

# RUSSIAN HYBRID WAR: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE\*

Rus Hibrit Savaşı: Teoriden Uygulamaya

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## **Abstract**

*Along with western strategists, Russia made a great contribution to developing hybrid war doctrine; highlighting and justifying most of the tested tactics in strategically important state documents such as National Security Strategy, Foreign Policy Concept and Military Doctrine. The theoretical background was “successfully” implemented by Russia during the military operations in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorny Karabakh, Transnistria; but the practical implementation of the complex of tools was demonstrated by invasion into Ukrainian territory, especially the illegal annexation of Crimean Peninsula. Changing a global security conjuncture by Russia turned “hybrid warfare” in a real threat to an overall stability.*

**Keywords:** Hybrid Warfare, Russia, Crimea, Annexation, Ukraine, Russian Military Doctrine.

## **Özet**

*Rusya tıpkı Batılı devletler gibi hibrit savaşla alakalı doktrinler geliştirmeye özen göstermektedir. Bu bağlamda Rusya; Ulusal Güvenlik Stratejisi, Dış Politika Konsepti ve Askeri Doktrin örneklerinde olduğu gibi stratejik öneme haiz olan devlet belgelerinde bu zamana kadar test edilmiş politikalarını vurgulamıştır. Teorik altyapı; Abhazya, Güney Osetya, Dağlık Karabağ, Transdinyester’de yapılan askeri operasyonlar sırasında Rusya tarafından “başarıyla” uygulanmıştır. Komplike hibrit savaş araçlarının pratikte uygulamaya geçirilmesi, Ukrayna topraklarının işgali ve özellikle de Kırım yarımadasının yasadışı ilhakı sürecinde gerçekleşmiştir. Küresel bir güvenlik konjonktürünün Rusya tarafından değiştirilmesi, “hibrit savaş”ı genel bir istikrar için gerçek bir tehdit haline getirmiştir.*

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## 1. Introduction

However, the nature of war does not change, the ways and techniques accessible to wage and win wars does. This appears to be the case with respect to hybrid war, a progressing type of war that the World has faced for last two decades. The definition of hybrid war is the merging of different methods and theories of war and warfare at different levels of war, in different realms, by a mix of actors, arranged in time and space to achieve objectives at all levels of war. Hybrid war poses a novel threat to the world for lots of reasons, including undue attention on irregular warfare as the “war of the future” as well as hybrid war’s blending of modes at different levels of war using different theories of war and warfare. In spite of having its roots in history, modern hybrid war has the potential to transform the strategic calculations of potential belligerents owing to the rise of non-state actors, information technology, and the proliferation of advanced weapons systems.

Russia is the country conducting several parallel wars at the same time using hybrid tactics. There has been a military intervention by stealth in Ukraine’s Crimea and Eastern territory. An economic war is taking place following sanctions imposed on Russia by the EU, U.S., and other Western powers. An information war is being conducted by Russia on a massive and asymmetrical scale, something that neighbouring countries have experienced during the last two decades. The combination of these various elements has resulted in a phenomenon described as “hybrid war”, “next generation warfare” or “non-linear warfare”, firstly mentioned by General Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Federation in his article issued in 05 March 2013, further known as a Gerasimov’s Doctrine.

Direct warfare in the past may have been marked by bombers and tanks, but if the pattern that Russia has presently applied in Ukraine, Syria and another geography, is any indication, then indirect warfare in is marked by “insurgents”, protestors and terrorists. Fifth columns are formed not only by secret agents and covert saboteurs but also by non-state actors that publicly behave as civilians. Social media and similar technologies replace precision-guided ammunitions as “the military attack” ability of the aggressive party, and chat rooms and Facebook pages become the new “militants’ den”.

Russia tested several hybrid tactics in different countries via creating new statelets such as Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorny Karabakh, Transnistria. Most of the tactics were highlighted by fundamental documents such as the National Security Policy and Strategy, Military and Foreign Policy Concept. The toxic results are there for all to see in Ukraine and Syria.

Hence, it is necessary to briefly trace the development of both the concept of hybrid war and of Russia's so-called new generation war in order to understand the military theory behind the origin of the war in Ukraine and analyze future prospects of the security architecture of Russian-Ukrainian relationships.

## 2. Russian Thinkers' Approach to Hybrid War Concept

Together with Western schools, Russian military thinkers such as General Makhmut Gareev, Major-General Vladimir Slipchenko, General Valery Gerasimov, Sergey Chekinov and Sergey Bogdanov have also studied the changes taking place in the nature of warfare in depth, and the emergence of new forms of battle.

Russian General Makhmut Gareev in his book "If War Comes Tomorrow"<sup>1</sup>, first published in 1995, argued that technological progress has radically changed warfare, in relation to both the negative effects of traditional weapons and the appearance of completely new forms of weaponry. He supposed that due to the increased range of missile and artillery systems, in a future war the depths of enemy territory could easily be penetrated in an attack. Regarding the new means and objectives of information warfare, Gareev argues that:

*"Systematic broadcasting of psychologically and ideologically-based materials of a provocative nature, mixing partially truthful and false items of information can all result in a mass psychosis, despair and feelings of doom and undermine trust in the government and armed forces. In general, it can lead to the destabilization of the situation"*

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<sup>1</sup> Makhmut Akhmetovich Gareev, *If War Comes Tomorrow? The Contours of Future Armed Conflict*, transl. Yakov Vladimirovich Fomenko, Frank Cass, London 1998, p. 192.

*in those countries, which become objects of information warfare, creating a fruitful soil for actions of the enemy.”<sup>2</sup>*

He also argued that new information warfare methods may well imply that, instead of a direct armed attack, the struggle may get transformed into a hidden, latent, undeclared war.

Gareev’s ideas were further developed by General Vladimir Slipchenko, who characterized future wars as ‘non-contact’. In accordance with Slipchenko, the attacks in modern wars will come from the air and space, using high-precision weapon systems in the depths of enemy territory. The main goal will be destroying the military, political and economic targets along with controlling the infrastructure of the other side without direct engaging enemy forces in a straight attack.<sup>3</sup>

The ideas about future armed conflicts were significantly developed by General Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Federation, in the journal *Voenno-promishlenniy Kurier*, published in 2013.<sup>4</sup> By referring to the experiences of the Arab Spring, Gerasimov described a new form of warfare, called “new generation warfare”, which concentrates on the combined use of diplomatic, economic, political and other non-military methods with direct military force, instead of waging open war. According to Gerasimov, the very rules of warfare have changed. The Russian general argued that the importance of non-military means in reaching political and strategic goals has increased; moreover, they are often more efficient than arms alone. Gerasimov forecasts the hidden use of force, such as paramilitary and civilian insurgent units, and emphasizes the need to rely on asymmetric, indirect methods. He urges that, besides the physical reality, war should include the information space as well, where the real-time coordination of the means and tools used is possible. He puts great emphasis on targeted strikes conducted well behind enemy lines and on the destruction of the enemy’s critical infrastructure, regarding both its military and civilian elements, preferably in a short timeframe. Gerasimov advocates the massive use of special forces and

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> Vladimir Slipchenko, “An Unavoidable Reform”, *Voyenno-Promishlenniy Kurier*, 2015, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/72>, (Accessed on 20.09.2017).

<sup>4</sup> Valeriy Gerasimov, “Prevision Is What Science Is Valued For”, *Voyenno-Promyshlenniy Kur'yer*, February 27-March 5 2013, <http://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/14632>, (Accessed on 20.09.2017).

also of robotized weapons, such as drones. As he argues, regular forces should be put into action only in the late phases of the conflict, often under the disguise of peacekeeper or crisis-management forces.<sup>5</sup>

Though it is far from classical military theory, another Russian thinker who should be mentioned is the Russian presidential advisor Vladislav Surkov, usually writes under his commonly used pseudonym, Nathan Dubovitsky.<sup>6</sup> In his article, he speaks about a future war, which involves everybody and everything, all aspects of life, while remaining elusive in its main contours. Surkov/Dubovitsky called this new form of future warfare ‘non-linear war’. It is probably no coincidence that the article was published on 12 March 2014, only a few days before the official Russian annexation of Crimea.

Since then, Russian military theorists have continued to discuss new generation warfare. Sergei Chekinov and Sergei Bogdanov,<sup>7</sup> for example, have expanded Gerasimov’s proposals, and have provided a much more detailed description of the ‘new generation war’. The authors declared the Gulf War to be the first ‘new generation conflict’ in human history and use it to illustrate their thesis about the characteristics of this type of warfare, along with the general concept of network-centric warfare.

Similarly to Gerasimov, Chekinov and Bogdanov continue the defense narrative, describing new generation warfare as an operation possibly conducted by the United States or the West.<sup>8</sup> They write very explicitly about the need to massively employ non-military methods prior to and during an armed conflict. They concretely list the media, religious organizations, cultural institutions, NGOs, public movements financed from abroad and scholars engaged in research on foreign grants as possible components of a coordinated attack against the target country. For example, in 2012 Victor Medvedchuk, the godfather of Vladimir Putin funded a pro-Russian party “All-Ukrainian Social

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Dubovitsky, Without Sky, *Russkiy Pioner*, <http://ruspioner.ru/honest/m/single/4131>, (Accessed on 10.09.2017).

<sup>7</sup> Chekinov–Bogdanov, The Nature and Content of a New-Generation War, *Military Thought*, No: 10, 2013, p. 12–23, [http://www.eastviewpress.com/files/mt\\_from%20the%20current%20issue\\_no.4\\_2013.pdf](http://www.eastviewpress.com/files/mt_from%20the%20current%20issue_no.4_2013.pdf), (Accessed on 14.10.2017).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Movement “Ukrainian Choice” the main goal of which was propaganda of Ukrainian membership in Eurasian Economic Space and Customs Union against EU and NATO membership of Ukraine.

The authors highlight the need to gain information superiority over the target country, both by conducting intensive propaganda prior to the actual attack and by the continuous use of *electronic warfare* (EW) methods to disable enemy communication, command and control capabilities. Their forecast is that the main battleground for new-generation wars will be the information space. According to the authors, new-generation wars will be dominated by psychological and information warfare aimed at crushing the morale of enemy troops and the population, thus breaking their will to resist.<sup>9</sup> In addition, they predict that in future wars the widespread use of non-traditional forms of fighting can be expected, such as weapons able to influence the weather or trigger earthquakes,<sup>10</sup> as well as the increased use of robotized, possibly autonomous weapon systems. Genetically engineered biological weapons may also appear.

There is a striking similarity between the new generation war theoretically described by Chekinov and Bogdanov in 2013 and the events that took place in Ukraine in 2014, particularly prior to and during the Russian operation in Crimea. As the authors prescribed, a several-months-long non-military preparatory campaign against Ukraine must have started well before the Euromaidan, in mid-2013 at the latest, but probably even earlier. Interestingly enough, the original Chekinov-Bogdanov article was published in the No:10 issue of the *Voyennaya Misl'* in 2013.<sup>11</sup> This may well mean that the Russian strategy that was already being employed against Ukraine was published at that time, which is indeed a rare case in military history. However, this did not help the new Ukrainian leadership that came to power in February 2014 to stop the hybrid war and prevent the Russian annexation of Crimea.

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15-16.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p. 14.

<sup>11</sup> Chekinov–Bogdanov, “The Nature and Content of a New-Generation War”, *Military Thought*, No: 10, Moscow 2013, p. 12–23, [http://www.eastviewpress.com/Files/MT\\_FROM%20THE%20CURRENT%20ISSUE\\_No.4\\_2013.pdf](http://www.eastviewpress.com/Files/MT_FROM%20THE%20CURRENT%20ISSUE_No.4_2013.pdf), (Accessed on 10.09.2017).

### 3. Place of Russia in a World Political Map: Russian Foreign Policy and New Military Doctrine

Nearly two decades after the break-up of the Soviet Union, Russia is still searching for its place in a complex and multipolar world order. Sitting on the periphery of both Europe and Asia, Russia's leaders need to shape an effective foreign and security policy. The Russia's greatest goal is to restore its superpower and influence as it was at the epoch of the Soviet Union, especially in its nearby regions. Russia wants to revive its influence with states that were previously part of the Soviet Union.

Under Putin's administration, Moscow reevaluated its national objectives in order to cope with the rising menaces in a world that are changing constantly. The shift from a bipolar to a multipolar system and the appearance of global and regional challenges has forced Russia to adjust its priorities and redesign its foreign policy. On the one hand, Russia has reasserted itself as an important global actor. On the other hand, Russia's resurgence as a major European and Asian power has brought back Cold-War-like memories to some of its neighbors and global competitors.

Russia has tried to take advantage of the opportunities offered by her strategic place and political heritage. The desire to strengthen its geopolitical role in the Eurasian continent, eliminate Russo-phobia and elaborate closer relations with the member-states of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) has been high on the agenda for the Kremlin. It is not only a matter of prestige for Moscow to sustain a leading role among the post-Soviet countries, but also a way to secure stability in its nearby countries, where it has enormous national interests.<sup>12</sup>

The greatest external factor modeling Russia's foreign policy stays The United States. There are some issues that the United States and Russia cooperate on, such as counterterrorism. This alliance in combating counterterrorism came about not because of a common ideology but because of shared fundamental interests. But Russia does

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<sup>12</sup> Andrei Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc, Oxford; Robert Legvold, *Russian Foreign Policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century & the Shadow of the Past*, Columbia University Press, New York 2007, p. 13.

not share the same interests of the United States and NATO over other issues such as nuclear non-proliferation, NATO expansion and U.S. involvement in the domestic affairs of former Soviet states.

The 9/11 attacks and the so-called “Global War on Terrorism” provided the opportunity to establish cooperation between Russia and NATO, but the results were not successful. The NATO-Russia Council (NRC) failed to embrace a strong partnership and the expansion of NATO to Eastern Europe and its potential enlargement reaching the Russian borders provoked the negative reaction of Moscow. The latter has accepted, although unwillingly, NATO and EU enlargements; but the participation of Ukraine and Georgia in the western security architecture constitutes a red line for Russia. Moscow considers the membership of the said countries in NATO as a violation of Russia’s traditional sphere of influence and a Western attempt to put into practice the idea of Russia’s strategic encirclement.<sup>13</sup>

These actions apparently decrease Russia’s influence and dominance in world politics and threaten its security. However, such tensions have resulted in the strained relationship between the United States and Russia. Russia still wants to be treated as the superpower it was during the Soviet Union, which it must do by asserting its influence in its near abroad.

Russia rejects any external influence from other states on its domestic and foreign policy issues and accuses the United States and NATO of influencing the policymaking of some of its neighboring countries. As a result, Moscow is reluctant to participate in western coalitions and tries to reinforce a number of regional integration associations. The Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) are all examples of efforts to counterbalance western organizations and strengthen Russia’s role in Central Asia.<sup>14</sup>

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13 Zevelev, “NATO’s Enlargement and Russian Perceptions of Eurasian Political Frontiers”, *George Marshall European Centre for Security Studies*, <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/98-00/zevelev.pdf>, (Accessed on 10.09.2017).

14 Olga Oliker, *Russian Foreign Policy Sources and Implications*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica CA 2009, p. 102-104.



The view of the Russian government on increasing Russia's role in the world is determined in its National Security Strategy, Foreign Policy Concept and Military Doctrine.

**The National Security Strategy to 2020 (NSS)**, aimed to define the domestic and foreign threats and suggests measures that will guarantee the security and development of the Russian Federation<sup>15</sup>. The analysis of the NSS will be a useful indication of how Moscow plans to formulate its foreign security policy for the coming years. The main directions of the national security policy of the Russian Federation are the so-called strategic national priorities, in the form of important social, political and economic transformations intended to create secure conditions for the realization of Russian citizens' constitutional rights and freedoms, the stable development of the country, and the preservation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state.<sup>16</sup>

The strategy forms the basis of the development of a system ensuring the national security of the Russian Federation and presents a plan of action and measures intended to guarantee national security. It lays the foundations for constructive interaction among state bodies, organisations, and social groups, in order to defend Russia's national interests and safeguard the security of the individual, society and the state. The main purpose of the given NSS is to formulate and support, with the aid of national security forces, the internal and external conditions conducive to the implementation of strategic national priorities.<sup>17</sup>

#### 4. Russian Foreign Policy Concept

In 2013, after reelection Putin as a Russian President a new doctrine of foreign policy was adopted and according to this strategy, Russian regional priority was to build a genuine Eurasian Economic Union, but

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15 Sophia Dimitrakopoulou-Andrew Liopoulos, "Russia's National Security Strategy to 2020: A Great Power in the Making?" *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, No: 4 (1), 2010, p. 35-42, [http://www.cria-online.org/10\\_4.html](http://www.cria-online.org/10_4.html), (Accessed on 10.09.2017), (Accessed on 14.10.2017).

16 Security Council of the Russian Federation, *National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation up to 2020, signed on 12 May, 2009*, <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/99.html>, (Accessed on 10.09.2017).

17 *Ibid.*

also to strengthen the economic integration in CIS.<sup>18</sup> Also, according to Putin's plan, the Eurasian Union would have cooperated with the European Union to build a common free trade market from Lisbon to Vladivostok, with polycentric decision-making bodies.<sup>19</sup> Thus, Russia was still open to cooperate with the EU and USA in a multi-polar world, based on principles of international law.

The new version of the concept is based on thoughts of Primakov and can also be analyzed as an offer of a "geopolitical" and "geo-economic" deal on strategic cooperation between Russia and the West. According to Russian government estimations, both Russia and the West are facing similar challenges and threats, generated by religious radicalism on the one hand, and the rise of Asian powers on the other. The ruling elite trusts that the weakening of the West is creating favourable conditions for a deal because the West will be more willing to accept Russian conditions. These are: that the West should recognise Russian "specificity" in the sphere of values, and give up any attempts to influence Russian internal developments; it should accept the coordination of activities in the security field based on the principle of a 'concert of powers' (Russia, the USA, the EU); open up the EU to Russian economic and social penetration (visas); bring about the de facto neutralization of Western alliance structures (NATO), and respect the Russian sphere of influence in the CIS.<sup>20</sup>

The concept takes into account the global financial and economic crisis and the instability in the Middle East and North Africa since 2011. If the document notes an international power shift from West to East and to the Asia-Pacific region, and that the development of friendly relations with China and India are 'a most important direction' of foreign policy, there is precious little further detail on how this important aspect is to be

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18 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation, "Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation Approved by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on 12 February 2013", [http://archive.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D](http://archive.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D), (Accessed on 10.09.2017).

19 Patrick Donahue, Putin Promotes Trade Zone From 'Lisbon to Vladivostok, *Bloomberg*, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2010-11-25/putin-promotes-trade-zone-from-lisbon-to-vladivostok-update1>, (Accessed on 10.09.2017).

20 Witold Rodkiewicz, "The Russian Federation's Foreign Policy Concept", *ANALYSES 2013-02-20*, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2013-02-20/russian-federations-foreign-policy-concept>, (Accessed on 10.09.2017).

developed.<sup>21</sup>

The concept indicates that the Russian ruling elite perceives the West as an important source of increasing instability in the international system. Firstly, it blames the global economic and financial crisis on Western economic policies. Secondly, it believes that the way in which the West (especially America) responds to regional crises – unilateral sanctions and humanitarian interventions without a UN mandate – undermines already-existing states, and opens up the way for Islamic radicals. Thirdly, it is convinced that the West is using new political technologies (soft power) to interfere in the political life of sovereign states and, by manipulating the public mood of both the masses and the elites, is seeking to impose their political and social model upon them. Actually, this was the strategy Russia entered into Ukrainian crisis.

## 5. Russia's New Military Doctrine as a Preparation for Hybrid War

President Vladimir Putin signed the new Russian Military Doctrine into effect on 25 December 2014, replacing the version of February 2010. It was drafted by a Security Council working group and had been commissioned before the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis in July 2013. So as well as representing a response to the current conflict escalation, the document also addresses broader changes in Russia's domestic and foreign policy environment focusing on the United States and NATO.<sup>22</sup>

The new Military Doctrine distinguishes between military dangers and threats. Dangers are precursors of threats that contain the real possibility of the beginning of a military conflict. Scenarios relating explicitly to NATO and implicitly to the United States continue to top the list of external military dangers, with explicit mention of “expanding the bloc”, the desire to “move military infrastructure” closer to Russia's

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21 Andrew Monaghan, “Russia and Eurasia REP 2013/03 The New Russian Foreign Policy Concept: Evolving Continuity”, *Chatham House*, [https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Russia%20and%20Eurasia/0413pp\\_monaghan.pdf](https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Russia%20and%20Eurasia/0413pp_monaghan.pdf), (Accessed on 10.09.2017).

22 President of Russia, “Military Doctrine of Russian Federation approved by Vladimir Putin, President of Russia”, Statik Kremlin <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/41d527556bec8deb3530.pdf>, (Accessed on 10.09.2017).

borders, and the “deployment (buildup) of military contingents of foreign states” in neighbouring states. The latter would include the Readiness Action Plan that NATO agreed for its eastern European members in September 2014.<sup>23</sup>

The Military Doctrine also directs closer attention to developments in Russia’s immediate neighbourhood. This is a direct consequence of the Ukraine crisis. The establishment thereof regimes that “threaten Russian interests” is categorised as a military danger, as are “interethnic and interfaith tensions” and “territorial claims against the Russian Federation”<sup>24</sup>, which gain a sharper edge in the aftermath of the annexation of Crimea.

The real new aspect of the Military Doctrine, however, includes foreign and domestic risks. Two scenarios are foreseen:

- 1) Firstly, the possibility of ethnic and religious strife escalating and eroding the internal cohesion of the multi-ethnic state. Such tensions are visible in Islamist tendencies in the North Caucasus, as well as growth in Russian nationalism.
- 2) The second scenario is “aimed at forcibly changing the constitutional system of the Russian Federation”.<sup>25</sup> The Military Doctrine reveals just how strongly the Moscow leadership fears for the stability of its authority and how vulnerable it feels to societal protest.

The legitimacy of Putin’s system is rooted above all in its economic success. And that is now threatened by the impact of Western sanctions and the low oil price. Here the Russian leadership keeps a particularly watchful eye on “activities intended to have an information effect on the population, above all on young citizens”, which mentions the dangers it sees emanating from social networks and the new media. The Military Doctrine makes no departure from Moscow’s tendency to “securitize” domestic problems. The Kremlin describes the Arab Spring and the “colour revolutions” as externally instigated processes and sees itself as the target of western regime-change plans. Alongside the military might

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

of NATO and the United States, the soft capabilities of the European Union are also increasingly perceived as a danger.<sup>26</sup>

The Chief of the General Staff, Valery Gerasimov, has already announced that the procurement programme for 2016–2020 will place particular emphasis on precision weapons, information and reconnaissance systems, and automated command systems.<sup>27</sup> While “non-nuclear deterrence” is primarily intended as insurance against states with the most modern conventional capabilities, “non-linear warfare” is Moscow’s preferred military instrument for asserting its influence in the post-Soviet space.

Although the specific term “non-linear warfare” does not actually appear in the Military Doctrine, Gerasimov explained in February 2013 what it means to the Russian leadership. In the twenty-first century, he said, the distinction between war and peace has become blurred because wars are no longer formally declared by states. This alters the rules of war, requiring what the Doctrine calls the “integrated use of military force and of political, informational, and other non-military measures”.<sup>28</sup>

This approach is supplemented by indirect and asymmetrical forms of deployment, in the sense of the use of special forces, armed irregulars and private military companies. These means permit an open military intervention to be disguised, as do “exploitation of protest potential within the population” and “externally financed and guided political forces and social movements”. These concepts, in fact, describe rather precisely Russia’s actions in Ukraine. In view of the relative “success”, the strategy has enjoyed in the eyes of the Russian leadership, it must be assumed that they will continue to expand these capacities. One indication is a strengthening of the special forces, with a dedicated “special operations command” established in 2013.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Yuriy Gavrilov, The President of Russia Vladimir Putin approved the security plan for the next five years, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, Federal issue No: 6831 (260) 18, November 2015, <http://m.rg.ru/2015/11/17/oborona-site.html>, (Accessed on 10.09.2017).

<sup>28</sup> President of Russia, “Military Doctrine of Russian Federation approved by Vladimir Putin” p. 7, <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/41d527556bec8deb3530.pdf>, (Accessed on 10.09.2017).

<sup>29</sup> Valeriy Gerasimov, General Headquarter and Security of the country, *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kur'yer*, Issue 4(522), 5 February 2014, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/18998>, (Accessed on 11.10.2017).

The comprehensive stepping up of “mobilisational preparation” is a new aspect of the doctrine. The emphasis here is less on the armed forces themselves than the mobilisation and disciplining of society and economy in an effort to block a “Maidan scenario” occurring in Russia. Special arrangements are provided for the financial sector and the fiscal and monetary systems in the event of mobilisation.

This gives the Kremlin instruments with which to intervene more effectively in the economy in the event of crisis – as well as leverage to ensure the loyalty of the oligarchs. In the interests of expediting the mobilisation of society, the Doctrine calls for a strengthening of “military-patriotic education” and “improving” security in the sphere of information. Sharper interventions in freedom of expression and the media, above all the internet, can thus be expected. The “Strategy for Countering Extremism” adopted in November 2014 also has the same thrust.<sup>30</sup>

The question for the European Union will be above all to strengthen the resilience of its eastern members and especially its post-Soviet partners, for example through a joint energy strategy or better integration of their Russian minorities. The second challenge is that shows of military strength may be compensating for internal as well as external weakness. If economic troubles lead to political crisis, Kremlin could be tempted to escalate conflicts with the West in order to justify interventions in economy and society.

At the same time, the opportunities for military cooperation with Russia are evaporating. All that the new Doctrine mentions is a “dialogue of equals” with NATO and the United States – while intensifying cooperation with Belarus, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the two separatist entities Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Nonetheless, Moscow’s new Doctrine still asserts an interest in cooperating with the West on fighting terrorism and Islamist extremism, on reviving arms control and on strategic missile defense. NATO and the European Union should pragmatically grasp the opportunities for cooperation that exist there. But they should abandon

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30 President of Russian Federation, The Strategy for Countering Extremism in Russian Federation until 2015, 28.11.2014, <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/16/130.html>, (Accessed on 10.09.2017).

the illusion that there could be positive spill-over effects for the general state of relations.<sup>31</sup>

## 6. Russian Hybrid Tactics Implementation

Russia has been accused since the collapse of the USSR of destabilising its former Soviet neighbours to keep them in its orbit through destabilizing the situation via creating artificial conflicts which can be recorded as a newly found instrument of Hybrid Wars. During the NATO Summit in Wales Anders Fogh Rasmussen expressed his opinion that Russian President Vladimir Putin wanted to see “protracted, frozen conflicts in the neighbourhood” to stop countries which used to be in Moscow's sphere of influence from integrating with the EU and NATO<sup>32</sup>.

It is necessary to take into consideration that in 2009 the EU launched its “Eastern Partnership Programme” (EaP), an attempt to build closer ties with six ex-Soviet countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. After Russian occupation of Crimean Peninsula, the EU has moved to sign association agreements (Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements) with the three countries where the voices for reform are loudest: Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, while the others have edged cautiously closer to Russia and its Eurasian Economic Union. Five of the six countries experience (Belarus being the exception), and to varying degrees, frozen conflict. Moldova's breakaway territory of Trans-Dniester and Georgia's rebel regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia were given as examples of this policy. Although less obviously involved in Nagorno-Karabakh -Russia backs Armenia- it tacitly arms both sides, causing a volatile militarization of the South Caucasus.

It has to be said, too, that Russia is often regarded as a benefactor and protector by the people who actually live inside the “frozen conflict” zones by using soft influence operations to generate demand for its 'protection', while many Russians feel a sense of duty towards

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31 Dmitri Trenin, “Should the West fear Russia's new military doctrine?”, 2015, *INOSMI*, <http://inosmi.ru/world/20150112/225466144.html>, (Accessed on 04.09.2017).

32 Patrick Jackson, “Ukraine crisis: 'Frozen conflicts' and the Kremlin”, *BBC News*, 10 September 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29078541>, (Accessed on 04.09.2017).

expatriates and anyone “loyal” to the old USSR. The real losers, as ever, are the inhabitants of the conflict zones. Each frozen conflict contains vested interests, backed by Russia. It has been clear during the war in Georgia in 2008, and Ukraine more recently, that Russia does not want to see these states move closer to Europe, and in particular NATO.

The Kremlin has exercised a modified form of imperialism based on the ‘divide and rule’ principle in its “near-abroad” after the uncertainty of the 1990s. Despite claiming to respect the inviolability of state sovereignty and non-interference in other states’ affairs, Russia supports corrupt elites, fueling crime and corruption, in maintaining the status quo.

The role of western countries in the Color Revolution and in the Arab Spring figured significantly in the evolution of Russian hybrid warfare studies, which was also highlighted by many Russian authorities.<sup>33</sup> This new form of warfare has formed Russian strategies in crisis after the Cold War. Therefore, in order to understand the Russian logic and motives of the implementation of hybrid war in Ukraine, it would be appropriate to analyze the hybrid tactics which Russia tested during the conflicts in Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) and Moldova (Transnistria).

## 7. Russian Hybrid Tactics Test: Frozen Conflicts

Historically, Russia succeeded to use its influence on separatist authorities of Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and even Nagorno-Karabakh, as leverage to control internal and foreign policies of former Soviet Union states. And as Russia became more economically coherent over the years, the number of Russian troops in these territories grew, and a bigger slice of the Russian budget was cut out to keep the quasi-states afloat.

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33 Şafak Oğuz, “The New NATO: Prepared for Russian Hybrid Warfare”, *Insight Turkey*, Vol: 18, No: 4, 2016, p. 167.



These post-Soviet statelets have a lot of similarities; all of them are small<sup>34</sup> and economically isolated, effectively run on black and gray economies, and are largely dependent on Russia's financial largesse for survival. Most important, from Russia's point of view, they each occupy strategic spaces in the post-Soviet sphere where Russian troops and thus the potential for further intervention can apply acute pressure on Georgia and Moldova.<sup>35</sup>

**Table 1. Russia's Generated Frozen Conflicts**

	Historical Background	Result
<b>Transnistria 1990</b>	Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, tensions arose between central Moldova and the linguistically, if not entirely ethnically, Russian region of Transnistria. War erupted between the central government and Transdnistria after the region attempted to break away in 1990.	Hundreds died in the conflict, which was only resolved in 1992, when Russian troops arrived and backed the separatists. Following a ceasefire, 1,500 Russian troops were stationed in the region, where they have been ever since. The disputed area remains in a tense but frozen situation, with Transnistria declaring itself as an independent state.
<b>Nagorno-Karabakh 1988-1994</b>	Nestled in a disputed range of mountains between Azerbaijan and Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh is a little different from the previous areas on this list, since it's not an independent state but actually a region that two nations claim. Ethnically Armenian, the region tried breaking away from Azerbaijan toward the end of the Soviet Union in 1988, resulting in regional war.	Years of war overtook Nagorno-Karabakh, with Russia indirectly supporting the secessionists through the backing of Armenia. Moscow armed both sides and played them against each other. After an estimated 30,000 people had been killed, Russia brokered a ceasefire in 1994 and Karabakh turned into frozen conflict.

34 South Ossetia is roughly 3.900 square kilometers and has about 40.000 inhabitants, Abkhazia covers 8.500 square kilometers and its population is about 240.000, and Transdnistria is 4.100 square kilometers and has a population of 555.000.

35 Russia and the occupied territories: their cost for Russian citizens (map), *Unian*, Kyiv 2015, <http://www.unian.net/world/1124242-rossiya-i-okkupirovannyie-territorii-ih-stoimost-dlya-grajdan-rf-karta.html>, (Accessed on 20.08.2017).

<p><b>Abkhazia 90th</b></p>	<p>Abkhazia is an ethnic enclave that hosted a long-term Russian military presence, following a violent civil war in Georgia during the early '90s in which the Abkhaz people attempted to form their own state. This U.N.-authorized Russian peacekeeping force began to show disturbing signs of offensive activity as the years went by priming the area for the conflict to come.</p>	<p>Abkhazia was declared an independent state in the aftermath of the Russo-Georgian conflict. How “independent” Abkhazia is remains questionable, as Russia controls its borders and has a deal to keep troops there for the next 45 years.</p>
<p><b>South Ossetia 2008</b></p>	<p>South Ossetia, a disputed region along the border between Georgia and Russia, was the scene of the most recent major standoff between the West and Russia. In the early 1990s, Ossetians fought for independence from Georgia, and for self-determination for their culturally and historically unique region; their failure to achieve independence set the scene for further tensions. The latest crisis came after Russia decided to launch an invasion of Georgia in August 2008, ostensibly as a humanitarian mission to protect Ossetians from Georgian aggression.</p>	<p>There had actually been a Russian peacekeeping force in Georgian territory since the early '90s, in part to protect Ossetians but also to support their secessionist movement. When the Georgian government responded with force to Ossetian separatist attacks in August 2008, Russia launched a full-scale invasion in response. Facing increased international pressure, Russia ended the operation after five days of war, declaring South Ossetia an independent state.</p>

Below are the main stages and results of the frozen conflicts, encouraged and controlled by Russia. (Tab.1.) As it is seen, Russia using different hybrid tactics plays a key role in negotiations between separatist and central power in the post-soviet area. As we know, Russia is a member of the 5+2 format of negotiations on Transnistrian conflict, is a part of Minsk group on Nagorno-Karabakh, and it deployed its peacekeeping forces in Transnistria, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia.

In fact, Russian participation in negotiations is a guarantee of the non-resolution of these frozen conflicts, because, the only formula agreed by Russia to settle the conflict is federalization.

## 7. Russian Military Budget in The Context of Hybrid Operations

At close to \$70 billion (4.5% of GDP) for 2014, the Russian military budget has more than doubled over the last decade, trailing only behind the United States (\$581 billion, 3.5% of GDP) and China (\$129 billion, 2.1% of GDP), according to the World Bank Data provided. (Data includes funding for armed services, paramilitary forces, military space activities, foreign military aid, and military R&D.)<sup>36</sup>

Both in terms of troops and weapons, Russian conventional forces dwarf those of its Eastern European and Central Asian neighbors, many of which are relatively weak ex-Soviet republics closely allied with Moscow. Russia has a military pact with Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan through the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), formed in 1992. Moscow also stations troops in the region: Armenia (3,300), Georgia's breakaway regions of Abkhazia (4,000) and South Ossetia (3,500), Moldova's separatist Transnistria region (1,500), Kyrgyzstan (500), Tajikistan (7,500), and Crimea (26,000).<sup>37</sup>

Though exact figures are hard to come by, various compiled estimates show Russia has annually been injecting about \$300 million into Abkhazia and at least \$100 million into South Ossetia and Transnistria each to finance their annual budgets, provide cheap fuel, pay pensions and so on. In addition, Russia has allocated at least \$2.42 billion in 2015 to support Crimea (not including military costs) and, according to a report written by Higher School of Economics analyst Sergei Aleksashenko, Russia has allocated at least \$2 billion in the federal 2015 budget to sustain its military support in eastern Ukraine, a figure that continues to grow.<sup>38</sup> Operating from a low and still rough estimate, it can be assumed that Russia is spending at least \$5 billion annually on these quasi-states, which is about 3 percent of Russia's 2015 federal budget.

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36 Military expenditure (% of GDP), *World Bank*, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS/countries/1W?display=default>, (Accessed on 12.08.2017).

37 List of Russian Military Bases Abroad, *Wikipedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Russian\\_military\\_bases\\_abroad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Russian_military_bases_abroad), (Accessed on 12.08.2017).

38 Ilya Yashin, "Putin. War", Independent expert report, Moscow 2015, <http://www.putin-itogi.ru/putin-voina/>, (Accessed on 12.08.2017).

This amount does not include a large amount of pre-allocated defense budget that goes into the hybrid operations in different countries. There is also an opportunity cost to bear in mind. Pre-allocated military resources cannot be redirected to other purposes, such as procurement, training, and research and development unless the defense budget as a whole continues to increase.<sup>39</sup>

In spite of the budget expenditures mentioned above Russia has initiated a military operation in Syria with the intention to widen its footprint in strategic spaces. The operation has been started at the end of September under the pretense of fighting the Islamic State group, also known as DAESH. Western leaders, however, have said Russia has also targeted opposition groups that pose a threat to Syrian president and Kremlin ally Bashar Assad. The daily cost of war for Russia in Syria comes with a price tag of approximately \$5 million to \$7.5 million a day, according to research from IHS a global economics and risk analysis firm. With no economic growth expected until 2016 or even 2017, the Russian government has been forced to make federal budget expenditure cuts in order to increase defense and security spending.<sup>40</sup>

While Russia's airstrikes in Syria were likely envisioned as a way for the Kremlin to come out of the cold and re-engage with the West after the annexation of Crimea in March 2014, the conflict has further increased the burden on the country's already crippled economy with predictions of a 3,7 percent GDP contraction in 2015. Added to the long-term support of separatists in Eastern Ukraine and the high cost of supporting the annexed peninsula of Crimea, Russia's two conflicts – one with ground troops in Eastern Ukraine and the other with air power in the Middle East – are proving unsustainable.

While Russia may choose to try and ignore the situation in Eastern Ukraine, Ukrainian nationalists and Crimean Tatar activists cut off electricity to Crimea Sunday plunging 1,6 million people into the

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39 Artem Dekhtyarenko, "Russia creates new DNR-LNR and 'gives back' to Ukraine Donbass", *Apostroph*, 2015, <http://apostrophe.com.ua/article/world/2015-09-16/rossiya-sozdaet-novyie-dnr-lnr-i-otdaet-ukraine-donbass---chastnaya-razvedka-ssha/2265>, (Accessed on 12.08.2017).

40 "Can Russia Afford to Fight Two Wars in Syria And Ukraine?", *International Business Times*, <http://www.ibtimes.com/can-russia-afford-fight-two-wars-syria-ukraine-2198253>, (Accessed on 12.08.2017).

dark with shopkeepers lighting candles to keep their businesses open. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has terminated freight transport to Crimea. While the electricity cut off has again challenged Russia in the region, experts say Russia is unlikely to want to escalate the situation.

Following the Paris terror attacks earlier this month that left at least 130 people dead and Russia's increased airstrikes in Syria, there appeared to be a moment of warming ties with the West. But with the terms of the Minsk peace agreement still not met in Ukraine, EU states keep extending their sanctions against Russia. Coupled with the downing of a Russian plane by Turkey and Turkey's concerns over the human rights situation for Crimean Tatars, the situation has become even more complex. The fact that Russia is involved in multiple conflicts that can bring together Turkey and Ukraine tactically is not in Moscow's interest. According to the data provided, Russia doesn't seem to be able to afford two wars simultaneously in the long run.

## **8. "Hybrid" Aspect of Russian - Ukrainian War**

The victory of Euromaidan revolution transformed Ukraine in a hostile state for Russia, with EU integration claims and a possible NATO membership. Yet, the victory of Euromaidan meant the end of Putin's Eurasian dream, because without Ukraine, it lost its sense. However, Euromaidan was the second popular pro-EU revolution in Ukraine. The first one ended with the victory of Yushchenko, who became the president of Ukraine in 2005. It was the first moment when Ukraine was more or less aggressive to Russia and it claimed EU integration and NATO membership. Pro-Russian leader Viktor Yanukovich became the president of Ukraine in 2010 and the pro-Russian "Party of Regions" had a comfortable majority in Ukrainian Parliament. Putin's bet on pro-Russian economic elites and Russian minorities with anti-western attitudes worked. However, in 2014, this kind of strategy could not be efficient, because of national consensus on EU integration and strong anti-Yanukovich attitudes in Ukraine. When Yanukovich left the country and the Party of Regions disaggregated, Putin lost all possible partners in Ukraine what was the main reason to start a war against it.

Russia resorted to conventional strategies but preferred threatening Ukraine and the western world with conventional warfare instead of using mass conventional units to invade Ukraine or Crimea. Snap exercises became the main methodology to show the muscles of conventional capabilities.<sup>41</sup> To discover Russian hybrid war against Ukraine it is necessary to analyze key Russian moves in the region.

## 9. The Annexation of Crimea

Annexation of Crimea was the first move in this crisis. Beginning in late 2013, a pro-European revolution took hold in Ukraine. In early February 2014, Viktor Yanukovych, the then-Ukrainian president and a strong ally of Vladimir Putin's, was swept from power, being replaced by Petro Poroshenko. With Ukraine slipping from what Putin saw as the Kremlin's orbit, the Russian president's 'little green men' – elite Spetsnaz (Special Purposes Forces) commandos and naval infantry marines, stripped of their insignia but retaining their discipline and professionalism – appeared in Crimea, on 27 February 2014. This marked the beginning of commonly known "hybrid warfare" – covert as well as obvious activities backed up by a disinformation campaign and the start of a process that culminated in the first major land grab in Europe since World War Two.

Use of proxies in new generation war in Russian insight got great importance. Where the state's survival was not at stake the increasing need of securing national interests can be achieved, some unofficial groups' proxy methods provide vital facilities for the attacker.<sup>42</sup>

As the unmarked men captured the Crimean government and parliament buildings, other pro-Russian actors began to claim that Kyiv's new pro-Western leadership were fascist nationalists, representing a significant threat to Russians and Russian speakers. While Ukraine's governance of Crimea was far from perfect – with Kyiv's attention frequently drifting away from the Peninsula, resulting

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41 Mehmet Seyfettin Erol-Şafak Oğuz, "Hybrid Warfare Studies and Russia's Example in Crimea", *Gazi Akademik Bakış*, September 17, 2015, p. 261-277, <http://dergipark.ulakbim.gov.tr/gav/article/viewFile/5000159909/5000144268>, (Accessed on 13.09.2017).

42 *Ibid.*

in high unemployment, low salaries and pensions, and a collapsing infrastructure – this was not so different from many other parts of Ukraine. There was never an oppressive policy towards Russian speakers. The Russian language was furthermore protected by the Constitution of the Autonomous Republic in Ukraine.

That same day, the Supreme Council dissolved the Council of Ministers and appointed Sergey Aksyonov, leader of the minority Russian Unity party, as Prime Minister. The Supreme Council also voted to hold a referendum as to whether Crimea should upgrade its autonomy within Ukraine. Initially set for *25<sup>th</sup> of May* (which coincided with the date on which Kyiv planned to hold elections for a new government), the referendum was soon brought forward to *30<sup>th</sup> of March*.

On 1<sup>st</sup> of March, Aksyonov appealed to Putin for help in ensuring peace on the peninsula.<sup>43</sup> Putin promptly received authorisation from Russia's Federation Council to intervene militarily in Ukraine, "until the normalisation of the socio-political situation in that country."<sup>44</sup> By 2<sup>nd</sup> of March, Russian troops – still operating without insignia – had moved from their naval base in Sevastopol, where the 25,000-strong Black Sea Fleet was headquartered, in order to exercise complete control over Crimea. Days later, on 4 March, Putin claimed that Russia was not considering annexing the peninsula. Instead, he said, "only residents of a given country who have the freedom of will and are in complete safety can and should determine their future."<sup>45</sup>

On 6 March, the Supreme Council announced that it considered Crimea to be part of Russia moved the date of the referendum forward to *16<sup>th</sup> of March*, and changed the referendum so that it would ask a new question: should Crimea accede to Russia, or should Crimea restore its 1992 constitution (which asserted that Crimea is an independent state and not part of Ukraine)? On 16 March 2014, with armed men hovering next

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43 "Ukraine Crisis: Crimea Leader Appeals to Putin for Help", *BBC News*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-26397323>, (Accessed on 12.08.2017).

44 "Ukraine Crisis: Text of Putin's Request to Use Troops", *BBC News*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-26399642>, (Accessed on 12.08.2017).

45 "Putin and Ukraine Press Conference Full Text", *MKRU*, <http://www.mk.ru/politics/article/2014/03/04/993618-putin-i-ukraina-presskonferentsiya-polnyiy-tekst.html>, 4 March 2014, (Accessed on 12.08.2017).

to the ballot boxes, Crimeans voted in the hastily organised, illegal and illegitimate referendum to join Russia with some 96% and participation rate not more than 35% in fact<sup>46</sup>. The Mejlis Of the Crimean Tatar People boycotted the Crimean referendum after Russian military invention in Ukraine and conduct of the referendum as illegal.<sup>47</sup> The international community condemned the referendum as well as the unfree and unfair circumstances under which it took place. The UN General Assembly immediately passed a (non-binding) resolution (68/262) declaring the referendum invalid.

On 18<sup>th</sup> of March, representatives from Crimea and from Russia signed the Treaty on the Accession of the Republic of Crimea to Russia.<sup>48</sup>

While Russia initially denied any military involvement, in the aftermath of the referendum Putin stated that Russian soldiers backed Crimean self-defense units to prevent a conflict. More recently, in a documentary on the annexation, President Putin stated it was all carefully planned, claiming that he personally oversaw the annexation.<sup>49</sup>

Russia resorted to terror tactics to suppress the pro-Ukraine population in Crimea. Pro-Maidan protests in Crimea, especially in Simferopol and Sevastopol, disappeared in one day because of threats and intimidation by the pro-Russian population and especially Russian irregular forces. Pressure, discouragement, threats, and killings resulted in the disappearance of pro-Ukrainian people from the streets. Crimean Tatars have been one of the main targets for the subversion. As Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko stated, several Tatars and pro-Russian activists have been murdered or simply disappeared. Many Tatar leaders have been barred from returning to their homeland.<sup>50</sup>

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46 “Voter Turnout at Pseudo-Referendum in Crimea Was Maximum 30-40 Percent – Mejlis”, *UKRINFORM*, [http://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-politics/1633566-voter\\_turnout\\_at\\_pseudo\\_referendum\\_in\\_crimea\\_was\\_maximum\\_30\\_40\\_percent\\_\\_mejlis\\_318657.html](http://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-politics/1633566-voter_turnout_at_pseudo_referendum_in_crimea_was_maximum_30_40_percent__mejlis_318657.html), (Accessed on 08.09.2017).

47 “Appeal of Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine”, *QTMM*, 2014, <http://qtm.org/новости/4290-обращение-меджлиса-крымскотатарского-народа>, (Accessed on 12.09.2017).

48 “Executive Order Establishing the Ministry of Crimean Affairs and Appointing Oleg Savelyev to the Post of Minister”, *kremlin.ru*, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/acts/6945>, (Accessed on 12.08.2017).

49 Andrey Kondrashov, “Крым. Путь на Родину” (Crimea. The Way Home), [http://russia.tv/brand/show/brand\\_id/59195/](http://russia.tv/brand/show/brand_id/59195/), (Accessed on 12.08.2017).

50 Erol, *ibid.*



Annexing Crimea, Russia almost solved the problem of its naval presence in the Black Sea and of its military base in Sevastopol. 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.<sup>51</sup> It is a net gain from the crisis; however, it is not clear how to sustain a day-to-day military, social and economic activities in Crimea that depend on resources from continental Ukraine. Water, electricity, gas, food, and fuel are imported from Ukraine because Russia has no infrastructure to assure the security of this new region and has no capability to provide for favourable conditions population living in the occupied region. In addition, Crimea is separated from main Russian military capabilities, thus, the peninsula is difficult to defend. The closure of the North Crimean Canal, the main irrigation source for Crimea's interior dry steppe lands, has adversely affected agriculture, with numerous crops failing. The construction of a bridge connecting Crimea to Russia across the Strait of Kerch will bring an economic upturn, although it is not due to be completed before 2019. As part of its efforts to ensure that Crimea's incorporation into Russia would be fast and palatable, the Kremlin spent 243 billion roubles (US\$6.8 billion) in the peninsula, in 2014.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, prices of basic commodities and rent have increased substantially – inflation reached 42.5 percent in 2014<sup>53</sup> – and people's lives have been thrown into chaos.

## 10. Russian Support for “Russian Spring” in Donbas

The second Russian move in this crisis was the support for the uprising in Eastern Ukraine. It started on 15 April, when irregular armed groups seized a couple of cities in Donetsk region. Soon, this uprising escalated into a full-scale war between separatist irregular military forces and Ukrainian army. The causes of the uprising could be considered the desire of Donetsk and Lugansk regions to become federal entities in Ukraine,

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51 Şafak Oğuz, "Russian Hybrid Warfare and Its Implications in the Black Sea", *ANKASAM Bölgesel Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Vol:1, No:1, Mayıs 2017, p. 10.

52 Katya Golubkova, "Factbox - Costs and Benefits from Russia's Annexation of Crimea", *Reuters UK*, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-ukraine-crisis-crimea-costs-factbox-idUKBREA370NY20140408>, (Accessed on 12.08.2017).

53 "Inflation in Russia-Annexed Crimea Hits 42.5 Percent in 2014", *The Moscow Times*, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/article/514424.html>, (Accessed on 12.08.2017).

with their own language and economic policies, as well as with leverage on central government foreign policy. Two pro-Russian separatist republics were proclaimed: Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and Lugansk People's Republic (LPR). However, the myth of federalization lived only a few weeks. Soon, on 24th May, a confederation of DPR and LPR was constituted – the so-called Novorossia (New Russia).<sup>54</sup>

This is a neo-imperial project, advocated by hard-line Eurasianists, like Alexandr Dugin and Alexandr Prokhanov, which should include all territories from Transnistria to Lugansk. In fact, a possible Novorossia confederation could help Russia to solve all security problems in Crimea, because, in this way, a land corridor of Russian-friendly state would be built. In consequence, there is no surprise that Russian citizens with a military background were in key positions of new separatist republics.<sup>55</sup>

It is necessary to pay attention to what kind of separatism was the “Russian Spring” in Eastern Ukraine. Ideologically it has a pro-Russian, anti-Ukrainian and anti-Western appeal. Also, the project of this military uprising was to build Novorossia independent state which should include Transnistria and eight Ukrainian regions: Odessa, Nikolayev, Kherson, Dnepropetrovsk, Zaporozhye, Kharkov, Donetsk and Lugansk. Eventually, this state could assure the security of newly-annexed Crimea and become a buffer zone between Russia and pro-Western Ukraine. So, in order to offer a long-term security solution for Crimea, it was in Russian interest to support the uprising conflict in Eastern Ukraine. However, despite Russian propaganda and some covert operations, no other regions raised against Kiev<sup>56</sup> and Novorossia project<sup>57</sup> failed.

The war in Eastern Ukraine caused additional pressures on Ukrainian economy. According to IMF, Ukrainian GDP decreased by 6,5% in

54 “Russia's Ukraine Strategy: NATO, The Novorossiya Project, Land Bridge?”, [http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=500\\_1431865705#2BkRIR9JVWdxkgAv.99](http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=500_1431865705#2BkRIR9JVWdxkgAv.99), (Accessed on 12.08.2017).

55 Alexander Dugin, “The War in The Donbas is Imposed on Us by Washington and Kiev”, <http://www.novorosinform.org/comments/id/828>, (Accessed on 12.08.2017).

56 “Strelkov: Support Donbass Russia has strengthened its sovereignty”, *Life*, <http://lifefews.ru/news/144448>, (Accessed on 12.08.2017).

57 Andrew Piontkovsky, “The Project “New Russia” Closed: The Following Steps of the Kremlin”, <http://apostrophe.com.ua/article/politics/2015-08-19/proekt-novorossiya-zakryit-sleduyuschieshagi-kremlya/2128>, (Accessed on 12.08.2017).

2014.<sup>58</sup> In addition, because of war, Ukraine became more dependent on Russian energy imports, because all its coal mines were situated in the Donetsk region. As result, for the first time in history, Ukraine had to import coal, especially from Russia, to surpass the deficit on the internal market. Finally, President Poroshenko affirmed that every day of war Ukraine spends 6-7 million dollars. The fall of Ukrainian economy is also Russian net gain from the crisis, because, in mid-term, Ukraine will suffer serious economic problems and will continue to be a weak state. In conclusion of this part, the separatism in Donbas provide three net gains for Russia: it will be the arbiter in all disputes between Kiev and separatist regions, it will have leverages on Ukrainian internal and foreign policy and it will weaken the Ukrainian state that, eventually, could face serious economic problems.

Russia succeeded to establish a couple of comfortable negotiation groups to deal with this crisis such as Normandy 4 and Minsk Group. Concerning participants of these groups excluded USA, Poland and the EU, the negotiations can be considered as a net gain of Putin. These forms isolated Ukraine and allowed Putin the possibility to negotiate the fate of Ukraine directly with Merkel, because the Ukrainian EU path depends on Germany and thus, Kiev will be forced to accept the German formula of the crisis.<sup>59</sup>

The Minsk group was created after first Minsk peace negotiations, on 5 September. It consists of Ukraine, Donetsk and Lugansk separatist republics, OSCE and Russia. It is a standard format of negotiations in CIS regions, because, similar formats were established for the Transnistrian problem, as well as for Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Actually, it is the easiest way to freeze the conflict and not to solve it at all. In this format, Russia plays the role of the arbiter for disputes between Ukraine and separatist, because, it has leveraged on both partners. Also, it is a way to maintain Russian military presence in separatist republics because OSCE lacks capabilities to force Russian army to leave. Of course, this

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58“IMF forecasts reduction of Ukraine's GDP to minus 6.5%”, *UKRINFORM*, [http://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-politics/1715266-imf\\_forecasts\\_reduction\\_of\\_ukraines\\_gdp\\_to\\_minus\\_65\\_326497.html](http://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-politics/1715266-imf_forecasts_reduction_of_ukraines_gdp_to_minus_65_326497.html), (Accessed on 12.08.2017).

59 Velencius, “A new Russian Strategy Towards Ukraine? Policy Memo No: 10”, *Fumn*, [http://fumn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Policy\\_Memo\\_no\\_10\\_BSUF\\_Russian\\_strategy\\_towards\\_Ukraine1.pdf](http://fumn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Policy_Memo_no_10_BSUF_Russian_strategy_towards_Ukraine1.pdf), (Accessed on 12.08.2017).

format will help to solve some low-politics issues and to establish a solid base of dialog between Kiev and separatist regions, but, without Russia, OSCE cannot do important steps to solve the conflict.

Another misreading about Russian “hybrid war” is that it is causally linked with the rising visibility of Russian broadcasting and efforts to shape public opinion globally, including in the West— most notably through the RT (formerly Russia Today) television network and Sputnik International (formerly Voice of Russia) radio. Some fear that because information warfare is part of Russia’s operations against Ukraine, other places where Russia’s broadcasting and messaging can be felt may be future targets for “hybrid war” operations.

Russia has turned information into an instrument of national power and is using it to create space for itself and its interests in the international environment and global public opinion. By sowing doubt, Russian government creates room for maneuver for itself at home and abroad. In Ukraine, this tool of national power has been brought to bear in a targeted manner, but its primary purpose is to instill doubt in Western institutions and sources of information writ large. As Philippe Breedlove, NATO’s Top Military Commander, pointed out, Russia’s information campaign was “the most amazing information warfare blitzkrieg we have ever seen in the history of information warfare”.

## 11. Prospects of The Security Architecture in Russian-Ukrainian Relationships

Hybrid war has become the catchall phrase for the elements of national power Russia is employing directly in Ukraine, but it is a poor descriptor and has already led world analysts and politicians down an unhelpful path. Given current tensions in and around Ukraine, which have resulted in a complete deficit of trust between Russia and its neighbors, fears that Moscow will continue to intervene in its neighborhood are fully understandable. But a domino-like repetition of “hybrid war” is the wrong lens for understanding the problem. Ukraine is not the first instance of a replicable “hybrid war” doctrine, or of a strategy for projecting Russian power in the post-Soviet space and beyond. It is important to understand the combination of tools in Moscow’s toolbox, but the chances that

it could simply repeat a Crimea or a Donbas scenario elsewhere are, fortunately, low.

Russian actions changed the geopolitical situation in the region, thus, this new reality cannot be ignored. Most of all Russian strategies towards Ukraine failed, so, this new reality should be considered as reference points for an emerging strategy.

According to experts' opinion, Russian solution for the Ukrainian crisis has several aspects.<sup>60</sup>

- 1) Russia does not want to annex Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics. These regions are almost destroyed by several months of the war; therefore, there is no sense to annex them. However, there is a reason to maintain them in Ukraine, because, these regions will amplify its economic and social problems. Also, these regions do not solve the problem of Crimea that is still separated from Russian heartland and is surrounded by Ukrainian regions. There is no sense to continue their territorial expansion because neighbor regions do not share separatist attitudes. Only a full-scale Russian invasion could build a land corridor to Crimea, but this is a scenario that Russia wants to avoid because there are other diplomatic means to alleviate the vulnerability of Crimea.
- 2) Russia will protect by all means the economic and military autonomy of Donetsk and Lugansk. But in order to protect them, Russia must have access to these regions, thus, separatists must hold the control of Ukrainian-Russian border. Consequently, Russian will try to assure a solution that will preserve military autonomy of these regions. Also, their survival depends on Russian army, so Russia will seek to formalize its military presence, according to the international law. The option of a joint peacekeeping operation, led by Russia, will be pushed, because, all other options will jeopardize Russian military presence on Ukrainian territory. In addition, the responsibility of reconstruction of the region will be passed to Ukraine, because it will accelerate the fall of the Ukrainian economy.

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

- 3) Russia will seek to avoid direct military invasion but will try to assure military equilibrium between Kiev and separatists. Russia started to introduce its army in Ukraine when separatist forces were almost destroyed. Also, it gradually enhanced its presence in the region to equilibrate the rising Ukrainian military potential.

Russia wants to assure the survival of separatist republics and this is the reason why it will try to convince Ukraine to stop the modernization of its army and to withdraw its troops from the frontline in a certain dimension. In long run, Russia will try to undermine all Kiev efforts to reform their army, because, Russia does not need a military strong Ukraine that could be a threat. However, if the survival of Donetsk and Lugansk republics will be seriously threatened, Russia may use ultima ratio – direct invasion. It is the last resort for this conflict, because, any military invasion in Ukraine will put all responsibility to manage and finance these regions on Russia. Finally, Russia will seek to preserve the existing format of negotiation because, they will allow to Moscow the possibility to control Ukrainian rapprochement with the EU, will exclude unfriendly states from negotiation and will create possibilities to negotiate the fate of Ukraine only with Germany, that is considered by Putin a friendly state.

Russian behavior in Ukrainian crisis could be considered irrational, because, its net gains are less valuable than loses. Since the annexation of Crimea, the geopolitical reality of Eastern Europe changed, so, Russian Eurasian dream for Ukraine could not be realized. Thus, paying attention to Russian last moves can predict which scenario Russia can apply to achieve its ambitious but irrational goals. Russia needs a weak Ukraine, which would not be able to defend itself, will not be able to modernize its economy, will be vulnerable to Russian pressures on internal and foreign policy and will not be able to solve the conflict in Donbas. Also, Russia wants to negotiate the fate of Ukraine directly with Western leaders manipulating with possible escalating of current conflicts so that it escapes further isolation in a world political map.

## 12. Conclusion

The theories about so-called hybrid warfare have become a background for a number of articles in the military periodicals around the world over the last few years since the term was adopted into the military debate.

Mark Hoffmann, McCuen, Russell Glen, Williamson Murray, Peter Mansoor and other western scientists prepared fundamental works that provided the critical background for hybrid war concept. In line with Western developments, Russian military thinkers have also studied the changes taking place in the nature of warfare in depth, and the emergence of new forms of combat.

Hybrid war has become the catchall phrase for the elements of national power Russia is employing directly against Ukraine, Ukraine is not the first instance of a replicable “hybrid war” doctrine, or of a strategy for projecting Russian power in the post-Soviet space and beyond. Georgia, Azerbaijan, Moldova have already become victims of Russian hybrid experiments.

Russia’s annexation of Crimea is a stark reminder of the Kremlin’s long-established role in destabilising its neighbourhood. From Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia to Transnistria in Moldova, the Kremlin has used separatist conflicts as engines for corruption and criminality, and to block progress in reform-minded countries on Russia’s periphery. The same tactics are visible in Crimea: the Kremlin has used the annexation to deprive Ukraine of its territorial integrity, to prevent it from joining Western institutions, and to distract it from successfully pursuing reforms.

Nevertheless, taking into consideration domestic socio-economic and political situation and worlds uncompromising reaction on hybrid wars conducted, by Russia, the ambitions of its leadership probably will be limited to attempts to avoid global isolation and to ensure stability inside of the country.

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