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RUSSIA AND HYBRID WARFARE – GOING BEYOND THE LABEL

Bettina Renz and Hanna Smith

Co-authored by Bettina Renz and Hanna Smith, with insights from Tor Bukkvoll, Antulio J. Echevarria, Keir Giles, Sibylle Scheipers, Sir Hew Strachan and Rod Thornton

Project "Russia and Hybrid Warfare: definitions, capabilities, scope and possible responses" report 1/2016

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Introduction: Reconsidering Russian "Hybrid Warfare"

This document is the first report compiled by the project 'Russian hybrid warfare: definitions, capabilities, scope and possible responses'. It outlines the findings of the project to date, based on the research conducted by the two investigators, on the discussions held with the project's international panel of experts during the first workshop in November 2015, and on the papers prepared by members of the panel of experts (attached) on specific aspects of the project.

In line with the research proposal submitted at the outset of the project, this first report focuses on definitional aspects of 'hybrid warfare' and seeks to highlight a number of important points to consider. The report is presented in three parts. Part 1 assesses the analytical utility of 'hybrid warfare' as a strategic concept and as a tool for estimating changes in Russian military capabilities and approaches to war. Discussing the concept's analytical shortcomings within the context of the history of military-strategic thought, the report argues that - not unlike other presumed war-winning approaches in the past - 'hybrid warfare' is not a panacea and the success of a hybrid approach, such as that pursued by Russia in Crimea, is always context dependent. The idea of 'hybrid warfare' has been useful in highlighting a number of improvements in Russian military capabilities as well as potential changes in Russian thinking about the utility of force. However, the concept's extreme ambiguity makes it unsuitable as an analytical tool used to underpin strategic decision-making and defence planning vis-à-vis Russia. Part 2 assesses the way in which 'hybrid warfare' has been applied in the West to frame Russian international actions in the aftermath of the Crimea annexation. It shows that the concept has been transformed from a military strategic concept into a quasi-theory of Russian foreign policy, thus further decreasing its analytical coherence and utility. Describing Russian foreign policy conduct as 'hybrid warfare' (against the West) is a dangerous misuse of the word 'war', which can have serious unintended consequences. Part 3 deals with the important question of 'what Russia wants'. It shows that the idea that Russia is conducting 'hybrid warfare' against the West is highly problematic, as it tells us nothing about the possible goals and intentions of such a presumed approach. The idea also overemphasises change and novelty in Russian intentions and capabilities, whilst at the same time underestimating continuity. In order to estimate any potential future threat from Russia and to decide on appropriate responses, a complex study of Russian goals and intentions - of what is old and what is new (as opposed to what merely appears to be new) - is required. The report argues that Russia sees its Great Power status in parallel to state survival and sovereignty and therefore is ready to defend what it sees as its national interest by all possible means. Methods used by Russia to maintain its status differ significantly on the global, regional and European level.

The report concludes with a number of recommendations based on the analysis conducted in its three parts. **Its principal conclusion is that the 'hybrid warfare' concept is not suitable as an analytical tool for assessing Russian military capabilities or foreign policy intentions and should therefore not be used as the basis for strategic decision-making and defence planning**. Russia's successful use of non-military instruments, and of information in particular, in the annexation of Crimea was the reason why the 'hybrid warfare' label has gained so much traction in its aftermath. Russia's use of similar instruments against other states has emerged as a major concern in the West, including Finland. **However, the discussion of these concerns under the 'hybrid warfare' umbrella is likely to obscure more than it can explain in terms of analysis and risks arriving at skewed conclusions that could even be playing into Russia's hands.**

PART 1: 'Hybrid warfare' as an operational approach to war – a new war-winning formula?

Russia's swift achievement of political objectives in Crimea without the need to fire a single shot took the world by surprise. Non-military instruments, and the use of information in particular, were important factors in the achievement of Russian victory. Russia's approach in Crimea appeared especially impressive, because it stood in stark contrast to past military interventions. The Chechen wars and the war with Georgia in 2008 were criticised for excessive use of force and were seen as poorly executed campaigns based on lack of coordination, outdated equipment and poor strategy. Throughout much of the post-Soviet period the idea that the Russian military was outdated and stuck in Cold-war thinking dominated Western perceptions, so the success of the unconventional campaign in Crimea was particularly unexpected.[1] Some observers in the West concluded from the Crimea operation that with the 'hybrid warfare' approach used there, Russia had found a 'new art of war'[2] that made up for shortcomings in its conventional capabilities and, if repeated, could pose a considerable threat to states in the West. The image of a resurgent Russia emerged. **In the view of many Western analysts it is the non-military tools, such as information, that are seen as the biggest threat emanating from Russia today. However, the Crimea operations have also led to concerns about the implications of Russian military modernisation more broadly, as it is not yet clear to what extent improved capabilities will go hand in hand with more forceful or hostile intentions.**

Arguably, the effectiveness and extent of non-military instruments used in Crimea are the reasons why the concept of 'hybrid warfare' has become so prominent in the aftermath of this conflict. However, it is important to bear in mind that from the point of view of military-strategic thought the analytical utility of the 'hybrid warfare' concept is contested, as is its utility as a tool for assessing Russian military capabilities. This section outlines problems pertaining to the 'hybrid warfare' concept from a military-strategic point of view. An awareness of these issues might aid the identification of lessons to be learned (and not to be learned) from Russian military performance in Crimea.

'Hybrid warfare' is a concept outlining a military *operational* approach that was first employed in 2007 by a former US Marine officer, Frank Hoffman, essentially in response to the need to challenge what he saw as engrained beliefs in the US military about the utility of military force in the post-Cold war environment. In Hoffman's views, the idea of 'hybrid warfare' was a suitable analytical construct that could explain the success achieved by comparatively weak opponents - non-state actors such as the Taliban, Al Qaeda or Hezbollah - against the vastly technologically and numerically superior militaries of the US coalition forces in Afghanistan and Iraq and Israeli forces in the 2006 Lebanon war. What makes a war 'hybrid', in Hoffman's view, is the coordinated use of different

1 Bettina Renz, 'Russian military capabilities after 20 years of reform', *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 56(3), 2014, pp. 61-82.

2 Sam Jones, 'Ukraine: Russia's new art of war', *The Financial* Times, 28th August 2014; <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/ea5e82fa-2e0c-11e4-b760-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3uV96FMNx>

modes of warfare, both military (use of force) and non-military (irregular tactics, criminal disorder, terrorist acts, et cetera) to achieve 'synergistic effects in the physical and psychological dimensions of conflict' within the main battlespace.[3] **At the time, 'hybrid warfare' was only one of many labels, which also included 'New Wars', fourth-generation warfare and asymmetric warfare amongst others, that were being used by analysts to conceptualise changes in contemporary warfare in line with the idea that war had become 'substantially distinct' from older patterns of conflict**.[4] After Russia's annexation of Crimea, in which the use of non-military instruments was seen as particularly significant, the concept quickly gained prominence as an analytical tool that could help explain Russian military success in this operation. However, in writing about Russia, few analysts have subsequently explicitly used Hoffman's actual concept or definition of 'hybrid warfare', but rather have loosely referred to the general idea of hybridity as a mix of military and non-military means.

It is important to bear in mind that **in the context of the history of military-strategic thought, 'hybrid warfare' is only one of many concepts that have seemed to offer a new war-winning formula**. A number of prominent examples of such concepts is summarised in the table below. What unites many of these 'war-winning' concepts is that they were constructed, with hindsight, on the basis of specific military successes (for example, 'strategic bombing' based on the psychological effects of limited German bombing raids on the UK during WWI; the 'Revolution in Military Affairs' or network-centric warfare based on the success of US coalition operations during the 1991 Gulf War; 'asymmetric warfare' based on the success of Al Qaeda's 9/11 attacks on the US, etc). Proponents of these concepts expected that, what they saw as a 'new' approach to warfare in each case, equated to a war-winning formula that, if captured in doctrine, could guarantee success in future conflicts irrespective of the circumstances. However, as outlined in the table, none of these presumed war-winning formulae turned out to be a 'silver bullet' and military victory based on a similar approach was not easily repeatable. For example, 'strategic bombing' in WWII did not cause targeted populations to turn on their governments, neither in the UK this time, nor in Germany. Technological superiority, precision weapons and a networked approach did not allow the US coalition operations to achieve swift overall and ultimate victory in the 2003 Iraq war, as it had done in the 1991 Gulf campaign.

The idea that any 'new' approach to warfare, including 'hybrid warfare', can lead to repeatable military victory reflects what Hew Strachan has called an 'astrategic' approach to war that overemphasises *operational* capabilities and doctrine at the expense of *strategy*. In other words, the presumption that any set mode of warfare or doctrinal approach will lead to military victory irrespective of the circumstances neglects the fact that the success of a strategy is always context-dependent. As Strachan has put it, "Strategy is about doing things, about applying ends to means. It is an attempt to make concrete a set of objectives through the application of military force in a particular case".[5] In other words, presumed 'silver bullets' like 'strategic bombing', 'network-centric warfare' and also **'hybrid warfare' are not a strategy in themselves, but merely means to an end, an *operational* approach**. They can only be successful if they match the circumstances specific to each

3 Frank Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, Arlington, VA: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007, p. 8.

4 Mats Berdal, 'The "New Wars" Thesis Revisited' in Hew Strachan and Sibylle Scheipers (eds), *The Changing Character of War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 109-10.

5 Hew Strachan, *The Direction of War: Contemporary Strategy in Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 13.

particular conflict and they cannot overcome the inevitable friction, chaos and the fog of war, which always distinguish war on paper from war in practice. As Antulio J. Echevarria and other strategists have also noted, it is important to treat any new warfare concept with caution. **New concepts are useful, in Echevarria's view, to draw the attention of policymakers to emerging security challenges. However, there is also a tendency for such concepts to turn into claims about contemporary wars that are not supported by strategic analysis and thus be counterproductive to decision-making and strategic planning in the long term.**[6]

The potential weaknesses and limitations specifically of 'hybrid warfare' as a military-strategic concept also should be borne in mind, as argued by Sibylle Scheipers in an article analysing the concept as an 'indirect approach' in historical perspective. As Scheipers showed, 'hybrid warfare' combines two types of 'indirect approaches' to war, one that is intended to shorten conflicts and the other to lengthen it. In Crimea, for example, a war-shortening approach was pursued inasmuch as the conflict was concluded before a major battle could even commence. The weakness of such a war-shortening approach is that it relies on surprise, tempo and superior information, which is not always possible, particularly as the element of surprise and unexpected moves wears out over time. The concept's weaknesses become even clearer if applying it to Russia's approach in Donbas, as some analysts have done. Here, the approach has been of the war-lengthening variety, drawing the population into the conflict and relying on auxiliary fighters. The weakness of this approach is the danger of loss of loyalty and control over the direction of the conflict as a result of decentralised leadership. The war-lengthening approach can also become very costly with many unintended consequences, like downing of the Malaysian airliner over Eastern Ukraine in July 2014. It remains in fact contested whether Donbas was an integral phase as part of Russia's 'hybrid war' in Ukraine from the outset, or a 'second round' inspired only by the events in Crimea as Mikhail Barabanov has argued.[7] Mark Galeotti suggested that Donbas could be described at most as an example of non-linear/hybrid war 'gone very wrong'.[8] **The fact that the 'hybrid warfare' concept is presumed to encompass approaches aimed at shortening and lengthening conflicts at the same time is a serious analytical weakness and makes it very difficult to operationalise it in practice as parameters for success cannot be clearly defined**. As Scheipers concluded, the 'hybrid warfare' concept should be approached with caution, as it 'suggests a consistency of effort where there is very little of that'.[9]

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6 Antulio J. Echevarria, 'How we should think about "gray zone" wars', *Infinity Journal*, 5(1), 2015, p. 16. For an excellent analysis of the analytical utility of a range of strategic concepts, including 4th generation warfare, asymmetric warfare, effects-based operations, etc, see Karl Erik Haug and Ole Maao, *Conceptualising Modern War*, London: Hurst, 2011.

7 Mikhail Barabanov, 'Testing a "new look": Ukrainian conflict and military reforms in Russia', *Russia in Global Affairs*, 4, 2014. < http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Testing-a-New-Look-17213> (accessed 1 October 2015).

8 Mark Galeotti, 'Blowback's a bitch: MH17 and the east Ukraine campaign's long-term costs for Russia', In Moscow's Shadows blog, 20 July 2014. < https://inmoscowsshadows.wordpress.com/2014/07/20/blowbacks-a-bitch-mh17-and-the-east-ukraine-campaigns-long-term-costs-for-russia/> (accessed 1 August 2014).

9 Sibylle Scheipers, 'Winning wars without battles: hybrid warfare and other "indirect" approaches in the history of strategic thought', unpublished paper prepared for the project.

Table: A short outline of 'war-winning approaches' in the history of strategic thought

Concept	When was it coined/origins	Key ideas/assumptions	Effects/criticisms
Area bombing/ strategic bombing	The effects of limited aerial bombardment during WW1 led to the doctrine of 'area bombing' in WWII.	• Psychological/moral effects are key to military success – 'breaking the enemy's will', rather than attrition warfare. • City bombing demoralises the civilian population, which will turn against its own government.	• Psychological effects were not achieved; resolve of the population was often strengthened. • The extent to which area bombing contributed to the allies' victory in WWII is highly contested.
Network-centric warfare/ 'The Revolution in Military Affairs'	The success of US coalition forces in the 1991 Gulf War promoted the doctrine of network-centric warfare	• Advanced technology and networked into a system of systems is key to military success. • Precision weapons will make wars shorter, 'cleaner' and easier to win.	• Success of 1991 Gulf War could not be repeated in other cases, especially Afghanistan and Iraq 2003. • Technological optimism/ technology as key to military success is highly contested.
4th Generation Warfare	Coined in the 1980s, but became prominent after 9/11 as a concept that could highlight the problems of network-centric warfare/ technological approaches to war	• - War has evolved in generations: 1st generation war = massed firepower/Napoleonic wars; 2nd generation war = firepower/WWI; 3rd generation war: manoeuvre warfare/WWII, 4th generation warfare: evolved from insurgency, using political, economic, social and military networks to break enemy leadership's will/Hamas, Hezbollah, Al Qaeda.- Allowing 'weaker'/ non-state opponents to exploit technological reliance/strengths of state opponents.	• Sequencing of war into generations is artificial: firepower, manoeuvre, insurgency, attempts to 'break the enemy's will to resist' are not mutually exclusive and elements of each can be detected in most wars. • 4th generation war falsely claims that traditional state-on-state warfare is a relic of the past
6th Generation Warfare	Concept coined by the Russian strategic thinker Vladimir Slipchenko, based on the US/NATO approach to the Kosovo war in 1999, which he described as the 'first 6th generation war'.	• Sophisticated technology/ technological superiority are the key to winning wars. Overall the concept is very similar to the idea of Network-Centric Warfare.	• Criticised in Russia for overemphasising the role of technology in warfare.
Counter-insurgency warfare	Counterinsurgency rose to prominence in the mid-2000s as a concept that would help make wars like those in Afghanistan or Iraq more 'winnable' for the US	• In conflicts involving insurgency, technological superiority and conventional military force are not helpful and can even be counterproductive. Knowledge of local culture and history as well as the 'winning of hearts and minds' of the local population are of central importance.	• Overemphasis on counterinsurgency during the 2000s has decreased the US military's ability to fight manoeuvre wars. • 'Winning of hearts and minds' is easier said than done.
Asymmetric warfare	Became a prominent concept in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks to describe the approach used by Al Qaeda	• Asymmetric approaches allow weaker actors, such as Al Qaeda, to defeat opponents that are considerably stronger technologically and numerically.	• Asymmetry is nothing new, but is an age-old strategic tenet, going back to Sun Tzu the ancient-world Chinese strategist.
Hybrid warfare	Coined in 2007, but rose to prominence after Russia's annexation of Crimea to highlight the effectiveness of non-military means in addition to limited military force to achieve political objectives.	• The coordinated use of non-military and military means decreases the need for using overwhelming firepower/excessive military force	• The idea of hybrid warfare is not substantially different from concepts such as 4th generation war. • All wars are 'hybrid' to an extent and include instruments other than the use of actual military force (diplomacy, information, economic means)

Russian 'hybrid warfare' and Crimea

In order to assess Russian 'hybrid warfare' capabilities based on military success in the Crimea case, close attention needs to be paid to the circumstances specific to this conflict. **The successful pursuit of objectives in Crimea was aided by a range of enabling factors. These included a largely pro-Russian civilian element; the presence of Russian military installations and personnel - making the infiltration of special operations forces inconspicuous; a weakened Ukrainian political leadership; the almost complete absence of military resistance, and the lack of reaction from an international community that was stunned and surprised at the swiftness of Russian actions.** Such a convergence of conducive factors will be hard to replicate in many other scenarios. As Nico Popescu has argued, favourable circumstances in Crimea meant that 'it was not only easy for Russia, it was almost effortless'.[10] Russian strategy in Crimea worked, because the range of military means it used was able to achieve specific political objectives in this particular case and not because it had found a new war-winning approach.

The importance of context is also significant when it comes to estimating Russian ability to use non-military tools, such as information and attempts to influence international public opinion. **As Echevarria concluded in his discussion of coercive practices in 'grey-zone wars', using communications, such attempts are always 'vulnerable to mirror-imaging, or projecting one's values and ways of thinking onto one's adversaries. Such projections lead to risky assumptions about what one's rivals hold dear and how they will behave'**.[11] As history showed and as outlined in the above table, those perceived new war-winning approaches to war that relied heavily on information/psychological influence did not universally deliver the promised results. In other words, 'winning hearts and minds' or 'breaking the enemy's will to resist', is easier said than done and the success of 'information warfare', like that of any other military instrument or approach, depends on the particular case. From this point of view, Russian 'information warfare' capabilities *per se* should not be overestimated and it is by no means clear that the results achieved in Crimea and Ukraine can simply be repeated in a different setting. In Crimea and to an extent also in Donbas, Russian information and disinformation operations fell on fertile ground in the form of the not inconsiderable pro-Russian civilian contingent that welcomed or agreed with the official Russian narrative of events, such as the portrayal of the Maidan protestors as fascists and the idea that Russia was merely protecting ethnic Russians and Russian speakers. **The extent to which Russian information or disinformation would be successful if deployed against a different country that does not have a significant pro-Russian outlook or where anti-Russian sentiments predominate is far from certain. Furthermore, in historical perspective disinformation can backfire both home and abroad when reality does not match the message**.

10 Nicu Popescu, 'Hybrid warfare: neither new nor only Russian, European Institute for Security Studies, Alert, 4, 2015, p. 2. < http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Alert_4_hybrid_warfare.pdf> (accessed 10 October 2015).

11 Echevarria, 'How should we think about "grey zone" wars?'.

What lessons can we learn from Crimea?

It is important to bear in mind that lessons to be learned from Crimea about Russian military capabilities *per se* are limited as very little actual fighting took place there.[12] However, some conclusions can be drawn from Crimea about the success of Russian military modernisation in a number of areas. **First, the operations demonstrated the effectiveness of Russia's newly created Special Operations Forces (SOF)**, which were deployed with high speed and to great effect. It is also important to note that Ukraine did not have corresponding capabilities and there is no reason to presume that the Russian SOF, which was modelled explicitly on the US Delta Force and UK SAS, is superior to equivalent forces in the West.[13] **Second, the conflict also showed the Russian leadership's ability to co-ordinate all relevant instruments of state power, including special operations forces, information operations including state media, elements of cyber warfare, deterrence and coercion through staged military exercises and the use of proxy fighters, for the successful achievement of objectives**. Lack of coordination between different agencies was seen as a problem in previous Russian military interventions and improved coordination in Crimea indicates the effectiveness of the new Russian National Centre for the Management of Defence established in early 2014.[14] **Third, the military exercises staged by Russia during the Ukraine crisis were unprecedented in size and served as an impressive show of force. As such, they demonstrate some of the advances Russia's conventional military forces have made in recent years, particularly given the fact that resources and capabilities to stage exercises on such a scale were lacking throughout much of the post-Soviet period.** Having said this, the exercises do not allow for conclusions about the combat skills of the soldiers involved and, as Johan Norberg argued, should be interpreted merely as posturing: 'The Russians appeared to want the world to focus on the scale of the exercise… But there was little detail about, for example, how many readiness-checked troops actually undertook field exercises.'[15]

The programme of Russian modernisation rolled out in 2008 is still ongoing, but it marked the start of a progress of rapidly improving capabilities and resulted in a newly found confidence in the country's armed forces, both of which were demonstrated in the Crimea operation. **The programme of modernisation is ongoing and, particularly with regard to the 'hybrid warfare' discussion, it should be noted that Russia is seeking to develop full-spectrum military capabilities and a conventional deterrent against the West, as hinted at in its 2014 military doctrine**. There is little basis to assume, as some analysts have done based on the Crimea operation, that Russia's view of the future is one of contactless war where 'the main battlespace is in the mind'[16] and actual military force will take on a secondary role. In terms of conventional military power Russia is superior technologically and numerically to any other former Soviet state and given

12 Tor Bukkvoll, 'Russian Special Operations Forces in the war in Ukraine – Crimea and Donbas'. Unpublished paper prepared for this project.

13 For a detailed discussion of the SOF see Tor Bukkvoll, 'Russian Special Operations Forces'.

14 Samuel Charap, 'The Ghost of Hybrid War', *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 57(6), 2015/16, p. 53.

15 Johan Norberg, 'The use of Russia's military in the Crimea crisis', Carnegie Endowment Website, 13th March 2014. <http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/03/13/use-of-russia-s-military-in-crimean-crisis?reloadFlag=1>

16 Janis Berzins, 'The new generation Russian warfare', *Aspen Review*, 3, 2014. < http://www.aspeninstitute.cz/en/article/3-2014-the-new-generation-of-russian-warfare/>

the country's comparative size and economic power this situation is unlikely to change in the future. Compared to the West, and especially to NATO as an alliance, Russian conventional capabilities do not yet fare well and the backbone of Russian military deterrence against the West continues to be its strategic nuclear forces.

Crimea revealed a number of new and strengthened Russian military capabilities. **However, taking the success of Russia's operational approach to this conflict as a basis for defence planning is counterproductive as it is likely to preclude the flexibility of responses needed in any potential future Russian hostility**. As Mark Galeotti cautioned, 'None of the current uses of Russian military power should be considered the standard blueprint. If they do anything direct in the Baltic States – and I don't actually think that they will – it will not be Crimea 2.0 or Donbass 2.0, but something that will be tailored to the situation there'.[17] Indeed, it would be bad strategy on the part of Russia if its leadership simply tried to replicate the Crimea operations elsewhere. Certainly, the element of surprise, which was central to success in Crimea, would be absent as any potential opponent would expect exactly that.

Russian military strategic thinking and 'hybrid warfare'

The concept of 'hybrid warfare' as a description for the approach pursued by Russia in Crimea does not originate in Russian military strategic thinking. Instead, it was made prominent by Western analysts in the aftermath of the annexation. **As a review of Russian-language academic and media coverage conducted for this project showed, when Russian analysts or journalists today speak or write about 'hybrid warfare' ['*gibridnaya voina*'] this is usually in reference to Western discussions of the issue and often in a dismissive way.** After the Crimea annexation, some Western scholars tried to trace the origins of Russia's approach back to the writings of Russian military thinkers in the years leading up to the crisis. In particular, an article authored by the Russian Chief of the General Staff, Valerii Gerasimov in 2013, caught the attention of a number of scholars.[18] Although the term 'hybrid warfare' was not mentioned in the article, Gerasimov was later identified as 'the face of the hybrid war approach', for example, in Maria Snegovaya's article on Russian information warfare published in 2015.[19] The idea that Gerasimov outlined a new 'hybrid warfare' doctrine that later served as the basis for Russia's aggression against Ukraine is the result of a selective and hindsight-based interpretation of the article. In fact, discussing the Arab Spring and NATO's intervention in Libya, Gerasimov outlines his views on general trends in Western and US approaches to warfare going back to the 1991 Gulf War. In his view, the increasing importance of non-military tools in conflicts, including political, economic, informational and humanitarian measures, is an important element of change in the current operating environment. An important piece

17 Octavian Manea, 'Hybrid war as war on governance' (interview with Mark Galeotti), *Small Wars Journal*, 19 August 2015. < http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/hybrid-war-as-a-war-on-governance>

18 Valerii Gerasimov, 'Tsennost' nauki v predvidenii', *Voenno-promyshlennyi kur'er*, 8(476), 27 February – 5 March 2015, pp. 1-3.

19 Maria Snegovaya, 'Putin's information warfare in Ukraine: Soviet origins of Russia's hybrid warfare', Institute for the Study of War (ISW), Russia Report No 1, September 2015, p. 10. < http://understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Russian%20Report%201%20Putin's%20Information%20Warfare%20in%20Ukraine-%20Soviet%20Origins%20of%20Russias%20Hybrid%20Warfare.pdf>

of context is the fact that **Gerasimov's article was based on a speech he had presented to fellow officers in the Russian Academy of War Sciences in January 2013. As such, it was a provocative appeal to the military establishment for the need for innovation in military thinking as part of the wider modernisation of the Russian armed forces**.[20] Indeed, a close reading of the article and of its conclusions in particular shows that one of **Gerasimov's central messages was not at all to outline a new Russian approach to war, but in fact to reproach Russian military leaders for not sufficiently engaging in the study of contemporary war and warfare and as such for having fallen behind the West in this respect.** As Charles Bartles also showed, Gerasimov's discussion of non-military instruments did not refer to Russian doctrine or future approaches but described 'the primary threats to Russian sovereignty as stemming from US-funded social and political movements such as color revolutions, the Arab Spring, and the Maidan movement'.[21]

'Hybrid warfare' measures like the use of information (for example, psychological operations, disinformation, subversion, the winning of 'hearts and minds') in warfare are age-old tactics that were already written about by Sun Tzu and are not new arrivals in the toolkits of either Russia's or Western militaries. **The prominent role and success of Russian 'hybrid tactics' in Crimea came as a surprise at the time, because they stood in stark contrast to the Chechen wars and the war with Georgia, which were fought largely as conventional military campaigns relying on heavy and often excessive use of military force**. However, the use of information and asymmetric approaches to warfare are not a new Russian capability.[22] Unconventional warfare, using special forces and guerrilla fighters and relying on subversive tactics, sabotage and disinformation amongst others, was a central element in Soviet military thinking and gained prominence particularly in discussions of the approaches pursued during the Cold War by both the Soviet and US militaries in the limited proxy conflicts fought around the world.[23]

The idea that 'hybrid warfare' is a successful innovation of Russian military thinking also imbues the Russian political and military leadership with an undue degree of strategic prowess and, in this sense, might represent a repetition of old mistakes. **Interpreting Crimea as evidence of a grander master plan of Russian 'hybrid warfare' is reminiscent of the West's enemy image of the Soviet Union, which viewed the Soviet leadership as a chess master that was vastly superior in terms of centralisation, organisation and coordination. As it turned out, the Soviet Union leadership's centralisation and strategic foresight was not as strong as had been presumed**. As Christopher Fettweis pointed out in an article seeking patterns in the creation of enemy images throughout history, 'people are aware of their own internal deliberations and divisions but see only the outcomes of decisions made elsewhere, which makes other actors seem unified and strategic'.[24]

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20 Ulrik Franke, 'War by non-military means: understanding Russian information warfare', FOI Report, FOI-R-4065-SE, March 2015, p. 41. < http://www.foi.se/en/Top-menu/Pressroom/News/2015/War-by-Non-Military-means/>.

21 Charles K. Bartles, 'Getting Gerasimov Right', *Military Review*, January-February 2016, pp. 30-38.

22 Rod Thornton, 'Turning strengths into vulnerabilities: the art of asymmetric warfare as applied by the Russian military in its hybrid warfare concept'. Unpublished paper prepared for this project.

23 A lot of literature on 'unconventional warfare' was published particularly in the 1960s. See, for example, Slavko Bjelajac, 'Unconventional warfare: American and Soviet approaches', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 341, 1962, pp. 74-81.

24 Christopher J. Fettweis, 'Misreading the Enemy', *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 57(5), 2015, p. 158.

Finally, a couple of words about potential unintended consequences of overstating Russian strategic prowess and 'hybrid warfare' capabilities. This might indirectly play into Putin's hands. After all, it is clear that Russian military aggression in Ukraine was motivated not least by the longstanding demand for respect on the international stage, as explicitly confirmed by Putin in his 'Crimea speech': outlining what was, in his view, a long history of Western meddling in Russia's affairs domestically and in its near abroad he concluded that the events in Crimea set a sign that it was time 'to accept the obvious fact: Russia is an independent, active participant in international affairs. Like other countries, it has its own national interests that need to be taken into account and respected'. **From this point of view the West's response to the Crimea annexation partially did exactly what Putin had demanded: putting forward the notion of Western weakness in the face of Russia's superior 'hybrid warfare' capabilities implies respect and even fear of Russia as a powerful global actor that was not afforded to the country before**.

PART 2: A dangerous misuse of the word 'war'? 'Hybrid warfare' as a quasi-theory of Russian foreign policy

The reason why 'hybrid warfare' is considered 'hybrid' is because of the mix of both military and non-military approaches. In Crimea, the use of information and psychological operations were important factors leading to Russian military victory and were more important than the use of actual military force, of which there was very little in this case. **However, it is important to bear in mind that Crimea was not 'won' with non-military means alone. These efforts were backed up by special forces, auxiliary fighters and the implicit threat of more military force to come**. The fact that both military and non-military instruments need to be used in a coordinated manner if we are to speak of 'hybrid warfare' in any meaningful way is even more significant when it comes to the conflict in Donbass, which is also often discussed under this conceptual umbrella. Here, massive military force was used and thousands of casualties were incurred. The origin of the 'hybrid warfare' concept as a military operational approach encompassing a mix of military and non-military means needs to be borne in mind when assessing conclusions made by some observers and policy makers in the West that 'Russia is already waging hybrid warfare throughout the West'[25] and the West needs to adjust to the situation of 'permanent hybrid war' with Russia.[26] Such an interpretation of the concept is not only a misuse of the word 'war', but it also stretches the original concept to such an extent that it becomes meaningless as an analytical tool that can lead to a better understanding of Russia or help foreign policy decision-making vis-à-vis this country.

What analysts refer to when they speak about Russian 'hybrid warfare' against the West are first of all Russian attempts to use information channels (media, social media and political statements) to influence public opinion or political processes in other countries, but they also include actions as diverse as cyber-attacks originating in Russia.[27] Other 'hybrid warfare' means include military aircraft flying close to other countries' borders; the purchase of infrastructure in other states and even Russian airstrikes in Syria. Most of these activities were happening already long before the Crimea crisis, but it was the rising prominence of the 'hybrid warfare' concept in the aftermath of the annexation that caused some observers to start seeing a pattern in past and current Russian actions

25 Aapo Cederberg and Pasi Eeronen, 'Wake up, West! The era of hybrid warfare is upon us', Overt Action blog, 25 August 2015, < http://www.overtaction.org/2015/08/wake-up-west-the-era-of-hybrid-warfare-is-upon-us/>

26 Rod Thornton, 'The changing nature of modern warfare: responding to Russian information warfare', *The RUSI Journal*, 160 (4), 2015, p. 46.

27 There are multiple reports of increasing cyber-espionage by Russia and cyber-attacks suspected to come from Russia. In these cyber-attacks, state involvement is very unclear and often not possible to prove. However the identification of groups or domains from where an attack has been launched have been identified as originating in Russia.

that they did not see before. **The reason why the 'hybrid warfare' concept turned from a concept describing a military approach into a quasi-theory of Russian foreign policy is two-fold. First, there is no commonly accepted definition of 'hybrid warfare' precisely because extreme ambiguity is the central premise of the concept.** This has enabled the retrospective interpretation of almost every Russian move as a part of a bigger whole or a campaign of 'hybrid warfare' going beyond the war in Ukraine and has decreased the analytical utility of this already contested concept even further. As Damien Van Puyvelde pointed out: 'in practice, any threat can be hybrid as long as it is not limited to a single form and dimension of warfare. When any threat or use of force is defined as hybrid, the term loses its value and causes confusion instead of clarifying the "reality" of modern warfare'.[28] **Second, the description in particular of Russian use of information to influence political processes in other countries as 'hybrid warfare' is at least partially the result of the attempts by some analysts in the West to create a model of Russian 'hybrid warfare' reverse-engineered from the approach pursued in Crimea**.[29] As the use of information preceded or prepared the ground for the use of limited military force in Crimea, some observers inferred that Russian information campaigns or attempts to influence public opinion elsewhere also represent only the first phase of a 'hybrid warfare' campaign. Such conclusions fully ignore a large degree of continuity in this respect. What is often described as Russian 'information warfare' today, after all, is the continuation of at least a full decade of Russian attempts to use information to improve Russia's image as a Great Power internationally and to put into question what it sees as a US and European interpretation of the world order, universal values and norms.

The implication that the use of information in various guises to influence public opinion or political processes is or can be an act of war in and of itself is problematic and, in the words of Samuel Charap, a , 'a dangerous misuse of the word "war"'.[30] **There are no wars in history that were won by non-military means, or by the use of information, alone**. Moreover, it is highly questionable whether tensions or a conflict situation that do not involve any measure of violence, bloodshed and the use of military force can or should be called a war at all without using the word merely in the broadest metaphorical sense, similar to discourses like 'war on poverty' or 'war on obesity'.

Changing the meaning of 'hybrid warfare' from a concept describing an operational approach into a quasi-theory of Russian foreign policy makes it difficult, as experts in a workshop on 'hybrid warfare' held by the International Institute of Strategic Studies in 2015 concluded, to distinguish not only between measures of (aggressive) foreign policy and (hybrid) warfare, but also to understand when peace blends into war.[31] As Kofman and Rojansky pointed out, Russian attempts to shape global public opinion certainly represent significant challenges for Russia's neighbours and the West.[32] The diverse range of

28 Damien Van Puyvelde, 'Hybrid war – does it even exist?', NATO Review Magazine, 2015. < http://www.nato.int/docu/Review/2015/Also-in-2015/hybrid-modern-future-warfare-russia-ukraine/EN/index.htm>

29 Bartles, Getting Gerasimov right', p. 34

30 Charap, 'The Ghost of Hybrid War'.

31 Bastian Giegerich, 'Workshop report: perspectives on hybrid warfare', International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), 1 July 2015. < https://www.iiss.org/en/iiss%20voices/blogsections/iiss-voices-2015-dda3/july-2632/perspectives-on-hybrid-warfare-cd5e>

32 Michael Kofman and Matthew Rojansky, 'A closer look at Russia's "hybrid war"', Kennan Cable, 7, April 2015. < https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/7-KENNAN%20CABLE-ROJANSKY%20KOFMAN.pdf>

information tools Russia has developed to seek influence in other states is not in doubt and has been analysed in-depth in Keir Giles' paper prepared for this project.[33] However, as Kofman and Rojansky also warned, discussing such tools and actions within the framework of 'hybrid warfare' makes it difficult to assess their 'ambiguous and often inchoate aims' and blurs the distinction between Russian global broadcasting, public diplomacy or propaganda and (military) operational goals. Russian information warfare can be and has been part of the military operations in Crimea. However, the use of information to seek influence can also be an end in itself, depending on its purpose and intended political outcome.

'Hybrid warfare' as a concept has been useful inasmuch as it highlighted Russia's strengths in using instruments of state power, such as information, that were not assessed systematically as a security challenge before the Crimea crisis. However, it is hard to disagree with Kofman and Rojansky, who concluded that 'hybrid war has become a catchall phrase…resulting in a misguided attempt to group everything Moscow does under one rubric'. Not unlike the idea that we are currently witnessing a 'New Cold War', 'hybrid warfare' used as a quasi-theory of Russian foreign policy is no more than a very general analogy and as such not useful either for scholarly analysis or policy making. As Andrew Monaghan argued such analogies, 'too often frame[s] the discussion in a repetitive and simplistic polemic that inhibits understanding of Russia and its relationship with the West. This makes it harder for the West to craft realistic policies with respect both to the Ukraine crisis and Russia generally'.[34]

33 Keir Giles, 'The next phase of Russian information warfare', unpublished paper prepared for this project.

34 Andrew Monaghan, 'A "New Cold War"? Abusing history, misunderstanding Russia', Chatham House Research Paper, May 2015, p. 1. < https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field_document/20150522ColdWarRussiaMonaghan.pdf>

PART 3: What does Russia want? The importance of understanding Russian goals and intentions

Explaining Russian foreign and security policy as 'hybrid warfare' might be convenient, but the concept crucially does not explain anything about Russian actions, intentions or aims. In other words, what, specifically, would be the goals of a Russian 'hybrid warfare' campaign against the West? **As discussed above, 'hybrid warfare' describes an operational approach, the means of warfare. It is not a strategy in itself and as such does not tell us anything about the goals or intentions behind a war**. To be able to form a strategy or find responses to challenges that Russia might pose now or in the future, a greater understanding of what Russia wants is essential. A good example that Russian goals and intentions are far from obvious was the Western countries' guessing game about Russian aims in Ukraine 2014. The *Financial Times* wrote in an article published in November 2014 that 'Russian army build-up triggers guessing game over aims in Ukraine'. The idea of a 'guessing game' clearly indicates that there are various conflicting explanations for Russian conduct: Russia is after the Azov Sea coastline; Russia is building up historical *Novorossiya*; Russian is creating on purpose a new frozen conflict; a Russian-backed war effort is meant to destabilize Ukraine's economy; Russia wants Ukraine to back away from EU integration, or Russia is just simply cooking up a strategy as it goes along. The article's authors concluded somewhat vaguely that the least that can be said is that Russia is probing and exploiting a moment of weakness.[35] A lack of clarity about Russian goals and intentions has continued shaping the West's relationship with Russia since the annexation of the Crimea. Western states and institutions are preparing responses to perceived Russian goals and intentions seemingly without a clear sense of what exactly these might be. Of course, it is impossible to establish Russian goals and intentions for certain. However, a look at Russian official statements, documents and past actions allow for some more concrete conclusions with regards to Russia's broader, political strategic considerations.

The 'guessing game' was characteristic of Western analyses of Russian strategic thinking, decision-making and interest formation during the Cold War and even before. In the early 2000s, a common view of Russian foreign policy described it as irrational and, paradoxically, dominated by continuity and change, consensus and conflict, and as such as essentially unpredictable. As Bobo Lo argued, 'easy assumptions about broader "national interests" and common priorities have been challenged by the politics of sectionalism and personalities, with rationality and logic acquiring multiple, contradictory forms. We enter a realm of smoke and mirrors in which little is as it seems, and where illusion and mythmaking are as much part of reality as "reality" itself".[36]

35 Sam Jones and Roman Olearchyk, 2014, "Russia army build-up triggers guessing game over aims in Ukraine", *Financial Times*, November 14, http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/eecc858c-6bf9-11e4-b939-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3zs8WlKu4

36 Bobo Lo, *Russian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era – reality, Illusion and Mythmaking*, Palgrave, 2003, p.1

What are Russian 'national interests'?

The latest Russian National Security Strategy published in December 2015 elevated the concept of 'national interest' to the forefront of Russian goals and intentions once again. However, it is important to note that the concept never really disappeared from Russian rhetoric throughout the post-Cold war period, but in Western analyses its centrality was merely disregarded. One of the reasons for this were Russia's own internal debates during the 1990s, which showed no clear consensus on what exactly constituted Russian national security and other interests. It seemed that trying to define or to understand Russian foreign policy through the concept of 'national interests' was too complicated. Russian foreign policy behaviour has continuously puzzled and surprised the West. For example, according to David Mendeloff, Russia did not have an inherently logical reason for backing Milosevic and Serbia in 1999 during the NATO intervention in Kosovo.[37] Western analysts have also struggled to assess the balance of material interests versus status/control gains as factors determining Russian international decision-making.[38] Clearly, the fact that Russian foreign policy has often been based on prestige and status rather than on material/economic considerations, has been hard to understand for the West. This is because of the assumption that economics and trade relations matter most in international policy, coupled with an expectation that countries do not act against their own economic interests. This might in fact be one of the biggest Western misperceptions about Russian behaviour and might therefore represent an important root cause of current tensions: **Russian behaviour is not all about the economy and economic interests**.

Russian Great Power identity and its implications for Russian foreign policy globally, in the post-Soviet region and in Europe

Great Power identity or 'greatpowerness' [*derzhavnost*] is deeply embedded in Russian strategic culture. As Strachan put it, 'Great Powers of the 19th century, for all that they may not be the great powers of the twenty-first, have not lost the habits of mind which gave them that status in the first place'.[39] This idea has led many scholars to conclude that Russia is currently seeking its former Great Power status, that is, that Russia should be categorised as a rising power. This is a misperception and does not correspond to Russia's self-perception of its global status. **In fact, both the Russian leadership and public have always regarded their country as a Great Power. In other words, instead of acting like an emerging Great Power, Russia throughout the post-Soviet period has been behaving like a Great Power, or possibly as a declining Great Power struggling to maintain that status.** The West's approach to Russia as at best a regional power has created persistent and increasing irritation in Moscow.

When looking for answers to the questions 'what does Russia want?' or 'what are the overarching intentions of Russian foreign policy behaviour?', international recognition of its Great Power

37 David Mendeloff, 2008, Pernicious History as a Cause of National Misperceptions- Russia and the 1999 Kosovo War, *Conflict and Cooperation*, March 2003, vol.43, No.1, pp.31–56, p.32.

38 Peter Sherman, The sources of Russian conduct: understanding Russian foreign policy", *Review of International Studies*, 2001, vol.27, issue 2, pp.249–263.

39 Hew Strachan, Strategy and Limitation of War, Survival, vol.50, no.1, February-March 2008, pp.31–54

status is indeed central. As Dmitry Trenin wrote in 2007, 'Russia's ultimate interest is a status of a major world power, on par with the USA and China'. [40] The implications of Russia's self-perception as a Great Power for its foreign policy conduct are complex, however. Rather than seeking for answers about Russian intentions *per se*, the question might better be approached by looking at three different geopolitical levels: the global level, the post-Soviet region and Europe (the EU). Such a differentiated approach is likely to lead to more precise conclusions, because Russian approaches to maintaining its Great Power status will differ from case to case.

Russia as a global Great Power

On the global level, the notion that Russia maintains a Great Power status is, in fact, fairly unambiguous and based on its historical role as a major world power. **Military strength and status-granting aspects - nuclear deterrence and past military victories – have been central to Russia's self-perception as a Great Power on the global level and these remain undisputed**. Russia's historical status as a major military power is based on the USSR's victory over Hitler in WWII and its status as a nuclear superpower. In a more distant epoch, the victory over Napoleon in 1812 as well as expansionist policies made Russia a huge land power. Russia-US nuclear proliferation treaties and negotiations have always had a high international profile, and have continued to provide affirmation of Russia's Great Power status. Furthermore, Russia's place as a permanent member in the UN Security Council is a status position, which it was granted on the basis of having been on the winning side in the Second World War. Russia's military power and its strong nuclear deterrent in particular have played the most important role in the preservation of its status in relation to the USA (and NATO) and, more recently, to China. Russia's claim of Great Power status on the global level expresses itself in a fairly traditional way and does not require much in terms of a 'guessing game' about its intentions.

A country cannot be considered a Great Power without friends or allies. Unlike the United States, Russia does not have 'natural' allies and even during Soviet times it struggled to achieve cooperation based on shared ideology or values. Instead, Russia has preferred to seek various cooperation partners when it suited its interests and it would prefer it if other countries also took a similarly pragmatic approach to cooperation. This does not mean that Russia does not seek its own sphere of influence, however. As Russia regained strength after the collapse of the Soviet Union it naturally assumed that the post-Soviet space would remain its sphere of influence. This would be enough if Russia was content with the status of a regional power, as it has often been referred to by leaders of Western countries. As a global Great Power, however, Russia's status needs to be recognised and extended beyond the former Soviet region. From the mid-2000s Russian energy policies were used towards this end, even if the Russian leadership denied using energy as a 'weapon'. At this time, discussions of Russia as an 'energy superpower' and its use of gas and oil to seek influence around the world, rather than 'hybrid warfare', dominated Western analyses of Russian foreign policy conduct. Russian energy policies from 2000 until 2008, however, did not achieve the intended results. As Peter Rutland concluded, 'if anything, Russia's efforts to use energy in this way have had a negative linkage. Rather than boost Russia's prestige and authority, it has

40 Dmitry Trenin, 'Russia's Strategic Choice', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 2007, Policy Brief 50

stoked anxiety and driven countries to seek alliances and take other steps to protect themselves from Russian pressure.'[41]

Abovementioned improvements in Russian conventional military capabilities and confidence have meant that Russia is today in a position to seek global influence also by military means, as demonstrated by its intervention in Syria. However, given the continuing limitations of its conventional deterrent, it is unlikely that Russia will push a situation that might lead to direct military confrontation with either the US (or NATO) or with China. However, of course, an indirect path towards such a situation, or unintended escalation, cannot be excluded. On the global level, 'hybrid warfare' does not really have much traction in explaining the Russian military's role in maintaining the country's Great Power status. The intervention in Syria is a conventional campaign relying predominantly on superior airpower. **Russia actions in Syria can be challenging to other regional powers like Turkey or Saudi Arabia. This in the bigger strategic picture can be seen as a Russian attempt to influence the establishment of a new balance of power in the region**. But a strong nuclear arsenal continues to be the backbone of Russian deterrence against Great Power rivals, such as the US and China. In spite of the advances made in the modernisation of Russia's conventional military capabilities, the discrepancies between Russian military spending and the budgets of the US and China mean that this reliance on nuclear deterrence will not change for the foreseeable future.

Russian Great Power identity and the former Soviet region

In the post-Soviet space, Russia always has been and remains the 'greatest' power, as it is the strongest state in demographic, economic and military terms. From this point of view it might appear as a contradiction that during the post-Soviet era Russia has more than once felt the need forcefully to exert its position in the post-Soviet region (by military means, but also by using the 'energy weapon', enforcing trade deals, regional integration, Eurasian civilisation arguments, educational influence, promotion of Russian language, etc.). In the West, these policies have raised the expectation that *Russia is trying to recreate the Soviet Union*. This is another important misperception. Although Russia is viewing the region as its number one foreign policy priority and natural sphere of influence, it has struggled to maintain its attractiveness to other post-Soviet states from the early post-Soviet period. Rather than continuing to look towards Russia as the regional hegemon, the newly independent states quickly set out to create their own, interest-based foreign policies where Russia was seen as merely one of various possible partners. The process of creating distinct national- and state identities in many former Soviet states has enhanced their resilience against Russian influence.

This divergence between Russian expectations and actual developments in its 'near abroad' is important when it comes to understanding Russian policies vis-à-vis the former Soviet region. Russia expected that it could rely at least on this 'circle of friends' in order to maintain international status and prestige as a Great Power in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet empire. It was taken by surprise that it had to work hard for this 'friendship', as ongoing cooperation resulting

41 Peter Rutland, 'Russia as an energy superpower', New Political Economy, June 2008, 13: 2, pp. 203–10.

from integration and interdependence was simply expected. As it happened, the newly independent states (excluding the Baltic States, although Russia sometimes includes them in this category) saw Russia as an attractive cooperation partner only if this benefitted them materially. When this was not the case, they turned their back on Russia and towards the US, the EU or, in the case of some Central Asian states, to China. This, from the point of Great Power identity, threatened Russia's perceived privileged interests in the region. In order to avert these threats and to maintain its status as the dominant regional actor, Russia reacted firmly and set out to dictate its terms for cooperation with its neighbours using various instruments of state power, including military force. Coercive tactics resulted in at least a mixed image (negative and positive) of Russia in many former Soviet states. **Russian actions in the former Soviet space can be explained by its intention to reinstate and maintain its position as the dominant regional actor, by military force if necessary, which is not the same as seeking to recreate the Soviet Union by means of territorial expansion.** This is an important distinction when it comes to assessing the likely direction of future Russian foreign policy vis-à-vis the former Soviet states.

As such, Russian intentions in the former Soviet space and its likely approaches to pursuing them are fairly unambiguous. Its position as the dominant actor in the region is non-negotiable and integral to its Great Power identity and there is no reason to assume that it will not continue defending this position when it perceives it to be under threat, either as the result of domestic political processes in a former Soviet state or perceived outside influences. **As Russian policy in regard to{too many vis's] the region throughout the post-Soviet period demonstrated, Moscow is prepared to maintain and defend its position using all instruments of state power at its disposal, ranging from broadly 'soft power' instruments, to economic pressure and the use of military force.** Any future Russian approach to maintaining its status in the region is likely to depend on the circumstances of the particular situation and on estimations by the Russian leadership with regards to a range of factors, including the concrete objective to be achieved as well as, in the case of military intervention, the opponent's military strength and resilience.

Russian Great Power identity and Europe

The implications of Russia's Great Power status vis-à-vis Europe are the most complex and ambiguous, both for Russia and for Europe. In fact, an important root cause for current tensions and fears of Russian 'hybrid warfare' against the West are linked to Russia's complicated relationship with Europe. Here we come to a final, important misperception; *Russia wants to cut itself from Europe*. This is not correct.

In recent years the United States has been on top of the list of Russian criticism, but the EU has become an increasingly important target. According to Russian official rhetoric the EU and the European continent (in this case excluding Russia) are in decline. The Russian leadership's 'what about-ism' retorts to criticism directed against its own country typically involve reference to what Putin likes to call 'Western double standards' or 'hypocrisy'. One recent example is the public statements made by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on the lack of transparency of the German police with regards to the alleged rape of a 13-year old Russian girl in Berlin. At the same time as criticising the German police, Lavrov asserted that Russia wants good ties and close cooperation with a strong Europe. Some analysts have interpreted these comments as an expression of Russian 'hybrid warfare' against the West. However, there is another way of looking at this. Long before Crimea and the rise of the 'hybrid warfare' concept to prominence, Russian diplomatic rhetoric vis-à-vis the West

has tended to highlight perceived weaknesses of the West and of EU states in particular. In response to criticism from the West, Russia has repeatedly urged Western states to fix their own problems and democratic shortcomings before worrying about other countries, whilst at the same time Moscow continues to emphasise its wish for cooperation. Rather than representing a contradiction, this policy can equally be read as an attempt to portray Russia and European countries as not that dissimilar and therefore suited to cooperation.

Another factor accountable for the misperception that Russia wants to cut itself off from Europe has been Russia's repeated claim that it is not reliant on Europe. As Dmitry Trenin has also written, 'now Russia has an important stimulus to grow relations with China, because relations with the West are troubled, and China is the only large player in the world that can be considered as an economic, political and, to a certain extent, military ally'.[42] Such a view has been misinterpreted as Russia turning its back on Europe.[43] However, a closer look at this issue shows that Russia's relationship with Europe is more ambiguous than this and such arguments do not correspond to the majority tenor of Russian official foreign and security policy rhetoric. Russia's relationship with Europe is ambiguous, because although most Russians see their country as essentially European, they are unhappy about the fact that Russia has not been granted the status of a European Great Power which it, in their eyes, deserves and is. Although the EU refers to Russia as being part of European cultural heritage and history, it does not regard Russia as (yet) belonging to modern, contemporary Europe sharing common norms and values. It is very important to note that the feeling of rejection by the EU has been and continues to be a very sensitive aspect for the Russian population as well as for the Russian leadership.

The optimism of the early 1990s held that Russia will democratise and become a part of the normative and value framework of the enlarging EU. This did not happen and it is precisely here where Russia has run into the biggest difficulties with its Great Power identity vis-à-vis Europe. Russia wants to be an equal member in the club of European Great Powers, but at the same time, as a Great Power, it does not want to be told what to do from the outside and be forced into adopting the European normative and value framework. For Russia's relationship with the EU this has meant that it has no interest in a strong Europe as long as it is not accepted as a European Great Power on its own terms. Rather than isolating itself from Europe, Russia has opted to ensure its political involvement in Europe by tapping into political forces that are critical of the EU, critical of incumbent governments and are generally pursuing a populist agenda. These can be far-left forces rejecting Western capitalism and standing for anti-Americanism or far-right parties propagating anti-liberal ideas (such as anti-immigrant sentiment) or EU critical political movements. Such 'meddling' has recently been interpreted by some observers as evidence of a Russian 'hybrid warfare' campaign against the West.[44] Clearly, there is a sense that Russian foreign policy towards Europe has become more assertive and even aggressive, especially compared to the Medvedev years. 'Hybrid warfare', in the eyes of some observers, seems to explain this change and a multitude of Russian actions, such as its attempts to seek influence in Europe by various information means, under one convenient umbrella. However,

42 Emma Graham-Harrison, Alec Luhn, Shaun Walker, Ami Sedghi and Mark Rice-Oxley, "China and Russia: the world's new superpower axis?", The Guardian, 7 July 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/07/china-russia-superpower-axis

43 Alexander Gabuev, 'A Soft Alliance? Russia-China relations after the Ukraine crisis', Policy Brief, European Council of Foreign Relations, February 2015, http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR126_-_A_Soft_Alliance_Russia-China_Relations_After_the_Ukraine_Crisis.pdf

44 http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/12103602/America-to-investigate-Russian-meddling-in-EU.html, http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/?fa=59930

explaining Russian foreign policy towards Europe as a campaign of 'hybrid warfare' tells us very little about what has actually changed or about what exactly Russian intentions are.

In the same way as strategic thinkers have questioned the newness of 'hybrid warfare' as an operational approach, we need to question the perceived newness of Russian behaviour and intentions towards the EU and the West more generally. Compared to the era of the Cold War, in fact, very little seems to have changed. Unpredictability and the 'guessing game' were as important then as they are now. 'Information warfare' (propaganda), sending contradictory messages, biased interpretations of historical events and attempts to destabilise political stability in Western Europe by the way of tapping into certain political forces were on the daily agenda. Threats were seen to lurk everywhere and fear factors were created so they could be used in diplomatic negotiations.[45] Conversely, Western interpretations of Soviet intentions and behaviour during the height of the Cold War were strikingly similar to the idea of a Russian 'hybrid warfare' campaign against the West today. As John F Kennedy described the situation in 1961:

> *It requires a change in outlook, a change in tactics, a change in missions – by the government, by the people, by every businessman or labor leader, and by every newspaper. For we are opposed around the world by a monolithic and ruthless conspiracy that relies primarily on covert means for expanding its sphere of influence – on infiltration instead of invasion, on subversion instead of elections, on intimidation instead of free choice, on guerrillas by night instead of armies by day. It is a system which has conscripted vast human and material resources into the building of a tightly knit, highly efficient machine that combines military, diplomatic, intelligence, economic, scientific and political operations. Its preparations are concealed, not published. Its mistakes are buried, not headlined. Its dissenters are silenced, not praised. No expenditure is questioned, no rumor is printed, no secret is revealed.*[46]

The similarity between Kennedy's portrayal of the Soviet Union in 1961 and the description by some observers today of Russia's perceived 'hybrid warfare' campaign against the West serves as a useful reminder that what is often described as 'hybrid warfare' is in fact not very new at all. It also underlines the above argument that the exaggeration of Russian 'hybrid warfare' capabilities as an all-encompassing, global strategy could be counterproductive and exacerbate tensions, rather than alleviate them.

As Aleksandr Prokhranov has put it, Russia sees itself at a crossroads and its Great Power status as a matter of 'state survival'.[47] This argument emerged from the Russian nationalist camp, but has recently gained in popularity. President Putin stressed in number of speeches that Russia needs to remain a sovereign nation: 'true sovereignty for Russia is absolutely necessary for survival'.[48] To the Western ear this might sound strange, as the West has never doubted Russia's sovereignty. From the point of view of Russia's Great Power identity, however, this statement makes a lot of sense and has been a constant in official Russian rhetoric: 'sovereignty' for Russia means that Russia is respected as

45 See for example, Nathan Leites, *The Operational Code of the Politburo*, The RAND Corporation, 1951, as one of the early works on the operational code.

46 John F. Kennedy, Address before the American Newspaper Publishers Association, 27 April 1961, http://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/JFK-Speeches/American-Newspaper-Publishers-Association_19610427.aspx

47 Valdai Club article by Alexander Prokhanov, Editor-in-Chief, Zavtra newspaper, 2013, Foundations of Russia's national idea, 2013

48 Vladimir Putin, 2014, Annual State of the Nation speech

a Great Power and it can act like a Great Power. Thus, from the point of view of Russia, the country could not be 'sovereign' under the post-Cold war consensus. **In order to ensure Russian 'sovereignty' (greatpowerness) from the Russian point of view, a shift in the international balance of power was seen as inevitable, as was the creation of a new/old security environment that is heading not towards 'hybrid warfare', but 'negotiated reality': As Thomas Berger has expressed it in general terms, 'in order to pursue their agenda, political actors are compelled to enter into debates and negotiations with other groups.... these compromises have to be legitimated....such legitimation often involves a reinterpretation of past events, current conditions and future goals. In this way, politics is a question not only of who gets what but of who persuades whom in an ongoing negotiation of reality.'**[49]

Table: Different levels of Russia as a Great Power

Russia as a Great Power	What is the status based on?	Which methods are used to try to maintain the status?	Where does it fail?
Global level	Military power (first and foremost nuclear weapons), historical military victories (most importantly in WWII), Cold War, geography.	Russia looks for allies and 'friends' on a case by case basis (interest based). Portraying itself as on a level with other great powers. Active role in UN and other international organisations. Showing off the global outreach of its military power. Insisting it should be seen and heard in global questions (including environmental, conflicts etc.)	Russia does not really have the resources to take on the responsibilities of a Great Power. The need to find common interests with allies in response to each new event leads to insecurity and unpredictability and makes it difficult to maintain alliances.
European level	Cultural heritage (literature, arts, science, education, sports, music) and historical interaction (royalty's interaction with Europe, military, diplomacy, trade etc.) European civilisation discourse,	To talk about 'Greater Europe', trade relations (energy as dominant), 'grey zone' activity, tapping into issues that divide in the EU and in the EU member states (information influencing) to divide Europe (EU) from US (behind the idea that strong Europe is not Europe with the US),	Russia does not see the norms and values of the EU (democracy, rule of law, good government) as essential parts of Great Power status but is constantly judged on these. Russia's actions in its near abroad and elsewhere (global level) antagonise Europe.
The former Soviet Union level	Strongest country in the region in all measurable aspects (demography, geography, economy, military, resources), historical superiority of 'Russianness' thinking	Using all instruments of state power/influence from the early post-Soviet years (carrot and stick approach), threshold for use of military low.	Russian underestimation of the importance of state and nationhood for newly independent states; other actors are also attractive to countries in FSU area.

49 Thomas U Berger, 'Norms, Identity and National Security' in eds. Christopher W.Hughes and Lai Yew Meng, "Security Studies – A Reader", Routledge, 2011.

Conclusion and points to consider

The main objective of this report is to assess the utility of the 'hybrid warfare' concept as a tool for analysing improvements in Russian military capabilities and changes in Russian foreign policy and as a basis for Western policy making vis-à-vis Russia. Based on the work conducted by the project's investigators as well as the international panel of experts, the project's main findings so far can be summarised as follows:

1. **The analytical shortcomings of the 'hybrid warfare' concept make it unsuitable as a tool for assessing improvements in Russian military capabilities and changes in Russian military-strategic thinking.**

'Hybrid warfare' is but one conceptual construct in the history of military-strategic thought that promises a quick way to military success. However, as the history of presumed war-winning approaches shows, no concept in the past has turned out to be a panacea. The idea that any one operational approach can lead to military victory is an 'astrategic' view on warfare that does not take into account that context always matters. Russia's 'hybrid approach' in Crimea worked because of the circumstances of this particular case and not because it found a 'new way of war' that can simply be repeated. The use of non-military instruments in warfare is neither new, nor specific to Russia. Moreover, as very little actual military force was used in Crimea, this particular operation allows for very limited conclusions with regards to improvements in Russia's military achieved in recent years. The development of 'hybrid warfare' capabilities does not encapsulate the objectives of Russian military modernisation, which continues to pursue the aim of developing full-spectrum capabilities and, ultimately, a conventional deterrent against the West. The portrayal of 'hybrid warfare' as a new Russian way of war also obscures the fact that the strength of any country's military capabilities is not universal, but needs to be assessed in the context of specific opponents. In other words, the Crimea operation showed that Russia's military is far superior to that of Ukraine, but says little about Russian military capabilities compared to other states.

2. **In the aftermath of Crimea, 'hybrid warfare' was turned from a military concept into a quasi-theory of Russian foreign policy, further decreasing the concept's utility for analysis or as the basis for policy making. The idea that Russia is pursuing a campaign of 'hybrid warfare' against the West is at best an extreme oversimplification and at worst a misuse of the word 'war' that could lead to dangerous unintended consequences.**

The centrality of non-military instruments, and of information in particular, in Russia's operational approach leading to the Crimea annexation is the reason why the 'hybrid warfare' concept has become so prominent. Russia's use of information to seek international influence today is seen by many observers as the number one threat emanating from Russia vis-à-vis states in the West. Russia's use of information certainly presents serious challenges, but the discussion of this under the 'hybrid warfare' label is misleading. It overstates the degree to which Russia's use of information to seek international influence is a new development – a quick look at Cold War history shows that information influencing played a significant role in that era. Both sides feared that the other's message would turn their own people against them. Moreover, it falsely implies that the use of information in itself represents an act of war. In Crimea, information was used alongside more traditional military

means to achieve Russian objectives. However, this does not mean that Russia's use of information is always going to be part of a larger whole. In a diplomatic framework, the use of information to seek influence can also be an end in itself, especially if it is creating a possibility to 'negotiate reality'. This can be seen as a more challenging and complex security issue than military threats as such, since it can allow Russia access to influence the domestic politics of other countries and thus cannot be deterred by military means

3. The idea that Russia is conducting 'hybrid warfare' against the West tells us nothing about Russian goals or intentions. The idea mistakenly implies that Russian foreign policy is driven by a universal 'grand strategy'. However, Russian goals and intentions, as well as likely approaches, differ on the global level, within the former Soviet space and with regards to the European Union. This is an important consideration when it comes to policy making, which requires an equally differentiated approach.

The 'hybrid warfare' concept seems to provide a convenient explanation for changes that occurred in recent years in Russian foreign policy, which clearly has become more aggressive, assertive and frustrated at Western countries. However, 'hybrid warfare' describes a means and as such does not explain what Russia's goals or intentions - the ends - behind a 'hybrid warfare' campaign pursued against the West would be. Finding policy responses to any current or potential future threat emanating from Russia will be difficult without an estimation of what Russia wants. Much in Russian foreign policy today, as in the post-Soviet past and beyond, can be explained by its wish to maintain its status as a Great Power. However, the implications of this and the tools used to achieve this aim are likely to differ on various geopolitical levels. On the global level, Russia's status as a Great Power is fairly unambiguous and based on its status as a nuclear power, a member of the UN Security Council, as well as a number of other historical factors. Recent improvements in military capabilities have meant that Russia is now in a position to use its military in order to maintain its Great Power status internationally. However, on a global level, for the time being, it is unlikely to do so in situations where this could lead directly to military confrontation with the US (NATO) or with China. Indirect confrontation on the other hand is much more likely as escalation, even if unintentional, is always a possibility. Within the former Soviet region, Russia's status as a Great Power and dominant actor remains largely undisputed and is non-negotiable for Russia. Throughout the post-Soviet period Russia has shown its preparedness to use all instruments of power at its disposal in order to preserve the status quo in this region, including the use of military force. There is no reason to assume that Russia will not engage in further military action in the future, if it sees its status as the dominant power in the former Soviet region under threat. Russia's status as a Great Power in Europe is the most complex and ambiguous situation. The most sensitive aspect in this respect has been Russia's feeling of rejection by the EU, as its acceptance as a European Great Power continues to be conditional on accepting shared norms and values. The use of information has been an important tool used by Russia to demonstrate its continued relevance as an important European actor and to enforce continued dialogue. The extent to which military force would be considered relevant by Russia to achieve its specific goals and intentions where Europe is concerned is at least questionable.

Appendices: papers prepared for the project by the international panel of experts

1. Tor Bukkvoll: Russia's Special Operations Forces
2. Antulio Echevarria: Grey Zone Wars
3. Keir Giles: Russian Information Warfare
4. Sibylle Scheipers: 'Hybrid warfare' as an indirect approach
5. Rod Thornton: Russia and asymmetric warfare

1. "Russian Special Operations Forces in the war in Ukraine – Crimea and Donbas"

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Introduction

This paper investigates what we so far know about the roles that special operations forces (SOF) have fulfilled in the Russian warfare against Ukraine – both in Crimea and in Donbas. After the introduction, the paper starts with a brief survey of the different types of Russian SOF and of how these forces fit into the hybrid warfare paradigm. Following on from that, Russian special operations in both Crimea and Donbas are analysed in relation to standard categories of SOF tasks. Finally, the question of what lessons other countries may draw from the Crimea and Donbas examples is discussed.

First, however, a brief note on sources is necessary. Given the particularly secret nature of special operations, reliable data are in general difficult to come by. This is even more so in the present case, both because of the recent nature of the events analysed and because of the current timidity of the Russian press. Baring a few media outlets, such as the newspapers *Novaia Gazeta* and *RBK-Daily,* much of investigative journalism is scared to silence in Russia today. Except for the officially admitted use of SOF in Crimea, and the arrest of two *spetsnaz GRU* officers in Donbas in May 2015, there is very little to find on the present topic in Russian media.

This means that the current paper, especially in the analysis of events in Donbas, to a large extent relies on Ukrainian sources. Since Ukraine is party to the conflict, there is every chance that these sources are biased. All the Ukrainian sources used are relatively independent from the Ukrainian government. Still, their objectivity needs to be questioned. This is first of all because most of them, understandably, display varying degrees of patriotism in the face of the Russian military aggression.

On the other hand, since the presence of in-service Russian military personnel on Ukrainian soil has been demonstrated beyond doubt, there is little reason to assume that Russian SOF are not there. No modern army would engage in a foreign mission of this scale without having designated roles for its SOF in operations. Thus, it would be in the details of how they operate rather than in the fact of their presence that the bias in the Ukrainian sources could skew the analysis.

Russian SOF in the Serdiukov reforms[1]

Russia has many military and military-like armed formations that are called special operation forces or *spetsnaz* (short for *spetsialnoe naznachenie* or special assignment). For this paper, the special

1 Minister of Defence Anatolii Serdiukov in 2008 initiated a fundamental reform of all the Russian armed forces. The main element of this reform was the transition from mass mobilization to high readiness troops, but the reform also changed many other aspects of organization.

forces of the armed forces' Main Intelligence Directorate, *spetsnaz* GRU, the special forces of the Federal Security Service, *spetsnaz* FSB, the special forces of the Foreign Intelligence Service, *spetsnaz* SVR, the Special Operations Command (SOC) and the 45th special forces regiment of the Airborne troops are the most relevant. One should note that special forces only make up parts of each of these organizations. Both GRU, FSB and SVR have a number of services beyond special forces, such as spying agencies (*agentura*), SIGINT (signal intelligence) units and others. These latter services also have to be part of this study, since they often work in close cooperation with "their" special forces. However, belonging to the same super-structure is no guarantee for close cooperation. The rivalry between *spetsnaz* and *agentura* within the GRU is well known.

Spetsnaz GRU is probably the most famous of the Russian SOF. This organization was established in the early 1950s, and it played an important role in the Russian warfare in Afghanistan and Chechnya. This means that most of the operational experience of the organization is as elite light infantry rather than as special forces in the current Western understanding of the term. Thus, *spetsnaz*-GRU may today better be compared to for example the US Rangers than to the US Delta force. This less strategic role for *spetsnaz*-GRU was to some extent formalized as part of the Serdiukov reforms, when the responsibility of *spetsnaz* GRU as a provider of services to the other branches of the military was enhanced at the expense of its former more independent position. In parallel with this development, a new Special Operations Command (SOC) was established to be the military instrument most directly at the hands of the political leadership. *Spetsnaz* GRU consists of 7 brigades spread around the country, with approximately 1500 servicemen in each – battle and support units combined. In addition, there are four naval *spetsnaz*-GRU detachments, one connected to each of the fleets. These latter detachments most likely have up to 500 servicemen each, again battle units and support personnel combined.[2] Thus, the total number of troops is probably plus/minus 12 000.[3] It has been declared that all *spetsnaz*-GRU should be contract soldiers by the end of 2014. So far, however, it has been difficult to find information on whether this aim has been achieved or not. Conscripts have traditionally played a significant role in *spetsnaz*-GRU.

The establishment of SOC was announced by Chief of the General Staff, General Valerii Gerasimov, in March 2013, but had been under development since 2009. It is modelled directly on the US Delta force and the UK SAS. The establishment of SOC was, and probably still is, resented within the GRU. SOC was seen as both a reason for and a symbol of GRU's institutional loss of status. The new special force was initially part of GRU, then removed from GRU, and is now again officially part of GRU, but with a very significant degree of autonomy. Also, recruitment often comes from outside GRU. The main strategic idea behind SOC is for the political leadership to have a small and very competent military tool at its hands for national and international contingencies where the use of force is needed, but where one does not expect larger scale military action to follow.

The FSB has two *spetsnaz* units – Alfa and Vympel. Alfa consists of five sub-units at different locations in Russia, and the main responsibility of the organization is anti-terror operations. Vympel consists of four sub-units, and has protection of strategic objects, such as nuclear plants, as the main

2 "Spetsnaz BMF Rossii" at http://modernarmy.ru/article/254/spetcnaz-vmf-rossii, downloaded 5 November 2013 and Sergei Kozlov, 2010, *Spetsnaz GRU – Noveishaia istoria,* Russkaia panorama, Moscow, p. 363.

3 Aleksandr Chuikov, "Spetsnaz soliut voiedino", *Argumenty i Fakty,* 28 January 2010 and Sergei Kozlov, 2010, *Spetsnaz GRU – Noveishaia istoria,* op. cit., p.310.

responsibility. These specialties, however, do not in any sense mean that these forces cannot be used also for other purposes. The size of Alfa and Vympel together is probably between 300 and 500 troops.[4]

The 45th SOF regiment of the Air-borne forces basically fulfils the same regular SOF tasks for these forces as the army *spetsnaz*-GRU does for the land forces and the navy *spetsnaz*-GRU does for the naval infantry. Their number is probably around 700 troops.[5]

Finally, the SVR has its own *spetsnaz* with around 300 troops.[6] Their primary mission is the protection of Russian embassy personnel around the world, but they will also be available for other assignments.

SOF and hybrid warfare

There have been numerous attempts to define the concept of hybrid warfare, and many also dismiss the concept. In terms of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, much of the focus has been on the use of non-military means for the achievement of strategic goals. It is, as pointed out by Nadia Schadlow, important to keep in mind that "hybrid" refers to the means, not the principles or the goals of warfare.[7] SOF is by definition a military means. The use of SOF in regular battle would therefore fall outside most definitions of hybrid warfare. However, one can argue that the use of SOF to attain political goals in non-combat settings would be an example of the use of these types of forces for hybrid warfare.

By NATO`s classification, special operations can be divided into three main types: direct action (DA), special reconnaissance (SR) and military assistance (MA).[8] This categorization, however, does not really accommodate some of the more covert *political* tasks that special forces sometimes execute. Since these latter missions are important in the present context, I will use the concept of covert action (CA) in addition to the three NATO types to structure the analysis.[9] It is primarily in this CA role that Russian SOF become a hybrid warfare tool. In the two cases below we will see that Russian SOF were parts of larger regular operations in both Crimea and Donbas, but also that they played the hybrid warfare CA role of influencing local political events in non-combat settings.

Crimea

The Crimean operation, although most probably conducted according to existing contingency plans, was sudden and mostly without direct fighting. This means there was no DA, and little time or need

4 The exact figures are secret, but estimates such as these are available in open sources. Se interview with former FSB colonel Sergeii Shavrin at http://www.agentura.ru/press/about/jointprojects/mn/shavrin.

5 "Spetsnaz GRU i spetsnaz VDV: naidi desiat otlichii", at http://1071g.ru/node/356, downloaded 15 October 2013.

6 "Razvedka budet igrat muskulami i vnutri strany", *Moskovskii Komsomolets,* 4 March 1998.

7 Nadia Schadlow, "The Problem with Hybrid Warfare", *War on the Rocks,* 2 April 2015.

8 Se Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations (AJP 3.5) at http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_05.pdf

9 The USA defines covert action as "an activity or activities of the United States Government to influence political, economic, or military conditions abroad, where it is intended that the role of the United States Government will not be apparent or acknowledged publicly". See Aki J. Peritz and Eric Rosenbach, "Covert Action", Belfer Centre Memorandum, July 2009, at http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/19149/covert_action.html.

for SR and MA from the Russian SOF. The operation was therefore largely CA, most likely based on intelligence gathered previously by units connected to the Russian Black Sea fleet and possibly local agents recruited by the FSB and GRU. Pre-deployment SR by *spetsnaz*-GRU may have taken place, but so far it has been difficult to find evidence of this in open sources. The Ukrainian military observer Dmitrii Tymchuk claims that both FSB and GRU became very active in Ukraine after Viktor Yanukovych became president in 2010. He made the Ukrainian security service SBU change its focus from counterespionage against Russia to counterespionage against the USA.[10] It would also be wrong to claim any significant MA role for the Russian SOF in Crimea, since the so called "Crimea self-defence units" seem largely to have been décor, providing the Russian forces with a local image. The self-defence units played an insignificant military role.

Since the operation in terms of SOF was largely CA, it was only to be expected that the newly created SOC would play a crucial role. According to Russian military observers Anton Lavrov and Aleksei Nikolskii, the take-over of Crimea was the first operation of a significant scale that was undertaken by the SOC.[11] In particular, SOC was behind the seizing of the local parliament on 27 September. This act made it possible to elect the Russian marionette Sergei Aksenov as new Crimean prime minister. Furthermore, SOC also led the take-over of the Ukrainian military's HQ and a number of other hard-target military compounds. These were all, however, operations that demanded more troops than SOC could provide. The organization was therefore aided by units from *spetsnaz*-GRU and naval infantry. The SOC, however, was always in the lead.[12]

The Crimean operation used speed and surprise to establish facts on the ground, thus making a military response from the Ukrainian side difficult. True, the Russian victory was secured by the transfer of additional troops to the peninsula, but the initial action by SOC and other special and elite forces elements was the decisive element.[13] From the take-over of the Crimean parliament to the signing of the treaty making Crimea a part of Russia it took only 19 days. Seven days later all Ukrainian military units had laid down their arms. This time schedule makes the Crimean operation very different from the follow-on operation in Donbas.

Donbas

Based mostly on "selfies" posted by Russian soldiers on the internet, the volunteer Ukrainian group Infonapalm has identified on Ukrainian soil a large number of individuals from different Russian SOF units. These include all seven *spetsnaz* GRU brigades, the VDV 45th brigade, and the FSB.[14] No open source, however, seems to claim that the SOC has taken part in these operations. According to

10 Dmitrii Tymchuk, "Po deiatelnosti rossiiskikh spetssluzb ha vostoke Ukrainy", *Informatsionnoe soprotivlenie,* 14 April 2014, at http://sprotyv.info/ru/news/50-po-deyatelnosti-rossiyskih-specsluzhb-na-vostoke-ukrainy

11 Anton Lavrov, "Russian Again: The Military Operation in Crimea", p.160 and Aleksey Nikolsky,"Little, Green and Polite: The Creation of Russian Special Operations Forces", p. 124, both in Colby Howard and Ruslan Pukhov (eds.), 2014, *Brothers Armed – Military Aspects of the Crisis in Ukraine,* Minneapolis, East View Press.

12 Ibid.

13 "Special forces" are here understood as the ones listed under the sub-title Russian SOF and the Serdiukov reforms in this study, "elite forces" are the Air-borne forces and the naval infantry. These are elite in the sense that they have a much higher degree of professional soldiers than regular army units, and the selection of personnel is much stricter.

14 See https://informnapalm.org/12174-russianpresence

the Russian military observer Aleksey Nikolsky, "based on what we know about how SOF forces are utilized and for what purposes, it appears that there is no need for their [meaning SOC] presence in eastern Ukraine".[15] So far this author has found no evidence to the contrary. Their absence in Donbas fits the image of SOC as a force only to be used where the chances of further fighting are small. It also underscores that SOC is a capability of such value and cost that it will be used only when others cannot do the job.

The first GRU operative was arrested on Ukrainian soil by the Ukrainian security service SBU already in March 2014. He was arrested together with three others while gathering intelligence on Ukrainian military positions on the Chongar peninsula just north of Crimea. His name was Roman Filatov, and he admitted to being an officer of GRU. As a result of a personal deal between Russian Minister of Defence Shoigu and head of the Ukrainian presidential administration Pashynskiy, Filatov was sent back to Russia in exchange for Ukrainian Kontr-Admiral Serhii Haiduk and eight others then held hostages by the Crimean authorities.[16]

Besides *spetsnaz*-GRU, the Russian internet site *Zabytii Polk* (Forgotten regiment) claims that the 45th *spetsnaz* regiment has been present with a base in the Ukrainian city of Novoazovsk. Furthermore, the Ukrainian general staff claims to have evidence that the SVR has been active doing political work in the area, and that both FSB special units, Alfa and Vympel, have taken part in the fighting. This latter claim, however, has so far been difficult to corroborate from other sources.[17]

Exactly when *spetsnaz*-GRU first started to send operators into Donbas we still do not know. One of the first eye witness accounts is provided by the Ukrainian war correspondent Inna Zolotukhina. In her book *Voina s pervykh dnei* (The war from its firs days) she claims that the forces occupying the SBU headquarter in Slaviansk in late April 2014 "were dressed and equipped exactly as the fighters from Ramzan Kadyrov's Vostok battalion[18] I had seen Crimea two months earlier". She also contends that "a highly placed representative of the local power structures [in Slaviansk] told me that about 150 instructors from GRU by then had been in place in the city for almost a month".[19] If this information is correct, *spetsnaz*-GRU may have been on the ground as early as mid-March 2014. That is a month before the Donbas anti-Kiev rebellion became critical.

That *spetsnaz*-GRU had a role in the initiation of the rebellion has also been confirmed by Ukrainian oligarch Serhii Taruta. Taruta took part in the Ukrainian government's negotiations with the rebels in Donetsk. According to him, the Ukrainian authorities were on 8 April able to convince the rebels who had taken over town hall in Donetsk to leave the building in return for money. However, as soon as that agreement was clear, "green men" came to Donetsk from Slaviansk and changed

15 Nikolskii, op. cit., p.130.

16 Iurii Butusov, "Kak ukrainskaia kontrrazvedka rovno god nazad zakhvatila pervogo shpiona v rossiisko-ukrainskoi voine", *Tsensor. net,* 12 March 2015 at http://censor.net.ua/resonance/328206/kak_ukrainskaya_kontrrazvedka_rovno_god_nazad_zahvatila_pervogo_shpiona_v_rossiyisk-oukrainskoyi_voyine

17 See http://joinfo.ua/politic/1057527_Rossiyskie-aktivisti-opublikovali-polniy-spisok.html, and "Rossiiskaia armiya i spetssluzhby RF v voine protiv Ukrainy", *Tsensor. net,* 25 November 2014 at http://censor.net.ua/resonance/313320/rossiyiskaya_armiya_i_spetsslujby_rf_v_voyine_protiv_ukrainy

18 The Vostok battalion, consisting largely of Chechen fighters, was directly subordinated to GRU in the years 1999-2008. In 2008 it was officially disbanded, but according to Ivan Sukhov, a Russian journalist and Caucasus expert, it was "never really broken up, just re-profiled and incorporated into a Defense Ministry unit based in Chechnya", see http://www.rferl.org/content/vostok-battalion-a-powerful-new-player-in-eastern-ukraine/25404785.html.

19 Inna Zolotukhina, 2015, *Voina s pervykh dnei,* Folio, Kiev, p. 70.

the mind of the Donetsk rebels. After that visit, a compromise was no longer possible.[20] This evidence suggests that Russia was involved in initiating parts of the anti-Kiev rebellion in Donbas, and that Russian SOF was one of the main tools. This is a prime example of the use of SOF in a CA hybrid warfare role. At the same time, the evidence in no way excludes that there also was significant local initiative for rebellion against Kiev.[21]

While Crimea for the Russian SOF was mostly about CA, their involvement in the Donbas war also saw them engaged in the full spectrum of regular SOF tasks from July-August 2014. The Ukrainian military observer Konstantin Mashovets claims that *spetsnaz*-GRU at any time have had from three to four combined units/battalions in Donbas. These units have contained roughly 250-300 fighters each, and have been provided to the theatre of operation on a rotational basis among the seven Russian *spetsnaz* GRU brigades. They have operated in groups of 10-12 individuals, and worked closely with GRU SIGINT units. [22]

In terms of Russian SOF relations with the local rebels, they have trained them and provided intelligence for them. At the same time, there has been a reluctance to operate together with them, especially in the cases where Russian not-in-service volunteers have been able to do the same job. Mashovets further claims that each *spetsnaz*-GRU group has been set up with "curators" from *agentura*-GRU. Thus, the Russian tactic seems to have been to keep political and military assignments somewhat separate. *Spetsnaz*-GRU do SR and MA, whereas the political work is taken care of by embedded "curators" from *agentura*-GRU.[23]

In terms of DA, Russian SOF in general have tried to avoid direct combat in Donbas. This, however, has not always been possible. For example, one of the GRU officers identified in Donbas is an individual known as Krivko. He was wounded in battle at Sanzjarovka at the end of January 2015. Simultaneously, in May 2015, two soldiers from the 16th brigade in Tambov were wounded in battle by Stsjastye near Luhansk.[24] These examples suggest that *spetsnaz*-GRU has been only partially successful in avoiding participation in regular battle.

Another area of DA has been sabotage and liquidation in Ukrainian rear areas. One example, of a sabotage mission gone wrong, was the killing of an alleged Russian GRU-agent in Kharkov in September 2014. He was suspected of blowing up train wagons with air fuel at Osnova railway station, probably in order to create problems for Ukrainian military aviation.

Ukrainian sources additionally claim that combined groups of rebels and *spetsnaz*-GRU increased their activities in Ukrainian rear areas in the summer of 2015. This activity included minelaying and attacks at poorly guarded Ukrainian transport convoys.[25]

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20 Sonia Koshkina, 2015, *Maidan – Nerasskazannaia istoria,* Brait Books, Kiev, p. 400.

21 This point is currently contested among specialists. For emphasis on the local initiative, see Serhiy Kudelia, "Domestic Sources of the Donbas Insurgency", *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo,* No. 351. For a stronger emphasis on Russia's role, see Andreas Umland, "In Defence of Conspirology" at http://www.ponarseurasia.org/article/defense-conspirology-rejoinder-serhiy-kudelias-anti-political-analysis-hybrid-war-eastern, and Yuriy Matsiyevsky, "The Limits of Kudelia's Argument", at http://www.ponarseurasia.org/article/limits-kudelias-argument-sources-donbas-insurgency

22 Konstantin Mashovets, "O turistakh Putina ili voina malykh grupp", *Informatsionnoe soprotivlenie,* 30 July 2015 at http://sprotyv.info/ru/news/kiev/o-turistah-putina-ili-voyna-malyh-grupp

23 Ibid.

24 *Infonapalm,* 28 May 2015 at https://informnapalm.org/9343-flesh-royal-soldat-3-j-brygady-spetsnaza-gru-rf-otkryl-vse-karty and *Infonapalm,* May 17 2015 at https://informnapalm.org/9082-v-plen-pod-schastem-popaly-bojtsy-tolyattynskogo-spetsnaza-gru

25 See "Spetsnaz GRU nachal okhotitsia na ukrainskykh voennykh v tylu", *Novoe Vremia,* 17 July 2015.

A somewhat different DA activity has been the responsibility of the FSB special forces. The Ukrainian military observer Dmitrii Tymchuk states that the FSB special forces has had supervision and disciplining of the different separatist groups as a special responsibility. This has included both diplomacy and more "physical measures" against recalcitrant individuals.[26]

Finally, as in most countries, there are problems with the coordination of policies among different agencies. The Russian observer Konstantin Gaaze claims that there are at least three different agencies of the Russian state that implement policy in Donbas. Those are often neither willing nor able to coordinate their efforts. For example, presidential adviser Vladislav Surkov has supervised the DNR/LNR political leaderships, whereas the Russian military have been directing the DNR/LNR militaries. In addition, the FSB has done things on its own that very few have heard about. None of the three, according to Gaaze, have informed each other very much about their doings.[27] In October 2015, however, according to Ukrainian sources, a joint coordination centre was established between the GRU and FSB in Donetsk do deal with the problem.[28]

In summary, the Russian use of SOF in Crimea and Donbas may be illustrated by the following table:

	Crimea	Donbas
Direct action (DA)		X
Special reconnaissance (SR)	(X)	X
Military assistance (MA)		X
Covert action (CA)	X	X

Lessons for other countries

As will always be the case, characteristics particular to these two operations will limit what other countries can learn from them. Both the presence of significant, largely ethnic Russian, pro-Russia elements in the populations, and the historical ties of these areas with Russia, set Crimea and Donbas apart from many other areas where Russia may get into conflict in the future. Despite this fact, at least three broad lessons can be learned.

First, the increased Russian ability to deploy SOF at high speed to a conflict zone is worth attention. It is especially the establishment of the SOC that has strengthened Russia's capability in this area. In Crimea they were very rapidly able to create a fait accompli on the ground that Ukrainian authorities found it hard to respond to. It is possible to imagine something similar also in Russia's relations with other countries. If, in a conflict of interest between Russia and another state, Russia uses SOF to quickly establish a fait accompli, the host government may be faced with a serious dilemma. Accepting what Russia has done will not be easy, but to risk escalation to a full scale conflict by striking back is not easy either. That is especially the case if the actual material and/or political damage of accepting the new situation is limited. NATO countries, furthermore, must take into account how

26 Interview with Tymchuk in Viktor Stepanenko, "Rossiiskikh grushnikov na okkupirovannykh territoriakh smeniaiet FSB", *Novoe Vremia,* 20 October 2015.

27 Konstantin Gaaze, "Vybor Surkova: zachem Kreml opiat meniaiet donetskoe nachalstvo", Forbes Russia, 7 September 2015, at http://www.forbes.ru/mneniya-column/vertikal/298849-vybor-surkova-zachem-kreml-opyat-menyaet-donetskoe-nachalstvo

28 http://nv.ua/ukraine/events/vtorgshiesja-v-ukrainu-fsb-i-gru-obedinilis-dlja-teraktov-i-diversij---is-78415.html

other members of the alliance may judge the new situation. Just because the host government may think a military response is justified, this does not mean the other members of the alliance think likewise. There will be serious worries about escalation. The host government would probably demand clarity on this issue before deciding on its own type of response.

Second, Russian use of SOF in particular, and hybrid warfare in general, will probably look very different from case to case. Thus, training according to Ukraine-like scenarios may be of limited value. Instead, each country needs to identify what their particular vulnerabilities may be in the case of a potential conflict with Russia. Efforts to deal with these vulnerabilities should be the main focus.

Third, the effect of the use of SOF may be enhanced by the simultaneous use of other, non-military, tools. In the cases of Crimea and Donbas this was propaganda by state controlled Russian television and disruption of the normal information infrastructure. In other cases it may be something totally different. The main lesson is to be ready for the fact that several threats are likely to manifest themselves at the same time.

Unless there is a change of regime, Russia's relations with many countries look set to be challenging for years to come. This means that even if Russia is not actively seeking confrontation, diverging interests and diverging interpretations of political realities are likely to make conflict a real possibility. This means that for many countries, until a broader understanding and more stable relations with Russia have been achieved, the danger of violent conflict remains a possibility. In this setting, growing Russian SOF capabilities are a particular concern.

2. How Should We Think about "Gray-Zone" Wars?

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Whatever its origins, and whether it is a blessing or a curse or both, the expression living in "interesting times" certainly describes strategic life in the present day. Recent events in Ukraine, Syria, and the South China Sea, for instance, continue to take "interesting" turns. We could say the same of the various ways in which military force has been used of late. Analysts, practitioners, and scholars alike have struggled to come to terms with such uses, assigning labels such as "hybrid wars," "new generation wars," or "gray-zone" conflicts, among others, to distinguish contemporary practices from those of so-called traditional wars. While the original aim of such labeling or relabeling may have been to draw the attention of busy policymakers to emerging security issues, it has evolved into something of a culture of replication in which the labels are repeated more out of habit than reflection. As a result, we have an increase in claims about what contemporary wars are (or are not), but little in the way of strategic analysis to support those claims. This article avoids that trend by identifying the problem posed by so-called gray-zone wars, and suggesting how the West's military strategists and campaign planners ought to adjust their conceptual frameworks to accommodate them.

What makes gray-zone wars "interesting" is they occur under NATO's Article 5 threshold, and below the level of violence necessary to prompt a UN Security Council Resolution. Examples are the aggressive moves undertaken in recent years by Moscow in Ukraine and by Beijing in the South China Sea. In each of these cases, there was little or no legal premise for a military response by the West; hence, the tendency to refer to such hostile actions as gray-zone wars, that is, uses of military force that fall short of actual war but which definitely do not qualify as peace. Moscow and Beijing have been able to exploit this zone of ambiguity to accomplish "wartime-like" objectives outside the normal scope of what military strategists and campaign planners are legally authorized or professionally trained to address. Figure 1 depicts this problem graphically.

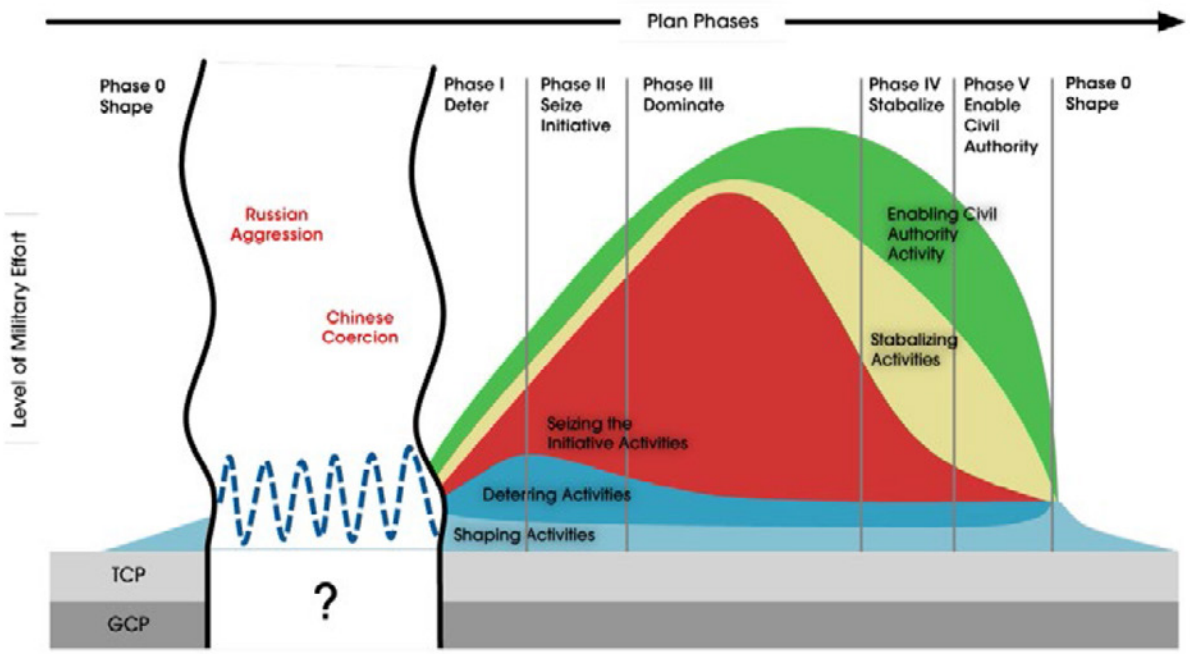


Figure 1

As Figure 1 shows, gray-zone wars take place within the space or gap that precedes traditional military campaigning.[1] They were likely designed this way intentionally, and they are not "wars," per se, as much as they are the outgrowth of strategies aimed at exploiting the West's legalist view of war and its inherent restraints. Clearly, Western military strategists and campaign planners need an alternative model by which to develop strategies and campaign plans for such conflicts. What might that model look like?

It is important to note the operational phases depicted in Figure 1 are currently under revision. Whenever the new doctrine is published, it may not have the same phases or even the same number of them. In fact, it likely will not. However, that is immaterial. The schematic of operational phases, referred to by some insiders (less than affectionately) as the "sand chart," merely serves as a reference point, a way to visualize the problem.

One way to approach the problem of gray-zone wars is to reduce the hostile actions undertaken in Ukraine and the South China Sea to their core dynamic—which is a combination of coercion and deterrence. As Clausewitz once said, war is the use of force to *compel* an opponent to do one's will.[2] War, he believed, was basically coercion by violent means. Obviously, peace can also involve coercion, diplomatic and otherwise, but presumably with less bloodshed. What distinguishes war from peace is simply the explicit use of coercive violence. Moreover, when we consider Clausewitz's *On War* holistically, particularly his discussion of the defense in Book VI, we find that his understanding of coercion included a necessary complement, namely, deterrence. The defense is stronger than the attack because, in theory, deterring one's foes is easier than coercing them. However, in practice the two are essentially opposite sides of the same coin: we are attempting to make others do what we want, while at the same time dissuading them from doing what we do not want.

1 *Joint Publication 5-0, Joint Operational Planning* (Washington, DC: US Govt. Printing Office, 2011), p. III-39.

2 Clausewitz, *On War*, 75.

Furthermore, we can find the coercion-deterrence dynamic in virtually every type of war. The exception that proves the rule is a genocidal war because it is aimed not at coercing a population but eradicating it. Even ethnic cleansing (which differs in nature from genocide) is at bottom about driving a people from a territory, and essentially involves using both coercive and deterrent force.

However, it is also present in situations short of war. Between 1936 and 1939, for instance, Adolph Hitler's desire for war—juxtaposed against the allies' desire for peace—made his use of coercive force and diplomacy quite effective. We might call it coercive diplomacy today, though the term was not in vogue at the time. Instead, it was more likely to be called "armed diplomacy" or "gunboat diplomacy" in maritime situations.[3] Hitler's brand of armed or coercive diplomacy used an expanding Wehrmacht to exert both deterrent and coercive pressure: the idea of going to war, even with demonstrably favorable odds, was so unpleasant to British and French diplomats that they could be intimidated by Hitler.

One answer for dealing with gray-zone wars, therefore, is to design operations and campaigns around this dynamic, that is, around the idea of coercing or deterring foes or rival powers. Peacetime coercive operations might include activities such as mobilizing military forces, initiating training exercises along a border, conducting aircraft over-flights, or launching an overt show of force in nearby territories, arms transfers, and intelligence sharing. Actions once referred to as "military operations other than war" might also constitute coercive or deterrence operations; these include: enforcement of sanctions, implementation of no-fly zones, strikes and raids, among others.[4] Such uses of force are sometimes necessary to establish credibility or to demonstrate resolve, key elements in the success of any coercive or deterrence operations.

How might such operations apply to the situation in Ukraine? The West might elect to deter further Russian (or separatist) aggression in specific areas of Ukraine, for instance, while also compelling Moscow to withdraw and to relinquish some of the territories they have already taken. One step toward accomplishing that aim would be to provide Ukrainian troops with qualitatively superior military hardware, and in enough numbers, so Ukrainian units are capable of inflicting significantly higher casualty rates on hostile forces than they themselves incur. The battlefields in Ukraine are high-tech in many respects, and the speed and range of one's weapons actually matter a great deal. Furthermore, operations to supply Ukrainian troops with specific kinds of high-tech weapons would dovetail with the West's imposition of economic sanctions because doing so would compound the costs of Moscow's aggression. At some stage, so the theory goes, Moscow will find the war untenable economically and begin suing for peace. Thus, a strategy aimed at hastening the arrival of that moment would seem worthwhile. In any case, the point is, even in gray-zone wars, operations designed to coerce or deter opponents can support campaigns, which in turn support military strategies, which subsequently aim at achieving policy objectives.

Such operations need not involve physical combat on the part of US and other NATO and non-NATO partners if that is not desired. Their military strategists and campaign planners can have a hand in designing and orchestrating such operations regardless. In many gray-zone situations, mili-

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3 Alexander L. George, *Forceful Persuasion: Coercive Diplomacy as an Alternative to War* (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace, 1997); Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman, *The Dynamics of Coercion: American Foreign Policy and the Limits of Military Might* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2002).

4 *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War*, Joint Publication 3-07 (Washington, DC: US Govt. Printing Office, 1995). The acronym MOOTW was popular in the 1990s, but has since fallen out of vogue; the operations it describes continue under various names.

tary hardware, advisors, and intelligence support may be all that is permitted legally. Nonetheless, the West has most of the planning tools it needs. The key to success is to think of ambiguity as an opportunity and to use it to one's advantage by ensuring military support to a beleaguered party is not haphazard and is well integrated into a larger plan.

To be able to do that, however, the West's military strategists and campaign planners need to study the strategies of coercion and deterrence closely because each has important limitations. As stated above, coercion is usually understood to mean compelling people *to do* something, such as surrender; whereas deterrence is commonly defined as getting people to decide *not* to do something, such as continuing to fight as guerrillas.[5] Moreover, making our adversaries elect to *do* something (coercion) is closely related to making them choose *not* to do something (deterrence) else. Coercive strategies typically include such measures as punishment, denial, intimidation, and reward. These have been used for centuries. Rome's legions fought many punitive actions designed to coerce opponents rather than to annihilate or enslave them. Punishment might have been severe in some cases, but ultimately Rome wanted tribute, not ruins. Medieval wars, as well, often aimed at coercing foes through military actions designed to punish or deny, such as taking livestock, burning crops, or imposing levies.

Although coercive strategies have been in use for centuries, serious study of them did not begin until the 1950s and 1960s. The two pioneers in this regard were political scientist and national security analyst Robert E. Osgood and the Harvard economist and Nobel Prize winner, Thomas C. Schelling. As Osgood, a veteran of the Second World War, noted: "The purpose of war is to employ force skillfully in order to exert the desired effect on an adversary's will along a continuous spectrum from diplomacy, to crises short of war, to an overt clash of arms."[6] To this view, Schelling added the argument military force could not only shape an adversary's behavior short of all-out war, it could be applied in "controlled" and "measured" ways to compel, intimidate, or deter. "The power to hurt," Schelling claimed, "is bargaining power. To exploit it is diplomacy—vicious diplomacy, but diplomacy."[7] Its purpose is to alter an opponent's behavior without having one's own conduct modified too greatly in the process.[8] This view comes to form the basis for the "bargaining model" of war in which military power is seen as a form of currency to be expended in a process of violent bartering.[9] It is a view well suited for gray-zone wars, though strategists would need to remember the currency of exchange is actually lives, not coins.

Coercion and its complement, deterrence, thus both require viewing diplomacy and war as a "continuous spectrum" rather than as an endeavor bifurcated along political and military lines. Unfortunately, as stated earlier, today's spectrum of conflict is partitioned for legal, doctrinal, or bureaucratic reasons. While those boundaries must be respected as far as military actions are concerned, they are no justification for ceasing military planning and strategizing. To be sure, the partitions render the West vulnerable to exploitation by rival powers. However, the task of the strategist is to

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5 For more see Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University, 2008), 69-79.

6 Robert E. Osgood, *Limited War: The Challenge to American Strategy* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1957); and *Limited War Revisited* (Boulder: Westview, 1979).

7 Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University, 1966), 2, 16, 34.

8 For more see Lawrence Freedman, ed., *Strategic Coercion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Gordon A. Craig and Alexander L. George, *Force and Statecraft: Diplomatic Problems in Our Time*, 2d Ed., (Oxford: Oxford University, 1990).

9 Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1960), 5; see also Oran Young, *The Politics of Force: Bargaining during International Crises* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).

find workarounds that are both legally and politically acceptable. Common sense suggests the West could remove its self-imposed partitions, if it wished, or at least adjust them so they are less limiting. Nonetheless, doing so would be extraordinarily difficult because those partitions serve a number of vested interests tied to the West's values. A change in those values is not likely to occur short of an existential threat, which by design neither Russia nor Beijing is posing.

Coercion and deterrence have many of the same limitations. Both require active monitoring of potentially fluid situations, credible communications across cultural and psychological boundaries, and at least some shared expectations regarding the use of force. Like most other strategies, both coercion and deterrence are vulnerable to mirror-imaging, or projecting one's values and ways of thinking onto one's adversaries. Such projections lead to risky assumptions about what one's rivals hold dear and how they will behave.

In theory, coercive strategies offer us more flexibility and greater control over escalation than military strategies such as attrition or annihilation. We can, for instance, apply coercive force gradually in what is known as "graduated pressure," an approach tried by US Presidents James Polk in the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) and Lyndon Johnson in the Vietnam War. Each applied force incrementally, increasing its intensity in steps or phases with the aim of bringing their opponents to the negotiating table. The idea was to avoid committing more military power than necessary, or more than the American public would abide. However, each ran into difficulty because their respective opponents' pain threshold was higher than anticipated, which in turn meant the amount of coercive force had to be increased beyond what was expected.[10] As one historian noted with regard to the war in Vietnam, "The level of pain Hanoi was prepared to endure was greater than Washington could inflict."[11]

To be sure, applying coercive pressure gradually may help achieve one's objectives at minimal cost; however, it can also prolong the struggle and increase one's losses until war weariness sets in and the public demands an end to the conflict. Friction and human emotion can also make it difficult to measure and control the level of force one employs.

In addition to these limitations, deterrence has several others that are unique to it. A military strategy of deterrence requires making our adversary believe we have the physical and psychological capacity either to defeat an act of aggression, or to make its costs exceed its benefits. International relations literature currently recognizes four types of deterrence: (*a*) *direct*, which refers to deterring an attack against oneself; (*b*) *extended*, or deterring an attack against a friend or ally; (*c*) *general*, or deterring a potential threat; and (*d*) *immediate*, which refers to deterring an imminent attack.[12] These are usually combined in some way. For instance, French and British efforts at immediate and extended deterrence on behalf of Poland failed to dissuade Adolf Hitler from invading that country on September 1, 1939.

First, it can be difficult to assess how well a strategy of deterrence is working. It is not always possible to know whether the absence of a rival's action was because of deterrence, or despite it. As former US National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, once noted:

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10 Wayne Thompson, "Operations over North Vietnam, 1965-1973," in John Andreas Olsen, ed., *A History of Air Warfare* (Washington, DC: Potomac, 2010), 107-26; Gian Gentile, "The Chimera of Success: Pacification and the End of the Vietnam War," in *War Termination*, 225-35.

11 George Herring, "America and Vietnam," *Foreign Affairs*, 119.

12 Paul K. Huth, *Extended Deterrence and the Prevention of War* (New Haven: Yale University, 1991).

Since deterrence can only be tested negatively, by events that do *not* take place, and since it is never possible to demonstrate why something has not occurred, it became especially difficult to assess whether the existing policy was the best possible policy or a just barely effective one.[13]

Second, deterrence is inherently fragile. It is based on a balance of power—in technological, military, political, and diplomatic dimensions—that can change quickly, and give one party a decisive advantage over the other. Or, one party may feel it is losing parity and must act before it is too late. Consequently, deterrence can have a short shelf-life. For that reason, it is useful to think of deterrence as a delicate balancing act requiring constant attention.

Third, as with any military strategy, deterrence requires knowing one's adversaries, especially since not all would-be aggressors can be deterred. Some, like Adolf Hitler, could be delayed, but not truly deterred; whenever they hesitated, they did so only long enough to gain a better advantage. Additionally, so-called "suicide bombers" have challenged the rational-actor model of deterrence in recent years. One way of coping with such actors is by denying them the conditions they require for success, such as by hardening defenses and dispersing likely targets so as to reduce casualties and make the attack less attractive.[14] Deterrence also works best when the parties share a baseline of expectations. Each party needs to be able to "read" the motives and actions of its rival; otherwise, profound misunderstandings may occur that lead to undesirable actions.

Finally, deterrence is vulnerable to friction and chance. Accidents, large or small, always happen. It can be difficult to determine whether such accidents were truly accidental; was the military aircraft that crossed another's borders simply lost, or was it on a special mission? How parties respond to accidents or unforeseen events can easily upset deterrence, particularly if efforts at communication are misperceived; this is especially true of nuclear deterrence. Communication is, of course, vital, but cultural and psychological filters can act like a form of friction and distort one's intended message. That is not to say ambiguity is never beneficial in strategy. Sometimes it can be useful to keep rivals guessing as to where one stands. Ambiguity is, in fact, one of the principles underpinning the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, which clearly stated the United States did not support Taiwan independence, but also laid the groundwork for a "robust unofficial relationship" between the two parties.[15]

Beijing's particular approach to gray-zone wars involves a form of direct deterrence. It consists of positioning several hundred land-based, anti-ship ballistic and cruise missiles in a manner that could deny or restrict the movement of other countries' naval vessels within the East China and South China Seas. Beijing may well view its strategy as "counter-intervention" or "peripheral defense," since it is designed to prevent other powers from interfering in off-shore areas the Chinese see as vital to their interests.[16] In contrast, the Pentagon refers to this strategy as "anti-access/area-denial," or A2AD, since it hampers Washington's ability to provide extended deterrence for its allies in the region. Beijing's counter-intervention strategy includes not only the use of modern air and missile technologies, but also what the Chinese call "political warfare," which entails refuting the

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13 Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1994), 608.

14 Alex S. Wilner, *Deterring Rational Fanatics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2015), 4-7; Matthew Kroenig and Barry Pavel, "How to Deter Terrorism," *The Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 21-36.

15 http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35855.htm.

16 Experts disagree on the proper terminology for the strategy; compare: M. Taylor Fravel and Christopher P. Twomey, "Projecting Strategy: The Myth of Counter-Intervention," *Washington Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (Winter 2015): 171-87, and Michael Carl Haas, "China: Exit Counter-Intervention, Enter Peripheral Defense," *Diplomat*, March 4, 2015; http://thediplomat.com/2015/03/china-exit-counter-intervention-enter-peripheral-defense/.

lawfulness of any interventionist acts (also known as law-warfare or "lawfare"), the mobilization of public opinion against an intervention, and psychological warfare.

In response, the United States and its allies have considered employing their own A2AD strategy, one that would restrict the movement of Chinese and North Korean vessels within the Western Pacific Region.[17] If implemented, the West's countermove will result in overlapping missile and aircraft defensive zones along the Pacific Rim. Yet, the West can also do more by strengthening it alliances in the region, and by conducting more coercive and deterrence operations. A word of caution is in order, however, since implementing either strategy can lead to an arms race. Defined simply, arms races are efforts to keep pace with, or surpass, an adversary's military might. History, in fact, shows arms races are often the outgrowth of the coercion-deterrence dynamic. The salient question, then, is whether the West believes its collective economic power is sufficient to win such a race, and whether it wants to accept the risk of doing so.

In sum, the coercion-deterrence dynamic is a useful way to approach gray-zone wars. Military strategists and campaign planners can develop options around this dynamic. Their courses of action can look to exploit the ambiguity of such wars, while remaining within their legal and political restraints. Conceptually, the result would be a new "sand chart" that might look something like Figure 2.

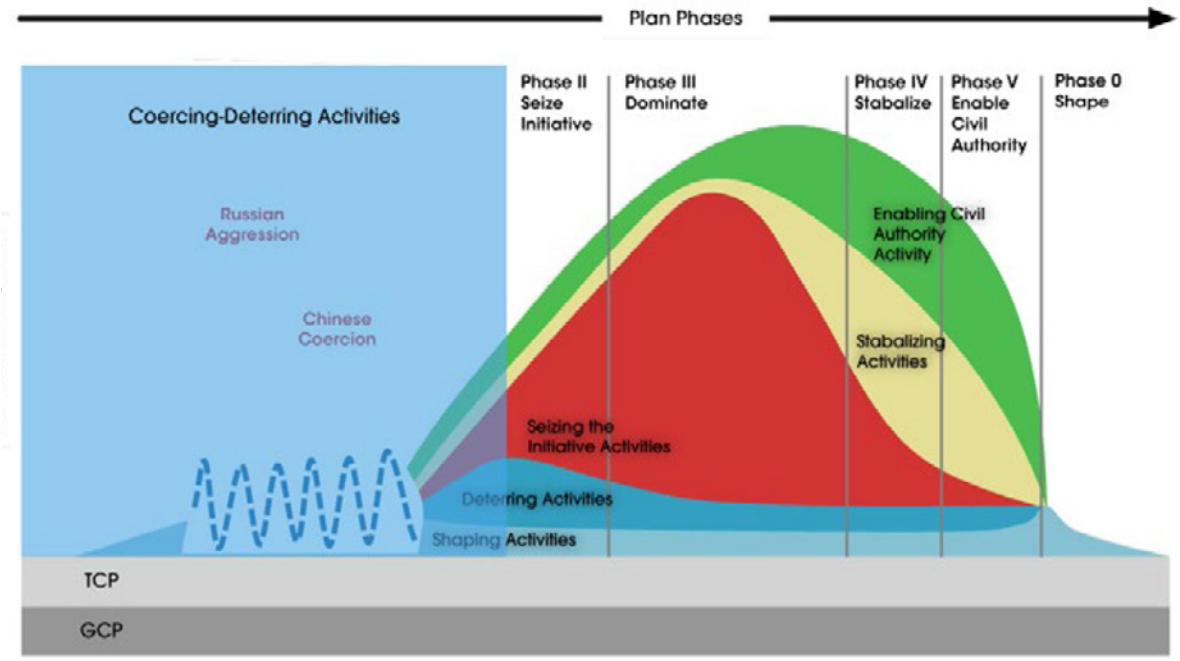


Figure 2

In truth, we might use any number of ways to depict the changes graphically. The goal is really to slide the military strategist's orientation further to the left of the diagram. One difference worth mentioning is "deterring activities" remain, but are expanded; while "shaping activities" are replaced by "coercing activities," which are also expanded. The larger point is that, under current conditions, both of these strategies need to become more prominent in the military strategist's "tool kit." Political leaders and diplomats will not have the training or the time to study these strategies and become expert in their use; thus, it is up to military professionals to do so.

17 Terence Kelly, Anthony Atler, Todd Nichols, Lloyd Thrall, *Employing Land-Based Anti-Ship Missiles in the Western Pacific*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2013.

3. The Next Phase of Russian Information Warfare

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The challenge of Russian information warfare is not a static situation, but a developing process. The Russian approach evolves, develops, adapts, and just like other Russian operational approaches, identifies success and reinforces it, and conversely abandons failed attempts and moves on. The result is that Russia should not be expected to fight the last war when it next decides to use an information warfare component in a new conflict.

This short paper therefore considers new developments in Russian practice, and their potential implications for the next wave of information confrontation with Russia.

Trolls, Bots and Social Media

Pro-Russian trolls – online profiles controlled by humans - and bots, those controlled by automated processes, follow a range of methodologies not only to plant, disseminate and lend credibility to disinformation,[1] but also to create a permissive atmosphere for Russian activities by diverting or suppressing any debate which points out the inconsistencies or implausibilities of the Russian version of events.[2]

A substantial body of research on Russian troll campaigns has developed in the West since early 2014,[3] to add to the Russian-language reporting available previously, and their key features are well documented[4] and will not be repeated here. Nevertheless, awareness of the different tactics and techniques used by the troll armies is not universal. Despite widespread experience of the hostile attentions of the Russian social media armies over the course of more than a year, some sections of the Western media remain oblivious to their intent and their effect. A senior correspondent for a

1 Polina Tikhonova, "Russia Hacking Your News", ValueWalk, 14 March 2015, http://www.valuewalk.com/2015/03/russia-hacking-your-news/

2 Ksenia Kirillova, "Россиӣские тролли терроризируют Запад", Novyy region 2, 20 October 2015, http://nr2.com.ua/blogs/Ksenija_Kirillova/Rossiyskie-trolli-terroriziruyut-Zapad-109046.html

3 For an early example, see detailed research by Saara Jantunen, specialist in strategic communications at the Finnish Defence Research Agency. James Mashiri, "Trolliarmeija, eli Venäjän informaatio-psykologinen sodankäynti", Random thoughts blog, 18 September 2014, https://fmashiri.wordpress.com/2014/09/18/trolliarmeija-eli-venajan-informaatio-psykologinen-sodankaynti/

4 For a useful summary, see Wikipedia entry on "Web brigades", https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_brigades

For a more detailed view, see Peter Pomerantsev & Michael Weiss: *The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money*. The Institute of Modern Russia, New York 2014; "Russian trolls spread government propaganda", Al-Jazeera, 11 August 2015, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/08/russian-trolls-internet-government-propaganda-150811205218686.html; "This is How Pro-Russia Trolls Manipulate Finns Online – Check the List of Forums Favored by Propagandists", Stopfake.org, 13 July 2015, http://www.stopfake.org/en/this-is-how-pro-russia-trolls-manipulate-finns-online-check-the-list-of-forums-favored-by-propagandists/

respected British national newspaper was still saying in April 2015 that the large numbers of e-mails and comments and responses through social media that were in support of Russian policy indicated a real groundswell of opinion among the readership. And in September 2015, the author was interviewed on BBC radio following an extended feature on one of these former employees. During the interview, the presenter reported receiving a large number of messages backing Russian policy and claiming that the UK also engages in similar opinion manipulation. The presenter was shocked at the suggestion that not all those messages might have been genuine, despite having just listened to a detailed report on how Russia pays large numbers of individuals to generate them.

In addition, Western mass media coverage of this phenomenon provides a prime example of superficial aspects of Russian information campaigns distracting from more substantive issues. In Western reporting, attention has been focused exclusively on a single "troll farm" in St Petersburg.[5] Despite the fact that the existence and activities of this organisation have been documented for over a year at the time of writing, thanks to on-the-spot reporting by local Russian media[6] later followed up by Finnish and other investigative journalism,[7] it continues to feature repeatedly in Western media - assisted by former employees giving repeated interviews.[8] The Russian authorities appear content to leave this location in the foreign media spotlight, as it serves as an effective distraction from the wider network of troll farms, or the organisation behind them.[9] This single-minded focus on the easiest target prevents deeper investigation, and as such, it is entirely acceptable to Russia - as suggested by the fact that the Petersburg troll farm remains in visible operation, and at least one intricate entrapment operation has been mounted against Western journalists attempting belatedly to follow up the story.[10]

The nature of the trolls and bots themselves provides another example of how an oversimplified notion of Russian capabilities and assets may leave the targets of disinformation open to surprise. A second wave of trolling, augmented by bot resources, is now well developed, and appears to include more tailored and sophisticated features to increase its effectiveness. To take one example of the customisation of troll types for specific targets, the "bikini trolls" described by researcher Mārtiņš Dau-

5 For example, most recently at the time of writing, in Alec Luhn, "Game of trolls: the hip digi-kids helping Putin's fight for online supremacy", The Guardian, 18 August 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/18/trolls-putin-russia-savchuk

6 Anton Butsenko, "Тролли из Ольгино переехали в новый четырехэтажный офис на Савушкина", Delovoy Peterburg dp.ru, 28 October 2014, http://www.dp.ru/103iph/

7 Jessikka Aro, "Yle Kioski Traces the Origins of Russian Social Media Propaganda – Never-before-seen Material from the Troll Factory", Yle, 20 February 2015, http://kioski.yle.fi/omat/at-the-origins-of-russian-propaganda

8 Most prominently Marat Burkhardt and Lyudmila Savchuk.Among many examples of sustained media coverage, see "One Professional Russian Troll Tells All", Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 25 March 2015, http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/26919999.html, and Tom Parfitt, "My life as a pro-Putin propagandist in Russia's secret 'troll factory'", Daily Telegraph, 24 June 2015, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/11656043/My-life-as-a-pro-Putin-propagandist-in-Russias-secret-troll-factory.html

9 "Blogger uncovers evidence using Google Trends of several new pro-Kremlin 'troll factories'", Meduza, 19 August 2015, https://meduza.io/en/news/2015/08/19/blogger-uncovers-evidence-using-google-trends-of-several-new-pro-kremlin-troll-factories. Catherine Fitzpatrick, "Russian Blogger Finds ProKremlin 'Troll Factories'", The Daily Beast, 20 August 2015, http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/08/20/russian-blogger-finds-pro-kremlin-troll-factories.html

10 James Hill, "The Agency", New York Times, 7 June 2015, http://mobile.nytimes.com/2015/06/07/magazine/the-agency.html

gulis at the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence feature scantily clad young ladies in their profile pictures, with enticing descriptions, and "target an especially vulnerable social group, men over the age of 45".[11] But a key feature of this approach is that these profiles attract followers and interaction from their targets - and thus defeat some of the tools for troll and bot analysis which were effective at detecting and exposing more straightforward and generic troll profiles, based on the interaction between them.[12] In this way they are able to build up a degree of apparent legitimacy, while remaining dormant until required for their primary purpose.

Russia has also taken opportunities to hijack already existing authoritative social media accounts in order to spread disinformation. A case in point is the Swedish TV4 television channels, whose Twitter accounts started broadcasting Russian information to their followers.[13] In addition to those instances already visible, it can be assumed that other high profile accounts are also under Russian or Russian-backed control, and ready to be put into use at the appropriate moment.

It has been argued that the use of trolls and bots in this manner can also be explained by marketing exercises, as well as state-sponsored disinformation. But this argument overlooks the fact that in exactly the same way as the tactics, techniques and procedures for cybercrime are the same as those used for cyber espionage, so marketing on the one hand, and maximising the visibility of disinformation on the other, also use exactly the same techniques.[14]

Examples are already available of how the transfer between one domain and another is seamless.[15] Observers of cyber campaigning during the conflict in Ukraine noted how malware which was intended to generate revenue by simulating clicks was diverted to promote pro-Russian videos on YouTube.[16] And Twitter accounts can follow the same pattern. The authoritative–sounding Finnish language accounts @Vaalit, @Eurovaalit, @Eduskuntavaalit (Elections, European Elections, Parliamentary Elections) and a range of other associated accounts were originally set up to generate revenue as click bait, but are now repeating Russian disinformation, with profiles providing links to RT.[17]

In each case, the underlying reason for the change is unclear. It is possible that distributing Russian disinformation is more profitable than selling clicks; an alternative explanation is that the owners of the accounts really do hold an altruistic ideological conviction that Russia must be supported.

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11 Mārtiņš Daugulis, speaking at the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence inaugural conference, 20 August 2015. See also "Internet Trolling as a hybrid warfare tool: the case of Latvia", NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, undated summary, http://www.stratcomcoe.org/internet-trolling-hybrid-warfare-tool-case-latvia

12 As described in Lawrence Alexander, "A Response to the KremlinBot Skeptics", Global Voices, 24 April 2015, http://globalvoicesonline.org/2015/04/24/a-response-to-the-kremlin-bot-skeptics/print/

13 Patrik Oksanen, "TV4:s twitter blev ryskt", helahälsingland.se, 3 February 2015, http://www.helahalsingland.se/opinion/ledare/tv4-s-twitter-blev-ryskt

14 This overlap is discussed, inter alia, in Jeffrey L Caton, "Distinguishing Acts Of War In Cyberspace: Assessment Criteria, Policy Considerations, And Response Implications", U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, October 2014.

15 For further analysis, see Kenneth Geers, "Strategic Analysis: As Russia-Ukraine Conflict Continues, Malware Activity Rises", FireEye, 28 May 2014, https://www.fireeye.com/blog/threat-research/2014/05/strategic-analysis-as-russia-ukraine-conflict-continues-malware-activity-rises.html

16 Kogan, R. 'Bedep trojan malware spread by the Angler exploit kit gets political', *Trustwave*, 29 April 2015, https://www.trustwave.com/Resources/SpiderLabs-Blog/Bedep-trojan-malware-spread-by-the-Angler-exploit-kit-gets-political/

17 Private correspondence with Joonas Vilenius, CIO of WG Consulting, a social media intelligence consultancy.

In any case, the net effect is precisely the same. Overall, the pattern is of Russia amassing abilities on social media, ready to be deployed when needed.

Internet Infrastructure

Other incidents and trends provide an insight into the range of capabilities which Russia may be preparing for action. These range from high-level macro approaches, including targeting communications infrastructure at a strategic level, to much more focused targeting of individuals on a personal basis.

Intensified Russian interest in civilian internet communications infrastructure is one possible indicator of future plans. After a long prehistory in the classified domain, Russian investigation of subsea communications cables is now of a sufficiently high profile that it has reached substantial public reporting in the West. Highly visible commentary in, for example, the New York Times[18] has been accompanied by more detailed investigations in Finnish[19] and Polish[20] media. This is an indication that the subsea activity which is the subject of recent media attention is not just limited to the area around the continental United States, but also extends to the Baltic Sea and elsewhere.[21] The technologies for accessing data from subsea cables are well established.[22] Targeting them would meet a wide range of Russian objectives; according to former SACEUR Admiral Jim Stavridis, these would include "a rich trove of intelligence, a potential major disruption to an enemy's economy and a symbolic chest thump for the Russian Navy."[23]

Unsurprisingly, nations have been reticent about revealing exactly what is known about Russian subsea activity in their immediate environment. The precise capabilities available to Western nations for detecting what is happening in the subsea environment are classified, just as the Russian activities there are. In the case of Finland, the only official statement as to the nature of the underwater intruder which was detected in April 2015 was that it was "not a submarine" – leading to speculation that it was a remotely operated vehicle.

But sophisticated subsea technologies may not be necessary in all cases. Finland in particular has seen media reporting of alarm at the apparently systematic acquisition by Russian interests of land and properties in key locations near strategically important facilities, including "locations related to telecommunication links".[24] The Turku archipelago, in the narrowest stretch of water between

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18 David E. Sanger And Eric Schmitt, "Russian Ships Near Data Cables Are Too Close for U.S. Comfort", New York Times, 25 October 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/26/world/europe/russian-presence-near-undersea-cables-concerns-us.html

19 Laura Halminen, "Venäjä nuuskii nyt lännen tietoliikennettä – Krimillä liikennekaapelit vain tärveltiin", Helsingin Sanomat, 7 November 2015, http://www.hs.fi/ulkomaat/a1446879570779

20 "Kable, bez których stanie świat", TVN24, 9 November 2015, http://www.tvn24.pl/weekend/tvn24-na-weekend,12/kable-bez-ktorych-stanie-swiat,237

21 Nicole Starosielski, "In our Wi-Fi world, the internet still depends on undersea cables", The Conversation, 3 November 2015, https://theconversation.com/in-our-wi-fi-world-the-internet-still-depends-on-undersea-cables-49936

22 Olga Khazan, "The Creepy, Long-Standing Practice of Undersea Cable Tapping", The Atlantic, 16 July 2013, http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/07/the-creepy-long-standing-practice-of-undersea-cable-tapping/277855/

23 Jim Stavridis, "A New Cold War Deep Under the Sea?", Huffington Post, 28 October 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/admiral-jim-stavridis-ret/new-cold-war-under-the-sea_b_8402020.html

24 Ari Pesonen, "Tietoliikenneyhteyksien katkaiseminen olisi Venäjälle tehokasta sodankäyntiä", Uusi Suomi, 27 October 2015, http://aripesonen1.puheenvuoro.uusisuomi.fi/205516-tietoliikenneyhteyksien-katkaiseminen-olisi-venajalle-tehokasta-sodankayntia

southern Finland and Sweden, is highlighted as a key location where communications cables and energy interconnectors are vulnerable.[25]

Potentially hostile activity by Russian assets in space, however, is greatly more visible, thanks to the involvement of commercial companies in space operations, and to amateurs reporting on what they observe. The unusual manoeuvres carried out by Russian space vehicles in the vicinity of communications satellites have a number of possible explanations. At worst, this could be practice for attack runs for deploying antisatellite weapons in order to degrade Western communications at a critical moment. At the other extreme, the most charitable explanation is that this provides an opportunity for close observation and investigation of Western communication satellites.[26] In either case, this is a further example of intensified Russian interest in communications infrastructure.[27]

The reason for this interest may well lie in the Russian experience of success in achieving information dominance in Crimea during the operation there in March 2014. In addition to control over broadcast and print media, Russia also successfully achieved control over telecommunications including the notionally independent internet, and thus successfully isolated Crimea from independent news from the outside world.[28] The result was the public perception in Crimea of events in the rest of Ukraine being defined exclusively by Russia, which greatly facilitated the Russian seizure of the peninsula and subsequent attempts at its legitimation.

Significantly for the nature of possible future Russian information operations, the method used to achieve this was simply taking physical control of the internet and telecoms infrastructure,[29] and selectively disrupting cable connections to the mainland.[30]

This argues that suitable telecoms expertise was available to the Russian special forces involved in the operation, and points to an entirely new interface between cyber, information, and kinetic operations, and one which Western planners should study closely. This combining of capabilities has been demonstrated further in ongoing operations in eastern Ukraine. According to Maj-Gen Stephen Fogarty, head of the U.S. Army's Cyber Center of Excellence, "Russian activities in Ukraine… really are a case study in the potential for CEMA, cyber-electromagnetic activities… It's not just cyber, it's not just electronic warfare, it's not just intelligence, but it's really effective integration of all these capabilities with kinetic measures to actually create the effect that their commanders [want]

25 "Suomen vesiväylät "motissa" venäläisfirma osti maat", Iltalehti, 19 January 2015, http://www.iltalehti.fi/uutiset/2015011919044524_uu.shtml, and "Maakauppoja strategisissa kohteissa", Iltalehti, 12 March 2015, http://www.iltalehti.fi/uutiset/2015031119338528_uu.shtml

26 For detail see Brian Weeden, "Dancing in the dark redux: Recent Russian rendezvous and proximity operations in space", The Space Review, 5 October 2015, http://www.thespacereview.com/article/2839/1

27 Capabilities both discussed further in Mike Gruss, "Space Surveillance Sats Pressed into Early Service", SpaceNews, 18 September 2015, http://spacenews.com/space-surveillance-sats-pressed-into-early-service/

28 Shane Harris, "Hack Attack. Russia's first targets in Ukraine: its cell phones and Internet lines", Foreign Policy, 3 March 2014, http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/03/03/hack-attack/

29 "В АР Крим невідомими у військовій формі повторно заблоковано декілька вузлів зв'язку", Ukrtelekom, 1 March 2014, http://www.ukrtelecom.ua/presscenter/news/official?id=120389

30 'Кримські регіональні підрозділи ПАТ «Укртелеком» офіційно повідомляють про блокування невідомими декількох вузлів зв'язку на півострові', Ukrtelekom, 28 February 2014, http://www.ukrtelecom.ua/presscenter/news/official?id=120327

to achieve."[31] Meanwhile, by contrast, the U.S. Army itself is reported to be only at an early stage of working toward this effective integration.[32]

As has been noted elsewhere, the very distinctive nature of Crimean Internet geography means that replicating this success in information dominance elsewhere would by no means be as straightforward for Russia. Even Crimea itself is now directly connected to the Russian internet, removing one of its key vulnerabilities of a single point of failure for internet connections.[33]

But the close Russian interest increasingly displayed in communications infrastructure in other areas of the world can have a range of hostile implications. Investigating vulnerabilities of this infrastructure can facilitate espionage operations, isolation, or means of planting disinformation - or a combination of all of these. In addition, information interdiction of the kind demonstrated in Crimea should also be thought of in a broader context. Capabilities displayed in eastern Ukraine include a much enhanced electronic warfare (EW) capability, including for GPS jamming,[34] which unofficial reports suggest has already been directed from Russia at U.S. and NATO military units visiting border regions of the Baltic states.

Targeting Personnel

Another campaign for which Russia appears to be developing, testing and accumulating capabilities is the targeting of military personnel, whether individually or en masse.

Again, a series of apparently isolated incidents indicate an underlying trend. In mid-2015 US soldiers on rotation through frontline states as part of Operation Atlantic Resolve, intended to both deter Russia and reassure the host nations, began to be accosted by Russian intelligence operatives recounting details of their personal lives gleaned from social media postings. This followed a series of incidents including unsubstantiated allegations of child rape in Russian-backed media against specific named US Army officers visiting Kiev, highlighting the very personal impact of hostile Russian interest.

At the same time, despite detailed guidance on use of social media and avoiding presenting vulnerabilities through indiscreet posting, many Western servicemen remain unaware that by using smartphones in hostile information environments – including, for example, Ukraine – they are presenting hostile intelligence services not only with their social media postings, but also with their personal details and in particular their security authentication for any application that is that they are logged into at the time. Russia thus does not need to undertake painstaking individual targeting when identities, and credentials, can be harvested and processed on an industrial scale.

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31 Sydney J. Freedberg, "Army Fights Culture Gap Between Cyber & Ops: 'Dolphin Speak'", Breaking Defense, 10 November 2015, http://breakingdefense.com/2015/11/army-fights-culture-gap-between-cyber-ops-dolphin-speak/

32 Jen Judson, "Army Learning How Cyber Support Plays Role In Tactical Operations", Defense News, 10 November 2015, http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/land/army/2015/11/10/army-learning-how-cyber-support-plays-role-in-tactical-operations/75545442/. With respect to integrating cyber and EW capabilities, see also Joel Harding, "Army Puts 'Cyber Soldiers' In The Mud", To Inform is to Influence, 13 November 2015, http://toinformistoinfluence.com/2015/11/14/army-puts-cyber-soldiers-in-the-mud/

33 Doug Madory, "No turning back: Russia activates Crimean cable", Dyn Research, 31 July 2015, http://research.dyn.com/2014/07/no-turning-back-russia-crimea/

34 See "Russia overtaking US in cyber-warfare capabilities," SC Magazine, 30 October 2015, http://www.scmagazine.com/russia-overtaking-us-in-cyber-warfare-capabilities/article/450518/.

Examples of the results are already available, as with the mass telephoning of Polish military personnel in November 2015.[35] Other instances of selecting and then simultaneously contacting a large number of specific individuals include government messaging to Russian internet users who accessed a mail service from Egypt,[36] and a well-documented instance of intimidatory SMS messages to individuals taking part in the Maidan protests in Kiev in January 2014. The messages, including "Dear subscriber, you are registered as a participant in a mass disturbance", appeared to be from the individuals' local phone service provider but was apparently accomplished without the providers' involvement.[37]

The capability is therefore available to message targeted individuals on a mass scale, with information that appears to them to be coming from a trusted source, whether by SMS, social media posting, or email. The implication is that in time of crisis, if the defence forces of a front-line state decided to mobilise in response to a direct and immediate threat from Russia, it might find that its personnel - and government officials more broadly - receive apparently trustworthy instructions to remain at home and offer no resistance. In the crucial and decisive first few hours that might decide a conflict with Russia, this could be a critical disabling factor.

35 Matthew Day, Roland Oliphant, "'Thousands' of Polish soldiers receive mysterious call from Russian number", Daily Telegraph, 3 November 2015, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/poland/11972391/Thousands-of-Polish-soldiers-receive-mysterious-call-from-Russian-number.html

36 Kevin Rothrock, "Russia's Most Popular Social Network Just Sent 20,000 Users a Private Message From the Government", Global Voices, 8 November 2015, https://globalvoices.org/2015/11/08/russias-most-popular-social-network-just-sent-20000-users-a-private-message-from-the-russian-government/print/

37 Heather Murphy, "Ominous Text Message Sent to Protesters in Kiev Sends Chills Around the Internet", The New York Times, 22 January 2014, http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/01/22/ominous-text-message-sent-to-protesters-in-kiev-sends-chills-around-the-internet/. See also analysis by Andrey Soldatov and Irina Borogan in "The Red Web", available in excerpt at http://uk.businessinsider.com/heres-how-facebook-kicked-off-the-euromaidan-revolution-2015-7

4. Winning Wars without Battles: Hybrid Warfare and Other 'Indirect' Approaches in the History of Strategic Thought

Sibylle Scheipers

Hybrid warfare is defined as a form of violent conflict that combines a range of different dimensions of war (military, economic, information and cyber), tactics (regular and irregular) and actors (state and non-state).[1] Through this combination of modes of action it is said to achieve surprise and lower the accountability of hybrid adversaries, who can hide behind the actions of their auxiliaries that are not directly attributable to them. At the same time, hybrid warfare has also been described as a method to extend the duration of the conflict as a means of winning, or at least not losing: 'Hybrid adversaries test the strategic patience of their opponents.'[2] Finally, analysts have highlighted that by drawing upon the support of the population, hybrid warfare places a premium on claims of political legitimacy. Hybrid opponents tend to bolster those claims by using propaganda and information warfare. This definition predicts that hybrid warfare is difficult to deter with conventional means. Moreover, it is perceived as an approach that promises less powerful actors to prevail against more powerful ones.[3]

Both critics and, indeed, some proponents of the concept of hybrid warfare point out that hybrid warfare is by no means new. A collection of essays edited by Williamson Murray and Peter Mansoor in 2012 traces historical instances of wars waged by hybrid means from antiquity to the twenty-first century.[4] In contrast to Murray and Mansoor's approach, who focus on military operational history, this paper aims to analyse hybrid warfare in the framework of the history of strategic thought. More specifically, it will place the notion of hybrid warfare in the context of recurrent attempts in the modern history of strategic thought to devise 'indirect' approaches to winning wars, in other words, approaches that promise to win wars without battles. Whether such a thing as 'hybrid warfare' exists on the ground is not the concern of this paper. In order to follow the subsequent argument, it is sufficient to acknowledge that 'hybrid warfare' has entered the realm of strategic thought as a concept, and it needs to be analysed in that context. This paper will come to the conclusion that the concept of hybrid warfare squarely fits into the 'indirect approach' tradition in strategic thinking. However, at the same time, as a compound concept or approach, it draws upon two different and possibly in-

1 Frank G. Hoffman, 'Hybrid Warfare and Challenges', *Joint Forces Quarterly* 52/1 (2009), 34.

2 Peter R. Mansoor, 'Introduction: Hybrid Warfare in History', in Williamson Murray and Peter R. Mansoor (eds) *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 7.

3 This is a feature that the concept of hybrid warfare shares with the older term of 'asymmetric warfare'. See, eg. Ivan Arreguín Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

4 Murray and Mansoor, *Hybrid Warfare*.

compatible branches of 'indirect' approaches to war. This highlights the possibility that the hybrid warfare concept is internally incoherent and, as a practical approach to armed conflict, features a number of vulnerabilities that have so far been glossed over by its reputation as a hyper-strategy of war.

'Indirect' approaches in the history of strategic thought

'Indirect' approaches have cropped up throughout the modern history of strategic thought as a response to innovations or changes in 'direct', battlefield-centred, means of war fighting.[5] The French Revolution and the subsequent *levee en masse* brought about a substantial change in the conduct of war through mass mobilization and the nationalization of war. One of the most prominent contemporary witnesses of this transformation of war was the Prussian general Carl von Clausewitz. Clausewitz and his fellow Prussian reformers pushed the Prussian king to encourage a popular insurrection against Napoleonic occupation. People's war was supposed to serve as a means to counter the overwhelming conventional military power of the Napoleonic empire. Modelled on the example of the Spanish guerrilla forces in the Peninsular War, Clausewitz argued that *Landsturm* forces ought to drag the Napoleonic armies into an unsustainable and costly occupation in which the former were to use small war tactics such as ambushes and raids on lines of communication, hence allowing Prussia to gather momentum to mount a conventional defence.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the introduction of firearms and artillery pieces with a longer range exacerbated the offense – defence dilemma on the battlefields of the American Civil War and the Franco-Prussian War. Both wars triggered 'hybrid' responses from the respective inferior opponents in that both the Confederacy and France drew upon a mix of regular and irregular military means to combat their adversaries. Both proved ultimately unsuccessful – both on the battlefield and in the framework of the clash of ideas and definitions of lawful combatancy. Both the Confederacy and France had claimed during the conflict that the irregular forces they drew upon were lawful belligerents, which the Union and Prussia respectively disputed. The clash of legal perspectives lasted into the twentieth century and was finally temporarily settled with the adoption of the 1907 Hague Convention on Land Warfare, which drew the boundaries of lawful combatancy were narrowly.[6]

At the same time, however, strategic thinkers struggled to find a solution to the dilemma that innovations in military technology had thrown into sharp relief: that of combining firepower and manoeuvre.[7] The immobile but costly fighting on the western front during the First World War seemed to prove to many contemporaries that they had failed to do so. Ironically, the British strategic thinker Basil Liddell Hart blamed Clausewitz's influence on the German high command and his alleged ob-

5 These innovations or changes could be triggered by a variety of factors, such as technological innovation, social change or intellectual transformations in strategic thought. Determining the sources of such innovations is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is also not essential to the argument put forward here.

6 Cf. Karma Nabulsi, *Traditions of War: Occupation, Resistance and the Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

7 Antulio J Echevarria II, *After Clausewitz: German Military Thinkers before the Great War* (Lawrence, KS: Kansas University Press, 2001).

session with decisive battles for the stalemate and carnage on the western front.[8] In his 1929 book *The Decisive Wars of History* (later republished as *Strategy: The Indirect Approach*) Liddell Hart argued that the secret of success in war, understood as reaching the political aims of war rather than merely defeating the opponent on the battlefield, lay in disrupting the opponent's moral and intellectual forces by using surprise and deception.

The interwar period brought further innovations in military technology. The mechanization of war held the promise of restoring the combination of firepower and manoeuvre. The introduction of long-range bomber aircraft was thought to open up the possibility of bombing 'strategic' targets in the opponent's heartland, far behind battlefield frontlines. 'Strategic' airpower was seized upon by figures such as Giulio Douhet, and initially also Liddell Hart himself, as a force that enabled advanced nations to win wars without engaging in battles. The bombing of urban centres and industrial nodes would produce a direct political effect on the opponent, the argument went, who would in turn be forced to terminate the war effort and sue for peace. However, strategic bombing never lived up to the promise of producing decisive effects independent of battles. While Allied airpower (and sea power) did, according to Phil O'Brien's latest research, play a decisive role in the achievement of Allied victory, it did so by attacking production and hence slowly grinding down Axis capabilities until the Allies were in a position to defeat the Axis powers on the battlefield. In other words, Allied victory in the Second World War was not achieved without battles; rather, air power and sea power dramatically expanded the battlefield to the opponents' industrial and urban centres.[9]

The advent of nuclear weapons had a profound impact on strategic thought. In Lawrence Freedman's words, nuclear strategy developed into a contradiction terms, in so far as strategy in the nuclear age was no longer designed as a means to win wars, but to avoid them.[10] Nonetheless, it did not bring an end to all wars. Yet, the nuclear threat provided an overarching framework for western strategic thinking. The conscious limitation of war was seen as a means to put a halt to war's potential towards escalation.[11] The concept of limited war implied that wars below the nuclear threshold were not waged with the aim of defeating the opponent on the battlefield; rather, they were perceived as a means to coerce the opponent into compliance. Military action had to avoid a descent into a fight to the finish. The communicative aspect of military power, in other words, its direct impact on the moral and intellectual forces of the adversary, were of supreme importance. The parallels to Liddell Hart's indirect approach are obvious.

At the same time, actors in wars in the peripheries of the international system fought for the aim of national self-determination and Communist revolution (and often for both at the same time). They too often endorsed an 'indirect' approach, but one that avoided battles with a few to lengthening, rather than shortening the war. Mao Zedong, widely perceived as the intellectual founding figure of 'revolutionary warfare', went back to Clausewitz's writings on people's war and sought to adapt them to the context of the Chinese civil war. Like Clausewitz, Mao emphasized that both irregular and regular forces had to be combined in order to prevail against the forces of the established power. He emphasized the sequentialization from irregular to regular, epitomized in his three stages of warfare,

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8 Christopher Bassford, *Clausewitz in English: The Reception of Clausewitz in Britain and America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 131.

9 Phillips O'Brien, *How the War Was Won: Air-Sea Power and Allied Victory in World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

10 Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1981).

11 Robert E. Osgood, *Limited War: Challenge to American Strategy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1957).

even more than Clausewitz had done before him. Equally similar to Clausewitz, he stressed the role of education and the emancipatory and constitutive power of fighting in a people's war – a point that was later echoed by Frantz Fanon.

Partly as a result of the US' experience of the Vietnam War and a turn away from containment missions in the peripheries of the international system, in 1982 the US army adopted the doctrine of AirLand battle as a way to prevail in a conventional conflict against Soviet troops in Europe. It epitomized the recurrent quest in strategic thinking for achieving victory without destroying the opponent's armed forces in lengthy and costly battles. AirLand battle was conceived of as a 'manoeuvrist' – as opposed to 'attritional' – approach to military operations. The 'manoeuvrist' gist of AirLand battle chimed with air power concepts such as John Boyd's 'OODA loop' and the doctrine of 'rapid dominance'. The common feature of all these doctrines and concepts is the idea of achieving victory through operational tempo, surprise and confusion, in other words, of winning the war by inducing strategic paralysis in the opponent rather than grinding down its forces on the battlefield. The emphasis was, once again, on targeting the adversary's moral and intellectual resources rather than taking on his material capabilities.

Hybrid warfare: a compound 'indirect' approach or a contradiction in terms?

The 'indirect' approaches outlined above have in common that they are built on the idea of avoiding battle and seeking an impact on the moral and politico-strategic resilience of the opponent. Beyond this similarity, they are highly diverse. Their specificities reflect the availability of military technology at their time and the characteristics of their social and political contexts. However, in order to make the perspective of the history of strategic thought fruitful for an analysis of the concept of hybrid warfare, it is useful to distinguish between two different orientations or directions of 'indirect' approaches: while all 'indirect' approaches aim to win wars and yet avoid major battles, some try to do so by *shortening* the war and others by *lengthening* it.[12] Strategic bombing, limited war and AirLand battle and associated doctrines fall into the first category, in that they are aimed at defeating the opponent even before the latter has had time to mount a full-blown defence (or, in the case of strategic bombing, by driving up the cost of resistance to such an extent that the opponent sues for peace before he is defeated in conventional ways). In contrast, different variations of people's war attempt to draw out the conflict by avoiding battle, even though the final objective may be to weaken the opponent to such an extent that the - often weaker party – can prevail in the framework of a conventional confrontation, as envisaged by both Clausewitz and Mao.

Both types of 'indirect' approaches have weaknesses and limitations. 'Manoeuvrist' approaches that aim to shorten wars by concluding them before major battles have taken place rely on surprise and tempo; and these, in turn, require superior information. Alas, as Lawrence Freedman points

12 This distinction has sometimes been captured in the framework of the dichotomy of 'manoeuvrist' vs 'attritional' approaches. However, this dichotomy has a tendency to lead to confusion. First, 'manoeuvrist' is a term that has been attached to all battle-avoiding approaches, implying that all battle-centred approaches are 'attritional'. Second, the dichotomy of 'manoeuvrist' and 'attritional' tends to confuse different levels of war: in a people's war, the avoidance of battle often serves the aim of drawing out the conflict in order to make the opponent lose the will to continue the occupation; in that sense it would be 'attritional'. However, the tactical means of people's war are often 'manoeuvrist' in that they rely on surprise and deception.

out, the shock effect of unexpected moves wears off over time, and surprise is not always possible.[13] Hence, while all commanders probably would like to avoid bloodshed and find a cunning and cost-effective way to win a war, they are well aware that that is not always a possibility.

'People's war' or guerrilla warfare are the other type of 'indirect approach', which is characteristically adopted by actors who have fewer material resources at their hands. As a practical model, this approach is also full of pitfalls: by drawing the population into the conflict, there is a risk of that the insurrectionary movement loses control over the direction of the conflict, that it is pushed out by rival or more radical parties or that it becomes subject to fragmentation. Reliance on local auxiliaries or foreign fighters involves difficult issues of loyalty and competing political agendas. Fighting wars by all possible means, as the hybrid warfare concept suggests, also includes the challenge of inevitable decentralization between different groups of actors, both military and civilian, who may not be accustomed to collaboration, as some participant witnesses of the West's attempt to implement a 'comprehensive approach' in Afghanistan and Iraq can attest.

If 'hybrid warfare' is a compound strategic concept that combines both types of 'indirect approach', the war-shortening and the war-lengthening one, two problems arise: First, as a strategic concept, 'hybrid warfare' is woefully ignorant about its compound vulnerabilities: if surprise and confusion is hard to achieve, a decentralization of command structures makes it even hard if not achieve it, then at least to exploit it. If 'hybrid warfare' as a concept would distribute agency in practice to such an extent that its instigators constantly risk losing control, then we cannot conceive of it as a cunning and well-choreographed plan that defeats the materially superior opponent with a movement akin to a 'judo throw'. Second, and more importantly, hybrid warfare as a concept that aims at shortening *and* lengthening the war at the same time runs into serious trouble: when are the aims of hybrid warfare achieved? What does winning mean, and what would defeat look like? In other words, owing to its internal inconsistency, the concept of hybrid warfare seems to be difficult to operationalize into any form of purposeful action. As a prescriptive approach to strategy-making – and it is disputed whether it has ever been used as such – , 'hybrid warfare' will soon either run into operational trouble or evaporate into a hollow label without any meaning. However, as a reflective and analytical perspective on the actions of the West's opponents, it has proved ill-guided and unhelpful too, in that it suggests a consistency of effort where there is very little of that and by highlighting the alleged effectiveness of a 'strategy' that leaves not room for defining its own parameters of success.

13 Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 211.

5. Turning strengths into vulnerabilities: the art of asymmetric warfare as applied by the Russian military in its hybrid warfare concept

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Introduction

The Russian military's recently adopted concept of 'new-generation warfare' (NGW) – what in the West is more commonly referred to as Russian 'hybrid warfare' – has, at its heart, asymmetric techniques. In time-honoured fashion, this military, feeling itself weak in comparison to the militaries of adversary states (those of NATO), has sought to engage in asymmetric means in order to obviate the strengths of such rivals.

'Asymmetric warfare' is basically the adoption in a military conflict of what might be seen as unconventional, indirect actions by the weak against the strong. It is a commonly held belief that such asymmetric warfare is all about warfare that is 'unequal'. This is correct up to a point; but the notion of asymmetry has a deeper meaning. The word 'asymmetric' actually implies a greater sense of difference than mere inequality. It does not mean that two comparative objects are being compared as to their size; it means that they are being compared as to their symmetricality. That is, they are seen as not being *mirror-images* of each other. Indeed, the techniques employed by the weaker party in asymmetric warfare are *so* different that the stronger party cannot or will not employ them itself and the weaker party knows this. The idea, moreover, goes further. A weaker party employing asymmetric warfare will strive to engineer means that will not only negate the strengths of its more capable rival but also actually (as advocated by Sun Tzu[1]) turn those strengths into vulnerabilities – into weaknesses. The strong tend to hubristically rely on the methods that came to ensure their military strengths in the first place. They thus tend to have no 'Plan B' - as it were - for when such specific strengths are negated. Can, for instance, the US military's supremely efficient logistics' system ever go back to using pen and paper if its computers have been compromised by an asymmetric Chinese cyber attack?[2] And if it cannot, then it must be assumed that the whole system collapses. In such a manner, supposed strengths can, with asymmetric thinking, be easily turned into vulnerabilities.

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1 'Cause his [the enemy's] strengths to become weaknesses', Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Samuel Griffiths, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.87.

2 For a discussion on the nature of asymmetric warfare, see Rod Thornton, *Asymmetric Warfare: Threat and Response in the 21st Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).

Russian military tradition

There is a long history of the use of asymmetric warfare techniques by the Russian military. From the time of Peter the Great onwards, Russia - including in its Soviet manifestation - has always been conscious that its military lacked the technological and organisational abilities enjoyed by western counterparts.[3] This military has therefore traditionally felt compelled to find ways of conducting warfare that would nullify the advantages of such rivals. Initially, for instance, in Tsarist times, the army relied on the use of manpower in numbers that its foreign foes could not match. Later, in the Soviet era, came examples of more refined approaches. In the 1930s, the likes of Georgii Isserson and Alexander Svechin engaged in innovative thinking about new ways of conducting warfare.[4] Such innovation came to be carried on into the 1970s with Soviet analysts developing, for instance, the concept of the 'revolution in military affairs' (*revolutsiya v voyennom dele*). The idea of the RMA (and, indeed, the phrase itself) is thus actually Russian in origin.[5]

The asymmetry in such Soviet thinking has been noted. As Jacob Kipp puts it, 'Soviet countermeasures [to western military strengths] were usually asymmetrical'.[6] Dimitri Adamsky emphasises this point. The idea of '"asymmetry", he says, '[has] much deeper, idiosyncratic roots in Russian military tradition' than it does in western military thinking:

> Cunning, indirectness, operational ingenuity and addressing weaknesses and avoiding strengths are expressed in Russian professional terminology as "military stratagem" (voennaia khitrost'[7]) and have been – in the Tsarist, Soviet and Russian Federation traditions – one of the central components of military art that complement, multiply or substitute the use of force to achieve strategic results in military operations.[8]

As Adamsky makes clear here, the 'art' of asymmetric thinking is still evident in the armed forces of today's Russian Federation. Its hierarchy knows that their military cannot match the NATO opponent.[9] In light of this realisation, there has been a good deal of discussion over the last few years in Russian military journals as to how, using asymmetric means, the strengths of the militaries of the United States and its NATO allies can not only be negated, but also actually turned into vul-

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3 Tsar Peter the Great (1672-1725) famously developed a 'window on the West' specifically in order that his military could learn from western expertise. See Robert K. Massie, *Peter the Great: His Life and Work* (London: Random House, 1981).

4 Georgii Isserson (trans. by Bruce Manning), *The Evolution of Operational Art* (Createspace Publishing, 2013); Alexander Svechin, *Strategy* (Minneapolis, MN.: Eastview, 1992).

5 Jacob Kipp, 'Forecasting the Revolution in Military Affairs During Russia's Time of Troubles', in Thierry Gongora and Harald von Weikhoff, *Toward a Revolution Military Affairs* (Westport, CN.: Praeger, 2000).

6 J. N. Nielsen ('Geopolicraticus'), '"Hybrid Warfare", Grand Strategy: The View from Oregon', 7 Oct. 2014, at https://geopolicraticus.wordpress.com/tag/georgii-isserson.

7 This can also be translated as 'military cunning'.

8 Dimitry Adamsky, 'Cross-Domain Coercion: The Current Russian Art of Strategy', Proliferation Papers 54, Institute Français des Relations Internationales, Nov. 2015, at http://www.ifri.org/en/publications/enotes/proliferation-papers/cross-domain-coercion-current-russian-art-strategy, p.25.

9 See Valerii Gerasimov, '*Tsennost' nauki v predvidenii*', *Voenno-promyshlennyi kur'er*, 8(476), 27 Feb.-5 March 2015.

nerabilities.[10] As Isabelle Façon confirms, to deal with western military preponderance, 'asymmetric responses have been conceived' by today's Russian analysts.[11]

Asymmetry and today's Russian way of warfare

'Asymmetric responses' are core to the Russian military's new concept of NGW. The hybrid warfare techniques it manifests exhibit much novel thinking in terms of how this military should conduct state-on-state warfare. One of the most important recent (2013) articles about this issue is that by two reserve-list colonels, S. G. Chekinov and S. A. Bogdanov. Writing in the journal, *Voennaya Mysl'* (*Military Thought*), and using elliptical language, they stressed that, as part of NGW, 'asymmetric actions' ('*asimmetrichnye deistviia*') would represent the most effective means to be used by a hypothetical weaker protagonist (meaning Russia) against a hypothetical stronger adversary (meaning NATO). These authors aver that:

> Asymmetric actions…will be used extensively to level off the enemy's superiority in armed struggle by a combination of political, economic, information, technological and ecological campaigns in the form of indirect actions and non-military measures…the indirect action strategy will draw on, above all, a great variety of forms and methods of non-military techniques and non-military measures, including information warfare to neutralise adversary actions without resorting to weapons.[12]

The focus of future Russian warfare - it may be reliably surmised from such statements in such a respected military publication - would therefore be on 'asymmetric actions' to achieve strategic aims which would be 'non-military' in nature. Such activity, as Adamsky also pointed out above, is in the Russian military tradition of looking to 'substitute the use of force' when faced with an opponent who could deploy force more efficiently. This facet is important to note. The art of asymmetry would come in the fact that the 'enemy's superiority in armed struggle' (i.e. the military power of NATO) could not be employed effectively to counter such Russian 'non-military techniques' devoid of 'force'. The 'enemy' would be unable to employ its strength - its military power - because military power was not being used against it. As the two authors note: 'non-military measures serve to reduce the possibility for the aggressor [meaning NATO] to engage in hostile activities against other countries [meaning Russia]'.[13] In essence, the point they were making is that the Russian military in any of its 'wars' would, in future, specifically use asymmetric warfare techniques – i.e. 'indirect actions and non-military measures' – in order to negate the possibility of NATO using armed force in response.

The non-military asymmetric approaches discussed in Chekinov and Bogdanov's article are hybrid in nature. That is, they would, as the authors make clear, come in 'a great variety of forms' and be applied in 'combination'.[14] Such hybrid warfare, non-military techniques became evident, of course,

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10 Ibid.

11 Isabelle Façon, 'The Russian Way of War: In Crisis?', in Julian Lindley-French and Yves Boyer, *The Oxford Handbook of War* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), p.282.

12 Colonel S.G. Chekinov (Ret.) and Lieutenant-General S.A. Bogdanov (Ret.), 'The Nature and Content of a New Generation War', *Voennaya Mysl'*, No. 10, Oct-Dec 2013, p.16.

13 Ibid, p.17.

14 Stress added.

in the actions taken by the Russian military against both Ukraine and, currently and more subtly, against the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.[15]

Russian hybrid warfare

The efficacy and importance of non-military means in attaining Russian strategic objectives has also been pointed out by the head of the country's armed forces himself. In an article in *Voenno-promyshlennyi kur'er* (*Military-Industrial Courier*) in 2014, Chief of the General Staff General Valerii Gerasimov stated that 'the role of non-military means in achieving political and strategic goals has grown and, in many cases, they have exceeded the power of the force of weapons in their effectiveness'.[16] Gerasimov thus confirms that in the new Russian concept of 'warfare' enshrined in NGW, the use of actual armed force has been officially downgraded. Gerasimov has even put a figure on the degree to which non-military means have come to take precedence: 'in terms of efforts employed in modern operations, the ratio of non-military and military operations is 4 to 1'.[17]

The principal aim of these non-military, hybrid warfare techniques is to use their asymmetric qualities to defeat an adversary from the *inside* out. That is, they will mainly be employed to target the morale of the adversary state's population, military personnel and political decision-makers. This process has been described as the developing of an 'inner decay'[18] designed to 'freeze society from within'.[19] As one official Russian publication puts it: 'Instead of straightforward occupation and the use of force, it is recommended that indirect approaches be used and efforts made to subdue the adversary to cooperation either by coercion or by allowing the adversary to lead itself towards the desired direction'.[20] The idea appears to be to destabilise a targeted state to the point where it does not represent a threat to Russia or can be more easily manipulated by Russia.

The modes of hybrid warfare to be applied – most notably those related to information warfare (perhaps the most important aspect of Russian hybrid warfare) – are slated to come from both civilian and military sources. This is a notable aspect of Russia's hybrid warfare campaign - the integration of civilian and military activities. The synergy created by the two working in tandem can be very effective. It is all seen as being controlled, moreover, by the military itself: 'these forms of non-military strategic competition [are] under the aegis of the military organisation'.[21] This is an important

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15 See Eve Hunter with Piret Pernik, 'The Challenges of Hybrid Warfare', International Centre for Defence and Security (Estonia), April 2015, <http://www.icds.ee/publications/article/the-challenges-of-hybrid-warfare-1/>.

16 Quoted in Mark Galeotti, 'Time to Think about Hybrid Defence', War on the Rocks, 30 July 2015, at http://warontherocks.com/2015/07/time-to-think-about-hybrid-defense/.

17 Adamsky, 'Cross-Domain Coercion', p.23.

18 From a presentation that Peter Mattsson of the Swedish National Defence Academy gave at a conference in Riga: 'The Russian Armed Forces Adapted to new Operational Concepts in a Multipolar World', 19 Feb. 2014. Quoted in Janis Berzins, *Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defence Policy*, National Defence Academy of Latvia Center for Security and Strategic Research 2, April 2014, p.6.

19 Paulius Gritenas, 'Zygimantas Pavilionis: Barbarians Already Inside the Country, Not Just at the Gates', *Lietuvos Rytas*, 4 Dec. 2014, BBC Monitoring EU1EUPRTFS1FsuPolog.

20 V. I. Lutovinov, *The Military Policy of the Russian Federation in the Conditions of Globalisation* (Moscow: Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, 2009). Referred to in 'On the Concept of Hybrid Warfare', Finnish Defence Research Agency, Research Bulletin 01-2015, at http://www.puolustusvoimat.fi/wcm/a7115c0047a97c30802699a0e97874b0/150316+_DOS_J_hybridwarfare.pdf?MOD=AJPERES, p.4.

21 Adamsky, 'Cross-Domain Coercion', p.23.

point. Both military and non-military means, including any information warfare operations, are to be under the 'aegis' of the military itself.

This integration of the two sources - civilian and military - of hybrid warfare activities is the result of a reform process undertaken by the Russian military that has been ongoing since 2008. One of the new factors that this military has had to deal with has been the modern world's focus on information and how its use as a strategic instrument in warfare is just as likely to be sourced to civilian means as to military. Gerasimov pointed this out in his article in *Voenno-promyshlennyi kur'er* in saying that the prevalence of information systems as war-fighting tools had narrowed the 'spatial, temporal and information gap between the armed forces [*armiya*] and government'.[22] Thus the barriers between the civilian and military output of information warfare (and, indeed, of other hybrid warfare means) had to break down in order to create the requisite degree of synergy.

By 2014, therefore, the new Russian Military Doctrine could talk of one of the 'special features of modern conflict' being the 'Integrated use of Armed Forces and political, economic, information and other non-military activities'.[23] Indeed, in 2014 a new Ministry of Defence centre was set up in Moscow designed in part to coordinate Russia's overall hybrid warfare activities.[24] NATO itself has come to recognise this new Russian doctrinal emphasis and the types of operations it has spawned in both Ukraine and the Baltic States. It has been characterised by the Alliance as the Russian 'integrated use of military force and political, economic, informational and other non-military measures'.[25]

But such integration developed between civilian and military realms - such a force multiplier - can only really be fashioned in a society where the military already works very closely with the government. As the Finnish Defence Research Agency points out, 'Hybrid warfare, with its wide spectrum of methods, can be ultilised most efficiently by a state in which strategic decision-making is centralised under one uniform, possibly totalitarian, leadership'.[26]

This degree of Russian integration represents asymmetry. One of the strengths of the western democracies is the fact that their governments are very largely free from military interference: there is a distinct separation between the activities of the civilian government and its armed forces. This means that such democracies, including those in NATO, cannot respond with a truly effective hybrid warfare campaign of their own to counter that of Russia because they can never fashion the necessary degree of integration of the means involved.

The Russians have thus developed a way of conducting 'warfare' that simply cannot be matched by the western powers. A strength of democracies – the separation of civilian government from the military arm of the state – has become, in today's strategic terms, a vulnerability.

Information warfare

As stated, the chief means slated to be adopted by Russia in order to create instability and undermine morale in an adversary state is information warfare. The information campaign in, for instance, the

22 Gerasimov, '*Tsennost' nauki v predvidenii*', p.2.

23 *Russian Military Doctrine 2014*, paras 15 (a) and (b) and 12 (a) and (b), at http://www.scribd.com/doc/251695098/Russia-s-2014-Military-Doctrine#scribd.

24 This is the Russian MoD's 'National Command and Control Centre for State Defence' (NTsUO). NTsUO stands for *Natsional'nyi Tsentr Upravleniya Oboronoi*.

25 'Analysis of Russia's Information Campaign against Ukraine', NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, No. 3, 2014, at www.stratcomcoe.org/download/file/fid/1886, p.3.

26 'On the Concept of Hybrid Warfare', p.1.

Baltic States, there focuses - often through the dissemination of falsehoods - on undermining morale by creating divisions between the different ethnic, linguistic and political groupings within these states or by engineering overall dissatisfaction with the government. As Gerasimov expresses it (although without naming the Baltics), the goal is to make 'use of internal opposition throughout the adversary's area as a permanent front'.[27]

The use of information warfare makes full use of the licence provided by the presence of a free media in targeted democratic states such as the Baltics. An acknowledged strength of democracies is their emphasis on democratic principles, of which perhaps the most important is free speech. Russia's information warfare campaign makes good use of this freedom for its own ends.**REF** If, however, the Baltic States try to restrict the Russian media outlets that are encouraging the dissent then they would be infringing the right of free speech and thus they would no longer be acting as true democracies. The Baltic States are being left in a situation whereby Moscow's propaganda output is designed to break up their states and yet they can do very little about it. As Pomerantsev and Weiss put it, 'the Kremlin has systematically learnt to use the principles of liberal democracies against them'.[28] Again, in true asymmetric fashion, a strength - democratic principles - is being turned into a vulnerability by Russian actions.

There is also very little that the core NATO countries can do to assist their Baltic allies. Although NATO has recently (January 2014) set up a centre in Latvia – the Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (Stratcom) – with the goal of coordinating its own propaganda output to try and match that of Russia, it is of little consequence when set against the sheer breadth and sophistication of the Russian information warfare output. Even Stratcom recognises that it is difficult for the West with its free media 'to compete with the forceful, synchronized messaging of the Russian government'.[29]

Other hybrid warfare means

While the use of information warfare is the paramount Russian asymmetric warfare means, any number of other techniques are employed with the goal, again, of creating internal fractures in targeted states. Any organisation, group or individual with anti-establishment credentials in such states is liable to receive Russian assistance. Moscow will seek to fund and thereby control any organisation that aims to limit or to undermine state control in, say, the Baltic States. These would include the likes of environmental groups, trade unions, opposition political parties and all the way down to individual academics. The Baltic States would obviously like to stop such funding – which is, after all, designed to undermine their governments. However, as the head of the Latvian Security Police, Normunds Mezviets, notes, 'Ours is a liberal democracy and we cannot ban organisations from receiving foreign financing'.[30] And if individual Baltic State governments can do nothing then neither can NATO. Again, the strength inherent in democratic principles is turned into a vulnerability by Russian asymmetric activity.

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27 Gerasimov in 2013 speech quoted in 'On the Concept of Hybrid Warfare', p.2.

28 Peter Pomerantsev and Michael Weiss, 'The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money', *The Interpreter*, 22 Nov. 2014, at http://www.interpretermag.com/the-menace-of-unreality-how-the-kremlin-weaponizes-information-culture-and-money, p.4.

29 'Analysis of Russia's Information Campaign against Ukraine', NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, No.3, 2014, at www.stratcomcoe.org/download/file/fid/1886, p. 4.

30 Voldemars Krustins, Girts Zvirbulis and Maris Antonevics, 'Understanding of Security Issues Improving', *Latvijas Avize*, 9 March 2015, BBC Monitoring EU1EUPRTFS1FsuPolog.

The use of military force

Despite the new doctrinal emphasis on non-military means in Russian hybrid warfare, military power is still seen as essential to its effective conduct. The thinking is, though, that such force should be used with much restraint. That is, ideally there should be no actual 'contact' with the forces of the adversary.[31] Armed force should merely remain latent as far as possible and be available only to add - through the likes of air-space incursions - to the psychological pressure directed at the targeted state's human component. And when the targets are the NATO member-states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania then such a stand-off approach is vital. Moscow does not want to be seen to be conducting an 'armed attack' against any NATO member such as the Baltic States. There must be no case presented for core NATO members to intervene to help the Baltics under Article 5. As Michael Williams points out, this new Russian military thinking is a 'direct threat to NATO as it circumvents the triggers necessary to provide assistance to allies under Article 5'.[32]

Russian NGW thinking does, though, foresee the occasional need to employ special forces across borders in order to facilitate the generation of the desired strategic effects. As Gerasimov put it in a speech he made in 2013, 'asymmetric operations [*asimmetrichnyye operatsii*]' involving such 'special forces' should be used to 'balance the adversary's [i.e. NATO's] superiority in armed battle'. These operations, though, would have to remain as far as possible covert and thus plausibly deniable and thus unable to trigger Article 5. According to Gerasimov, 'Goals will be achieved by using [among other measures] clandestine military operations' using special forces. Such covert activity would be exemplified by the likes of the 'little green men' operating in Ukraine in 2014. And if Russian military elements are to be used *overtly* across borders then they must only be looked upon as being non-combatant. 'Visible military force', Gerasimov continues, 'will be used in the form of peace-keeping and crisis management operations'.[33] This is done in order, again, not to provoke a military response from NATO or any other international body.

This use of what Gerasimov calls 'contactless war' – a distinctly asymmetric approach – is again designed to negate NATO's military strength.[34]

Conclusion

Today's Russian military continues the long-established tradition of applying asymmetric warfare techniques to counter the strengths of western rivals. These techniques, applied as part of the Russian military's concept of NGW - i.e. hybrid warfare - are currently, it would certainly appear, being skillfully applied. There is both a commitment to them and an evident 'art' in their application. They have been discussed in military circles, committed to doctrine and applied in practice in adroit ways that are obviously effective in terms of generating instability in targeted states. The asymmetric qualities inherent in such techniques are, moreover - and notably as applied against the Baltic States

31 Gerasimov, '*Tsennost' nauki v predvidenii*', p.3.

32 Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty states that an 'armed attack' against one NATO member state should be treated as an attack on all of them. Michael John Williams, 'Russia's New Doctrine: How the Kremlin Has Learned to Fight Tomorrow's War Today', Center for European Policy Analysis, 9 May 2014, at http://cepa.org/content/russia%E2%80%99s-new-doctrine-how-kremlin-has-learned-fight-tomorrow%E2%80%99s-war-today.

33 Gerasimov in 2013 speech quoted in 'On the Concept of Hybrid Warfare', p.2.

34 Gerasimov, '*Tsennost' nauki v predvidenii*', p.3.

- able to undermine western military strengths and create great difficulties for NATO in terms of responding adequately to them. Using asymmetric warfare, the Russian military has, to a large extent, negated the power of its stronger adversary.

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