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Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education

# The relevance of governance and social capital to understanding hybrid threats

*Assessing a society's vulnerability and susceptibility towards hybrid  
threats through governance and social capital*

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis asks the question: “how can the concepts of governance and social capital contribute to the MCDC-report’s analytical framework to further expose a society’s vulnerabilities and subsequent susceptibility towards hybrid threats”. By using the concepts of hybrid threats (HT) together with governance and social capital (SC) in the aspect of democracy, this thesis looks at the conflict in Crimea and Ukraine since 2014 to analyse and discuss this question. The analytical framework from the Multinational Capability Development Campaign (MCDC) report is used as the main framework for understanding HT. Through the case study, this thesis found that Ukraine has several challenges in terms of governance and SC, which made it easier for Russia to conduct its operations in Crimea and east Ukraine.

The case study exposed two ways in which the concepts of governance and SC can expose a society’s vulnerabilities and susceptibility towards HT. Firstly, already existing challenges in a society and in the social relations in that society, can expose and influence other vulnerabilities, which can be exploited in HT. Secondly, governance and SC influence a society’s ability to respond and counter HT. This affects the efficiency of HT operations and the extent of their effects.

The thesis concluded with a set of questions as a guideline for how to assess a society’s governance and SC situation. The questions may give an idea of the situation, which can then be used as a baseline assessment, contributing to the MCDC-report’s analytical framework to expose a society’s possible vulnerabilities and subsequent susceptibility towards HT. The idea is that a deeper understanding of the societal and civilian aspects in HT might give a better understanding and ability to counter HT. Further testing and development of such a framework, requires more research, which is beyond the limits of this thesis. Nevertheless, this thesis hopes to serve as a basis for further research on governance and SC in the context of HT.

**Key words:** Hybrid threats, governance, social capital, Multinational Capability Development Campaign report

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

### **1.1 Hybrid threats: a study on societal-focused threats**

When we think of war, we may think of weapons, military operations, casualties, revolutions, and brutal changes in governments. These are very visible elements and aspects of war. Through this thesis, the argument is that it is also important to look into what might not always be so visible in war and other conflicts – namely the societal and civilian aspects. This thesis aims at understanding how the concepts of governance and social capital can contribute to further expose a society's vulnerabilities and susceptibility towards hybrid threats. In this thesis, three main concepts are at the centre: 1) hybrid threats, 2) governance, and 3) social capital. Hybrid threats (HT) is described by the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Hybrid CoE)<sup>1</sup> as *“methods and activities that are targeted towards vulnerabilities of the opponent. If the interests and goals of the user of hybrid methods and activity are not achieved, the situation can escalate into hybrid warfare where the role of military and violence will increase significantly.”* Chapter 2 will go further into the discussion on the meaning of the three main concepts.

Combining various military and non-military methods/elements and activities, as well as exploiting vulnerabilities in society is nothing new to warfare. Such has been the case throughout history, from the Trojan horse in the battle of Troy to the activities of the USA against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s (Jacobs and Lasconjarias 2015:1, Popescu 2015). However, the more recent developments around the concept of HT has led to a further focus on the societal and civilian aspects of war and conflict. Since the conflict in Crimea and the crisis in Ukraine in 2014, and the subsequent investigation of Russia's interference in the US elections in 2016, the civilian sphere (the population) as a target has become more widely discussed (Chivvis 2017, Harding 2016). NATO's Science for Peace and Security Programme has funded a specific project at the Centre of Peace Studies, UiT on studying HW with the focus on the civilian and societal aspects (High North News 2018).

It is this departure point – the civilian and societal aspect of HT – from which this thesis draws. I have previously examined the different ways in which governance and social capital have an influence on how smaller communities can cope with globalisation and will build on this knowledge by examining the relevance of the same concepts to the complex realm of HT. Briefly, governance pertains to the interactions among structures, processes and traditions that determine how power is exercised in a society (Plumptre and Graham 1999:3). Social capital addresses

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<sup>1</sup> The Hybrid CoE is an international hub for practitioners and experts aimed to assist member states and institutions in understanding and defending against hybrid threats. Their understanding on HT is taken from their website: <https://www.hybridcoe.fi/hybrid-threats/>

features of social organisation, through concepts like trust, norms and networks influence social dynamics (drawing on Putnam's research in 1993). Both these concepts will be further explained and discussed in chapter 2.

During the research on HT, I realised that many of the ideas and concepts on governance and social capital could be relevant for understanding how vulnerabilities in societies can make them more susceptible to tactics and strategies used in HT. In sense, this thesis focuses on HT by looking at those who are targeted by these threats rather than on the opponent who exercises these threats. It is important for us to ask not only why and how actors conduct HT, but also to ask what about the target enables them to do so. What are the vulnerabilities in society that makes us potentially susceptible to HT, why do they exist, and how do we reduce them? Our own vulnerabilities are at least as important (if not more) than the enemies' ability to exploit them.

## **1.2 Research question and methodology**

The research question in this thesis is "how can the concepts of governance and social capital contribute to the MCDC-report's analytical framework to further expose a society's vulnerabilities and subsequent susceptibility towards HT?" The concepts of governance and social capital invite many questions and issues on what type of governance and social capital, how one defines these concepts, how to measure them, as well as how are they implemented in the concept of HT, to mention a few. How one understands HT is also an important issue. There are several articles centred on the exploitation of societal vulnerabilities aspect in HT with different understandings on HT. In this thesis, I chose to look deeper into the framework from the Multinational Capability Development Campaign (MCDC) report<sup>2</sup>, written by Cullen and Reichborn-Kjennerud from NUPI (2017). The report has been significant and instrumental to the discussions taking place in NATO as well as amongst other countries. In this report, the term hybrid warfare (HW) is used instead of HT. Chapter 2 will discuss the differences and relevance of HW and HT. Nonetheless, the report's focus on societal vulnerabilities, and its analytical framework on how HW attacks can be conceptualised, can be transferred to the description of HT. Further, their framework gives a visual representation for monitoring HW, which is transferable to various cases of HW and HT. This will be discussed in chapter 2 and 3. The main argument is that their framework offers the ability to incorporate the concepts of governance and social capital. This is why the research question in this thesis is based on the MCDC-report and seeks to contribute to this report. Chapter 3 will explain the MCDC-report and discuss how it is relevant for this thesis.

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<sup>2</sup> This thesis refers to the report by Cullen and Reichborn-Kjennerud as the MCDC-report, while their Baseline assessment (also part of the MCDC) will be referred to as the MCDC-assessment to shorten the wording.

This thesis is based on qualitative research method based on literary review. Specifically, this thesis:

1. Explores the three concepts: hybrid threats, governance and social capital
2. Looks in-depth at the MCDC-report
3. Looks at one case study – the conflict in Crimea and Ukraine
4. Analyses and critically compares the theory from point 1 and 2 with the empirical case in point 3 to gain an understanding of how the concepts of governance and social capital can contribute to the MCDC-report's analytical framework to further expose a society's vulnerabilities and subsequent susceptibility towards HT.

Throughout this thesis, I seek to build upon the MCDC-report and gain a deeper understanding on how HT can be understood through governance and social capital.

### *1.2.1 Research material and structure of the thesis*

While it is not possible to remove all subjectivity when selecting which scholarly sources to use, I have attempted to gather literature from a wide range of sources, including journals, article, and reports from The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, The Norwegian Defence Collage, as well as syllabus from other institutions and universities. Thus, this study relies upon a comprehensive literature review and analysis. This thesis is structured into six chapters. Below is a brief summary of each chapter and the research material/sources used in them.

Chapter 2 is this thesis's theoretical framework, presenting and discussing the three main concepts in this thesis. This should give the reader the theoretical background for the HT framework in chapter 3, the case study in chapter 4 and the analysis in chapter 5. HT and the concept's relevancy to this thesis's topic will be further discussed, before presenting governance and social capital (SC). There is a lot of literature on governance and SC and the main discussions in this chapter are based on reviewing the debates and criticism that has been central in these subjects.

Chapter 3 will look into the MCDC report's description of HW (here adapted to HT) before looking at the analytical framework they use to conceptualise and visualise hybrid threats. The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Hybrid CoE) also focuses on vulnerabilities in societies and I use some of their literature in this thesis. However, the analytical framework in the MCDC-report is used as the main framework for understanding HT.

Chapter 4 presents this thesis's case study on the conflict in Crimea and east Ukraine from 2014 and onwards. In addition to giving a brief overview of the conflict, this chapter looks at governance and social capital in Ukraine. The conflict in Crimea and eastern Ukraine was chosen due to the accessibility of literature on not just the HT aspect but regarding to literature on governance and SC (Polese 2018:4). Since the 1990s, many post-Soviet countries, including

Ukraine, have been studied in terms of governance and SC. This chapter is based on some of these studies from the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s.

Chapter 5 is the main analytical part of this thesis. It first discusses the case study from chapter 4 through the MCDC-report's analytical framework. Through that section, we will see how the Ukraine case is analysed in the MCDC-reports model. Afterwards, I analyse the findings in the Ukraine case from chapter 4 and see how the concepts of governance and SC overall can expose a society's vulnerabilities and susceptibility towards HT. Here, the theory with the empirical aspects come together to critically analyse and discuss this thesis's research question. Lastly, I provide a suggestion for possible questions to assess governance and SC in a society and how one can create a baseline assessment for governance and social capital in the context of HT.

Chapter 6 will give a brief summary and conclusion of this thesis.



## **CHAPTER TWO – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, we will look at the theoretical framework, which encompasses this thesis' three main concepts: 1) hybrid threats, 2) governance, and 3) social capital (SC). The chapter begins by discussing how this thesis explains hybrid threats (HT), before discussing the other two concepts. It is important to note that governance and social capital are not separate elements. They are interconnected. Nevertheless, this chapter is structured to present the concept of governance before presenting the concept of social capital.

### **2.2 Defining hybrid threats**

The introduction chapter gave a simplistic explanation of the concepts hybrid warfare (HW) and hybrid threats (HT). In this section, the concept will be further explained in relation to the topic of this thesis, as well as providing a reason for using the concept HT and not HW in this thesis. Looking back to the Hybrid CoE's description of hybrid threats, they write the following: *“Hybrid threats are methods and activities that are targeted towards vulnerabilities of the opponent. Vulnerabilities can be created by many things, including historical memory, legislation, old practices, geostrategic factors, strong polarisation of society, technological disadvantages or ideological differences. If the interests and goals of the user of hybrid methods and activity are not achieved, the situation can escalate into hybrid warfare where the role of military and violence will increase significantly”*.<sup>3</sup>

Further more the Hybrid CoE characterises hybrid threat as:

- *“Coordinated and synchronised action that deliberately targets democratic states' and institutions systemic vulnerabilities, through a wide range of means.*
- *The activities exploit the thresholds of detection and attribution as well as the different interfaces (war-peace, internal-external, local-state, national-international, friend-enemy).*
- *The aim of the activity is to influence different forms of decision making at the local (regional), state, or institutional level to favour and/or gain the agent's strategic goals while undermining and/or hurting the target.”*

In relation to HW, both HW and HT involve the issue of mixing military and non-military, conventional and irregular components, and using various elements, among other economic, political, cyber and information elements, to achieve certain objectives by targeting vulnerabilities in a society. Both concepts are widely used in articles and reports from NATO, and western think

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<sup>3</sup> This description is taken from their website: <https://www.hybridcoe.fi/hybrid-threats/>

tanks (e.g. RAND corporation and FFI - Norwegian Defence Research Establishment), as well as in media. However, this thesis argues that there is a certain distinction. With the word *warfare* in HW, the activity of conducting war/armed conflict<sup>4</sup> is involved. This implies kinetic actions, meaning conducting warfare through the application of physical force (Hurley et al. 2009:ES-1, 3-4).

In this thesis, I use the concept HT because I focus on the non-kinetic aspects of conflict. In Hybrid CoE's description of HT, the term threats implies that we are dealing with any threats that target vulnerabilities in a society. Hybrid CoE focuses much less on the military and kinetic aspects in HT, and through their description one can interpret it in a way that HT is a precursor to HW. This thesis argues that HT as a concept can include both kinetic warfare as well as existing or potential threats that are non-kinetic (where physical force is not applied), and that this can be further escalated to include more kinetic warfare. An example in the Ukraine case was where unidentifiable soldiers patrolled Crimea without using physical force. These soldiers were anonymous, with no insignias, and one could not assign their origin other than not being part of Ukraine's military forces. The lack of physical force used together with the lack of identity made it difficult to categorise the actions as kinetic or non-kinetic force. Nevertheless, this thesis does not focus on to which degree the activities in a conflict constitute a "threat" or "war" phase. Using the term HT avoids the discussion of what degree of military elements are needed to distinguish a case from a non-military/non-kinetic conflict to military/kinetic conflict. HT signifies the possible threats that can arise and/or are conducted without war taking place. In this thesis, the argument is that HT is a more versatile and open concept for assessing potential threats that are discussed in this thesis. Some reports define HW through descriptions including both kinetic and non-kinetic features. The MCDC-report's description of HW (as will be further explored in chapter 3) is such. In this thesis, the term HT will be consequently used and when discussing the MCDC-report's analytical framework, the concept HT will be used, even though they use the concept HW in their report. Because of their description (as will be discussed in chapter 3), this will not have any functional consequences to the topic of this thesis. Likewise, while some of the literature referred to in this thesis uses the concept HW, the concept HT will be used consequently instead because for the purpose of this thesis and in the context it is used, the difference is not relevant.

The focus on non-kinetic warfare does not mean excluding the military when focusing on the aspect of society in HT. The military is a tool of the state, but it is also a product of society. How the military is part of society and how it is shaped by society also influences how conflicts can

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<sup>4</sup> War can be defined as an armed conflict between states or nations (Merriam-webster dictionary website). The classification of war can be measured by the number of battle-related deaths as Uppsala University's definition on their website: [http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#Warring\\_party\\_2](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#Warring_party_2). Warfare is defined as the activity and method used in fighting war as described on the Cambridge dictionary website: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/warfare>

develop. As such, militaries can also be analysed sociologically as social entities in conflict, and how they interact with the civilian entities in conflict. This will be illustrated in section 2.3 on governance.

Regarding the societal aspect in the topic of this thesis, HT is relevant because of the focus on targeting vulnerabilities in society. In conventional warfare an example could be that state A uses its military to fight state B's military to subject state B and its population to state A's demands/desired goal. In HT, an example could be that state A uses either an already existing crisis/tense situation or creates one (e.g. with its own military or by using third parties) and then applies disinformation campaigns coordinated with economic and political games to undermine state B by turning its own population against it. In addition, HT allows for ambiguity, uncertainties and confusions for whether the attack is an attack and from whom etc. which can further be exploited by the attacker. Especially in (but not limited to) democratic countries in which the population has more power to influence the government, targeting the population to undermine the government can be more efficient than by solely targeting the opponent's military to undermine the opponent's sovereignty. Thereby, HT can potentially allow for achieving more with less resources and less political risk for the attacker.

However, mixing various military and non-military methods/elements and activities, as well as exploiting vulnerabilities in society is nothing new in the history of warfare. Such has been the case throughout history, from the Trojan horse to US' counterinsurgency (COIN) operations during the Cold War and today (Jacobs and Lasconjarias 2015:1, Popescu 2015, Clemis 2009:164-178). Nevertheless, as mentioned before, the concept HT has led to a further focus on the societal and civilian aspects of war and conflict. In chapter 3, I discuss what changes have occurred in the battle scene today as compared to before.

The issue of targeting the vulnerabilities in a society poses the questions of how we understand vulnerabilities and what issues in society can constitute vulnerabilities. Understanding how society functions and how different societal features can in certain circumstances become vulnerabilities, may prove be a valuable asset in understanding and countering HT. One method in doing so, which is the main topic of this thesis, is to assess society through governance and social capital. In the next sections, the theoretical frameworks of the concepts governance and social capital will be explained.

## 2.3 Governance

Governance has, like many concepts in social sciences, various connotations and descriptions. Looking at previous research on governance in the context of local communities and aboriginal perspectives, there is a lot of literature on relevance of governance in the sustainability of communities. In Plumptre and Graham's (1999) research on governance in international and aboriginal perspectives, they discuss this but also note the overall similarities in what governance refers to. One way to look at it is as the art of steering societies<sup>5</sup> and organisations. Governance involves the interactions among structures, processes and traditions that determine how power is exercised, how decisions are taken, and how citizens or other stakeholders have their say (ibid:3). Similarly, Healey (1997:206) describes governance as involving the articulation of rules of behaviour with respect to the collective affairs of a political community; and of principles for allocating resources among community members. In other words, how the processes through which collective affairs are managed in a society or community (ibid). In their book on global governance, Barnett and Duvall (2004:2) wrote that governance involves the rules, structures, and institutions that guide, regulate, and control social life, features that are fundamental elements of power.

From these descriptions, we can understand governance as a process not confined to government but existing in all social organisations. It is about the interaction of governments and other social organisations, how they relate to citizens, and how decisions are made (Plumptre and Graham 1999). In this sense, it is also important to differentiate between government and governance. Plumptre and Graham (ibid) define government as an institution or a set of institutions – it is one of several societal players in society in which decision-making is manifested, whether through representation (e.g. in democracy) or through the leaders in the said institute(s). Simplified, government is only one type of institution(s) in which governance works with and within. Moreover, the concepts governance and government are not confined to democracy but include any kind of political system from liberal democracy to authoritarian regimes. Referring to the three previously given descriptions of governance, all political systems, regardless of type, involve some rules, structures, and institutions that guide, regulate, and control social life as well as determine how power is exercised, how decisions are taken, and how citizens or other stakeholders have their say (whether this is free or highly limited).

Government as an institution is also comprised of several institutions in itself as government can be divided into different entities (legislative, executive, judiciary as well as different

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<sup>5</sup> Society as a group of people can be anything from a collective group of people (e.g. in some indigenous communities). However, in this thesis I am narrowing it down to modern state societies that constitute some form of formal institutions such as a government and other public institutions. This is to fit with the thesis' context of democracy.

departments under these entities) which each may have influences (depending on the political system and how it is practiced) in decision making and the overall governance of issues in society.

In addition to government and its public institutions, there are other players in society that have a role in decision making. In Plumptre and Graham's (1999:4) studies on governance related to aboriginal perspectives, they divided society into four spheres/sectors, 1) government/public sector, 2) civil society, 3) private sector, and 4) media (see figure 1).

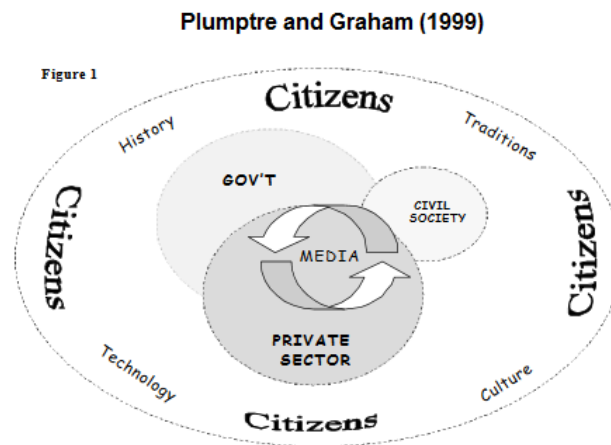


Figure 1.

In this illustration, we see that besides the government/public institutions, the private sector (private businesses both local and international), media, and civil society (e.g. through voluntary organisations or protests but also many other activities) also have an influence on the governance of a society. An example can be if people protest against a new law and media presents this, which in turn pressures the government to revoke the new law. Another example can be private businesses that lobby their own interests through media as well as through politicians. These are just examples illustrating the notion of “checks and balances” - not only within governments but also the influential power that the other sectors have over the government in democratic governance. In short, governments are not the only decision makers in a democratic society. Another factor is that the collective governance in society – the total function of all these players in society together – can work together efficiently to various degrees. As such when we talk about vulnerabilities in society we are not just talking about whether a government, media, or the private sector in a society is functioning well. We are also talking about whether these players are functioning well together.

As explained in the introduction (chapter 1), HT is about taking advantage of the opponent's societal vulnerabilities. Even more so, it plays on the range of players in society. Herein, lies the role of governance. If the players in a society are not functioning well together, a HT attacker may use the fragmented relations between these players to weaken that society and more easily influence



that society as a whole to achieve its objectives. Overall, the idea is that if governance of a specific society is well-functioning, it may be more difficult for an opponent to find and exploit certain vulnerabilities. Likewise, societies with less well-functioning governance may facilitate for more vulnerabilities.

So what does well-functioning governance look like? This is a very complex question and beyond the scope of this thesis. However, this thesis looks into some of the concepts that constitute governance and what consequences might be for different degrees of these concepts. In Plumptre and Graham (ibid:3), they boil governance down to three concepts: 1) power – who has influence, 2) relationships – who decides, and 3) accountability – how decision-makers are held accountable. How and why these concepts can be useful to understand governance will be discussed in the next sections of this chapter.

### *2.3.1 An introduction to the concepts power, relationships and accountability*

If governance is about the processes of interactions and influence, then power as an act of influence is crucial. Max Weber's famous definition of power is "*the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability exists*" (Barnett and Duvall 2004:13). Another influential definition is from Robert Dahl in which "*power is the ability of A to get B to do what B otherwise would not do*" (ibid). From these two definitions we can understand power as an act of influence within social relations. In their book, Barnett and Duvall (2004:8) conceptualise power as "*the production, in and through social relations, of effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their own circumstances and fate*". As they explain (ibid:8-9), this definition represents two analytical dimensions: 1) the kinds of social relations through which power works, and 2) the specificity of social relations through which effects on actors' capacities are produced.

Barnett and Duvall (ibid:8-23) go deep into the discussion and analysis of these two analytical dimensions of power. However, what is relevant to this thesis is the understanding that power is a social relational phenomenon – e.i. it cannot exist in a social vacuum. This brings us to the concept of relationships. Power as such is not just about who has influence and relationship is not just about who decides (referring to Plumptre and Graham's concepts 1999:3). Power and relations are also about how the subjects (we as humans) manoeuvre through life in the organisation of society – how we as individuals (as much as how society as a whole) solve certain tasks to sustain themselves. In a society as shown in figure 1, citizens manoeuvre through these four spheres – they may go to public school, use both public and private health systems, work in the private sector, get informed and entertained by media, pay taxes, and get licenses via public sectors etc.

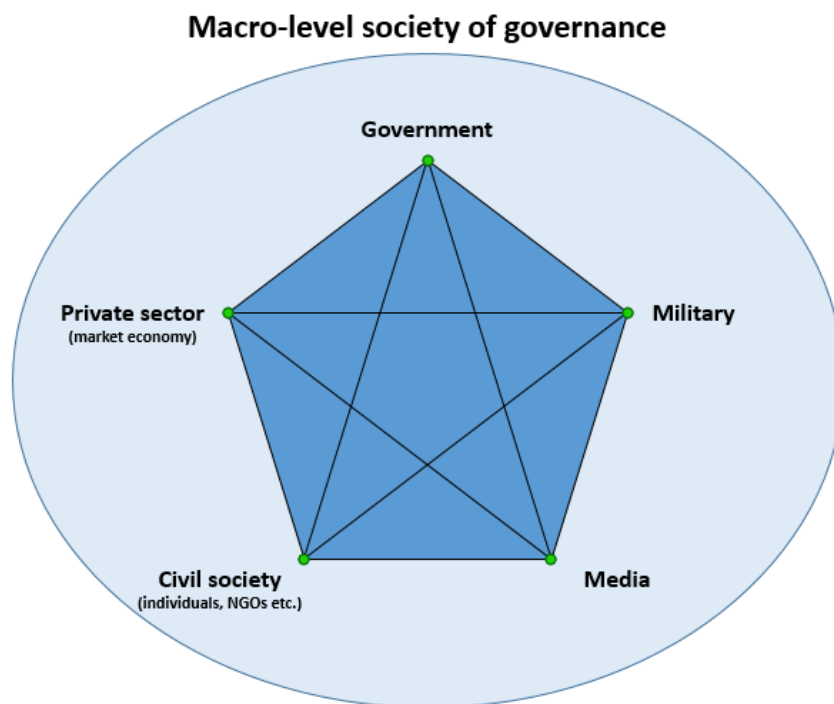
Much like Foucault's view on power as a system, a network of relations encompassing the whole society, rather than a relation between the oppressed and the oppressor (Balan 2010:56), Barnett and Duvall (2004:8-23) describe power through the ways it is relational to the subjects involved. At the same time, according to Foucault (Balan 2010:56), individuals are not just objects of power; they are the locus where the power and the resistance to it are exerted. Thus, throughout this thesis, the two concepts (power and relationships) will be used together – power-relations or power-relationships. The argument here is that this is what we are talking about in governance. We are talking about how power is shared and how it is exercised through these relationships. An example being the power-relationships between the four spheres in figure 1.

In this sense, power alone is not a positive nor negative phenomenon in itself – it depends on how it works in relation to those involved. Two governments, in each of their own country may have the same power to both protect their populations and use force (e.g. police) against those not behaving according to its laws. However, whether the populations accept and legitimise their government's power is another issue. This is why the power-relationships, or how the influence is exerted, matters. In democracy, ultimately it is the population that decides through formal (e.g. voting) and informal (e.g. protests) influence. As mentioned in section 2.1, societies in which the population has more power to influence the government, targeting the population to undermine the government can be more efficient than by solely targeting the opponent's military to undermine the opponent's sovereignty. Nevertheless, in authoritarian societies, the population is not an isolated entity with no influence. They may still have influence (directly or indirectly), and in some cases the population can take down the government such as in revolutions, like the French in 1789 and the Russian in 1917 (Palmer et al, 2002:343-363, 697-719).

Power-relationships can, among other things, be affected by accountability. In Plumtre and Graham (1999), they view accountability as how decision-makers are held accountable. This is done in the context of democratic political systems. Many studies on governance are in the context of democracy in which legitimacy, transparency, representation and (thereby) accountability are important factors in governance (Newman 2005, Sørensen and Torfing 2007, Healey 1997, Plumtre and Graham 1999). Barnett and Duvall (2004:305-306) also tie accountability to the ownership of decision making, involving people having more access or being more included in the decision making in society. Based on this, the thesis argues here that accountability is a factor in countries where the people in society are already used to a governance system based on some degree of legitimacy and transparency – they feel an ownership to their society. Møller and Skaaning (2012:36-37) differentiate between vertical accountability as the power between people and the state (e.g. in elections), and horizontal accountability as the balance of power within the state (e.g. checks and balances). If accountability is deterred, it represents a change in the power-

relationships, which can reduce the population's rights. One could say that in the context of HT and vulnerabilities, such changes in the accountability of society could pose as a vulnerability to the stability and susceptibility. The case study in this thesis is on a constitutionally democratic country (Ukraine). In that regard, the governance structure in this thesis will be focused on the aspect of representative and liberal democracy and use the concept accountability even though it is recognised that the practice of this type of governance may differ from the ideological and sometimes constitutional structure of this type of governance. This will be shown in chapter 4 on how Ukraine's political system differs from the ideal principles in liberal democracy.

The power-relationship between the government and the people is not the only factor in conflict. Figure 1 in the governance section illustrated one way of structuring a society. It is also possible to add the military as a fifth sphere/sector (see figure 2). In chapter 1, I mentioned that the military is also a product of society. Thus, it does not always work as a tool of the government in conflict and in that way it can also play an important role in the outcome of internal conflicts in a society.



*Figure 2. This thesis' division of sectors in society*

An example of this is illustrated in Paul Danahar's (2015:25) book "The New Middle East: The World after the Arab Spring". He sums up the relation between a regime, the military and the people in the following matter: *"If the army sees itself as an instrument of the state it will ditch the regime to protect the people. This is what we saw in Egypt and Tunisia. If the army has no investment in either the state or the regimes, then the military will crumble, which happened in Libya. If the army is not only an instrument of the regime, but helped build the state, it will kill the*

*people to protect it. Then the people must not only overthrow the regime, they must fight to overthrow the state because they are one and the same. That is what happened in Syria”.*

In his book “How Armies Respond to Revolutions and Why”, Zoltan Barany explores and analyses how important the relations between the government and the army is for the success of revolutions (Barany 2016). Barany (ibid) goes deep into analysing which factors matter and why. Through his case studies, Barany (ibid:165) concludes that while there are many variables (knowns and unknowns), generally, the more we know about the relationships between the military/army<sup>6</sup>, the state, and society that form its environment, and the international setting in which it exists, the more self-assured we can be of the accuracy of our forecasts of internal conflicts. In terms of governance, we can see that the power-relationships in these cases revolve around the state and the people in which the military is in the middle and who it decides to support has an effect on the outcome of the revolutions presented. The power-relationships raise several questions, among other; can those in the military be held accountable and face negative consequences if they rebel against the state and loose? Likewise, what if they win but the people take over – will the people view the military as allies or as the next opponents to overrule? Overall, I mention this example to illustrate that the military, in a non-kinetic aspect, is still a part of society and the power-relationships that constitute that specific society. They are not just static tools. This is also relevant when the military’s loyalty to the government can be targeted as a vulnerability in HT.

We have now briefly been introduced to the concepts (power-relationships and accountability) and how they can be understood. Overall, we can view governance through power-relationships between the subjects involved in it and the accountability in the system. However, social relations are not just confined to power-relations and accountability, there are also other factors. These factors will be presented through the concept of social capital in the next section.

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<sup>6</sup> Barany (ibid:6) uses the term military, armed forces, or simply army interchangeably. I use the term military consistently as I do not wish to exclude the other branches (air force, navy, and national home guard) which make up a military.

## 2.4 Social capital

This chapter's introduction mentioned that governance and social capital are interconnected and overlap. In a generalised, theoretical distinction between the two concepts, one could say that governance can give us an insight to the power-relational roles and influence of entities in social relations, while social capital takes us deeper into how these social relations may foster, develop and exercise within and between different social entities. Together they provide us a deeper understanding of the processes in social dynamics in societies.

The term social capital (SC) is broad and through decades of literature, it has gained many different definitions and uses. Nevertheless, one could say that the commonalities of most definitions on SC are with the focus on social relations that have productive benefits (Claridge 2004). Portes (1998:8) for example, defines social capital as "*the ability to secure benefits through membership in networks and other social structures*". Although the term itself became more apparent in social sciences through among researchers like Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988), it was with Putnam's research in the 1990s and 2000, that the term became influential in community development practitioners in the US and internationally (DeFilippis 2001:783-784). Putnam (1993:167) defines social capital as "*features of social organisation, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions*".

In "Making Democracy Work" (1993), Putnam et al. compared twenty regional Italian governments (in northern and southern Italy) since the 1970s, which shared similar institutions but had different social, cultural and economic backgrounds. In the aim to gain understanding of the performance of democratic institutions, they concluded that mutual levels of trust in connection with norms, civic engagement<sup>7</sup>, and more horizontal level of ties are the key to making democracy work (ibid:3, 171-176, 185, DeFilippis 2001:785). Putnam's definition is interesting because it brings in the concepts of trust, norms and network together to describe social organisation. In a sense, we can understand SC as organisation through different types of networks, norms in which the networks work by/within, and trust of varying degrees with which the networks work upon (in different aspects). However, Putnam's definition and understanding of SC has also received a lot of criticism (Gelderblom 2018:1311). This chapter will discuss some of the criticism of Putnam's research to illustrate a more balanced view as well as the complexity of SC as a concept, but first an explanation will be provided on how the concept of SC will be presented and conceptualised in this section.

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<sup>7</sup> By civic engagement, I mean in this thesis any individual or group activity that addresses any issues of public concern.



In Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), social capital is researched in the context of business management and organisational advantage. In their research, they structure social capital through three dimensions (ibid:251-256)<sup>8</sup>:

1. *The structural dimension* = how network ties and configuration may facilitate opportunities for access to resources and transfer of information.
2. *The cognitive dimension* = how shared norms, values and behaviour through shared language, codes, and narratives, may form social collectives.
3. *The relational dimension* = how trust and the extent of trust play a role in social relationships and the two previous dimensions.

In these three dimensions, we can see that it is possible to relate them to the three concepts in Putnam's definition – networks, norms and trust. In this chapter, the different ways to understand networks will be explained first. Then the issues of norms (together with identity), and lastly how trust may work in SC. Of course, this is not the only way to conceptualise or structure SC theory. Nevertheless, this is how this chapter has been structured to give an overview of how SC can be understood and studied through different aspects and levels of analysis.

### 2.3.1 Networks in SC theory – the structural dimension

When we talk about networks in this context, we talk about social networks as relationships among social entities. Likewise social network analysis focuses on the patterns and implications of these relationships (Galaskiewicz and Wasserman 1994:xii). Because SC is such a broad and complex term and social networks can encompass so many things, we can try to get an understanding of networks by looking at the different levels of ties (connectedness), as well as at the different levels of analysis in which networks can be studied. Beginning with the levels of connectedness in network, SC can be divided into three types (Gilchrist and Taylor 2016:53):

1. *Bonding social capital* = describes strong relations, e.g. family and close friends.
2. *Bridging social capital* = describes weaker relations between people who are different in their social identity and/or location but are connected through other forms of communities of interest, e.g. acquaintances and members of a voluntary organisation (e.g. a sports club or organisations advocating for certain public or political interests).
3. *Linking social capital* = describes connections between people across status and power, e.g. service users and service providers or community members and government officials.

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<sup>8</sup> The explanations of the three dimensions by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998:251-256) are my own understanding and summary of their sections on each dimension in their article.

While bonding SC is useful for “getting by”, bridging and linking SC are needed for “getting on” or “getting ahead” (ibid). Moreover, while bonding (socialising within groups) and bridging (socialising between groups) represent horizontal networks in general, linking SC is a socialisation that occurs across clear, formal/institutionalised authority in society. This makes linking SC described as vertical because it refers to a more clear social relationship across social positions of power (vertical in a hierarchy) compared to the other two SC which are more horizontal (Putnam 1993:173).

However, this does not exclude asymmetrical power-relations in the other two SC networks. Bonding and bridging SC, may also include vertical aspects, e.g. mother-daughter relations and team-captains in sport clubs, but these are not formalised and/or institutionalised relations like government-public relations. In addition to the levels of connectedness in networks, there are levels of analysis in which networks can be studied depending on if we want to analyse networks on an individual, regional or international level. Roughly, these can be divided into three levels of analysis:

1. Micro level = e.g. individuals (person to person)
2. Meso level = e.g. groups or organisations
3. Macro level = e.g. communities or nations, international community etc.

Some studies also look at the relations between the different levels. Gelderblom (2018) for example, looks at the influence of macro actors on micro and meso situations. In his article, Gelderblom (ibid:1321-22) criticises Putnam’s research for neglecting vertical networks, overemphasising bridging SC as a primary solution to reduce communal tensions, and for underemphasising the negative aspects of SC. The two latter criticisms will be briefly explained later, but in regards to the first criticism, Putnam (1993:174) states that “*no matter how important to its participants, cannot sustain trust and cooperation*”, and that “*vertical flows of information are often less reliable than horizontal flows*”. However, as Gelderblom (2018:1312-1315) points out, in reality it is much more complex. Krishna and Shrader (1999:4) also point this out, writing that whether organisations are vertical or horizontal can be unclear, and what type of organisation and their composition also matter. Lastly, empirical investigations also indicate that horizontally shaped networks do not necessarily have higher SC (ibid).

In summary, there are two ways of categorising networks, into levels of connectedness and levels of analysis, which can provide us with an overview of how to understand and analyse networks.

### 2.3.2 Norms and identity – the cognitive dimension

In the cognitive dimension we find the shared norms, values and behaviour through shared language, codes, and narratives (as mentioned earlier). The shared language, codes, and narratives from Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998:253-254) can be understood as certain linguistically as well as socially constructed ways of behaviour a certain social group share and that this facilitates for easier exchange of information in networks. In Putnam (1993:171-172) the term norms is used to explain socially constructed behaviour. “Norms are inculcated and sustained by modelling and socialisation (including civic education) and by sanctions (ibid:171).

Norms not only dictate what proper and improper behaviour is, but also through setting such social “rules”, they form a prediction of how people within the same social group will behave. In Putnam (ibid:172), norms of reciprocity is about the idea that if I do something for you now, I can expect you to do something for me later. The idea here is that this fosters trust.

Further, I would argue that the norms discussed in Putnam (1993) and the shared language and codes discussed in Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) can be seen as a part of the bigger concept “identity formation”. By this, I mean the social group’s collective identity<sup>9</sup>. As noted in Hopkins’ (2011:528) research on religion and SC in the context of Muslim identity in Britain, “*how social networks are used and how relationships are developed depends on group members’ understandings of their collective identity*”. Collective identities (as simultaneously self-perceived and as perceived by others) matter for networks and trust relationships (ibid:532-534, 538). The idea behind this is that how we behave and foster networks depends not only on norms developing and sustained within a social group but also on how a social group relates to externalities such as other social groups. I would argue that identity (who identities who as what) plays a role because the formation of identity creates social structures of in- and out-groups to varying degrees and this, in turn, influences norms and trust in others. Further, it is important to note that identity and norms are not stable phenomena, they are interchangeable and constantly develop over time with internal and external influence (Hopkins 2011:530, 531-534, 538, Galaskiewicz and Wasserman 1994:3-25). This duality of internal and external formation of collective identity affects network.

The connection between networks and formation of identity (ID) has also been noted in research connected to coping strategies for local communities in a globalised environment (Bærenholdt and Aarsæther 2001:41-42, Aarsæther and Bærenholdt 2001:22-26, 36-40). In that context, formation of identity involves the individual’s dependency on more than one community. The formation of identity is not given but constructed and negotiated – through laws, politics, networks, and cultural traditions (Aarsæther and Bærenholdt 2001:36-38).

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<sup>9</sup> This does not mean that individual identity is not important (and it is mentioned as a part of micro level in network analysis), however, due to the scope of this thesis, the discussion will be limited to collective identity.

While criticism of Putnam's research is more focused on networks and trust aspects, there is also the issue that norms as a "rule-based" concept may allow for different interpretations of how and from whom norms are enforced. Gelderblom (2018:1317) notes that in many cases, norms are imposed from top down (i.e. macro actors develop/enforce norms). This is not fully taken into the discussion in Putnam (1993).

Overall, the "rule-based" concept of norms (from Putnam) can be replaced by identity formation. Identity formation not only contains shared norms, values, language etc. but also through the self-perceived and "perceived by others" aspect of collective identity of social groups we can look at how identity formation in different levels of analysis (individual ID, ID in minority communities, to national ID) may influence the levels of connectedness (bonding, bridging, linking) in networks.

### 2.3.3 Trust – the relational dimension

Trust is often seen as a major part of SC. However, it is a difficult concept to define. One can talk about trust as a complete confidence in someone else or as a "quid pro quo" in which I do this for you and then I can expect you to do something for me later (referring to the norms of reciprocity mentioned earlier). One can also analyse trust on an individual (micro) level that depends on personal experiences and state of mind, versus a collective trust (meso/macro level) that relates to how a social group views trust through their collective identity. The latter is more relevant to this thesis.

In Svendsen and Svendsen (2016:17), they talk about vulnerability as an inevitable price of trust because one can never be 100% sure in another person. In that sense, trust becomes "*a willingness to be vulnerable to another person based on the expectation, but not certainty, that he or she will act benevolently*" (ibid). They also separate specific trust between concrete persons one know (family, friends), and social/generalised trust that is more about trust between people in general. The latter is mostly relevant for this thesis. Here, they tie it to Fukuyama's definition in which "*trust arises when a community shares a set of moral values in such a way as to create regular expectations of regular and honest behaviour*" (ibid). In this sense, trust becomes about predictions and expectance of reciprocity (to add: through the formation of a collective identity). In this way, trust in SC can overlap with accountability (and certainly predictability in the authoritarian regime situation) in governance. On the other hand, whether one can describe accountability (and predictability) in power-relationships between e.g. the government and the people as a part reciprocity and confidence, is a discussion in itself and may depend in each case.

In the relational dimension in Nahapiet and Ghoshal's article (1998:254-256) norms and identification are included, and these are all interrelated concepts. Nevertheless, I have chosen to

categorise them into the cognitive dimension instead of the relational dimension in this chapter to show the similarities and relatedness between Nahapiet and Ghoshal's conceptualisation and Putnam's. In practice, these all overlap. Nahapiet and Ghoshal (ibid) use the definition of trust as the "*results of somebody's intended action will be appropriate from our point of view*" (ibid:254). I would argue that this definition also relates to the formation of collective identity in which a social group both sets the norms/rules of conduct, while having to adhere to external norms as well (e.g. a minority having its cultural norms, but also being influenced by the national norms or the nation state they reside within). So what is the relation between trust and norms (here: identity formation), trust and networks?

Putnam (1993:167-171) talks about a type of informal savings institutions called "*rotating credit association*"<sup>10</sup> to illustrate his point on the role of trust as a lubricator in cooperation and networking. He also contrasts it with the implications of distrust/absence of trust in that without trust there can be no mutual confidence to build network on. Krishna and Shrader (1999:6) note that it is difficult to verify group solidarity with reference to norms (in this thesis: identity formation) alone. Likewise, network forms also don't provide any reliable indicators of human interaction occurring within a group. Network types can both promote and support cooperation as well as competition and conflict (ibid). In that regard, this thesis argues it makes sense to look at identity formation and networks together with the concept of trust. The relative levels of trust add an additional indicator for how a network may function. In some networks, trust may be the glue that holds it together – e.g. in Putnam's examples of rotating credit association. In contrast, a study on groups and associations in Russia concluded that trust is not associated with all types of networks – even those that are horizontally organised or have a heterogeneous group of members (ibid:7).

Gelderblom (2018:1314) criticises Putnam's research (after 2000s) for his/their overemphasis on "*the casual role of bridging SC as a solution to religious intolerance that they underplay the extent to which bridging SC is itself the effect of deeper social changes*". This criticism is important, because an issue with Putnam's research is the limited discussion on the negative aspects of social capital. As Gilchrist and Taylor (2016:52-53) mention, networks can be exclusive, secretive and unaccountable. Likewise, social norms (in a collective identity) can be oppressive for some, while trust can be hugely complicated – depending on individual connections and social contexts. In some social contexts, close ties may foster discrimination and conservatism, causing social stagnation and resistance to change (ibid:53). For example, if social capital is high within a small group of people in a society, it could be at the expense of the others in the society who are not part of this small group. Now imagine if this small group consisted of business or

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<sup>10</sup> "*A rotating credit association consists of a group who agree to make regular contributions to a fund which is given, in whole or in part, to each contributor in rotation*" (Putnam 1993:167).



political elites whom control greater economic resources/capital in the society. What could be the implications for the remaining people in the society? DeFilippis (2001:792) presents this argument by challenging Coleman's (1988) often cited example of the diamond industry in New York, which is concentrated around a specific Jewish community. DeFilippis (ibid) argues that when any group of people control an economic market or activity it can become difficult for outsiders to enter it.

#### *2.3.4 Networks, identity formation and trust – bringing it together*

Essentially, what we need to think of in relation to trust in SC, is that trust gives us an indicator of the levels of connectedness in networks, as well as understanding the degree to how collective identities are formed. By knowing how much people trust their government or other people in their own collective groups as well as others, may tell us something about how collective identities and how networks can be sustained, deter, and develop. Looking back to the three levels of connectedness (bonding, bridging and linking), we can analyse them through their levels of trust and the role of identity in them. Therefore, this thesis argues we need the trinity of networks, identity formation and trust to understand the dynamics of SC. Looking at trust without networks and collective identities gives us very little context to base the research on. Likewise, looking at one of the other without the other two, we risk losing additional relevant information and context.

For example when we look back at Danahar's (2015:25) quote, the military's decision depends partially on the military's identity - how it sees itself in relation to the state and the people. Trust in this aspect is not just an issue between these formal institutions but also about the identity of the individuals as well as the collective groups within these formal institutions and how the trust within and between the groups affect the networks and formation of identity. From there we can ask, how is the military connected through networks? What levels of connectedness (primarily bridging and linking) are working most – do the generals have a good connection with government officials, their lower-ranking officers, or with the people? Do the lower-ranked officers have a good connection with government officials, their own higher-ranking officers, or with the people?

Besides understanding the trinity of networks, identity formation and trust in SC, the point of this section is that we understand how complex and over-arching the term SC is. To fit SC into each research context (including how to measure it) we must fine-tune how we define it in each context and analyse how it functions in that specific context. In this chapter, I merely present the concept SC and its relation to the topic of this thesis. The further application and possible measurements of SC will not be discussed until the analytical discussion in chapter 5 after reviewing the findings in the case study of Ukraine. As such, I take a more inductive approach by first observing the case study of Ukraine through the context of governance and social capital, and then analyse how governance and social capital (SC) plays a role in HT.

Nevertheless, figure 3 is an illustration of this thesis’s definition of SC as “*features of social relations based on networks, identity formation, and trust, which have an effect on the efficiency of coordinated actions through social relations in a society*”. In this definition, SC can have positive and/or negative consequences, but overall it effects the way societies conduct coordinated actions to function as a society - whether getting official documents through government bureaucracy, based on linking SC, or procuring products through informal networks based on bonding and/or bridging SC (e.g. through friends or black markets). In the illustration, we can see that the three concepts (network, identity formation and trust) are interconnected and that influence can go from micro to macro level and vice versa. If networks are weak, identity formation within a society is fragmented and is a source of tension, and/or if trust between people is low, then the efficiency of coordinating actions can be low.

In the next chapter, we will look into the MCDC-report’s analytical framework on HT, how it looks at the societal aspects in HT, and how this can be connected to governance and SC.

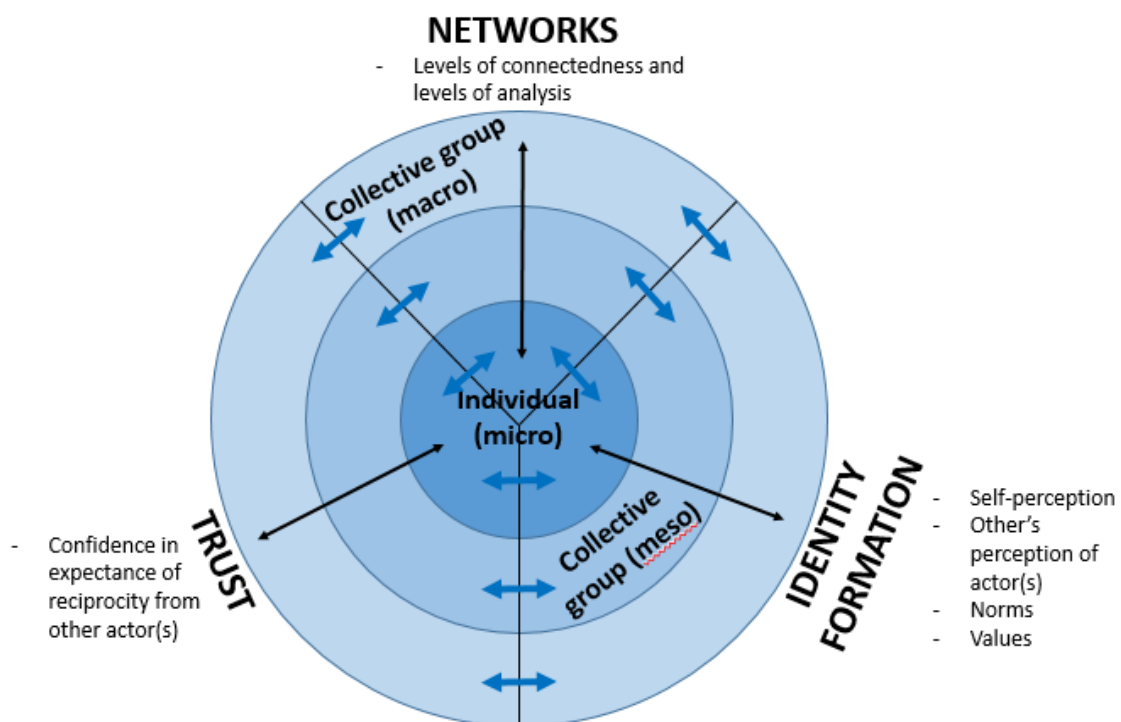


Figure 3. Illustration of SC in this thesis.

## **CHAPTER THREE – HYBRID THREATS AND THE MCDC-REPORT**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Chapter 1 and 2 discussed hybrid threats (HT) and briefly explained what the MCDC-report is. In this chapter, we go deeper into the MCDC-report and discuss its description of HT, its analytical framework, as well as its limitations, which tie it to this thesis's subject on governance and social capital. We begin by looking at the description of hybrid warfare (HW)/hybrid threats (HT) in the MCDC-report, before examining how the report conceptualises HT in its analytical framework.

### **3.2 The MCDC-report's description of hybrid threats**

Chapter 2 explained the reason for this thesis's use of the concept HT rather than HW, despite the MCDC-report's usage of the latter concept. In the MCDC-report, HW is described as *“the synchronized use of multiple instruments of power tailored to specific vulnerabilities across the full spectrum of societal functions to achieve synergistic effects”* (Cullen and Reichborn-Kjennerud 2017:8). Furthermore, they write that the MCDC-assessment concluded that HW is *“asymmetric and uses multiple instruments of power along a horizontal and vertical axis, and to varying degrees shares an increased emphasis on creativity, ambiguity, and the cognitive elements of war”*. Just to clarify, the latter description is an extension of the former and, as such, these two sentences act as one description of HW. Through this description, the MCDC-report's analytical framework aims at understanding HW through three main characteristics/features:

1. Instruments of power and synergistic effects
2. Critical functions and vulnerabilities in society are targeted
3. Effects and non-linearity

When we look at the MCDC-report's description of HW with these three characteristics, we can see that they are quite similar to the Hybrid CoE's description and characteristics of HT. The MCDC-report's description offers a functional definition of HT, which forms the basis of their analytical framework. The MCDC-report states (ibid, see footnote) *“Because of the difficulties of agreeing on a common definition of the term hybrid warfare, this project focused on describing, rather than defining<sup>11</sup>, the challenge”*. The main goal is to understand the dynamics of HT and its relation to governance and social capital. This further illustrates the reason for why, in this thesis, the distinction between HT and HW is not so important. They both highlight: 1) societal

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<sup>11</sup> In this thesis, definition and description are used interchangeably as the distinction is not so relevant for this thesis.

vulnerabilities, and 2) coordinated and synchronised actions using various elements/instruments<sup>12</sup> of power. In addition, the MCDC-report mentions the characteristic of effects and non-linearity (which is here argued to also be the case in HT). This chapter will explain the MCDC-report's three characteristics but will first briefly discuss the functionality of the MCDC-report's description of HW, which throughout the rest of this thesis will be referred to as HT.

The MCDC-report's description of HT is useful in several ways. The argument presented here is that there are four key points made in the MCDC-report's definition. Firstly, the description does not distinguish between state and non-state actors - thereby focusing more on the functional/operational and strategic<sup>13</sup> perspective of HT. Thus, it does not focus on who the actor is but more on the act itself. This can be useful if we want to be flexible and not exclude different types of actors. Secondly, it does not separate attack or defence, which can be useful because we reduce the risk of being enemy-centred as both the attacking and defending actor in the conflict can use HT tactics (also simultaneously). Thirdly, the description highlights the relation between vulnerabilities, instruments of power/means, and effects, which are clear characteristics in HT. This is also the case in the description from Hybrid CoE. Lastly, their wording "*emphasis on creativity, ambiguity, and the cognitive elements of war*" does not directly imply solely the use of warfare but rather the wide use of elements of war. The interpretation in this thesis is that their wording allows for a description involving kinetic actions but, at the same time, does not exclude non-kinetic actions.

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<sup>12</sup> Elements and instruments in this thesis have the same meaning in this thesis and both are used interchangeably in much of the literature on HT used in this thesis.

<sup>13</sup> Operation, tactic, and strategy are concepts necessary to distinguish from each other. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, an operation (in a military sense) is "an action, mission, or manoeuvre including its planning and execution" (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/operation>). Tactic is "a method of employing forces in combat" (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tactic>). Strategy is "the science and art of employing the political, economic, psychological, and military forces of a nation or group of nations to afford the maximum support to adopted policies in peace or war" (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/strategy>). While operation and tactic may be similar in definition for a method or act, strategy is a term that denotes a more long-term and higher-level of planning of acts, which may include several operations or tactics.

### 3.3 The MCDC-report's three characteristics in relation to its analytical framework

As mentioned, the MCDC-report's description and analytical framework understands HT through three characteristics. The three characteristics from the MCDC-report will be further used in the case study and analysis. The next sections of this chapter will explain the three characteristics through their meaning in the MCDC-report's analytical framework and the functionality of HT.

#### 3.3.1 Instruments of power and synergistic effects

On the instruments of power, we refer to military and non-military, conventional and non-conventional elements. These elements or instruments of power can include a wide range of tools from propaganda/disinformation campaigns, cyber attacks, funding NGOs, facilitating protests, to political and economic leverage. In the MCDC-report the instruments of power are divided into military, political, economic, civil, and information (abbreviated to MPECI instruments). In addition, military elements can range from direct kinetic action by using conventional or Special Forces in specific operations, to indirect and sometimes non-kinetic actions like giving training and logistical support of rebels in a proxy war. This aspect allows for an expansion of the non-attrition-approaches. Attrition-approach is based on symmetric strengths between opponents and it is something that can separate kinetic actions in HT from more conventional kinetic actions in warfare. Asymmetric wars are often associated with guerrilla warfare or insurgency, in which strategically directed sabotage and smaller scale attacks were often utilised by forces because they knew they couldn't match the qualitative or quantitative strength of their opponent to follow an attrition-approach (Arreguin-Toft 2001) (Kalyvas and Balcells 2010). As such, directed operations to achieve certain effects were more sought out rather than big battles to take out the opponent in one go (ibid). Such opportunities are increased when there is no military elements but instead the attacker uses a range of diffused non-military elements to conduct HT. This can put pressure on the opponent, leading to wanted effects for the attacker without leading to war. In addition, as Popescu (2015:2) writes, *“one reason why [hybrid threats] is so dangerous and potentially destabilising is that it is easy and cheap to launch for external aggressors, but costly in various ways for the defenders. While an attacker can try and hide behind plausible deniability, those responding are immediately placed in the spotlight”*.

The issue of achieving specific effects brings us to the concept of effects in HT, and more specifically “synergistic effects”. The dictionary<sup>14</sup> definition of synergy is “the interaction of elements that when combined produce a total effect that is greater than the sum of the individual elements, contributions, etc”. In relation to objectives (aimed effects), the concept “synergistic

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<sup>14</sup> This definition is taken from Dictionary.com, link: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/synergy>

effects” makes sense as a description of how actors in asymmetric warfare often operate. An example is the Vietnam War in which the North Vietnam fought South Vietnam and the USA using both regular/conventional forces but also irregular/guerrilla fighters to compensate for being weaker technologically and in firepower (Lowe in Murray and Mansoor, 2012:255-281). Another example is the case of Hezbollah in the Second Lebanon War, where they utilised a mixture of guerrilla tactics and technology in dense urban centres to take on the conventionally superior opponent – the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) (Hoffman 2009a:37). We can see (and as mentioned in previous chapters) that the mixture/hybridity of instruments in HT is not a new phenomenon. As Murray and Mansoor (2012:3-12) illustrate in their book “*Hybrid warfare: fighting complex opponents from the ancient world to the present*”, from the Peloponnesian war in 5<sup>th</sup> century BC to the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s, mixing military and non-military, conventional and non-conventional elements in warfare is nothing new.

However, what can be argued as new is the context of today’s increasingly interconnectedness between these spectres through technological (e.g. internet communications technology - ICT) and political developments (e.g. the role of transnational corporations, EU, NGOs, and increased globalisation, etc., Nye and Welch 2014:298-325, Wigell 2019:260). In today’s global economy, very few countries are economically isolated (Jackson and Sørensen 2016:7). They trade with other countries and their foreign policies, as well as national policies, are often influenced by this. An example is the economic interdependency established through the EU in many European countries (Hovi and Underdal 2010:88-92). This economic interdependency can be good, but it can also make countries vulnerable to fluctuations in the global economy and to sudden trade policies in countries that they trade with, which further could cause tensions nationally (ibid:232-235). This can allow for economics to play a greater role as a leverage in HT. In one way, since the world is more economically and politically (through international organisations, like EU, UN, etc.) connected, what happens in one place in the world is increasingly more quickly conveyed across the globe and can potentially have an increasing effect somewhere else in the world (Nye and Welch 2014:273-287, Wigell 2019:260).

Regarding technology, recent ICT had allowed for information and communication to spread fast across the globe. This is positive in many aspects, but can also reveal a challenge in controlling and handling digital security in important parts of a countries infrastructure – e.g. in the health sector. An example is a case from Norway in which the health administration in the southeast region (Helse Sør-Øst) outsourced its IT-services and data servers to outside of Norway. It was later discovered that over 100 foreigners (among other people from China, India, Malaysia, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Germany, and France) had access to the health journals of 2.8 million people in this part of Norway (Remen and Tomter 2017). This poses many potential security risks, for example as key

people (with access to sensitive information) can be targeted by foreign actors and pressured based on their medical issues to hand over sensitive information.

Another challenge, is the natural anarchy that internet has in the sense that the internet generally has no supervisor – anyone can establish websites and post what they want. Before, propaganda could be limited to radio, TV, newspapers. Today, we find it not only on the newspaper’s website, but also in social media. While this increased information spread can allow for more diversity of information to citizens, a challenge is that the algorithms for which news and information is sent to each individual centres on what the algorithms understand that individual is interested in (Flaxman et al. 2016:317-318). This can lead to an echo-chamber effect that reinforces someone’s opinion and may lead to more ideological segregation to in society (ibid). Another issue with technology is that many advanced technologies once only available to states and research institutions have become more easily available to the individual (e.g. drones, smartphones, 3D-printers, various computer software etc.). This can allow for increased innovation, but it can also give opponents wanting to conduct HT more tools much easier. In the Hybrid CoE report on addressing HT, Treverton et al. (2018:5) writes “*the virtual realm has dramatically lowered the cost of propaganda, and cyber operations are also relatively cheap*”.

These examples can have positive effects but also pose potentially serious threats. Together, all these potential threats can be done covert and without it being possible for the attacked to know who or where the attack came from – even when several instruments of power are used together. An example can be a computer virus shutting down vital functions in a society (e.g. hospitals and electricity grids) and sabotage on industries, together with local protests being instigated by foreign entities. At the same time, other countries can be covertly pressured to cut off e.g. oil supply to the intended victim country. These are four instruments of power used together. An additional feature in the MCDC-report’s analytical framework is that it analyses the escalation of instruments of power through vertical (in terms of the intensity of usage) and/or horizontal (the synchronisation with other instruments) aspects. Figure 4 is a useful illustration, as we can see how the MPECI instruments of power may interact and can be used to achieve desired strategic objectives, i.e. effects. The degrees of intensity and synchronisation of the instruments of power will vary according to what is being targeted specifically.

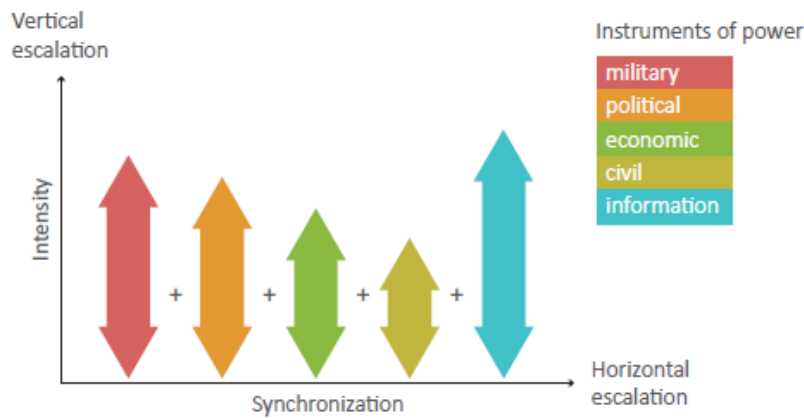


Figure 4. Vertical and horizontal escalation (Cullen and Reichborn-Kjennerud 2017:9)

### 3.3.2 Vulnerabilities and critical functions

The vulnerabilities in the MCDC-report's description is directly linked to their framework in which MPECI elements work as the instruments used against vulnerabilities in critical function. In the MCDC-report, critical functions are defined as “*activities or operations distributed across the political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure (PMESII) spectrum which, if discontinued, could lead to a disruption of services that a working system (for example, a state, its society or a subsection thereof) depends on*” (Cullen and Reichborn-Kjennerud 2017:11).

Furthermore, they explain (ibid), that these functions have vulnerabilities that may give an opponent the possibilities to exploit depending on the means it has at its disposal and what its intent is. As such, which vulnerabilities are targeted may not always be apparent and some less vulnerable functions may be targeted instead of other more vulnerable functions depending on the means and intentions of the opponent. In that regard, critical functions involves a magnitude of actors across different levels (micro, meso, or macro level) in society. Critical functions can be specific persons with key functions or organisations and departments in public or private sector. It can also be physical objects like infrastructure (e.g. roads, power grids etc.), or processes like the technical, political and/or jurisdictional procedures in public and/or private sector (ibid). In figure 5, we can see how the MCDC-report's analytical framework (se figure 5), visualises the spectrum of critical social functions is divided into Political, Military, Economic, Social, Infrastructure, and Information (PMESII).



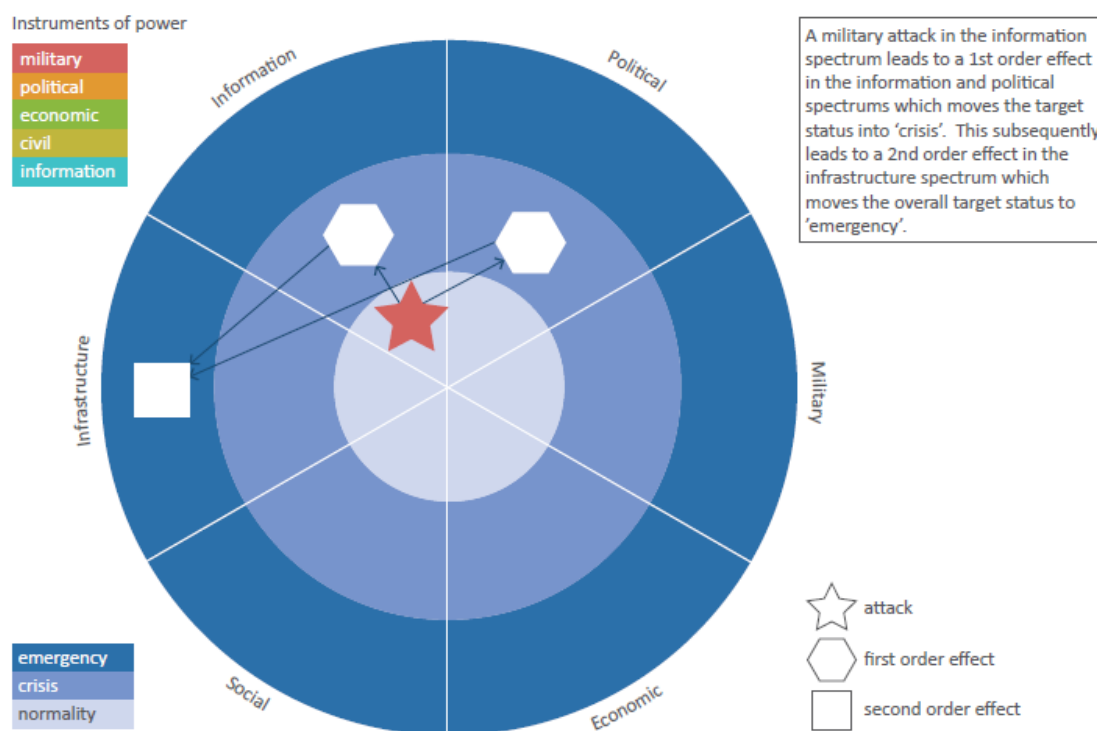


Figure 5. Visualisation of HT (Cullen and Reichborn-Kjennerud 2017:14)

This is just one way to divide society into, and variations can be made depending on how one wants to assess vulnerabilities and critical functions in society. Because the instruments of power are across military, political, economic, civil, and information, one could say that they (MPECI) overlap with the PMESII. In figure 6 is a table with examples to illustrate the relational role between MPECI as instruments of power and the vulnerabilities in society (presented as PMESII in the MCDC-report).

MPECI	Example as an instrument of power	Example as a vulnerability in society
<b>Military</b>	Conventional or covert military forces deployed.	If the military is weak and disorganised, it could be vulnerability as it might be less able to deter a threat
<b>Political</b>	Funding of opposition parties or political campaigns to smear the government	Weak political leadership
<b>Economic</b>	Using economic sanctions as leverage	High economic dependency on one or few industry sectors or imported resources
<b>Civil/social</b>	Encouraging civilian rebellion against the government	Ethnic divisions and tensions in civil society
<b>Information</b>	Propaganda and cyber-attacks	Polarised opinions among populations

Figure 6. Made by the author based on some of the examples in the MCDC-report (Cullen and Reichborn-Kjennerud 2017:27-30)

The reason for this illustration is to make it clear that both the MPECI as instruments of power and the PMESII as the spectrum of critical functions exemplify how HT is a very societal and civilian focused threat. This is what makes the MCDC-report's analytical framework suitable for a more sociological analysis of HT. The limitation of the analytical framework is not that it doesn't put societal vulnerabilities into focus, but that it lacks deeper analysis for how society (represented through their PMESII spectrum) functions and how certain features in society make the critical functions more susceptible to vulnerabilities, which can be targeted in HT.

As the PMESII spectrum represents society and the interaction between different parts of society, understanding how these relations work in times of threats and in warfare seem important in the process of assessing vulnerabilities. HT is conducted on different spectrums, meaning that not only the vulnerability of each spectrum needs to be assessed, but also the vulnerability in the relations between the spectrums need to be assessed. Assessing what critical functions we have and the degree of vulnerability, requires a great deal of self-awareness and understanding of what governs stability and change in our own societies. This awareness brings us to this thesis's aim on understanding how the concepts of governance and social capital can contribute to the MCDC-report's analytical framework to further expose a society's vulnerabilities and subsequent susceptibility towards HT.

In this thesis's theoretical framework, we discussed how governance centre's on the concepts power-relationships and accountability between the spectrums, while social capital (SC) involves networks, identity formation, and trust in society. Together, these concepts may tell us something about the possible vulnerabilities in a society and what that may mean to the society's susceptibility towards HT. An example being the role of militaries in revolutions (as explained in chapter 2). With this in mind, we can come to understand that vulnerabilities in the concepts of governance and social capital are related to the vulnerabilities described in the MCDC-report. Moreover, such vulnerabilities can be exploited by the opponent in HT scenarios (as the MCDC-report describes) and therefore may have an influence on the effectiveness of HT. Here, the effectiveness can be influenced by vulnerabilities in two stages.

The first, is the starting ground – the situation of the targeted society before HT is conducted by the opponent. If there are already existing deep vulnerabilities, then that society is already an easier target for HT compared to if the society has few vulnerabilities to begin with. In the next chapter, we will look into the governance and SC situation in Ukraine before looking at the case of Russia's intervention in Crimea and Ukraine.

The second stage of vulnerabilities, is how the existing vulnerabilities may increase the already existing vulnerabilities and/or lead to more vulnerabilities (that did not exist before). In chapter 4 and 5, we will see how existing vulnerabilities, when put under pressure, can effect a

targeted society. Noteworthy is that effects can be unforeseen by both the subject and the opponent, and therefore the opponent is forced to shift its tactics on spot according to the development<sup>15</sup>.

### 3.3.3 *The effects and non-linearity*

This brings us to the final concept in the MCDC-report's analytical framework: "Non-linear effects". Section 3.3.1 explained synergistic effects as the coordination of instruments of power (MPECI) in order to create desired effects. The concept of non-linearity is centred on the idea that the synchronised actions need to be revised continually as the situation changes due to the effects resulting from the previous set of synchronised actions. As is says in the MCDC-report: "*The ability of a hybrid warfare actor to synchronize means against specific vulnerabilities to create effects means that one cannot readily discern a linear causal chain of events. The more elements that are in the mix the more difficult causality becomes*" (Cullen and Reichborn-Kjennerud 2017:13).

In other words, the correlation between action A and outcome B is not certain – anything can happen and this needs to be accounted for. The process of operations are non-linear as the effects are non-linear. This makes the whole process of analysing effects in operations and strategies more challenging. More variables need to be accounted for and most likely the non-linear effects cannot be seen until they have been manifested, i.e. our ability to predict is reduced. This requires the adversary to be highly adaptable to new situations and effects that may arrive as the HT operations progresses.

This challenges the ability to counter HT and it is unlikely that full-predictability in HT can ever be achieved. However, this thesis argues that part of increasing predictability lies in understanding the governance and social capital situation in a given society. The spectrum of critical functions in society (PMESII), represents society as a whole and the interaction between different parts of society. Thereby understanding how these relations (through the concepts in governance and social capital) work in times before and during HT seem important in the process of assessing vulnerabilities, which in turn can be important for assessing possible effects.

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<sup>15</sup> One can, of course, argue that this is the case in all threats and warfare. However, this may be more apparent and complex in HT as described in the MCDC-report (Cullen and Reichborn-Kjennerud 2017:13-14)

## **CHAPTER FOUR – CRIMEA AND UKRAINE: A CASE STUDY**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapters presented the theoretical and analytical frameworks on this thesis's three main concepts, governance, social capital (SC), and hybrid threats (HT). In this chapter, we look at the Russian intervention in Crimea and Ukraine. The aim of this chapter is to look at the case study through governance and SC. Based on this, the next chapter (chapter five) will analyse the relevancy of the three concepts together, to address this thesis's research question. This chapter will begin with a brief overview of the governance and social capital (SC) situation in Ukraine since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Then a brief overview of the events in the Russian intervention in Crimea and eastern Ukraine will be presented.

### **4.2 Governance and social capital in Ukraine**

Before looking into the conflict in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, it is useful to understand the situation in Ukraine before and in relation to the conflict. In this section, we will explore how the social situation of Ukraine through governance and SC.

#### *4.2.1 Governance*

Though it has been mentioned earlier that governance and SC are interconnected, they will be addressed separately in this section, to make clear the impact of both concepts in the context of Ukraine. To reiterate, governance is about how societies are structured. It encompasses how power and decision-making is exercised through how rules, structures, processes and relations between entities within a society interact. In this thesis, governance is viewed through power-relationships between the entities involved in it (here: Ukrainian society) and the accountability in the context of democracy.

Ukraine gained its independence along with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Hrytsak 1998:271). An important note in this independence is that that the constituting regions of west and east Ukraine, each with their own particular history, had never before been formed into an entity as an independent state (Janmaat 2000:11, 13). Their different historical backgrounds, shaped the national consciousness and political outlook of the Ukrainians as the titular nationality (i.e. Ukraine) (ibid:13). In figure 7 is a map showing the regions in Ukraine.

Without going too deep into the history of Ukraine, the distinctiveness of each region is related to their historical connections to the old empires in Europe. Roughly summarised eastern (and then southern) Ukraine has had the longest and closest connection to the Russian Empire (from end of 15<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century) and later the Soviet Union. The greater part of central

Ukraine was part of Poland until it became part of the Russian Empire in a piecemeal fashion from the 15<sup>th</sup> century until 1795 when the entire region went to the Russian Empire. Finally, western Ukraine was part of Poland until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, then part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire until 1918 and then again part of Poland until the Soviet invasion of 1939 (Janmaat 2000:14-17, Darden 2014). Even though central Ukraine shares a more similar history with east and south than west Ukraine, central Ukraine was more oriented towards Ukrainian nationalism while east and south's formation of political culture first took place in the Russian Empire and later in the Soviet Union (Himka 2015:131-133). The different political and cultural historical developments resulted in what Janmaat (2000:17-18) describes as two dimensions of divergences in Ukraine's regions. In one dimension, rural, predominantly Ukrainian speaking regions versus urban, predominantly Russian-speaking regions. In the other dimension, weak Ukrainian national conscious regions versus strong Ukrainian national conscious regions (see figure 8).



Figure 7. The territorial administrative structure of Ukraine (from Janmaat 2000:14)

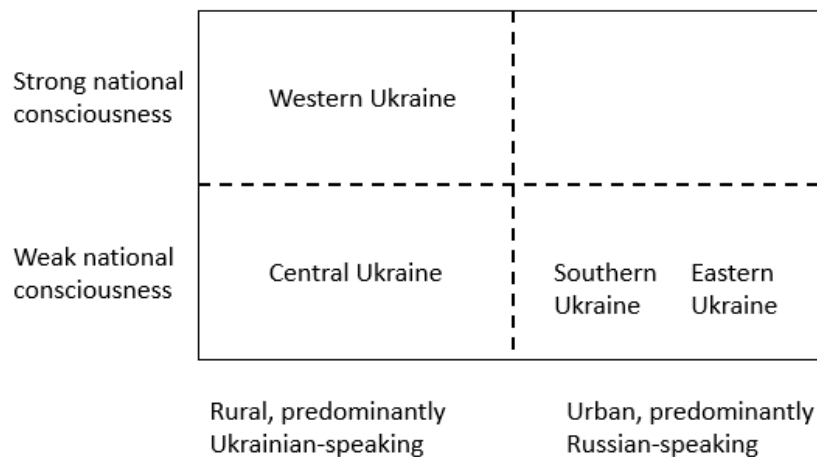


Figure 8. A typology of Ukraine's regions. From Janmaat (2000:18)

In his article on nation-building in post-Soviet Ukraine, Janmaat (2000:19-22) illustrates how these regional differences were evident in the 1991, 1994 and 1998 presidential elections. The general divide in the political landscape is that western Ukrainians consistently vote for nationalist candidates (who oppose closer ties to Russia), while eastern and southern Ukrainians vote for leftist and centre-left candidates who favour strong Russian ties. This political divide is apparent through Ukraine's history, especially after its independence in 1991 (Himka 2015:130-136). The western region was a hotbed for anti-Russian and pro-European sentiment during the Soviet times (Darden 2014). When the Soviet Union took over in western Ukraine, it met a very hostile population and had to deal with a large-scale insurgency. The western region were among the first to protest against Soviet rule again in the 1980s, and in 1991 they voted by large majorities for secession from the Soviet Union (being the only Ukrainian region to do so) (ibid). Since its independence, Ukrainian central authorities have been combating regional diversity through a nation-building process<sup>16</sup> (Janmaat 2000:24). Through this process of "Ukrainisation", certain elements of Russian culture and language have been marginalised (Polese 2018). This will be discussed later in regards to social capital. Already in 1993, the dissatisfaction with Kiev's "anti-Russian" foreign policy and fear of Ukrainisation prompted the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblast Councils to vote for regional autonomy during the mass miners' strike in June that year (Janmaat 2000:22).

In addition to this regional divide, the governance of Ukraine's politics is highly centralised and bears witness of a political system in which the winner takes it all where one regional faction sits in Kiev with either Russian or European backing (Darden 2014). When Yanukovych and his government were ousted in February 2014, the West viewed it as a semi-constitutional revolution. In contrast, the Russians viewed it as a right-wing coup d'état (Darden 2014). While both versions is partly true, as Darden (ibid) explains, each misses the point. The relevant issue is that in Ukrainian politics the power shifted from one region to another in an extreme fashion. The Euromaidan<sup>17</sup> was only sympathised with by 20% in the eastern region and 8% in the southern region. The new government take over was therefore not viewed so favourably (ibid). The historical and recent political events overall make the power-relationship in Ukrainian politics very polarised and unstable. Darden (ibid) argues that the east and south's view of the government and the national political elections as unfair requires a process of decentralisation in order to gradually build up trust and legitimacy – and eventually stability. Kiev would need to transfer its power to the other regions to avoid the situation of a centralised power, which divides the country rather than unifying it.

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<sup>16</sup> Nation-building here refers to state policy intended to nationally homogenize the population (from Janmaat 2000:22).

<sup>17</sup> The Euromaidan is the name of the protest against the Yanukovych government due to the sudden refusal to sign the free trade and Association Agreements with the European Union (EU). The protest began on the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2013 and lasted several months (Onuch 2015:217, 233).

One of the major challenges with this (and many say the main challenge with Ukraine overall) is corruption<sup>18</sup> (De Waal 2016:7, Leitner and Meissner 2018:183-184). The national politics in Ukraine follows a governance framework of a semi-presidential representative democratic republic in which the president rules with a prime minister and a cabinet that has the responsibility of the legislature of the state. However, as with many post-Soviet states, the transition from Soviet rule to democracy has faced many challenges. Kuzio (2005:33-41) describes Ukraine's governance situation during the years of president Kuchma (1994-2004) as semi-authoritarian. By this, Kuzio (ibid) states that in an effort to make the transition from communism to capitalism, Ukraine during this time got stuck somewhere in between. Thus, while not resembling a totalitarian regime, this system (under Kuchma) was characterised through; intimidation, loyal parties competing for favours, poorly functioning legislatures with little power, a semi-free media with self-censorship, and a state involvement in, and over-regulation of, the economy (ibid:34-35). This makes the power-relationship in the Ukrainian political system more concentrated into one entity in the government (the president and his close informal network) rather than having it distributed through the different entities in government and other public sectors (in accordance with the governance framework for representative democracy). In other words, the horizontal accountability (balance of power within the state) is not ideal according to the principles of governance in a representative democracy.

The “partial retrenchment” in the political system meant a continuation of clientelism practices, which can also be seen as part of the Soviet and pre-Soviet legacy in Ukraine (Leitner and Meissner 2018:185). As noted in Leitner and Meissner (ibid), the Soviet Union was a breeding ground for clientelist politics. This is because the Soviet system conserved patterns of pre-modern forms of interaction, based on trust, personal interactions and exchange (i.e. trust and networks in social capital theory). Meanwhile, the centralist, top-down structure of institutions and procedures, together with the lack of checks and balances proved to be advantageous for patronage (ibid). As such, during the privatisation period after Soviet dissolved, the members of the nomenklatura privatised official positions and material goods in order to hand them over to their clientele in exchange for loyalty. Those profiting from this are today many of the wealthy oligarchs (ibid:186). This made it over to the political sphere as economic and political power merge – creating nomenklatura democratisation, as Kuzio (2005:41) explains, enabling electoral patronage.

Ukraine at the time (and arguably now as well) is an archetypal delegative democracy in which citizens remain passive between elections (ibid:42). As a consequence, this democratic legitimacy is used to promote and justify authoritarian corporatist politics. The rule of law remains

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<sup>18</sup> According to Transparency International, corruption can be defined as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain” (<https://www.transparency.org/what-is-corruption#define>).

weak, institutionalisation of democratic norms is paltry, the historical experience of democracy is weak, and the executive presents itself as standing above party politics (ibid:42-43). All this combined hampers the possibility for the civil society to find a space where it can function effectively and grow – the institutionalisation of democracy takes no place and turns to a vicious cycle where weak institutions are made weaker through policy because they are accused to be weak (ibid:43). It is among this De Waal (2016) talks about in his report on fighting a culture of corruption in Ukraine. Essentially corruption is strongly rooted in Ukrainian politics (as well as society as a whole), and the Euromaidan's ousting of government in 2014 had very little effect on the overall challenges with corruption (ibid:8). Ultimately, even though the people have the power to oust their president, there is not necessarily enough vertical accountability to have an effect on the overall challenge of corruption in Ukraine.

Overall, Ukrainian's highly centralised politics combined with its clientelist features of governance seems to give a poor distribution of power-relationship, which has a major impact on the functions, efficiency, and accountability of Ukrainian public sector, and its relation to the civil society in general. In the next section, we will look at some of the overlapping issues and impacts through social capital.

#### *4.2.2 Social capital*

Looking back at this thesis's theoretical framework, social capital (SC) is about the features of social relations based on the concepts networks, identity formation, and trust. These three concepts have an effect on the efficiency of coordinated actions through social relations in a society. With this in mind, we will now look at some of the features in networks, identity formation, and trust in Ukrainian society. Due to their interconnectedness, these three concepts will be discussed interchangeably and not necessarily in an orderly fashion.

Nevertheless, beginning with the first concept in social capital (SC) theory, the networks in Ukrainian society can be characterised as a relying on informal rather than formal networks. Referring back to the Soviet legacy of clientelism and corruption in post-Soviet Ukraine, informal networks are used on all levels – macro, meso and micro (here: national, regional and individual) - in Ukrainian society. On the macro level, the political elites use their power (as noted earlier) to secure economic profit and protection against rule of law (Leithner and Meissner 2018:188-191, De Waal 2016:4-5). The issue of state capture and favouritism on the macro level has several spill over effects. Firstly, it makes bureaucracy less efficient, among other because resources are unequally distributed. Secondly, this builds and maintains the population's distrust towards the state authorities and institutions. Third, this in turn encourages people to use informal networks (Åberg 2000:307). Such informal networks can be based on bonding SC and different types of bridging SC,



but to much less degree linking SC as the latter can (and is in this thesis) be seen as formal networks involving officials. This does not exclude, however, the corruption occurring in linking SC.

Whether and how informal networks effect bridging and linking capabilities requires more research. However, what is likely is that because this governance situation and these features in network have existed for a long time in Ukraine (even before Soviet times), the population's ability to perform civic engagement remains low. In Åberg's (2000:301) study on SC in western Ukraine, a survey in 1994 revealed that 52.8% of the respondents in L'viv and 60.5% of the respondents in Donetsk replied that they were either little interested or indifferent to politics. In contrast, an overwhelming majority of the samples in the survey stated that they would vote in the coming parliamentary election that year (ibid). Åberg (ibid:302-303) noted that people in Ukraine overall had in general very little experience in civic engagement, but that in general L'viv had around twice the percentage of people with experience in civic engagement compared to those in Donetsk<sup>19</sup>.

Another example of people's inexperience with civic engagement, and more specifically on understanding the issues of corruption, is the statement from Oleksiy Chornyy who opened an anti-corruption agency in Odessa: *"People don't understand what corruption is... At first people came [to our agency] with any old complaints, such as problems with their neighbours or unjust court judgments. After two months we understood it wasn't working"* (De Waal 2016:2-3).

Going back to the third spill over effect noted, is the issue that due to the clientelism on macro-level and the level of distrust in the central authority on meso-level and micro level, people resort to informal networks (Leitner and Meissner 2018:191) (Åberg 2000:307). This implicates that coordinated actions through social relations in Ukrainian society (ref. definition of SC) works by using family, friends and acquaintances (i.e. bonding, but in some cases also bridging SC) in horizontal and reciprocal exchange relations to carry out practical problem solving and successfully going about their business (ibid:307-308). Such networks in society, however, have both positive and negative sides. On one hand, this kind of exchange relations might have the ability to build trust and extend networks provided networks are not only contained to bonding SC and specific bridging SC. If so, then it may also expand to bridging SC and later over to linking SC. On the other hand, the type of exchange relations this SC is built upon don't facilitate collective agency and trust in a situation where non-authoritarian and less vertical formal institutions are attempted (ibid:307). More importantly, complex, large-scale societies (e.g. on a national level) can't be administered efficiently through only personal contacts and direct links between members of society (ibid:308). Åberg's point here, which is relevant in not just Ukrainian society, is that one needs formal

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<sup>19</sup> An exception was regarding participation in demonstration in which L'viv respondents showed 40 % (compared to Donetsk' 12.6%). Åberg (2000:302) notes that this may be due to the mass rallies in 1988 and the demonstrations during the 1990 elections.

institutions and functioning linking SC to facilitate and manage complex procedures in a modern society, e.g. taxes, infrastructure as well as health and education-systems to mention just a few. Furthermore, in order for formal institutions to function they need some level of trust. While combating corruption is one aspect, identity formation is arguably another aspect in building trust.

In the governance section of this chapter, we note the historical divide between the eastern and southern versus the central and western regions. In terms of identity formation, Ukraine is an interesting case. Although the regions in Ukraine have diverging historical backgrounds, which shaped the different compositions of ethnicities in each region (see figure 9) as well as their respective national consciousness, and although Ukraine went through a nation-building process after its independency in 1991, the distinction between identities in east and west Ukraine is by far not so black-white. It is, in fact, quite complex.

Table 1.1 Ethnic Composition of Population by Oblast and the Russian Population in Oblast Capitals in Ukraine in 1989 (in percentage)

Oblast	Ukrainians	Russians	Other nationalities	Russians in oblast capitals
<i>Eastern Ukraine</i>				
Donets'k	50.7	43.6	5.7	53.6
Luhans'k	51.9	44.8	3.3	54.2
Kharkiv	62.8	33.2	4.0	43.6
Dnipropetrovsk	71.6	24.2	4.2	31.0
Zaporizhzhia	63.1	32.0	4.9	34.2
<i>Total in Eastern Ukraine</i>	<i>59.3</i>	<i>36.1</i>	<i>4.6</i>	<i>42.3</i>
<i>Southern Ukraine</i>				
Crimea	25.8	67.0	7.2	71.6
Mykolaiv	75.6	19.4	5.0	31.2
Odesa	54.6	27.4	18.0	39.4
Kherson	75.7	20.2	4.1	29.2
<i>Total in Southern Ukraine (excluding The Crimea)</i>	<i>65.0</i>	<i>23.6</i>	<i>11.4</i>	<i>40.8</i>
Kyiv City	72.5	20.9	6.6	20.9
<i>Central Ukraine</i>				
Kirovograd	85.3	11.7	3.0	19.5
Chernihiv	91.4	6.8	1.8	15.8
Sumy	85.5	13.3	1.2	19.0
Kyiv Oblast	89.4	8.7	1.9	-
Poltava	87.9	10.2	1.9	17.5
Cherkasy	90.5	8.0	1.5	20.5
Zhytomyr	84.9	7.9	7.2	16.7
Vinnitsia	91.5	5.9	2.6	16.4
Khmel'nytskyi	90.4	5.8	3.8	14.2
<i>Total in Central Ukraine</i>	<i>88.7</i>	<i>8.6</i>	<i>2.7</i>	<i>17.5</i>
<i>Western Ukraine</i>				
Rivne	93.3	4.6	2.1	13.1
Volyn	94.6	4.4	1.0	11.9
Ivano-Frankivsk	95.0	4.0	1.0	16.6
L'viv	90.4	7.2	2.4	16.1
Terнопil	96.8	2.3	0.9	7.2
Zakarpattia	78.4	4.0	17.6	14.3
Chernivtsi	70.8	6.7	22.5	17.7
<i>Total in Western Ukraine</i>	<i>88.5</i>	<i>5.1</i>	<i>6.4</i>	<i>14.6</i>
<i>Total for all Ukraine</i>	<i>72.7</i>	<i>22.1</i>	<i>6.2</i>	<i>30.4</i>

Figure 9. From Janmaat (2000:19). Statistics from 2001 show a similar composition but with an overall decrease among Russians in Ukraine (State statistics Committee of Ukraine 2001)

Firstly, in contrast to the Soviet ethnic policies, Ukraine has not politicised ethnicity to degree that Soviet did. In Soviet times, policies assigned ethnic identity to citizens at birth and made them report their identity whenever applying for jobs or positions in higher education. The Soviet Union also established its 15 republics as internal national homelands - each one named after the dominant nationality, for example Ukraine for Ukrainians. As such, the Soviet state promoted a system of ethnic classification on two levels: 1) an ethnocultural/personal level, and 2) a territorial level (Giuliano 2018).

In comparison to the Soviet Union, ethnic identities did not become politicised in Ukraine through the 1990s and early 2000s, and the government did not condition citizenship on cultural practice or ethnic ancestry (ibid). People have the freedom to choose their personal identities, religion as well as language. In east and south Ukraine, people continued using Russian while in west Ukraine people continued speaking Ukrainian. The change in language policy was that Ukrainian language (previously subordinated to Russian in Soviet times) was gradually introduced into primary education. Today most Ukrainians are bilingual (ibid).

Looking through the research of Hrytsak (1998), Åberg (2000), Kulyk (2016), and Polese (2018), the overall issue with identity formation is not so much about ethnicity alone but how national identity is conceived and conveyed through politics. Kulyk (2016:592) notes that towards the 2000s the perception of identity gradually increased in preferences of national identity rather than subnational level. In a survey from 1997, this preference was roughly equal. In 2006, national identity clearly overshadowed subnational identities (ibid). However, the degree to the importance of the identity as “Ukrainian” still differed between west Ukraine vs. east and south Ukraine (ibid, Hrytsak 1998:274-277). Based on these surveys, we see that the formation of national identity is in general moving towards a more unified national conscious identity.

However, subnational identities still matter. Polese (2018:11) notes the acceptance of Ukrainian identity differs between L’viv and Odessa, as well as difference between older and younger generations. Another interesting duality on identity in Ukraine is the consequences of language policies since the 1990s. In his article on Ukrainian identity in Odessa, Polese (2018:5-7) looks at informal nationalism in which national identities are constructed and renegotiated on every level through ordinary citizens. People switch between Russian and Ukrainian in several contexts, several times a day. In the classroom, teachers have to teach in Ukrainian even though they sometimes need to translate it into Russian. Then if pupils can’t reply in Ukrainian, they do so in Russian and then the teacher answers in Russian. This constricted and seemingly artificial usage of the Ukrainian language reflects the dichotomy between formal and informal settings in the Ukrainian language in society. The dichotomy appears like a formal/official game in which everybody “adheres” to the rules of bureaucracy (speaking Ukrainian in the classroom and other

public spaces) even though everybody quickly switches back to Russian as soon as they can. Eventually the “incidental” use of Russian leads to it being used more frequently, which makes the gap between theory (the state instructions) and practice more visible. Overall, the language situation seems to be an inconvenient practice at best, but can, if exploited in the long term, be precarious at worst. Using Ukrainian becomes thus functional to give an impression, to “construct a façade of Ukrainianess” (ibid:7). The big challenge in this is when the difference between how the state and its institutions conceive national identity versus how the people in different regions of Ukraine perceive it, becomes too big. According to Polese (ibid:13), this depends on the flexibility (the mediation and compromise) on different levels in society from national parliament, technocratic, to local (macro, meso, micro).

In terms of SC, promoting bilingual conditions through education can serve as a unifier in formation of national identity. It can also act as a facilitator for bridging and linking SC since both languages are needed in different parts of Ukraine as well as in different work sectors (notably in the public sector). On the other hand, forcing one language to dominate another in a region or area where it is not the main spoken language, could cause an opposite effect. If pushed too far it could also lead to more resistance by those it is forced upon. Then in the long term, it might not have a positive effect on the formation of a unified national identity. The fact that the “constructed façade of Ukrainianess” is so apparent in the education sector is of concern. Education such as school, comprises a big part of a person’s early life and can have a great impact on the formation of an individual’s identity, values and cognitive behaviour depending on how the education interacts with issues that matter the most to that individual’s identity (Kaplan and Flum 2012, Agirdag et al 2011:208-210, Feliciano 2009:150-152). If language is big part of an individual’s identity and that individual feels their own language is being marginalised, then education might not yield the best opportunities for unifying a national identity based on one language.

Together with language, the politics of national identity become problematized when shifts in governments either with west or east Ukrainian backing promote and conduct policies that are in favour of one region or the other. Kulyk (2016:607) describes Ukrainian society for a decade after the Orange Revolution in 2004-2005, as characterised by the uneasy coexistence of two roughly equal territorial halves with their respective divergent identities and policy preferences. In this sense, the Euromaidan in 2014 become for one part an empowerment of the Ukrainian people, those who tend to be proud of their belonging to the Ukrainian nation. For the other part, it became another stage to their deprivation as a new government furthered their frustration with the state which has allegedly abandoned them, even if they’re not necessarily less fond of the country or its culture (ibid).

In 2017, the president and the parliament passed a law on education that bans the use of minority languages for instruction in schools after 5<sup>th</sup> grade by 2020 (Giuliano 2019). This means that the approximately 621 Russian-language schools, 78 Romanian-language schools, and 68 Hungarian-language schools in Ukraine will have to adapt quickly or face penalties. Furthermore, one provision of the law allows certain subjects at Ukrainian-language schools to be taught in European languages, such as Hungarian and Romanian, but not in Russian. This led to charges of discrimination from the Council of Europe's Venice Commission (ibid). Another case is the separation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church from the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC–MP), which is affiliated with the Russian Orthodox Church. While the majority of Ukraine's population does not attend church, the political symbolism was profound. President Poroshenko, who led the push for autocephaly, described the achievement in overtly political terms as “a question of our independence, national security, statehood, a question of world geopolitics.” (ibid).

Such cases of policies increase polarisation and politicise identity through language and religion. These cases also increases estrangement from new authorities in Kiev towards eastern Ukrainians. Looking back to the issue of corruption in Ukraine, Leitner and Meissner (2018:191) note that there is a spatial difference in the scope of corruption in Ukraine. Although a common feature in all Ukrainian regions is a general distrust of the population against the authorities and state institutions, there is some degree of difference in the levels of trust. In the eastern regions, only 10.4% of the respondents in a survey by Kiev International Institute of Sociology trusted those authorities, while in the western regions the percentage was 24.7 (ibid).

In summary, there are many differences in Ukrainian society, which overlap making it complex. While national, regional and individual opinions on issues such as language, religion, national identity, as well as politics, represent many divisions in Ukrainian society they do not necessarily lead to conflict. However, such divisions together with a generally high distrust in the authority can make a society vulnerable to conflicts if such differences in society are provoked and put pressure on – for example through polarising policies and/or foreign interventions. As we will see in the next section, Russia played on these vulnerabilities in their operations on Crimea and in eastern Ukraine.

### 4.3 A brief overview of the conflict in Crimea and Ukraine

The conflict in Crimea and Ukraine is seen by many as not just a turning point in the political relations between Russia and the west, but also for the popularity of the term hybrid warfare (HW) and hybrid threats (HT) (Tsygankov 2015:279, Jacobs and Lasconjarias 2015:1, 7, McDermott et al. 2015:41). Russia's actions in the conflict in Crimea and Ukraine is often described by NATO as HT (Reisinger and Golts 2014:3). In contrast, Russia views the terms HW and HT as a western concept, mainly described to be used against Russia (Wigell 2019:260, Russian Times 2019). Different actors in the conflict have perceived the conflict differently, and throughout the conflict there have been extensive disinformation campaigns promoting different narratives of the conflict (Lazarenko 2018:1-3). The narratives in the conflict are mainly divided between Russia and Ukraine. These narratives will be discussed further in section 4.3.3. There is bias on all sides and the narratives are highly politicised. In this chapter (and the thesis overall), we will not go into the discussion on Russian-West<sup>20</sup> relations, but instead look at the events which occurred during the conflict. The events listed in the following sections are mainly from western institutions (e.g. NATO, Hybrid CoE, NUPI) and media sources. The reason for this is that in general there is a greater diversity in western sources in their ability to be both biased but also critical. The critical literature in this case has been more useful in this thesis.

It is important for the reader to note that during the conflict in 2014, Russia's degree of involvement was uncertain and much of information on Russian involvement presented in this chapter comes from sources after the events had unfolded. The political concerns and tensions between Russia and Ukraine increased after the Orange revolution and with the presidency of Viktor Yushchenko (2004-2010). Meanwhile, the crisis itself can be said to have begun with the Euromaidan leading to the removal of then president Viktor Yanukovich (2010-2014) 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2014 after his decision to postpone an Association Agreement with the EU in the fall of 2013 (Tsygankov 2015:284-285, Reisinger and Golts 2014:1). The day Yanukovich was ousted, Russian special forces Spetsnaz began deploying to Crimea.

However, as Einar Seljevold (2015:14) explains, Russia might have planned the intervention of Crimea and the support of the separatists in eastern Ukraine long before and just used these events as an excuse. Whatever Russia's real motives were, this thesis will now give a brief overview of the events in the conflict in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, including the diverging narratives in the conflict.

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<sup>20</sup> By the West, I mean in this chapter member-states in NATO and EU.

### 4.3.1 *Crimea*

The intervention of Crimea began, as mentioned in end of February as Spetsnaz (Russian military intelligence infantry) started deploying to Crimea. On the 24<sup>th</sup> February, Sevastopol city council appointed the Russian citizen and businessperson, Aleksei Chaliy, as mayor. The following days, Russian naval units arrived in the city square. On February 26<sup>th</sup>, Russia conducted a snap exercise of 150 000 troops from the Western and Central Military Districts - possibly to draw attention away from their operations on Crimea as well as intimidate the Ukrainian government (Treverton et al. 2018:16, Seljevold 2015:14). However, Russia said the exercise was not related to the events in Ukraine (Higgins and Myers 2014, Gutterman 2014). Meanwhile, the masked men (the “little green men”), claiming to be local “self-defence militia”, occupied the Crimean Parliament and raised the Russian flag (Treverton et al. 2018:16, Seljevold 2015:14, Reisinger and Golts 2014:3). At the time it was not clear who these little green men were as they did not wear any identifying signatures on their fatigues. Russia, especially in the beginning, also denied any involvement.

This ambiguous situation was (in aftermath) a very clear tactic of uncertainty – a core feature in HT (Bukkvoll and Åtland 2015:89, Reisinger and Golts 2014:4). The new Crimean parliament decided to vote for holding a referendum on Crimea’s status on 25<sup>th</sup> May (same day as Ukraine’s presidential elections). Over the next few days, Russian troops seized more and more strategic facilities on Crimea. On 1<sup>st</sup> March, Putin requested parliamentary approval to use troops in Ukraine to protect the Black Sea Fleet and ethnic Russians who faced “real threats to their life and health” (Treverton et al. 2018:17), but still by the 4<sup>th</sup> March Putin denied any Russian troops being involved (Seljevold 2015:14). The 6<sup>th</sup> March, Russian Ochakov Kara-class cruiser blocked the exit to the Black Sea. Same day, parliament moved the date of the referendum to March 16<sup>th</sup>. During the following week, the Russian troops continued to seize other military bases on Crimea without much resistance. Eventually, they managed to cut off and isolate the peninsula – giving them the effective control over Crimea (Treverton et al. 2018:17). The 16<sup>th</sup> March the referendum was held, resulting with over 96% vote in favour of joining Russia. The referendum was not recognised internationally but Putin recognised it and signed the treaty stating that Crimea is annexed by Russia (Seljevold 2015:14). 21<sup>st</sup> March, Crimea became formally annexed, ten days after it declared independency from Ukraine (Treverton et al. 2018:18).

### 4.3.2 Eastern Ukraine

While Russia used the similar elements in their operations in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, the operations had different goals and Crimea followed a more conventional “covert” method of invasion using their own troops synchronised with a propaganda campaign. In the operations in eastern Ukraine, Russia took a more ambiguous strategy by mainly supporting the separatists. (Bukkvoll and Åtland 2015:89, Treverton et al. 2018:14-15). In the beginning, Russia utilised political campaigns by encouraging an anti-government movement and using people of power to oppose the Ukrainian government (Jacobs and Lasconjarias 2015:7, Treverton et al. 2018:21). When the Ukrainian government arrested protest leaders, they escalated the situation. Eventually, this sparked a separatist insurgency, which then turned to irregular warfare. Stepping it up, Russia began supporting the separatists with conventional reinforcements using its own troops (Treverton et al. 2018:21).

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2014, Ukraine changed the official status of the Russian language. This was problematic in eastern Ukraine where the majority speaks Russian. Altogether, the Euromaidan, removal of Yanukovich, the new language policy, and later Russia’s annexation of Crimea amounted to an increasingly agitated situation. Protests broke out as a response to the uncertainty of Ukraine’s political future, making it easier for Russia to exploit. (Treverton et al. 2018:21). The 1<sup>st</sup> March 2014, pro-Russia demonstrators began seizing the regional government HQ buildings in Kharkiv and Donetsk from pro-Maidan occupiers. The same happened in Luhansk, the 9<sup>th</sup> March. The Russian flag was hoisted and the protesters demanded a referendum regarding Russia’s annexation. Across eastern Ukraine, similar demands for referendums occurred, also including recognising Russian as an official state language, and creating a Customs Union with Russia (ibid:22). Ukraine’s counteractions with arresting protest leaders backfired when self-proclaimed governors and mayors without much experience were replaced by those who did have more experience. Moreover, these people also had ties to Russian security services, military backgrounds, and business interests with Russia. These people were more capable and willing to use direct action and command paramilitary forces (ibid:22-23). The separatists gained more and more control.

Another challenge the Ukrainian government had, was that the separatists bribed and intimidated political officials to either adopt to a pro-Russian stance or leave their position. This was also part of the case with the Ukrainian military, in which soldiers were targeted with bribes, intimidation through their phones, and local pressure (ibid:23). The Ukrainian military also struggled with efficiency, organisation and motivation. During April, the Ukrainian military forces launched counter-attacks as a response the separatists’ gains. However, the Ukrainian military proved inefficient, using conventional forces and not special forces in urban battles. The Ukrainian



military was also lacking in numbers and poorly equipped, and many soldiers refused to shoot at fellow Ukrainians (Reisinger and Golts 2014:8-9, Treverton et al. 2018:23). The latter is an interesting issue, regarding to the role of the military in internal conflict, as mentioned in chapter 2 (page 14). However, unlike in Egypt and Tunisia, the Ukrainian military did not revolt against its government or dissolve, respectively.

Throughout April and May 2014, fights/battles continued between separatists and pro-Ukrainian forces. The Ukrainian forces continued to launch attacks in Mariupol and northeast of Donetsk but these were also very inefficient. Blockades were also attempted to isolate the separatists, but this failed as the separatists still managed to receive support from Russia. 11<sup>th</sup> May, “self-rule” referendums were held in Donetsk and Luhansk to establish new, independent republics. In Donetsk, the support for self-rule was 89%, while in Luhansk 96% (Blair 2014). 25<sup>th</sup> May, Petro Poroshenko won the election for prime minister of Ukraine, replacing Yulia Tymoshenko whom took over after Yanukovich. The following day, the first battle for Donetsk airport began, marking a turning point in the conflict. Ukrainian forces were able to push the separatists out of the Donetsk’s international terminal with air strikes and a paratrooper assault. Larger groups of volunteers from Russia joined and reinforced the separatists. Meanwhile, more Russian soldier were directly supporting the separatists, also marking a turning point in the conflict (Treverton et al. 2018:23-24).

Following June to August, the conflict escalated as Russia supplied the separatists with mechanised equipment, armour, advanced munitions, and medium air defences. The effective air defence caused many losses for the Ukrainian air force, ending their operability by Mid-August. Yet, Ukrainian ground forces managed to fight back the separatists and on 5<sup>th</sup> July they recaptured several towns held by separatists, pushing them back to their strongholds in Donetsk and Luhansk (ibid:24). Eventually, by August, Ukraine recaptured around 75% of the territory that was held by separatists. The Ukrainian forces were close to regaining border control and closing inn/surrounding the separatists. Meanwhile, Donetsk and Luhansk also risked being split as Ukrainian forces created a wedge between them (ibid:24-25).

As Russia’s strategy was failing, they decided to launch a conventional invasion in the period 14<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> August, deploying somewhere between 1000 and 4000 Russian troops to support the separatists. Still, Russia denied any involvement until 10 Russian paratroopers were captured by Ukrainian troops, leading Russia merely claim they crossed the border accidentally (BBC 2014). Eventually, separatists regained pressure on the airports in Luhansk and Donetsk, as well as threatening Mariupol again near the end of August. On the 5<sup>th</sup> September, negotiations, referred to as Minsk I, led to a signed ceasefire between the separatists and Ukrainian forces. However, Russia, intensified its training and equipping of separatists. Throughout January 2015, the Russians

launched artillery strikes and the separatists (with Russian backing) seized Donetsk airport (Treverton et al. 2018:25). The 12<sup>th</sup> February 2015, the two parties met again in Minsk and agreed to a second ceasefire, referred to as Minsk II. This deal favoured the separatists and Russia by giving a constitutional reform, which decentralises the separatist regions and adopt permanent laws on the special status of those areas (Oliphant 2015, BBC 2015). Six days later, the Ukrainian troops retreated from Debaltseve under enemy fire. Ukraine began implementing its Minsk II obligations by July 2015. Russia continued to arm and train the separatists as well as providing support with their own troops. Throughout the rest of 2015 and early 2016, the fighting ensued with varying intensity (Treverton et al. 2018:26).

As of April 2019, the conflict is still ongoing. While less intense, it is steady and so far the conflict has claimed over 13 000 casualties, whereof 3 000 are civilians (Miller 2019). Over 1.7 million people have been displaced (Treverton et al. 2018:26). The fighting continues along an ad-hoc border stretching around Donetsk and Luhansk between the Ukrainian government and the Russian-backed separatists (ibid). Overall, the situation of the Minsk II agreement is that it has stagnated, if not completely failed (Beck 2018).

#### *4.3.3 Diverging narratives in the conflict*

Throughout the conflict, Russia used its special forces for insurgency, its conventional forces for intimidation and for backup of separatists, in addition to economic and political pressure (from offering lifelines amid instability and discounts on gas imports to threatening with shutting off the gas supply) (Reisinger and Golts 2014:3-10, Jacobs and Lasconjarias 2015:7-8, Treverton et al. 2018:29, Kramer 2014).

As mentioned earlier, the conflict in Crimea and Ukraine was also marked by massive disinformation campaigns on both fronts. In her article on the multiplicity of narratives about the conflict and displacement in Ukraine since 2014), Lazarenko (2018) noted that there are different competing narratives in Ukraine regarding the conflict. On one side is the main Ukrainian strategic narrative, distributed through the media and the speeches of state authorities. In this narrative, Russia is portrayed as an invader conducting its imperialistic policies, threatening Ukraine's struggle for freedom. The civil protest of the Euromaidan is framed as the protest against the highly corrupt regime of then president Yanukovich and how his refusal to sign the association agreement with EU deprived Ukrainians of their expectations. When Yanukovich fled to Russia, Ukraine started building a new democratic state. This is when Russia intervened in Crimea and later in east Ukraine. Moreover, this narrative emphasise historical events (e.g. crimes from Soviet era) and Ukrainian nationality is idealised (ibid:4-5).

On the other side, the official Russian narrative is grounded in two main points: 1) the incorporation of Crimea as a historical justice, and 2) the protection of the Russian-speakers in the diaspora (which fitted with Russian-language speakers based on the new language policies) (ibid:5-6). Russia used historical narratives to discredit the Kyiv government as “fascist”, using every possible channel to undermine Ukraine’s democracy (Jacobs and Lasconjarias 2015:8). The Euromaidan was also framed as a coup d’état where democratically elected Yanukovych was taken from power as a result of extremist neo-Nazi involvement together with direct Western involvement (USA and EU) (Lazarenko 2018:6). Denial of Russian involvement in the conflict is also an important part (Reisinger and Golts 2014:5).

In these two opposing narratives, the conflict was described to its audience through simplified versions of the ongoing events, which pulled on the diverging issues as mentioned in the previous section. A third narrative put these events in a geopolitical framing between the West (NATO and EU) and East (Russia) as a prolongation of the Cold War (Lazarenko 2018:9, 12-13). Another challenge with these conflicting narratives is that Russian media generally resonates more in east Ukraine than in west (Helmus et al. 2018:16, 58-59, Bukkvoll and Åtland 2015:89). Without going into a discussion on media’s role in HT, the point here is that these media discourses increased existing tensions within society and have made trust and reconciliation-building even more tangled (Lazarenko 2018:13).

Chapter 5 will further analyse the case study of Crimea and Ukraine in relation to the MCDC-report’s analytical framework and the theoretical framework from chapter 2.

## **CHAPTER FIVE – ANALYSIS: ASSESSING GOVERNANCE AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IN HYBRID THREATS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The research question in this thesis is “how can the concepts of governance and social capital contribute to the MCDC-report’s analytical framework to further expose a society’s vulnerabilities and subsequent susceptibility towards HT?” Through the chapters so far in this thesis, we have looked at the theoretical concepts of governance and social capital (SC), explored the MCDC-report’s understanding and analytical framework of HT, as well as looked at the governance and social capital situation in Ukraine in relation to the conflict since 2014.

This chapter will first look at how the conflict in Ukraine is analysed through the MCDC-report’s analytical framework and in that regard discuss their analytical framework. Following this, the findings in this thesis’ case study will be analysed to see how governance and SC can expose a society’s vulnerabilities and subsequent susceptibility towards HT. The chapter ends with a suggestion for possible questions that can be used to assess governance and SC in a society, and how one can create a baseline assessment for governance and social capital in the MCDC-report’s framework.

### **5.2 The Ukraine case in the MCDC-report’s analytical framework**

In the MCDC-report, the authors use the conflict in Ukraine as an example of how their analytical framework can be applied. In their empirical case study, they begin by listing the vulnerabilities inherent to Ukraine and then the vulnerabilities created intentionally by Russia. Secondly, they identify two synchronised attack packages (SAP 1 and SAP 2). Briefly explained, SAPs are specific military, political, economic, civilian, and/or informational (MPECI) instruments of power that are synchronised and tailored to specific vulnerabilities that are used in a HT attack (Cullen and Reichborn-Kjennerud 2016b:32). Figure 10 is a summary of their identification on vulnerabilities and SAPs. In figure 11 we see how they have illustrated these identifications into their visualised model.

Identified vulnerabilities	Synchronised attack packages (SAPs)
<b>Vulnerabilities inherent to Ukraine:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Weak macroeconomic fundamentals in Ukraine.</li> <li>- High levels of foreign debt in Ukraine.</li> </ul>	<b>SAP 1:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The adversarial actions undertaken by Russia and its proxies (mainly Gazprom and Gazprom bank) within Ukrainian gas domain during the conflict.</li> </ul>
<b>Vulnerabilities created intentionally by Russia:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gas supply and transit contracts between Russia and Ukraine.</li> <li>- Russian loan structure to Ukraine.</li> <li>- High levels of Ukrainian dependency on Russian gas.</li> </ul>	<b>SAP 2:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adversarial actions undertaken by Russia within Ukraine's foreign debt domain during the conflict period.</li> </ul>

Figure 10. Identified vulnerabilities and synchronised attack packages (SAP)

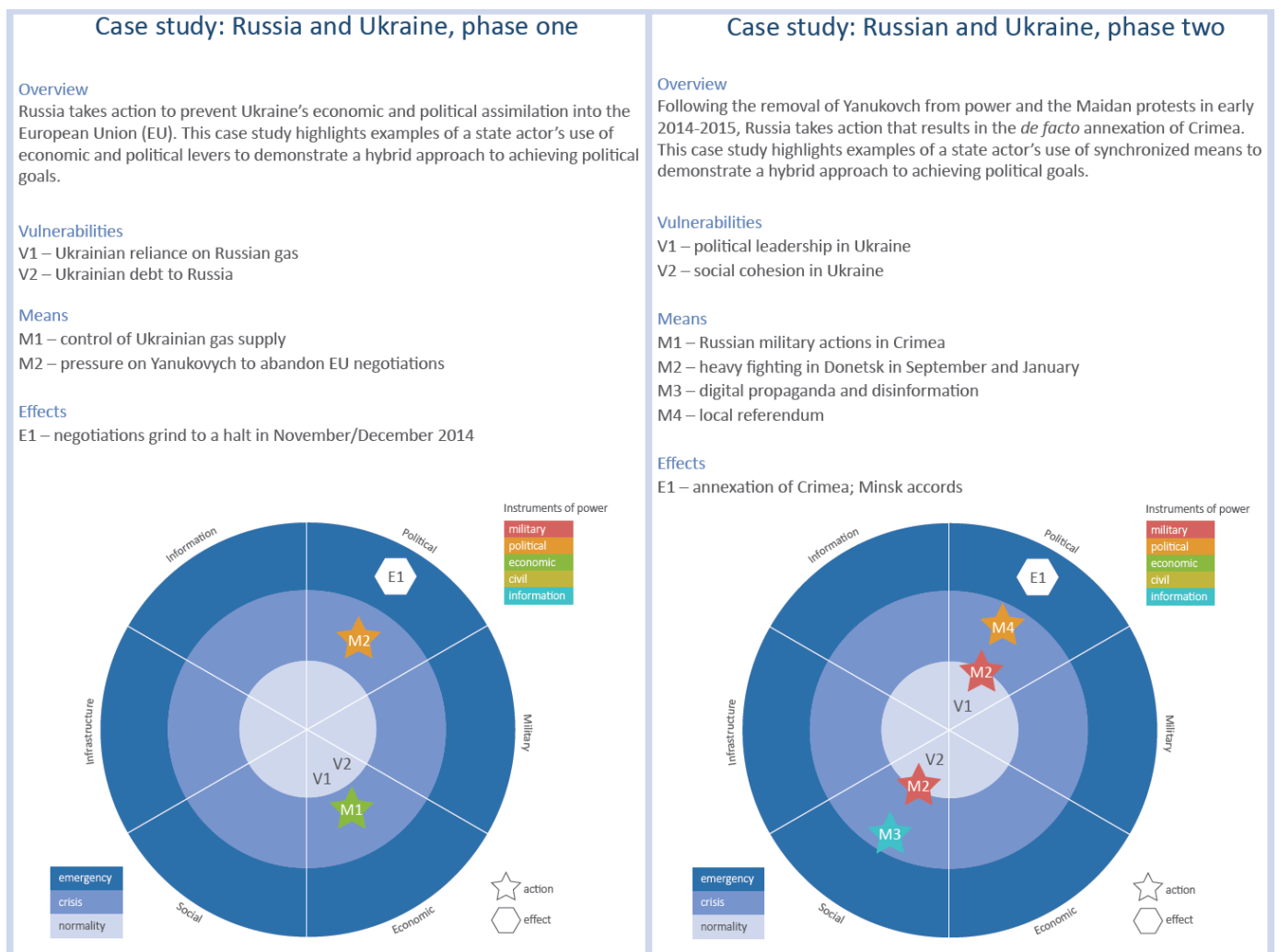


Figure 11. Phase one and two of the Ukraine conflict (from the MCDC-report)

In their analysis the vulnerabilities are centred on the economic aspects of Ukraine, the economic relations between Ukraine and Russia (particularly Ukraine's dependency on Russia regarding gas and loans, and how Russia used these economic vulnerabilities to gain political influence. In their empirical case they look at how Russia in 2014 used a combination of political pressure and compensation (push-pull tactics) with cheap gas and loans to get then-president Yanukovich to abandon the signing of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement (Cullen and Reichborn-Kjennerud 2016b:17). Then as the Euromaidan progressed and a new, pro-Western government came into power, the strategic environment had changed. This meant that Russia had to adapt their use of MPECI-instruments of power. However, the identified vulnerabilities were still there. Russia continued using these push/pull tactics - coercive and escalatory, and compensatory and de-escalatory – by offering and cancelling loans as well as increasing and decreasing gas prices (ibid). These economic tools were used in synchronisation with military and informational instruments of power (as shown in chapter 4). For example, before the Minsk agreements Russia would either offer cheaper gas and loans, or threaten with supply shortage and repayments in debt, while escalating their military efforts.

These push and pull tactics were part of Russia's strategy to create ambiguity and uncertainty in the conflict. Ukraine's economic and political vulnerabilities made its ability to handle such situations very low. Russia's strategy was effective. First, it led to the abandonment of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement by then-president Yanukovich. Then, during the political and social chaos during and after the Euromaidan, Russia annexed Crimea and adapted its tactics to the new government in place. Looking at figure 11, we see these tactics being used and how Russia's strategy adapts from phase one to two. With this visualisation of their analytical framework, the MCDC-report provides a good understanding of HT as non-linear threats that target vulnerabilities utilising different instruments of power. Moreover, it allows us to monitor threats and events in contemporary/real time.

The MCDC-report states that *“while this section is only a limited outline of a very complex conflict it shows how the Analytical Framework can be used to further our understanding of how tailor-made synchronised attack packages work against specific contextual vulnerabilities in a target system”* (ibid:19). Moreover, they explain what the targeted actor needs to do is to:

- 1) Assess its critical functions and vulnerabilities.
- 2) Once these are identified, thresholds must be established to monitor changes in the functional status. Thresholds help identify and define the severity of HT by creating predetermined levels (e.g. from normality to crisis) along with the magnitude or intensity that must be exceeded to move from one level to the next.

3) Specific indicators should also be built in to determine if and when HT are occurring.

Through this, a baseline assessment is made to identify and separate what is normal from what is likely an attack.

These three notions (from their report, *ibid*:20) lay the foundation for monitoring and countering HT. The highlighted connections and visualisation of the relation between vulnerabilities, instruments of power/means, and effects is the strength of the analytical framework in the MCDC-report. The framework makes it easier for us to create a baseline and a system for monitoring potential vulnerabilities, distinguish a “normal” situation versus a HT attack, the severity of an attack, and possibly how to counter it.

There are two issues that can be pointed out on this analytical framework, which, are arguably important to consider. Firstly, the analytical framework can only be as good as the report it is based on; meaning when vulnerabilities are listed, as in phase one (reliance on Russian gas and debt to Russia) we understand why these are vulnerabilities. However, when vulnerabilities are listed as political leadership and social cohesion we need more information to further explain what this means as well as why and how these are vulnerabilities. This brings us back to the point in chapter 3 (page 32), where the analytical framework lacks a deeper analysis for how society (represented through their PMESII spectrum) functions and how certain features in society make the critical functions more susceptible to vulnerabilities that can be targeted in HT. When the MCDC-report notes “social cohesion and political leadership” as vulnerabilities, we need to understand what this means and what role social relationships (which social cohesion and political leadership is a part of) play in HT and have this into the analytical framework.

Secondly, the listed vulnerabilities “political leadership and social cohesion” would arguably have an effect on how the targeted actor can assess and identify vulnerabilities, as well as develop a baseline based on the identified vulnerabilities. For example if the vulnerability is state corruption, which involves those in charge of making the baseline, possibly with the result that such vulnerabilities are less likely to be addressed. This was exemplified in Ukraine where the government and the parliament (where much of the corruption lies) decidedly underfunded and poorly staffed the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine (de Waal 2016:6-7). The issue of countering HT is then challenged from the start. The point here is the process of assessing vulnerabilities in HT itself, is also influenced by certain aspects of governance and SC.

### 5.3 The role of governance and social capital in Ukraine

In their case study, the MCDC-report identifies political leadership and social cohesion as vulnerabilities in phase two. Looking at chapter 4 in this thesis, we can agree with this. There are evident challenges in the Ukrainian political system that pose a vulnerability for Ukraine. In the MCDC-report, they refer to the vulnerabilities in political and social divisions as social cohesion. However, what do these vulnerabilities mean and why are they vulnerabilities? Below, Ukraine's governance and SC situation from chapter 4 is summarised in four notes to highlight those issues that will be further discussed in relation to governance and SC.

1. *Regional differences:* Ukraine consists of four regions (East, South, Central and West) that have had different historical and politically cultural developments. This has led to not only different regional identities but also different perceptions towards the central government in Ukraine, which also depends on who is in government and which region they are from.
2. *Political system:* Since its independence, Ukraine has had several challenges in the transition from a Soviet system to democracy. Firstly, political power is strongly centralised and during the year under president Kuchma (1994-2004) was seen as semi-authoritarian, characterised through; intimidation, loyal parties competing for favours, poorly functioning legislatures with little power, a semi-free media with self-censorship, and a state involvement in, and over-regulation of, the economy. Secondly, corruption also plagues the political system in Ukraine in which power is concentrated into one entity in the government (the president and his close network) rather than having it distributed through the different entities in government and other public sectors. The rule of law remains weak, institutionalisation of democratic norms is paltry, the historical experience of democracy is weak, and the executive presents itself as standing above party politics. Few people are experienced and proficient in civil engagement.
3. *Civilian society:* With the public institutions being weak, the incentives are higher for the civilians to use informal networks based on bonding SC (i.e. family, friends and other close connections) and to some extent (bridging SC, i.e. acquaintances) rather than (public) formal networks such as linking SC in order to live their lives and mobilise through society. In addition, when formal networks are used, they may often involve corruption (e.g. bribery) of officials – representing bridging and/or linking SC based illegal procedures. This type of exchange relations the SC is based upon (especially in linking SC) do not facilitate collective agency and trust in a situation where non-authoritarian and less vertical formal institutions are attempted. The use of such informal networks rather than formal, may have a negative cause-effect cycle on people's trust in government and public institutions overall. Low trust and inefficiency in public sector can make it difficult for the society as whole to



administer well the complex functions that modern societies comprise of – be it taxes, infrastructure, or health and education-systems.

4. *Identity politics*: While towards the 2000s the perception of identity has gradually increased in preferences of national identity rather than subnational level (e.g. regional identity), the latter still matters. Moreover, policies in the recent years have posed some tensions and challenges towards the process of building a unified national identity. Language policies that are perceived as unfair, or even further as an act of linguistic assimilation by some, can cause more tension between different groups of people in the different regions in Ukraine. This is especially true for those where language constitutes a bigger part of their identity. As such, nation building and the politics of national identity can be a challenging issue in countries like Ukraine, which comprise of people with different regional identities. It should be noted, however, that regional identities are not simply divided between the four regions but also represent varying degrees of differences between the composure of Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians, Russian-speaking Ukrainians, Russian-speaking Russians, etc. within each region. The different language groups also don't necessarily agree on the same issues in politics and policies. As such, it is important to recognise the complexity of identities and opinions on identity politics.

We will now look at these four notes in light of the descriptions of governance and SC. For a brief review, governance is about the structure of societies. It can be viewed through power-relationships between the entities involved in it (how power is shared and exercised), and through the accountability in the system (how decision makers and other entities involved are accountable to each other and how this can facilitate legitimacy and ownership within the society). Social capital is about the features of social relations based on networks, identity formation, and trust, which have an effect on the efficiency of coordinated actions through social relations in a society. By “the efficiency of coordinated actions”, we mean how society is able to coordinate certain tasks in order to function as a society. Governance and SC are both about social relationships and concern how the entities involved in the social relationships interact. The main difference is that governance is more oriented towards the structure and institutionalised aspects of how power is shared and its accountability, while SC is more oriented towards the basis and nature of the social relationships – what they are based upon and how they are maintained.

In terms of governance, the regional differences together with the political system in Ukraine makes for an uneven power-relationship in which power is concentrated by a smaller group of those in power on the national level. Likewise, the centralised power makes for an uneven power-relationship between the people and the politicians, including other higher officials in public sectors. In contrast to the checks and balances in a democracy as described in chapter 2, the checks

and balances in the Ukrainian government and between the five sectors (see figure 2) are not highly functioning – making horizontal accountability low. On the issue of vertical accountability, the situation is in one way certain and in another way uncertain. On one hand, people do not seem to have enough power to change the political system and do not expect any changes to the status of corruption and weak public institutions since this has been the situation for a long time. It is difficult for accountability to develop if there are few or no proper practices for accountability (vertical and/or horizontal). If there is little influence from the people to the state (vertical) and/or little balance of powers within the state (horizontal), then it is less likely that accountability can be high in a society. Power-relationships will also be less likely to be balanced. Whether this is favourable for those involved, is another issue. It depends on the socio-political culture and how governance is perceived. Do the people in the society favour a “strongman leader” or a more “collective decision making leadership”? Either style of governance experience different challenges that can be exploited in HT.

The people can exercise their right to vote and oust presidents. However, the political situation is unstable and the recent political developments after the Euromaidan have created many uncertainties. For example the recently elected president, Volodymyr Zelensky, is a comedian with no political experience who has built his campaign on his difference from the other candidates rather than any concrete policy ideas (BBC 2019). Though he promises to combat corruption, many question his ties with the oligarch billionaire Ihor Kolomoisky (ibid).

Overall, the accountability in Ukrainian governance is somewhat uncertain as the power-relationships are uneven and accountability is uncertain. In certain aspects, authoritarian regimes can contrast the accountability in democracy as authoritarian regimes can sometimes be more efficient in their governance due to there being little or no opposition against them. Nevertheless, a challenge in Ukraine is that their political system is somewhere in between. The political system seems to be not “democratic” enough to gain legitimacy and support from the entire population, but neither authoritarian enough to deter all opposition and effectively carry out their policies. The Euromaidan’s result in ousting the president and the military’s inefficiency (e.g. soldiers defecting and vulnerability to pressure, Treverton et al. 2018:23) are some of the examples of this.

In terms of social capital, the uneven power-relationships and uncertain accountability in the public institutions could seem to foster and maintain the people’s preference for using informal networks to possibly compensate for the lack of a functioning formal networks in linking SC and to some extent bridging SC. An example of the relation between the deficit of trust in society and the poor functioning of public institutions, can be found in Kurkchiyan’s (2013) study on legal procedures in Ukraine’s judicial system, here specifically in courts on civil cases. Below is extract from one of Kurkchiyan’s findings (ibid:528).

*“In contrast, the Ukrainian cases demonstrate the judicial difficulties caused by the prevalence of cynicism and habitual distrust in everyday life. Those characteristics of social relationships tend to spill over from daily life into the courtroom. Inevitably, such a demanding social environment inflicts frustration on the judges. To adapt to it, they typically choose not to question the reliability of the evidence given by any of the litigants or witnesses, but instead to allow cases to be determined solely by certified written documents that are taken at face value even though they are not trusted. A similar pattern in the work done by judges has been recorded in other countries such as China that also struggle with a deficit of trust (Woo and Wang, 2005).”*

Kurkchyan (ibid:529) found that Ukraine has not modernised in a way that its bureaucracy actually functions. How deep the relations between SC and the functioning of public institutions goes, and to what extent this is a case of cause-effect, requires further research. However, it is an interesting issue to analyse in the context of HT as we can question what this means to other public institutions such as the military and intelligence departments. Another question is if the people do not have enough trust in the government and public institutions to begin with, can they trust and rely on them in a conflict? Can the people count on the government to handle crises and conflicts? Likewise, can the government trust the people in a conflict?

With the additional issue of subnational identities, building a national identity with national narratives becomes a challenge as the different subnational identities may not share the same identity, values, narratives and networks as the main governing entity (i.e. the government). The sociological distance between the citizens and the governing entity can be a challenge for gaining trust, building a unified national identity, as well as forming networks that can make society function efficiently. The annexation of Crimea and intervention in east Ukraine made all these issues, which Ukraine struggled with, more tense altogether. As Popescu (2015:2) stated: *“it is hard to imagine a more favourable ground: a contested, passive or near-absent sense of Ukrainian identity, estrangement from the new authorities in Kiev, a large-scale Russian military and intelligence presence in Sevastopol and the domination of Russia-based media outlets. Due to this climate, for it was not just easy for Russia, it was almost effortless”*. In the Ukraine case, Russia knew and understood the regional divisions, the political instability, the tensions caused by recent language policies, etc. and used it in their information campaigns during their operations in Crimea and east Ukraine (Reisinger and Golts 2014:4-6). Playing on contradicting narratives and polarising subjects was an important part of Russia’s HT strategy (ibid:4-8).

Yet, as Kulyk (2016:600) noted, the Euromaidan and the Russian intervention seems to have led to an increased general alienation from Russia and that this constitutes the recent changes in Ukrainian identity. Worth noting is also that both the pro-Maidan and anti-Maidan groups were predominantly critical of the Russian authorities, although in Kharkiv some participants in the latter

group were reluctant to give up their fondness for Russia, more so as they did not consider Russia primarily guilty for the current predicament in Ukraine (Kulyk 2016:601). As such, there is no clear-cut correlation between pro-Maidan/anti-Maidan and pro-Russia/anti-Russia. Similarly, the perception of language amongst people (before and after the events in 2014) is complex. This illustrates the non-linearity of HT as Russia (the instigator in this case) could not predict the outcomes of their tactics and strategies (which sometimes were unfavourable to them), but needed to adapt as they went. Either way, the many complex and conflicting opinions in Ukrainian society regarding language and national identity as a whole, as well as politics and the relation between the authorities and the people, were enhanced through this conflict.

#### **5.4 What the case of Ukraine tells us about governance and social capital in HT**

Based on the case study, this thesis argues that there are two ways in which the concepts of governance and SC can expose a society's vulnerabilities and susceptibility towards HT. Firstly, the concepts are about society and social relations. As such, if there are already existing challenges in a society and in the social relations in that society, then these can expose and influence other vulnerabilities in society, which can be exploited by the HT aggressor. Secondly, these concepts also play a role in how the targeted is able to respond and counter the HT. This affects the efficiency of HT operations and the extent of their effects. These two ways overlap, but will be discussed separately.

##### *5.4.1 What governance and SC mean to existing vulnerabilities in democratic society*

The topics in this thesis have been in the context of democratic governance, specifically representative and liberal democracy where democracy is based on a representative government and liberal values such as freedom of speech, open market economics, and individual rights. While there are definitely differences between Ukraine and other democracies in Europe, e.g. in Great Britain, Germany and Norway, the main principles in governance and possible challenges are similar. In his article on hybrid interference (in this thesis: HT), Wigell (2019:268-273) highlights four features that make liberal democracies particularly vulnerable to hybrid interference.

The first feature is the restrained state in which the principles of protecting individual rights restrain democracies, through constitutional mechanisms, from abusing power. The checks and balances in terms of horizontal accountability is one example of this. This feature, one of the main principles in democratic governance, limit the state in its control of civil society and its ability to detect and protect against threats to society. Countering disinformation campaigns and economic threats are more challenging as the state must avoid breaching civil rights and freedoms, and cannot use the same tools as authoritarian states can (ibid:268-269).

The second feature is pluralism as democracy is based on the political competition of different interests. Such competing forces in politics allow for open debates in society and compete for influence on governance in society. This also allows for vulnerabilities as an external actor can use different elements of power to polarise a political situation and increase societal divisions (ibid:269-270). Referring back to the Ukraine case, there are many divisions in Ukrainian society, which overlap making it complex. Together with a generally high distrust in the state authorities, this creates several societal vulnerabilities, which can be exploited. Recent language policies, which marginalise one part of its society, can be viewed by some as a worsening of the vertical accountability. The most recent language policy, was passed by the Ukrainian parliament in end of April this year (2019), stating that Ukrainian language must be spoken in Official settings (Luhn 2019). It also sets the quotas that 90% of new films and television and 50% of books must be in Ukrainian (ibid). Signing the legislation into law will be one of the last acts of the resigning president Poroshenko before the newly elected Zelenskiy (who has criticised the law) takes over (ibid). Such laws risks antagonising even more the significant minority of Russian speakers in Ukraine (ibid).

The third feature in democracy is free media. Free and independent media works as a facilitator of the freedom of expression, ensuring the freedom of speech and individuals' rights and liberties. It also acts as part of the checks and balances by facilitating government responsiveness and accountability to the people in its society (Wigell:270-271). However, this allows for media to become the battlegrounds for political competitions, which can be polarised and cause more tension based on existing divisions in society. Disinformation campaigns and "fake news" distorting truths of real events while promoting a specific narrative as conducted in the Ukraine case, pose many challenges to democracies where everyone has the right to express opinions and share news. In comparison, authoritarian regimes can control media to a greater extent.

The fourth feature in democracy is open economy. Open market economy may not be limited to democracies, but it has become a feature closely associated with western democratic systems (ibid:271). Among the implications of open economy is securing of rights of property and restriction of the state. As mentioned in chapter 3, it also allows more freedom for foreign actors to enter and influence another state actor's national economy (ibid:260, 272). Ukraine's reliance on Russian gas and its debt to Russia is an example of this.

In summary, we can see that democracies are particularly vulnerable to HT because they, in comparison to authoritarian regimes, are more open and susceptible to external influences and possible threats. Another issue is that because the governance situation is based on the principles of ensuring individual rights, democracies have fewer tools, compared to authoritarian regimes, to counter HT. Still, an important note is that external actors conducting HT rely on already existing

vulnerabilities in their target's society. In terms of governance and SC, democracies rely on a more balanced situation of power-relationships, which need to be upheld and maintained through accountability and fair formal networks that ensure a trust between the people and the government and other public institutions. In contrast, the power-relationships in authoritarian societies are constricted and controlled by the ruling entity to a higher degree. Governance and SC still matter in authoritarian regimes but in a different way.

As stated in the second feature on what makes liberal democracies particularly vulnerable to HT, democracies are based on the political competition of different interests. As such, governance in democracies will always have some degree of conflicts as steering a society (governing) requires following certain policies that have been chosen over other (previously competed) policies. This may leave some in society disappointed. However, such types of divides and conflicts of interest are not necessarily negative. It depends on how the process of selecting policies is carried out and how this process is perceived by the people in that society. If the process of selecting policies is viewed as fair, then the fact that some people in society are disappointed with the decision may not necessarily facilitate for any vulnerabilities or make that society more susceptible to HT. This can be because the people view the power-relationships and accountability as favourable or acceptable. If accountability is deterred, it represents a change in the power-relationships, which can reduce the population's (or at least part of the population's) rights. In that case, policies then selected over other competing policies, can facilitate for further tensions.

One could say that in the context of HT and vulnerabilities, reductions in the accountability of society could facilitate for vulnerabilities to the stability and make the society more susceptible to HT. If an external actor chooses to use HT to create further divides in a society, it is easier to do so where the power-relationship and accountability already facilitates for divides and tensions in that society. Power-relationships and accountability can thus be seen as factors determining (among other) whether the competing policies in a democracy may exacerbate vulnerabilities and subsequent susceptibility towards HT. In Ukrainian society the power-relationships between the entities (government, private sector, citizens) is poorly distributed due to systematic corruption and the accountability is low as execution of government policies, through among other bureaucracy, are inefficient. Recent language policies, which marginalise one part of its society, can be viewed by some as a worsening of the vertical accountability. The most recent language policy, mentioned on page 60, is an example of this.

Regarding SC, the efficiency of coordinated actions may affect how power-relationships and accountability in a society is perceived. If the formal networks, such as bureaucracy, are efficient and people view it as functioning, ensuring their interests, then this facilitates for more trust in the system. Likewise, if linking SC (e.g. relations between the people and government officials) are

perceived as favourable, and bridging SC (e.g. voluntary organisations exercising civic engagement) are common – illustrating a society that facilitates and maintains actively participating citizens – then this facilitates for more trust in the system and overall a higher SC.

However, high levels of SC can be also be problematic to the power-relationships and accountability in a society. Chapter 2 mentioned that networks can be exclusive and unaccountable, social norms (in this thesis: identity formation) can be oppressive for some, while trust can be hugely complicated – depending on individual connections and social contexts. In some social contexts, high SC with close ties may foster discrimination and conservatism, causing social stagnation and resistance to change. Moreover, if SC is high within a small group of people in a society, it could be at the expense of the others in the society who are not part of this small group. All these features can in turn facilitate for certain vulnerabilities in a society. Firstly, these features can challenge a society's accountability, e.g. if high SC in limited groups or the majority becomes at the expense of other groups or minorities.

Ukraine provides very visible examples of low SC. To compare, we can briefly touch upon an example from a country with relatively high SC, such as Norway (Svendsen and Svendsen 2016:1-3). Norway also has its challenges in both governance and SC. In 2017, the Norwegian government voted to reduce the number of counties in Norway from 19 to 11 (Furunes 2018). This involved merging Finnmark county and Troms county. Despite resistance from the majority of the population in Finnmark and Troms, the government continued to carry out this plan. The Minister of Local Government and Modernisation, Monica Mæland, warned that if Finnmark County did not adhere to the plans, she would conduct the merger by force. 14<sup>th</sup> of May 2018, 87% of the people in Finnmark County voted against the merger. Minister Mæland stated that Finnmark County was breaking the law and threatened to take the power away from Finnmark and transferring it all to Troms County. This agitated the situation. The government did not recognise the votes, nor Finnmark as a singular county (ibid). On 21<sup>st</sup> June 2018, Finnmark county council chose to boycott the merger. 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2019, the government forced the merger, making Finnmark and Troms one county from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020 (Hansen 2019).

This example illustrates how countries with overall high SC, also can experience challenges if networks (here the political power in the south of Norway) become limited through reduced linking SC in this case. The efficiency of coordinated actions may be high, on one side, due to the efficiency of bureaucracy, but on the other hand, it may be reduced when the people then oppose the decision-making/policies enforced. In terms of governance, the accountability (at least for the population in Finnmark) may be reduced as they may perceive their rights to influence governance in their society as taken away. Overall, having too low or too high SC and societies may struggle

with accountability and possibly then the efficiency of coordinated actions. These struggles can in turn facilitate for societal vulnerabilities and susceptibility towards HT.

Another way to view governance and SC in HT (through the aspect of democracy) is stretching a society's "social contract"<sup>21</sup> to increase the divide between the people and the state in different ways compared to what the social contract in that specific society is built upon in the first place and how it developed. In his article, Wigell (ibid:262) refers to this as a wedge strategy – "*a policy of dividing a target country or coalition, weakening its counterbalancing potential*". Whatever, we call it, the point is that HT plays on existing imbalances of power-relationships in governance and the disruptions in SC in democracies to weaken the society and exert influence over it. Regarding the social contract, we can think of the issue of ownership. Where the social contract in democracy meets governance and SC is the issue of ownership the people have towards their society. When the situation of governance and SC in a society is viewed as favourable by the people in it, it might be more likely that they have an ownership to the society. By ownership, I mean in both the functional and emotional aspect. The functional aspect is about whether they (through among other elections – see chapter 2, page 15) can influence how their society is governed. The emotional aspect is whether they feel a belonging to their society. It is easier to create a wedge in a society where the governance and SC situation leaves the people without an ownership to their society. When people feel alienated from their government, it could be easier for an external actor to use HT to divide the people from their government even more. The case from Norway is an issue that could in the long term, if more pressure from the Norwegian government occurs, facilitate for a societal vulnerability. Social media movements such as #notmypresident can also be indicators of lack of ownership in a society (Gold et al. 2016).

To reduce this opportunity for the targeting actor, the targeted society needs to ensure that those who are part of it perceive the societal structure and social relations within it as favourable. How to do so and solve existing vulnerabilities is a challenging and complex task, which will vary in each society and context. However, the features of possible vulnerabilities can be observed and analysed in this thesis's Ukraine case.

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<sup>21</sup> The social contract is a theory concerning the legitimacy of the authority of the state (here: government) over the people. The contract refers to an agreement where the people surrender some of their freedoms and submit to authority in exchange for social order and the protection of their remaining rights (Møller and Skaaning 2012:24-25, Jackson and Sørensen 2016:67-68).



#### *5.4.2 What governance and SC mean to a democratic society's ability to respond and counter HT*

The role of governance in HT becomes more exposed in acute situations than in the “normal” or non-HT situation. How the government and other public sectors (e.g. military), as well as the civilian sector is organised, works together, matters not only to the decision-making process but also to the effectiveness of the decisions made. If the power-relationships between these sectors is characterised through competitiveness rather than collaborative, conflict rather than concurrence, then the decision-making is less likely to be effective. As such, the responsive capabilities in weaker governance is lower and can make the state more susceptible to HT and more challenging for them to counter. This makes HT more effective. This is especially if the HT attacks are based on the underlying issues behind the conflicts between the different sectors.

Social capital in conflict and crises plays a similar role as governance but can be more directed towards the population's resiliency against external pressures. In times of crises and conflict, people rely on functioning networks to access basic needs but also to solve conflicts. The management and developments in conflicts in a society depend not only on the state's preventative actions towards conflicts, but also on the abilities of the people (Gjørsv 2019a). If the state authority and public institutions are not able to function properly, the question is how informal networks through bonding and to some extent bridging will work in the conflict or crisis. The civilian population in a society is not merely a bystander in crises and conflicts. The role of civilians in conflict and the relations between civilians and the military are complex and many. The people's ability to mobilise through their networks in crises and conflict effects their resilience (ibid). The level of civic engagement could thus possibly also be an indicator for how voluntary organisations are in crises. In addition to general trust and accountability in a society, cooperation between such voluntary organisations, civil defence as well as with the military depend to varying degrees on good network relations and certain levels of civic engagement. This is the assumption of Norway's Total Defence concept (Totalforsvaret) of which the Norwegian defence policy is based upon (Nystuen 2016, Brekke 2018, Gjørsv 2019a, Gjørsv 2019b). The ability and capability of resilience, thus, can depend on the situation of the social contract and ownership in that society.

In Ukraine, the social contract between the people and the government has been through challenging times – from different regions becoming part of the Russian Empire (and later the Soviet Union) in different times, to handling periods of change since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The transition from authoritarianism to democracy takes time, and so it does too for a new governance system and SC situation to solidify a social contract. The social contract in Ukraine still needs to solidify and mature in order to have a functioning system in which the relations within the population and the relations between the people and the government are good enough that coordinated actions are efficient. When governance involves power-relationships and accountability

perceived as favourable by those entities involved, the social contract can stand stronger. When SC involves flexible bridging networks (formal and informal), an overall unified identity formation that is not at the expense of marginalisation, as well as a general sustainable trust within the population and between the people and the government, then the social contract can stand stronger. When the situation in a society does not have enough, or any of these, elements, and HT puts enough pressure on the society, then the social contract can be stretched far enough to dissolve the society. In such an extreme case, the society dissolves as the social dynamics that the social contract is based upon, is eroded. Besides the extreme cases, we can recognise that HT puts pressure on society in different ways to varying degrees. Even without HT, unfavourable governance and SC in a society already expose many negative consequences for those entities in that society – they put pressure on the foundations of democracy as explained through Wigell’s four features of democracy.

As mentioned in chapter 3 on the MCDC-report, vulnerabilities and critical functions can involve a wide range of activities and entities. Further, any vulnerabilities and critical functions can become a target for a HT attacker. It is not limited by governance and SC. If we look at the vulnerabilities in phase one in the MCDC-report’s analysis of the Ukraine case “reliance on Russian gas and debt to Russia” does pose a challenge to counter such HT. However, the argument here is that as governance and SC constitute the fundamentals of social relations in society, these two concepts play a role in the severity of vulnerabilities. If the vulnerability in case was poor infrastructure or something else that could be solved with physical and/or economical resources then it is much easier to fix such vulnerabilities if the governance and SC situation is strong in the society. However, if the governance and SC situation is poor and distributing physical and/or economical resources is challenging due to corruption and/or conflicting interests, then the ability to fix vulnerabilities is much more challenging. Even more so is the case if (which HT often is) the vulnerability being targeted is directly the issue of poor governance and SC, such as in the Ukraine case.

In summary, a society’s ability to respond to HT is, among other, determined by its internal political and social conflicts together the low efficiency and functionality in its public institutions. It seems how power-relationships, accountability, together with how networks and civilian-public relations function can have consequences for the efficiency of responses to HT and, thus, the efficiency of the HT conducted. With governance and SC effecting the ability and capability of resilience towards HT, it seems important to be able to assess and evaluate the governance and SC situation in a society. This is the final issue of discussion in this thesis.

## 5.5 Assessing governance and social capital in HT

In hope of answering the research question in this thesis, this section will present a set of questions as a suggestion for how to assess a society's governance and SC situation. The questions will work as indicators to give an idea of the situation, which can then be used as a baseline assessment, contributing to the MCDC-report's analytical framework to expose a society's possible vulnerabilities and subsequent susceptibility towards HT. The idea is that a deeper understanding of the societal and civilian aspects in HT might give a better understanding and ability to counter HT.

Chapter 2 mentioned it is difficult to measure SC. To measure governance and SC in the context of HT is complex. What good governance and SC is varies in each society and different styles of governance and situations in SC may work differently for different societies. This means that assessing these two concepts, requires an assessment that takes into account the perceptions and socio-political history in each society in case study. It also implies an understanding of how such perceptions may change over time. If we are to create baseline assessment for governance and SC that can contribute to the MCDC-report's analytical framework, we need to establish some ground ideas for what we are looking for in relation to who we are assessing. As governance and SC are social concepts, the perceptions of these can change over time. This has implications for how we can assess a society through these concepts, as well as the effects of HT. The suggested questions for assessing a society are based on this and focus on what those entities involved perceive instead of set factors for what good governance and SC implies. The questions are therefore formulated based on three notions/principles:

- 1) The descriptions/definitions of governance and SC in this thesis do not limit or describe any particular type of governance and SC. Instead, they are oriented towards how societies are steered in decision making, their level of accountability, and how society is able to coordinate certain tasks in order to function as a society based on how they are structured in terms of social relations.
- 2) Thus, we acknowledge that different styles of governance and situations in SC may work differently for different societies, and therefore we can't prescribe in a black/white manner what is good and what is bad governance and SC.
- 3) Further, this means that we are assessing the governance and SC situation based on the entities' (in this society) perception and relation to the situation as well as how this may develop over time.

Throughout this thesis, we have seen how a society's governance and SC situation can in two ways expose a society's vulnerabilities and susceptibility towards HT. Based on the findings through the case study, the following questions are suggested for how to assess a society's governance and SC situation:

*Governance:*

1. To what degree are the power-relationships in the society viewed as favourable by the different entities (e.g. government, military, and the people) in it?
  - a. What makes it favourable or not favourable?
  - b. Has there been a change in this perception in recent years, if so why?
2. To what degree are decision makers and the entities (including the people, private sector, public sector etc.) involved in the society held accountable for their actions, i.e. what is the degree of the society's accountability (vertically and horizontally)?
  - a. Is the situation perceived as favourable by the entities in it, and why so?
  - b. Has there been a change in this perception in recent years, if so why?
3. To what degree do the entities in the society feel a functional and emotional ownership to their society?
  - a. Is the situation perceived as favourable by the entities in it, and why so?
  - b. Has there been a change in this perception in recent years, if so why?

*Social capital:*

1. Do the entities in the society mostly rely on formal or informal networks to mobilise and function in society (on macro, meso, and micro level), and to what extent are these networks based on bonding, bridging, and linking SC?
  - a. How so and why?
  - b. Is the situation perceived as favourable by the entities?
  - c. Has here been a change in the situation in recent years, if so why?
  - d. Has there been a change in this perception in recent years, if so why?
2. Does the society contain different entities with different collective identities based on, but not limited to; language, religion, ethnicity, territory, and/or history?
  - a. If yes, do they cause any tensions in the society?
  - b. If they do cause any tensions, why?
  - c. How is the situation perceived by the different entities in society?
  - d. What identity policies does the society have and how does it affect the situation?
  - e. Has the situation changed in recent years, how?
3. To what degree do the entities in the society trust each other, across formal and informal networks?
  - a. Has here been a change in the situation in recent years, if so why?
  - b. Is the situation perceived as favourable by the entities?

The questions above are meant as a guideline. As societies differ, certain questions may need to be tailored to fit the case in accordance to what the specific focus is in each assessment. In addition, these questions are designed through the aspect of democratic governance due to the focus of this thesis. Other questions may be necessary if the assessment regards an authoritarian regime. Moreover, further research on governance and SC in the context of HT could give more depth to how these questions can be developed, and how the questions may correlate more directly to specific HT tactics and strategies. Such research is beyond the scope of this thesis. The point here is that these questions could be developed to work as a guideline to create a baseline assessment for governance and social capital, contributing to the MCDC-report's framework to further expose a society's vulnerabilities and subsequent susceptibility towards HT.

The next step is to assess the governance and SC situation in the context of HT. Here we can follow the MCDC-report's idea of creating a baseline assessment, which allows for an identification and separation of what is a normal situation from what is likely an attack. Below, is a suggestion to how a baseline assessment could be developed (following the MCDC-report's analytical framework).

1. Find out how the current situation is based the guideline questions.
2. Identify possible scenarios that could worsen the situation, i.e. make the situation more unfavourable to the entities in the society
3. Identify what threats and actions could lead to such scenarios
4. Establish how to identify the sources and reasons behind any changes in the situation, are the changes due to internal decisions (the society's own policies) or from external pressures (an actor outside the society). This involves establishing how to determine where the sources of change come from
5. Establish a system that can monitor the severity of an attack and inform on possible counteractions to deal with different scenarios of threats and actions

Creating such baseline assessments and systems for countering HT, and factoring governance and SC into it, requires a lot of analysis into one's own society and dealing with all the challenges (as mentioned earlier in section 5.2, page 53-54). Just as mentioned in page 54, how these questions are answered can also be influenced by the governance and SC situation. Nevertheless, to understand how HT affect and play on societal vulnerabilities we need to understand how societies and the social relations in societies work. As HT occurs across the entire spectrum of society, it also needs to be understood and dealt with through the entire spectrum of society. Different entities in society, from different public institutions not limited to government and military, but also private actors and civilian agencies need to be involved. Societies on the national government level also need to cooperate internationally, with other national governments

and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This is also suggested in the MCDC-report on recommendations (Cullen and Reichborn-Kjennerud 2016b:23-25). HT expands the “theatre of war and threats” from the battlefield and into society, arguably, more intensely than before. Developing guideline questions and baseline assessments for the concepts governance and SC situation in a society could thus, prove to be a valuable asset in understanding and countering HT. As mentioned, the questions and points in this section of the chapter are just suggestions. Further testing and development of these, require more research, which is beyond the limits of this thesis. Nevertheless, this thesis hopes to serve as a basis for further research on governance and SC in the context of HT.

## **CHAPTER SIX – SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This thesis, aimed at gaining an understanding of how the concepts of governance and social capital can contribute to the MCDC-report's analytical framework to further expose a society's vulnerabilities and subsequent susceptibility towards hybrid threats. In this research, three main concepts are at the centre: 1) hybrid threats, 2) governance, and 3) social capital. In section 6.2, is a summary of the chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4. The summary of chapter 5 and conclusion of this thesis is given in section 6.3.

### **6.2 Summary**

Chapter 2 looked at the three main concepts in this thesis: 1) hybrid threats, 2) governance, and 3) social capital (SC). Hybrid threats (HT) is described by the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Hybrid CoE) as “*methods and activities that are targeted towards vulnerabilities of the opponent*”. The chapter argued for using the concept HT because this thesis focuses on the non-kinetic aspects of conflict. In relation to the topic of this thesis, HT is relevant because of the focus on targeting vulnerabilities in society. While, mixing various military and non-military elements and activities, as well as exploiting vulnerabilities in society is nothing new in the history of warfare, the concept HT has led to a further focus on the societal and civilian aspects of war and conflict. Understanding how society functions and how different societal features can in certain circumstances become vulnerabilities, may prove be a valuable asset in understanding and countering HT. One method in doing so, which is the main topic of this thesis, is to assess society through governance and social capital.

Governance is about the structure of societies. It encompasses how power and decision-making is exercised through how rules, structures, processes and relations between entities within a society interact. Governance can be viewed through power-relationships between the entities involved in it (how power is shared and exercised), and through the accountability in the system (how decision makers and other entities involved are accountable to each other and how this can facilitate legitimacy and ownership within the society).

Social capital (SC) is about the features of social relations based on networks, identity formation, and trust, which have an effect on the efficiency of coordinated actions through social relations in a society. By “the efficiency of coordinated actions”, we mean how society is able to coordinate certain tasks in order to function as a society. If networks are weak, identity formation within a society is fragmented and is a source of tension, and/or if trust between people is low, then the efficiency of coordinating actions can be low.

In chapter 3, we see how the MCDC-report's description of HW is quite similar to the Hybrid CoE's description and characteristics of HT. They both highlight: 1) societal vulnerabilities, and 2) coordinated and synchronised actions using various elements/instruments of power. In addition, the MCDC-report mentions the characteristic of effects and non-linearity, which is also the case in HT. The MCDC-report's description offers a functional definition of HT, which forms the basis of their analytical framework. The framework highlights the connections and visualisation of the relations between vulnerabilities, instruments of powers, and effects. The framework makes it easier for us to create a baseline and a system for monitoring potential vulnerabilities, distinguish a "normal" situation versus a HT attack, the severity of an attack, and possibly how to counter it. The limitation of the analytical framework is not that it doesn't put societal vulnerabilities into focus, but that it lacks deeper analysis for how society (represented through their PMESII spectrum) functions and how certain characteristics in society make the critical functions more susceptible to vulnerabilities, which can be targeted in HT. This adds to the argument for looking into governance and social capital to understand societal vulnerabilities.

In chapter 4, we found that Ukraine has several challenges in terms of governance and SC. With regional divisions, tensions in national identities, polarising identity policies (centred on language), together with corruption and inefficient public management, the situation of governance and social capital was easy for Russia to exploit in its operations in Crimea and east Ukraine. Russia actively exploited the divisions in Ukrainian society and the unequipped government using a multitude of instruments from economic leverage to special forces and disinformation. The Ukrainian government and its military was inefficient in its response to Russia's hybrid attacks. Although they eventually managed to fight back in east Ukraine, the conflict stands unresolved today (as of May 2019).

### **6.3 conclusion**

In chapter 5, the Ukraine case tells us that there are two ways in which the concepts of governance and SC can expose a society's vulnerabilities and susceptibility towards HT. Firstly, the concepts are about society and social relations. If there are already existing challenges in a society and in the social relations in that society, then these can expose and influence other vulnerabilities in society, which can be exploited by the HT aggressor. Secondly, governance and SC influence a society's ability to respond and counter HT. This affects the efficiency of HT operations and the extent of their effects. These two ways overlap.

We see that democracies are particularly vulnerable to HT because they are, in contrast to authoritarian regimes, more open and susceptible to external influences and possible threats. Another issue is that because the governance situation is based on the principles of ensuring



individual rights, democracies have fewer tool, compared to authoritarian regimes, to counter HT. In terms of governance and SC, democracies rely on a balanced situation of power-relationships, which need to be upheld and maintained through accountability and fair formal networks that ensure a trust between the people and the government as well as other public institutions. Together these constitute what ownership the people have to their society - do they identify as a part of their society's collective identity and do they feel ownership to how their society is steered?

HT plays on existing imbalances of power-relationships in governance and the disruptions in SC in democracies to weaken the society and exert influence over it. To reduce the susceptibility towards HT, the targeted society needs to ensure that the societal structure and social relations within it is perceived as favourable by the people in it. How to do so and solve existing vulnerabilities is a challenging task, which will vary in each society and context. Ukraine's ability to respond to the conflict was challenged by its internal political conflicts and the low efficiency and functionality in its public institutions. It illustrated how power-relationships, accountability, together with how networks and civilian-public relations function can have consequences for a society's ability and efficiency in countering HT.

In hope of answering the research question in this thesis, the thesis concluded with presenting a set of questions as a suggestion for how to assess a society's governance and SC situation. The questions will work as indicators to give an idea of the situation, which can then be used as a baseline assessment, contributing to the MCDC-report's analytical framework to expose a society's possible vulnerabilities and subsequent susceptibility towards HT. The idea is that a deeper understanding of the societal and civilian aspects in HT might give a better understanding and ability to counter HT. Creating a baseline assessment for countering HT, and factoring governance and SC into it, requires a lot of analysis into one's own society and dealing with all the challenges. Further testing and development of such a framework, requires more research, which is beyond the limits of this thesis. Nevertheless, this thesis hopes to serve as a basis for further research on governance and SC in the context of HT.

In closing remarks, it seems that HT offers a duality in the aspect of democracy. HT challenges democracies by exposing vulnerabilities. At the same time, it also highlights the principles and strengths of democracy. The health of a democratic society determines its resiliency. If a democratic society adheres to the democratic principles and constitute power-relationships, accountability, and SC that is favourable to the people, then it may be resilient and function in a manner that reduces susceptibility to HT. If not, the democratic society, in the extreme case, risks collapsing under its own weight. HT is then merely a catalyst. HT can thus be viewed as one of modern democratic societies' great tests.

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