2 hours, which enabled them to cover wide aspects with relations to the regime of practices. The interviews have been conducted in English, while the interview with the Spokesperson on the EU Delegation was conducted in Danish. The interviews have been recorded and transcribed according to thematic relevance (Appendix 4). Furthermore several background talks and interviews with diplomats from other EU Embassies in Moscow, and with scholars within the field, have contributed to my ability to construct the regime of practices.

Theory on EU foreign policy often shows that big EU member states generally have a bigger influence on the EU foreign policy development than smaller ones (Wood 2011: 247; Lequesne 2015: 256). My study of the empirical context in Moscow has shown that this is also the case when it comes to developing strategic communication as foreign policy practice. On this background, I have chosen the primary informants among the big EU embassies (beside from the EU institutions). All the diplomats are heads of their embassies' press and communication departments, which mean that they are both in charge of following the communication policies by their respective national MFA's, and at the same time constitute the direct partners for the EU diplomats working with the implementation of East StratCom in Russia. On this basis, I argue that the six

informants chosen for this study are placed in influential positions at the center of the regime of practices, which strengthens the quality of the findings.

The interviews have all been conducted as semi-structured research interviews (Kvale 1997), which have enabled me to guide the informants through the themes of the characteristics of the Russian media system, the emergence of and tools for diplomatic strategic communication, the role of the media for democratic societies, and their engagement in the implementation of the EU's East StratCom. The interviews have been conducted through "open" and yet "focused" questions, which have helped to secure that all relevant themes were touched upon, while at the same time enabling the informants to contribute with new aspects and concepts, which could provide new insights for the analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 131f).

2.2.2.3 The researcher and the field of study

At the time of research, I was a non-active part of the Danish diplomatic corps in Moscow through a personal relation. This eased the facilitation of interview agreements with the "high-profile" and very busy diplomats, and it might have enabled me to obtain access to internal newsletters, evaluations and reports, which I might not else have been granted access to. My previous knowledge of the diplomatic community in Moscow increased my "sensitivity" towards nuances in the informants' articulations (Kvale 1997: 44f), and made it easy to create a natural atmosphere around the interview (enhanced by the agreements of anonymity). This seems to have enhanced the informants' likeliness to speak freely, in a way they would do with colleagues from other EU embassies. This, I believe, have strengthened the quality of the interviews as material for discourse analyzes due to the diplomats larger tendency to use their "normal" ways of articulating themselves, than they would have had, if they had perceived me as someone from an alien professional field. In this way the interviews both enabled me to collect information about the official policies and practices which

each diplomat represents, and about their personal constructions of their roles as strategic communicating diplomats.

In order to minimize the risk that my personal relation to the diplomatic corps set my academic neutrality at risk, I have been paying huge attention to keeping myself in a neutral position in relation to the field of study. Since I am not working as a diplomat myself, I was still able to position myself as an 'outsider' with the opportunity to use interview techniques as "intentional naivety" (Kvale 1997: 43). Through these 'naive' questions, I sought to make the diplomats elaborate on more sensitive topics, as for example the disagreements between member states, and between member states and the EU. The Danish Embassy is furthermore not actively engaged in the development of strategic communication in Russia, which also secured my outsider-position.

Since the field of study is generally characterized by high political sensibility and emotions, I was extra careful about pursuing a neutral position, e.g. by starting each interview out with broad 'who' and 'what'-questions. This enabled the diplomats to present their work and analyses using their own terminology, which was crucial for the validity of my analyses of the diplomats' discursive constructions (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 131f). In order to make the informants comment on the terminologies and practices of other actors, I have always quoted these directly – again in order to minimize my own influence.

3 Knowledge underpinning the East StratCom

This chapter studies The StratCom Regime's *field of episteme* in order to investigate the central underlying assumptions, values, and forms of knowledge, which enable the EU to problematize the "disinformation" in Russian media, and further to construct strategic communication as a legitimate policy response.

The first part of chapter 3 investigates how two dominant and divergent discourses construct EU as a foreign policy actor. In the second part of chapter 3 the concept of 'utopia' is introduced in order to investigate the fundamental norms and values that form the underlying assumptions legitimizing certain EU foreign policy practices. Further, the specific utopian ideas underpinning the East StratCom are detected. The last part of the chapter scrutinizes the concepts of "disinformation" and "propaganda" in order to examine how these terms are infused with meaning in the diplomat's discourses and the East StratCom. Further, this chapter investigates how the concepts of "disinformation" and "propaganda" are constructed as oppositions to the EU's utopias and how the exclusion of "propaganda" from the EU East Stratcom can be seen as a 'gap' within the field of episteme.

3.1 Discourses of EU foreign policy actorness: Intergovernmental or supranational?

After the European Union was established under its current name in 1993, the *"discursive processes of constructing European foreign policy have increased in terms of both scope and density"* (Jørgensen 2013: 503). According to Jørgensen's studies more and more policy areas have been included into the realm of EU foreign policy, but still the character of the EU as a foreign policy actor is a complicated political construction to pin down. It has been described as everything from a "non identificable political object", a "technocratic edifice", to a "Family of nations" (Carta&Morin 2014: 305).

> *"The EU is famous for being a complex political hybrid, which represents its member states, but at the same lies "above" the European national states as a multi-layered structure and with multiple agents, but with the same fundamental goal as the national states: The management of the populations living within its territorial borders."* (Larsen 2004: 70f).

In line with governmentality framework, this thesis does not seek to judge to what extend the EU is political, technocratic, bureaucratic etc. What matters here is how the different actors engaging in the discursive constructions of the EU ascribe meaning to the EU's role/identity. The different roles of the EU become central for the way the EU can legitimize its governance within The StratCom Regime.

In order to understand how the EU is constructed as an institution and political body with a mandate to operate on the international level, my analysis sets out with the investigation of two prominent existing discourses, which both seek to define EU as a foreign policy actor.

3.1.1 The EU as a supranational unified foreign policy actor

In the EU documents, which contain the Unions policy practices, it is possible to detect a *"hegemonic, unitary discourse on the assertion that the EU is an international actor with its own interests and policies"* (Larsen 2004: 69f). These policies are among others aiming to *"spread the European values all around the World"* (EU 2014: 3). The construction of EU as a foreign policy actor can be traced back to the foundation of the Union. However, this understanding was especially strengthened through The Maastricht Treaty from 1993, which included defense policy in its provisions, and thus supported the conceptualization of the Union as a "tous azimuth" foreign policy institution. This was further enabled by the significant increase in European decisions-makers' engagement in common foreign policy-making during the 1990's (Jørgensen 2004: 10).

The discourse, articulating the EU as a supranational unified foreign policy actor, has been strong within the EU institutions. E.g. in 2003 the EU launched the European Security Strategy, which argued that the size of the EU justifies that it is perceived and acts as a global actor:

> *"As a union of 25 states with over 450 million people producing a quarter of the world's Gross National Product (GNP), the EU is inevitably a global player"*
> (Document on European Security Strategy 2003).

The most prominent development of the supranational aspect of the EU foreign policy was the launch of the European External Action Service (EEAS) in 2011, with the appointment of a High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR). This new EU Foreign Service operates through its headquarter in Brussels and through 140 delegations worldwide (EEAS 2016/1; Conceição-Heldt&Meunier 2014: 962). Through the EEAS the EU has obtained a central foreign policy body, with responsibility for communicating the values and policies of the EU related to foreign affairs by continuously briefing other European institutions and political and civil society actors internally and externally (Jørgensen 2013: 493). The process of creating the EEAS as supranational organ representing the EU's common foreign policy strengthened the discourse shaping the EU a supranational unified foreign policy actor.

3.1.2 The EU as an arena for member states

Even though the discourse on supranational governance can be argued to get "thicker" as the Union develops and expands (Dean 2009: 228f), the EEAS never became a European Ministry of Foreign Affairs, designed to replace the foreign ministries of the member states. The member states have to a large extend given the EU mandate to manage civilian aspects of foreign policy (stability pacts, trade and cooperation agreements, political conditionality, declaratory diplomacy, etc.), but the member states have not been willing to pass e.g. a direct military mandate to the EU's foreign policy 'toolbox' (Larsen 2004: 75). Instead another discourse articulating the EU foreign policy as being the sum of all independent member states' foreign policies remain strong. Is can for example be detected in The Lisbon Treaty's Declaration 13 that stressed that the establishment of the EEAS would not "*affect the responsibilities of the Member States, as they currently exist, for the formulation and conduct of their foreign policies nor of their national*

representation in third countries and international organizations'" (Lequesne 2015: 255f).

This discourse stresses the intergovernmental characteristics of the EU and does not consider the EU to be a foreign policy actor, since *"there are no 'real' European interests to represent, and since the EU has only obtained power that rightfully belonged to sovereign nation states*" (Larsen 2004: 69f). Following this discourse the EU cannot be characterized as a unified foreign policy actor, even though it has obtained mandate to construct itself as such, within certain policy areas, through the institutionalization of the supranational discourse. Instead this discourse constructs EU as a policy arena for member states.

As outlined in the above the supranational and intergovernmental discourses construct two divergent roles for the EU as a foreign policy actor. This finding is in line with Jørgensen's (2004) suggestion, that *"Sometimes the EU is the policy arena, sometimes it is an actor"* (Jørgensen 2004: 12)

As the further investigations of this thesis will support, none of these discourses on the EU's foreign policy actorness have yet obtained hegemony within the field of episteme. Both understandings coexists, and the analysis in chapter 5 and 6 will investigate how this two-sided character of the EU's foreign policy identity is defining for how strategic communication is "thought" and "practiced" among EU policy practitioners.

3.2 Utopias - Legitimization of foreign policy

In order to understand how EU diplomats draw upon aspects of the *field of episteme* to legitimize the initiation of the East StratCom, and their general work with strategic communication, I utilize an aspect of Dean's characteristics of governmentality, which he calls "the Utopian element of government". This entails the belief that *"every theory or programme of government presupposes an end of this kind: a type of person, community, organization, society or even world*

which is to be achieved." Thus, governmentality works through the creation of a shared belief – a utopia – which actors believe it is possible to reach through concrete policies (Dean 2009: 44). In order to detect the central utopias underpinning the East StratCom, I will first present some general utopian elements of the EU foreign policy, before I specify the utopian elements, which are especially strong within the East StratCom Action Plan.

3.2.1 Universal values and the EU's normative power

In the founding documents, which express the identity of the European Union, the values regarding liberal democracy, rule of law, good governance, human rights, and order and justice are central elements (Larsen 2004: 73; Kangas 2015: 485, Münch 2010: 1). These utopian concepts and values are central for the discursive legitimization of the performance of EU institutions, for the citizens' transmission of decision competence to the EU "collectivity", and for the value and identity creation across the heterogeneous member states (Čmakalová&Rolenc 2012: 264).

In this thesis, legitimacy will be defined as *"a shared expectation among actors"* which make actors engaged in governance processes (for example the member states) voluntarily accept the actions of those who rule (for example the EU institutions), because they are convinced that the actions "*conform to pre-established norms"* (Čmakalová&Rolenc 2012: 265). The legitimacy of the EU's foreign policy thus depends highly on how populations as well as opinion and policy makers in and outside of the EU consider the character of the EU's actorness – and if they "buy in" on the utopic discourses dominating the EU's foreign policy and EU in general. Similarly, the EEAS' activities abroad are based on several of these utopian guiding principles used to legitimize "*The Union's action on the international scene (…) and which it seeks to advance in the wider world"* (Lisbon Treaty, EEAS 2011).

Generally, the values, which are sustaining processes of legitimizing EU policies, are often associated with general 'Western values' or *"within some discourses (especially within the West) even "universal values"* (Pace 2007: 1059). These values play a huge role for the EU's interaction with other countries. In order to be perceived as a legitimate international actor, the EU extensively draws on these "universal values", and within the last decade the EU has frequently been articulated and studied as a 'normative power' (Čmakalová&Rolenc 2012: 260f, Pace 2007: 1059, Conceição-Heldt&Meunier 2014: 972). This normative power is especially powerfully exerted when the EU is acting as a regional power, where it constructs itself as a "force for good", which spreads the "universal" democratic values and governance forms to its less developed neighboring regions (Pace 2007: 1059). These "universal values" are a strong element in The Copenhagen Criteria, which sets the development goals for countries aspiring to EU membership (European-Lex). Also within the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the EU develops its relations to its EU Southern end Eastern Neighbors through these *"common interests and on values — democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and social cohesion"* (EEAS ENP). Through the partnership programs, the EU uses its normative and political attractiveness as central foreign policy 'tools', in order to make countries in the neighboring regions adapt their internal developments to the EU's (Zimmermann & Favell 2011: 496). Here, the normative tools are often taking place through different tools of rewards or punishments, e.g. the association agreements and partnership arrangements with Eastern European non-member states work through international recognition, financial assistance, market access, technical expertise or aid, and the public praise for every change in the desired direction (Pace 2007: 1045). In this way the normative aspects underpinning the EU as a part of the *episteme* of different regimes of practices also become influential in the more technical aspects of the EU's foreign relations.

3.2.2 Utopias underpinning the East StratCom

As part of the European Neighborhood Policy, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) was launched in 2009. Under the slogan *"Bringing Eastern European partners closer to the EU"* it aims to strengthen the EU's relations with six eastern neighbors, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine (EC Eastern Partnership). The East StratCom was initiated as a part of furthering the EU's policy objectives for these countries in its Eastern neighbourhood region (EEAS ENP). In line with the overall objectives of the EaP the East StratCom are similarly *"building a common area of shared democracy, prosperity, stability, and increased cooperation"* and thus aim at strengthening and working upon the "universal values" as mentioned above (East StratCom Action Plan 2015).

But since the East StratCom is specially created as response towards "disinformation" in the Russian media, the more specific utopias regarding public sphere, independent media, and journalistic press norms are imbuing the East StratCom Action Plan.

3.2.2.1 The European public sphere

A central part of the EU's democratic legitimacy is related to the creation of a European public sphere (Čmakalová&Rolenc 2012: 265f), which is promoting the creation of a civil society, that can "take on the functions of the state" (or the functions the EU encourages the states to promote), and which can provide a space for free and economically driven citizens to be formed through conduct of conduct (Kurki 2011: 362). Within the East StratCom the central target groups are precisely members of "civil society " as journalists, young people, members of academia or more broadly "local populations" or "the general public" within the EaP-countries (East StratCom Action Plan 2015).

Within the EU the idea and construction of a European public sphere is central for securing the right to information and freedom of expression, which the EU

constructs as the *"heart of democracy in Europe"* and as a human right for the citizens (EU communication policy 2006). The public sphere works as an overarching communicative space that fosters dialogue between rule makers and populations (Zimmermann & Favell 2011: 501f). Here the media and journalists can be seen as holding an important democratic function as 'intermediaries' between the governing agencies and the public (Frandsen&Johansen 2015), in that they secure that the public get the necessary information to take on their role as democratic citizens. In order to be sure that the EaP citizens can take on their 'democratic role' the East StratCom similarly work *"to secure that citizens have access to alternative sources of information in their local language".* As part of this the promotion of media literacy among the populations should be promoted (East StratCom Action Plan 2015).

In this way the populations both within the EU and in EaP-countries are constructed as conscious and involved citizens, who can be governed through conduct of conduct enabled through the spread of information within the European public sphere.

Similarly, the media are constructed as central information-providers within the utopian concept of the European public sphere. Today the "general-audience" mass media is generally considered the most influential public forum (Zimmermann & Favell 2011: 495; 501f) – many even see the mass media *as* being the public sphere (Metykova & Preston 2009: 61). In democracies the media are generally constructed as a central player for the legitimacy of democracy in itself, through their ability to encourage transparency and political accountability (Thomas 2009: 1), and the EU also explicitly stresses that *"The media are key players in any European communication policy"* (EU communication policy 2006). Similarly, the fundament for the EastStratCom is to strengthen *"the overall media environment"* in the Eastern Neighbourhood (East StratCom Action Plan 2015).

3.2.2.2 Media independence

In order to secure the role of the media as 'democratic intermediaries', the East StratCom strive to diminish the effects of perceived "disinformation" in the Russian media through their work to *"support independent media"* and the *"fundamental freedom of the media and freedom of expression"* (East StratCom Action Plan 2015).

The norms of media independence is one of the utopian values, which are generally underpinning the EU's foreign policy within the Eastern Partnership, where for example *"Political interference in the media, economic concerns such as media concentration and various forms of harassment, including violence against journalists"* is stated as threats that have to be eliminated (EEAS ENP). The norms of media independence are also institutionalized within the very core of the EU, where press freedom and media pluralism are established as fundamental rights in the EU Charter, which is protected especially in Article 10 in the European Convention on Human Rights (Council of Europe). Here 'media pluralism' entails the rights of free movement of media services across the EU, the independence of media from private monopolies, and an ambition to ensure pluralism in information and views spread within the Union. Within the East StratCom this is explicitly expressed through the objective of *"supporting pluralism in Russian language media space"* in the East StratCom. 'Press freedom' obligate public authorities to guarantee the freedom of media both from state monopoly or state intrusion and from un-proportionable restrictions by private actors (European Parliament 2015). To enhance this in the Eastern Neighbourhood the EU *"will work to improve cooperation between national regulators" and "partner country administrations"* (East StratCom Action Plan 2015). As a part of the East StratCom suggestions about creating a EU Russian-language TV station has been discussed among the member states. This idea has so far been rejected, since many member states have seen this as problematic, specifically according to the values of press freedom (Q&A East StratCom). As one of the EU diplomats in Russia explained the discussion about a common TV channel referring to the utopias: *"I think our strength is the pluralism, that we*

don't have one single narrative, and we shouldn't have one. We had this discussion if we should counter Russia Today TV with a EU TV Channel. But it would be counter productive." (National Diplomat 3)

3.2.2.3 Press norms

The East StratCom furthermore works to strengthen the civil society "media watchdog" that can "*hold Governments to account"* (East StratCom Action Plan 2015). This is in line with general democratic understandings within the EU, where the press obtains this mandate in order to secure that the governing institutions and people do not abuse the power democratically passed on to them (McQual 2000). In order to perform this role the media have obtained special rights, which includes that obstructions to journalists' information gathering are banned (European Parliament 2012). In order to legitimize their central role as "watchdogs" the medias correspondingly have to work according to certain norms and ethics. Here especially the concepts of "objectivity" and "neutrality" have gained prominence as vital journalistic professional norms among Western journalists and scholars (Vartanova 2012: 137). These normative aspects entail that the media in democratic societies should do *"objective, impartial and balanced reporting*" (Metykova & Preston 2009: 63).

Among journalists within the EU this more specifically entails professional journalists should seek the truth, get as many sources as possible, check sources, cite sources correctly, balance information, and strictly separate facts and opinion (Metykova & Preston 2009: 64). These understandings are in line with the central elements in the Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists adopted by the International Federation of Journalists in 1954 (IFJ 1954), which is also referred to as the norms for press behavior underpinning the EU's East StratCom (Liborius 2016). Even though the Western press norms are not explicitly mentioned in the East StratCom Action Plan, they still widely underpin the ways the diplomats understand the media institutions and journalists that they wish to support. Here the press norms are seen as a

guarantee that the media live up to their democratic obligation as intermediaries and watchdogs:

> *"We believe that the citizens need access to valid information, and in order to secure that, we have some classical and well-proven and well-developed journalistic standards. These should just be sustained, they should not be developed. It is actually very simple. We just have to keep up to good form and tradition."* (Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016).

Likewise, the diplomats interviewed for this thesis refer to both the press norms and the utopias of independent media, when they talk about the East StratCom. Such utopias and norms underpin their categorizations of *"professional journalists"* that are *"accepting the rules"* (National diplomat 2).

As investigated in the above the StratCom Regime's pervading utopias being the democratic public sphere, the independent media and the journalistic press can be studied as underpinning norms and values that the East StratCom is based upon, and that the diplomats refer to as indirect utopian 'truths'. Following, these norms are constituting an underlying point of reference for EU actors' articulations of "disinformation" as being the antithesis to these norms.

In the next part I will scrutinize how the concepts of "disinformation" and "propaganda" are discursively constructed in the official strategy papers of the East StratCom and in the diplomats' articulations. As a part of this I investigate how some discursive constructions intertwine the meaning of the two words. I further investigate how the exclusion of "propaganda" is related to the discursive construction of EU as a unifying policy actor.

3.3 Propaganda or disinformation?

The official strategy documents from the EU's East StratCom use "disinformation" as a broad term to describe the information spread by Russian media, politicians or officials etc., which they find misleading, nonfactual, and/or

discrediting the EU on a false premise (EU Actions Plan; East StratCom Q&A). Within the East StratCom's official written communication (Action Plan and online Q&A) "propaganda" is excluded. Even though "disinformation" has been chosen as the official term within the EU to describe such misleading information spread by the Russian media and politicians the term "propaganda" is widely used to describe the characteristics of the Russian media – especially in more popular debates and analyses and news coverage like "EU campaign to counter Russian propaganda asks MEPs for help" (Euractiv 19.2.16). Likewise, several of the diplomats working with strategic communication in Russia and the 2015 report on information and communication from the Delegation in Moscow, use the term "propaganda" to explain what they perceive as problematic content in Russian media:

> *"The main challenges to our activities are: (1) Increased anti-Western / anti-EU public rhetoric from key state opinion makers. (2) Significant increased state media operations against "the West"/EU including with covert "trolling", fake or misleading propaganda via social media activities (…)"* (EU Delegation 2015)

The term "propaganda" has historical roots back to the big periods of internal conflicts within the 20th century. Propaganda-like methods were already used as a prominent tool for state officials during World War I, where e.g. the U.S. Committee on Public Information organized journalists in order to create domestic and allied support. Similarly the term propaganda is popularly connected to the techniques used by the chief Nazi-propagandist Joseph Goebbels (Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016). But also the leaders from nations like Britain and the United States 'Western nations' used the techniques mentioned above to attack the credibility of enemies, and to gain support for their own military actions both internally and within the international community during World War II (Van Dyke & Verčič 2009: 914). In recent times in 'the West' propaganda has been widely connected to the information spread during the Cold War by the United States representing a Western liberal world order, and the Soviet Union representing a communist world order (Van Dyke & Verčič 2009: 914). Since the utopian narratives of the 'Western press norms' was developed within the Western countries after the 1940's, propaganda was

widely connected to the information control and intervention in media productions executed by totalitarian states, with especially Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union presented as the bugaboos for what power abuse and the lack of a democratic public sphere could lead to (Crossen 2003). The connection between state involvement and propaganda can be outlined as follows:

> *"In its most common current usage, propaganda refers to a form of persuasion distinguished by a mass persuasion campaign, often one sided and fear based, that distorts or attempts to hide or discredit relevant evidence, disguises sources, and discourages rational thought. Often considered a tool of government formation and policy, propaganda also may be found in advertising, religion, education, and other institutional settings."* (Hurn 2016: 1)

In line with these enemy pictures the diplomats' articulate "propaganda" as being performed by an illegitimate undemocratic state, e.g.:

> *"Moscow is different. Moscow is the place where we have to face official propaganda, misinterpretation, manipulation, all kinds of hybrid stuff"* (National diplomat 3).

The underlying free press norms enable the diplomats to frame the Western media as being on the right side of the "democratic spectrum" and the Russian media as being 'the other' that is engaged in propaganda:

> *"It is always difficult because our media do not function like the Russian do. We are not used to do propaganda. We never taught propaganda"* (National diplomat 2).

When taking a closer look at the definition of "disinformation" in the New Oxford American Dictionary, it becomes clear that the concept is closely connected with the hegemonic understandings of propaganda as presented by Hurn (2016). Here disinformation is understood as *"false information that is intended to mislead, especially propaganda issued by a government organization to a rival power or the media."* (New Oxford American Dictionary). This definition is very

much in line with one of the diplomats' view on propaganda: *"Propaganda is certainly the falsification, which is intentionally done"* (National diplomat 2).
In this way both the terms "propaganda" and "disinformation" are used to describe the examples of fake news stories constructed through the Russian media. While some diplomats equals "propaganda" and "disinformation", others construct "disinformation" as being a more legitimate, less confronting, and a less historically tainted term:

> *"I think disinformation is the right word. I think there are so many version of the truth out here, that I think it is difficult for audiences know what is and isn't correct. I dont know how much trust there is in Russian media, but I dont think that necessarily there is trust in what we but out messaging wise either. "* (National diplomat 4)

"I understand that at some point some sentences specifically, some headlines, of course deserve the word that "this is propaganda". But that the Russian media as a standard are propaganda, come on…" this diplomat says, referring to fact that the Russian state today is not controlling the media in the way they have done historically (National diplomat 1).

In this way the term "propaganda" is seen as more problematic to some member states and diplomats, while disinformation is more neutral. Since the initiation and implementation of the East StratCom is contingent on all member states' consent, the term "propaganda" has been excluded from the official strategy papers. But as I will study in the following chapter, it is still central for the EU's general problematization of the Russian media. This is supported by the point made in this chapter, that the terms "disinformation" and "propaganda" easily become intertwined since the both refers to false information especially promoted by a government, which is intended to mislead (Hurn 2016: 1; Dictionary).

3.4 Sum up: Episteme

In order to analyze *"the forms of knowledge that arise from and form the activity of governance" (Dean 2009: 42)* this chapter has studied the field of episteme

underpinning The StratCom Regime. As being a part of the EU's foreign policy a central element of the regime is formed by the way the EU is constructed as a foreign policy actor. Here the first part presented two contradictory discourses on the EU, which are respectively constructing the EU as a unified supranational foreign policy actor or the EU as an arena for member states. The unified discourse was presented as most strong within the EU institutions themselves.
This two-sided character of the EU foreign policy identity creates specific conditions for the way the EU can exercise governance, and more specifically how the strategic communication is implemented in Russia.

In order to bridge the contradiction within both identities, the EU is constructs itself upon democratic utopian values, which from the EU perspective is often presented as "universal values" that are forming the utopias form both member states and EU institutions. Similarly, the utopias are also underpinning the Eastern Partnership programs, which the East StratCom is launched as a part of. The utopias enables the EU to construct itself as "a force for good" through these praogams. The East StratCom is especially dominated by the utopias regarding public sphere, independent media, and journalistic press norms. These are widely referred to as taken-for-granted values within the East StratCom and among the diplomats working with strategic communication in Russia. Especially these utopias are constructed as an antipole to the terms "disinformation" and "propaganda", which enables the diplomats to articulate the EU and the EU media as being legitimate, while positioning the Russian media as illegitimate from a democratic point of view. The analysis of the episteme furthermore showed how "propaganda" as a term has been excluded from the official East StratCom policy papers due to its more historically tainted perceptions, while "disinformation" has been included. The term propaganda is excluded from the East StratCom as an attempt to strengthen the EU's ability to act as a unified policy actor through the East StratCom, since all member states can adhere to this term. But as both dictionary definitions and the diplomats' articulations show, the perceptions of the terms "disinformation" and "propaganda" are largely overlapping and both terms are constructed as the opposite to the EU's utopias.

4 The problematization of "disinformation" in the Russian media

This chapter analyzes the *field of visibility* of The StratCom Regime in order to outline how "disinformation" in the Russian media has become constructed as an *"object for governance"* (Dean 2009: 41).

Drawing on Bacchi (2012), the initiation of the EU's East StratCom can be studied as a policy response that takes its point of departure in a problematization of "disinformation" in the Russia media. Correspondingly, the present chapter analyzes how this problematization can be linked to the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis, and how this has enabled a new conflict narrative about Russia to occur among EU actors. As a part of the problematization, I will study how EU diplomats working in Russia construct the Russian media system as a promoter of "disinformation", and how this enables them to articulate strategic communication as a legitimate foreign policy response towards the Russian "disinformation campaign".

4.1 The EU's construction of Russia's "disinformation campaign"

4.1.1 The Ukraine crisis and the narrative on 'revisionist Russia'

The military and political crisis in Ukraine has played a central role for relations between Russia and the EU as well as for the formulation of the EU's East StratCom in relation to Russia.

Russia's annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula Crimea in March 2014 prompted wide condemnation within the EU, leading the Union to impose economic

sanctions on Russia due to the *"gross violation of international law and of the territorial integrity of Ukraine"* (EEAS 18/03/2016).

The annexation of Crimea made critical voices within the EU and the Eastern Neighborhood fear, that if Russia had been willing to use military in Ukraine, the country might as well do it to annex other former Soviet territories as well (The Washington Post 16.05.15). In this way the Ukraine crisis has become constructed as a threat towards the stability of the EU and neighboring countries' borders with particular resonance for some member states. The Latvian vice-president for the European Commission presented the threat at an official meeting in the beginning of 2015:

> *"Russia's aggression against Ukraine is very worrying for Baltic states (...) It shows that Russia is looking to redraw Europe's 21st century borders by force, and it must be noted that Ukraine is not the first country to face Russia's aggression."* (Reuters 19.02.15)

According to Larsen (2004), articulations that build up a risk related to foreign nations can be seen as an important part of the establishment of the EU's own foreign policy identity (Larsen 2004: 73). For example the conflict narrative enhance the EU's ability to construct itself as a "force for good" in the Eastern Neighborhood by increasing the "enemy"-construction of Russia. Even though the official statements regarding the EU's condemnations of Russia's actions have been much more subtle, the criticism of the Russia's military involvement in Ukraine has nonetheless become predominant within the EU's official communication about EU-Russia relations (EEAS 18/03/2016). Several scholars have studied how the relationship between Russia and the EU has generally been characterized by 'othering'-processes created through inside-outside distinctions highlighting Russia and the EU's geographical, cultural, political, and historical differences (see e.g. Prozorov 2004, 2006, Wilson & Popescu 2009, Haukkala 2008). The term 'othering' can be defined as a the *"construction of 'us' and 'they' identities"* (Vartanova 2014: 100), and in this way the Ukraine crisis can be seen as an event that is clearly reviving and invoking the 'othering' of Russia by the EU, through articulations of Russia as a potential threat:

> *"A number of European countries first pursued a policy [where they] thought that insecurity and instability was vanished forever. And then someone [Russia] came and reminded them, that that wasn't how life was, and that is why you have to turn some policies back and find good old-fashioned deterrence back again"* (Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016).

Within the official Russian narrative, the annexation of Crimea has been presented as an act of *"historical justice"*, since Crimea was a part of Russia before the Peninsula became a part Ukraine when the country got its independence in 1991 (The Moscow Times 2015). Combined with Russia's high level of engagement in other post-Soviet states, e.g. its military intervention in Georgia in 2008, a discourse has been growing within the EU, which characterizes Russia as a "revisionist state". This defines a state which seeks to adjust the way present borders are drawn, through the willingness to *"use force to alter the balance of power"* (Dunne, Kurki & Smith 2010: 79). The prominent EU articulations of a fear of potential Russian military aspirations in other post-Soviet states support the construction of a bigger conflict narrative of Russia turning into a "revisionist state" following the Ukraine crisis.

This conflict narrative of "Revisionist Russia" has also included the information within the Russian media into its broader problematization of Russian foreign policy intentions:

> *"What is happening within the media field is a precise parallel to what is happening in the security field"* (Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016).

The following section will elaborate on how the EU increasingly sees the Russian media as 'problematic'. This led the European Council on March 20 2015 to stress *"the need to challenge Russia's ongoing disinformation campaign*" and to the creation of the East StratCom Team (East StratCom 1).

4.1.2 Media in the center of Russia's "disinformation campaign"

EU's increased awareness of "disinformation" in Russian media, is supported by the perceived increase in 'false' stories in the Russian media since the outbreak if the Ukraine crisis:

> *"For instance, the number of stories now compared to half a year ago, compared to a year ago, which altogether lack basis in reality, which are pure fiction – it has been remarkably increased (…). After all, it gives food for thought that we now on a weekly basis can spot a number of outright lies"* (Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016)

Especially one *"fake"* news story about a child who was allegedly crucified by Ukrainian military forces in the Ukrainian city Slovyansk on 13 July 2014, was the turning point at which the EU truly became aware of this "campaign" (Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016). This story was produced for Russian national television, Channel 1, and the EU as well as other critics inside and outside of Russia have subsequently claimed, that the story was pure fabrication, since no evidence or additional sources could be found on the alleged crucifixion (Moscow Times 14.07.14).

In its annual communication report from 2015, the EU Delegation points out *"Significant increased state media operations against "the West"/EU"* as an obstruction to the EU's work in Russia (EU Delegation 2015). In line with the terminology "disinformation campaign" the EU constructs this increase in "disinformation" as a deliberate part of the strategy by the Russian state. In this way the EU's criticism of the way the Russian state "uses" information is in line with Hurn's definition of "propaganda" as a *"mass persuasion campaign, often one sided and fear based (…) Often considered a tool of government"* (Hurn 2016: 1). Hurn (2006) also describe propaganda as information or actions *"that distorts or attempts to hide or discredit relevant evidence"*. This is in line with the EU's accusations of Russia's "campaign" as using *"fake or misleading propaganda via social media activities, fake academia/think tanks aiming at "neutralising" EU positions"* (EU Delegation 2015). Concluding, the EU constructs the "disinformation" in the Russian media as a propaganda campaign seeking to

position the EU as the enemy. Since freedom of the press constitutes a utopian cornerstone within the EU (EUparl 1), this propagandistic use of the media is not only discrediting the external image of the EU, it also poses a threat to the values on which the EU builds its narrative as "a force for good", which suggests that the "propaganda" and "disinformation", also reaching citizens within the EU, is constructed as a threat to the legitimacy of EU's governance itself (Barbé & Johansson-Nogué 2008).

In this way, the increase in "disinformation" and "false" stories within Russian media, is connected to the bigger conflict narrative of Russia as a "revisionist state" seeking to achieve its goals through military means, but also through a "disinformation campaign" which discredits the EU and constructs the Union as an enemy.

Thus, the EU explains the differences in media coverage and framing within Russian and EU based media through the conflict narrative, which is seen as a part of "Russia's campaign". An example of this is how the Russian state media and EU based media framed a documentary program about Putin from 15. March 2015 on the Russian state-run TV-channel Rossiya-1. While the international press largely focused on the news that *"Vladimir Putin describes secret meeting when Russia decided to seize Crimea"* (The Guardian 09.03.15), Russian state-sponsored English-language news media utilized the word "reunited" instead of "seized": *"Putin Reveals Details of Russia-Crimea Reunification, Maidan in Documentary"* (SputnikNews 15.03.15).

These stories are examples of how differences in news framing are vital for the impression that reaches the target groups. The medias' ability to frame international events and influence populations' opinions through agenda setting (Coleman et al. 2009: 147; Entman et al. 2009: 177) supports the EU's narrative of the potential damaging influence of "disinformation" in the Russian media. Here especially adherents to the so-called "CNN-effect" point out how global broadcasting corporations' coverage of an international crisis can prompt changes in foreign policy and shift the opinions of populations (Madianou 2009:

348; Robinson 2001: 524). Since many scholars have criticized the overestimation of the role of the media and the CNN effect (Robinson 2001, Gilboa 2005), I will not enter into the wider debate on the media's actual influence on the developments and events during the Ukraine crisis. What is important for this study is that the EU constructs the media as having an influence (East StratCom Action Plan).

4.1.3 Russian minorities as targets for the "media war"

As a part of the conflict narrative of "Revisionist Russia", the media has been constructed as a central part of the Ukraine conflict due to its ability to influence how populations perceive international conflicts. Even though media attention and framing cannot always be equaled with the opinion formation in society, the positive framing of the annexation of Crimea inside of Russia might have had a say on a poll made by the independent Russian Levada Center in January 2016 showing that 83 percent of Russians supported Russia's annexation of Crimea and only 13 percent opposed it (Carnegie 21.03.16). Several of the informants within this study have been referring to these polls, which show that they have influenced the diplomats' perception of a connection between the coverage by the Russian media and the support by the Russian population to president Putins' foreign policy.

In line with this the EU constructs the Russian minorities living in EU countries like the Baltics States and in the EU's East Partnership countries as posing a potential threat to the EU's stability. Like the Russians inside of Russia, these minorities are also getting most of their news from the big Russian television channels. A Gallup World poll from 2014 among 12 former Soviet-states concluded that the vast majority of the Russian minorities in post-Soviet countries trusted Russian media more than they trusted Western media. Similarly, the majority supported Crimea joining Russia (Gallup 2014). This has made skeptics within the EU fear that there is a risk of the minorities becoming more loyal to Russia than to the EU – ultimately turning these minorities into

actual enemies of the EU integration, as Russian minorities have been in Ukraine (Carnegie 21.03.16). In line with this perception of risks, the EU has constructed the Russian speaking populations in the EaP as main targets of the East StratCom (East StratCom Action Plan). But since also EU member states like the Baltic countries, Germany, UK, and Finland also have big Russian minorities the Russians within the EU are similarly constructed as target groups for both the Russian "media campaign" and the East StratCom. From this point of perspective the ambition of the East StratCom is to secure that the Russian minorities in the countries *"continue to be fragmented"* so they do not become uncritical targets for the Russian "disinformation campaign" (Spokesperson, EU delegation 2016).

According to Larsen (2004) the threat to European security is *"constructed as threats to European integration, and thus the coherence within the territory of the EU"* (Larsen 2004: 73f). Through the construction of the Russia minorities as potential threats to the EU's internal cohesion, the East StratCom is also constructed as a means of internal risk reduction, which enables the EU to make strategic communication work as a bridge between foreign and internal policies. Since the narratives within the so-called "disinformation campaigns" are mainly produced in Moscow, the Russian journalists and media also become central target groups for the implementation of the EU's East StratCom. And since the Russian people are the ones having the potential to delimit the extend of the Russian state's "campaigns" they also become target groups for the East StratCom: *"It is Russians who decide Russia's fate."* (Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016). Because the empirical material of this thesis consists of interviews with diplomats working in Moscow the target groups within Russia will be the primary subject matter in this study because these groups are the main concern in the diplomats articulations.. In the following I analyze how these diplomats construct the Russian media system as being central for the promotion of "disinformation" and as a problematic context for implementing strategic communication.

4.2 The Russian media system as promoter of "disinformation"

Keeping in mind the utopias underpinning the East StratCom, as analyzed in chapter 3, it becomes clear that the diplomats' problematization of Russian media is not merely restricted to conditions within the Russian media outlets themselves or among journalists. The ideas and historical conditions for media freedom and propaganda are tightly connected to the broader ideas defining the interconnectedness between media, state, market, and politics within a given national context.

Through their comparative media systems approach Hallin and Mancini (2004) have theorized how the role of media and journalists can be studied as integrated with the political, economic and cultural system, within a given state (Hallin&Mancini 2004: 13). These correlations which define the distinctiveness of a given media system can be analyzed through four analytical dimensions: 1) the level of state intervention, 2) the media's political alignment, 3) the development of media markets, and 4) the journalistic profession (Hallin & Mancini 2004: 21). In this thesis I do not conduct a thorough analysis of the Russian media system, but I utilize the understanding of media systems as a categorization constructed by diplomats in accordance with their state-centric worldview, and as part of their problematization of the Russian "media campaign".

4.2.1 State centralization and media control

The first and most prominent level of the diplomats' problematization of the Russian media system is their perception of the state as a central power controlling essential areas of the Russian society (diplomat 1, diplomat 2, diplomat 4). Such perceptions are in line with Vartanova's (2012) characterization of the Russian media system as "neo-autoritarian" (Vartanova 2012: 142).

Especially after Putin became President in 2000, Russian media has been reintegrated into the state after a decade of liberalizations. This promoted a centralization of the political system around the president, including subordination of other centers of political power as the State Duma (the Parliament), the opposition parties, the media owners and oligarchs in general (Hallin & Mancini 2012: 298). More precisely, this process enabled various state agencies to reestablish financial or de facto managerial control over 70 pct. of electronic media organizations, 80 pct. of the regional press, and 20 pct. of the national press (Vartanova 2012: 134).

> *"Now, the Russian political system is increasingly centralistic – some would compare it to absolutism – and that makes it difficult to point out anyone outside the narrow circle who can possess decisive influence (…)"* (Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016)

An important feature of this process of centralization was, that the state in most cases did not expand its direct ownership over the national mass media. Instead it restructured the ownership patterns according to its own interests. John A. Dunn (2014) describes how the way of restructuring the media system has created a "two-tier media system". Here the first tier comprises by far the majority of the media, including nearly all of the national television channels with national distribution[1], bigger newspapers and news agencies[2], and most radio stations[3]. These outlets are generally promoting a world-view in line with the state's narrative. The second tier of the media comprises outlets that are allowed a considerable degree of freedom in their coverage of political events [4]. The media belonging to the second tier, including most of the Internet, have been permitted a significant degree of freedom. It especially targets a small intellectual liberal segment in the big Russian cities. But even though this media provides airtime for critical and controversial voices, it seems to a large extend to be aware, that it only still exists on the mercy of the state power (Dunn 2014: 1431-1449).

[1] E.g. Perviy Kanal (Channel One), Rossiya 1, NTV, TNT and Pyatiy Kanal (Channel 5),
[2] E.g. Komsomolskaya Pravda, Izvestiya, and Ria Novosti
[3] E.g. Russkaya Sluzhba Novostei and Radio Rossii
[4] The most prominent players of within the second tier are the newspapers Novaya Gazeta, Nezavisimaya gazeta, Kommersant, the radio Echo Moskvy and to some extend REN TV and TV Dozhj – even though the independence of the five latter are continuously discussed

> *"I think that they allow a space for written media in the big cities for freedom of speech. Cause they know that controlling the TV they can reach the majority of the population"* (National diplomat 1).

A central feature of the state's way of controlling the media is by the creation of media laws, which can be applied on the media outsets, which encroach on the interests of the state. As examples can be given legislation providing the state's media watchdog Rozkomnadzor with greater powers to shut down unwanted online content, and a recent bill allowing authorities to ban so-called "extremist" online content. This law especially had huge influence on the media and increased the state's ability to regulate journalistic content (AP 07.10.15). The EU Delegation describes that this "*Systematic restrictive and repressive Russian legislation [is] forcing more Russian civil society partners to become fearful and hesitant in their cooperation with EU (…)"* (EU Delegation 2015). In this way the features of the Russian media system is problematized as hindering the EU in its cooperation with partners within Russia.

The neo-authoritarian characterization is according to the diplomats enabling the state to promote the EU as an enemy in order to secure the centralization of power:

> "*Here it becomes very important either to be able to create scape goats, blame someone else, and avoid a feeling of dissatisfaction in the public mood which could be turned against the central power."* (Spokesperson, EU Delegation)

In this way the diplomats generally connect the use of "propaganda" or "disinformation" with the need for the state power to create a narrative that generates internal support. In this process the press is disabled from functioning as a critical "watch dog" and is instead turned into a "tool" for the people in power.

> *"Of course we know that there are sort of state influenced channels here, and we do not have the tools like that at our disposal"* (National diplomat 4)

In the following section, I elaborate on how the journalists in the first tier media are constructed as "tools" for the autocratic state power.

4.2.2 Journalists as "tools" for the state

Dispite the high degree of centralism, the paradoxical characteristics of the Russian media system is that it actually has a high degree of media independence, understood in the way that the state and political parties do not have direct ownership over many of the news-rooms (Dunn 2014). But since the system is characterized by a low level of freedom of speech, most journalists are prevented from producing content, which seriously criticizes the state power.

> *"(…) there is no free media in Russia. You can find obviously journalists individuals (…) who will happily listen to you and probably will agree to you (…) But they will not go public with their opinions, or there are marginalized environments, which have no potential no influence on the majority of the audience."* (National diplomat 3)

The mechanisms used by the state to control the media are, among others, the ability to appoint top managers who are approved by state authorities, to punish disloyal media through tax or custom legislation or different regulations (e.g. related to sanity or fire safety), or to bring lawsuits against media companies as a part of defamation. Other means is to deny certain media access to certain kinds of information or attendance in state agencies' press conferences (Vartanova 2012: 135). Is this way the EU journalists' special right to collect information is violated by the state itself, as are the media full ability to work as a "watchdog", and the obligations of the state to promote media pluralism and guarantee freedom of the media are not fulfilled.

A law that has posed great difficulties to the journalists who wish to contradict the line of the state controlled media is the infamous "foreign agents law", which label all media actors that receive foreign funding as de facto working according to the interests of foreign agents (Moscow Times 19.02.16).

In this way the general role of the journalistic community is weak in its democratic sense, due to the common tendency that leading journalists and

media managers are being integrated into the state. In this way a leading part of journalists stop serving the interests of the citizens and enter into the process of social management led by the state, which enable disinformation through the media to circulate (Vartanova 2012: 139; 142). As one diplomat said, *"Russian media a clearly willing to play the role as an instrument (National diplomat 3).*

Despite the legislative difficulties and personal risks (several journalists have mysteriously been killed related to their work during the last decade), there is still a tradition of investigative and critical journalism in Russia. But following the rising commercialization and de-politicization of the news journalism and media in general, the journalistic professionalism (as understood by Hallin & Mancini) is under pressure, both due to historical and contemporary developments in the Russian media system (Vartanova 2012: 137).

But generally the interviewed diplomats see the Russian journalists as very professional, even though they are more keen to violate the Western press norms prescript:

> *"Actually to be journalist under Putin is much more demanding (…) so in some way they are much better journalists (…) Technically they are perfect, and of course they technically know that it is a rule that you present both points of view. They don't don't do it not because they don't know it"* (National diplomat 3).

Especially the big debate programs on the big TV Channels are perceived as very far from the Western press norms, and are more characterized as "gladiator fights", where e.g. the EU ambassador is only called in to act the target for the other participants' allegations:

> *"It's all about who yells louder. It is a dog fight. It has no value of information or of debate for the democracy"* (Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016).

4.2.3 Nationalistic citizens and media distrust

All the interviewed diplomats refer to the opinion polls which show that well over the 80 pct. of the Russian population get their information from TV

channels (BBC report). In this way the Russian population is mainly influenced by the first tier media, even though they have other sources available:

> *"They have a great variety of offerings, they have access to the Internet. They can get all the information that they want. Nevertheless there is a high level of disinformation"* (National diplomat 2)

The high degree of "disinformation" is making the Russians less trustful in the media in general:

> *"I think there are so many versions of the truth out here, that I think it is difficult for audiences to know what is and isn't correct* (National diplomat 4)

This distrust in the media have increased since the beginning of the 1990's when the new Russian media system was about to reinvent itself after the collapse of the Communist party press system (Gehlbach 2010: 84). In 2012 Vartanova wrote that *"the discrepancy between media rhetoric and everyday practices of audiences produces growing distrust and disappointment of citizens in mainstream political media"* (Vartanova 2012: 142).

Even though the Russian speaking populations generally believe the Russian media more than the Western media as sources to information about the Ukraine crisis, the developments in the media system do not necessarily suggest that the trust have increased.

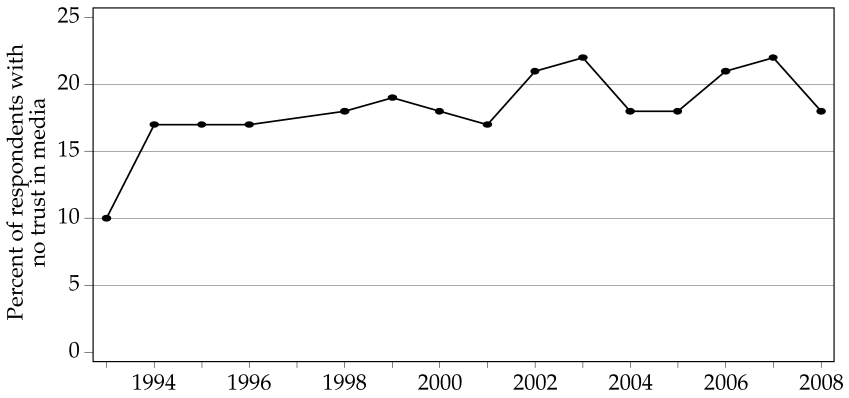


Fig 2. The evolution of distrust in the media. *Source*: Levada Center, *Obshchestvennoye mneniye 2008 in Gehlbach 2010* [www.levada.ru/sborniki.html].

This distrust can be explained by the high degree of political parallelism in the mid-1990s, when the media became a player in the elite's internal struggles for political power, and the increased state centralization after the 2000s (Vartanova 2012: 129f; 133). In this way the new independence of Russian media from the state did not lead to the formation of a democratic public sphere after the ideals of the European Union.

Aside from this general skepticism among Russians towards media in general, the interviewed diplomats point out a growing patriotism/nationalism as a main reason for why the state's narrative ("propaganda") becomes widely accepted as part of the mainstream media:

> *"The Russians are really nationalist people (…) You can see that media even being critical with Putin are not going to criticize any of the basic pillars of the nation"* (National diplomat 1).

As a process of the political centralization, the state under President Putin has been very successful in promoting nationalism as a force to connect to homogeneous Russian population. This, for instance, explains some why Russians might support e.g. the "foreign agents"-law "*if they feel that [some media] that was critical to the government was funded by the USA or the European Union"* (National diplomat 1).

In this way the societal processes observed by the diplomats within Russia contribute to the conflict narrative drawn up in the beginning of this chapter:

> *"This historical propaganda from the Russian side should be perceived as a European issue, cause in one hand it produces anti-western even neo-nazi sentiments inside Russia. And it produces people who are aggressive and xenophobic generally towards the outside world"* (Diplomat 3).

4.2.4 The construction of EU unity through 'othering'

During most of the 73 years of communist rule under the Soviet Union, the press worked as a one-way communication channel for the one-party political system. In the West, the Soviet media system, as all other elements of Soviet society and

rule, was presented as the antithesis to the independent media norms gaining hegemony in 'the West' (de Smaele 1999: 185).

Meanwhile, within the EU, media systems have also been developing heterogeneously, in spite of the strong discourses on liberal press norms often proclaimed as "universal". In their work, Hallin & Mancini, have identified three overall distinct media models within the EU: 1) A liberal[5], 2) a democratic corporatist[6], and 3) a polarized pluralist model[7], which are roughly constructing three overall media systems connected with the Anglo-Saxon countries, the Scandinavian and central European countries, and the Mediterranean countries respectively (Hallin & Mancini 2004: 11). Even though EU member states on a normative level adhere to common Western press norms, the characteristics of the media within the member states are highly different. Some countries, especially within the polarized pluralist model, are even characterized by some of the same features that the EU is criticizing Russia for (Vartanova 2012: 141). Therefore, the EU and the East StratCom have been more inspired by some countries than others as role models for other EU countries, and for Russia. In line with this, the Spokesperson on the EU delegation sees the development goals and foundational principles promoted through the East StratCom as deriving from the liberal model, and the democratic corporatist countries (with France included):

"We can draw a big circle which includes the Scandinavian countries and Germany, France and UK, and this is the journalistic DNA – the journalistic principles – which has been ruling. This can for example be spotted by the educational programs which the EU has financed for journalists, cooperation programs with the local

[5] Great Britain and Ireland is representing *the liberal model*, which is characterized by highly professionalized journalists, a relative dominance of market mechanisms and commercial media and low degree of political parallelism and state intervention.
[6] The Nordic countries, the German-speaking countries, Belgium, and the Netherlands constitute *the democratic corporatist model*. This model means high reach of the press market, relatively high degrees of political parallelism, strong professionalization, and strong state intervention in the form of strong public service broadcasters and subsidies for the press.
[7] *The polarized pluralist model* is constituted by the Mediterranean countries, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, and is characterized by a low reach of the daily press, weak professionalization, high political parallelism and state intervention which promotes clientelistic relationships between the media and the people in power.

professional journalistic organizations, for example first when the EU expanded to the east, and now in the partnership countries (Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova)." (Head, EU Delegation 2016)

In this way the EU media systems differ greatly, and some countries have had much more normative influence on the EU's policies with the media areas, than others. But through the construction of "universal" press norms a central within the EU, the adherence to these are used to include all EU member states and membership candidates into the same normative "system", where discourse on media plurality and freedom can be used as turning differences to a force for inclusion:

> *"I think our strength is the pluralism, is that we don't have one single narrative, and we shouldn't have one. They [the Russian's] think it is confirmation of our weakness, it is precisely the contrary. Every member state has different structures for public media. But I don't think this is a problem"* (National diplomat 3).

Despite being dominated by three different overall media systems, many of the interviewed diplomats refer to the European media as something distinct and unified, when they describe how the Russian media system is differing from it - all the while "othering" the Russian media system from the "European model":

> *"Russia and Europe in one point of history may have been closer than today. 10 years ago everybody thought they [Russia] strived for the European model. It is probably not only the current crisis in Ukraine, but also the kind of state involvement in the media etc., which make it more difficult also for Russians to speak freely, to discuss freely etc."* (National Diplomat 2).

Due to the Western centrism in media literature and media development, the diplomats tended to measure the Russian media against the Western/EU normative model for media systems. In this way they construct an "us-them" distinction based on the geo-political categorization of the Russian nation state. But when it comes to the EU, the diplomats transgress the differences internally in the EU through the articulations of the common EU utopias.

4.3 Strategic communication as legitimate foreign policy practice

Since *"policies and policy proposals contain implicit representations of what is considered to be the 'problem'"* (Bacchi 2012), I was able to study how the East StratCom-strategy was enabled through the EU actors' problematization of the Russian "disinformation campaign" through the media.

In this part of the thesis, I will show how diplomats construct strategic communication as a legitimate foreign policy response towards the "disinformation" in the Russian media system.

Even though all the interviewed diplomats to a large extent contribute to the conflict narrative, the national diplomats do not articulate their specific work with strategic communication as related to a common policy response:

> *"I mean this is not something that has just happened over the last year or two, it has been a process over a decade. I mean we are just doing our job that we normally have done."* (National diplomat 4).

But especially the EU has presented the Ukraine-crisis as fundamental for the introduction of strategic communication as a defensive response to the Russian "disinformation campaign".

> *"I think that what made many take offence was that our own EU activities, policies, programs, were seen misrepresented. When you say that the EU is financing concentration camps in Ukraine, and this becomes the headline for giving money to refugees who have fled Donetsk and Lugansk."* (Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016).

Accordingly, perceived Russian misrepresentation of the EU has triggered a policy response from the EU. In this way disinformation is presented as a form for self-defensive response:

> *"And the brutalization [of the Russian "media campaign"] is also the reason why the EU countries decided that something had to be done. This is, as a matter of fact, a reactive action"* (Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016).

Since the EU is dependent on the support of the member states, the member states are highlighted in order to create legitimacy for the EU's response. Through the East StratCom, the EU has taken the lead in order to unify the EU member states' actions through the articulation of strategic communication as a response to the Russian "disinformation". Since *"the same activity can be regarded as a different form of practice depending on the mentalities that invest it"* (Dean 2009: 26), the Russian media and experts have claimed that the East StratCom Team was created to produce "counter-propaganda" (TV Rossiya 30.03.16). The interviewed EU diplomats, are aware of the risk that their strategic communication activities can be perceived as the very "thing" the EU is problematizing:

> *"I do realize that there is this danger of becoming perceived as counter propaganda, which is not our intention. But otherwise you can only sit and wait and see how Russian propaganda operates"* (National diplomat 3).

As touched upon earlier, the term propaganda is connected with communication that does not build on evidence and rational thought (Hurn 2016: 1). The interviewed diplomats have widely connected propaganda with the act of spreading direct lies, and in order to legitimize their ways of communicating, and distance themselves from the propaganda narrative, all the diplomats stress that a "facts-based approach" is central for the way they do strategic communication.

> *" What I think is really important both for the EU disinformation effort, and also for our work, is taking a facts-based approach. So wherever you can use facts to demonstrate the accuracy of what you are putting out, I think that helps in trying to address the challenges that we all see"* (National diplomat 4)

In general, the generally legitimize this facts-based approach through the rationalities of the positivist sciences (Fuglsang & Olsen 2009: 56). This can be seen through the tendency of the diplomats to refer to underlying epistemic norms as 'rationality' and 'truth', and the "positivist" belief that *"Reality will confront bullshit"* (National diplomat 3):

> *"Strategic communication is to set our record straight and to put things right (…) We keep telling the right things. It doesn't mean that next time the guy is convinced, but you have to do it."* (National diplomat 2).

In order to distance the EU's strategic communication from the acts of propaganda *"we do not necessarily have to sell sunshine. We must inform about what we do honestly and properly"* (Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016).

Within Russia media, the relation between Russia and the West has often been presented as a state of "information war" (RT 01.10.15; TV Rossiya 30.03.16). Within the "information warfare"-discourse, information is seen as a tool that is applied strategically in order to undermine and delegitimize "the opponent" (Dimitriu 2012: 197). Within this understanding strategic communication can be seen as an important tool, which can support and legitimize military action, thus turning strategic communication to "information operations", and which ultimately creates an image of "communication as a weapon" (Van Dyke & Verčič 2009: 905). Similarly one of the diplomats connects the occurrence of strategic communication in foreign policy as a supplement to military operations.

> *"It feels like it is something that happened since Iraq and Afghanistan. That's also when my career started, but throughout my career I definitely feel it has come more out of this more military (context)"* (National diplomat 4).

None of the diplomats, however, were willing to accept the *"Warmongering vocabulary"* from the Russian side, which claims that the EU's strategic communication is a part of an "information war":

> *"I do not admit that we are already in a place where all normal professional journalistic behavior has ended (…) If we said that it was an information war, then we would already be far past that point. And if we said it was an information war, then we also say that it is okay to lie, and then it is okay to fabricate lies, cunning and deceit because the goal justifies the means"* (Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016).

So even though the EU constructs strategic communication as a defensive response to Russia's "disinformation campaign", the diplomats reject the "information war" discourse.

> *"Well look, this is not our narrative, this is not our approach to communication. I am not engaged in information warfare. I am trying to promote (…) foreign policy, culture, and values (…) Where we got interesting things to say, where we got facts."* (National diplomat 4).

Accordingly, EU diplomats extensively draw on the facts-based approach in order to legitimize the way they do strategic communication in Russia. This strengthens their discursive constructions between them as legitimate strategic communicators, engaged in a defensive response to "disinformation".

4.4 Sum up: Visibility

According to Bacchi *"governing takes place through particular problematizations"* (Bacchi, 2012: 5). Following this, chapter 4 has analyzed how the *field of visibility* is constructed among EU actors through the problematization of "disinformation" in Russian media. This problematization is enabled through the construction of the conflict narrative of "revisionist Russia", through which the Russian-speaking minorities become constructed as both potential internal risks and as target groups for the East StratCom. Furthermore, the construction of "the Russian neo-authoritarian media system" has enabled the EU to present the "disinformation" in the Russian media as a part of a state led "disinformation campaign", among others targeting the EU. This has enabled the EU to invent the East StratCom and construct it as a legitimate defensive policy response to a hostile Russian "campaign".

Through the "othering" of the Russian media system, and the broader conflict narrative, the EU diplomats construct a unity across the diverse EU media systems which enables them to create an "us-them" distinction between the Russian neo-authoritarian media system, which is promoting "disinformation",

and the EU diplomats which seeks to diminish "disinformation". By drawing on the EU's "universal" press norms and articulating the importance of a facts-based approach, the diplomats legitimize the implementation of strategic communication towards "disinformation" in the Russian media. Even though the EU practitioners engaged in the East StratCom articulate the strategy as being a response towards the Russian "campaign", they simultaneously distance themselves from the discourse of "information war". This is done in order to legitimize strategic communication as foreign policy practice in Russia, as something different than the work of the "propagandists".

While the EU level actors largely present the implementation of strategic communication as a defensive response towards the Russian "campaign", the member states' diplomats rather present strategic communication as a practice more generally trying to operate in the "problematic" Russian media system. The following chapter will analyze how the East StratCom implementation become aligned with the general strategic communication practice performed by the member states within the *field of techne*.

5 Strategic communication as unifying diplomatic practice

In accordance with the governmentality framework of this thesis the, way specific policies and practices are performed and perceived as legitimate or comprehensible dependend on the underlying rationalities forming the actors in a given regime of practices (Dean 2009). This chapter analyzes *the field of techne* of The StratCom Regime by studying the actual tools, activities and vocabularies forming strategic communication practices among the diplomats in Russia. In order to detect how strategic communication has been constructed as a foreign policy practice "on top of" other practices, I first detect the central strategic rationalities, which are underpinning The StratCom Regime. Next, I analyze the existing diplomatic practices in The StratCom Regime, how they are

underpinning the objectives of East StratCom and how they are implemented through specific tools and activities. This enables me to construct a model that reveals the interconnections between the central diplomatic practices and strategic rationalities within The StratCom Regime and how these practices and aims are supporting the East StratCom. Finally, this chapter studies how network creation is a central way to facilitate and legitimize EU governance.

5.1 Strategic rationalities in the East StratCom

A central part of the problematization of the "disinformation" in Russian media has been the formulation of the East StratCom Action Plan (2015), since *"policies and policy proposals contain implicit representations of what is considered to be the 'problem'* (Bacchi 2012: 21). The Action Plan is implemented in tight cooperation between the East StratCom Team in Brussels and the communication departments of the EU delegations and member states' embassies especially in Eastern Partnership countries and Russia. The activities initiated under the East StratCom strategy are organized under three objectives promoting the following:

- Media support & cooperation: *"Strengthening of the overall media environment including support for independent media"*
- Promotion of policies and values: *"Effective communication and promotion of EU policies and values towards the Eastern neighbourhood"*
- 'Myth busting' & political statements: *"Increased public awareness of disinformation activities by external actors, and improved EU capacity to anticipate and respond to such activities"*

(East StratCom Action Plan)

The objectives of the Action Plan are clearly reflecting the EU's central utopias regarding independent press and democratic values. This can be seen directly in the Action Plan's aim to communicate *"the universal values that the EU promotes,*

including a commitment to democracy, the rule of law, the fight against corruption, minority rights and fundamental freedoms of expression and of the media" (East StratCom Action Plan). But especially the last objective aiming at creating increased awareness of disinformation activities is perceived as a new initiative among the EU diplomats. This especially takes place through the East StratCom Team's weakly disinformation review, which *"collects examples of pro-Kremlin disinformation all around Europe and beyond"* with more than 450 journalists, civil society organizations, academics, and public authorities in over 30 countries currently contributing to the review (EU vs. disinfo, EEAS). As presented in chapter 3, the East StratCom is supporting the general policies towards the Eastern Partnership countries. At the same, time strategic communication is presented as a 'new' policy response towards Russian "disinformation", which is supported by the way the East StratCom Team is presented as *"a first step"* and as a *"start-up team"* (East StratCom Action Plan 2015).

5.1.1 Strategic aims as a governance rationality

According to Hallahan et al. (2007), strategic communication can be defined as *"the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission"* (Hallahan et. al 2007: 3). In line with the role that utopias play for the act of governance, similarly this 'strategic rationality' can be seen as central within the way government promotes and guides conduct:

> *"All practices of government of self or others presuppose some goal or end to be achieved"* (Dean 2009: 27).

In this way the act of setting objectives can be seen as technique to support the rationalities of governance itself.

In line with the framework of this study, Knights & Morgan (1991) used a Foucauldian genealogical analysis to reveal how corporate strategy has developed to a hegemonic discourse concurrent with the general emergence of neoliberal rationalities. These hegemonic strategic rationalities have generally

promoted practices that are taking form as rational management decision-making processes including strategy formulation, goal setting and implementation through strategic objectives (as e.g. expressed in the famous SWOT analysis model by Michael Porter, 1985). In line with Knights & Morgans study (1991) I analyze the East StratCom Action Plan as an expression of strategic rationalities, which are identified through the concrete objectives, definition of target areas for implementation, selection of target groups, and the broader incorporation of the East StratCom into the EaP strategy.

As a part of promoting strategic rationalities within The StratCom Regime the act of setting objectives can be compared with the act of setting 'strategic aims', which describe an acts *"that is systemic, focused on the future, and oriented toward change"* (Colarelli & Hughes 2005). In line with this I have detected three main underlying strategic aims within the East StratCom Action Plan, which are underpinning the concrete activities related to the East StratCom. Further, I will show how the existing diplomatic practices of the diplomats in Russia are also supporting these underlying strategic aims.

In the following I will present the strategic aims underpinning The StratCom Regime and present how these are related to the concrete objectives in the East StratCom Action Plan. The objectives and the underlying strategic aims they support are presented in Figure 1.

Aid and access:

The aim of creating *aid and access* is pursued through supporting and developing media and media institutions in the target countries. By doing this, the EU seeks to establish the creation of civil society platforms, which in the long term can secure the EU access to populations and segments that were not reachable for the EU before. The Action Plan for example mentions how the development of civil society platforms and networks in the longer term can contribute *"to maximising and amplifying the impact and effectiveness of the communication activities undertaken by the East StratCom Team"* (East StratCom Action Plan 2015).

Engagement and influence:

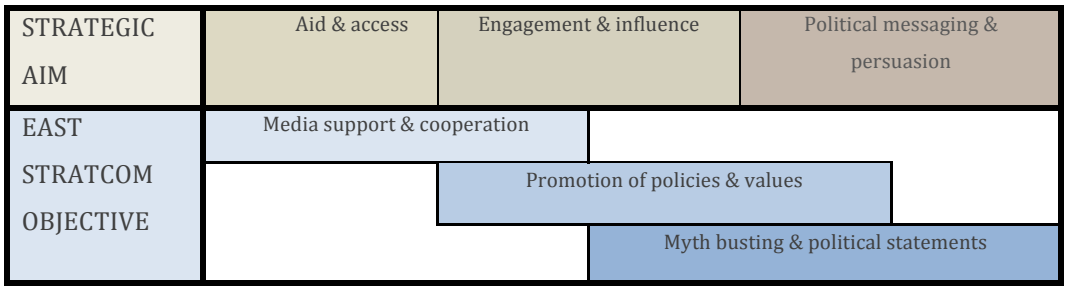
The strategic aim of *engagement and influence* refers to the diplomatic work seeking to attract populations and create positive support for the culture and political line of the state represented. This level can be promoted through initiatives to enhance the universal values of the EU, as e.g. media literacy, and through communication that should explain the benefits of the EU's programs through a positive narrative that *"should be communicated in clear language, and based on real-life success stories that will resonate with the target audience"* (East StratCom Action Plan 2015).

Political messaging and persuasion:

Political messaging and persuasion is concerned with the diplomatic task of *"exposing target audiences to the EU, explaining EU policies, promoting dialogue, and ensuring that citizens are generally informed about the EU"* (East StratCom Action Plan 2015). The strategic aim underpinning this differs from the previous two in that it does not mainly communicate values and narratives to attract and engage populations, but instead focuses more on traditional political messaging (as will be elaborated later on). This is typically characterized by one-way information of core policies and concrete positions towards states, institutions, populations etc. In the East StratCom, "myth busting" becomes a part of the strategic aim of political messaging, since the "disinformation" is first presented followed by the correction, which enables the EU and other actors to present their messages/narratives.

Table 5. illustrates how the objectives of the East StratCom Action Plan is supporting the different strategic aims. The objective for "media support & cooperation" is largely focusing on fulfilling the strategic aims of *aid & access* and *engagement & influence*, while the objectives of "promoting policies and values" and "myth busting & political statements" mainly are working in order to create *engagement & influence* and to secure and spread the *political messages.*

Table 5. ***The East StratCom's strategic aims and related objectives***



Source: Table by the author of this thesis

The rationalities of underlying strategic aims will enable the analysis to show how different existing diplomatic practices among the diplomats in Russia are included into The StratCom Regime.

5.1.1.1 EU governance through strategic 'fit'

An important aspect of how these strategic rationalities promote the ability to enhance EU governance can be explained through the strategic rationality of 'fit' creation. Through goal and aim-setting, strategic communication can work as an instrumental tool to create correspondence and 'fit' between the manifold communication activities by an organization – in this case the EU. Michael Porter (1996) describes 'fit' as the important art of creating correspondence between an organization's different activities so they all contribute to the same "mission". In this way, fit has to do with the ways different activities or tools interact and reinforce one another (Porter 1996: 13f). Within public relations, strategic communication can similarly be described as a "bridging activity", and within management literature more broadly, strategic communication is defined as a process of creating *"linkages between discourse and interactions, and negotiations of multiple actors and the situated practices that they draw upon in accomplishing that activity"* (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007, p. 8 in Thomas&Stephens 2014: 4). These understandings of strategic communication are in line with the hegemonic corporate strategy discourse that Knights & Morgan (1991) detected. Furthermore, this is in line with "the strategic turn", which *"transforms all*

communication into strategic communication" (Torp 2014: 44). This discourse can also be detected among the diplomats in Moscow:

> *"I would say that everything we do is sort of strategic communication, and then within that you have different messaging and different components (…) actually thinking of what impact you're having over a period of time in order to achieve your goals"* (National diplomat 4).

Most of the diplomats interviewed articulate strategic communication as being a practice that can be used to create and support a long-term strategy plan in order to reach defined goals, which is in line with the hegemonic strategic rationalities presented above.

Similarly, strategic communication becomes a way to promote the EU's overall values (cf. objective 1 in East StratCom Action Plan). In The StratCom Regime the communication of specific policies and events are strategically connected in order to create 'fit' between them and the EU's bigger values, and in this way "*strategic communication is a part of our overall implementation of our policies"* (Spokesperson, EU Delegation). But since the legitimacy of the EU itself is contingent on the homogeneity – or at least consent – of the member state, the strategic rationalities can also be used to strengthen the EU's role as a 'unified supranational foreign policy actor' (see chapter 3). This is enabled through the ability of strategic communication to create 'fit' between the communication goal of national member states, and that of the EU. In this way the diplomats in Russia rethink the EU level with the national level through strategic communication:

> *"We always look to 're-tweet' when possible to share each other's content. So we do speak about how we can amplify messages and how we best do that. We are trying to coordinate, so we can support each other's StratCom messages"* (National diplomat 4).

In this way the strategic rationalities become a useful 'tool' to create synergy between both goals and practices of member states and EU institutions, and this can be argued to strengthen the legitimacy of the EU's actions, since the EU is dependent on the recognition of the members states. This can furthermore

contribute to strengthening the EU's external legitimacy, and ability to act as a 'force for good'.

Furthermore, the strategic rationalities can be used as an internal "tool" in order to legitimize why more resources should be allocated to e.g. the policy field aiming at diminishing Russian "disinformation". Following, the strategic rationalities help making it easier for decision makers to see the bigger strategic relevance through goal-setting and implementation planning, which are central strategic communication tools:

> *"And this also becomes a way for them [the European Parliament] to see some structure in it and to have a chance to prioritize"* (Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016).

In this way, the strategic rationalities underpinning The StratCom Regime become central for the legitimization of the regime itself, among all the other regimes of practices with which it coexists within the EU. The following section analyzes how the strategic rationalities have assimilated existing diplomatic practices into The StratCom Regime. Here I will study the diplomatic practices, which are underpinned by the strategic rationalities just detected.

5.2 Strategic communication as diplomatic practice

According to Dean (2009), regimes of practices must be seen as constituted by *"multiple elements (…) having diverse historical trajectories"* (Dean 2009: 41). In this section, I will detect how The StratCom Regime is constructed 'on top' of a range of other diplomatic practices. I will analyze how all the diplomats are drawing on and redefining these practices through their engagement in strategic communication. I will use the knowledge about the strategic aims underpinning the East StratCom in order to show how the existing different diplomatic practices in Russia are underpinning the East StratCom, and in this way create

'fit' between the practices performed by national diplomats and the East StratCom Team/EU Delegation.

The findings in this section lead to the construction of a table that exposes how strategic communication practice is, more broadly, constituted by interconnections between overall strategic aims, diplomatic practices, and tools implemented in Russia. Furthermore, the table will also include the articulated objectives from the East StratCom Action Plan in order to suggest how the general underlying strategic aims, and the diplomatic practices, tools and activities, are supporting implementation of the East StratCom in Russia.

5.2.1 Public diplomacy

The interviewed diplomats in Moscow articulate 'public diplomacy' as a diplomatic practice that is closely linked to the work with strategic communication. These diplomats consider strategic communication as either being a part of their public diplomacy work or as being a practice including public diplomacy:

> *"I don't think public diplomacy is a separate thing from strategic communication, they kind of overlap (…) Public diplomacy is one tool at our disposal. But you know it falls within what we are trying to do with strategic communication overall"* (National diplomat 4).

> *"Public diplomacy is not only strategic communication, because a picture or an image of a country is more than the strategic communication"* (National diplomat 2).

> *"I believe that if one is to make a distinction, then strategic communication is a subset of public diplomacy, it is a condensate, and it is a more targeted attempt to take stock of a few phenomena"* (Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016).

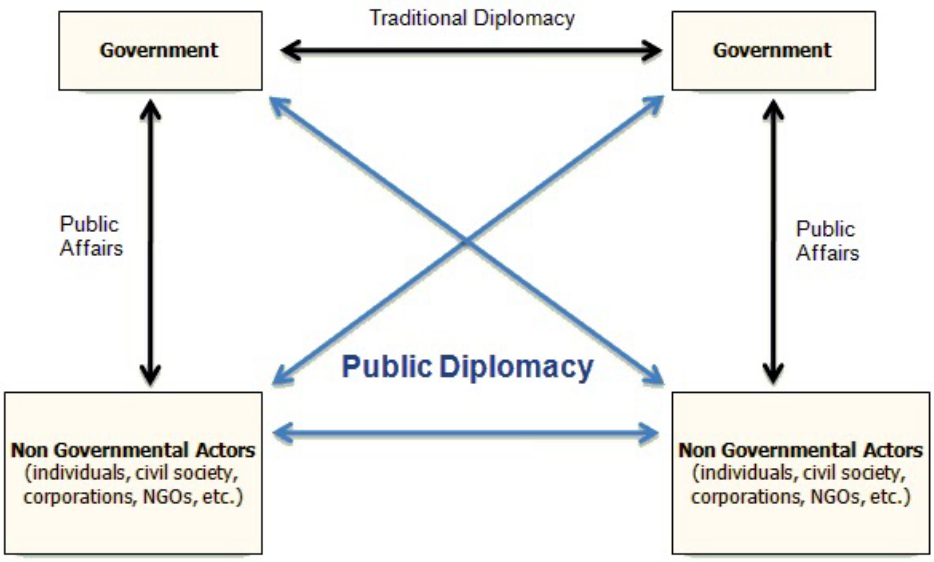
As illustrated, diplomats to a large extend include tools and activities also entailed in public diplomacy practices when they describe their work with strategic communication.

Public diplomacy has many aspects in common with the broader concept of public relations, which in its broadest meaning refers to *"the professional maintenance of a favorable public image by a company or other organization or a famous person"* (Dictionary definition, Van Dyke & Verčič 2009: 905). Within international relations, public diplomacy can correspondingly be described as a foreign policy approach that seeks to influence public opinion, especially among populations in foreign countries, in order to advance the success of foreign policy towards that country (Sheafer & Gabay 2009: 464). This is e.g. evident in one of the objectives articulated in the EU Delegation's communication plan for 2016: *"Try to regain support for a favourable image of EU among the Russian public"* (EU Delegation 2015).

This entails that the diplomats to a larger extend have to change their role from traditionally working on a state-to-state level as lobbyists and political messengers, towards taking an active part in trying to shape the public debates, e.g. in Russia (Jönsson & Hall 2003: 203). Public diplomacy can also entail the EU's role as a network creator between nongovernmental actors, such as NGO's, universities, businesses etc.

Figure 1. Illustrates how public diplomacy practices focus on the relations between government bodies and foreign populations, or the relations between a nation's own population and foreign populations.

Figure 1. ***The field of public diplomacy***



Source: Suto (2011) based upon McDowell's (2008) public diplomacy model

As a subfield within public diplomacy, 'cultural diplomacy' has emerged as the diplomatic practice attempting to promote a positive attitude towards one's nation through the promotion of cultural features such as language, art, sports, traditions, etc. (Van Dyke & Verčič 2009: 907).

A central feature of public diplomacy is the reliance on what Joseph Nye has conceptualized as 'soft power'. Soft power works to gain influence not through physical force and coercion, but through the ability of a state to attract and shape the preferences of others in order to enhance one's own foreign policy objectives (Nye 2004, 2008). The strategic communication aspects within public diplomacy include, among others, *"direct or mass-mediated communication activities"* which aim at *"directly or indirectly reducing negative clichés and prejudices, generating sympathy and understanding for a nation's ideals, goals, (foreign) policies, its institutions, culture and model of society"* (Löffelholz et. al: 2014: 440).

Following, strategic communication must be seen a practice similarly engaged in influencing populations through engaging forms of communication, facilitating people-to-people contact, communicating a positive image of a country etc.

5.2.1.1 Tools and activities

A large part of the diplomats' strategic communication work in Russia can be categorized within the realm of public diplomacy, conferring the diplomats' quotes in the beginning of this section.

In line with this, the strategic communication can include work related to activities promoting c*ultural exchange,* e.g. the embassies' partaking in arranging art exhibitions, concerts, education exchange etc. as part of the intercultural relations. Here, most of the big countries have cultural centers in addition to their embassies, which undertake the main tasks of building cultural relations, e.g. The British Council, the German Goethe Institute, or the Institut Francais. A part of public diplomacy work is also the *general information work,* targeting the broad parts of the Russian population in order to facilitate public interchange or overall promotion of the diplomats' home countries. This can take place by means of traditional spread of information material (leaflets, posters, publications), conferences on certain topics, public speaking by the ambassador, spokesperson, or other diplomats, or through political diplomatic communication about the policies as laws of the country.

All the embassies of the diplomats I interviewed as well as the EU Delegation use their homepages as important channels for sharing communication towards target groups. However, the explosion of *online communication* on social platforms has revolutionized their ability to communicate strategically directly to populations:

> *"It has just opened up the diplomatic world much wider, and have broadened the range of audiences. The people who didn't get invited to receptions can now still find out what we are doing out here."* (National diplomat 4)

In this way the social media becomes a central part of the diplomats' work on a daily basis. All the embassies communicate regularly on their homepages and on Twitter, and especially their profiles on Facebook, Vkontakte (the Russian version of Facebook), YouTube, and Instagram are considered as particularly valuable ways to reach "normal Russians" and to strengthen the intercultural bonds:

> *"We need these bridges and these ties between people. Even in more difficult times it is important that you continue. And you have to continue both tracks. If you double only the official communication, I mean, you are lacking the human touch"* (National diplomat 2).

As the last part indicates, public diplomacy is not just about strengthening one's own 'brand', it is also about creating access to target groups, through the *engagement* of target groups in cultural exchange activities and online communication. But cultural relations are mainly seen as a national issue, which means that the strength of the EU as a unified actor is perceived as weak within this practice. As one diplomat said, *"The Russians don't really understand the EU"* (National diplomat 2). In this way the ability to create 'fit' between the EU level and the member state level is weaker within the public diplomacy:

"We all try to promote our narrative, which include of course public diplomacy, cultural issues, history issues (…)" (National diplomat 3).

Accordingly, public diplomacy tools become central parts of promoting bilateral relations, and the member states are highly focusing on their own unique relations with Russia among cultural actors, businesses, science, etc. In this way the public diplomacy is contributing to fulfill the objective of "promotion of values and policies" in Russia but with preponderance of the bilateral level. Similarly, public diplomacy tools also become central for the EU institutions in order to improve the image of EU as a supranational foreign policy actor. This brand becomes important for the ability to communicate strategically in the future:

> "*Credibility – brand identity – becomes hugely important! We will see much more brand theft. And that's why we need to carefully maintain our image as a credible, honest interlocutor. When you tune into our frequency, or look at our products, then*

you need to be sure that we are the ones talking. Already now, troll fabrics are engaged with producing pure lies behind the cover of virtual identities which do not exist at all" (Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016).

Concluding, public diplomacy is presented as a central part of the diplomats' work with strategic communication. This does not mean that the diplomats will stop calling these activities public or cultural diplomacy. Instead, it implies that the diplomats are articulating and constructing strategic communication as a practice "besides" or "on top of" the public diplomacy practice that can be drawing on the same tools, activities and strategic aims as public diplomacy. In this way the practices are generally presented as highly entangled. The public diplomacy work of embassies is generally favoring *engagement and influence* on a bilateral level, while the EU focuses on the overall EU "brand". But since the promotion of the *values and policies* are generally drawing on the common "universal values", also national public diplomacy activities can be argued to support the promotion of EU values and policies on a bigger level. Thus, the diplomatic practice of public diplomacy can be argued especially to be concerned with the East StratCom objective 2 regarding "Promotion of values and policies", whose primary strategic aim is to create "engagement and influence" (cf. Table 5). These finding are summed up in Table 6.

Table 6. *Public diplomacy in the East StratCom*

DIPLOMATIC PRACTICE:	PUBLIC DIPLOMACY
Tools and activities:	Cultural exchange, general information work, online communication, engaging intermediaries
Strategic aim:	Primary: Engagement & influence Secondary: Aid & access and political messaging & persuasion
East StratCom objective:	Promotion of values and policies

Source: Table by the author of this thesis

5.2.2 Media diplomacy

As a part of their engagement in strategic communication, all the diplomats stressed the importance of their work with the media and journalists in Russia:

> *"What I see critically important is to stay in touch with individual journalists (…) from main dailies, weeklies, information agencies, radio stations."* (National diplomat 3).

> *"Relations with key media representatives will be nursed and maintained. To achieve this, the Delegation builds on previous years of work and contacts in order to maintain the position of a relevant and reliable partner to media and public officials and academia."* (EU Delegation 2015).

Theoretically 'media diplomacy' can be seen as a subfield of public diplomacy. Where public diplomacy targets the public in general through a wide range of tools and channels, media diplomacy is the specific practice of utilizing news media channels to influence domestic and foreign audiences with access to either the Internet or global news media (Van Dyke & Verčič 2009: 907). The struggle to gain media access has become a central aspect of today's foreign policy, due to the belief that sympathetic media coverage is a prerequisite for political influence. The central aim for media diplomacy is then to influence the framing[8] of political issues (Sheafer & Gabay 2009: 449). Here media diplomacy becomes an efficient approach to try to enhance the use of politically favorable frames above discrediting ones.

5.2.2.1 Tools and activities

As part of the East StratCom the objective for *media support & cooperation* is especially concerned with the aspect of creating media support through building networks and providing economic aid e.g. through capacity building for journalists (East StratCom Action Plan). But due to the previously described

[8] Framing is the act of *"selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution"* (Sheafer & Gabay 2009: 449).

constraints within the Russian media system, the objectives regarding media support and development is very restricted in its implementation in Russia. The diplomats working in Russia see their abilities to provide financial and structural aid as limited due to the structures within the centralized Russian media system. This restriction also enable the EU to strengthen its central position in The StratCom Regime due to the benefits for individual member states to work under the EU "umbrella" when it comes to more politically tense issues. This enables the EU to obtain a more central role when it comes to trying to *"reconfigure events and develop alternatives"* (EU Delegation 2015). This stronger role of the EU within this dimension also become underpinned by the strong utopian character of the media values, which makes EU countries more likely to present themselves as united within the structural dimension of media diplomacy. In line with this, one of the diplomats explains how the strong values strengthen the EU cooperation:

> *"It is only when we agree with our EU allies, on for example the issues on freedom of the press, that we represent the EU"* (National diplomat 3).

In spite of the limitations for doing *media support*, the member states and the EU still have some initiatives which are especially concerned with giving scholarships for journalists, inviting journalists for seminars or study visits abroad, or buying content in supplements for papers etc. The EU has supported the creation of an Internet radio-station "Terra Libra" aiming at developing a regional news agency that *"accumulates and promotes voices of Russian regions"* (EU Delegation 2015).

As already mentioned, all the diplomats stress *contact creation* with journalists as an important task. This includes hosting seminars or informal gatherings for press contacts, or having lunches and meetings with Russian and international journalists. Hence, one of the EU Delegation's Communication objectives for 2016 is to seek to promote a credible and accurate reflection of main EU positions, by *"engagement of key media representatives/opinions makers/decisions-shapers & -makers on appropriate platforms in electronic and*

broadsheet media" (EU Delegation 2015). In this way the media contacts are seen as central "investments" for building networks for later use:

> *"If you build that kind of relationship with the journalists or in a higher level with the director of the media – with a respect-approach – most of the times it works"* (National diplomat 1).

Network creation becomes important for diplomats to secure that they have media channels to use to disseminate their messages through (as I will elaborate on in the next part).

> *"We have to be realistic about which journalists we can actually trust and build a relationship with (…) you have to have a relationship with the journalist before you can even do things like interviews and briefings and things like that"* (National diplomat 4).

As the last quote points out supporting media and building contacts with journalists is covering the *strategic aim* of securing *access,* since this is the work that nourish the relations that gives the diplomats access to the broader communication channels within the Russian society. As one diplomat said, *"at some time maybe the situation will change and it is important to have partners and players"* (National diplomat 3).

A central part of the diplomats' strategic communication in Russia is thus concerned with building relations with media actors, especially to pursue the strategic goal of obtaining *access* to media channels. The East StratCom objective about media support is hard to pursue in Russia due to the many laws restricting foreign funding and stigmatizing the media and organizations cooperating with Western donors. But in spite of this, the diplomats do continue to have some initiatives supporting the objective.

Table 7. ***Media diplomacy in the East StratCom***

DIPLOMATIC PRACTICE:	MEDIA DIPLOMACY
Tools and activities:	Media support & journalist exchange, contact creation, briefings & content
Strategic aim:	Primary: Aid & access Secondary: Engagement & influence
East StratCom objective:	Media support and cooperation

Source: Table by the author of this thesis

5.2.3 Political diplomatic communication

As already mentioned by one of the diplomats above, there is a diplomatic 'track' next to public diplomacy, which I focusing on more official of political communication. Thus, practice of political diplomatic communication is closer to the diplomatic practice of 'traditional diplomacy', which usually is concerned with communication between two governments at an official level (as represented in figure. 1). Here, political diplomatic communication is similarly concerned with the traditional act of delivering political messages from one state to another. But this practice also includes todays' broad variety of communication platforms, which means that political diplomatic communication can target traditional diplomatic forums, but also online platforms, the media, etc. Opposite to the diplomatic practices under public diplomacy, which is mostly concerned with the use of 'soft power', creating the ability to shape the preferences of others (Nye 2004), political diplomatic communication can include communication on 'hard power' policies, which relates to economic or military measures. In this way *"Hard power can rest on the inducements ("carrots") or threats ("sticks")"* (Nye 2004: 12).

Just like the work with strategic communication in Russia, the political messaging on the economic sanctions related to the Ukraine crisis constitutes a

substantial part of the EU's communication. This is also one of the areas, where the EU level is strong, and an area which is highly defining for EU-Russia relations:
"[A]t the end of the of the day it is always about the sanctions" (National diplomat 1).

"I think that across all areas - the EU has been more in the need in terms of sanctions and on the Minsk 2 agreement. I think that was something where we used messaging, or we just used the EU's messaging." (National diplomat 4).

5.2.3.1 Tools and activities

A part of the third objective of the East StratCom is the ambition to create *"Increased public awareness of disinformation activities by external actors"* and to be able to *"respond to such activities"* (East StratCom Action Plan). A central element of the ability to respond is *political statements,* which are distributed on the homepages and social media platforms by the EU member states and the EU institutions. These statements are performed by people in top positions within the EU, such as the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the President of the European Parliament, the President of the European Commission, or by national ministers in the member states or ambassadors for the EU or the member states in Russia. The EU would not communicate statements by single national member states (single the it to be a union for all member states), but the member states often post the EU statements, and use them strategically in their own communication. In this way political statements from the EU have a great potential for fit creation in the strategic communication:

> *"A recent example has been the EU statement on the threat against Kasyanov, who is a member of the opposition. Again we 're-tweeted' the EU and put out our own messages. So its not competition, it is how we amplify each others messages."* (National diplomat 4).

As this excavation of the strategic communication, as a policy response to perceived disinformation, reveals, strategic communication is generally seen as a "patch-work" of other diplomatic practices already performed within other frameworks by the diplomats, which get linked through different strategic aims. But as mentioned before, something that all the diplomats perceived as something new, and generally the first thing they mentioned in connection with the East StratCom Team, was the aspect of "*myth-busting*". This term covers their work of *"analyzing trends, explaining narratives and addressing disinformation"* (East StratCom Q&A). This work is primarily based in the East StratCom Team and is communicated through the weakly Disinformation Review, which presents an overview of the "pro-Kremlin" (Russian state) stories that provided factually wrong information or frames within the past week. This is supported by continuous posts on the Twitter profile 'EU Mythbusters'. In connection with the *"Falsification of the Disinformation",* the EU or its partners provide a "Disproof" to support the falsification of the stories (e.g. Disinfo Review 1.3.16). In this way the Disinformation Reviews also provide a platform for the EU and like-minded actors to correct information according to their beliefs, here among information supporting the objective 3 in the East StratCom: *"Increased public awareness of disinformation activities by external actors, and improved EU capacity to anticipate and respond to such activities".* In this way, the myth busting can also be seen as an enabler for political messaging:

> *"Personally I think it is good to have the disinformation, because it helps you to get your messages right, where to put your emphasis (…) It is good to have these kinds of examples, because it is funny. The more interesting challenge is how to get our messages through, not how to dismantle the thing."* (National diplomat 2).

Other tools for *political messaging* also encompass public speaking, press briefings and conferences, press releases, public announcements, publication of graphics and statistics, and giving interviews. Even though these tools can also be used as part of public diplomacy practice, the characteristic of their use within political diplomatic communication is the focus on delivering political messages (one-way). While public diplomacy and media diplomacy generally focus on creating the right platforms and access to spread the messages, public diplomacy

and cultural diplomacy focus on securing that these messages are perceived the right way among the target groups. The *strategic aim* of political statements is first of all to get the message "out" in hope that they can persuade the target groups by the strength of the argument. The success of the two previous strategic aims thus secure that the diplomats can spread their messages, and that these messages are getting framed in the ways the diplomats indented, and that they are perceived in the right ways (positively/with trust) among target groups.

Table 8. ***Political diplomatic communication in the East StratCom***

DIPLOMATIC PRACTICE	POLITICAL DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATION
Tools and activities	Official statements, interviews & public speaking, "re-tweeting" and message sharing, disinformation review
Strategic aim	Primary: Political messaging & persuasion Secondary: Engagement & influence
East StratCom objective	Myth busting and political statements

Source: Table by the author of this thesis

5.2.4 *Sum up:* Strategic communication as unifying diplomatic practice

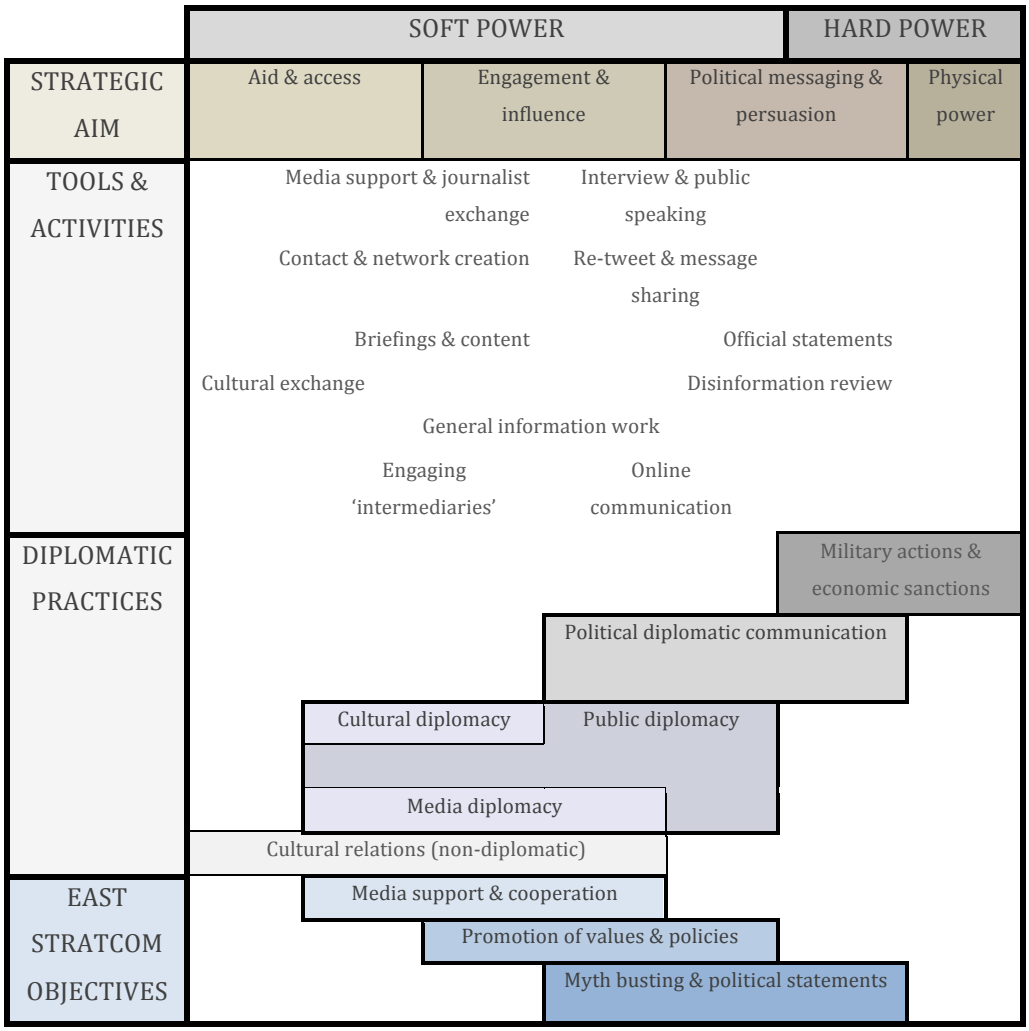
It has become clear that strategic communication is perceived as involving different diplomatic practices, especially public diplomacy, with its more specified approaches of cultural diplomacy and media diplomacy. But also political diplomatic communication is an important ingredient of the diplomats' strategic communication work. Thus, the previous analysis showed how strategic communication practices are constructed "upon" other diplomatic practices, but with specific strategic aims guiding how the "mission" is supposed to be advanced (Hallahan et al. 2007: 4). Informed by these findings, I suggest that strategic communication can be characterized as a unifying diplomatic practice.

With inspiration from the "International Relations positioning spectrum" by the British Council (see appendix 1), I have constructed a schematic overview showing the relations between the three objectives within the East StratCom, their underlying strategic aims, and the diplomatic practices, tools and activities supporting the implementation. Figure 2. provides a simplified overview – a condensate – over the *techne* dimension of The StratCom Regime, since it highlights *"the techniques, mechanisms, vocabularies, and technologies"* (Dean 2009: 31, 42) applied towards the problematization. It is important to stress that the different categorizations should be seen as analytical clarifications enabling this thesis to reveal the different rationalities and practices in play in The StratCom Regime and their interrelatedness. In the diplomats' everyday work with strategic communication, the stylized diplomatic practices and strategic aims become much more fluent and entangled.

> *"In a country as Russia, the transition between public diplomacy, ordinary diplomacy, ordinary diplomatic work and strategic communication is fluid. It is a continuum in which one moves, where it will be difficult to identify where one thing ends and the other begins."* (Spokesperson, EU Delegation)

Similarly, Figure 2. cannot be reduced to the work of a single diplomat, but can be used as an analytical tool for further analyses of the interrelatedness between diplomatic practices, tool and activities, and the guiding underlying strategic aims.

Figure 2. ***Strategic communication as a unifying diplomatic practice***



Source: Table by the author of this thesis

In the previous section, I have studied how strategic communication has been initiated as a foreign policy response to "disinformation" in Russian media through the East StratCom. And we have seen how the East StratCom has been introduced into – and constructed upon – a broader field of diplomatic practices. In the following I will present some of the academic literature on the field of strategic communication in order to support the conclusion, that strategic communication can be labeled a 'unifying diplomat practice'.

5.3 Strategic communication as a unifying paradigm

As presented above, strategic communication is a concept, which can be attributed to activities within many diplomatic practices. In the academic literature strategic communication is similarly regarded as an *"overarching concept combining public diplomacy, public affairs, international broadcasting and information operations as done by the political–military sector"* (Löffelholz et al. 2014:444). The emergence of strategic communication as a *"unifying paradigm for studying purposeful communications by organizations"* has in this way managed to unite previously different *"forms of strategy and communication practice, since they in reality had many of the same concepts in common, among other audience analysis, goal setting, message strategy, channel choice, and program assessment"* (Hallahan et al. 2007: 16, 5). This is in line with the findings of the previous section that showed how the East StratCom and strategic diplomatic communication practices in Russia are comprised by several different diplomatic practices and tools.

In chapter 4, I detected how that strategic communication became especially outspoken among EU diplomats – especially at the EU level – after the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis. But the EEAS has a general strategic communications team, which was formed with the EEAS in 2011, before the Ukraine crisis. This of course indicates that strategic communication, as a foreign policy practice, is not specifically related to the Russia policies, even though it has overall been articulated as a new foreign policy response to Russia. The term strategic communication has long been used within academic literature, but it is only within the last decade that the term has emerged as a specific field of academic study (Thomas & Stephens 2015, Hallahan et al. 2007, Torp 2014). Accordingly, the practices of strategic communication in themselves are not new, but the extended use of the overarching or unifying term strategic communication has only developed recently.

5.3.1 The strategic turn in foreign policy practice

In chapter 4, I presented how the initiation of strategic communication responses was related to the narrative of Russia as a 'revisionist state'. This observation is in line with those of Van Dyke & Verčič (2009). They have detected the occurrence of strategic communication practice within international relations as being largely formed by the broad conflict narratives, which have been defining international politics within the last and the current century. They argue that the World Wars played a central role for the developments of different communication strategies – such as propaganda – in order to attack the credibility of one's enemies and conversely enhance the nations' own international image and legitimize national military or political engagement in the different international alliances (Van Dyke & Verčič 2009: 914f). Similarly, the intensification of a bipolar conflict perception and the risk of nuclear destruction during the Cold War encouraged state leaders to invent "strategic communication management policies" that could combine different communication activities like public relations, public diplomacy, negotiation, persuasion, and coercion in order to promote dialogue and deter nuclear war (Van Dyke & Verčič 2009: 915). In this context strategic communication related to foreign policy and was fundamentally built up around a grand conflict narrative, which could guide and legitimize states' foreign policies. During the Cold War, 'the West' correspondingly promoted the foreign policies related to the grand narrative of the threat of the Soviet Union and its promotion of international communism.

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the U.S., the 'war on terror' became a hegemonic international conflict narrative, which became a catalyst for the creation of new ways of conducting national security and foreign policies (Dimitriu 2012). Similarly, the argument of this thesis is that the construction of the new conflict narrative, which has gained momentum within the EU in the wake of the Ukraine crisis, has enabled strategic communication to be presented as a legitimate foreign policy response (as studied in chapter 4). While Van Dyke & Verčič has presented how earlier conflict narratives have paved the way for

the development of different forms of strategy and communication within foreign policy practices, this thesis thus takes their study further by analyzing how the rise of the conflict narrative about Russia as a 'revisionist state' has enabled the development of strategic communication as a foreign policy response to "disinformation". Further, this thesis argues that this was the outset for the broader constitution of The StratCom Regime.

Finally, strategic communication within both management literature and international relations cannot be seen as a radical change in practices, and in this way it can be argued that *"the degree of change in diplomatic communication is today often exaggerated"* (Jönnson 208). But the way new conflict narratives combine existing practices through strategic rationalities must here be argued to constitute the fundament for the emergence of strategic communication as legitimate foreign policy response – in our present historical context towards Russian "disinformation".

5.4 EU governance through network facilitation

As introduced in chapter 3, the spread of information and knowledge is central for any processes of 'conduct of conduct'. This aspect of governmentality is likely to take place among a network of actors, and the construction of such governance networks is central for the way EU governmentality plays out (Joseph 2012: 186). In the following, I will analyze how the practice of creating networks becomes central for the EU's ability to govern through The StratCom Regime. Through the role as policy arena, the EU acts like a network facilitator which makes other actors cooperate about specific issues and strategies:

> *"Networks should provide a platform for relevant stakeholders to exchange products and ideas, to amplify communication messages, and to coordinate their activities."* (East StratCom Action Plan).

As this indicate the engagement of networks is vital for the actors ability to create 'fit'.

As mentioned in chapter 2, The StratCom Regime is a sub-regime to the broader Regime of Practices against Russia "Disinformation". As the East StratCom Action Plan explicate, the creation of networks with actors in the broader regime is also important for the EU. Similarly, the network creation constitutes central tools and activities within the diplomatic practices detected earlier in this chapter. But since the analysis of this thesis is The StratCom Regime, the network creating with like-minded and not like-minded actors in the broader regimes will not be elaborated. Instead, Appendix 2 provides a rough overview of some of the actors in the broader regime.

5.4.1 The EU as network facilitator among member states

The thesis have already studied strategic communication towards Russian "disinformation" as a multilayered process comprised by many strategies and practices within the East StratCom Team, the EU Delegation, and the individual member states. In order to enhance the level of fit among these practices and strategies, the practice of network creation becomes an important tool. As one diplomat put it: *"[T]he EU do things according to their strategy. We deliver according to our strategy. And there will be some overlap and some points of synergy, where we can support each others' messages"* (National diplomat 4).

The process of increasing synergies is widely supported through networks and cooperation, and here, the EU level plays a central role for the development and articulation of strategic communication in Russia:

> *"We are the first movers, and we definitely move first"* (Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016).

The decision and initiation of the East StratCom has given the EU this "leader role" within The StratCom Regime. One of the diplomats from the Brussels-based East StratCom Team is in charge of the strategy implementation in Russia in close cooperation with especially the spokesperson/Head of the Press and Information Department at the EU Delegation in Moscow. Through the facilitation of meetings and seminars, they engage the diplomats in charge of strategic communication at the national embassies in the development of strategic communication initiatives and the 'fit' creation between the member states and the EU level. This especially takes place through the exchange of best practices and discussions of the recent developments within the Russian media system (EU Delegation 2015).

A secondary "leadership level" is constituted by the big member states, which the diplomats interviewed for this thesis represent. Since it is mostly the big member states that have resources to actually have an employee dedicated to strategic communication, these member states also get big influence on how strategic communication is defined and developed within the EU. This influence is especially exerted through their role as "best practice models". This can be illustrated through a prior description of a meeting at the EU Delegation in February 2016:

> *"And then we will also invite some of our most active colleagues to share their experiences. And the context of it all is that a number of tese colleagues [from other member states] have said, 'we have been told by our capitol that we are about to do something, and we are not entirely sure how to tackle it'"* (Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016)

In this regard the power relations that enable the bigger member states' to exert more influence on the strategic communication practices in the EU is not constructed on the basis on their material capabilities per se, but, in addition to that, the fact that they have the knowledge and experience. This is supported by the diplomats interviewed. For example one diplomat explains how he co-creates online strategic communication in cooperation with his peer colleagues at the other big member states' embassies and the EU Delegation:

> *"I am having almost direct contact to the EU and to the other bigger states who are very active also in social media (…) I know what is on their presences and I know where to retweet"* (National diplomat 2)

Accordingly, the knowledge about strategic communication is to a large degree developed through the experience of big member states, which in this aspect gain more influence than smaller member states. But the EU takes a central role in The StratCom Regime by constituting a policy arena for the member states, and by taking the lead, especially through the East StratCom objectives and the specific knowledge on strategic communication accumulated through the East StratCom Team, who become constructed as 'experts' within the regime. In this way the EU is simultaneously acting in accordance with its two foreign policy 'roles' outlined in chapter 3: The supranational and the intergovernmental.

The EU's ability to define and execute strategic communication initiatives in Russia (through the Disinformation Review, own social media profiles, own ambassador etc.) must be seen as something strengthening the EU's role as a foreign policy actor in its own. But since the East StratCom is highly dependent on the support from the member states, the EU's role as a policy arena has to be included in order to secure legitimacy among the member states:

> *"We must keep in mind that the EU, after all, is a club of member states. It is not a federation which tells the subjects to do this and that. […] The member states, on the other hand, may expect that when they have decided on xxx, then we actually do it"* (Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016).

The governmentality framework enables this thesis to study how the EU performs 'indirect' or 'hidden' governance, by, for example, encouraging the member states to adopt certain practices and rationalities – in this case strategic rationalities and the conflict narrative about Russia as a 'revisionist' state. The promotion of strategic communication can thereby be argued to work as a form of 'conduct of conduct', where the network facilitation enables the EU to obtain a central role for defining the form of knowledge, rationalities, and practices which

are dominant for the regime. Through this common knowledge and certain practice frameworks, the member states 'freely' choose to implement strategic communication tools within their work – or, equally important, to adopt the terminologies and target groups promoted through The StratCom Regime. For exampled the weekly disinformation review circulated by the East StratCom Team is frequently read by national diplomats, who all see it as a "really interesting" basis for understanding the Russian media system (National diplomat 1). Even though the strategic communication activities by member states might not be initiated as a direct part of the East StratCom - they almost never are – the EU is nevertheless still able to form the central basis on which diplomats 'talk' about strategic communication and disinformation.

Doing so, the EU govers through its influence on the *"the forms of knowledge, techniques and other means employed"* (Dean 2009: 18) and through it central position with The StratCom Regime, which enables it to play a dominant role for defining the target groups within Russia, the actors involved in the networks, the strategic end goals, and the practices applied.

As mentioned, the fields where the diplomats express the largest degree of alignment between the national and the EU level is on the Ukraine policy, Russia's implementation of the Minsk 2 agreement, and the EU's sanctions against Russia. Even though most of the member states' communication in or related to Russia is related to national issues, and, to a large degree, national cultural issues, the EU becomes a central channel for the countries' strategic communication on the biggest conflict issue related to Ukraine. In this way the EU becomes a strategic channel to communicate through, when EU member states criticize Russia, in order to secure that Russia cannot play the member states out against each other*:*

> *"I think why EU counts in this respects is, that if it was only the Czechs who raises the issue of freedom of press in Russia, they would be ignored, dismissed or even repressed economically. If ambassador Ušackas* [the EU ambassador] *says it, it is impossible, because then Russia realizese that its also the German, Danish Dutch, French, British. Then we are together, and it is not too easy for Russians to play their favorite game (…)*

- to give something to the Italians, and punish Poles and isolate the Hungarians." (National Diplomat 3).

As this indicates the ability of the EU to influence the member states – and to exercise governance – through the East StratCom is realized through its role as a knowledge promoter and network facilitator, because of its privileged position to set the agenda and not least promote strategic communication as a "new" but important policy practice towards Russia.

5.5 Sum up: Techne

In this chapter I have analyzed some of the central elements within the *field of techne* in order to reveal the rationalities, practices and techniques that constitute The StratCom Regime. Through its ability to position itself as a dominant actor within the regime, the EU is undertaking a role as network facilitator. Since the EU cannot dictate what the member states should do, the governance in the network works through 'conduct of conduct' where the EU promotes strategic communication as an emerging foreign policy practice towards "disinformation". Through the networks the EU influence the reality perceptions and knowledge bases of the member states by information and best practice sharing and facilitation of cooperation within the regime.

Since the implementation of the East StratCom is not contingent on the member states' participation, the EU becomes the main promoter of strategic communication as being a "new" foreign policy response to Russian "disinformation". But through the strategic rationalities underpinning The StratCom Regime, the national diplomats are encouraged and qualified to contribute indirectly to the EU's East StratCom, without giving lower priority to the tasks expected by the member states. This is enabled through the creation of 'fit', which furthermore strengthens the EU's ability to act as a unified supranational foreign policy actor.

The analysis showed that strategic communication, as a diplomatic practice, is not a single practice "imported" into the Russian context as part of the policy solution. Strategic communication can rather be defined as a 'unifying practice' since it is drawing upon several other practices, such as public diplomacy, media diplomacy and political diplomatic communication. Through the strategic aims that are underpinning the East StratCom, the existing practices of diplomats in Russia are subjected into strategic communication. In this way the analysis reveals that strategic communication is not a 'new' practice but rather a unifying practice. Supported by findings in existing literature, the analysis shows that the emergence of the conflict narrative about Russia as a 'revisionist' state has enabled the emergence of The StratCom Regime and the extension of EU governance, which is enabled through the regime. Based on this, I argue that the EU governance is not contingent on the actual success of the East StratCom and the actual strategic communication results. Rather, the governance potential lies in the way the underlying rationalities enable them to unify practices and actors into a common network, through which the EU can exercise conduct of conduct.

6 The strategically communicating diplomat

Through the analysis of the first three governmentality dimensions in chapter, 3, chapter 4 and chapter 5 it has become clear that the diplomats working with strategic communication in Moscow have been central for the construction of strategic communication as a practice against "disinformation".

In this chapter I will investigate how the diplomat role in particular becomes central for the EU's ability to govern through The StratCom Regime. This dimension studies the formation of certain identities above others, "*through which governing operates and which specific practices and programmes of government try to form"* (Dean 2009: 43). This is enabled through the processes of 'conduct of conduct', which make the diplomats internalize certain truths,

interests, and wishes above other (Torfing & Sørensen 2005: 115ff). I study governance through the diplomats processes of self-government (Dean 2009).

The chapter will first briefly outline three predominant diplomat identities suggested by Cornut (2005) being the *role as knowledge-producer*, the *role as representative* and the *role as bureaucrat*. However, I find these existing diplomat identities limited when it comes to understand the diplomats' articulations of their role in relation to the StratCom Regime. Following, I analyze and identify a new diplomat identity that I name the role of *the strategically communicating diplomat*.

6.1 Diplomatic multi-roles

In his study of diplomats in Egypt, Cornut (2015) has detected three predominant roles, which the diplomats working at embassies manage simultaneously. The first role is the *role as knowledge-producers*. While engaging in diplomatic practices diplomats inevitably engage in knowledge-construction through the description and interpreting of information about topics related to current international affairs. At the national representations the knowledge production is mostly targeting the national MFA's, and in this way the diplomats are the home country's main source to information about other countries (Cornut 2015: 388). However, the EU member states are all interested in knowledge about each others' view on current affairs - for example on new trends within strategic communication - and in this process an important part is also to engage in common knowledge production (Bicchi 2013: 254), which is happening through common newsletters, analyses, seminars, best-practice sharing etc.

The second role is as *representative of a government*. This means that the diplomats in the end are responsible for the execution of the priorities of their governments, and in this way the diplomats have a mandate to speak on behalf of their state, and the population they represent (Cornut 2015: 389). In line with the preponderance of the national level in the EU's foreign policy, the national

role is very strong in the diplomats' identities – also when in comes to finding common ground through strategic communication in Russia:

> *"It is good to have the European side, but my headquarter is still demanding from me to do information on this and this, specifically on something with relation to (my country)"* (National diplomat 2)

But studies have also shown that the discourse on 'the EU as a unified supranational foreign policy-actor' is generally strong among diplomats in EU countries. A recent study building on 138 questionnaires shows that many diplomats understand EU foreign policy as *"a collective political project with the objective to craft a common European policy".* Especially this "supranational attitude" is strengthened, if the diplomats have direct work experience from Brussels (Chelotti 2014: 190). I have similarly detected this 'EU-identity' among my informants, who all express support and positive attitudes towards the East StratCom. As one diplomat expresses the commitment to the East StratCom:

> *"I am a part of the StratCom, cause I belong to the European Union, and the StratCom is a part of our embassy, of course (…)"* (National diplomat 1).

Actually this diplomat was the one expressing biggest cautiousness towards the East StratCom, especially the aspects of media developments, which she feared could easily be perceived as "paternalism". But the fact that she is nevertheless expressing clear involvement in the strategy nonetheless, can be seen as a symbol of the EU's ability to make the diplomats feel that they want to be included. In this way the national diplomats also play a central role for the development of EU foreign policy actorness. But even though the discourses and perceptions of among practitioners show that the EU is constructed as an important foreign policy actor, another recent study of diplomats' practices relating to EU foreign policy showed that diplomats see the policies of the EEAS as an additional resource, but not something that can substitute the policies of the national ministries of foreign affairs (MFA's) (Lequesne 2015). Similarly all the diplomats in this study stress the national level as being primary to their professional role.

While representing their countries abroad all diplomats are still a part of the bureaucracy in their national MFA, and thus they take on the *role as bureaucrat* (Cornut 2015: 389). As part of the member states' integration into the EU and the development of EU's institutions, the administrative and legislative standards within the Union have been increasingly adapted to common standards (EU 2014: 23). Through the engagement in EU policy processes and by working after the same diplomatic 'rules', the diplomats also to some extent take part in the EU's bureaucracy. An example of these emerging common working procedures in foreign policy can be the COREU network, through which EU institutions and member states can share confidential foreign policy information (Bicchi 2011). Through these systems and bureaucratic regimes the diplomats produce and reproduce diplomatic practice, through which they solve their tasks and meet expectations from national MFA's, the EU, populations etc. (Čmakalová&Rolenc 2012: 265).

These three diplomatic roles presented above all have an impact on how the EU diplomats construct and legitimize their practice, which form the way governance takes place. In the following I will analyze how strategic communication has contributed to an emerging diplomat role, which promotes new possibilities for EU governance.

6.2 The strategically communicating diplomat

Processes of forming certain identities are closely connected to the processes of problematization as I studied in chapter 4 (Bacchi 2012). Through the analyses this thesis has shown how the diplomats, as a part of the problematization of the Russian media system, have been drawing up discursive distinctions in order to legitimize how their own strategic communication actions can be seen as legitimate while propaganda activity is illegitimate. As studied in chapter 4 the diplomats 'othering' of the Russian media system becomes a way to strengthen the diplomats EU identity (Vartanova 2014: 100). As a part of the problem articulations the diplomats draw on the underlying distinctions between 'us' and

'them', which are guided by the epistemic norms regarding independent media and propaganda. Here the distinctions are drawn between the 'independent press' and the 'propaganda press', and similarly between the diplomats as 'strategic communicators' versus the Russian officials working as 'propagandists' seeking to control the media:

> *"Nu er det politiske system jo I tiltagende grad centralistisk, nogen vil kalde det enevældigt, og derfor bliver det vanskeligt at pege på nogle mennesker, som kan have afgørende indflydelse uden for den snævre kreds"* (Spokesperson, EU Delegation).

Through this problematization of the Russian media system and the initiation of strategic communication as a legitimate policy response, the diplomats similarly shape themselves into the role as strategic communicators. As presented above, the diplomats hold many different roles, and they are engaged in many different practices (as analyzed in chapter 5). As part of the process of legitimizing strategic communication as a foreign policy practice and the emergence of strategic communication as a unifying paradigm, the diplomats have similarly been encouraged to adapt into a new corresponding role:

> *"How individuals view themselves as diplomats is closely associated to the tasks they are expected to perform, how these expectations relate to their interpretation of the role, and the organizational and cultural features of the contexts they are embedded in"* (Chelotti 2014: 193).

Based on Chelotti's "recipe" of the formation of diplomat's roles I will proceed to the analysis of how the governance through strategic communication has formed the role of the 'strategically communicating diplomat'.

The first aspect of how the diplomats see their roles is concerned with the tasks that the diplomat is expected to perform. This thesis has shown how strategic communication has been promoted by the EU through the East StratCom. Since the informant for this thesis are all heads of the communication departments of their respective embassies the role as 'strategically communicating diplomat' is more likely to emerge among them that in other embassy departments. This

makes them more exposed to this role, while many of their colleagues might be more connected to the bureaucratic or representative role etc. But the strategic rationales seem to be spreading into more traditional diplomatic positions as described above, exemplified by the tendency that many ambassadors and spokespersons are now being active on twitter, blogs etc. Furthermore, many of the diplomats' national MFA's have upgraded strategic communication teams at home. In this way the role of the 'strategically communicating diplomat' is promoted from many sides. Similarly the diplomats express that they in their capacity as strategic communicators become included in central decision processes of their embassies, and in this way this role moves them closer to the political management, which can be argued to underpin how strategic communication facilitates e.g. the integration of political messaging into public diplomacy work. Similarly this changes the role for the diplomats, since strategic communication becomes a way for them to obtain more influential and 'visible' positions within their organizations.

> *"So we don't communicate as an afterthought (…) Communication is not a thing you do at the last minute at the end. We are now brought into the discussion a lot earlier and through the development of things."* (National diplomat 4)

According to Cornut the diplomats also have their own interests in pursuing the roles close to management, since this gives them more influence and a higher standing among their mangements (Cornut 2015: 396)

The 'strategically communicating diplomats' are also expected to change themselves *"from being reporters and lobbyists on reactive issues to shapers of public debates around the world"* (Jönsson & Hall 2003: 203). Thus, the diplomat role within The StratCom Regime is to be actively engaged in the procession of opinion formation not just among national populations, but also among foreign publics. Especially online communication on e.g. social media become a new arena where the 'strategically communicating diplomat' is expected to act:

> *"For us this means that we also have to be present, where the new consumption patterns are"* (Spokesperson, EU Delengation 2016).

And in this way the diplomats see themselves a being directly communicating with the 'users'. This expresses a central part of the diplomats' own "interpretation of the role" (Chelotti 2014). Here the 'strategically communicating diplomats' become integrated into the self-image of 'the modern diplomat':

> *"I think that is a part of being a modern diplomat, who understands the modern world and modern communication technology and audiences. It has just opened up the diplomatic world much wider, and braided the range of audiences."* (National diplomat 4).

Like the other dimensions of the regime of practices, this diplomat articulates how the role of the 'modern diplomat' is supporting norms such as *"transparency, openness, and understanding of what work we are doing"* (National diplomat 4). Since these are utopian norms within the EU, this self-image can be argued to strengthen the emerging role. Similarly the strategically communicating role can be integrated into the role of the traditional representative diplomat role: *"We are here to bring bridges"* (National diplomat 1), which similarly underscores the legitimacy of the emerging role.

The diplomats' interpretations about their future work are closely linked to their "interpretations of their context" (Chelotti 2014). Here the strategically communicating role is again tightly linked to the developments within the global communication networks, which become important for the user-oriented 'strategically communicating diplomat':

> *"So now it doesn't matter if you can write the most elegant press release. Nobody is interested. You need to be able to write your 140 characters on twitter, but I can hear that's changing too: You need to be able to take photographs, videos, in real time – there is no point in doing it late"* (National diplomat 4).

In this way the role of the 'strategically communicating diplomat' is always seeking to analyze the "new trends", which again underscores that the role

encourages a further move away from traditional diplomatic channels to the public diplomacy channels. While still stressing the importance of independent journalists the developments within communication also make the 'strategically communicating diplomats' integrate closer with the field of journalism, which they traditionally have seen themselves as strictly divided from:

> *"We are producing now. And what is happening is – and I think this will be more accentuated the coming years (…) that we start to produce fully pre-packed products, which you as a consumer on Vkontakte or Facebook and Twitter kan choose to read"* (Spokesperson, EU Delegation 2016).

While the traditional diplomat would work as the source for the journalists, the 'strategically communicating diplomat' can still be the source that gives interviews or press briefings, but it can also be a newsmaker in itself, by posting directly on online platforms, where also more and more journalists search in order to find news (Verweij 2012). In this way the strategic communicating diplomat is interacting fundamentally different with the journalists and the public than more traditional diplomatic roles as e.g. the knowledge producer, the state representative, or the bureaucrat. In this way the 'strategically communicating diplomat' acts across traditional boundaries, and both takes part in management processes and political communication while also becoming a content producer and newsmaker.

Due to this "agile" role the 'strategically communicating diplomat' can similarly be engaged in the creation of fit between many different levels, both within the national diplomatic sphere, between the diplomatic sphere and the public sphere, and between the national level and the EU level:

> *"So we are working in a sort of multiple layers (…) Some interests will overlap with several other EU countries or the EU. So you look at the policy issue and then look at the context around it (…) We are trying to coordinate, so we can support each others stratcom messages"* (National diplomat 4).

So even though the diplomats are generally much closer linked to the nation state they represent, it can be argued that the 'strategically communicating diplomat' is more encouraged to integrate different levels and strategies simultaneously. According to the hegemonic strategic rationales, which were detected as underpinning the StratCom Regime against Russian "Disinformation", this can similarly be argued to underscore the level of fit creating between the national level and the EU - as long as it strengthens the ability to reach the users. Larsen (2004) have studied how *"the overall problematics of international governance in the EU"* can be seen as *"an expression of struggles between states and institutional actors adhering to different discourses"* (Larsen in Tonra & Christiansen 2004: 68f). In line with the above presentation, the promotion of the 'strategically communicating diplomat' can be argued to improve the integration of the EU level into the national diplomatic communication and create bigger alignment between the different discourses in play – which might have a positive influence on EU governance.

The challenges of governance on the EU level are big, since "*the social and political actors are not naturally inclined to interact in and through governance networks. Thus international organizations and institutions (as well as states) constantly have to form subjectivities in accordance with the aims, and to legitimize their own existence" (Torfing&Sørensen 2006: 39f*). In line with this, this thesis suggests that the formation of the 'strategically communicating diplomat' is promoted as part of strengthening the abilities of actors to engage in the EU governance network. In this way the formation of this role – or subjectivities – become a part of legitimizing strategic communication action, but also a part of legitimizing EU governance in itself.

6.3 Sum up: The formation of identities

Through the study of the governmentality dimension of *identity formation* this chapter has detected the emergence of the new role of the *strategically communicating diplomat*. Contrary to more traditional diplomatic roles the

strategically communicating diplomat is constructed as being able to work across many fields, both close to central management and policy formulation and internal developments, but at the same time highly oriented towards the external target groups/users. This user-oriented focus supports the constructed self-image of being a promoter of democratic utopias e.g. transparency and public engagement. Central for the field of study in this thesis, an interesting aspect is how this is enabling a redefinition of the traditional relations between diplomats, journalists, and the public. While journalists to a large extent have been central intermediaries between the diplomats and the populations, the diplomats' increased adaption to online communication has enabled them to develop identities as being newsmakers themselves through the direct communication with populations especially on social media platforms.

In this way the role of the strategically communicating diplomat is articulated to overlap with the broader expectations to the "modern diplomat" (National diplomat 4), who is constantly working in order to adapt the diplomatic institutions and practices to the ever changing technologies and conditions in the contemporary "outside world". Thus, this role is more externally focused than more traditional diplomatic roles. Due to the closer integration into management the strategically communicating diplomat tends to give precedence to political diplomatic communication, which increases the tendency that political messages is given higher priority by the diplomats than other kinds of content. This, in combination with the strategic rationales forming the strategically communicating diplomat, makes this role more capable of seeking to bridge the gaps between national and EU identities and combine these according to common strategic aims. In this way strategic communication becomes a diplomatic practice that enables 'fit' between the national communication and the EU's communication. But since the national level still has preponderance, the strategically communicating diplomat is depending on national political alignment with the EU level.

7 The institutionalization of strategic diplomatic communication in EU foreign policy – consequences and prospects

In this chapter I will present some reflections on how strategic communication can be seen a part of a broader process of institutionalizing strategic communication into the EU's foreign policy, and what consequences and opportunities this can have for diplomatic work.

Since I have studied how strategic communication is working within the ever-changing structures within institutions and networks I align with Frederiksson & Pallas (2014) who define strategic communication as being a part of "constituting these structures" (Fredriksson & Pallas 2014: 153). In line with Dean, a regime of practices is not a closed structure separated from other regimes (Dean 2009: 28). Through this understanding I can thus suggest that the structures constituting The StratCom Regime are likely to becomce influential on the broader structures constituting the EU in general. Following this the constitution and emergende of The StratCom Regime can also be seen as a part of integrating strategic communication in the EU itself. This might lead to the creation of other StratCom Teams in the future, tasked with targeting other interest areas for the EU, for example a Southern Partnership.

Even though the strategic rationalities underpinning The StratCom Regime seek to present strategic communication as merely "purposeful" means of communicating (Hallahan et. al 2007: 3), the experiences with strategic communication in the Eastern Partnership context (studied through the Russian case) have shown that strategic communication is not always perceived as a "neutral" act: It can be associated with such different concepts as "public diplomacy", "counter-propaganda" and "information warfare". Van Dyke & Verčič (2009) have studied how strategic communication practices can cause legitimacy crisis in the way that they present themselves as soft power

programs, but that they are often used to "*attract others to cooperate on hard power (e.g., political, economic, and military sanctions or force) to persuade or compel others to adopt goals*" (Van Dyke & Verčič 2009: 904). Similarly, I have studied how the strategic communication related to hard power politics are easily framed as illegitimate. In the thesis we have also been aware how the East StratCom has been presented as illegitimate from, even though the EU actors have presented its as legitimate. Since strategic communication works as a unified practice this opens up for tighter integration between hard power policies and the diplomatic practices of for example cultural and public diplomacy, which are traditionally connected with soft power. In line with Van Dyke & Verčič's observations, I suggest that strategic communication might risk blurring the lines between the diplomatic practices, which might lead to legitimacy problems for diplomats and diplomatic institutions.

Furthermore, critics have argued that strategic communication "privileges a management discourse" (Hallahan et. al 2007: 11). In the case of The StratCom Regime my analysis has indicated that the management orientation has led to an increase in the political diplomatic communication, since the embassies upper management is after all national politicians, who are communicating in accordance with the contemporary political agenda. This can further lead to the dilution of the traditional soft power diplomacy practices.

Lastly this encourages me to raise the question: What does the integration of strategic communication into EU's foreign policy practices then induce for the *art* of diplomacy?

One of the diplomats interviewed for this thesis raised the point that for him public diplomacy needs to be seen as a broader concept than strategic communication, since the core of the diplomatic work is to ensure that cooperation between countries remains even in times of political tensions:

> *"Even if we have difficulties that we didn't manage to overcome at the moment, the relations between the two countries and the people are still there. There are cultural exchanges (…) the framework of economy, business, which are there and which we should preserve. Especially in difficult times, because you have to have a channel of*

communication" (National diplomat 2)

Through the emergence of the strategic rationalities within diplomatic practices of The StratCom Regime, the diplomats are encouraged to legitimize their work through creating 'fit' with the overall EU political level and common political statements and messages. As mentioned above, this leads to a closer integration of political goals into for example the public diplomacy-field. In accordance with this, I argue, that the strategic rationales tend to encourage the alignment of the diplomatic practices focusing on soft power and intercultural relations with the more political management-oriented communication practices. Such integration increases the likeliness that these "channels of communication" become politicized and integrated in the dominating conflict narratives (e.g. that of 'revisionist' Russia). While public and cultural diplomacy previously were able to work as a diplomatic track that could ensure some kind of intercultural relations even in times where the official channels are affected by increased political tensions or even state of war, the integration with strategic communication puts this to a risk. From this perspective the pervasiveness of strategic rationalities might in worst case cause damaging effects on the diplomats ability to work beside the political level.

It is out of the realm of this thesis to actually suggest how dominating this tendency has become within broader regimes of EU diplomatic practices, but this thesis has revealed that the EU is clearly promoting these rationalities through for example The StratCom Regime. Furthermore, I cannot provide a conclusion on whether the EU's governance through strategic communication risks to have damaging effects for the diplomats' abilities to work beside the political structures and keep the other "channels" open in times of increased political tensions between the EU and Russia. In order to get a closer understanding of the actual influence of strategic communication on the traditional intercultural frameworks within diplomatic practice, more study is needed. Furthermore, this thesis highly encourages future studies to take up how the broader institutionalization of strategic communication practice into the institutional structures of the EEAS affects the EU's ability to bridge the EU's "gaps" between it identity as supranational and intergovernmental.

8 Conclusion: Governing through strategic communication

How does the EU govern through strategic communication with the aim to diminish the effects of perceived "disinformation" in the Russian media?

By constructing of The StratCom Regime, I have analyzed the "*relatively stable field of correlation of visibilities, mentalities, technologies and agencies"* through which EU governance takes place (Dean 2009: 37).

My findings from the analyzes of the four governmentality dimensions of The StratCom Regime have shown that EU governance is enabled through the problematization of the Russian media (the field of visibility), which is legitimized through the utopias of press norms and independent media (the field of episteme). The form of conduct is empowered through the EU policy practitioners and national diplomats endorsement of the EUs East StratCom as a legitimate policy response towards Russian "disinformation".

The EU promotes the necessity of member states to engage in strategic communication practices in Russia through promoting a conflict narrative of Russia as a 'revisionist' state. Through this narrative Russian minorities in member states and partnership countries are constructed as a potential risk, which strengthens the perception of the necessity of a united foreign policy response towards "disinformation" among the EU member states. Through the conflict narrative, the EU actors are furthermore enabled to link the general "disinformation" in media to the problematization of Russian "disinformation campaigns" led by the Russian state. This has enabled the EU to initiate the East StratCom, which indirectly targets the actions of the Russian state, but works through the Eastern Parnership Programme, the Disinformation-Review,

network-formation within The StratCom Regime and the broader regime of practices, and through a broad array of strategic communication tools and activities in Russia (the field of techne).

Due to its central position within The StratCom Regime the EU level is enabled to organize the strategic communication actions of member states through the network in Russia. The foundation of the East StratCom Team has made the EU level construct strategic communication practices and rationalities as a new policy approach. But as my analysis shows, strategic communication must rather be characterized as a unifying policy practice, which has subjected existing diplomatic practices as public diplomacy, media diplomacy, and political diplomatic communication. This has been enabled through prevailing strategic rationalities, which encourage the national diplomats to seek 'fit' creation between the national and the EU's strategic communication. Through strategic aims, the diplomatic practices performed by the diplomats are aligned with the objectives of the East StratCom. In this way the national diplomats are enabled to contribute indirectly to the East StratCom while they are working to fulfill the expectation from their national states. This form of governance is to a large extent carried out through conduct of conduct within The StratCom Regime, where the diplomats are encouraged to adapt to the role as 'strategically communicating diplomats' (formation of identities).

Through the internalization of the strategic rationalities, the diplomats become inclined to align with the EU level as often as possible. Since the bilateral level is still strongest among the diplomats in Russia, this is only possible when national and EU-interests overlap. However, on the long run, the conduct towards strategic diplomatic communication can contribute to strengthen the EU's identity as a unified supranational foreign policy actor.

The governance processes enabled through The StratCom Regime can be summed up according to the sub-question.

Subquestion 1: How do utopian assumptions and a problematization of "disinformation" in the Russian media construct a field for legitimate EU governance?

The field for EU govenance is constructed through:

- *Legitimation of strategic diplomatic communication through epistemic utopias of independent media and press norms.*
- *Construction of the conflict narrative of Russia as a 'revisionist' state.*
- *Construction of "disinformation" in Russian media as part of Russia's "disinformation campaign".*
- *Legitimation of strategic communication practice through a facts-based approach and 'othering' of the Russian media system.*

Subquestion 2: How is strategic communication practice implemented among diplomats in Russia, and how does it enable governance through The StratCom Regime?

Governance through The StratCom Regime is enabled through:

- *Institutionalization of strategic communication as a unifying foreign policy practice.*
- *The promotion of strategic rationalities.*
- *Promotion of 'fit' creation between national and EU-level strategic communication.*
- *Formation of strategically communicating diplomats.*

Since governmentality processes *"do not work in universal mechanistic ways but must be analyzed in their complex societal and cultural contexts"* (Kurki 2011: 36f) the rationalities and practices which have been included in The StratCom Regime can only be understood within the empirical context of this study. But since this thesis has revealed that many of the utopias, the strategic rationalities, the diplomatic practices, and also the greater conflict narrative, are drawing on hegemonic discourses within the EU, I suggest that the dynamics detected with The StratCom Regime might be applicable on similar sub-regimes within the EU. However, I leave it to further studies to investigate this supposition.

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10 Appendix

10.1 **Appendix 1.** Dimensions of The StratCom Regime

The StratCom Regime	
Field of episteme	*-The EU as a supranational unified foreign policy actor vs. the EU as an arena for member states* *- Democratic public sphere* *- Neoliberal utopias* *- Independent media & press norms* *- Propaganda & disinformation*
Field of visibility	*- Conflict narrative on" Russia's revisionist aspirations"* *- Problematization of the Russian media system*
Field of techne	*- Legitimate discourse on strategic communication* *- Rationality: Strategic aims* *- Diplomatic practices:* - *Public Diplomacy* - *Media Diplomacy* - *Traditional diplomatic*

	communication - *Network creation*
Creation of identities	- *Strategic communicating diplomats*

Table: Dimensions of The StratCom Regime

10.2 Appendix 2. Actors in the broader regime of practices

The following provide an overview over different kinds of actors, which are in some way engaged in the broader regime of practices – The Regime of Strategic Diplomatic Communication towards Russian "Disinformation".

This should only be seen as some selected examples to provide a rough illustrative overview, and in this way central actors might not be included. Furthermore the "borders" of the regime of practices are fluent, with some actors playing a more central role (or being included/excluded) in some problematizations and practices while not in other. The actors below are all in some extend related to "disinformation" in the Russian media, but does not indicate how like-minded/not likeminded the actors are.

Like-minded actors:

- Multilateral actors: *European Union, OSCE, Council of Europe, NATO (stratcom team), UNESCO*
- Governmental actors: *the Embassy of the United States, embassies of other Western states, EU friendly governments in Eastern Partnership states*
- Liberal political non-systemic opposition in Russia

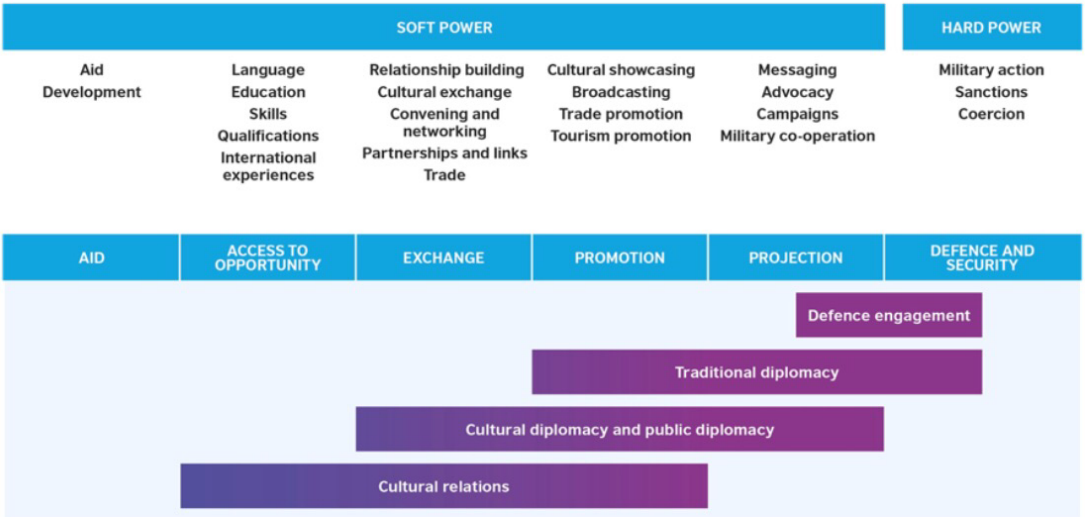
- Regulative actors (other than states): *Internet service providers, social network hosts*
- Knowledge producing actors: *University research departments, think tanks, e.g. Carnegie Center Moscow*
- Organizations for democracy, freedom of speech, and free press*: European Endowment for Democracy, Reporters without borders, Amnesty International, International Media Support*
- Myth-busting networks and internet watch-dogs: *e.g. Rublacklist.net*
- News media and journalist associations: *Mass Media Defence Centre, Russian Union of Journalists, International and European Federation of Journalists*, *Deutsche Welle, BBC, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Russian "second-tier" media*
- Bloggers, "tweeters", "instagrammers" and other opinion makers/sharers on social media

Not like-minded actors:

- The Russian state, Rozkomnadzor, government supporting parties, 'systemic opposition'
- Russian pro-Kreml media owners, editors, journalist, bloggers, and public opinion makers
- Pro-Kremlin think tanks and research departments
- Russian "first-tier" media
- Patriotic/anti-Western groups inside of Russia, the EU, and EU neighbor states
- Promoters of catholic right-wing/orthodoxy
- EU-skeptical groups outside and inside the EU

Etc.

10.3 Appendix 3. Table of public diplomacy



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10.4 Appendix 4. Formidlingsartikel

Valg af medie: Information
Genre: Kronik
Antal tegn: 7.500

Begrundelse:
Målet med min formidlingsartikel har været at præsentere nogle af aspekterne ved EU's "styring" gennem strategisk kommunikation på en måde, der kan være nærværende og let tilgængelige for den gængse avislæser.

Jeg har valgt at formidle stoffet som en kronik, da denne debatterende formidlingsform tillader mig at præsentere nogle mere grundlæggende refleksioner omkring sammenhængskraften i EU og de strategiske logikker, som er fremherskende i de styrende samfundslag i EU. Tilsvarende muliggør denne genre, at jeg igennem artiklen kan rejse nogle bredere spørgsmål, som læseren selv kan tænke videre over. Jeg har i kronikken taget afsæt i specialets konklusioner vedrørende de fremherskende strategiske styringsrationaler inden for diplomatiet, samt den rolle internationale konfliktnarrativer spiller for EU's muligheder for at skabe intern samling. Kronikken rækker ud over specialets fokus, i det jeg i kronikken træder ud af den "neutrale" forskerrolle og tillægger mig en mere normativ diskuterende og problematiserende taleposition. Derudover inddrager kronikken særlige perspektiver/informationer, som jeg vurderer har relevans for den danske læser.

Jeg har valgt dagbladet Information som medie, da avisens målgruppe er blandt den mere veluddannede del af den danske befolkning, som typisk interesserer

sig for internationalt stof med storpolitisk udsyn. Samtidig er Information kendt for at være en mere kritisk venstrefløjsavis, som sætter en dyd i at stille spørgsmål til det etablerede og det, vi normalt tager for givet. Derfor falder min kritiske undersøgelse af EU's brug af internationale fjendebilleder og strategiske styringsredskaber i fin tråd med avisens profil.

10.4.1 KRONIK

Er Rusland EU's strategiske redningsplanke?

En nyttig fjende. I takt med at det interne sammenhold i EU smuldrer, har Unionens diplomatiske korps sat de strategiske kommunikatører i frontlinjen i Øst. Men er målet den russiske "løgne-kampagne", eller er det snarere EU-borgerne selv?

Gry Waagner Falkenstrøm

"*EU finansierer kz-lejre, og der er i øvrigt også krematorier! Og jeg sad og så det på live tv, og der tænkte jeg: Hold da op altså"*. Sådan fortæller EU-diplomaten Søren Liborius om en af de mange "løgnehistorier", han jævnligt ser i landsdækkende russisk tv. Historien her omhandler en af EU's flygtningeprogrammer i Ukraine og er et eksempel på de falske russiske nyheder, som han i stigende grad har iagttaget, siden Ukraine-konfliktens udbrud. Tilsvarende historier, som havner på to do-listen hos EU's kommunikations-strateger i Rusland, omfatter alt fra korsfæstede børn, til nedskudte fly og interview, der aldrig har fundet sted.

Som et modtræk til historier som disse har EU fra september sidste år søsat et East StratCom Team, der samarbejder med de udsendte diplomater fra EU og medlemslandene om at udvikle strategisk kommunikation rettet mod både Unionens nuværende og måske kommende borgere i Øst. Det erklærede formål

er at styrke de uafhængige medier og indsatsen mod de falske informationer samt generelt at underbygge EU's naboskabspolitikker i Øst. Men er den strategiske kommunikation udelukkende et redskab i kampen mod den såkaldte russiske medieoffensiv, eller benytter EU sig af en kærkommen lejlighed til at styrke det indre sammenhold?

Den strategiske diplomat er EU's nye helt

For EU er der klare fordele ved at styrke udviklingen af "moderne" strategisk kommunikerende diplomater. EU's identitet – også i udenrigspolitikken - er grundlæggende skizofren. På den ene side udgør EU en selvstændig overnational aktør, som kan markere sig over for Rusland, men på samme tid er den reduceret til en forhandlings- og samarbejdsarena for de mange medlemsstater.

Vi kender strategisk kommunikation fra indenrigspolitikken. Her har den ofte en negativ samklang med spindoktorers fejen-under-gulvtæppet eller diverse partiers charmekampagner på bybusserne. Men ser vi på management litteraturens definitioner, er der større grund til EU's begejstring for konceptet. Her defineres strategisk kommunikation som et redskab til at opsætte strategiske mål og skabe et 'fit' mellem aktiviteter, visioner og målsætninger. I en udenrigspolitisk virkelighed, hvor EU er afhængig af medlemslandenes opbakning, er det vel netop sådan en værktøjskasse, der kan sikre EU's overlevelse i en tid, hvor medlemsstaterne i stigende grad vender sig mod sig selv. Ny forskning om EU's strategiske kommunikation i Rusland har netop påvist, at den strategiske kommunikation i stigende grad bruges til at bygge bro mellem EU og det nationale diplomatiske arbejde. Det er en af forklaringerne på, at den strategiske kommunikation er kommet højt på EU-dagsordenen i blandt andet Rusland, hvor EU aktivt promoverer den som et vigtigt diplomatisk redskab. Det får diplomaterne fra EU og medlemsstaterne til i højere grad at samtænke deres politiske statements, udvikle "best practices", 'like' hinanden på de sociale medier og ugentligt dele "disinformations-analyser" i stor stil.

Ved at placere sig centralt i den strategiske udvikling kan EU være med til at udvikle diplomater, som kan bruge deres strategiske sans til at skabe overensstemmelse og "fit" mellem de nationale udenrigsagendaer og EU's budskaber og visioner. På den måde kan strategisk kommunikation blive et nyttigt skjult redskab til at skabe samling i EU i en tid, hvor de nationale regeringer ikke bliver populære på at fremme den fælles europæiske dagsorden internt. På det mere synlige plan kan EU's East StratCom mod Rusland bidrage til at vise borgerne, at Unionen beskytter dem mod en løgnagtig nabo, og at EU-pengene derved ikke blot forsvinder dybt i EU-bureaukratiets egne lommer.

Rift om udenrigspolitikken

De strategiske rationaler, der dominerer indenrigspolitikken, har også for længst fået blik for potentialerne i at samtænke udenrigspolitikken i de interne anliggender. Hvis vi skal tage Danmark som eksempel, så er udviklingsbistanden på det seneste blevet til "indenrigsbistand" til flygtninge i Danmark, og kampen mod Islamisk Stat i Syrien er tilsvarende blevet 'framet' som et indenrigs sikkerhedsspørgsmål. På den måde er der mange strategiske hensyn, den moderne diplomat skal tage, hvis både de indenrigspolitiske agendaer og EU's udenrigspolitiske visioner skal kommunikeres igennem udenrigspolitikken. Da EU ofte må følge medlemsstaternes taktstokke, ender de nationale agendaer med at vægte højest. Vil EU derfor sikre, at så mange af EU-landene engagerer sig i et fælles udenrigspolitisk anliggende, som for eksempel den øgede retoriske konfliktoptrapning fra russisk side, så handler det om at gøre de eksterne trusler interne. Derfor gøres den russiske "løgne-kampagne" relevant for EU-borgerne ved at den ofte bliver koblet sammen de russiske mediers mulighed for at øge kløften mellem de etniske befolkninger og russiske minoriteter i medlemslandene. Det sker ved at italesætte, hvordan præsident Putin gennem de russiske medier har et direkte talerør til at udbrede propaganda, der gør de russiske minoriteter i EU loyale over for Rusland. Lige som det skete i Ukraine, kan den loyalitet blive destabiliserende for de enkelte medlemslande, men også for EU som helhed.

Vi samles om truslen og lader værdierne sejle

Når EU landenes diplomater i Moskva skal kommunikere til den russiske offentlighed, er indholdet ofte af bilateral karakter. Et område, hvor diplomaterne med fordel kan samtænke de nationale fortællinger med EU's, er i forhold til de grundlæggende værdier om demokrati, ytrings- og pressefrihed og retssamfund. Det er værdier, som skaber et 'fit' imellem EU og de enkelte medlemslande. Men i en tid hvor mange af de nationale regeringer i EU i stigende grad går på kompromis med de fælles værdier (eller hvor det virker for dyrt aktivt at promovere dem) kan selv værdi-fortællingen komme til at klinge hult.

For hvordan skal diplomaterne kunne promovere EU's "universelle værdier" om åbenhed og menneskerettigheder samtidig med, at en lang række medlemslande sætter grænsekontroller op mod flygtninge, hvor polakkerne øger statskontrollen med medierne, danskerne indfører "smykkelove" og briterne er på vej til at melde sig helt ud af EU-fællesskabet?

Hvis ikke vores fælles værdier kan bruges til at skabe sammenhæng i den diplomatiske fortælling over for Rusland, hvad skal så? Og hvis EU landene ikke skal samles om de fælles værdier i en tid, hvor sammenhængskraften smuldrer, hvad skal så holde os sammen?

Hvor de fælles værdier i EU svækkes, træder konfliktfortællingen om den fælles trussel til i stedet for at skabe sammenhold mod terroristerne, flygtningene og Rusland. Så nok kan Rusland ses som en nyttig fjende for EU, når det kommer til at styrke den fælles fortælling i en opbrudstid. Men frygtnarrativet åbner samtidigt op for nye måder for medlemslandene at legimitere, at flere går på kompromis med de fælles værdier. En pessimistisk anlagt læser vil nok selv tænke videre over, hvad konsekvenserne vil være, hvis de ydre trusler i stigende grad bliver den strategisk samlende kraft i EU – i stedet for værdierne.

Gry Waagner Falkenstrøm er specialestuderende på Roskilde Universitet og har netop undersøgt EU og EU-landenes strategiske kommunikation blandt diplomater i Rusland.