RUSSIAN HYBRID WARFARE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN THE BLACK SEA*

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Abstract

This paper will study Russian hybrid warfare in Ukraine and especially in Crimea, and analyse its implications on the Black Sea region. Although hybrid warfare is an old concept, theoretical studies of it began in Western countries mainly in the post-Cold War era, focusing on asymmetrical threats against the conventional superiority of Western countries such as the USA. The September 11th attacks and the 2006 Lebanon War played important roles in the evolution of hybrid warfare theories. Studies in Russia on hybrid warfare, which the Russians call "non-linear war," are based primarily on lessons learned during the Color Revolutions and the Arab Spring. Hybrid warfare emerged as one of the main security issues for the West, and especially for NATO, with the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine crisis. The Russian military strategies that Western countries called "hybrid warfare" resulted in the successful annexation of Crimea and became a serious security issue for the West. Russian military activities during the Ukrainian crisis and the Russian annexation of Crimea also resulted in important changes in the security of the Black Sea. The crisis intensified the Russian military build-up and the military presence of NATO, especially the USA, in the region, while the Black Sea, which was intended to be a peaceful region, became a stage for a military showdown between NATO and Russia.

Keywords: *Russia, Hybrid Warfare, NATO, Black Sea, Crimea*

Özet

Bu çalışma Rusya'nın Ukrayna'daki ve özellikle Kırım'daki karma savaşını incelemekte ve bunun Karadeniz'deki etkilerini analiz etmektedir. Karma savaş eski bir konsept olsa da batılı devletlerdeki teori çalışmaları genel olarak ABD gibi devletlerin konvansiyonel üstünlüğüne karşı asimetrik tehditlere odaklanarak Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemde başlamıştır. 11 Eylül saldırıları ve 2016 Lübnan savaşı karma savaş teorisinin gelişiminde önemli rol oynamışlardır. Rusların "doğrusal olmayan savaş" olarak adlandırdıkları Rus karma savaşına yönelik çalışmalar esas olarak Renkli Devrimler ve Arap Baharı esnasında alınan derslere dayalı olarak şekillenmiştir. Rusya-Ukrayna krizinin başlaması ile karma savaş batı ve özellikle de NATO için temel güvenlik sorunu olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Batılı devletler tarafından karma savaş olarak adlandırılan Rus askeri stratejileri Kırım'ın başarılı bir şekilde ilhakı ile sonuçlanmış ve batı için bir önemli bir güvenlik sorunu haline gelmiştir. Rusya'nın Ukrayna krizindeki askeri faaliyetleri ve Kırım'ı ilhakı Karadeniz'in güvenliğinde önemli değişimlere yol açmıştır. Kriz bölgede Rusya'nın askeri anlamda takviyesini ve NATO'nun ve özellikle ABD'nin askeri varlığını artırırken bir dönem barış bölgesi olması amaçlanan Karadeniz NATO ve Rusya arasındaki güç gösterisi alanı haline gelmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Rusya, Karma Savaş, NATO, Karadeniz, Kırım*

Introduction

Hybrid warfare numbers as one of the shining new theories to describe the emerging conflicts after the Cold War, with emphasis on its asymmetrical character. Debates concerning the theory intensified after the beginning of the 2014 Ukrainian crisis because Western countries described Russian activities as "hybrid warfare". Theorists revised the existing definition of hybrid warfare to conceptualise Russian military activities, which according to Russian officials were based on experience gained during the Color Revolutions and the Arab Spring, and called by the Russians "non-linear war."

Having decided to make Crimea and the Black Sea the new centre of geopolitical competition, Russia embarked on a robust military build-up in the Black Sea immediately after its annexation of Crimea, altering the military balance of power in its favour. Russia declared its intention to modernise and strengthen its Black Sea Fleet based at Sevastopol, accelerated the establishment of a second naval base in the Black Sea, and deployed effective missile systems in the region.

The Russian tactic of annexing Crimea and supporting the rebels in eastern Ukraine has been described as one of the greatest threats to the Western world, not only at present but for the future as well, thus emerging as a core security issue radically changing the security perception of European countries. To contain further Russian activities, Western countries and especially NATO increased their military activities in the Black Sea. Under pressure from Eastern European members who felt themselves under imminent Russian threat, NATO also then decided upon structural and functional improvements in its military system.

Consequently, with the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis and especially after the Russian annexation of Crimea, the Black Sea became a hotspot for Western-Russian competition, with the 2014 Ukrainian crisis increasing further the strategic value of the Black Sea region. Thus, key factors in determining the contour of the confrontation between NATO and Russia in the Black Sea will include developments in NA-

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TO's Ballistic Missile Defense System, possible establishment of a NATO Black Sea Force, and a membership process for Ukraine and Georgia into NATO although the latter seems unlikely in the new future.

1. Hybrid Warfare: Old Concept, New Techniques

Although with the Ukrainian crisis hybrid warfare emerged as one of the most controversial and important issues, no comprehensive definition or consensus on the characteristics of "hybrid warfare" have been forthcoming. Some analysts argue that hybrid warfare strategies have been employed since ancient times. Peter R. Mansoor places the historical pedigree of hybrid warfare at least as far back as the Peloponnesian War of the fifth century BC,[1] while Timothy McCulloh dates it to 66 A.D., arguing that during the Jewish rebellion a hybrid force of criminal bandits, regular soldiers, and unregulated fighters applied such tactics against Vespasian's Roman Legions.[2] Both argue that most wars since then have included a hybrid warfare aspect.

Studies of hybrid warfare have been relatively recent, though, and its theories became intense foci of study after the end of the Cold War. The term "hybrid warfare" is attributed to Robert G. Walker, who in 1998 defined it as "lying in the interstices between special and conventional warfare". Even he admits that "there is nothing new about the concept of hybrid operations or their utility in conflict," arguing that "the combination of closely coordinated special and conventional operations has impacted the outcomes of numerous military campaigns".[3]

Frank G. Hoffman contributed one of the most widely referenced definitions of hybrid warfare theory with his concept of "the blend of the lethality of state conflict with the fanatical and protracted fervour

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1   Williamson Murray and Peter R. Mansoor, *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p 3.

2   Timothy McCulloh and Richard Johnson, "Hybrid Warfare*"*, *JSOU Report* 13-4, August 2013: p 3, accessed May 12, 2016, www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA591803

3   Robert G. Walker, "Spec Fi: The U.S. Marine Corps and Special Operations", PhD diss., Monterey, Naval Post-Graduate School, 1998, p 5.

of irregular warfare." Hoffman further argued that "hybrid warfare incorporates a full range of different modes of warfare, including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder."[4] He predicts that "the future does not portend a suite of distinct challengers with alternative or different methods but their convergence into multimodal or hybrid wars"[5] implying that wars in future will be hybrid.

The 2006 Lebanon War between Israel and Hezbollah has also been portrayed as a central example of hybrid warfare, claiming that Hezbollah's successfully fight against conventionally stronger Israel is an example of hybrid warfare. In this vein, Tuck holds that in pitting Israel against Hezbollah, the Lebanon War forms the key Hybrid Warfare example,[6] while Hoffman describes Hezbollah in the Lebanon war as "the clearest example of a modern Hybrid challenger".[7]

However, new hybrid warfare theories after the Ukrainian crisis did not conform with previous studies. Russian hybrid warfare activities in Ukraine and Crimea with unusual military methods urged hybrid warfare theorists to revise previous studies that were mainly associated with asymmetrical characteristics.

2. Russian Hybrid Warfare

Although the West describes Russian military activities in Crimea and eastern Ukraine as a hybrid warfare in general, once one considers the specifics then differing definitions of Russian hybrid warfare emerge. NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg, for example, called it "warfare that combines disguised military operations with the power

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4   Frank G. Hoffman, "Hybrid Warfare and Challenges", *Joint Force Qarterly* 52, 1st Quarter 2009, p 37.

5   Frank G. Hoffman, "Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars"*, Potomac Institute for Policy Studies* 2007, accessed May 18, 2016, http://www.potomacinstitute.org/publications/Potomac_HybridWar_0108.pdf, p 28.

6   Christopher Tuck, *Understanding Land Warfare*, London and New York: Routledge, 2014, p. 219.

7   Hoffman, "Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars", p 35.

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of unconventional means such as cyber and information operations."[8] The *Washington Post*, on the other hand, described it as "a conflict waged by commandos without insignia, armoured columns slipping across the international border at night, volleys of misleading propaganda, floods of disinformation and sneaky invasions like the one into Crimea".[9] Those pondering the difference between recent and classical hybrid warfare descriptions highlighted the complexity of Russian warfare activities.

As mentioned, Russian officials prefer the term "non-linear warfare," rejecting the term "hybrid warfare". One of Putin's closest political advisers, Vladislav Surkov, used the term "linear war" in a short story published under his pseudonym, Nathan Dubovitsky, just a few days before the annexation of Crimea.[10] Russian officials explain their rejection of the term by claiming that "the actions attributed to so-called hybrid warfare are fairly standard to any low-intensity armed conflict of recent decades, if not centuries, and it is difficult to imagine any country using military force without providing informational support, using methods of 'secret warfare', attempting to erode enemy forces, exploiting internal ethnic, social, economic, political or other divisions in the enemy camp, and without the use of retaliatory economic sanctions".[11]

Lessons learned by Russia during the Color Revolutions and the Arab Spring played a critical role in the evolution of Russian hybrid warfare/non-linear war studies in Russia, as noted by authorities. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu stated during the Moscow Conference on International Security in 2014 that the Color Revolutions are increasingly taking on the form of warfare and are developed according to the rules of Warcraft while Russian President Putin, in his opening address before the Conference, made the case that "Color

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8   Future NATO, Speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at *Chatham House- London*, 2014, accessed March 24, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_111132.htm

9   "Russia's new tactics of war shouldn't fool anyone", *The Washington Post*, August 27, 2014.

10 Peter Pomerantsev, "How Putin is reinventing Warfare", *Foreign Policy*, May 05, 2014, accessed September 18, 2016, http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/05/05/how-putin-is-reinventing-warfare/

11 Ruslan Pukhov, "Nothing 'Hybrid' about Russia's war in Ukraine", *The Moscow Times*, 27 May 2015.

Revolutions" constitute the main threat to peace.[12] On the other hand, Valeriy Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, argued that "the Arab Springs are precisely typical of warfare in the 21st century".[13]

Russia's understanding of this allegedly new warfare can be traced to Gerasimov's published argument that "in the 21st century there has been a tendency toward blurring the lines between the states of war and peace, and wars are no longer declared and, having begun, proceed according to an unfamiliar template."[14] In his view, "the broad use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian, and other non-military measures," to be supplemented by the ignition, through concealed armed forces, of the local population as a next pillar.[15] The world witnessed the application of this theory in Crimea as well as in eastern Ukraine, just as it did during the 2008 Russian-Georgian war.

The 2014 Russian Military Doctrine also described modern warfare conflict as "the integrated use of military force, political, economic, informational and other non-military measures, implemented with the extensive use of the protest potential of the population, and special operations forces." Other characteristics include participation in hostilities by irregular armed groups and private military companies, the use of indirect and asymmetric methods of action, and the use of externally funded and run political forces and social movements.[16]

Based on experience gained from the Color Revolutions and the Arab Spring, and encouraged by its success in the 2008 Georgian crisis and in Ukraine, Russia introduced the unusual military strategies in Crimea and eastern Ukraine after the removal of Ukraine's pro-Russian president Yanukovich. Russian military activities based on deception, denial, and ambiguity were similar to *maskirovska* masked war-

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12 Alexander Golts, "Are Color Revolutions a new Form of War", *The Moscow Times*, June 02, 2014.

13 Robert Coalson, "Top Russian General Lays Bare Putin's Plan for Ukraine", *Huffington Post*, February 09, 2014.

14 Coalson, "Top Russian General Lays Bare Putin's Plan for Ukraine".

15 Sam Jones, "Ukraine: Russia's New Art of War", *Financial Times*, 28 August 28 2014, p. 2.

16 Russia's 2014 Military Doctrine, 4, accessed September 21, 2016, https://www.offiziere.ch/wp-content/uploads-01/2015/08/Russia-s-2014-Military-Doctrine.pdf.

fare, the concept developed by the Soviet military in the 1920s and including active and passive measures to deceive the enemy and influence the opinion-making process in the West. By achieving a surprise effect and creating ambiguity, Russia's actions made adequate reaction difficult for other countries and especially for multinational organisations that operate on the principles of consensus[17].

Deployment of Russia's conventional forces on the Ukrainian border, and snap exercises with its regular forces on the Ukrainian border and simultaneously in other parts of Russia in order to mask their main purpose, have constituted the main tool for intimidation and threat in Ukraine, as well as a strong deterrence to third parties, especially NATO and the United States. Russia's exercises began just one day before soldiers without insignia appeared in Crimea, and helped to distract Western attention from Crimea. Russia conducted several hundred snap exercises during the crisis in several parts of Russia but mostly close to the Ukrainian border. That deception strategy allowed for the option of a military incursion imposed political pressure, and complicated political and military decision-making for Ukraine and third parties, especially NATO; the strategy also masked its main political and military intention, diverting attention from Crimea.

In addition to the exercises, Russia bolstered its activities in Crimea by using its conventional units, blocking harbours with warships, controlling military bases and airports, and establishing checkpoints to control access to Crimea. Russia used troops it kept inside Crimea before the invasion based on the base agreement with Ukraine limited to 20,000. Protection of legal units inside Crimea was the main pretext. The Russian Foreign Ministry stated on 28th of February, that it had informed the Ukrainian government that armoured units from the Black Sea Fleet base near Sevastopol had entered Crimea in order to protect fleet positions.[18]

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17   Merie Maigre, "Nothing New in Hybrid Warfare: The Estonian Experience and Recommendations for NATO", *The German Marshall Fund of the United States Policy Brief*, 2015, p. 2, accessed August 15, 2016, http://www.gmfus.org/publications/nothing-new-hybrid-warfare-estonian-experience-and-recommendations-nato

18   "Russia admits that it has moved troops in Ukraine", *The Telegraph*, February 28, 2014.

Russian hybrid warfare has been primarily based on irregular warfare strategies with the heavy use of irregular forces, especially in Crimea. Right after Yanukovich was overthrown, armed men in military uniform without marks of identification, called "little green men" by Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) General Philippe M. Breedlove, were reported to control all strategic locations in Crimea. Russian irregular warfare activities provided denial for Russia, especially at the early stage of the crisis. Vladimir Putin stated during an interview that "there are no armed forces, no Russian instructors in southeastern Ukraine, and there never were any".[19] However, he later admitted that Russian forces had been part of the military activities that resulted in the annexation of Crimea.[20]

Another objective of Russia's irregular warfare was regime change in Crimea. Russian irregular forces played a crucial role in the mass mobilisation of the local population in eastern Ukraine and Crimea, to destabilise the country and undermine the legitimacy of the legal government in the target country. Supported by irregular forces, on 27 February pro-Russians forced the Crimean parliament to hold an emergency closed-door session that purposefully excluded Prime Minister Anatolii Mohyliov and approved the election of pro-Russian Sergei Aksyonov as the new president of Crimea. The new government urgently decided to hold a referendum on joining Russia.

Information warfare based on Russian propaganda has been an important component of Russian military activities. Former SACEUR Breedlove described Russia's information warfare campaign as "the most amazing information warfare blitzkrieg we have ever seen in the history of information warfare."[21] Russia controlled the narrative in eastern Ukraine and Crimea by using all available means in the information environment, in the Russian language. They performed information operations in Ukraine to undermine the Ukrainian people's

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19 Vladimir Putin's interview with Radio Europe 1 and TF1 TV channel, June 04, 2014, accessed July 28, 2016, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/45832.

20 Mehmet Seyfettin Erol ve Şafak Oğuz, "Hybrid Warfare Studies and Russia's Example in Crimea", *Gazi Akademik Bakış*, Cilt 9, Sayı 17, Kış 2015, s. 270-273.

21 John Vandiver, "SACEUR: Allies must prepare for Russia 'hybrid war'", *Stars and Stripes*, September 04, 2014, accessed August 11, 2016, http://www.stripes.com/news/saceur-allies-must-prepare-for-russia-hybrid-war-1.301464.

support for the central government, garner support of the Russian-speaking population in eastern Ukraine, and threaten certain targeted countries. To highlight Russia's decisiveness, Putin underscored that he also weighed putting Russia's nuclear arsenal on alert because of his concerns about both anarchy and Western intervention.[22]

Emerging technologies, especially cyber technology, have contributed to the complexity of Russian hybrid warfare. Ukraine's energy ministry accused hackers employed by a Russian-based internet provider, and phone calls from inside Russia, of mounting a coordinated cyber-attack on Ukraine's power grid in December 2015.[23] And Germany's domestic intelligence agency accused Russia of engaging in ongoing cyber warfare as part of hybrid warfare to steal information and carry out sabotage against its enemies, both real and imagined[24]. Many cyber-attack incidents were reported in this period, carried out by groups linked to Russia.

Moscow also proved remarkably effective in non-military instruments of influence and diplomacy, which emphasised a more-or-less plausible deniability in an effort to disable international responses and bolster domestic Russian support[25]. Pressure on Ukraine as well as on other countries, using the energy card, formed one of Russia's main tools. Non-military instruments also included issuing passports for Crimean, playing the energy card whereby the dependence of Ukraine on Russia for energy imports granted Russia a degree of influence in Ukraine as well as in Crimea[26] and holding the referendum in Crimea for the international legality of the annexation.

In sum, blurred boundaries between the strategic and tactical levels, and across the spectrum of political, military, economic, informational

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22 Neil MacFarquhar, "Putin says he weighed Nuclear Alert over Crimea", *The New York Times*, March 15, 2015.

23 Pavel Polityuk, "Ukraine sees Russian Hand in Cyber Attacks on Power Grid", *Reuters*, February 12, 2016.

24 "Germany's Domestic Intelligence Chief accuses Russia of Cyberwarfare", *Deutsche Welle*, May 13, 2016.

25 Roy Allison, "Russian "deniable" Intervention in Ukraine: how and why Russia broke the Rules", *International Affairs* 90-6 2014, p. 12-58.

26 Michael Rühle and Julius Grubliaukas, "Energy as Part of Hybrid Warfare", *European Security and Defence*, April 2015, p 21.

and technological elements of power, characterised Russian warfare strategies in Ukraine. With its opportunistic nature, Russia took advantage of weakness and vulnerability in Ukraine and used all available tools to create vulnerability if none were previously present. Based as they were on surprise, ambiguity and deniability, Russian activities in Crimea presented a unique case example for hybrid warfare studies.

3.Russian Hybrid Warfare and the Black Sea

Russia's military activities to enhance its power in the Black Sea, and especially its annexation of Crimea, have bequeathed important and longstanding consequences for the security and stability of the Black Sea region. As Bodner pointed out, "The ultimate decision to annexe Crimea from Ukraine may have been a largely emotional and political one, but the strategic significance of the Black Sea Fleet's Sevastopol headquarters provided Russian decision-makers with a concrete rationale to seize the peninsula. Whoever controls Crimea can easily assert a dominant position across the entire Black Sea region."[27] Control of the Black Sea means the only way to reach warm waters—Russia's dream for centuries.

Based on its 1997 agreement with Ukraine, Russia has maintained by lease its naval base in Sevastopol in Crimea, with around 15,000 troops stationed there. During the presidency of pro-Western Yushchenko, Russia encountered problems in extending the lease agreement of the base. However, the pro-Russian president Yanukovich signed a deal with Russia in 2010, called Kharkov agreement, to extend the lease of the base for 25 years after 2017, until 2042, with an additional 5-year renewal option. With the Ukrainian crisis, however, Russia annexed Crimea and thus became outright owner of the strategically important Sevastopol base, Russia's only warm water base and headquarters of the Black Sea Fleet, one of four Russian fleets. With the port of Sevastopol under its control, Moscow wields a geographic advantage vis-a-vis all other littoral countries, including NATO members Romania, Turkey, and Bulgaria.[28]

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27 Matthew Bodner, "Black Sea Rising: Rebirth of a Russian Fleet", *The Moscow Times*, May 17, 2016.

28 Dimitar Bechev, "NATO Summit: Focus will be on Black Sea Security", *Aljazeera*, July 05,

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Citing the buildup of NATO in the region, Russia opted to strengthen its Black Sea Fleet and invested $1.4 billion in developing another naval base on the Black Sea, in Novorossiysk, planned to be completed in 2020. The Black Sea Fleet headquarters will relocate to the Novorossiysk base, but continue docking in Crimea, according to the Russian plan.[29] The commander of the Fleet stated that Russia plans to reinforce the Fleet with 80 warships, to ward off what it sees as an increasing NATO presence in the waters around the recently annexed Crimean Peninsula.[30]

In 2015-2016, the Black Sea Fleet took delivery of the first of six improved KILO-class submarines and the first of six planned Admiral Grigorivich class frigates; these surface and sub-surface units add sophisticated long-range anti-ship missiles to the Anti-Access/Area Denial A2/AD[31] network as well as long-range land-attack cruise missiles.[32] With two main bases and modern and reinforced warships, thus the Russian Black Sea Fleet will become the dominant power in the region. General Valeriy Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, has already stated that the balance of power in the Black Sea has changed recently in favour of Russia, implying that the country's Black Sea fleet is now stronger than Turkey's navy.[33]

In addition to the naval power, Russia also bolstered its army forces in Crimea. Crimea already hosts stockpiles of S-400 surface-to-air missiles with a range of up to 400km, and a Bastion anti-ship coastal battery. Additionally, Russian President Putin has authorised the dep-

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2016, accessed November 18, 2016, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/06/nato-summit-focus-black-sea-security-160629071029770.html.

29 Damien Sharkov, "Russia to unveil new $1.4 billion Black Sea Fleet Base near Crimea", *Newsweek*, July 28, 2016, accessed August 17, 2016, http://europe.newsweek.com/russia-unveil-new-14-bn-black-sea-fleet-base-four-years-484974?rm=eu.

30 Matthew Bodner, "Russia's Black Sea Fleet Will Get 80 New Warships to Repel NATO", *The MoscowTimes*, September 23, 2014.

31 The objective of A2/AD strategy is to prevent the attacker from bringing its operationally superior forces into the contested region or to prevent the attacker from freely operating within the region and maximizing its combat power.

32 Steven Horrell, "A NATO Strategy for Security in the Black Sea Region", *Atlantic Council, Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security* September 2016, accessed September 21, 2016, https://www.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/resources /docs/Atlantic%20Council-A%20NATO%20Strategy%20for%20Security%20in%20the%20Black %20Sea%20Region.pdf.

33 "Rusya'dan Karadeniz açıklaması", *Hurriyet*, September 14, 2016.

loyment of Iskander ballistic missiles and TU-22M bombers known as "Backfire", which can deliver both conventional and nuclear strikes.[34] These missiles also expand Russia's A2/AD capability from the eastern half of the Black Sea to nearly its entirety.[35] NATO planners, including US General Philip Breedlove, have repeatedly stated their concerns about Russian A2/AD capability, and are concerned in particular about Russia's ability to seal off the Black Sea.[36]

On the other side of the equation, with the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis, NATO decided for important structural and functional changes, called the Readiness Action Plan (RAP), that consists of assurance and adaptation measures. As part of assurance measures, the Alliance has intensified maritime patrols in the Black Sea along with the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean with the Standing NATO Maritime Groups and Standing NATO Mine Counter-Measures Groups, the Alliance's standing navy forces that patrol rotationally around the clock. The Alliance warships now have been patrolling the Black Sea on a rotational basis, never leaving the area unattended since the beginning of the crisis, in addition to the exercises held either by member countries or by the Alliance.

In the context of assurance measures, NATO has increased the number of fighter jets deployed to Romania. Portugal and the United States have also deployed aircraft to Romania for training, conducted AWACS surveillance flights over the territory of NATO's eastern Allies, and maritime patrol aircraft flights along NATO's eastern borders along with other measures in the eastern part of the Alliance, increasing the tension around and next to Black Sea region. As part of adaptation measures, the Alliance established small multinational NATO headquarters—or "NATO Force Integration Units," NFIUs—in Bulgaria and Romania along with some of the Eastern Allies, established a new deployable multinational headquarters for the Southeast in Romania, and pre-positioned military supplies on the territory of Eastern Allies.

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34 Bechev, "NATO summit: Focus will be on Black Sea security"
35 Horrell, "A NATO Strategy for Security", p. 3.
36 Bechev, "NATO Summit: Focus will be on Black Sea security", Mehmet Seyfettin Erol ve Şafak Oğuz, "NATO ve Kriz Yönetimi", *Krizler ve Kriz Yönetimi*, Mehmet Seyfettin Erol ve Ertan Efegil (Ed.), Barış Platin, Ankara 2012, s. 358-362.

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Despite pressure by some countries to lessen tension between NATO and Russia, both sides continue to reinforce their military presences in the region. NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg recently stated that the Alliance has already increased its presence in the south-east of the alliance including in Romania and have made decisions to further increase it[37] despite strong warnings by Russia. Russia reacted negatively to Stoltenberg, citing Russian concern that NATO's presence in the Black Sea would be "destabilising," adding that this is not NATO's maritime space and has no relation to the alliance.[38] However, Russia's objections did not change the position of NATO and build-up has been continuing.

There has been intense pressure on NATO by Black Sea members of the Alliance since Russia's annexation of Crimea. Especially after the crisis of its downing a Russian jet in November 2015, Turkey urged NATO to become more effective in the Black Sea. President Erdoğan stated that he communicated to Secretary General Stoltenberg that the Alliance is absent in the Black Sea, and as a result, it has nearly become a Russian lake.[39]

On the other hand, at the beginning of 2016, Romania offered NATO the opportunity to establish a permanent Black Sea Fleet in the Black Sea.[40] Discussion about the offer intensified just before the NATO-Warsaw summit. Bulgaria, though, rejected joining any Black Sea Fleet, stating they do not need a war in the Black Sea,[41] and Turkey also changed its policy after normalisation of its relations with Russia. The Alliance did not specifically support the project, merely expres-

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37 Pre-ministerial press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, 14 February 2017, accessed April 22, 2017, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_141005.htm?selectedLocale=en

38 Damien Sharkov, "NATO to strengthen in Black Sea Region despite Russia warning", *Newsweek*, June 15, 2016, accessed September 29, 2016, http://europe.newsweek.com/nato-strengthen-black-sea-despite-russia-warning-470717

39 "Erdoğan, Genelkurmay Başkanları Konferansında konuştu 2", *Hürriyet*, May 11, 2016, accessed September 12, 2016, http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/erdogan-genelkurmay-baskanlari-konferansinda-konustu-2-37278428

40 Marian Chiriac, "Romania Calls for Permanent NATO Black Sea Force", *Balkan Insight*, February 02, 2016, accessed November 11, 2016, http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/romania-calls-for-permanent-nato-black-sea-force-02-01-2016-1

41 "Bulgaria says will not join any NATO Black Sea fleet after Russian warning", *Reuters*, June 16, 2016.

sing in the Warsaw Declaration that NATO will continue to support, as appropriate, regional efforts by the Black Sea littoral states aimed at ensuring security and stability.

In addition to the naval build-up, NATO accelerated Ballistic Missile Défense (BMD) activities in Europe, including the Black Sea region, which Russia declared as one of the threats to its Russia's security. In December 2015, the US Navy formally inaugurated its new missile defence base in Deveselu, southern Romania, which is expected to host around 500 US personnel. The base will be the first of two European land-based interceptor sites for the NATO BMD project, along with the base in Poland. Thus, Romania began to host a second US base along with the US military base at Mihail Kogalniceanu airport, near the Black Sea, which became operational in 2007.

Military build-up has been supported by military exercises by both sides. Since the beginning of the crisis, NATO increased its military exercises in the region either as Alliance or member countries individually or in groups. Russia, which kept close tabs on exercises by NATO and by individual Western countries, has confronted the Alliance with several exercises since then, causing dangerous confrontations between both sides. For example, Canada accused Russia of sending three warplanes to buzz its navy frigate *Toronto* while it was taking part in NATO exercises in international waters of the Black Sea in September 2014.[42] Or, during naval exercises in the Black Sea in April 2016, a Russian jet came within 9m of a US destroyer in what the US Navy described as a "simulated attack" —one of the closest and riskiest encounters between the two countries' armed forces in recent years.[43] Thus the Black Sea has become the stage where Russian and Western military forces test the limits of a hot conflict.

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42 Carol J. Williams, "Canada says its frigate buzzed by Russian warplanes during NATO drill", *Los Angeles Times*, September 09, 2014.
43 "Russian attack jets buzz US warship in riskiest encounter for years", *The Guardian*, April 13, 2016.

Conclusion

Russian military activities in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, called hybrid warfare by Western countries, changed the security perception in the West and especially in NATO. Having enjoyed a relatively peaceful period and cooperation since the end of the 2008 Russian-Georgian war, both sides have intensified their land, air, and naval military build-ups in Europe. With that, the Ukrainian crisis and Russian hybrid warfare activities opened a new phase in the confrontation between Russia and Western countries.

Once considered a peaceful region by the countries bordering it, the Black Sea has recently become one of the hottest regions in this confrontation, since the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis. NATO increased its military activities in the region in the context of the Readiness Action Plan, while Russia bolstered its existing military infrastructure as well as a naval presence with its annexation of Crimea. The latter has long been hosting the Russian Black Sea Fleet, one of the strategic naval commands tasked with patrolling the Mediterranean Sea as well as supporting Russian military operations in Syria.

While accusing Western countries of enhancing their military presence in the Black Sea region, including implementation of the Ballistic Missile Défense system, Russia, has openly declared the military presence of non-Black Sea countries in the Black Sea region, and potential membership of Ukraine and Georgia in NATO both crucial for the Russian navy as its red line. It has militarised this declaration first in Georgia in 2008 and then in Ukraine, and especially in Crimea, in 2014. Russia intensified its military build-up and modernization of the Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol base by illegally annexing Crimea and expanding its naval presence in Novorossiysk, on the Black Sea. Thus, Russian policies have changed the balance of power in the region in Russian favour, despite NATO's efforts. Therefore, the annexation of Crimea can be regarded as a strategical and long-term step for Russia.

It is highly unlikely that the annexation of Crimea by Russia will be cancelled in the foreseeable future, and Russia most probably will retain the Crimean status as a "frozen conflict," as they do in Abkha-

zia and South Ossetia despite pressure by the international community. Therefore, it is expected that high tension between Russia and the West, especially NATO in the Black Sea, will continue in the near future. The BMD activities of NATO around the region, especially in Romania, will constitute a critical factor in the fate of the relations between NATO and Russia. So far, Russia has not hesitated to resort to military power when its declared red lines are threatened, and BMD is listed as one of them.

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