

# Identifying factors to compare responses to hybrid threats

Bas Keijser & Kimberley Kruijver

[Start presentation](#)

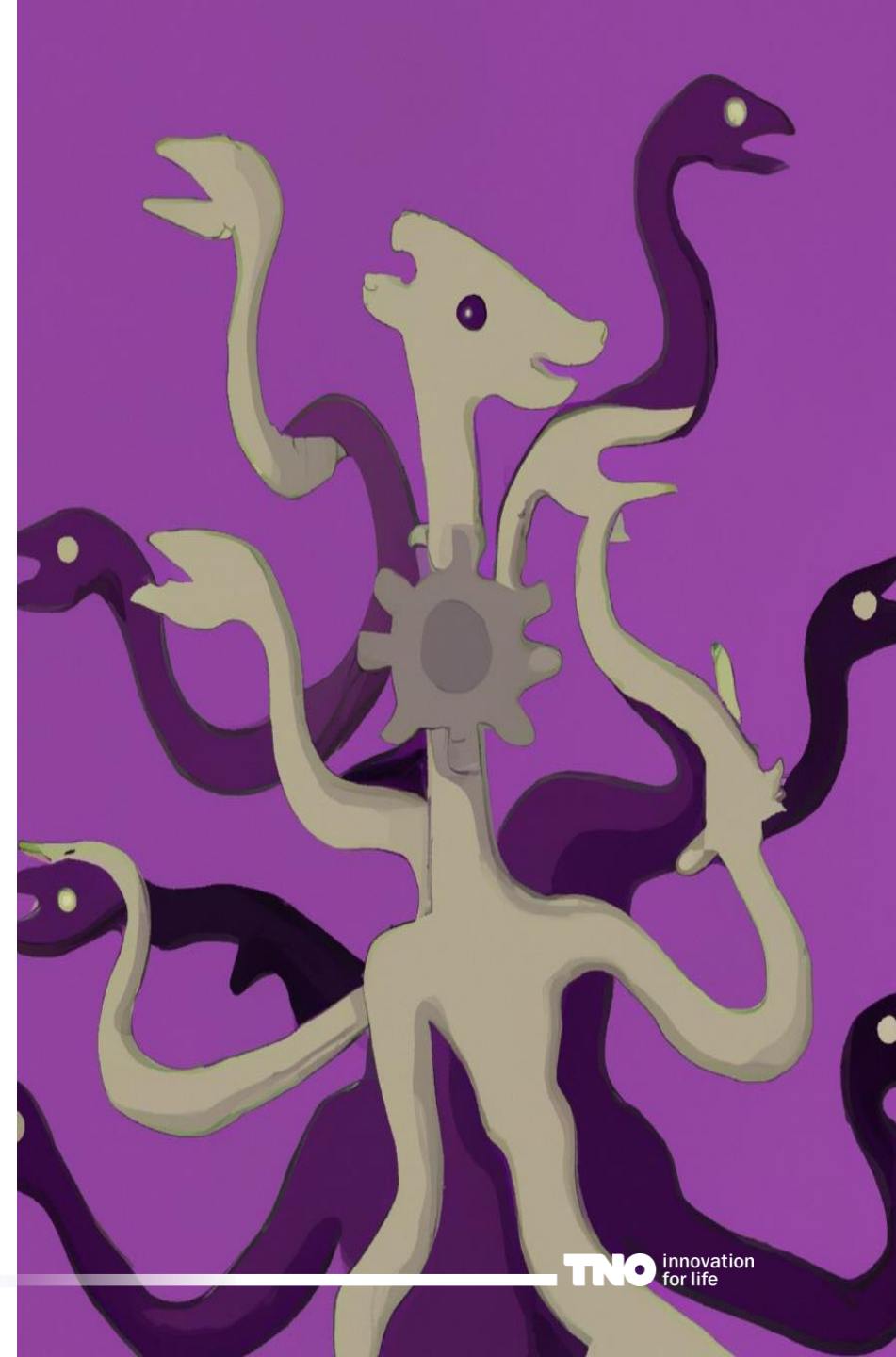
# Agenda



1. Background & research question
2. Basics of countering hybrid threats
3. Basics of strategic culture
4. Institutionalisation of hybrid response
5. Strategic culture framework
6. Conclusion & recommendations

# Background & research question

- Emerging threat of hybrid conflict with consequences for NATO's deterrence and defence posture
- Countries differ in their responses → role of strategic culture?
- *Strategic culture: norms, ideas and practises that influence decision-making and ultimately the creation of a grand strategy to achieve strategic political objectives.*
- RQ: What factors can be identified to explain differences between how countries counter hybrid threats?



# Basics of countering hybrid threats

- Based on situational awareness: before, during or after a hybrid activity
- Objectives: resilience, deterrence (by denial and by punishment) or response
- Two axes: when a counterhybrid measure is taken & when its effect materialises → categorisation in table

	Measure before activity	Measure during activity	Measure after activity
Effect before activity	Disrupt cyber influencing capability	<i>Not possible</i>	<i>Not possible</i>
Effect during activity	Strengthen disinformation awareness in social group	Expose disinformation presence on platforms used	<i>Not possible</i>
Effect after activity	Identify and support people vulnerable to disinformation	Investigate disinformation narrative	Investigate disinformation uptake, design counternarrative

# Basics of strategic culture

- Strategic culture: norms, ideas and practises that *influence* decision-making and ultimately the creation of a grand strategy to achieve strategic political objectives.
  - Reflected in the relevant aspects of decision-making related to counterhybrid efforts
  - Constant interplay between *discourse* and *practice*
- Delineation of strategic culture:
  1. **The political-strategic level** → reflected in national grand strategy
  2. **The organisational level** → procedures and organisations
  3. **The behavioural level** → actual counterhybrid practice of a country

# Institutionalisation of hybrid response

- Institutionalisation: the sustainable incorporation of counterhybrid activities into an explicit strategy and underlying practical implementations
  - Takes place in broader geographical context and strategic culture
  - Mutual influence between strategic culture and underlying norms, values, perceptions, ideas
- Operationalisation of a country's counterhybrid efforts that reflect strategic culture:

At the political-strategic level:	- Counterhybrid strategies and legislation
At the organisational level:	- Procedures to identify threats, detect, respond and communicate - Organisations tasked to perform the procedures above - Collaborations between organisations and with other countries
At the behavioural level:	- Measures applied to prevent or react to hybrid threats - Use of the above procedures - Behaviour of organisations with a counterhybrid task - Behaviour of collaborations with a counterhybrid task

Table 3: A strategic culture framework of factors to analyse responses to hybrid threats

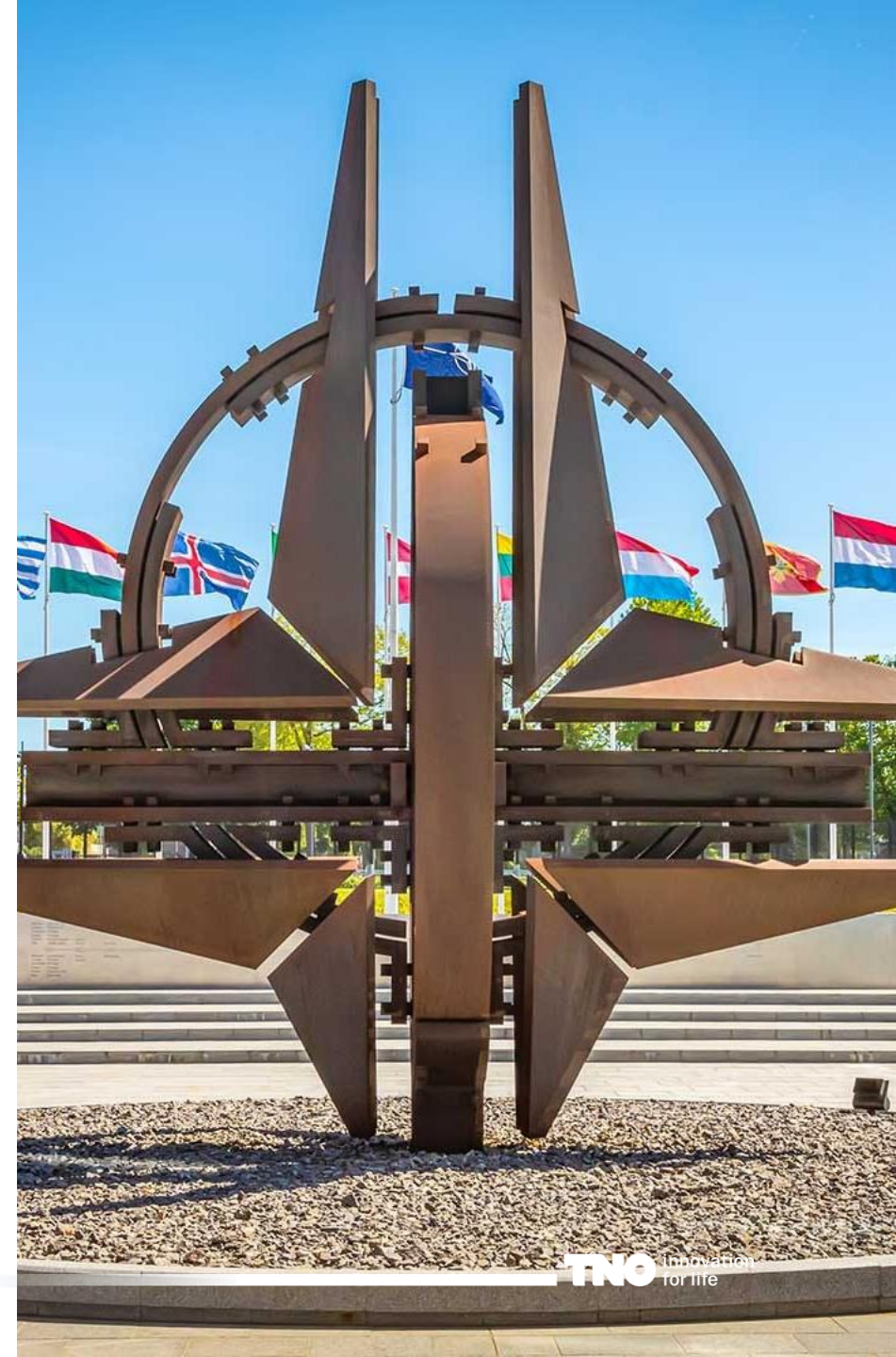
Level of strategic culture	Factor	Description and relevant questions
<b>Counterhybrid grand strategy: broad outline of goals, ways and means</b> Informed by context, threat perceptions, motivations and decision-making models	1. Geographical and societal context	<b>Political-strategic:</b> <i>Basics to understand the country's geopolitical and security situation, and where the threat comes from. What inherent societal vulnerabilities are present? What hybrid activities have taken place in recent years?</i>
	2. Threat perception of hybrid threats	<b>Political-strategic:</b> <i>What national security threats are perceived by a country? What is understood as 'hybrid threats'? Is different terminology used to describe (aspects of) 'hybrid'? What underlying values are threatened? What actors are perceived as hybrid threat actors? What is the level of the threat?</i>
	3. Motivations & historical practices	<b>Political-strategic:</b> <i>What are the goals for the use of counterhybrid measures? Which norms, values and perceptions underly those goals? What can history tell us about the security and defence practices of a country? Which events have influenced current counterhybrid policies and behaviours?</i>
	4. Decision-making models	<b>Political-strategic:</b> <i>How does decision-making on a national level work in general and with regards to security and specifically counterhybrid policy? Which norms, values and perceptions underly national decision-making processes?</i>
	5. Counterhybrid strategies and legislation	<b>Political-strategic:</b> <i>What national strategies, policies or high-level guidelines exist that are relevant to hybrid? Which ones are specifically for counterhybrid?</i>
<b>Counterhybrid procedures: essential steps to react to hybrid threats</b> Informed by grand strategy	6. Procedures for situational awareness, detection, attribution, decision-making, execution and evaluation	<b>Organisational:</b> <i>What procedures are in place to support the hybrid response cycle consisting of building situational awareness, detection, attribution, decision-making about a response, execution and evaluation?</i>
		<b>Behavioural:</b> <i>How have these procedures been used?</i>
	7. Procedures for risk or vulnerability assessment	<b>Organisational:</b> <i>What procedures are in place (if any) to perform risk or vulnerability assessment connected to hybrid threats? What is the scope of assessment performed?</i>
		<b>Behavioural:</b> <i>How have these procedures been used?</i>

<b>Counterhybrid governance: tasking and use of procedures</b> Informed by grand strategy	8. Procedures for strategic and crisis communications	<b>Organisational:</b> <i>What procedures are in place for strategic communications and crisis communications directed at the own population?</i> <b>Behavioural:</b> <i>How have these procedures been used?</i>	
	9. Organisations and organisational structure with a counterhybrid task	<b>Organisational:</b> <i>What governmental and non-governmental organisations are tasked with a counterhybrid task? What are their tasks? What tasks are not explicitly given to an organisation?</i> <b>Behavioural:</b> <i>What activities have these organisations undertaken?</i>	
	10. Collaboration between organisations and with other countries on counterhybrid threats	<b>Organisational:</b> <i>What collaboration between organisations exists? What collaboration on the topic of counterhybrid efforts does the country have with other countries? What task is given to the collaborations?</i>	
		<b>Behavioural:</b> <i>What activities have been undertaken in these collaborations? What tasks are not collaborated on?</i>	
	<b>Toolbox of measures: performance of tasks</b>	11. Applied measures	<b>Behavioural:</b> <i>What counterhybrid measures have been applied in practice, across the DIMEFIL-spectrum? What resilience, deterrence effects were reached?</i>
		12. Prepared measures	<b>Behavioural:</b> <i>What counterhybrid measures are already actively prepared, but have not yet been used? What are preferences across DIMEFIL-axes? What resilience, deterrence effects are envisioned?</i>



# Conclusion & recommendations

- Two hypotheses for further cross-country case study research:
  1. **Countries differ in how they institutionalise their counterhybrid efforts** into a counterhybrid strategy, underlying procedures, governance and exact measures taken.
  2. **Country differences can be explained** by describing geographical and societal characteristics of a country's environment together with the **core elements of strategic culture**.
- Investigate **NATO's deterrence and defence posture** against hybrid threats:
  - Including the role of different strategic cultures





› **Thank you**  
**FOR YOUR ATTENTION**

**BAS.KEIJSER@TNO.NL**

**KIMBERLEY.KRUIJVER@TNO.NL**