

# To what extent is societal (de)securitization present in the practices of EuVsDisinfo in the Netherlands and the EU?

AUTHOR: J.J STEENMAN, S 1237292

Supervisor: V. Scepanovic

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## Abstract

This thesis explores the extent to which (de)secritization is present in ten speech acts enunciated by the EuVsDisinfo campaign and the Dutch Parliament. This fills a research gap on simultaneous (de)secritization in this particular case study.

## List of Abbreviations

- ESCTF: East StratCom Task Force
- EEAS: European External Action Service
- EaP: Eastern Partnership
- DCFTA: Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
- JIT: Joint Investigation Team
- IRA: Internet Research Agency

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Coming to terms with Fake News and moving to Disinformation

In 2017, the Collins English Dictionary declared “Fake News” to be the word of the year. This Dictionary defines it as “false, often sensational, information disseminated under the guise of news reporting.” According to the Dictionary’s head of language content, Helen Newstead, frequent use of the term had become commonplace in the electrified political landscape of the Anglophone world. This was in part because of the haphazard allegations of “Fake News” distribution by the 45<sup>th</sup> president of the United States Donald J. Trump, which has tied very real consequences to alleged fictitious reporting. One of the more dire repercussions of the recent upsurge of “Fake News” is that trust in news reporting was undermined by what seemed to be a ubiquitous use of the word.<sup>1</sup> Many scholars have pointed out that use of the term “Fake News” is problematic, one of the main reasons for this is that it is almost never accurate label. The subjective approach of designating the absolute terms “real” and “fake” to reporting allows for dubious practices. News can acquire the status of bearing truth or being fake by virtue of the reaction it instills in the beholder. In a 2017 report written for the council of Europe, Wardle and Derakhshan refrain from using the term “Fake News” altogether. Instead, they identify misinformation, disinformation and malinformation as terms that are more useful. These different concepts all touch upon the wider issues that “Fake News” seeks to describe.<sup>2</sup> The complication of undermined trust in news agencies predates discussions that have been sparked by democratic outcomes in the United Kingdom and the United States of America. A general sense of discontent and disbelief emerged amongst liberal democratic audiences as a response to the expectations that mainstream news outlets raised in their predictions on the US presidential elections of 2016 and the Brexit referendum.<sup>3</sup> It is equally important to highlight that Russia meddled with the decision making process of the 2016 US presidential elections by releasing confidential E-mails from the democratic national committee through WikiLeaks.<sup>4</sup> It should however be noted that hacking and disinformation distribution pose fundamentally different problems, they are merely linked in their subversive consequences to the democratic process.<sup>5</sup> Altogether, this made sure that the vulnerability of electoral systems was evident. Constituents were led to question the resilience of their democracy to external threats. A piece in Time magazine concluded that the Brexit referendum had rendered the quote; “The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter.” to carry a shattering resonance after the Brexit vote took place. Winston Churchill, wartime prime minister and British champion, was accredited with uttering this quote.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Julia Hunt, “Fake News Is Officially 2017’s Word of the Year.” The Independent. Independent Digital News and Media, November 2, 2017.

2. Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan, “INFORMATION DISORDER: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making.” *Council of Europe Report*, October 2017: 5.

3. Ronald Inglehart, and Pippa Norris, “Trump and the Populist Authoritarian Parties: The Silent Revolution in Reverse.” *Perspectives on Politics* 15, no. 2 (2017): 5.

4. “Background to ‘Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections’: The Analytic and Cyber Incident Attribution.” *Intelligence Community Assessment*, January 6, 2017: 443.

5. Erik Brattberg and Tim Maurer, “Russian Election Interference Europe’s Counter to Fake News and Cyber Attacks.” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, May 2018: 4.

6. Henry Wismayer, “Brexit: Britain’s Referendum Was Not a Triumph of Democracy.” Time. Time, June 29, 2016.

## 1.2. Shifting from the Global Stage Towards the Dutch Context

The troubles of legitimacy and the rise of populist movements have however extended beyond English speaking world.<sup>7</sup> An observable trend shows that these sentiments of bad faith are on the rise throughout the European Union. Allegations of subversive practices in relation to the French and German elections required a response, therefore the European Council established the East StratCom Task Force in March 2015.<sup>8</sup> The EuVsDisinfo program which falls under the ESCTF was the response of the European External Action Service to this problem. Although it focused on disinformation in eastern Europe it also investigated non eastern European instances of disinformation. The EuVsDisinfo campaign was specifically launched to counter pro-Kremlin disinformation.<sup>9</sup> The Netherlands is no exception. Although the problems in the Netherlands are oftentimes classified as relatively minor, Dutch struggles with disinformation are now ingrained in domestic debates. In December 2017 the discussion was lead into new avenues due to the controversy surrounding the European Union's EuVsDisinfo campaign. Five Dutch articles and their outlets were classified as disinforming by the EuVsDisinfo campaign, which lead to calls for the disbandment of EuVsDisinfo in the Dutch parliament.<sup>10</sup> On the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 2018, three of the targeted outlets urged the Kennedy van der Laan law firm to file for a subpoena charging the EU with libel against them.<sup>11</sup> Eventually this legal charge was retracted when 4 of the 5 articles were removed from the EuVsDisinfo database.<sup>12</sup> After the EuVsDisinfo debacle took place, a governmental response was necessary. Particularly because there were three parliamentary motions on the campaign, two motions intended to alter the work of EuVsDisinfo and the last one wanted to shut down the campaign. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of March 2018 the Dutch interior minister addressed parliament on the desire of the executive to defend the freedom of speech in the Netherlands, this was in relationship to the EuVsDisinfo campaign. The value of the ESCTF's work in limiting foreign influence in the political process was however also acknowledged.<sup>13</sup> To this day, the taskforce hosts the EuVsDisinfo website which compiles a database of disinformation spread to target the strategic interest of the EU. Through a content analysis, disinformation is unveiled without claiming to read into the intentions behind such disinformation campaigns. The premise of the website aligns with the Dutch government's intention to uphold an independent media marketplace whilst combatting foreign interference.<sup>14</sup> The campaign has however urged scholars and civilians to focus on the methods used to identify disinformation. The Dutch case sheds an interesting albeit timely light on disinformation discussions. The next paragraph links the case to international relations literature.

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7. Lisa Gaufman, "The Trump Carnival: Popular Appeal in the Age of Misinformation." *International Relations*. Accessed August 27, 2019: 2.

8. Martin Kragh and Sebastian Åsberg. "Russia's Strategy for Influence through Public Diplomacy and Active Measures: the Swedish Case." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 40, no. 6 (May 2017): 775.

9. "Questions and Answers about the East StratCom Task Force - EEAS - European External Action Service - European Commission." EEAS - European External Action Service. Accessed August 27, 2019.

10. Gewijzigde motie Kwint/Yesilgöz-Zegerius over het opheffen van EU versus Disinfo (ter vervanging van 21501-34-286) - Raad voor Onderwijs, Jeugd, Cultuur en Sport - Parlementaire monitor. Accessed August 27, 2019.

11. Marta Barandiy, "Why Are the Dutch Demanding to Shut down the EU's Only Anti-Propaganda Service? |." *Euromaidan Press*, March 21, 2018.

12. Arjen Nijeboer, "[Opinion] Why the EU Must Close EUvsDisinfo." *EUobserver*. Accessed August 27, 2019.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Staten-Generaal, Tweede Kamer der. "Raad Voor Onderwijs, Jeugd, Cultuur En Sport ; Brief Regering; Reactie Op De Gewijzigde Motie Van De Leden Kwint En Yesilgöz-Zegerius over Het Opheffen Van EU versus Disinfo, Op De Motie Van Het Lid Westerveld over Een Andere Strategie Voor EU versus Disinfo) En Op De Motie Van De Leden Sneller En Verhoeven over Een Europese Strategie Tegen Ondermijnende Desinformatie." *Wet- en regelgeving, onderdeel van Overheid.nl*, March 7, 2018.

15. Staten-Generaal, Tweede Kamer der. "Nationale Veiligheid; Brief Regering; Ongewenste Buitenlandse Inmenging." *Wet- en regelgeving, onderdeel van Overheid.nl*, March 20, 2018.

### 1.3. EuVsDisinfo in academic literature

Thus far, the practices of the EU's ESCTF have been severely understudied in academia. This may relate to the novelty of the organization and what seems as the relatively new challenge that disinformation poses. Wagnsson and Hellman are two of the scarce scholars who published about the taskforce. Their article presupposes that as a normative power the EU's taskforce must refrain from engaging in the same strategic communication that the Russians apply in their operations in the informational theatre. If the conduct of the ESCTF is not handled with care, the EU stands to lose its reflexive normative identity as an international power by allowing itself to get dragged into an information war. This can lead to overtly antagonistic lines of thinking in which narratives on an EU "self" and a Russian "other" epitomize the relations of these neighbouring actors on the international stage. Loss of the normative power status, by engaging in othering and securitization can be prevented by adopting public diplomacy as a method instead. The inquiry is restricted to the communication of the EU towards Russia.<sup>16</sup> The securitization of identity has been described by the Danish scholar Weaver as a societal process in which order is maintained by propagating a shared worldview amongst at least a minimum inner circle.<sup>17</sup> The utterances of the EU's high representative and the EuVsDisinfo's Disinformation Digest newsletter are both investigated in the research that follows. According to these findings, the HR Frederica Mogherini voices an abjective tone in her speeches whereas the disinformation digest purveys aggressive othering.<sup>18</sup> This leads Hellman and Wagnsson to arrive at the possibility for two conclusions. On the one hand, discontinuing the communication with Russia allows the EU to meet the discursive criteria that help it maintain its normative power status. On the other hand, the possibility for normative powers to use the means necessary for information warfare can arise under certain circumstances.<sup>19</sup> As mentioned earlier, few scholars wrote about the EuVsDisinfo campaign. Therefore time needs to be devoted to the research of this EU institution, particularly in the light of the alleged securitization and proven aggressive othering by the EuVsDisinfo campaign. The next paragraph will identify the relevant international relations literature and proposes a research objective.

### 1.4. Working towards and Outline for the Thesis

The case in which 5 Dutch "Disinforming Outlet's" were published in the disinformation database can be placed in the wider literature of international relations. Hellman and Wagnsson warn of securitization, therefore a research gap exists on whether this particular incarnation of international relations theory is actually observable in the practices of the EuVsDisinfo.<sup>20</sup> Recently Austin and Beaulieu called for a rearticulation of the prevalent normative stances on securitization and desecuritization. These views question the Schmittian "self" and "other" or "us" and "them" understandings on societal securitization. The traditional critique voiced in the literature on this polemic mode of engagement is that a common identity may bridge this dichotomous relationship that occurs during calls for societal securitization. Desecuritization supposedly allows for this state of universality to be reached, this voices a strong ethical preference for desecuritization. The theoretical innovation that Beaulieu and Austin put forward is that securitizing agents often simultaneously resort to securitizing and desecuritizing moves.<sup>21</sup> This insight has been tested, but it is interesting to uncover whether it holds for the conduct of EuVsDisinfo in the Netherlands. Moreover, the Dutch experience is a good case for various reasons. First of all, there are genuine concerns over security in the EU and the Netherlands. The case also lends itself as an example of societal securitization, on the one hand European identity is threatened by

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16. Charlotte Wagnsson and Maria Hellman, "Normative Power Europe Caving In? EU under Pressure of Russian Information Warfare." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 56, no. 5 (2018): 1162.

17. Ronnie D. Lipschutz, *On Security*. New York, NY: Columbia Univ. Press, 2010: 60.

18 Charlotte Wagnsson and Maria Hellman, "Normative Power Europe Caving In? EU under Pressure of Russian Information Warfare." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 56, no. 5 (2018): 1170.

19. *Ibid*: 1172.

20. *Ibid*: 1162.

21. Jonathan Luke Austin and Philippe Beaulieu-Brossard, "(De)Securitisation Dilemmas: Theorising the Simultaneous Enactment of Securitisation and Desecuritisation." *Review of International Studies* 44, no. 2 (2017): 307.

Russia due to disinformation and on the other hand Dutch identity is set aside for a bureaucratic Europe that does not seem to adhere to its own subsidiarity principle. The duopolistic ontological nature of this case reveals an inter-organizational struggle. This is a consequence of the pooled sovereignty from which the EU derives its legitimacy. There is no prior research on dual ontologies in relation to the EuVsDisinfo campaign, which is an additional signal that the findings of this research are relevant. Although the EU claims against the Dutch articles have since been redacted, there is a social relevance to the assessments on how this ad-hoc disinformation countermeasure works. This may yield useful insights for future operations that seek to counter disinformation. Therefore, the following question will be posed in this thesis. To what extent is societal (de)securitization present in the practices of EuVsDisinfo in the Netherlands and the EU? This research question will be supplemented by three sub questions. First some contextual specificities will be sorted out, then the presence of (de) securitization will be tested within the EU and the Netherlands. A general effort of this thesis is to demonstrate how easily untruthful claims enter the public sphere, the quote attributed to Churchill in the first paragraph for instance was never actually traced to him.<sup>22</sup>

## 2. Literature review (De)Securitization

### 2.1. The genesis of (De)Securitization theory

The 1998 publication of the Copenhagen schools book, "Security a New Framework for Analysis" by Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde is often classified as the origin of securitization theory, the process was however described prior to the publication of this contribution to international relations theory. The theoretical origin can be traced to a 1989 paper called "Security, the Speech Act - Analyzing the Politics of a Word" the second draft of which was presented at a conference in Israel in June that year.<sup>23</sup> In this work, the author states that the words "national security" are invoked to achieve a special right to block those subjects that threaten it. In the linguistic theory from which speech acts emerge, these acts generate illocutionary conditions that solidify it as a security problem.<sup>24</sup> Within the original (de)securitization theory, illocutionary actions set up conditions which allow speech acts to transform appraisals on security.<sup>25</sup> In a 1995 volume called "On Security" Waever described the twined concept (de)securitization in a dedicated chapter. This "Securitization and Desecuritization" section of the book described how the terms operated in tandem. The intention of this chapter was to devote attention to the heavily used but initially scarcely contemplated use of security in the field of international relations. This reflective process had started in the eighties and subsequently gained considerable traction. The perspective that Waever highlighted at the time did however devote more attention to otherwise overlooked details. This vision was subsequently used in four distinct security agendas. Waever mentions that the chapter cannot be read without the realization that the security concept is loaded with a large chunk of connotations and historical context from which it cannot escape, (de)securitization acknowledges these underpinnings.<sup>26</sup> The securitization theory that can be distilled from Waevers early writing describe it as a method to allow extraordinary measures to curb security threats to the state and those that preside over it. Essentially, the process of securitizing an issue is a tool that allows power holders to wield control over it. It pertains to manufacturing alternative securities. It is like playing a game in which the ruling elites have the ability to change the modalities of engagement in security discussions. Those entrusted with the administration of order are in the position to abuse it for myopic self-serving purposes. The use of speech acts, which descend from language theory, form the contours of security in the securitization process.<sup>27</sup> In a certain respect, the (de)securitization theory constitutes an academic merger

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22. Michael Richards, "History Detectives - Red Herrings: Famous Words Churchill Never Said." The International Churchill Society, June 9, 2013.

23. Ole Waever, "Security, the Speech Act Analysing the Politics of a Word." *Peace and Conflict Research*, June 1989, 1.

24. *Ibid*: 6.

25. Thierry Balzacq, *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*. London: Routledge, 2011: 13.

26. Ronnie D. Lipschutz, *On Security*. New York, NY: Columbia Univ. Press, 2010: 46-47.

27. *Ibid*: 54-55.

between neorealist analyses of military security and the Aberyswyrth Schools proposal to widen security. The Copenhagen School occupies the middle ground in this theoretical landscape<sup>28</sup> Hansen interpreted the intention of Waever to coin the term desecuritization from a historical vantage point. She argues that this counter movement to securitization emerged from the social need in Eastern European states in the late eighties to bring about change in society without enticing a security response from those in power.<sup>29</sup> The statement of Hansen is affirmed in Waevers analysis of societal security and the means through which ideology is employed to legitimize the rule of those in power. Endeavors to societal security rely on identity as the referent object, this is in contrast to traditional notions on security which emphasized the threat to sovereignty. Identity is therefore at stake when society is threatened.<sup>30</sup> To Hansen, footnotes in Waevers 1995 chapter make it apparent that the notion of desecuritization raised to the surface in response to post-structuralist and deconstructivist texts.<sup>31</sup> The next section will elaborate on the processes of securitization and desecuritization as they occur in the world and are described and analyzed in the literature.

## 2.2. The Securitization Process

Rhetoric that invokes claims on security opens avenues for states that want to garner legitimacy in areas that are high in terms of their public salience. Raising certain issues to the level of security is the method through which this is brought about. A non-politicized, politicized and the ultimate securitization stage have been identified as part of the sequence through which this state authority is consolidated.<sup>32</sup> The political process that securitization sets in motion allows for the side lining of regular political and bureaucratic checks and balances. Thereby exceptional policy measures may arise. These measures curtail the threat that is securitized but can lack a democratic mandate<sup>33</sup> Four illocutionary preconditions determine the success of a securitization process. The first prerequisite relates to the social weight of a securitizing actor, this status is employed to reinforce the chosen line of argumentation. The second condition pertains to the adherence of a grammar in the speech acts that are deployed on an issue area. Then, several case specific qualities need to be encapsulated in the speech expediting a referent object into the security domain. Finally, the resonance of speech that frames an object within the security lens amongst audiences is a key factor in its acceptance.<sup>34</sup> Several units are identified in the (de)securitization process. The theory explains how actors, referent objects, audiences and speech acts relate to each other during a securitization process. Securitizing actors raise referent objects into the realm of security by conveying speech acts, these acts suggest that the objects are existentially threatened. The intention behind this is to direct the preservation of the status quo situation towards the security domain, in the process the scope of security is broadened.<sup>35</sup> Referent objects need to stand out as requiring sustenance against the existential threat they face. Security can thus not rely on the objects and subjects that it interacts with, instead there ought to be agreement on the matter among subjects.<sup>36</sup> Thierry Balzacq adds referent subjects to the equation of units in

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28. Alison Howell and Melanie Richter-Montpetit, "Is Securitization Theory Racist? Civilizationism, Methodological Whiteness, and Antiblack Thought in the Copenhagen School." *Security Dialogue*, July 2019: 3.

29. Lene Hansen, "Reconstructing Desecuritisation: the Normative-Political in the Copenhagen School and Directions for How to Apply It." *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 3 (2011): 536.

30. Ronnie D. Lipschutz, *On Security*. New York, NY: Columbia Univ. Press, 2010: 66-67.

31. Lene Hansen, "Reconstructing Desecuritisation: the Normative-Political in the Copenhagen School and Directions for How to Apply It." *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 3 (2011): 537.

32. Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde. *Security a New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998: 23.

33. Michael C. Williams, "Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics." *International Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (2003): 511–31: 518.

34. Elizaveta Gaufman, "World War II 2.0: Digital Memory of Fascism in Russia in the Aftermath of Euromaidan in Ukraine." *Journal of Regional Security* 10, no. 1 (2015): 26.

35. Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde. *Security a New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998: 36.

36. *Ibid*: 123.



securitization, these subject are the things that threaten whereas the objects are threatened.<sup>37</sup> The expedience of a security predicate is debatable, ethical reservations against this status are raised because the issues are shrouded into more secluded political territories afterwards. Under pre-securitized circumstances, a large amount of normative judgments can be vented into debates on an issue area. This assures that issues that are of high significance are exposed to vigorous debates. There are also significant variations in the approaches to issues within and outside of the securitization process.<sup>38</sup> A securitizing move is a component of the securitization process. This move only displays the first three preconditions of a securitization process. Since measuring the resonance of speech acts amongst audiences is absent, moves set themselves apart from the wider framework.<sup>39</sup>

There are distinct approaches to the way in which different issue areas are securitized. Therefore the theory has been subdivided into a military, political, environmental, economic and societal sector of securitization.<sup>40</sup> Most securitized issues overlap in terms of the sector to which they can be allocated, issues do however not have an intrinsic fealty to one particular sector.<sup>41</sup> In spite of this, there are reasons to opt for a particular sector for the purpose of conducting research. The societal dimension of securitization allows for the mobilization of identity claims for the purpose of policy objectives. An in-group and out-group dynamic is intrinsic to the societal level of securitization, the caveats that exist in communities are exploited in order to work towards the desired security objective.<sup>42</sup> This dynamic allows for the formation of the contours of identity, this happens by forming relationships in terms of difference. This process is referred to as othering.<sup>43</sup> In case of a societal securitization process, securitizing actors are usually confined to a single person or institutions and referent objects consist of large groups that are exposed as threats.<sup>44</sup> The way in which domestic debates eventually morph the behavior of states is an instance of this identity infused change, this discussion is shaped by the contours that identity set out for it. Obviously, the identity of a society is highly fluid and there is not a single homogenous standard that it brings forward. Instead, a congregation of several different voices builds up a vibrant ever-changing identity.<sup>45</sup> The assertion of the will of a political collective is the Hegelian struggle for recognition in which states constitute their identity. Clausewitz distilled test cases of the will of a state such as war and politics, according to Waever these tests which follow a war logic can take place outside of the military domain. War becomes a metaphorical struggle.<sup>46</sup> In contrast to other theories in the constructivist tradition, securitization theory sets itself apart by its intellectual indebtedness to the controversial German scholar Carl Schmitt.<sup>47</sup> The authors that wrote up the original theory of securitization were aware of the fact that the securitization process that they described could expose the detrimental use of existential threats on public deliberations. When something is treated as a security issue, there are constraints to the access of civilians to information on this particular subject. This situation derives from aspirations to an ideal state of security, but can result in anti-democratic outcomes. In this case, threats are exploited for domestic reasons which thwart the political deliberation processes. The quality of security becomes negative in this case, in order to curtail this the

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37. Thierry Balzacq, *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*. London: Routledge, 2011: 36.

38. Elbe, "Should HIV/AIDS Be Securitized?" *International Studies Quarterly*. 50, no. 1 (2006): 123.

39. Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde. *Security a New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998: 123.

40. *Ibid*: 25.

41. *Ibid*: 25.

42. Michael C. Williams, "Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics." *International Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (2003): 518.

43. Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: a Study in Identity and International Relations*. London ; New York: Routledge, 2017: 25.

44. Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde. *Security a New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998: 123.

45. Michael C. Williams, "Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics." *International Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (2003): 519.

46. Ronnie D. Lipschutz, *On Security*. New York, NY: Columbia Univ. Press, 2010: 53-54.

47. Michael C. Williams, "Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics." *International Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (2003): 518.

original authors of the theory state that removal of the security predicate is a remedy. The desecurity concept emerges here.<sup>48</sup> The steps outlined above reveal how the initially linguistic theory of speech acts bring dynamism into notion of security.<sup>49</sup>

### 2.3. The Desecuritization Process

Interestingly, the 1989 Waever paper mentions desecuritization before it refers to securitization. This term relates to the politization of security, or the means by which the social change attained through speech acts roll out.<sup>50</sup> Jeff Huysmans described desecuritization as the unmaking of securitization.<sup>51</sup> The illocutionary negation of the abovementioned securitization procedure constitutes desecuritization. This means that desecuritization occurs when a reversal of the social changes that stem from securitization are brought about. Speech acts move away from a prior securitization processes. Partaking in desecurity discussions has to happen in the absence of security language. The desecuritization process is a response to earlier securitizing speech acts. This reaction does not strictly come in the form of a desecurity speech act. Hansen aptly points out that the literature refers to a securitization theory instead of a desecuritization theory. In both a semantical and political sense, desecuritization developed from the tenants set out in securitization theory.<sup>52</sup> In most of the literature, a normative preference for Desecuritization is voiced over securitization. Speech acts that adhere to certain pragmatic criteria can restore democratic scrutiny over an issue. The political choice of restoring democratic checks and balances can thereby reinstate hasty exceptional measures into a gradual bureaucratic deliberation process.<sup>53</sup> Issues of national security tend to be barred from public reflection, in spite of this they can still be pulled back into public debates if there is sufficient social consensus for such undertakings.<sup>54</sup> As a derivation from a more fully fledged concept, desecuritization lacks a critical edge. In a sense, desecuritization is more of a preference which the original authors of the theory drew up.<sup>55</sup> More practical descriptions of desecuritization have been described as garnering public support for challenging the policies that result from a securitization process and disputing the threat these measures curtail.<sup>56</sup> Many and more have expanded and elucidated on the theory. In some circles, post-Copenhagen school takes on (de)securitization have even ushered in.<sup>57</sup> In 2017, Austin and Baulieu voiced their intellectual estrangement from the twin concept of (de)securitization. The authors took notice of the fact that reoccurring cases of securitization and desecuritization in the literature tend to imply that there is a temporal distance between these two phenomena. By the time a state of desecurity sets in, a referent object is once again embedded in the realm of politics. The time that passes because of this can be attributed to the lengthy political process at its heart. This lead Baulieu and Austin to recalibrate the theory. This allowed for the circumnavigation of the flaws that lead to the inability for simultaneous (de)securitization

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48. Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde. *Security a New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998: 28-29.

49. Claudia Aradau, "Rethinking Human Trafficking in Woman." (2008): 59.

50. Ole Waever, "Security, the Speech Act Analysing the Politics of a Word." *Peace and Conflict Research*, June 1989, 3.

51. Claudia Aradau, "The Perverse Politics of Four-Letter Words: Risk and Pity in the Securitisation of Human Trafficking." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 2 (2004): 389.

52. Lene Hansen, "Reconstructing Desecuritisation: the Normative-Political in the Copenhagen School and Directions for How to Apply It." *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 3 (2011): 530.

53. Claudia Aradau, "The Perverse Politics of Four-Letter Words: Risk and Pity in the Securitisation of Human Trafficking." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 2 (2004): 393.

54. Michael C. Williams, "Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics." *International Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (2003): 524.

55. Claudia Aradau, "The Perverse Politics of Four-Letter Words: Risk and Pity in the Securitisation of Human Trafficking." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 2 (2004): 393.

56. Nadia Abu-Zahra, Philip Leech and Leah Macneil. "Emancipation versus Desecuritization: Resistance and the Israeli Wall in Palestine." *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 31, no. 3 (February 2016): 386.

57. Jonathan Luke Austin and Philippe Beaulieu-Brossard. "(De)Securitisation Dilemmas: Theorising the Simultaneous Enactment of Securitisation and Desecuritisation." *Review of International Studies* 44, no. 2 (2017): 305.

detection.<sup>58</sup> In the next paragraphs, a review of (de)securitization literature will attempt to arrange the variations in the theory in an intelligible overview. It will discuss specific outlooks on two key contested elements of the literature, the ethical and contextual dimensions behind the premises laid out in the upper paragraphs.

## 2.4. The Contextual Dimension of (De)Securitization

Three debates ponder over the role of context in (de)securitization theory, the radical contextualists, the sociological school and the Copenhagen schools self-referential model. The last of these emerged directly from the thoughts that were at the cradle of the theory. Under the conditions of this self-referential model, the context on an issue only changes once it adheres to the relatively static set of illocutionary demarcations outlined for a successful speech act. These stages have largely defined the terms of the debate on (de)securitization. The radical contextualists point out that situational logics lie at the foundation of what is framed as a security issue. Kurowka and Reshetnikov use this radical contextualist approach in their analysis of the Russian blogospheres response to the Boris Nemtsov killing. The situation surrounding this killing invites blog audiences to perceive politics as an arena where moral filth and irreconcilable contradictions prevail.<sup>59</sup> Non-homogenous audiences are at the core of the sociological model of (de)securitization, this branch relies on the intersubjective acceptance of speech acts by these recipients. Although distinct interpretations on (de)securitization theory can seem as though they display stark differences they are ideal types. It is therefore not the case that studies on or cases of (de)securitization neatly tick the illocutionary boxes of the varieties to which they are allocated.<sup>60</sup> Context in the sociological model relates to what is highlighted over other things vis-à-vis concepts such as politics and security. The illocutionary checkboxes are there but they need to be accompanied with perlocutionary effects. Perlocution relates to audience responses to illocution, this surmounts to the attractiveness of speech acts to the public within the marketplace of ideas. In case of the aforementioned concept of politics for instance, this suggests that it is different for the time and space where it is practiced.<sup>61</sup> Austin and Beaulieu state that while securitization is a road to the exceptional, desecuritization marks the return to normal politics.<sup>62</sup> In spite of the implication by Waever that securitization and desecuritization are political processes and not stable formula's, the Copenhagen School does not propose a working definition of the important politicization stage. Because of this Aradau pays attention to the what she considers a lacking regard for politics in securitization.<sup>63</sup> The sociological model captures the contextual intentions of the research question best. This is because the other two do little to factor in the audience reception of speech acts. In addition to this, a radical contextualist approach is so geared towards a single case study that it is hardly reproducible. Although the repetition of research is problematic when it comes to interpretivist inquiries in international relations anyway, the highly tailored approach towards one case carries the risk of rendering the results of any radically contextualist study into investigatory dead ends. The Copenhagen school falls short in a different way, its fixation on illocutionary effects made Balzacq argue that it was not complete. The intersubjectivity behind the sociological school and the tangible perlocutionary effects this reveals make it the best variant of (de)security to conduct research with. Unlike the Copenhagen school, the sociological interpretation allows for specifics in politics and security to come to the surface in real world processes without forfeiting the epistemological rigidity radical contextualists do. The methodological complexity of providing evidence for the intersubjective weight of a speech act is a problem that comes along when one opts for the sociological model. This can be curtailed by focusing on those aspects within (de)securitization that do not rely

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58. *Ibid*: 310.

59. Xymena Kurowska and Anatoly Reshetnikov. "Neutrollization: Industrialized Trolling as a pro-Kremlin Strategy of Desecuritization." *Security Dialogue* 49, no. 5 (August 2018): 347-349.

60. Thierry Balzacq, *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*. London: Routledge, 2011: 2-3.

61. *Ibid*: 13-14.

62. Jonathan Luke Austin and Philippe Beaulieu-Brossard. "(De)Securitisiation Dilemmas: Theorising the Simultaneous Enactment of Securitisation and Desecuritisiation." *Review of International Studies* 44, no. 2 (2017): 302.

63. Claudia Aradau, "The Perverse Politics of Four-Letter Words: Risk and Pity in the Securitisation of Human Trafficking." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 2 (2004): 389.

on proving intersubjective resonance, such as a securitizing move. The next paragraph will discuss which views in literary debate exist on the ethics of (de)securitization.

## 2.5. The Ethical Dimension of (De)Securitization

As mentioned in the upper paragraphs there is a tacit ethical preference for desecuritization which comes at the expense of the securitization processes. This arises from the founding literature on which (de)securitization theory was built. The Schmittian roots behind the theoretical underpinnings of politics within (de)securitization stipulate the Copenhagen schools attempts to avoid inclinations towards realpolitik. The illicit nature of this engagement in antagonistic policy demonstrates the discursive ethics that emerges from the communicative action behind speech acts.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, the theory has endured severe criticism for the Schmitt induced processes that distinguish between exception and norm. The fact that Carl Schmitts philosophy wrote on behalf of the Third Reich is at the root of this attitude.<sup>65</sup> Aradau became one of the most staunch supporters of this approach to the ethics behind (de)securitization in her works.<sup>66</sup> For her, the distribution of security is unequal.<sup>67</sup> The concept of positive securitization emerged as a response to the abovementioned views on the (de)securitization theory. The founder of this train of thought, Paul Roe, identifies two arguments that have contributed to this negative framing. The first line of argumentation pertains to a supposedly exaggerated lack of openness which the securitization process usher in. Secondly, the exceptional politics that arises out of this outcome harbors opportunities for cooperation and non-divisive practices. What is considered to be negative and positive is also highly influenced by the normative angle from which security is approached.<sup>68</sup> Although the potential for abuse resides in securitization processes, legislative practices are not instantaneously abandoned. In addition to this, the speed at which securitized decisions seem to be taken are a byproduct from the singled out security case studies involving military action. The defense sector requires speed in order to conduct successful operations, and since the security concept widens through (de)securitization there is no reason to exclusively focus on this military realm. Moreover, the tendency towards desecuritization can remove the prominence that issues require by virtue of their securitization. This lead Roe to his proposal for more positive appraisals of securitization.<sup>69</sup> Austin and Beaulieu-Brossard added to the discussions on normativity in (de)securitization by pointing towards its supposed splitting. They point to the simultaneous occurrence of desecuritization and securitization in the same speech act. Their line of reasoning is grounded on methodological, temporal and ontological biases in (de)securitization literature that obfuscated the discovery of these split speech acts. This claim radically undermines the widespread ethical superiority of desecuritization within the theoretical framework, the argument even goes as far as giving desecurity a role in the sustenance of protracted conflicts.<sup>70</sup> Demands that "others" should resemble "selves" are set in motion through simultaneous (de)securitization. A privileged status of moderates over radicals is an example of the discursive consequences resulting from these split speech acts. This ties in with the idea that referent objects and subjects anchor multiple ontologies. Simultaneous (de)securitization shape what "normal" political debate and negotiations should resemble.<sup>71</sup> The ramifications that accompany whether a form of (de)securitization is ethically desirable can be

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64. Michael C. Williams, "Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics." *International Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (2003): 523.

65. Alison Howell and Melanie Richter-Montpetit. "Is Securitization Theory Racist? Civilizationism, Methodological Whiteness, and Antiracist Thought in the Copenhagen School." *Security Dialogue*, July 2019: 5.

66. Claudia Aradau, "The Perverse Politics of Four-Letter Words: Risk and Pity in the Securitisation of Human Trafficking." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 2 (2004): 393.

67. Claudia. Aradau, *Rethinking Trafficking in Women: Politics out of Security*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008: 57.

68. Paul Roe, "Is Securitization a 'Negative' Concept? Revisiting the Normative Debate over Normal versus Extraordinary Politics." *Security Dialogue* 43, no. 3 (2012): 250.

69. *Ibid*: 260.

70. Jonathan Luke Austin and Philippe Beaulieu-Brossard. "(De)Securitisation Dilemmas: Theorising the Simultaneous Enactment of Securitisation and Desecuritisation." *Review of International Studies* 44, no. 2 (2017): 305.

71. *Ibid*: 321.

enormous. Therefore opting for a specific theoretical interpretation on the ethics of the process would be premature at this stage of the thesis. Instead the method that will be devised hereafter will seek to facilitate the detection of the presence of the three reviewed normative stances on the (de)securitization theory.

### 3. A Method for the Case Study

#### 3.1. Societal Securitization and identity

The literature review discusses two dimensions of the (de)securitization theory in detail, three aspects of the contextual and normative discussions are set out and weighed in this part of the thesis. These findings will serve as the building blocks for the methodology. This methodology intends to clarify what data will be assessed and how this will be done. The research question that guides this examination is; "To what extent is societal (de)securitization present in the practices of EuVsDisinfo in the Netherlands and the EU?" As stated in the literature review, identity is the overarching referent object in societal securitization efforts.<sup>72</sup> Paragraph 2.4. also points out that societal security is the best contextual understanding of (de)security for the purposes of this thesis. Studying identity needs to be unpacked though. So far, the notion of othering has occurred as a component of the securitization framework. The polemic language in securitization processes or the recognition process occurring in desecuritization are both directed towards referent subjects. Within the (de)securitization framework, othering within speech acts allow securitizing actors to levy political advantages from the invocation of "us" and "them" or "self" and "other" dichotomies.<sup>73</sup> The othering phenomenon is particularly useful when studying processes like societal securitization because these rely on categories that include and exclude people from the larger group.<sup>74</sup> The authors that wrote up the original theory of (de)securitization were aware of the fact that the securitization process that they described could expose the detrimental use of existential threats on public deliberations. When something is treated as a security issue, there are constraints to the access of civilians to information on this particular subject.<sup>75</sup> As mentioned in the literature review however, a preference for an ethical stance in securitization will come to the detriment of the findings of this research. The ethical dimension will be factored in during the case by case analysis instead. As mentioned in the literature review, there are instances where securitization and politicization take place simultaneously through the artificial division of hardliners and moderates in relation to the ontological state of a particular society. This simultaneous (de)securitization is done by the paradoxical deployment of desecuritizing moves at the same instance when securitizing moves are uttered. This conduct allows for parameters to be set on what moderates and hardliners are.<sup>76</sup> This will be taken into account during the analysis of the primary sources. Facilitating research on identity without trying to be esoteric is a challenge, there is however an ample supply of international relations research that does so. One of the methods to do this is through an interpretivist discourse analysis.<sup>77</sup> Obviously there are two stakeholders when it comes to a discourse analysis on the research question, the EU and the Netherlands as a member state within it. Both of these stakeholders of the research question will acquire a dedicated research

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72. Michael C. Williams, "Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics." *International Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (2003): 518.

73. Jonathan Luke Austin and Philippe Beaulieu-Brossard. "(De)Securitisiation Dilemmas: Theorising the Simultaneous Enaction of Securitisation and Desecuritisation." *Review of International Studies* 44, no. 2 (2017): 381.

74. Michael C. Williams, "Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics." *International Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (2003): 518.

75. Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde. *Security a New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998:28.

76. Jonathan Luke Austin and Philippe Beaulieu-Brossard. "(De)Securitisiation Dilemmas: Theorising the Simultaneous Enaction of Securitisation and Desecuritisation." *Review of International Studies* 44, no. 2 (2017): 302.

77. Sergei Prozorov, "The Other as Past and Present: beyond the Logic of 'Temporal Othering' in IR Theory." *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 3 (2010): 1278.

question for their perception of the ESCTF conduct through its EuVsDisinfo's channels. These sub questions stem from a wide and narrow interpretivist approach to the case study, the wide question will cover a time span of several decades around the case whereas the narrow questions will cover an in depths analysis of several months. Because of the time spans, wide research is more suitable for perlocutionary findings and narrow investigations do a better job at covering the illocutionary conditions of (de)securitization. The wide question is asks the following; "What contextual specificities need clarification when it comes to the practices of EuVsDisinfo in the Netherlands?" The narrow focus will cover the extent of the presence of (de)securitization in the EU and the Netherlands respectively. The next paragraphs will elaborate on the data and the wide and narrow sections of the analysis.

### 3.2. A wide interpretation of relevant interest areas

In order to conduct research on the practices of EuVsDisinfo in the Netherlands it is necessary to delve into the contextual specificities that surround this institution. These specificities are comprised of the developments identified within the case study of EuVsDisinfo in the Netherlands. As with any research in international relations there is an almost infinite amount of material to draw conclusions from in the radically contingent international arena. A scope is necessary to make sure that the context can also be investigated within the confines of this particular research. First of all, this scope pertains to the two previously identified stakeholders, namely the Netherlands and the EU. Obviously the institution behind EuVsDisinfo, the ESCTF of the European External Action Service where set up to defend the Eastern member states and the nations participating in the Eastern Partnership against the dissemination of Russian disinformation.<sup>78</sup> Therefore the concept of disinformation as used by Russia and the Soviet Union is the first of the issue area that needs to be clarified. Without this background information it is hard to build an argument on what the threat is that EuVsDisinfo sought to curtail. It is also of the utmost importance that the EuVsDisinfo campaign is located in its correct institutional setting. This clarification of the institutional position of the EuVsDisinfo campaign is the second issue area that requires clarification. In addition to this, the case study directs us to the Netherlands because the articles that caused all the commotion came from Dutch media outlets. This focus of EuVsDisinfo on Dutch language media cannot be seen without factoring in the affairs that had played out between the Netherlands, Ukraine and Russia prior to the publication of the five Dutch articles in the EuVsDisinfo's disinformation database. The third issue area will therefore highlight the circumstance surrounding the case study. Secondary institutional, academic and news sources will be consulted in an interpretivist discourse analysis to uncover the abovementioned. This analysis will conform to the sociological interpretation of (se)securitization theory.

### 3.3. A narrow focus on speech acts

The data that is at the disposal of those that seek to draw narrow conclusions on the practices of EuVsDisinfo in the Netherlands within the confines of the (de)securitization theory will comprise of speech acts. A division between the two main stakeholders will be made, the speech acts differ for these securitizing actors. All speech acts generate different referent objects and subjects by virtue of their content. Like the interest areas, there are loads of speech acts to draw on. This means that there needs to be a selection process for the speech acts that can be analyzed. In case of the speech acts that relate to the EU this is simple, the 5 articles in the EuVsDisinfo disinformation database, which were deemed to contain disinformation, will serve as the analyzed speech acts. Since the articles are revoked by EuVsDisinfo, the internet Wayback machine will be consulted to conjure the sites as they were prior to being taken down. The original Url's are retrieved from the Dutch Saltmines

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78. "Questions and Answers about the East StratCom Task Force - EEAS - European External Action Service - European Commission." EEAS - European External Action Service, August 2, 2018.

blog.<sup>79</sup> It is necessary to mention that the article that was not taken down after the criticism arose has been changed since its original upload. Unfortunately it was not archived in the Wayback machine. Figure 1 below displays a print screen of the original disinformation database entry of the non-redacted disinformation, this figure does miss the disinformation outlet tag. The new articles that gave cause to the EuVsDisinfo action will not be scrutinized for (de)securitization. This choice was made because these articles do not carry the same social weight as the speech acts from the EuVsDisinfo campaign. In addition to this, it is worth asking whether the EuVsDisinfo publications should be representative of the entire EU stance. The union took legal distance from the database results after all.<sup>80</sup> It might seem as a bit of a stretch, but since the ESCTF and its affiliated organizations derive their mandate and funding from EU institutions the conflation of the two for the purpose of this thesis is justified. A short anatomy of the Disinformation database will follow now. The database contains a summary of disinformation and disproof section, in the EU analysis these will be used as securitizing and desecuritizing element of the referent subject respectively. The apart from the date and the disinforming outlet, speech acts will be accompanied with the word count of the original article



**Figure 1:** EU Speech act example from the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2018

The Dutch speech acts are the parliamentary statements on the EuVsDisinfo campaign. These are deduced from a letter by the minister of internal affairs to parliament. This letter, which was sent on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March is a response to five parliamentary motions in on the EuVsDisinfo campaign. All parliamentarians responded to the tumult this organization caused through its accusations on Dutch media platforms.<sup>81</sup> Hence, the letter of the minister and the parliamentary motions on the subject will serve as speech acts that represent the Netherlands. These speech acts are in Dutch, therefore all of them will be translated to English. The speech acts will be supplemented with the their parliamentary approval where available, the document numbers of the motions will also be included for reference. Now a systematic interpretivist approach to both sets of the narrow speech acts needs to be generated. In order to uncover what the normative consequences of the data in the narrow scope are a table as devised by Austin and Baulieu will be used. This table should contain the case study and referent object, a securitized and desecuritized element of the referent subject and a speech act example

79. Russell. "Afgang Voor Brussel: Nepnieuwsdatabase Blijkt Totale Hoax." Saltmines, January 21, 2018.

80. "Disinformation Cases." EU vs DISINFORMATION. Accessed September 1, 2019.

81. Staten-Generaal, Tweede Kamer der. "Raad Voor Onderwijs, Jeugd, Cultuur En Sport ; Brief Regering; Reactie Op De Gewijzigde Motie Van De Leden Kwint En Yesilgöz-Zegerius over Het Opheffen Van EU versus Disinfo, Op De Motie Van Het Lid Westerveld over Een Andere Strategie Voor EU versus Disinfo) En Op De Motie Van De Leden Sneller En Verhoeven over Een Europese Strategie Tegen Ondermijnende Desinformatie." Wet- en regelgeving, onderdeel van Overheid.nl, March 7, 2018.

from which the latter two can be excavated.<sup>82</sup> Since the speech acts of the EU and Netherlands sections differ these will both get a tailored approach, this is elaborated on in the first paragraph of the analysis for each stakeholder. Each speech act will be discussed separately for its (se)curitization presence and othering, this will enable drawing conclusions on the process. From here on the analysis commences.

## 4. What Contextual specificities need clarification when it comes to the practices of EuVsDisinfo in the Netherlands?

### 4.1. Disinformation and Active measures

The term active measures is a concept that arose out of the lexicon of the Soviets intelligence agencies. In 1984, Schultz and Godson stated that the Soviet Union described active measures as “overt and covert techniques for influencing events and behaviour in, and actions of, foreign societies.”<sup>83</sup> In a 2006 article written by Max Holland, active measures serve as an umbrella terms for overt and covert psychological operations. The manipulation of media platforms and the dissemination of favourable broadcasting are but a small element in the large scope of actions that fall under the active measures category. Disinformation is just one of the kinds of these covert active measures. Lothar Metz, who was one of the CIA’s prime connoisseurs on communist ideology described disinformation as “operations aimed at polluting the opinion making process in the west.” Under the auspices of the KGB, eastern bloc intelligence services conjured up a bewildering array of false stories. The aim was that these narratives would find their way to the public sphere through opinion makers. During the cold war disinformation gained notoriety as a term because of its potential efficacy. The intention to leverage existing cleavages in western allegiance structures through deception resonated well in the Soviet circles responsible for concocting strategies against said coalitions. The Soviets deployed tactically advantageous tales in the public sphere which would gain traction there.<sup>84</sup> As recent as 2017, Kragh and Asbergh sought to distinguish active measures from public diplomacy, the reason for this is that public diplomacy is a term that rivals active measures in terms of what it conceptualizes. The term public diplomacy can be employed in order for governments to espouse a desired narrative on target audiences abroad. In case of Russian public diplomacy this shapes opinions that are consistent with the Kremlins. These Swedish scholars state that active measures however intend to bar a country from gaining popular support for the policies it seeks to realize. These measures are practiced in a covert manner and rely on plausible deniability to lure the adversary in the direction that is the most desirable or the least onerous to the Kremlin. Asbregh and Kragh depend on a conception of active measures that they found in a publication by Romerstein in a 2001 issue of the journal on intelligence history. This idea of active measures also states that disinformation is a key element of these measures. Disinformation is defined as the “deliberate dissemination of carefully constructed and false messages into the communication system of a target group in order to deceive decision-making elites or public opinion.”<sup>85</sup> It is noteworthy that the definitions on active measures by Romerstein and Holland both contain a fully-fledged description of disinformation in it.

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82. Jonathan Luke Austin and Philippe Beaulieu-Brossard. “(De)Securitisation Dilemmas: Theorising the Simultaneous Enactment of Securitisation and Desecuritisation.” *Review of International Studies* 44, no. 2 (2017): 303.

83. Richard H Shultz and Roy Godson. *Dezinformatsia: Active Measures in Soviet Strategy*. Washington u.a.: Pergamon u.a., 1984: 15.

84. Max Holland, “The Propagation and Power of Communist Security ServicesDezinformatsiya.” *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* 19, no. 1 (2006): 2-3.

85. Martin Kragh, and Sebastian Åsberg. “Russia’s Strategy for Influence through Public Diplomacy and Active Measures: the Swedish Case.” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 40, no. 6 (May 2017): 777-778.



In recent times, the operational toolkit that active measures fall under have been repurposed which created an extraordinary blend of Russian revanchist thinking and Soviet operations.<sup>86</sup> One of the reasons that Russians can effectively disseminate alternative narratives to audiences abroad relate to its domestic political qualities. The characteristically top down decision making structure and media control that occur in Russia make it particularly well equipped for exporting its pro-kremlin message abroad. In a sense the country is projecting its own ontological state onto other countries.<sup>87</sup> There is a considerable difference between the US and Russian stances on cyberspace. An inclination towards government regulated content prevails in Russia while the US traditionally opposes this.<sup>88</sup> As stated in the introduction, a strong upsurge in the terms fake news and disinformation where observable in the aftermath of the 2016 election in the United States and the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom. According to a 2017 report by the CIA, NSA and the FBI the campaign of Russia in the US for instance was multifaceted, this means that it involved overt and covert activities. An example of the covert activities are the intelligence operations conducted by the military intelligence service GRU to obtain exorbitant amounts of data from US targets with the intention of weaponizing this compromising material. The DNC E-mails that where leaked to Wikileaks are a result of these covert operations. The overt operations where conducted by Russian international media outlets and quasi-government trolls. These overt information operations sought to favor Donald J. Trump over Secretary Hilary R. Clinton by discrediting the latter and praising the former.<sup>89</sup> These two overt and covert courses of action play out differently when it comes to their effects in the public sphere. While in the covert case classified information is exposed, the overt case gradually slips erroneous information into otherwise accurate publications. Wardle and Derakhshan devised a means through which these effects on the public sphere could be categorized. Their notion of information disorder distinguishes between misinformation, disinformation and malinformation. Misinformation is described as the unintentional reporting of false stories, disinformation intentionally deploys false information with the intention of subverting and malinformation pertains to harmful truths that are purveyed with malicious intent. Figure 2 on the right sets out this model<sup>90</sup>

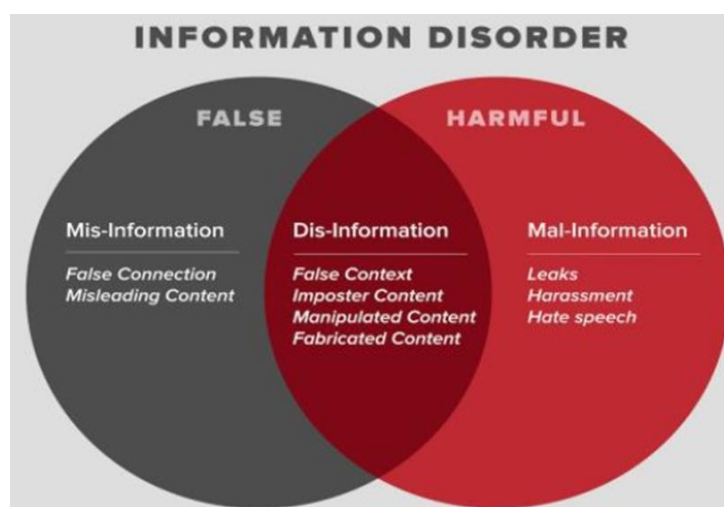


Figure 2: Information Disorder chart from October 2017

The US election example above suggests that this is a rather novel practice, driving wedges in an adversarial sovereign is however an old tactic. It was described over 5000 years ago in Sun Tzu's "Art of War." Sun Tzu points to the importance of diminishing the will of the enemy by driving wedges in a sovereigns court

86. Steven J. Main, "‘You Cannot Generate Ideas by Orders’: The Continuing Importance of Studying Soviet Military History—G. S. Isserson and Russia’s Current Geo-Political Stance." *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, vol. 29, no. 1, Feb. 2016, pp. 65.

87. Martin Kragh and Sebastian Åsberg. "Russia’s Strategy for Influence through Public Diplomacy and Active Measures: the Swedish Case." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 40, no. 6 (May 2017): 777.

88. Tim Stevens, "A Cyberwar of Ideas? Deterrence and Norms in Cyberspace." *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 33, no. 1, 5 July 2012, pp. 19.

89. "Background to ‘Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections’: The Analytic and Cyber Incident Attribution." *Intelligence Community Assessment*, January 6, 2017, 2-3.

90. Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan. "INFORMATION DISORDER: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making." *Council of Europe Report*, October 2017: 5.

and using agents to leak intentionally false information<sup>91</sup> The historical use of disinformation by the Soviet and Russian governments affirm this.

In addition to public diplomacy there are several other concepts that challenge active measures, these rival the term because they describe similar activities. Soft power as devised by Joseph Nye and strategic communication are both examples of concepts that overlap in terms of the functionality that they pose to those that utilize the notion of active measures. According to Nye "A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries – admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness – want to follow it." Instead of coercing other nations these countries are swayed into following the example of the entity exercising soft power. Military threats and economic sanctions are deemed less effective than swaying and cooperating.<sup>92</sup> There are various ways in which this is exercised, the core means of wielding soft power is however designated to cultural practices<sup>93</sup> Disinforming activities do not match the label of soft power because of their deceptive nature. Where disinformation lures actors towards compliance with the will of the instigators, soft power seduces countries to adopt this direction themselves. The concept of strategic communication is however employed increasingly. The taskforce behind the EuVsDisinfo campaign also uses strategic communication. Unfortunately strategic communication is poorly conceptualized, this lead to the establishment of international journal of strategic communication in 2007. Holtzhausen and Zerfass provided a comprehensive definition of strategic communication in a 2012 issue of this journal. They define it as "the practice of deliberate and purposive communication that a communication agent enacts in the public sphere on behalf of a communicative entity to reach goals."<sup>94</sup> Wagnsson and Hellman have stated that the use of strategic communication undermines claims of international actors to the status of normative power. They argue that engaging in strategic communication is not desirable, the reason for this is that there is no way for the normative powers to elevate themselves above those that engage in similar activities and it encourage antagonistic othering. Instead, a path towards the earlier describes notion of public diplomacy should be followed by normative powers, which is deemed more benign.<sup>95</sup> Although strategic communication overlaps with active measures in terms of what it describes, there is no role for deception in it. The clear link to disinformation signifies that the EuVsDisinfo campaign is trying to safeguard the Union against Russian active measures. There is however a role for strategic communication since the taskforce that it charged with protecting the union against this societal threat uses StratCom in its name.

## 4.2. The place of the EuVsDisinfo Campaign within the European Union

In essence the EuVsDisinfo website is only a small component in a larger body of EU policy relating to the unions diplomatic mission. The EuVsDisinfo Campaign is part of the ESCTF which itself is part of the EEAS. The EEAS is occupied with the diplomatic ties of the European Union and was established through the Lisbon treaty in 2009.<sup>96 97</sup> The team that runs the EuVsDisinfo campaign is also responsible for maintaining the Russian

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91. Richard H Shultz and Roy Godson. *Dezinformatsia: Active Measures in Soviet Strategy*. Washington u.a.: Pergamon u.a., 1984: 13.

92. Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: the Means to Success in World Politics*. PublicAffairs, 2004: 5.

93. Kirk Hallahan et al. "Defining Strategic Communication." *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2007: 3.

94. Ansgar Zerfass et al. "Strategic Communication: Defining the Field and Its Contribution to Research and Practice." *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, vol. 12, no. 4, Aug. 2018: 4.

95. Charlotte Wagnsson and Maria Hellman. "Normative Power Europe Caving In? EU under Pressure of Russian Information Warfare." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 56, no. 5 (2018): 1162.

96. Anonymous. "European External Action Service (EEAS)." *European Union*, 24 Oct. 2017.

97. "EU States near Agreement on Diplomatic Service." *EUobserver*.

language website of the EEAS.<sup>98</sup> Along with the Genesis of the EEAS, six of the EU's post-Soviet eastern neighbors were engaged in the cooperative framework of the EaP. The objective of the EaP is to converge regional values and harmonize economic standards in the countries close to the common market. One of the tools that bring this harmonization about are Association Agreements, this contractual scheme is the highest attainable level of economic integration non EU member states can attain.<sup>99</sup> Since the onset of the initiative Russia felt that the partnership threatened the strategic interests in it had in its near abroad.<sup>100</sup> Part of the reasons for the rising tensions between Russia and the west is caused by the encroachment of NATO and the EU into territories that the Kremlin considered to be within its sphere of influence. As a consequence, Russia felt compelled to make its experience of the eastern enlargements known. Frozen conflicts, in which areas of post-soviet states are held hostage by militants presumably supported by Russia operate under the NATO mobilization thresholds. Therefore these conflicts constitute a means for Moscow to hedge against western encroachment.<sup>101</sup> The Russian narratives on frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet space differ markedly from the western viewpoints. Frustrating integration project in the states between Russia and the EU is therefore a longstanding foreign policy objective of the Kremlin.<sup>102</sup> In 2015, the EEAS set up the ESCTF in response. The intention of these strategic communication efforts was to improve the conveyance of the EU's policies towards its eastern neighborhood and embolden the regions media plurality. Russian language media were of a particular concern to the ESCTF. The main channels through which these efforts are undertaken are the EuVsDisinfo website and the Disinformation review newsletter formerly known as the disinformation digest.<sup>103</sup> The website was also supplemented by a database which compiles disinforming articles in it. Volunteers collected the contents of this database. Outsourcing the composition of the database to civil society intended to ensure that there was no governmental involvement in the selection of disinforming material.<sup>104</sup> The work of the EuVsDisinfo campaign can be said to enjoy legitimacy within the commission because security commissioner Julian King confessed to MEP's and the public that Russia had been "extremely successful" when it comes to disseminating disinformation.<sup>105</sup>

As early as October 2016, a European Parliament report written by the committee on foreign affairs noted that the EuVsDisinfo campaign needed to revisit the criteria it used to draft this disinformation review. The report established that the East StratCom Task Force needed to meet International Federation of Journalist standards and refrain from using offensive language and value judgements.<sup>106</sup> According to Wagnsson and Hellman, the Taskforce had 14 employees in 2017 and the resources at its disposal grew at the time. Since there is no way to guarantee that the apparatus for identifying disinformation is flawless the campaign is highly politicized.<sup>107</sup> In

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98. "Questions and Answers about the East StratCom Task Force - EEAS - European External Action Service - European Commission." *EEAS - European External Action Service*.

99. David Cadier, "Eastern Partnership vs Eurasian Union? The EU-Russia Competition in the Shared Neighbourhood and the Ukraine Crisis." *Global Policy*, vol. 5, 2014, pp. 76–77.

100. Sergey Tumanov et al. "Russia–EU Relations, or How the Russians Really View the EU." *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2011: 130-131.

101. Peter J Katzenstein and Nicole Weygandt. "Mapping Eurasia in an Open World: How the Insularity of Russia's Geopolitical and Civilizational Approaches Limits Its Foreign Policies." *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2017: 432.

102. S. Blank, "Russia and the Black Seas Frozen Conflicts in Strategic Perspective." *Mediterranean Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 3, Jan. 2008: 33.

103. N.A. "MEANS GOALS AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE PRO-KREMLIN DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN." *ISPI Commentary*, 2017: 3.

104. Marta Barandiy, "Why Are the Dutch Demanding to Shut down the EU's Only Anti-Propaganda Service? |." *Euromaidan Press*, 21 Mar. 2018.

105. Arjen Nijboer, "[Opinion] Why the EU Must Close EUvsDisinfo." *EUobserver*. Accessed August 27, 2019.

106. Anna Elizabieta Fotyga, "REPORT on EU Strategic Communication to Counteract Propaganda against It by Third Parties." *Committee on Foreign Affairs*, pp. 12.

107. Charlotte Wagnsson and Maria Hellman. "Normative Power Europe Caving In? EU under Pressure of Russian Information Warfare." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 56, no. 5 (2018): 1162-1163.

January 2018, the Dutch public broadcaster found out that of the 400 volunteers involved with the selection of articles for the disinformation database, only ten were really active. Approximately 75 percent of the disinforming articles were picked by these ten volunteers, almost a quarter of the 3748 database contributions of that time came from a single volunteer. These volunteers may also have strong ideological motivations for filing an article as disinforming, the Promote Ukraine NGO which filed four out of five Dutch articles to the database is a case in point.<sup>108</sup> On the 24<sup>th</sup> of January, the EuVsDisinfo website announced that there would be a change in the terminology used to describe its database due to reservations against it. The intention was to change the term “disinformation outlet” into “an outlet where disinformation appeared” in order to highlight that the intention of the database was to correct the content of the information rather than the outlet. The “organization” also clarified its mandate, they seek to unveil the manner through which pro-Kremlin disinformation winds up circulating through European media outlets. By virtue of longstanding investigations on pro-Kremlin outlets the campaign claims it can uncover if certain news is situated within a narrative tacitly supported by Moscow. As mentioned on the disclaimers of the website there is no intention of linking news outlets to the Kremlin, the website strictly concerns itself with content. Disinformation is described as a false message by the campaign, misinformation can thereby be perceived as a successful disinformation campaign by those using this concept.<sup>109</sup> Subsequent action plans on a European approach to disinformation were written up by the European Commission. The preambles of the action plan published on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 2018 stressed that attention was devoted to safeguarding the freedom of speech in Europe.<sup>110</sup> In addition to this, the plan formulates a code of practices in regards to activities curtailing disinformation. This code would bind relevant stakeholders to a set of intentions which sought to minimize the harm of disinforming content.<sup>111</sup> In November of 2018, a document obtained through a Dutch freedom of information act on discussions between Dutch and EU Civil servants stated that Dutch articles would no longer appear in the EuVsDisinfo campaign. The campaign's focus had also shifted to Russian language content or publications in the languages of countries neighbouring Russia. The reliance on volunteers was also aborted in favour of a different internal disinformation gathering method to fill the database and the review. The actor responsible for logging the disinformation to the database would therefore no longer appear in the disinformation database.<sup>112</sup> The 2018 budget of the East StratCom Task Force was €1.1 million and increased to €3 Million in 2019 to fund professional media monitoring tools, disinformation analysis and data analysis. This yields a more comprehensive picture of the disinformation campaigns waged by Russia.<sup>113</sup>

### 4.3. Circumstances Surrounding the Case Study

A New York Times article reported on the occurrence of disinforming practices in the Netherlands in the wake of the Dutch referendum on Ukraine's Association Agreement to the European Union. The Hague Center for Strategic Studies fellow Sijben de Jong, was quoted as saying the following; “Those in power are very worried – there is more than ample reason for alarm over interference in elections.” According to de Jong, populists who want to damage or destroy the status quo in Europe aid the Kremlin whether they realize it or not. By retweeting or liking an anti-establishment post on Twitter, states or those covertly acting on their behalf can anonymously amplify the political reach of this tweet. De Jong stated that the Ukraine referendum in the Netherlands could contribute to the destruction of the EU from within. In addition to this, the New York Times article states that advisors from breakaway Russian speaking regions of Ukraine were active during the referendum. Apparently, these advisors helped Dutch political movements organize against the association agreement. In addition to this,

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108. Thomas Spekschoor, “Nepnieuwsljst EU Afhankelijk Van Tien Vrijwilligers.” *NOS*, 12 Feb. 2018.

109. “Change of Terminology in the EUvsDisinfo Database.” *EU vs DISINFORMATION*, 24 Jan. 2018.

110. N.A. “Action Plan Against Disinformation.” European Commission, 5 Dec. 2018: 1.

111. *Ibid*: 3.

112. Thomas Spekschoor, “Geen Nederlandse Media Meer Op Europese Nepnieuwsljst.” *NOS*, 31 Nov. 2018.

113. “Questions and Answers about the East StratCom Task Force.” *EEAS*, 5 Dec. 2018.

the volunteers proliferated a wide variety of implausible theories on the downing of the MH17 aircraft.<sup>114</sup> In order to highlight why it was argued that disinformation took hold of the Dutch domestic debate, it is necessary to elaborate on this manifestation of direct democracy in the Netherlands. Essentially the Dutch electorate was asked to approve or reject a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. This DCTFA economic integration initiative is part of the EaP's Association Agreement Scheme. In November 2013 the president of Ukraine at the time, Victor Yanukovich, rejected this same Association Agreement. This November 2013 decision was the proximate cause that set a chain of events in motion through which Ukraine would spiral towards its grim internal military confrontations.<sup>115</sup> The balancing act of Yanukovich resulted in the fact that the country was left outside of a Russian lead or EU lead integration project.<sup>116</sup> Yanukovich was ousted in March 2014 and new elections were called for. Eventually, Petro Poroshenko won the May 2014 elections and signed the agreement that cost Yanukovich his presidency.<sup>117</sup> In the meantime a Dutch law made it possible to hold advisory referenda on legislative outputs in the Netherlands. The law that installed this democratic tool entered into force on 1 July 2015, it allowed for a referendum after the collection of signatures from a sufficient number of constituents. Two organizations, which were classified as Eurosceptic, seized the moment and called for an election on the first bill relating to the EU that required for parliamentary approval. It was sheer coincidence that Ukraine became the subject that was put up for a vote in this referendum.<sup>118</sup> There was much confusion surrounding the referendum, although Ukrainian EU membership was never on the agenda the Association Agreement was seen as a stepping stone towards this. Kiselyov asserts that Dutch people might have spited Ukraine over the MH17 incident. Ultimately those against the ratification and signing of the Association Agreement succeeded, 61.1 % of the constituents rejected the agreement and only 38.1 % backed the deal. The result was advisory in nature and since the Netherlands had already signed the initial agreement, the prospect that the referendum result would be honored in a meaningful way was practically null.<sup>119</sup>

So far, the Downing of the MH17 on the 17<sup>th</sup> of July 2014 stands out as an issue that gave rise to loads of controversy in the Netherlands. The main reason for the attention that is granted to this incident stems from the fact that 193 of all the 298 deceased people on board of the MH17 aircraft held the Dutch nationality.<sup>120</sup> According to the Joint Investigation Team and research collective Bellingcat, the MH17 was downed from rebel controlled territories of Ukraine.<sup>121</sup> To be more precise, the surface to air missile launch system was fired in the rebel held town of Sniezhne.<sup>122</sup> The Dutch Safety board concluded that the MH17 aircraft was struck by a missile at 13:20:03 PM Dutch time, it crashed in the neighbourhood of the towns Petrobravlivka and Hrabove.<sup>123</sup> After this tragedy surpassed, a convoy escorted the BUK weapon system across the Russian border, the JIT and others later stated that this BUK rocket system was part of the 53 division of the Russian army's anti-aircraft brigade based in Kursk.<sup>124</sup> When word came to pass about the events in East Ukraine, Russian state media denied involvement immediately and spread a plethora of alternative perspectives on what happened. These conspiracy theories were later spread on social media by trolls from the Saint Petersburg based Internet Research Agency. The operations this group carries out have the intention of polarizing discussions, this is achieved by encouraging

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114. Andrew Higgins, "Fake News, Fake Ukrainians: How a Group of Russians Tilted a Dutch Vote." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 16 Feb. 2017.

115. David Cadier, "Eastern Partnership vs Eurasian Union? The EU-Russia Competition in the Shared Neighbourhood and the Ukraine Crisis." *Global Policy*, vol. 5, 2014, pp. 76 -78.

116. Rilka Dragneva and Kataryna Wolczuk. "The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement and the Challenges of Inter-Regionalism." *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2014: 241.

117. Wilmer Heck, "Alles Wat Je Moet Weten over Het Oekraïne-Referendum Op 6 April." *NRC*, NRC, 7 Apr. 2016.

118. "Het Oekraïne Referendum Gemist? Start Met Kijken Op NPO Start." *Www.npostart.nl*.

119. Yevgeney Kiselyov, "THE DUYCH DEBACLE." *The Current Digest*, vol. 68, no. 16, 11 Apr. 2016: 16-17.

120. N.A. "MH17 Crash." *Dutch Safety Board*, Oct. 2015: 1.

121. Politie. "JIT MH17, Persbijeekomst MH17, 24 Mei 2018." *YouTube*, YouTube, 28 May 2018,

122. "Bellingcat Podcast: MH17, Episode 2 Guide: A Pack of Lies." *Bellingcat*, 24 July 2019,

123. N.A. "MH17 Crash." *Dutch Safety Board*, Oct. 2015: 6.

124. "Bellingcat Podcast: MH17, Episode 2 Guide: A Pack of Lies." *Bellingcat*, 24 July 2019,

radicalization on the more extreme ends of this discussion. Twitter has shared a [dataset](#) of 9 million Tweets that originated from the IRA. From this data it is apparent that at least 65000 of these tweets relate to the MH17 downing, the tweets from Saint Petersburg started pouring into the Twitter sphere 40 minutes after the crash. The most prevalent Russian language message of these trolls blame Kyiv for the downing of the aircraft. The Twitter debate that sparked following the MH17 tragedy can roughly be divided into two camps, on the one hand there are Twitter accounts that support the conclusions of the JIT and on the other hand there are accounts that spread false theories. Interestingly the latter resonate well amongst Dutch language Twitter audiences. After Russian and English, Dutch ranks highest as the language in which MH17 discussions are held.<sup>125</sup> On the 6<sup>th</sup> of March, Dutch interior minister Ollongren sent a letter to parliament to address the proliferation of disinformation in the Netherlands. The letter clarifies that free speech is fundamental to a democracy in which the rule of law prevails. The minister states that a free press can serve as a watchdog for the democratic process. In addition to this, the European Court of Human Rights regularly affirms this notion in its verdicts. Furthermore, the Dutch government wants to limit covert influence operations on its domestic public opinion. The ESCTF is one of the instruments at the disposal of the Dutch government to guarantee freedom of expression and counter external influence.<sup>126</sup>

## 5. The Extent of the Presence of (De)securitization in the EU.

### 5.1. On the Legibility of the Analysis

In order to account for the multiplistic ontology of the EU, three referent objects are identified for each EuVsDisinfo case study. One of the referent objects is shared amongst all EuVsDisinfo case studies, it relates to the campaigns protection of societal identity. This first referent object is derived from the mandate of EuVsDisinfo and the ESCTF to protect the Union and Eastern neighbourhood from hostile disinformation campaigns.<sup>127</sup> Naturally, the article that is included in the database constitutes a securitized element of the referent subject that occurs in all of the case studies by virtue of the referent object status of the public sphere. The referent object and subject that the EuVsDisinfo campaign targets itself are signified as such by the EU prefix in their cell. The other two referent objects, and the referent subjects that accompany the EuVsDisinfo one's are unique to each case, they relate to the Summary of Disinformation and Disproof subsections that are allocated to articles entered in the disinformation database. These sections have respectively been transcribed into the Speech act 1 and speech act 2 columns of the table treating the article. These are literal copies of the text and titles found on the Disinformation Database entries on the EuVsDisinfo website. The referent objects that are inferred from these separate speech acts each get their own row in the case study and referent object column, these are signified by the SA1 and SA2 abbreviations. In addition to providing the abovementioned information the word count of the summary of disinformation and the article that gave cause to this EuVsDisinfo response is included in the analysis of the EU primary sources. Although the choice was made to refrain from analysing the articles that were targeted by the ESCTF directly, the juxtaposition of the word counts and the translation of the Dutch title of these texts can provide a meaningful insight into the process behind the articles inclusion in the disinformation database. The author of the disinforming article is also included where available. The speech acts are accompanied by the date mentioned in the disinformation database and the Wayback machine capture date. The original article only comes with the Wayback machine entry date.

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125. Robert van der Noordaa and Coen van de Ven. "Hoe Nederlandse Activisten De Leugens Van Russische Trollen Blijven Rondpompen." *De Groene Amsterdammer*, De Groene Amsterdammer, 29 May 2019.

126. Staten-Generaal, Tweede Kamer der. "Raad Voor Onderwijs, Jeugd, Cultuur En Sport ; Brief Regering; Reactie Op De Gewijzigde Motie Van De Leden Kwint En Yesilgöz-Zegerius over Het Opheffen Van EU versus Disinfo, Op De Motie Van Het Lid Westerveld over Een Andere Strategie Voor EU versus Disinfo) En Op De Motie Van De Leden Sneller En Verhoeven over Een Europese Strategie Tegen Ondermijnende Desinformatie." Wet- en regelgeving, onderdeel van Overheid.nl, March 7, 2018.

127. "About." *EU vs DISINFORMATION*.

## 5.2. The TPO Case Study

### 5.2.a. Disinformation Database entry:

**Date Disinformation Database:** 19<sup>th</sup> of November 2015

**Wayback machine entry:** 19<sup>th</sup> of January 2018

	Referent Subject	Referent Subject	Speech Act 1	Speech Act 2
Case study and referent object	Securitized Element	Desecuritized Element	Summary of Disinformation	Disproof
<b>EU:</b> Identity	EU: TPO Article	Ukraine, Dutch Association Agreement referendum	Ukraine is an oligarch state with no independent media. "The resistance army which killed hundreds thousands Polish Jews during the Second World War is still respected."	The Article seems to be aimed only at worsening the image of Ukraine before the Dutch referendum about the Association Agreement.
<b>SA1:</b> Killed Polish Jews	Ukraine, Oligarchy, Media, Worshipping of Second World War Resistance Army			
<b>SA2:</b> Association Agreement				
<b>Disinforming Outlet:</b> politiek.tpo.nl				

**Source:** <http://web.archive.org/web/20180119201906/https://euvsdisinfo.eu/report/ukraine-is-an-oligarch-state-with-no-independent-media/>

### 5.2.b. Discussion

In case of the TPO article, the EuVsDisinfo campaign warns that the societal identity is under attack due to an incorrect appraisal of Ukraine by the disinforming article. In addition societal identity, the killed Polish Jews serve as a historic referent object that where under threat by Ukrainians at the time. The disproof that is brought forward states that the only reason for the publication of the article is that he intention of the disinforming articles author is to give a blow to the Ukrainian reputation prior to the Dutch referendum on the Association Agreement of Ukraine to the EU. Along with the Ukrainian image this referendum serves as a desecurizing element of the referent subject. The disinformation summary also states that Ukraine is ruled by oligarchs and lacks an independent media system. In addition to this, the summary states that a second world war resistance force which killed hundreds of thousands Polish Jews is still respected by the Ukrainian people. Ukraine is othered in this SA1, this is however mitigated by the disproof section. These four components make up the securitized element of the referent subject. The Summary of disinformation section counts 26 words.

### 5.2.c. General information on the disinforming article:

**Translation of the Title:** #Bruslog: Thierry Baudet is the Netherlands's most important Expert on Ukraine

**Author and Wordcount:** Chris Aalberts is the author of this 754 words long article.

**Wayback machine entry:** 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 2018

**Source:** <https://web.archive.org/web/20180122022555/https://politiek.tpo.nl/2015/11/19/bruslog-thierry-baudet-is-neerlands-belangrijkste-expert-over-oekraine/>

## 5.3. The First Geenstijl Case Study

### 5.3.a. Disinformation Database entry:

**Date Disinformation Database:** 27<sup>th</sup> of November 2015

**Wayback machine entry:** 18<sup>th</sup> of January 2018

	Referent Subject	Referent Subject	Speech Act	Speech Act
Case study and referent object	Securitized Element	Desecuritized Element	Summary of Disinformation	Disproof
<b>EU:</b> Identity	EU: Geenstijl Article Corruption, Fascism, drug trafficking, human trafficking	Repeating Older Disinformation, factlessness	Ukraine is a highly corrupted, fascistic country, which is the centre of international drug and human labour traffic.	Repeats older disinformation about regime in Ukraine. No supporting facts given.
<b>SA1:</b> Ukraine				
<b>SA2 :</b> Ukraine				
<b>Disinforming Outlet:</b> Geenstijl.nl				

**Source:** <http://web.archive.org/web/20180118081543/https://euvsdisinfo.eu/report/ukraine-is-a-highly-corrupted-fascistic-country-which-is-the/>

### 5.3.b. Discussion

The first of the Geenstijl articles threatens societal identity by pointing to corruption, fascism, drug trafficking and human labour trafficking in Ukraine throughout the summary of disinformation section. Societal identity and Ukraine are the referent object throughout this case. The four elements that threaten Ukraine comprise the securitized referent subject. The disproof is based on the assertion that this is the mere repetition of old disinforming myths which are factually unsubstantiated. These two elements conjointly make up the desecuritized elements of the referent subject. Ukraine is othered in SA1, again this is mitigated in the disproof. The summary of disinformation consist of 18 words.

### 5.3.c. General information on the disinforming article:

**Translation of the Title:** Live! Geinpeil-lecture Porosjenko at Uni Leiden

**Author and Wordcount:** The original article is written by Timon Dias aka Spartacus contains 264 words.

**Wayback Machine Entry:** 26<sup>th</sup> of January 2018

**Source:** [http://web.archive.org/web/20180127002757/https://www.geenstijl.nl/4676801/27\\_november\\_president\\_porosjen/](http://web.archive.org/web/20180127002757/https://www.geenstijl.nl/4676801/27_november_president_porosjen/)

## 5.4. The Second Geenstijl Case Study

### 5.4.a. Disinformation Database entry:

**Date Disinformation Database:** 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2016 as shown in figure 1

**No Wayback Machine Entry:** currently in the EuVsDisinfo disinformation database

	Referent Subject	Referent Subject	Speech Act	Speech Act
Case study and referent object	Securitized Element	Desecuritized Element	Summary of Disinformation	Disproof
<b>EU:</b> Identity	EU: Geenstijl Article	Fake	Azov fighters threaten the	The video is a fake, second in three weeks of



	Azov fighters		Dutch people with a terror attack again.	the same kind: bit.ly/1SPxKvP, //bit.ly/1T2LRiL, //bit.ly/1QOWKRN,
SA1: Dutch People				
SA2: Video				
<b>Disinforming Outlet:</b>				

Source: <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/report/azov-fighters-threaten-the-dutch-people-with-a-terror-attack/>

#### 5.4.b. Discussion

The second Geenstijl entry to the EuVsDisinfo disinformation database poses a danger to societal identity and the Dutch people, these are also the referent object. The securitized element of the referent subject is an attack by the notorious Azov battalion on the people of the Netherlands. The disproof points out that the video that announces the threat is Fake. The video is the referent object and its fakeness the referent subjects desecuritized element. It is noteworthy that this entry has not been removed from the disinformation database after the December 2017 commotion arose in the Netherlands. The page has however been altered since March 2018, after this update the article links to the original source of disinformation. The Azov fighters are othered in SA1. A mere 11 words are allocated to the Summary of Disinformation.

Maybe mention this Bellingcat research.<sup>128</sup>

#### 5.4.c. General information on the disinforming article:

**Translation of the Title:** Video. Another Ukrainian Video Threat Directed to the Dutch People

**Author and Wordcount:** This article is also written by Timon Dias aka Spartacus and is made up of 187 words.

**Wayback Machine Entry:** 5<sup>th</sup> of February 2018

**Source:** [https://web.archive.org/web/20180205165717/https://www.geenstijl.nl/4761512/video\\_weer\\_oe\\_kra\\_iens\\_dreigfilm/](https://web.archive.org/web/20180205165717/https://www.geenstijl.nl/4761512/video_weer_oe_kra_iens_dreigfilm/)

### 5.5. The Dutch NPO Radio Channel Case Study

#### 5.5.a. Disinformation Database entry:

**Date Disinformation Database:** 7<sup>th</sup> of September 2016

**No Wayback Machine Entry:** 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 2018

	Referent Subject	Referent Subject	Speech Act	Speech Act
Case study and referent object	Securitized Element	Desecuritized Element	Summary of Disinformation	Disproof
<b>EU:</b> Identity <hr/> <b>SA1:</b> Ukraine	Ukrainian Right Extremists, Society, Svoboda 36 Seats, Violence, Parliament	6 Svoboda Party Seats, Debunked disinformation, 1.8% support	Right extremists are taking power in Ukraine, they control Odessa, and are going to have control	There are 6 MP's from Svoboda in the Ukrainian parliament. // Repeating already debunked disinformation

128. "Behind the Dutch Terror Threat Video: The St. Petersburg 'Troll Factory' Connection." *Bellingcat*, 3 Apr. 2016.

<p><b>SA2:</b> Ukraine</p> <hr/> <p><b>Disinforming Outlet:</b> Dutch NPO radio Channel</p>			<p>over Ukraine using violence. They are represented in the state institutions and have a lot of influence in the society. There are 36 MP's (minute 2;08) of Svoboda in the Ukrainian parliament.</p>	<p>about right extremist governing Ukraine. In fact, the "Right Sector" is an insignificant power, which is evident from the presidential elections; the party received 1,8 per cent of the vote in the October 2014 parliamentary elections.</p>
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Source: <http://web.archive.org/web/20180123220946/https://euvsdisinfo.eu/report/right-extremists-are-taking-power-in-ukraine-they-control-odessa-and/>

### 5.5.b Discussion

This article is a description that accompanied a radio interview. In addition to societal identity, Ukraine is the referent object of the summary of the disinformation and the disproof. Odessa is also a referent object due to the right wing control that it is under. There are four securitized elements mentioned in the summary of the disinformation speech act. First of all, the 36 right extremist MP's that represent the Svoboda party in the Verkhovna Rada threaten Ukraine. Additionally, this group is said to have taken control of Odessa through violence. Svoboda also wields significant influence in Ukrainian society through its right extremist ideas. Interestingly the disproof states that there are only 6 Svoboda MP's, the party only managed to sway 1.8% of the voters in the October 2014 Elections. The third desecuritizing element of the disproof mentions that the other disinformation refers to earlier debunked stories. When NPO noticed the article was included in the database the radio station changed the title of this publication that supplemented the radio interview. Right extremists are othered in in SA1. This summary of the disinformation is 48 words long.

### 5.5.c. General information on the disinforming article:

**Translation of the Title:** Rightwing extremist take over power in Ukraine

**Author and Wordcount:** There is no author specified. The article only contains 58 words.

**Wayback Machine Entry:** 19<sup>th</sup> of January 2018

**Source:** <http://web.archive.org/web/20180119193106/https://www.nporadio1.nl/de-nieuws-bv/onderwerpen/373640-rechts-extremisten-nemen-macht-in-oekraine-over>

## 5.6. The De Gelderlander Case Study

### 5.6.a. Disinformation Database entry:

**Date Disinformation Database:** 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2016

**No Wayback Machine Entry:** 19<sup>th</sup> of January 2018

	Referent Subject	Referent Subject	Speech Act	Speech Act
Case study and referent object	Securitized Element	Desecuritized Element	Summary of Disinformation	Disproof

<b>EU:</b> Identity	BUK-Rocket, Kyiv controlled territory	RIA	The whole technical report concerning the MH17 case was based on false facts, rigged by Ukraine to accuse Russia. The BUK-rocket was launched from the territory controlled by Kyiv.	Dutch translation of the RIA disinformation mentioned above.
<b>SA1:</b> Technical report concerning the MH17 case				
<b>SA2:</b> Translation				
<b>Disinforming Outlet:</b> De Gelderlander				

Source:: <http://web.archive.org/web/20180119223344/https://euvsdisinfo.eu/report/the-whole-technical-report-concerning-the-mh17-case-was-based-2/>

### 5.5.b. Discussion

The Gelderlander article contains three referent objects, the common societal identity, the technical report concerning the MH17 case and the translation of this report. The securitized elements of the referent subject is twofold and pertains to the alleged Ukrainian control of the location from which the BUK missile was launched. According to the disproof section, the Dutch translation to the article was taken over from the Russian RIA novosti outlet. This Russian company serves as the desecuritizing element of the referent subject because it shows that the disinforming article must be on the wrong track. The “mentioned above” statement in the second speech act refers to the disinformation database. To this day, the database contains two entries with the same securitizing speech act as the one at hand. These relate to the abovementioned Russian RIA news agency and RT, the international English language Russian broadcaster.<sup>129130</sup> Ukraine is othered in SA1, this harm is alleviated in the disproof. The summary of disinformation is composed of 29 words.

### 5.6.c. General information on the disinforming article:

**Translation of the Title:** BUK Manufacturer Rejects Conclusions MH17

**Author and Wordcount:** There is no author specified. It is a 110 word article.

**Wayback Machine Entry:** 11<sup>th</sup> of October 2018

**Source:** <http://web.archive.org/web/20180119193106/https://www.nporadio1.nl/de-nieuws-bv/onderwerpen/373640-rechts-extremisten-nemen-macht-in-oekraïne-over>

## 6. The Extent of the Presence of (De)securitization in the Netherlands

### 6.1. On the Legibility of the Analysis

This is a compilation of the parliamentary votes that enticed the ministerial response on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March. As mentioned in the Methodology and section 4.3, the ministerial response set a chain of effects in motion on the Dutch and EU levels. The votes that are at the root of these policies can therefore be analysed as speech acts, they will be analysed for their position within the (de)securitization continuum outlines in the literature review. As with the speech acts analysed for the EU, the common referent object is identity. This is signified by the NL abbreviation in the cell. Other than formulating what is in the Dutch interest, there is no common discernible objective of the Dutch parliament. Therefore there is also no means of ascertaining a

129. “The Whole Technical Report Concerning the MH17 Case Was Based...” EU vs DISINFORMATION.  
130. “The Whole Technical Report Concerning the MH17 Case Was Based...” EU vs DISINFORMATION.

common referent subject throughout the votes. The securitizing and desecuritizing elements of the referent subject and the supplementary referent objects will be distilled from the speech act in the discussion.

## 6.2. Kwint Leijten Parliamentary Motion,

**Published:** 22 February 2018, 12:18

**Speech act translation and parliamentary reference number:** 21501-34 nr 286

Proposed 21<sup>st</sup> of February 2018

The Parliament,

Upon the debate,

Noting that EuVsDisinfo has unjustly signified three Dutch publications as fake news;

Noting that this agency predominantly relies on its own flawed news selection methods encircled by contradictory statements;

Concluding that government agencies, particularly not those based in Brussels, should never signify free press publications as fake news;

Calls on the government to promote the disbandment of the EuVsDisinfo within the European covenant,

And continues to the general proceedings.

Kwint

Leijten

	Referent Subject	Referent Subject
Case study and referent object	Securitized Element	Desecuritized Element
NL: Identity Free Press, Three Dutch Publications	EuVsDisinfo, EuVsDisinfo Selection Methods, Government Agencies based in Brussels,	Fake news

Source: <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-21501-34-286.html>

### Discussion

This speech act contains three referent objects. Alongside societal identity, the free press and the three Dutch publications are referent objects. It can be argued that these supplement each other, since a free press without false fake news allegations benefit society. There are three securitizing referent subjects in the speech act, the EuVsDisinfo agency, their selection method and government agencies based in Brussels. These securitized elements are all undesirable. Interestingly, fake news serves as a desecuritizing element of the referent subject. The burdensome qualities of this predicate are outweighed by the negative actions of the EuVsDisinfo campaign and Brussels based government agencies. The speech act ends by pleading for the Dutch government to lobby for the complete disbandment of the EuVsDisinfo campaign within the EU. Othering of the EU is harboured in this speech act.

**Result:** Altered and included in vote 21501-34 nr. 290.<sup>131</sup>

131. "Moties Ingediend Bij Het VSO OJCS-Raad Van 15 Februari 2018." Tweede Kamer Der Staten-Generaal.

## 6.3. Westerveld Parliamentary Motion

**Published:** 22 February 2018, 12:19

**Speech act translation and parliamentary reference number:** 21501-34 nr. 287

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Proposed 21<sup>st</sup> of February 2018

The Parliament,

Upon the debate,

Noting that governmental involvement with the content of journalistic reporting poses a risk to press freedom;

Noting that EuVsDisinfo signified Dutch journalists and their articles as disinformation;

Contemplating the current goal of the East StratCom Task Force – increasing awareness on continued Russian disinformation campaigns – will not be accomplished like this;

Concluding that the Task Force is not credible;

Calls on the government to plea for a renewed strategy of EuVsDisinfo which promotes independent investigative journalism, and to consult parliament on this,

And continues to the general proceedings.

Westerveld

	Referent Subject	Referent Subject
Case study and referent object	Securitized Element	Desecuritized Element
NL: Identity Press Freedom, Dutch Journalists and Articles, Awareness of Russian Disinformation Campaigns, Task Force Credibility	EuVsDisinfo,	Renewed EuVsDisinfo,

Source: <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-21501-34-287.html>

### Discussion

The Westerveld speech act is composed of five referent objects. Press freedom, Dutch journalist and the articles they write, the aim of raising awareness on Russian disinformation, the Credibility of the ESCTF and societal identity. The referent subject is splits the EuVsDisinfo campaign into an organization that did not manage to protect the referent objects and a potential campaign that could achieve this through a rejuvenated approach. Othering of Russia is harboured in the speech act due to the fact that awareness needs to be raised on disinformation campaigns of this country.

**Result:** 33 out of 150 parliamentarians voted in favour, the vote was rejected.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> “Moties Ingediend Bij Het VSO OJCS-Raad Van 15 Februari 2018.” Tweede Kamer Der Staten-Generaal, <https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/stemmingsuitslagen/detail?id=2018P02973>.

## 6.4 Yesilgöz-Zegerius Parliamentary Motion

**Published:** 22 February 2018, 12:19

**Speech act translation and parliamentary reference number:** 21501-34 nr. 288

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Proposed 21<sup>st</sup> of February 2018

The Parliament,

Upon the debate,

Noting that the East Stratcom Taskforce, was erected in 2015 as a part of the European External Action Service, with the goal of unmasking erroneous information from pro-Kremlin sources by signalling these;

Noting that EuVsDisinfo, which is a part of this Taskforce, seems to go well beyond this goal, interfered with press freedom in the Netherlands by unilaterally accusing news websites and newspapers of spreading Fake News;

Calls on the government to plea for the protection of our free press within the EU-covenant and clearly gives off the signal that there cannot be any government agency that may interfere with the practices of independent media and thus the call for the disbandment of the EuVsDisinfo,

And continues to the general proceedings.

Yesilgöz-Zegerius

	Referent Subject	Referent Subject
Case study and referent object	Securitized Element	Desecuritized Element
NL: Identity Press freedom,	EuVsDisinfo	Fakenews Accusation

Source: <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-21501-34-288.html>

### Discussion

The statement from Yesilgös-Zegerius employs societal identity and the functioning of the free press within it as the referent object. The East StratCom Taskforce goal of unmasking erroneous pro-Kremlin information is mentioned in this speech act. EuVsDisinfo seems to go above and beyond this goal through its unilateral accusations. The securitizing and desecuritizing element of the referent subject are the EuVsDisinfo campaign and the fakenews accusation respectively. Admittedly, the fake news accusations are placed in the context of the erroneous information spread by the Kremlin. The statement ends by calling on the government to disband EuVsDisinfo, embolden the Dutch free press and a warning on the removal of any government agency from interference with the content of free publications.

**Result:** Withdrawn but partially included in vote 21501-34 nr. 290.<sup>133</sup>

## 6.4. Sneller Verhoeven Parliamentary Motion

**Published:** 22 February 2018, 12:20

**Speech act translation and parliamentary reference number:** 21501-34 nr. 289

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Proposed 21<sup>st</sup> of February 2018

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133. "Motie Van Het Lid Westerveld over Een Andere Strategie Voor EU versus Disinfo." Tweede Kamer Der Staten-Generaal.

The Parliament,

Upon the debate,

Noting the risk that democratic governance is undermined through propaganda, disinformation and other elements of information warfare, like those specified by the report of special prosecutor Mueller in regards to influence on the American election, may not be underestimated and require an adequate response;

Noting that in European countries like Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine and Moldova are vulnerable to such subversion by the Russian government and that the East StratCom Task Force was erected as an answer to this;

Noting that the functioning of EuVsDisinfo, which is a component of this taskforce, has been counterproductive thus far through its (perceived) involvement with press freedom, requires to be reformed;

Calls on the government to increase the means for a European devised strategy which emboldens the resilience of European countries against undermining disinformation campaigns, in which the perception of state involvement in independent media is prevented,

And continues to the general proceedings.

Sneller

Verhoeven

	Referent Subject	Referent Subject
Case study and referent object	Securitized Element	Desecuritized Element
NL: Identity Democratic Governance, Europe, Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine, Moldova, East StratCom Task Force, Press Freedom	Propaganda, Disinformation, Information Warfare, American Election, Counterproductive EuVsDisinfo, Russian Government, Prevention of the perception of state involvement in independent media	Reformed EuVsDisinfo, European Strategy

Source: <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-21501-34-288.html>

### Discussion

The Sneller Verhoeven motion distinguishes itself through its nine referent objects. Democratic governance, Europe, Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine, Moldova, the ESCTF and press freedom accompany the shared referent object of societal identity. Democratic governance and the role that the free press and the Taskforce play in it are threatened. Interestingly, European countries are threatened rather than the Netherlands. This complex referent object does not stand alone, the securitized referent subject consist of seven elements for this speech act. Propaganda, disinformation, information warfare, the American election, the counterproductive EuVsDisinfo, the Russian government and the perceived state involvement in the media after the commotion in the Netherlands all threaten. An Interesting geopolitical vision can be unpacked from this speech act, the threat that the Russian government posed to democratic governance in the United States applies to the Europe too. Russia is othered in relation to the west in this case. In addition to this, the EuVsDisinfo campaign worked counterproductively by giving the impression that government entities presiding over the Netherlands were involving themselves with the conduct of independent media. The two desecurizing elements of this referent subject are a reformed EuVsDisinfo campaign and a reified European strategy on disinformation to foster European resilience against it.

**Result:** No votes available but the motion persists as mentioned in the ministerial response 21501-34 nr. 291.<sup>134</sup>

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134. "Moties Ingediend Bij Het VSO OJCS-Raad Van 15 Februari 2018." Tweede Kamer Der Staten-Generaal.

## 6.5. Kwint Yesilgöz-Zegerius Parliamentary Motion

**Published:** 22 February 2018, 12:20

**Speech act translation and parliamentary reference number:** 21501-34 nr. 290

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Proposed 6<sup>th</sup> of March 2018

The Parliament,

Upon the debate,

Noting that the East Stratcom Taskforce, was erected in 2015 as a part of the European External Action Service, with the goal of unmasking erroneous information from pro-Kremlin sources by signalling these;

Contemplating that EuVsDisinfo, Which is a part of this Taskforce, goes well beyond this goal, interferes with press freedom in the Netherlands and has up to date unjustly marked three Dutch publications as fake news;

Noting that government agencies, whether they are national, European or of another order, should not determine whether free press publications are fake news;

Calls on the government to plea for the protection of our pressfreedom and promote the disbandment of the EuVsDisinfo within the European covenant,

And continues to the general proceedings.

Kwint

Yesilgöz-Zegerius

	Referent Subject	Referent Subject
Case study and referent object	Securitized Element	Desecuritized Element
NL: Identity Press freedom, Three Dutch Publications	EuVsDisinfo	Fakenews

Source: <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-21501-34-290.html>

### Discussion

This last speech act more or less shares it's referent object with the one under the 6.2. header. Societal identity, press freedom and the three Dutch publications are referent objects in this case. The securitizing element of the referent subject is the EuVsDisinfo campaign, which threatens all of the referent objects. Once again, fake news acts as the desecuritized element of the referent subject. The goal of unmasking erroneous pro-Kremlin information from the Yesilgöz-Zegerius statement is included here. All contributions of governments of any kind of value judgement on free press publications are disavowed. The speech act ends by calling on the Dutch government to fulfill two actions. First of all, the government should actively promote Dutch free press. Secondly, the Dutch government should lobby for the complete disbandment of the EuVsDisinfo campaign within the EU.

**Result:** 109 out of 150 parliamentarians voted in favour, the vote was approved.<sup>135136</sup>

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135. "Raad Voor Onderwijs, Jeugd, Cultuur En Sport." *Raad Voor Onderwijs, Jeugd, Cultuur En Sport | Tweede Kamer Der Staten-Generaal*.

136. "Moties Ingediend Bij Het VSO OJCS-Raad Van 15 Februari 2018." *Tweede Kamer Der Staten-Generaal*.



## 7. Conclusion

From the wide and narrow analysis, it is apparent that the units of which the (de)securitization theory is composed are found in the selected set of speech acts. The aim of identifying the presence of societal (de)securitization has thereby been fulfilled. The extent of this presence is however the more interesting question. The three sub questions all worked towards answering this research question. There are of course many different kinds of issue areas that came up in the speech acts that were not necessarily covered in the wide analysis. The wide analysis did however paint a comprehensive picture of the disinformation and institutional components of the thesis in addition to the circumstances surrounding the case. For the illocutionary conditions, the presence of securitizing elements of the referent subject suggest securitizing moves take place throughout the cases. Moves are mentioned here due to the nature of the sociological school of securitization, this school states that it is necessary to factor in audience resonance to draw definite conclusions on the presence of (de)securitization. The data on audience receptions falls out of the scope of this thesis, therefore only (de)securitizing moves are proven in the narrow illocutionary inquiries. These conditions are accompanied with a wide range of desecuritizing elements of the referent subjects. This proves that the simultaneity of securitizing and desecuritizing moves occurs in all ten cases. It is necessary to acknowledge that there are certain flaws inherent to bringing this finding about. When a table is included under a speech act, researchers are invited to fill in blank spaces. This can result in tenuous lines of reasoning, path dependency and confirmation bias lure on the way of those embarking on such investigative paths. It is entirely possible that in writing up the narrow illocutionary analysis voids were filled for the sake of doing so, this is a byproduct of the interpretivist method. It should be mentioned that the units of (de)securitization that were found in the case studies were selected by using a similar formula for all of the speech acts whilst upholding the integrity of a systematic interpretative research method. Since (de)securitization is essentially political, and illocutionary boxes aren't neatly ticked off, this justifies the fuzziness of these outcomes.<sup>137</sup> The fuzzy set of speech acts also renders it impossible to draw a single ethical conclusion on the presence of (de)securitization. The othering practices, which relate to the international actors Ukraine, Russia and the EU in terms of difference do suggest that these speech acts approach these countries from the condoned security angle. The right sector and the Azov battalion are also introduced as othered parties, these do emerge from a domestic playing field. The multiplicity of ontologies from which speech acts are conveyed is an explanatory factor of the different othered parties. Overall, various elements are identified in the illocutionary segment which signify where (de)securitization is found.

The perlocutionary effects, which have social consequences, can be said to have taken place in response to the parliamentary motions. First of all, the response letter of interior minister Ollongren set a snowball effect in motion which led to several outcomes. The affirmation of the letter that freedom of speech needs to be upheld in the Union is acknowledged in the 2018 disinformation action plan released on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December. The decision to refrain from including Dutch language articles in the database and to devote even more attention to Russian and Neighboring language content can also stem from minister Ollongren's letter. This thesis didn't take into account if language constrains or amplifies the reach of disinformation, English language content almost certainly exerts a decent amount of influence on Dutch audiences. Since the case study relates to Dutch content, this limitation is justified. Because EuVsDisinfo continues to do a lot of work in English, Dutch audiences will most certainly keep paying attention to it. In addition to this, the growth of the Budget over the last years affirms that continued scrutiny over the EuVsDisinfo case is necessary. The fact that the EuVsDisinfo campaign wasn't shut down, as suggested in the motion that enjoyed a parliamentary majority. The crux of this matter boils down to whether shutting the campaign down is a member state or union wide competence. At the time of writing, there are 27 other member states in the Union that all have a view on this matter. The letter of minister Ollongren already sidelined the Kwint Yesilgöz-Zegerius motion, this is all the more reason that that this parliamentary outcome did not materialize. Therefore the perlocutionary effects left tangible traces in the conduct of the Dutch government and EuVsDisinfo campaign. Admittedly the way in which the research was conducted largely

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137. Jonathan Luke Austin and Philippe Beaulieu-Brossard. "(De)Securitisiation Dilemmas: Theorising the Simultaneous Enaction of Securitisation and Desecuritisiation." *Review of International Studies* 44, no. 2 (2017): 302.

reflected processes of muddling through and wondering as research attitudes. Drawing conclusions on identity is a fickle enterprise, but this is accounted for in the methodology. Identities shift, therefore it is more important to figure out if they receive a security predicate than what exactly this identity is. The approach to this thesis also comes from an all-encompassing ambition, at times this led to losing track of the essence of the project. This inclusivity derived from a recognition that the work is in some ways flawed. In addition to this, It is essential to confess that this thesis cost loads of mental energy. By needlessly complicating things throughout the process, un-useful pathways to the answer were explored. I want to thank my supervisor and all those around me for being so patient with me, even when I did not always listen to their good advice. A Dutch proverb states that one should not turn a mosquito into an elephant. The implication is to not exaggerate an issue that is essentially rather small. This dictum applies to various levels on this work. The policies that were described in this thesis arise out of an alarming worldview, as does most interest in the topic. Keeping calm and carrying on tends to be a good approach to hyped topics like disinformation distribution.

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