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REDEFINING 21ST CENTURY WARFARE: RUSSIA'S HYBRID WARFARE AGAINST UKRAINE

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Exercise Solo Flight

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EXERCISE *SOLO FLIGHT* – EXERCICE *SOLO FLIGHT*

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WARFARE AGAINST UKRAINE**

Maj S.M. Davies

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INTRODUCTION

We believe Russia is a great empire that other powers want to tear away parts from. We need to restore our power, occupy lost lands, grab Crimea from the Ukrainians.

– *Russian citizen, Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible*

In its quest to be a resurgent great power, since the rise and reign of President Vladimir Putin, Russia's mounting hostility against the West has garnered the attention of the international community. A reinvigorated nationalistic fervour that seeks to regain lost Soviet territory coupled with the pursuit to be unfettered from American hegemonic influence has characterized the Federation and has undoubtedly shaped Russia's actions toward Europe, perhaps most vividly in 2014 against Eastern Ukraine. Russia's bold military incursion into a sovereign state and subsequent annexation of Crimea left the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European Union (EU) countries reeling from shock while the citizens of Ukraine remained largely helpless against a militarily superior force. How could such a colossal event have happened in the heart post-Cold War Europe, perpetrated by a country who *lost* the Cold War?

Russia has always posed a formidable conventional military threat to the West, yet the means by which Russia exerts itself increasingly aligns not with a traditional form of conventional warfare in order to secure its strategic objectives, but rather, with a different form of warfare: *hybrid* warfare. Rooted in the annals of past civilizations but certainly modified to the modern conflicts of the 21st century, Russia's brand of non-linear warfare is not a new concept nor is it void of former Soviet influence. However, this style of warfare has indeed been taken to a new level, most aptly characterized by an amalgamation of perpetual, conscious disinformation and propaganda in order to confuse, intimidate and dislocate the adversary with augmentation by

cyberattacks, state-controlled media and Russia's "little green men."¹ This is precisely the type of warfare that was unleashed on the people of Ukraine during what has become known as "the Ukrainian crisis."

This paper will demonstrate that Russia's effective employment of hybrid warfare against Ukraine directly led to the annexation of Crimea in 2014. The first section will focus on defining and examining the origins of hybrid warfare before transitioning into the second part of the paper which will explore the key tenets of hybrid warfare and the means by which Russia successfully annexed Crimea. This paper will then examine the root causes behind Russia's hybrid warfare in Eastern Ukraine in order to fully grasp the implications and proposed response to Russia's hybrid warfare against Ukraine, Europe and the West.

"OLD WINE IN A NEW BOTTLE?" – DEFINING HYBRID WARFARE

'Friends,' he implored in Vedomosti, 'history repeats itself.'

– *Andrei Zubov, a prominent Russian historian fired from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations for drawing a parallel between the annexation of Crimea to Hitler's Anschluss in Austria in 1938.*

That which has been is that which will be, and that which has been done is that which will be done. So there is nothing new under the sun.

– *Ecclesiastes 1:9*

Russia's invasion into Eastern Ukraine in February 2014 and subsequent annexation of Crimea shortly thereafter was described by NATO SACEUR,² General Phillip Breedlove, as "the most amazing information warfare blitzkrieg we have ever seen

in the history of information warfare."³ Crimea had been taken "without firing a shot"⁴ leaving the West staggering in disbelief over how Putin had managed to outmanoeuvre his

¹ A reference to armed and equipped Russian special forces and agents who operated in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea. Merle Maigre, "Nothing New In Hybrid Warfare: The Estonian Experience and Recommendations for NATO," *Foreign Policy Program*, February 2015, 3.

² Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR)

opponents. As theorists and staffers scrambled for answers, military analysts and scholars emerged with an explanation: Russia was now employing not merely a conventional form of warfare, nor strictly an irregular form of warfare, but rather a blend of the two – a hybrid form of warfare. The term “hybrid warfare” (a synonym for “non-linear warfare,” coined by Putin’s advisor, Vladislav Surkov in March 2014⁵) initiated an onslaught of talk over Russia’s “new” military strategy. After all, the term itself – “hybrid warfare” – was not common military lexicon in the West and was only recently introduced into official publications having been previously dismissed as a non-doctrinal concept by military planners.⁶

Hybrid warfare is used commonly in today’s military vernacular to describe threats that operate outside of a standard, symmetric military construct. But what exactly *is* hybrid warfare? United States Marine Corps (USMC) Lieutenant-Colonel (Retired) Frank G. Hoffman, a leading expert in modern conflict, defines hybrid warfare as:

...any enemy that uses simultaneous and adaptive employment of a complex combination of conventional weapons, irregular warfare, terrorism and criminal behaviour in the battlespace to achieve political objectives. Hybrid wars blend the lethality of the state conflict with the fanatical and protracted fervour of irregular warfare.⁷

Amplifying on Hoffman’s definition, Dr. Woo Pyung-Kyun, author and research professor at South Korea’s Hanyang University, contends that “hybrid warfare occurs in all levels of war,

³ Scott E. McIntosh, “Kyiv, International Institutions, and the Russian People: Three Aspects of Russia’s Current Information Campaign in Ukraine,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 2015, 299.

⁴ Timothy Thomas, “Russia’s Military Strategy and Ukraine: Indirect, Asymmetric and Putin-Led,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 2015, 453.

⁵ Merle Maigre, “Nothing New In Hybrid Warfare: The Estonian Experience and Recommendations for NATO,” *Foreign Policy Program*, February 2015, 2.

⁶ Craisor-Constantin Ionita, “Is Hybrid Warfare Something New?” *Security and Military Strategy*, Strategic Impact No. 4, 2014, 64.

⁷ Frank Hoffman, “Hybrid Warfare and Challenges,” *JFQ Magazine*, Issue 52, 1st Quarter 2009, 35.

ranging from tactical, operational and strategic across the full spectrum of conflict.”⁸ NATO’s definition slightly varies:

A hybrid threat is one posed by any current or potential adversary, including state, non-state and terrorists, with the ability, whether demonstrated or likely, to simultaneously employ conventional and non-conventional means adaptively, in pursuit of their objectives.⁹

Differentiated though not exclusive from strict forms of the essential components of non-linear warfare – conventional warfare,¹⁰ irregular warfare,¹¹ and informational warfare¹² respectively – hybrid warfare is boundary-less fusion of all three forms of warfare across the full spectrum of conflict, incorporating all facets of tactics, techniques and procedures at its disposal in order to achieve its intended political aims. It blurs the traditional lines of war¹³ by employing methods which are predominantly not politically or ethically palatable to the West in modern times. These methods – the use of “plausible deniability” coupled with conscious disinformation (blatant deception); the use of conventional weapons coupled with state and/or non-state actors, including terrorist and/or criminal parties, to carry out tasks; and, the use of media and

⁸ Woo Pyung-Kyun, “The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis: Some Characteristics and Implications,” *The Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, Vol.27, No.3, September 2015, 384.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Also known as “classical warfare” or “regular warfare”, conventional warfare is defined as “a form of warfare conducted by using conventional weapons and battlefield tactics between two or more states in open confrontation. The forces on each side are well-defined, and fight using weapons that primarily target the opponent’s military. It is normally fought using conventional weapons, and not with chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conventional_warfare

¹¹ Also known as “asymmetric warfare” or “unconventional warfare”, irregular warfare is defined as “warfare in which one or more combatants are irregular military rather than regular forces. Irregular warfare favors indirect and asymmetric warfare approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capabilities, in order to erode the adversary’s power, influence, and will.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irregular_warfare

¹² Martin C. Libicki asserts that information warfare encompasses the following activities: command and control warfare; intelligence-based warfare; electronic warfare; psychological warfare; hacker warfare (also known as computer network operations); economic information warfare; and cyber warfare. Martin C. Libicki, *Conquest in Cyberspace: National Security and Information Warfare* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 16.

¹³ Foreign and defence policy writer for the Smith Richardson Foundation, Nadia Schadlow states: “Hybrid warfare is a term that [seeks] to capture the blurring and blending of previously separate categories of conflict. It uses a blend of military, economic, diplomatic, criminal, and informational means to achieve desired political goals.” Nadia Schadlow, “The Problem With Hybrid Warfare,” *War On The Rocks*, 2 April 2015, <http://warontherocks.com/2015/04/the-problem-with-hybrid-warfare/>, accessed May 5, 2016.

cyberspace to intimidate, destroy, shape and spread propaganda, to name a few – can vary, are unpredictable and do not conform to international law.¹⁴

After Russia had successfully invaded another sovereign country – the second time in six years (Georgia falling prey in 2008) – and then annexed a chunk of it, talk of a “new” type of warfare came to the fore. Moreover, the very nature of war came under close scrutiny given Russia’s unorthodox approach toward Crimea which had been initially opened as a debate immediately following 9/11, and more specifically, during the prolific use of hybrid warfare tactics waged by Hezbollah against Israel during the Second Lebanon War.¹⁵ Addressing the discussions surrounding the ostensible changing nature of war, USMC General James Mattis, on the cusp of the Iraq War in 2004, made this astute observation:

Ultimately, a real understanding of history means that we face nothing new under the sun. For all the “Fourth Generation of War” intellectuals running around today saying that the nature of war has fundamentally changed, the tactics are wholly new... I must respectfully say, “Not really.” Alexander the Great would not be in the least bit perplexed by the enemy that we face right now in Iraq, and our leaders going into this fight do their troops a disservice by not studying the men who have gone before us.¹⁶

Dr. Pyung-Kyun concurs: “Hybrid war does not change the nature of war, it merely changes the way forces engage in its conduct. However it is waged, war is war.”¹⁷ Nevertheless, distinctions must be made. Though Mattis argues that the *nature* of war has not changed since time immemorial, Clausewitz maintains that the *kind* of warfare has: “Every age has its own kind of

¹⁴ Dr. Pyung-Kyun states succinctly: “International law was ineffective against Russia’s invasion of Crimea and military intervention in Eastern Ukraine.” Woo Pyung-Kyun, “The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis: Some Characteristics and Implications,” *The Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, Vol.27, No.3, September 2015, 396.

¹⁵ Frank Hoffman, “Hybrid Warfare and Challenges,” *JFQ Magazine*, Issue 52, 1st Quarter 2009, 37.

¹⁶ Geoffrey Ingersoll, “General James Mattis Email,” *Business Insider Military & Defence*, May 9, 2013, last accessed May 9, 2016, <http://www.businessinsider.com/viral-james-mattis-email-reading-marines-2013-5>

¹⁷ Woo Pyung-Kyun, “The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis: Some Characteristics and Implications,” *The Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, Vol.27, No.3, September 2015, 384.

war, its own limiting conditions, and its own peculiar preconceptions.”¹⁸ Evidently, history has vindicated both Generals in their assessments. In the 1920s, the Soviet military developed *maskirovka* (“masked warfare”) based on deception and concealment of identity. The apple has evidently not fallen far from the tree as Russia’s employment of the “little green men” (or “polite people” – a euphemism used by Putin for Russian special forces operating in Crimea¹⁹) in Eastern Ukraine is indicative of the fact that hybrid warfare is not a new theory or practice. History is replete with other examples²⁰ of hybrid warfare of various shapes and sizes, but the critical difference in today’s hybrid threats according to Dr. Pyung-Kyun is the inclusion of hybrid actors and cyberspace thereby increasing the complexity already inherent in asymmetric conflict.²¹

Conversely, Hoffman contends that “the most distinctive change in the character of modern war is the blurred or blended nature of combat. We do not face a widening number of distinct challenges but their *convergence* into hybrid wars.”²² As an increasing number of military analysts, experts in the field of modern warfare and scholars believe that “the boundaries between regular and irregular warfare are blurring,”²³ how much more should Clausewitzian uncertainties of war (“frictions”, in his magnum opus *On War*), apply when the blurring of lines between conventional and irregular warfare are the norm, not the exception? Indeed, the fog of war just became foggier.

¹⁸ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton University Press, 1976), 593.

¹⁹ Merle Maigre, “Nothing New In Hybrid Warfare: The Estonian Experience and Recommendations for NATO,” *Foreign Policy Program*, February 2015, 3.

²⁰ Maigre and Hoffman cite the following examples: Mongol empire, American Revolution, Spanish Civil War, Franco-Prussian War, Anglo-Boer War, and Vietnam War.

²¹ Woo Pyung-Kyun, “The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis: Some Characteristics and Implications,” *The Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, Vol.27, No.3, September 2015, 385.

²² Frank Hoffman, “Hybrid Warfare and Challenges,” *JFQ Magazine*, Issue 52, 1st Quarter 2009, 37.

²³ *Ibid.*, 39.

Putin's famous 2007 Munich Speech²⁴ was the moment Russia turned a corner. Long recognizing the efficacy of non-linear warfare, the Kremlin has re-institutionalized this type of thinking into their military, not as a model to be strictly followed but as a "peculiar logic"²⁵ characterized by an indirect, remote influence on an adversary rather than the classical approach to warfare. Known as the "Gerasimov doctrine," Valeriy Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of Russia's Armed Forces (credited with championing the resurgence of hybrid warfare in the Russian military) stated that "wars are now not even declared, but having begun, are not going according to a pattern we are accustomed to."²⁶

Some, however, contend that this style of hybrid warfare is new. Colonel Craisor-Constantin Ionita, Romanian General Staff Officer who also holds a doctorate in Military Sciences claims:

Hybrid warfare theory [is] a new approach of unconventionality... in which states or groups of non-state actors could reach their interests and strategic objectives by blending a variety of tactics and technologies in an original way to crash modern Westernized Armed Forces.²⁷

Conversely, Merle Maigre, security policy advisor to the president of Estonia, claims that Russia's non-linear warfare is "not new, nor is it a unique strategy to the Russian military."²⁸ Pyung-Kyun buttresses Maigre's assertion stating that "hybrid war is as old as war in many ways, yet technology and globalization have transformed parts of hybrid war in the 21st

²⁴ Putin's Munich Speech outlined that Russia would no longer tolerate an American unipolar model of international relations and that the Federation would pursue its own foreign policy interests. Maria Snegovaya, "Putin's Information War In Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia's Hybrid Warfare," *Russia Report I*, September 2015, 9.

²⁵ Timothy Thomas, "Russia's Military Strategy and Ukraine: Indirect, Asymmetric and Putin-Led," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 2015, 453.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Craisor-Constantin Ionita, "Is Hybrid Warfare Something New?" *Security and Military Strategy*, Strategic Impact No. 4, 2014, 62.

²⁸ Merle Maigre, "Nothing New In Hybrid Warfare: The Estonian Experience and Recommendations for NATO," *Foreign Policy Program*, February 2015, 4.

century.”²⁹ He goes on to say that “the rise of hybrid warfare does not represent the end of traditional or conventional warfare,”³⁰ a belief that is affirmed by many senior Western military leaders.³¹

Hybrid warfare may in fact be “old wine in a new bottle,”³² as one writer put it, but good wine does get better – or in Russia’s case, more lethal – with age. Russia’s Soviet-style hybrid warfare has proven to be a good wine, inflicting intoxicating (debilitating) effects on its enemies who are forced drink the bottle down to its very last dregs.

A THREE-PRONGED APPROACH: HOW RUSSIA ANNEXED CRIMEA

The Russians were the adversary who dropped the sword and picked up the club.

– Tolstoy, *War and Peace*

Truth is treason in the empire of lies.

– George Orwell, *1984*

This section will examine the three means by which Russia employed a form of hybrid warfare *blitzkrieg* effectively against Eastern Ukraine and Crimea.³³

The fall of pro-Russian Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich and his removal from power at the end of February 2014 was the watershed moment in the Ukrainian crisis. Faced with

²⁹ Woo Pyung-Kyun, “The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis: Some Characteristics and Implications,” *The Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, Vol.27, No.3, September 2015, 384.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 385.

³¹ General Jonathan Vance, Chief of Defence Staff of the Canadian Armed Forces, referring to the increasing proclivity of state and non-state actors to acquire and employ conventional weapons such as small arms, tanks and artillery mixed with unconventional means such as chemical weapons, stated “conventional warfare is on the rise.” Jonathan Vance, “Chief of the Defence Staff Vision and Priorities for the Canadian Armed Forces,” (address to C.D. Howe Institute, Toronto, ON, 4 February 2016), with permission.

³² Harlan Ullman, “Hybrid War: Old Wine In A New Bottle?” *Atlantic Council*, March 19, 2015, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/articles/hybrid-war-old-wine-in-a-new-bottle>

³³ It is important to note that Russia’s triumvirate of hybrid tactics – information warfare, irregular warfare and conventional warfare – must not be examined in isolation as each entity shares a synergetic relationship with one another and therefore must be examined through a holistic lens.

a long-standing corrupt government and a waning economy, the people of Ukraine had renewed hopes that a new Ukrainian government would pursue closer ties with the EU and NATO, curb Russian influence in the region, institute democratic reform and preserve national unity.³⁴ Taking a \$15 billion bailout³⁵ from Russia was seen by Ukrainians as the final straw. Akin to a Hitler-Mussolini relationship,³⁶ Ukrainians well-understood Putin to be *Stromboli* the puppet master pulling the strings of Yanukovych's every move. In protest, Ukrainians took to the streets of Kyiv's Maidan Square. Russia, still preoccupied with hosting the Sochi Winter Olympic Games, was faced with the perfect storm. Threatened by what it saw as Western encroachment on its borders and a ploy to allure a former Soviet territory into closer political, economic and military alliance with Europe, in Putin's mind Russia was fully justified in launching a hybrid warfare campaign against Eastern Ukraine, and in particular, Crimea. After all, Putin had warned Yanukovych – “You will have anarchy. There will be chaos in the capital”³⁷ – and could not allow this opportunity to slip away. With the perfect smokescreen in place, and significant Russia military forces already pre-staged to provide vital security for Sochi, Russia's “little green men” had already been deployed to Kyiv prior to the conclusion of the Olympic Games. Violence erupted in what became known as the “Euromaidan movement” which became the catalyst for the ensuing months of Russian war cloaked in secrecy against Ukraine, effectively violating the 1994 Budapest Memorandum and Minsk accords.³⁸

³⁴ Alexandra Talvan, “Particularities In Developing Hybrid War In Ukraine,” *National Defence University*, Bucharest, 2015, 181.

³⁵ Steven Lee Myers, *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin* (New York: Alfred A.Knopf, 2015), 457.

³⁶ It is not entirely uncommon for comparisons between Vladimir Putin and Adolph Hitler to be made. Paul Johnson, “Is Vladimir Putin Another Adolph Hitler?” *Forbes*, May 5, 2014, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/currentevents/2014/04/16/is-vladimir-putin-another-adolf-hitler/#7b26e4c7709f>

³⁷ Steven Lee Myers, *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin* (New York: Alfred A.Knopf, 2015), 458.

³⁸ Russia's violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty is a clear breach of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum which stipulated security assurances against threats or force against Ukraine in exchange for non-

The Ukrainian crisis was dubbed as “the greatest geopolitical change in the region of Eurasia since the collapse of the Soviet Union”³⁹ – an interesting observation since Putin had once stated that the fall of the Soviet Union was “the greatest geopolitical disaster of the 20th century.”⁴⁰ As one author put it, “the bear was back and the bear was hungry.”⁴¹

Informational Warfare

The most critical component of Russia’s hybrid warfare – and arguably the most insidious – is what the Russians call “reflexive control,” an informational warfare⁴² tactic that “causes a stronger adversary voluntarily to choose the actions most advantageous to Russian objectives by shaping the adversary’s perceptions of the situation decisively.”⁴³ Maria Snegovaya, PhD candidate at Columbia University and contributor to the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), incisively points out the utility of Russia’s reflexive control tactics:

It plays on the reluctance of Western leaders...to involve themselves in conflict by surrounding the conflict with confusion and controversy. Like a good judo move, it works best when it helps push the adversary in a direction in which he wanted to go in the first place. In the case of Ukraine, the West prefers inaction, and Russia’s information operations have provided support to the policy of inaction.⁴⁴

proliferation of nuclear weapons. DW, “Ukraine’s Forgotten Security Guarantee: The Budapest Memorandum,” accessed 4 January 2016, <http://www.dw.com/en/ukraines-forgotten-security-guarantee-the-budapest-memorandum/a-18111097>. The Minsk accords were also violated which were agreed upon ceasefires along the border between Russia and Ukraine. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minsk_II

³⁹ Woo Pyung-Kyun, “The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis: Some Characteristics and Implications,” *The Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, Vol.27, No.3, September 2015, 386.

⁴⁰ Walter Laqueur, *Putinism: Russia And Its Future With The West* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2015), 224.

⁴¹ Garry Kasparov, *Winter Is Coming: Why Vladimir Putin and the Enemies of the Free World Must Be Stopped* (New York: Public Affairs, 2015), 202.

⁴² Martin C. Libicki asserts that information warfare encompasses the following activities: command and control warfare; intelligence-based warfare; electronic warfare; psychological warfare; hacker warfare (also known as computer network operations); economic information warfare; and cyberwarfare. Martin C. Libicki, *Conquest in Cyberspace: National Security and Information Warfare* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 16.

⁴³ Maria Snegovaya, “Putin’s Information War In Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia’s Hybrid Warfare,” *Russia Report I*, September 2015, 7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

If reflexive control is the *modus operandi* within Russia's operational design hybrid warfare campaign, then Snegovaya's description of the classic Soviet "4D approach" – dismiss, distort, distract, dismay⁴⁵ – are its lines of operation. Shaping perceptions is the ultimate goal. The Kremlin's aggressive information warfare against Ukraine, the West, and even its own citizens, in order to provide "conscious disinformation" (a euphemism for flat out deception and bold-faced lies), and if caught in the act, resorting to "plausible deniability" when the truth emerges, is the foundation for all the subsets of informational warfare. In other words:

The hallmarks of non-linear warfare are operational confusion, mistaken identity, and a sense of brittleness and crisis. Russia has actually mastered psychological warfare...and is using such tools to wage its campaign... The core approach, tactic-like deception in hybrid war, is as old as war.⁴⁶

If "all warfare is based on deception"⁴⁷ as the great military theorist Sun Tzu famously said, then Putin's motto must be "all warfare is *maskirovka*".

Through state-controlled media, Russia employed its multi-hundred million dollar propaganda machine⁴⁸ by repeatedly stating that ethnic Russians in Crimea were continually oppressed by extremist Ukrainian "terrorists, Russophobes and Fascists"⁴⁹ without bona fide evidence. As the conflict progressed, Putin condemned Ukrainian authorities for "sending men to the frontlines as cannon fodder"⁵⁰ despite the fact that it was *Russian* troops (and tanks) who initiated hostilities by illegally crossing an internationally recognized border. When confronted at

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴⁶ Woo Pyung-Kyun, "The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis: Some Characteristics and Implications," *The Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, Vol.27, No.3, September 2015, 390.

⁴⁷ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 41.

⁴⁸ Russia Today, the Federation's media giant, is assessed to be a \$400 million operation. Scott E. McIntosh, "Kyiv, International Institutions, and the Russian People: Three Aspects of Russia's Current Information Campaign in Ukraine," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 2015, 300.

⁴⁹ Woo Pyung-Kyun, "The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis: Some Characteristics and Implications," *The Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, Vol.27, No.3, September 2015, 387.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 388.

the G20 by then Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper to “get out of Ukraine,”⁵¹ Putin quipped “That’s impossible because we are not there.”⁵² Out of the other side of Putin's mouth, however, was an aggressive narrative justifying Russia's actions which was pumped at a steady-state through the Kremlin's mass media, effectively inoculating and earning the favour of 84% of ethnic Russians in Crimea.⁵³

Using another arrow from the quiver of hybrid tactics, the Kremlin launched cyberattacks aimed at siphoning data from Ukrainian government networks containing the Russian malware “Snake” or “Uroburos” were launched against Ukraine in order to intensify the information war.⁵⁴ Well-versed in this practice and having shut down Estonia’s government and banking institutions in 2007, this was old-hat and politically unproblematic to do to another country that was viewed as not even being a state.⁵⁵ Russia’s weapons in information warfare are speed and pretense. In information warfare, the player who fires the first shot across the bow in order to spread obfuscation and discredit the opponent normally wins. Such was the case on July 17, 2014 when a civilian airliner – Malaysian Flight 17 – was shot down over Ukraine killing all 298 people on board.⁵⁶ The Dutch investigation confirmed a Russian 9K37 Buk surface-to-air missile to be the cause,⁵⁷ but this did not stop Russia's Ministry of Defence from reporting another story.

⁵¹Canadian Press, "Stephen Harper At G20 Tells Vladimir Putin To Get Out Of Ukraine," *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*, November 15, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/stephen-harper-at-g20-tells-vladimir-putin-to-get-out-of-ukraine-1.2836382>

⁵² *Ibid.* Months later when Putin did admit to having troops in Crimea, he blamed the US for inciting riots in Kyiv and then stated that the safety and security of ethnic Russians in Ukraine was the responsibility of Russia.

⁵³ Alexandra Talvan, “Particularities In Developing Hybrid War In Ukraine,” *National Defence University*, Bucharest, 2015, 182.

⁵⁴ Woo Pyung-Kyun, “The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis: Some Characteristics and Implications,” *The Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, Vol.27, No.3, September 2015, 388.

⁵⁵ In 2008 at the NATO Summit in Bucharest, Putin was quoted in saying “Ukraine is not even a state!” Heidi Reisinger and Alexander Golt, "Russia's Hybrid Warfare: Waging War Below the Radar of Traditional Collective Defence," *Research Paper*, NATO Defence College, Rome, No.105, November 2014, 1.

⁵⁶ Steven Lee Myers, *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin* (New York: Alfred A.Knopf, 2015), 472.

⁵⁷ "Crash Course", *The Economist*, 17 October 2015, 58.

This "plausible deniability" is beyond ridiculous in light of hard evidence to the contrary, but the alternative is unthinkable in an empire of lies.⁵⁸

Even when Crimea was annexed illegally through a slipshod "referendum" which did not meet international standards, Russia declared that it was "the will of the people in Crimea."⁵⁹ The West, however, found it difficult to counter Russia's pre-emptive narrative. The Kremlin had indeed shot first: by strategically planting these "polite people" as well as pro-Russian separatists into Crimea in order to skew the actual reality within Ukraine, as well as feigning legality by conducting a mock referendum, Russia was not in the least bit concerned with the means since the ends were achieved.

Today Moscow continues to fund Western think-tanks, media outlets and full-time media trolls to influence opinion of Russia's actions in Ukraine.⁶⁰ Gaining traction within the international community, Jean-Marie Le Pen of France's National Front said "Mr. Putin hasn't made a single mistake"⁶¹ and former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt stated that Putin's actions in Crimea were "absolutely understandable."⁶² According to *Foreign Affairs*, the U.S. and its European allies are chiefly to blame for Russia's incursion into Crimea as a result of NATO

⁵⁸ Brave individuals who told the truth were poisoned, shot or disappeared. Some of the more high profile victims include: Alexander Litvinenko (former KGB operative and Russian whistleblower who was poisoned with a radioactive isotope); Anna Politkovskaya (Russian journalist on the Chechen conflict who was shot to death in her apartment); and, Boris Nemtsov (former deputy Prime Minister to Yeltsin and Russian statesman who was shot to death near the Red Square, in sight of the Kremlin). Steven Lee Myers, *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015), 304, 478.

⁵⁹ Heidi Reisinger and Alexander Golt, "Russia's Hybrid Warfare: Waging War Below the Radar of Traditional Collective Defence," *Research Paper*, NATO Defence College, Rome, No.105, November 2014, 3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 7. "In an interview in 2013, Russia Today editor-in-chief Margarita Simonyan made clear that objectivity was never her goal...In peacetime, an international channel will not absolutely necessary. But in war times, it can be crucial. An Army is also not set up a week before the war begins." Another example is the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a prominent New York-based think tank is supported extensively by the Kremlin in order to discredit Western retaliation in the form of sanctions against Russia. James Kirchick, "How a US Think Tank Fell For Putin," *The Daily Beast*, July 27, 2015, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/07/27/how-a-u-s-think-tank-fell-for-putin.html>

⁶¹ Timothy Thomas, "Russia's Military Strategy and Ukraine: Indirect, Asymmetric and Putin-Led," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 2015, 449.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 450.

expansion.⁶³ These are but a few examples of how Russia's information warfare has brilliantly created a cacophony of opinions, effectively discrediting Western aggression against the real aggressor – Russia.

Irregular Warfare

Inextricably linked to Russia's information warfare is their engagement in asymmetric, indirect warfare. There were predominantly three groups Moscow used to overwhelm Crimea. The first group were Russian *Spetsnaz* who deployed by the thousands into Eastern Ukraine with no identifiable military insignia, though retaining military discipline and professionalism of special forces. Armed with Russian weapons and equipment, these "little green men" seized key administrative (government) buildings, recruited and rallied pro-Russian locals to incite violence and instability.⁶⁴ Capitalizing on *la propagande par le fait* from previous atrocities (kidnappings, torture and murder) committed in the Donetsk and Donbass regions, these (so-called) "polite people" expertly worked alongside a pro-Russian executive authority under the protection of occupying Russian forces to facilitate a fraudulent referendum⁶⁵ for the annexation of Crimea which did not even come close to meeting international standards.

The second key element for Russia's irregular warfare was the use of the Cossacks⁶⁶ – a feared caste of warriors renowned for their military prowess – have played an instrumental role in the occupation of Crimea. Affiliated groups such as the Wolves' Hundred and Chechen

⁶³ John J. Mearsheimer, "Why The Ukraine Crisis Is The West's Fault," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2014 issue, last accessed May 9, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault>

⁶⁴ According to Committee on Foreign Affairs conducted on May 8, 2014 in the House of Representatives, those responsible for inciting violence included individuals whose papers indicated they came from Transnistria and Russia. Woo Pyung-Kyun, "The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis: Some Characteristics and Implications," *The Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, Vol.27, No.3, September 2015, 390.

⁶⁵ According to Foreign Policy Initiative Fact Sheet, on March 16, 2014, 95.5% of Crimeans voted to join Russia. <http://www.foreignpolicyi.org/content/fpi-fact-sheet-timeline-russian-aggression-ukraine-and-western-response>

⁶⁶ The ethnic origins of the Cossacks are disputed, and so there are both Ukrainian Cossacks and Russian Cossacks. Wikipedia, last accessed May 7, 2016, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cossacks>

fighters, experienced from Russia's invasion into Georgia in 2008 and Putin's hired thugs for the past decade,⁶⁷ were also utilized irregular warriors in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine.

Lastly, Russia employed a hodge-podge of criminals, thugs and the Berkut riot police (corrupt Ukrainian police officers who were responsible for at least 100 civilian deaths during the Euromaidan protests in 2014) dubbed "self-defence forces."⁶⁸ Armed with AK-47s and red arm bands, this group scoured Kyiv's streets wreaking havoc as well flexing its roguish muscle in Crimea where the situation was fertile for anarchy. Tolstoy was right: Moscow did prefer the club over the sword. The latter, a precision weapon which requires a high degree of training and skill to wield effectively, was exchanged for the former, a versatile, unsophisticated weapon conducive to irregular warfare. Of course, whether the agents themselves were asked for their identity by Ukrainian authorities or whether Moscow was prompted for an explanation for a surge of Russian forces across the border, the first rule of hybrid warfare was executed from the Soviet playbook: deny and lie.

Conventional Warfare

The Russian bear has always placed a premium on its military might. Stalin's Red Army remains a proud symbol in Putin's "new Russian idea"⁶⁹ and Russia's military sphere of influence is unquestionably far-reaching. Dwarfed only by the U.S. (\$640 billion) and China (\$188 billion), Russia's military budget has more than doubled over the last decade under Putin's leadership, coming in at just under \$90 billion in 2013.⁷⁰ Russia's arsenal – 5,000 strategic

⁶⁷ Woo Pyung-Kyun, "The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis: Some Characteristics and Implications," *The Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, Vol.27, No.3, September 2015, 391.

⁶⁸ Mark Galeotti, "Crime and Crimea: Criminals as Allies and Agents," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, November 3, 2014, <http://www.rferl.org/content/crimea-crime-criminals-as-agents-allies/26671923.html>

⁶⁹ The "new Russian idea" is characterized by increased governmental control, an aggressive posture toward the West and a resurgence of Russian national identity as a great power. Walter Laqueur, *Putinism: Russia And Its Future With The West* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015), 118.

⁷⁰ Jonathan Masters, "The Russian Military," *Council on Foreign Relations*, 28 September 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/russian-federation/russian-military/p33758>

nuclear warheads, 3,500 tactical warheads, and more than 11,000 stockpiled warheads⁷¹ – is potent and its posture remains fierce toward perceived Western encroachment (NATO) on its borders. Moreover, Russia's ability to act unilaterally in a regional military context has been clearly evident in Georgia and the Crimea.

However, Putin is a strategist and a classic warfare manoeuvrist,⁷² who will not pit strength-against-strength against an enemy but will rather “focus on the enemy’s weakness and avoid direct and overt confrontations.”⁷³ Strategically used for security for the Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia's pre-positioned conventional military equipment was advantageously – cunningly – within striking distance of Crimea during the Maidan protests. In February 2014, Moscow launched a large-scale, unannounced "snap" military exercise of 40,000 troops on the border with Ukraine leaving NATO to believe that an attack could be imminent.⁷⁴ A couple months later, Russia conducted another "snap" inspection this time involving over "65,000 troops, 177 planes, 56 helicopters and 5,500 vehicles and armoured vehicles."⁷⁵

Although surges of Russian conventional forces never crossed into Ukraine on a mass scale, conventional equipment did. Notwithstanding Putin's denial at having Russian forces and equipment inside Ukraine's borders, in June 2014, the U.S. Department of State confirmed 10 Russian tanks had crossed the Ukrainian border⁷⁶ while NATO satellite imagery identified an assortment of Russian military equipment being positioned in Eastern Ukraine: T-72 main battle

⁷¹ Kathleen J. Hancock, "Russia: Great Power Image Versus Economic Reality," *Asian Perspective* 31, no. 4, 2007, 94.

⁷² The term "manoeuvre warfare" (also known as the manoeuvrist approach to warfare) refers to an emphasis on identifying and exploiting an enemy's critical vulnerability in order to bring about defeat rather than the physical act of positional movement on the battlefield.

⁷³ Woo Pyung-Kyun, "The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis: Some Characteristics and Implications," *The Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, Vol.27, No.3, September 2015, 395.

⁷⁴ Heidi Reisinger and Alexander Golt, "Russia's Hybrid Warfare: Waging War Below the Radar of Traditional Collective Defence," *Research Paper*, NATO Defence College, Rome, No.105, November 2014, 3.

⁷⁵ Merle Maigre, "Nothing New In Hybrid Warfare: The Estonian Experience and Recommendations for NATO," *Foreign Policy Program*, February 2015, 3.

⁷⁶ Foreign Policy Initiative Fact Sheet, last accessed May 9, 2016, <http://www.foreignpolicyi.org/content/fpi-fact-sheet-timeline-russian-aggression-ukraine-and-western-response>

tanks, BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicles, SA-11 Buk air defence missile systems, BM-21 missile launchers and self-propelled artillery.⁷⁷ Given the mounting evidence to Russia's incursion into Ukraine, it is no wonder the international community labelled the Russian Buk surface-to-air missile that took down Flight MH-17 as "Putin's missile"⁷⁸ despite Moscow's insistence to the contrary.

It is very interesting to note that “many in the West use the term *hybrid* to describe Russian actions [though] the Russian military does not use the term to describe its own actions.”⁷⁹ Moreover, “mass armies are obsolete”⁸⁰ – quite the statement from General Gerasimov, who adds that Russia’s non-military tactics (namely, the choice weapons of cyber warfare,⁸¹ economic sanctions and specialized units) have been used at a rate of 4:1 compared to conventional military tactics in order to attain strategic ends.⁸² Gerasimov adds:

The very ‘rules of war’ have changed significantly. The use of non-military methods to achieve political and strategic objectives has in some cases proved far more effective than the use of force... Widely used asymmetrical means can help to neutralize the enemy’s military superiority. These include the use of special operations forces and internal opposition to the creation of a permanent front throughout the enemy state, as well as the impact of propaganda instruments, forms and methods which are constantly being improved.⁸³

⁷⁷ Matthew Bodner, "5 Heavy Weapons In Ukraine's Rebel War That May Have Come From Russia," *The Moscow Times*, February 6, 2015, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/article/515557.html>

⁷⁸ Steven Lee Myers, *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015), 473.

⁷⁹ Timothy Thomas, “Russia’s Military Strategy and Ukraine: Indirect, Asymmetric and Putin-Led,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 2015, 455.

⁸⁰ Walter Laqueur, *Putinism: Russia And Its Future With The West* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2015), 244.

⁸¹ In response to imposed sanctions on Russia, Putin’s countersanctions included an increase in cyberattacks on US banks and internet sites. Timothy Thomas, "Russia's Military Strategy and Ukraine: Indirect, Asymmetric and Putin-Led," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 2015, 449.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Heidi Reisinger and Alexander Golt, "Russia's Hybrid Warfare: Waging War Below the Radar of Traditional Collective Defence," *Research Paper*, NATO Defence College, Rome, No.105, November 2014, 2.

Thomas aptly summarizes by observing: “After reacquiring Crimea without firing a shot, who appears to understand these new rules better than the Russian military?”⁸⁴

PUTIN’S WAR, PUTIN-STYLE: WHY RUSSIA ANNEXED CRIMEA

Oh, he understood very well that for the meek soul of a simple Russian, exhausted by grief and hardship and, above all, by constant injustice and sin, his own or the world’s, there was no stronger need than to find a holy shrine or a saint to prostrate himself before and to worship.

– Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*

After a long, hard and exhaustive journey at sea, Crimea and Sevastopol are returning to their home harbor, to the native shores, to the home port, to Russia!

– Vladimir Putin, *Red Square*,

2014

The [Russian] military’s strategy is Putin-led. Without his input, there would have been no Crimean intervention.

– Timothy Thomas, *Russia’s Military Strategy*,

2015

It is futile to strictly examine how Russia’s successful employment of hybrid warfare led to the annexation of Crimea without examining the reasons for this action. This section will examine why Russia resorted to hybrid warfare against Ukraine.

Politically and Economically-Driven

Russia’s primary strategic objective in invading Crimea was the disintegration of Ukraine in the hopes that it would descend into a failed state thus setting the conditions for Russia to reclaim Ukraine as a Soviet territory.⁸⁵ This coincides with Putin’s broader vision for Russia: “[Putin] wants to restore former territories, retain the unfettered ability to obtain and sell oil or

⁸⁴ Timothy Thomas, “Russia’s Military Strategy and Ukraine: Indirect, Asymmetric and Putin-Led,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 2015, 453.

⁸⁵ Woo Pyung-Kyun, “The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis: Some Characteristics and Implications,” *The Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, Vol.27, No.3, September 2015, 394.

natural gas, neuter NATO and European Union influence, and acquire additional natural resources.”⁸⁶ Given Putin’s broad array of objectives, hybrid warfare was the perfect method to achieve these political aims, operating just barely below the radar without provoking large scale conventional warfare.

On the other hand, and no doubt as a result of the Kremlin’s superb information warfare campaign against the West, many have asserted that Russia’s hybrid warfare against Crimea was a response to Western hegemonic aggression vis-à-vis NATO expansion in Eastern Europe.⁸⁷ After all, Moscow was merely protecting its national interests by creating a buffer zone between Russia and NATO, so the argument goes. And why would Putin’s popularity in Russia soar⁸⁸ after Crimea was annexed if he was seen to be a corrupt dictator as the West portrayed him to be?

However, upon closer inspection, “Moscow’s signature new subversive strategy is a shadowy combination of war, terrorism, subversion and diplomacy.”⁸⁹ Putin’s “sovereign democracy”⁹⁰ is tantamount to a schizophrenic regime according to Peter Pomerantsev: “Moscow can feel like an oligarchy in the morning and a democracy in the afternoon, a monarchy for dinner and a totalitarian state by bedtime.”⁹¹

⁸⁶ Timothy Thomas, “Russia’s Military Strategy and Ukraine: Indirect, Asymmetric and Putin-Led,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 2015, 447.

⁸⁷ John J. Mearsheimer, “Why The Ukraine Crisis Is The West's Fault,” *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2014 issue, last accessed May 9, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault>

⁸⁸ Steven Lee Myers, *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin* (New York: Alfred A.Knopf, 2015), 212.

⁸⁹ Woo Pyung-Kyun, “The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis: Some Characteristics and Implications,” *The Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, Vol.27, No.3, September 2015, 395.

⁹⁰ Walter Laqueur, *Putinism: Russia And Its Future With The West* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2015), 66.

⁹¹ Peter Pomerantsev, “The Hidden Author of Putinism: How Vladislav Surkov Invented the New Russia,” *The Atlantic*, November 7, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/11/hidden-author-putinism-russia-vladislav-surkov/382489/>

The second reason Moscow resorted to hybrid war against Ukraine was simply because it was fiscally prudent. Maigre rightly points out that “hybrid warfare is dangerous because it is easy and cheap to launch for external aggressors, but costly in various ways for the defenders.”⁹² Faced with a decreasing GDP, the progressive deterioration of the ruble and plummeting oil prices at \$52 a barrel,⁹³ Russia’s economy was (and still is) in a terrible state, exacerbated by Western sanctions. Hybrid warfare offered Putin a fiscally viable alternative to expensive large scale military operations.

However, the spoils of war in Crimea have not yielded well for Russia. The cost of doing business in Crimea has cost Russia \$7 billion in addition to the \$35 billion annual cost of unpaid gas bills within the self-proclaimed *Novorossiya* (New Russia).⁹⁴ As it turns out, war – regardless of its form – is costly, as Russia is continuing to learn the hard way.

Ideologically and Culturally-Driven

The most instrumental and devious component behind Russia’s use of hybrid warfare against Ukraine is undeniable: Vladimir Putin. Leveraging an entrenched, philosophical propensity toward hybrid warfare (namely with an emphasis on conscious disinformation and *maskirova*) within the Soviet psyche coupled with a strong historical precedent under the Soviet regimes, one cannot isolate Putin from Russia’s hybrid tactics against Ukraine. Indeed, “this is Putin’s twenty-first century warfare, rather than Russia’s one.”⁹⁵ Steven Lee Myers, author of *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin*, observes that “Putin made himself the symbol of the resurgent Russia, and the idea had to be maintained without acknowledgement of

⁹² Merle Maigre, “Nothing New In Hybrid Warfare: The Estonian Experience and Recommendations for NATO,” *Foreign Policy Program*, February 2015, 4.

⁹³ Walter Laqueur, *Putinism: Russia And Its Future With The West* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2015), 207.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 224.

⁹⁵ Woo Pyung-Kyun, “The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis: Some Characteristics and Implications,” *The Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, Vol.27, No.3, September 2015, 395.

fault. Only in a cult of power can the leader be inseparable from the state. No Putin – no Russia.”⁹⁶

Certainly under Putin's office, the corrupt nature of Russia became a breeding ground for hybrid warfare. Among the many on Putin's hit list, the late Russian oligarch, Boris Berezovsky, found murdered in his bathroom for speaking out against Putin's Russia, once said: “If Russia in the 1990s was corrupt on a scale of four out of ten, now it is corrupt ten out of ten!”⁹⁷ The late Boris Nemtsov, another quarry who was shot in the back in front of Red Square for being a nuisance to Putin's regime, used a more colourful description – “a festival of corruption”⁹⁸ – when describing the Sochi Olympic Games scandal.⁹⁹

Building on a foundation of systemic corruption, falsehoods and murder, Putin created an environment in which hybrid warfare could flourish. Though different ideologically, there is a similar effect between Soviet communism and what has been called "Putinism"¹⁰⁰:

Communism is like an autoimmune disorder; it doesn't do the killing itself, but it weakens the system so much that the victim is left hopeless and unable to fight off anything else. It destroys the human spirit on an individual level, perverting the values of a successful free society.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Steven Lee Myers, *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin* (New York: Alfred A.Knopf, 2015), 473.

⁹⁷ Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the NewRussia* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014), 205.

⁹⁸ Steven Lee Myers, *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin* (New York: Alfred A.Knopf, 2015), 437.

⁹⁹ It is estimated that \$30 billion of surplus money was siphoned off the projected cost of \$50 billion for Sochi's Games and diverted. The games in Sochi were \$30 billion more expensive than the games in London the year prior and five times more costly than any winter games in Olympic history. Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the NewRussia* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014), 205.

¹⁰⁰ Putinism is broadly defined as "state capitalism, a liberal economic policy, but also a great amount of state intervention - almost total interference when important issues are concerned. It is an autocracy, but this is nothing new in Russian history and is almost mitigated by inefficiency and corruption. There is a parliament, but the opposition parties are not really in opposition. There is a free press, but the freedom is limited to small newspapers and the criticism must not go too far. There is a constitution, but it is not the best guide for the realities of contemporary Russia." Walter Laqueur, *Putinism: Russia And Its Future With The West* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015), 118.

¹⁰¹ Garry Kasparov, *Winter Is Coming: Why Vladimir Putin and the Enemies of the Free World Must Be Stopped* (New York: Public Affairs, 2015), 33.

Military-Driven

The means by which Russia outmanoeuvred Ukraine (and the West) was undoubtedly accomplished through a flash combination of information warfare coupled with irregular methods. Although Russia's conventional forces posed a significant threat along the border with Ukraine, the Gerasimov doctrine confirmed that "methods of conflict have changed, and now involve the broad use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian and other non-military measures."¹⁰² Putin recognizes that he cannot use solely use conventional tactics and forces to reassert power on the global stage; he is outmatched militarily by the U.S. and China is a looming threat.

An opposite view, however, would assert that Russia is a nuclear power that has dedicated the past 15 years to rebuilding its conventional forces. Russia has shown that it can indeed act with impunity with an arsenal of conventional forces and weapons (Georgia and Syria, respectively), contending that it was Russia's "military machine" that was dominant in Crimea:

The seizure of Crimea demonstrated a more capable – and to other neighbours in Europe, a more ominous – military machine than any since the Red Army disintegrated. It blended hard power with soft power, speed and stealth, obfuscation and relentless propaganda meant to deflect culpability until it was too late to do anything about it.

However, Dr. Pyung-Kyun offers an insightful qualifier:

Russia lacks credible power projection capacities... While the Russians would be able to deliver a devastating initial blow should Putin choose to invade Ukraine, they risk then getting bogged down in the kind of messy, close-quarters warfare that would deny them the kind of quick, clean victory they have achieved in Crimea.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Woo Pyung-Kyun, "The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis: Some Characteristics and Implications," *The Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, Vol.27, No.3, September 2015, 385.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 395.

Another reason Russia resorted to hybrid warfare over strict conventional warfare against Ukraine refers back to its cultural, historical Soviet roots. Dubbed “an oldie, but a goodie,”¹⁰⁴ Russia’s reliance on disinformation tactics, or “reflexive control” tactics are a result of a persistent lack of innovation within the Russian military. General Gerasimov himself even admits the lack of intellectual capital within Russia’s modern military,¹⁰⁵ thus creating a dependency on non-linear, low-tech tactics. In Russia’s perspective, innovative technological developments cost money, lies do not.

Hybrid warfare now seems to be Putin’s 21st century Bismarckian *realpolitik* and Ukraine was the guinea pig under the Gerasimov doctrine. Under this form of warfare, Putin joined the illustrious (infamous?) “executive club” of stooges including Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic who made the short list of leaders who invaded a country in the nuclear age,¹⁰⁶ the pedigree of power sought after and required as Russia's newest Tsar.

IMPLICATIONS FOR UKRAINE, EUROPE AND THE WEST

*The information war and the war in Ukraine are by no means over; Russia is re-accumulating forces to strike again.*¹⁰⁷

– Maria Snegovaya, *Putin's Information Warfare In Ukraine*

Given the nature of the war Russia has waged against Ukraine, and more importantly, the mastermind behind this – Vladimir Putin – there are key implications that come to the fore.

Western Resolve is Essential

¹⁰⁴ Maria Snegovaya, “Putin’s Information War In Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia’s Hybrid Warfare,” *Russia Report I*, September 2015, 12.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Garry Kasparov, *Winter Is Coming: Why Vladimir Putin and the Enemies of the Free World Must Be Stopped* (New York: Public Affairs, 2015), 236.

¹⁰⁷ Maria Snegovaya, “Putin’s Information War In Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia’s Hybrid Warfare,” *Russia Report I*, September 2015, 20.

First, the West cannot afford to ignore the fact that Russia is a re-emerging threat that poses significant concern not only for the stability of Europe, but for the international community. According to the U.S. Secretary of Defence and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Russia's hybrid war in Ukraine is the largest geopolitical threat in the world.¹⁰⁸ The West can no longer blindly ignore Russia's blatant violation of international law against a sovereign state while offering lip service in terms of half-hearted measures. Moreover, the West's cowardly platitudes against Russia's actions which have only encouraged Putin to act more aggressively. World renown chess player, Garry Kasparov (currently in exile for speaking out against Putin's ruthless dictatorship), pulls no punches when recalling U.S. President Barack Obama's response after Russia's invasion of Ukraine:

Russia's 'rightful role as a great nation'? Putin was rolling tanks through a European country as Obama spoke in Hawaii about a KGB dictator acting as a force in progress...Calls for friendship don't deter someone like Vladimir Putin, they encourage him. It's a tragedy that thousands of Ukrainians, as well as many Russians, are suffering today because the Obama administration failed to learn that lesson.¹⁰⁹

Enlarging the blame beyond the U.S., Kasparov, undaunted, goes after other Western leaders:

Actions directed at Putin were also shockingly weak despite the clear presence of Russian forces and Russian arms flooding into Ukraine. It's one thing for academics and pundits to calmly sympathize with Putin and his 'vital interests' and his 'sphere of influence', as if 50 million Ukrainians should have no say in the matter. It's quite another thing for Barack Obama, David Cameron and Angela Merkel to fret about the 'instability' and 'high costs' caused by sanctions against Russia, as if that could be worse than the instability caused by the partial annexation of a European country by a nuclear dictatorship, carried out with impunity.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Ihor Kozak, "The Forgotten War: A View From Ukraine's Frontlines," *Atlantic Council*, October 7, 2015, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/the-forgotten-war-a-view-from-ukraine-s-frontlines>

¹⁰⁹ Garry Kasparov, *Winter Is Coming: Why Vladimir Putin and the Enemies of the Free World Must Be Stopped* (New York: Public Affairs, 2015), 196-197.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 241.

Arguably, Western sanctions against Russia have not been "shockingly weak" but in fact have taken a toll on Russia's already collapsing ruble compounding the impact of the abysmal drop in oil prices. The bear may have been wounded by Western embargoes, but is still a formidable foe capable of inflicting devastating hybrid warfare against its enemies. Russia is not scaling back. According to Russian military expert Pavel Felgengauer, "the Kremlin has been planning for a global war around 2025-2030 and hence has been extensively redirecting its resources in preparation."¹¹¹ If this is indeed the case, at a *minimum*, a recommitment of NATO countries¹¹² and a firm resolve to counter Russian aggression will be paramount to deterring and defeating Russia's aggression. Practically speaking, this means providing lethal, modern military supplies and equipment to Ukrainian forces in desperate need of assistance.¹¹³ Ihor Kozak, a Canadian independent defence and security consultant, who has visited the front lines in Ukraine's conflict, comments:

For our sake, the West must not abandon Ukraine to struggle on its own against the Russian strongman. Expanding our military support to Ukraine today may prevent the West from having to deploy its own troops into harm's way tomorrow.¹¹⁴

It Begins With Ukraine

¹¹¹ Maria Snegovaya, "Putin's Information War In Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia's Hybrid Warfare," *Russia Report I*, September 2015, 11.

¹¹² Europeans have benefited from U.S. monetary contributions to Europe through NATO, but the reality is that the majority of European countries (as well as Canada) are not adequately shouldering the load in contributing to the defence and security of Europe, even after Russia's annexation of Crimea. Naftali Bendavid, "Just Five of 28 NATO Members Meet Defense Spending Goal," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 22, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/nato-calls-for-rise-in-defence-spending-by-alliance-members-1434978193>

¹¹³ "What [Ukraine] needs to succeed, however, is tangible kinetic military assistance in the form of defensive weapons such as Javelin anti-tank systems and modern equipment like drones. On September 29, 2015 US President Barack Obama authorized \$20 million to provide Ukraine with long-range counter-battery radars, but this isn't enough." Ihor Kozak, "The Forgotten War: A View From Ukraine's Frontlines," *Atlantic Council*, October 7, 2015, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/the-forgotten-war-a-view-from-ukraine-s-frontlines>

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Second, Ukraine must seriously address its own internal issues. “Rome wasn’t built in a day,” as the saying goes, yet it was toppled very quickly from within. Yet if Rome in all its grandeur collapsed internally, how much more will Ukraine fall prey to Russia if it succumbs to persistent corruption? Yanukovich was undoubtedly not the first to be bribed by Putin or by other Russian oligarchs with incestuous connections with the Kremlin. The moth of hybrid warfare gravitates to the flame of failing states, rife with corruption, internal instability and political vulnerability. This is precisely why Ukraine was low-hanging fruit for Russian hybrid warfare exploitation. Maria Snegovaya correctly points out:

Fundamentally, the goal of hybrid warfare is to take advantage of the domestic weaknesses of other countries. Russia’s disinformation works only where it finds prolific ground; not as much due to its own efficiency, but due to the failures and internal problems of Ukraine and Western countries, such as cooperation of policy-makers, anti-U.S. sentiment, corruption, frustration with capitalism, failure to implement reforms and achieve transparency.¹¹⁵

As a start, it would be wise for Ukraine to revert to the path it was previously on, namely aligning itself with Europe and NATO. Granted, this will not ultimately solve the problem of corruption inside Kyiv, but Western influence and democratic reform are desperately needed to offset Russian influence.

Professional and Principled Approaches

Third, despite the advantage hybrid warfare gives to Russia, non-linear warfare is not a "wicked problem."¹¹⁶ However, Putin's hybrid war "does present a complicating factor for defence planning in the 21st century [because] it has laid bare the weakness of NATO's ossified

¹¹⁵ Maria Snegovaya, “Putin’s Information War In Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia’s Hybrid Warfare,” *Russia Report I*, September 2015, 21.

¹¹⁶ In modern parlance, a wicked problem is "a problem that is difficult or impossible to solve because of incomplete, contradictory, and changing requirements that are often difficult to recognize. The use of term "wicked" here has come to denote resistance to resolution, rather than evil." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wicked_problem. Words, however, do in fact connote specific meaning. It is the author's opinion that Russia's hybrid warfare is not "wicked" in the sense that it is unbeatable (it can be overcome), but rather it is rightly "wicked" because of the morally reprehensible manner in which it has been waged against innocent people in Ukraine.

military deterrent.”¹¹⁷ In other words, hybrid warfare has exposed the chinks in the West's weak (and complacent) armour. The Ukraine crisis goes well beyond Crimea and its national borders. Putin has essentially said that “the defence of ethnic Russians does not lie in the countries in which they reside or with their laws, government or constitution, but with Russia.”¹¹⁸ What this means is that Russia will continue to expand their influence wherever Russians, and Russia's national interests, reside. Putin knows that Russia's military can surge viciously, but he also understands that he cannot sustain quick and relatively pain-free victories with the use of heavy conventional forces. That is why Hoffman affirms that “operationally, hybrid military forces are superior to Western forces within their limited operational spectrum.”¹¹⁹

In response, Russia’s hybrid warfare tactics must compel the West to notch up its understanding, skill and intensity when it comes to the military profession of arms. Hoffman postulates:

We may have to redouble our efforts to revise our operational art. We have mastered operational design for conventional warfare, and recently reinvigorated our understanding of counterinsurgency campaigns. It is not clear how we adapt our campaign planning to combinations of the two. What is the center of gravity in such conflicts, and does it invalidate our emphasis on whole-of-government approaches and lines of operations?¹²⁰

In short, the West can no longer afford to bring its "B game" to the fight. And in all of this, principled over sheer pragmatic approaches must be *la ligne de conduite* for Western governments who must view political power not so much as a privilege, but as a responsibility – a duty – to act against any threat that would seek to undermine or destroy another state.

Pomerantsev adeptly diagnoses the West’s dilemma: “As the Kremlin’s propaganda campaign

¹¹⁷ Woo Pyung-Kyun, “The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis: Some Characteristics and Implications,” *The Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, Vol.27, No.3, September 2015, 395.

¹¹⁸ Craisor-Constantin Ionita, “Is Hybrid Warfare Something New?” *Security and Military Strategy*, Strategic Impact No. 4, 2014, 65.

¹¹⁹ Frank Hoffman, “Hybrid Warfare and Challenges,” *JFQ Magazine*, Issue 52, 1st Quarter 2009, 36.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

intensifies, the West is having its own crisis of faith in the idea of ‘truth’.”¹²¹ Yet if the West resorts to implementing enemy hybrid tactics, it will compromise the very democratic values we cherished and upheld. In other words, the ends do not justify the means (even in hybrid warfare) and the rule of law must prevail.¹²²

CONCLUSION

Putin has not miscalculated; Putin is redefining 21st century warfare.

– *The Washington Post, 2014*

Russia's effective hybrid warfare campaign against the sovereign state of Ukraine in 2014 which ultimately led to the annexation of Crimea in less than a month later completely took NATO and the international community by surprise. Tragically, for the people of Ukraine, even an orchestrated, intentional hybrid war perpetrated by a KGB dictator proved insufficient for a galvanized response from the West.

This paper demonstrated that Russia's successful fusion of informational, irregular and conventional warfare waged against Ukraine led to the swift and seamless annexation of Crimea. Through calculated disinformation, mistaken identity, plausible deniability and an aggressive state-controlled media narrative, Putin's "little green men" supported by hired thugs and pro-Russian separatists wreaked havoc in a short amount of time - all the while the world was waking up to the fact that the bear had started a war. Guided by the Gerasimov doctrine of not declaring wars and using non-conventional methods, Russia expertly implemented classic Soviet

¹²¹ Peter Pomerantsev, "Russia and the Menace of Unreality: How Vladimir Putin Is Revolutionizing Information Warfare," *The Atlantic*, September 9, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/09/russia-putin-revolutionizing-information-warfare/379880/>

¹²² Merle Maigre, "Nothing New In Hybrid Warfare: The Estonian Experience and Recommendations for NATO," *Foreign Policy Program*, February 2015, 6.

"reflexive control" tactics to stun the West into inaction and attain its political and strategic objectives.

The bear has attacked and will attack again. Ukraine must not be left to fend for itself. NATO and the West must recognize the greatest geopolitical threat to international stability is Putin's Russia and must act decisively, aggressively and wisely in order to restore European and international peace and stability.

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