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THE BEAR WENT UNDER THE MOUNTAIN: HYBRID WARFARE AND THE CASE OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

Maj L.L.F. Harvey

JCSP 42	PCEMI 42
Exercise *Solo Flight*	**Exercice *Solo Flight***

Canada

CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE – COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES
JCSP 42 – PCEMI 42
2015 – 2016

EXERCISE *SOLO FLIGHT* – EXERCICE *SOLO FLIGHT*

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Word Count: 5079

Compte de mots: 5079

In 2013, Ukraine's peaceful development was interrupted when it was faced with a choice between the West's European Union and Russia's Eurasian Economic Union. Then Ukrainian President, Victor Yanukovych, chose to side with Russia.[1] This decision caused revolt among the population and resulted in violent demonstrations in Kiev's Maidan Square which prompted Yanukovich to panic and to leave the country. These events had profound effects in Russia where President Vladimir Putin was worried that this highly coveted country was irrevocably spinning towards the West's orbit.[2] The Russian propaganda machine became hyperactive, blaming the West for staging a *coup d'état* that put "ultranationalists" and "fascists" in power, thus placing the sizable Russian minorities throughout Ukraine in danger. With his self-proclaimed mandate of protecting Russian citizens,[3] Putin decided to intervene, first in Crimea and then in eastern Ukraine. By March 2015 he had taken Crimea and most of the sector of eastern Ukraine that interested him.[4]

The international community was shocked; witnessing with unease what seemed to be the first case of European state-on-state aggression since the Spring of Prague in 1968. What also struck most observers were the methods used by Russia to perpetrate its actions in Ukraine. As "Little Green Men" appeared in Crimea, the words "Hybrid Warfare" started to appear in the headlines. Although Hybrid Warfare seems to be the new preoccupation of many Western military theoreticians, the concept is not entirely new. At the end of the 1980's, several military specialists launched the idea that warfare was heading towards a radical transformation where

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[1] Timothy Thomas, "Russia's Military Strategy and Ukraine: Indirect, Asymmetric—and Putin-Led," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 28, No 3 (2015): 446.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Federation of Russia, *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation* (Moscow: MFA of Russia, 2013), 2, 11.

[4] Timothy Thomas, "Russia's Military Strategy and Ukraine…, 446.

the lines between war, peace, combatants and non-combatants would become increasingly blurred. In turns, these ideas lead to the development of new theories on the employment of military power in non-conventional conflicts such as "compound wars" and "unrestricted warfare".[5] The Second Lebanon War of 2006 was the pivotal event that leads many military analysts to suggest that future conflicts would be multi-modal or multi-variant, blending the fanaticism of irregular warfare with the lethality of conventional conflicts.

Since then, many theoreticians have come up with various, sometimes diverging definitions of Hybrid Warfare. However, theories on the mechanisms that drive this type of war have yet to be properly developed. The entire issue then begs fundamental questions: what exactly is Hybrid Warfare? What are the tenets of this approach and how are they applied? Is this really what Russia is doing in Ukraine? This paper argues that Hybrid Warfare is a way to attain one's objectives through the fusion and the simultaneous use of conventional, irregular and informational means to create synergetic effects against targets that are dispersed along all of the sectors of statehood and that Russia did indeed fight Hybrid Wars in its conflicts over Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. The following analysis is divided in three parts: first, the theoretical foundations as well as a definition of Hybrid Warfare will be presented. Secondly, its mechanisms and inner workings will be explained through the prism of a new model. Finally, this model will be put to the test by comparing it to Russia's actual war in Ukraine.

PART I – WHAT IS HYBRID WARFARE?

For us to get a proper understanding of the characteristics and functioning of Hybrid Warfare, we first need to get a proper understanding of its meaning. Scholars such as Alezander

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[5] Craisor-constantin Ionitas, "Is hybrid warfare something new?" *Strategic Impact*, No 4 (2014):61.

Lanoszka (2016), Andras Racz (2015), Frank Hoffman (2009) and Craisor-Constantin Ionitas (2014) all have developed their interpretation of Hybrid War but their work has yet to be consolidated into a widely accepted definition. This section will thus highlight the major trends pertaining to Hybrid Warfare theories in order to help the reader obtain an understanding that is useful for the analysis presented in subsequent parts of this research.

The first trend is that contemporary wars are increasingly waged between adversaries of vastly unequal capabilities and that this has generally forced weaker protagonists to combine elements of regular conventional warfare with elements of irregular (guerrilla) warfare. In other words, large military formations are still to be used for some missions, while other missions will require smaller, more mobile units that sometimes need to act covertly.[6] The second trend, stemming from observations of the conflicts in Chechnya, Afghanistan, Lebanon and Iraq is that the opinion of the people living in the theatre of operation as well as the home population of the belligerents, often alienated and hostile, needed to be influenced.[7] Scholars thus came to the realization that not only did Hybrid Warfare require success at blending conventional with unconventional means but it also needed simultaneous success on all fronts of the informational spectrum.[8] So, in the words of a leading Romanian scholar on Hybrid Warfare, Dinu Padurariu:

> Hybrid Warfare is a combination between symmetric and asymmetric war, where forces take conventional military actions against enemy forces and targets and, at the same time, try to get control over the indigenous population in the conflict area[9]

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[6] Alezander Lanoszka, "Russian hybrid warfare and extended deterrence in Eastern Europe," *Foreign Affairs* 92, No 1 (2016): 177.

[7] Andras Racz,"Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine: Breaking the Enemy's Ability to Resist," *The Finninsh Institute for International Affairs*, FIIA report 43 (Helsinki, Finland: 2015), 30-31.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Dinu Padurariu, Nicolae Cretue and Vasile Onesimiuc, *The Hybrid Warfare Threats to the Security of the States at the NATO East Border*, International Scientific Conference "Strategies XXI", suppl. Command and Staff Faculty 2 (Bucharest: "Carol I" National Defence University, 2014): 2.

Detractors of the Hybrid Warfare concept have pointed out that the blending of asymmetrical, symmetrical and informational elements is nothing new and has already been addressed by theorists of Compound Warfare. Although there is truth in this argument, namely that Compound Wars have seen the fusion of conventional and irregular capabilities, the concept however only achieves synergy at the strategic level. Hybrid War introduces synergy, complexity, fusion, and simultaneity at the operational and tactical levels of war.[10] Researcher at the US Marines' Centre for Emerging Threats and Opportunities, Frank Hoffman, goes further by pointing out that:

> [I]n most conflicts regular and irregular components occurred in different theaters and in distinctly different formations. In hybrid wars, these forces became blurred into the same force in the same battle space, while they are operationally integrated and tactically fused.[11]

Based on the discussion above, the following definition of Hybrid Warfare is proposed as being the most complete and valid and will be used as the basis for the remainder of this analysis: Hybrid Warfare uses simultaneous and adaptive employment of conventional weapons, irregular warfare, information operations, terrorism and criminal behavior, in the same battlespace, to achieve political objectives. Thus, Hybrid Wars blend the lethality of state conflict with the fanatical and protracted fervor of irregular warfare.[12]

PART II – THE MECHANICS OF HYBRID WARFARE: A NEW MODEL

With this definition in hand, we can now take a closer look at the mechanisms that characterize Hybrid Warfare and the very specific conditions under which they are arranged to

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[10] Frank Hoffman, "Hybrid warfare and Challenges," *Joint Force Quarterly* 52 (1st quarter 2009): 36.

[11] Mehmet Syfettin Erol and Safak Oguz, "Hybrid Warfare Studies and Russia's Example in Crimea," *Journal of Gazi AcademicView* 17, No 9 (2015): 265.

[12] Craisor-constantin Ionitas, "Is hybrid warfare something new?. . .", 64.

produce synergy at the lower levels of warfare. This section will use the model at Figure 1 to demonstrate and explain the different parts of Hybrid Warfare. For ease of comprehension, the terms Aggressor and Victim will be used to refer to the antagonist states. Furthermore, the model will be analyzed in a counter-clockwise fashion, starting with the nature and conditions pertaining to the Aggressor.
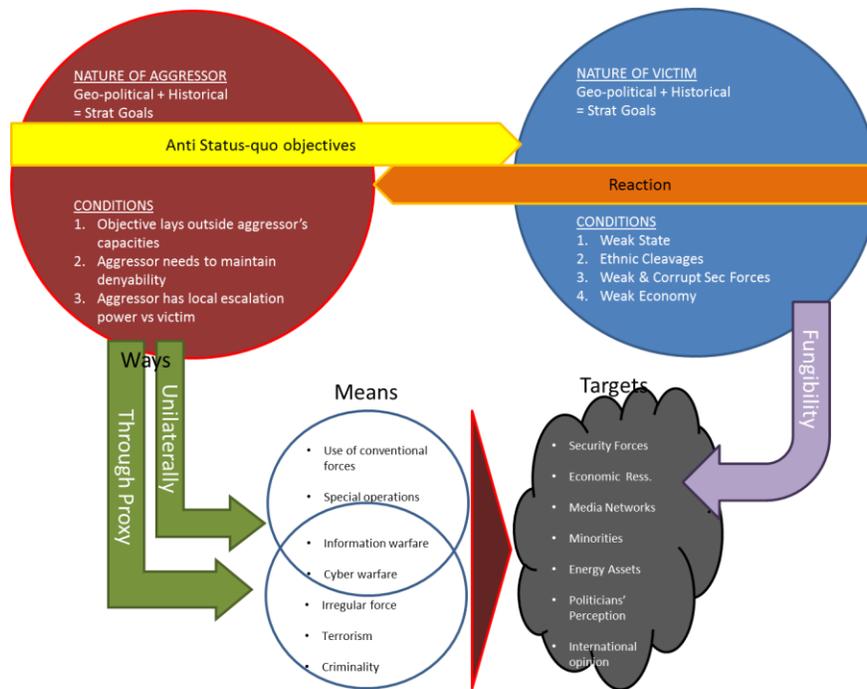

Figure 1 – Model of the Mechanics of Hybrid Warfare

The nature of the Aggressor
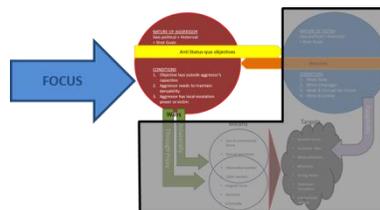
Figure 1.1 – Area of Focus

The nature of the Aggressor amounts to the geopolitical circumstances delineating its existence and its core characteristics. These comprise, but are not limited to: its political origins, its geographical location, its socio-political history, its economic complexity, its strategic context, and its strategic objective(s).[13] Hybrid Warfare becomes possible only once the Aggressor's core characteristics are blended to generate strategic objective that seek to revise the status quo v*is-à-vis* the Victim.[14] Since the current Western-dominated, and highly globalized, world order makes it difficult for democracies to harbor revisionist objectives, we can hereby surmise that dictatorships or restrictive democracies are more prone to have the profile of a hybrid aggressor.

But the nature of the Aggressor, alone, is not what makes Hybrid War inevitable nor unique. What truly differentiates Hybrid Warfare from other forms of war is the presence of one, or a combination, of the following three conditions. First, the desired objective of the Aggressor lies beyond its endogenous capabilities to unilaterally accomplish it. As we will see later on, this condition forces the Aggressor to find exogenous entities who can act as agents supplying the desired skills, materials, and/or access.[15] Second, the Aggressor has the need of not making itself known. The need for deniability is especially important if the objectives of the Aggressor run counter to the established international norms. For example, such objective might be legally unacceptable because the Aggressor is a signatory of the Geneva Convention, The Laws of Armed conflicts, and agreements with other countries.[16] Domestic considerations, too, might make Hybrid Warfare an attractive option to the belligerent in the event that a conflict could be

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[13] Frank Cilluffo and Joseph Clark, "Thinking About Strategic Hybrid Threats – In Theory and in Practice," *Prism* 4. No 1. (Dec 2012): 49.

[14] Alezander Lanoszka, "Russian hybrid warfare and extended deterrence . . ., 176.

[15] Frank Cilluffo and Joseph Clark, "Thinking About Strategic Hybrid Threats . . ., 48-49.

[16] Pyung-Kyun Woo, "The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis: Some Characteristics and Implications," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 27, No. 3, (September 2015): 383.

unpopular, especially if it means imposing some hardship on the domestic public.[17]

Furthermore, if the Victim has powerful allies or friends, then deniability also helps avoid

triggering an intervention that the belligerent does not believe it can handle.[18] This observation

leads us to the third condition: that the Aggressor has local military escalation dominance but not

global escalation dominance.[19] In other words, the Aggressor needs to be militarily stronger than

the Victim in order to limit the latter's countermeasure potential.[20] However, since the

international community is usually averse to military escalation, the Aggressor must use its threat

of military escalation in a way to unsettle the Victim without enticing other great powers

responding too strongly.[21]

The Ways
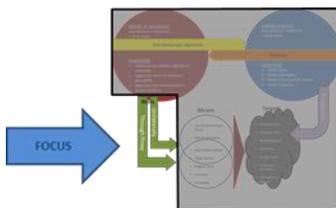
Figure 1.2 – Area of Focus

The nature of the Aggressor and the conditions shaping the attainment of its anti-status

quo strategic aim create a situation where it seeks to use all the tools of its limited power and

extend the conflict in both time and space in order to win a protracted contest of wills. Under this

construct, regular military forces still conduct conventional operations against the armed forces

of their opponent but their effect is complemented by the use of irregular proxies who work to

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[17] Alezander Lanoszka, "Russian hybrid warfare and extended deterrence . . ., 180.
[18] *Ibid.*
[19] *Ibid.,* 189-190.
[20] Andras Racz,"Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine . . ., 88.
[21] Alezander Lanoszka, "Russian hybrid warfare and extended deterrence . . ., 178, 180.

achieve control over the population or strike at targets that are outside of the Aggressor's

standard military capabilities.[22] Thus, a state which conducts a hybrid war seeks to carry out

military/information operations with the support of non-state actors such as militants, community

groups, public radical organizations, or criminal gangs.[23] These proxies can do things that the

Aggressor itself cannot do, because it is likely obliged to abide to international treaties. The

proxy relationship with such groups is not only a way to bridge the Aggressor's lack of

endogenous capabilities; it also affords a degree of deniability since the relationship can be

completely denied.[24] Building on the concept above, a hybrid threat can be defined as a

"customized capability produced through a [proxy] relationship for the purpose of seriously

decreasing or adversely changing vital elements or instruments of [the victim's] national

power."[25] While hybrid threats by proxy are undertaken for the purpose of attaining the

Aggressor's objective, the tactical or operational target of the threat and the strategic goal may

only be indirectly related.[26] Based on the discussion above, it is argued that this dual use of

endogenous forces and proxy is precisely what gives Hybrid Warfare its distinct character. It is

from this proxy relationship, and the resulting weaving together of disparate capabilities, that the

hybrid threat emerges.[27]

The Means

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[22] Pyung-Kyun Woo, "The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis . . ., 385.
[23] *Ibid.,* 383.
[24] *Ibid.*
[25] Frank Cilluffo and Joseph Clark, "Thinking About Strategic Hybrid Threats . . ., 49.
[26] *Ibid.*
[27] *Ibid.,* 48-49.
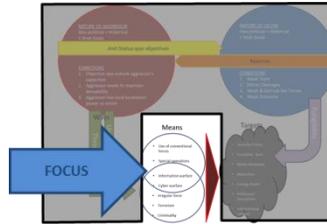
Figure 1.3 – Area of Focus

As discussed above, it is the interweaving of proxy and regular forces, under a somewhat unified command or synchronization structure that enables the Aggressor's deployment of the full *palette* of means offered by Hybrid Warfare. In this *palette*, each of the Aggressor's components, be it unilateral or proxy, are integrated to complement and reinforce each other in order to achieve operational and tactical synergetic effects. As such, the proxy component can mostly be related to irregular capabilities which can encompass tactics of varying intensity, many of which are being associated with insurgencies. At the low end of the intensity spectrum is propaganda; next is espionage; then comes the creation of social dissension and discord; after this comes criminal disorder; finally, the belligerent might launch full-scale engagements by armed groups or launch terrorist activities to unsettle the Victim, probe its weaknesses and sap its resources.[28]

Although it is clear that Hybrid Warfare always incorporates aspects of irregular warfare, it does not preclude the use of heavy weaponry. In fact, the Aggressor can use its conventional capabilities to arm local groups with sophisticated weapons in order to erode the strength of the Victim while still avoiding a direct confrontation. This results in an effective way of maintaining deniability and avoiding an open, protracted warfare by the creation of a fifth column to

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[28] Alexander Lanoszka, "Russian hybrid warfare and extended deterrence . . ., 178-179.

destabilize the Victim state before it can properly respond.[29] Alternatively, the Aggressor could

covertly insert its conventional forces in order to reinforce the proxy's fighting capabilities. The

insertion of "unmarked soldiers who are heavily armed but lack the insignia that would identify

them and their home government"[30] is a perfect example of such a direct yet covert use of

conventional forces by an Aggressor state. The use of unilateral conventional forces is not,

however, limited to covert roles of proxy reinforcement. Because the Aggressor enjoys a degree

of local escalation power, he may opt to engage in overt acts of military persuasion.[31] As a

concept, military persuasion is linked to the ideas of deterrence and coercion.[32] Thus, it is a

psychological strategy intended to influence the decisions of the Victim, without necessarily

having to physically destroy its armed forces or the instruments of its power. Show of force and

demonstrations such as exercises and maneuvers close to the battlefield are examples of such

stratagems.[33]

Either of the Aggressor's means can be accomplished by both its unilateral and proxy

components. Since the global environment has seen an increase in cyber-space interconnection

of key state infrastructure domains such as energy, national defense, banking, economics,

transport, etc., an increased in risks and threats associated to these functions has also developed.

The wide range of state functionalities to be targeted means that the Aggressor has to diversify

its resources. Consequently, the Aggressor seeks to use agencies of varying abilities in order to

conduct its information and cyber-warfare against the Victim. This can range from the unilateral

use of resources associated with powerful national intelligence agencies to the contracting of

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[29] *Ibid.,* 180.
[30] *Ibid.,* 178-179.
[31] Stephen J. Cimbala, "Sun Tzu and Salami Tactics? Vladimir Putin and Military Persuasion in Ukraine, 21 February–18 March 2014," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 27 (2014): 360.
[32] *Ibid.,* 362.
[33] Stephen J. Cimbala, "Sun Tzu and Salami Tactics? . . .," 360.

nebulous cyber-criminal organizations or hackers. [34] Since information and cyber-warfare are very difficult to detect, it is argued that it forms a compulsory and unavoidable element for any Aggressor conducting Hybrid Warfare.

The Targets and Nature of the Victim
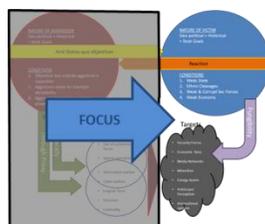
Figure 1.4 – Area of Focus

Certainly, the *palette* of actions described in the preceding paragraphs must be set in motion against targets that are meaningful for the Aggressor's attainment of its strategic objective(s). Because the types of actions to be employed are spanning a vast spectrum of kinetic and non-kinetic means, so are the possible targets. These targets are not limited to the military / security sectors of the Victim's state. To the contrary; for the hybrid threat to be directed in the most effective way, it must target a combination of multiple aspects of statehood, both physical and moral. Such targets may include, but are not limited to: military forces; economic and financial resources; media networks; ethnic minorities; energy; politician's perceptions; the international opinion; etc. Polish Institute of International Affairs expert Anna Dyner describes the target-objective relationship as follows:

> Each side of the hybrid conflict seeks victory by mobilizing the civilian population and demoralizing the enemy. The more political, economic, social and territorial damage

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[34] Dinu Padurariu, Nicolae Cretue and Vasile Onesimiuc, *The Hybrid Warfare Threats . . .*, 4-5.

done to the antagonist, the better. The key to success is to create chaos in what is being called the enemy's information space as well as in the economy and the legal system.[35]

The Aggressor's ability to strike at these targets is, however, determined by their level of fungibility. Fungibility is a direct product of the Victim's state characteristics and composition. It determines the range of targets that may be successfully threatened, the likelihood of *a priori* detection, and the ease with which the Victim may correctly attribute the threat.[36] In other words fungibility determines the range of potential targets as well as the scope of what, where, and when the Aggressor may attack or threaten to attack.[37] Like the Aggressor, the nature of the Victim state is defined by the combination of its geo-political, historical and social characteristics. These, in turn, must be shaped by the prevalence of a combination of conditions for Hybrid Warfare to be possible, let alone effective. First and foremost, the Victim needs to be weak and divided, with the presence of officials that are corrupt and easy to coerce.[38] Secondly, the Victim must also be militarily weak; deterring it from escalating the conflict in fear of being defeated.[39] Thirdly, the Victim's civil society needs to be sufficiently weak and ethnically heterogeneous so that latent historical grievances can be more easily exploited.[40]

The vulnerabilities caused by social cleavages can be further compounded if the Aggressor enjoys strong media presence in the Victim's information landscape. Finnish Institute for International Affairs' researcher Andras Racz argues that it is the asymmetry in military means and the exploitation of modern media within the Victim state that form the most important

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[35] Anna Dyner, "Hybrid Warfare: The challenge of our time," *New Eastern Europe* 5 (Nov/Dec2014): 81.

[36] Frank Cilluffo and Joseph Clark, "Thinking About Strategic Hybrid Threats . . ., 49.

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] Andras Racz,"Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine . . ., 80-82.

[39] Alexander Lanoszka, "Russian hybrid warfare and extended deterrence . . ., 180; and Andras Racz,"Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine . . ., 80-82.

[40] Alexander Lanoszka, "Russian hybrid warfare and extended deterrence . . ., 181

prerequisite for the full spectrum of hybrid warfare to be successful.[41] While this author agrees with this assessment, it is noteworthy to point out that a certain dichotomy exists between these two prerequisites. First, while the latter is unsuitable for an environment where the level of technological development is low, the former cannot be possible without one. In light of this analysis, we come to the conclusion that the set of partially contradicting conditions that make Hybrid Warfare possible can only apply to a very limited number of states and under very limited conditions.

PART III – PUTTING THE MODEL TO THE TEST: THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

The Russian "Fox"

We should now put the aforementioned model to the test by assessing whether Russia's actions in Crimea and Ukraine fit the mechanics of Hybrid Warfare. To do so, let us first analyze the nature and characteristics of the Aggressor: Russia. The origins of today's Russia are complex and cannot be described in detail here. Suffice it to say that its current quest for great power status has been shaped by events going as far back as the first east Slavic state.[42] The Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) and the trauma of two World Wars left deep scars in Russia's collective memory.[43] Moreover, many internal conflicts such as the October Revolution in 1917, the breakup of the Soviet Union, the war in Chechnya and NATO's recent expansion into former Soviet republics have been perceived as severe threats to the unity of Russia.[44] In a context where Russia sees itself has having no easily defendable geographical boundaries and being

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[41] Andras Racz,"Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine . . ., 80-82.

[42] Norbert Eitelhuber, "The Russian Bear: Russian Strategic Culture and what it implies," *Connections : The Quarterly Journal* 9, no.1 (Winter 2009): 5.

[43] *Ibid.*

[44] Norbert Eitelhuber, "The Russian Bear: Russian Strategic Culture . . ., 5, 10.

vulnerable to external and internal dissention, caution, circumspection, flexibility and deception became necessary political qualities.[45] Moreover, Russia's geo-political complexion and wide range of threats has proven autocracy as the only feasible mode of governance.[46] For these reasons, Russia today is "a revisionist power that plans to reverse developments from the past 20 years which it believes should never have happened."[47] It wants to weaken NATO and the European Union, by playing member states off against one another and gaining influence within some key countries.[48] The *EuroMaidan* made the Kremlin realize that Ukraine was irreversibly slipping out of its sphere of influence. Consequently Moscow planned for war against Ukraine and passed several laws, such as the one authorizing the use of military force to "protect Russian compatriots worldwide" prior to its invasion, in order to legally justify its aggressive use of military force against its neighbor.[49]

At face value, Russia's geo-political outlook seems to have been divergent to the model's pre-condition stating that the Aggressor's objective must lay outside its capabilities. With its large army and sheer political weight, Russia arguably had the necessary endogenous capabilities to affect a favorable outcome in Ukraine. But what it had in local escalation dominance, it lacked in global escalation dominance. It is important to realize that NATO's expanding encirclement and the presence of its powerful armed forces in regions adjacent to Russia's territory were proving a considerable threat to the latter's regional hegemonic aspirations.[50] Consequently Russia adopted a subtle approach intended to give the Kremlin plausible deniability while

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[45] *Ibid.*, 8.
[46] *Ibid.*
[47] Roland Freudenstein, "Facing up the bear: confronting Putin's Russia," *European View* 13, No 2 (Dec 2014): 226-227.
[48] *Ibid.*
[49] Pyung-Kyun Woo, "The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis . . ., 386.
[50] Norbert Eitelhuber, "The Russian Bear: Russian Strategic Culture . . ., 10.

reducing the costs associated with engaging Ukraine's, and potentially NATO's, armed forces directly. For example, Russia did not launch a traditional invasion to wrest Crimea away from Kiev's control. Instead, it fomented local pro-Russian demonstrations, inserted unmarked military forces ('little green men'), and oversaw a local referendum to lend an air of legitimacy to the annexation effort.[51] By doing so, Russia has turned disinformation into an instrument of national power and is using it to sow doubt in order to create room for maneuver for itself.[52] In Ukraine, "its primary purpose is to instill doubt in Western institutions and sources of information writ large."[53] Thus, the way in which Russia has used force against Ukraine since early 2014 has prompted some observers to remark that it was indeed engaging in Hybrid Warfare.[54]

Army Corps, Ruffians and Little Green Men

As per the model in the preceding part of this paper, Russia did not content itself with acting unilaterally but also involved the use of proxies to obfuscate its actions in Ukraine. Although the Kremlin deployed thousands of unmarked *Spetsnaz* with no insignias and purporting to be local "militias" who had "self-mobilized", its regular forces seldom took the role of direct aggressor. Instead, they served to intimidate, while proxy irregular groups did the fighting together with local extremists and criminal gangs.[55] For example, during the so-called "snap inspections" of March and April 2014, the Russians deployed upward of 40,000 to 50,000 troops near the Ukrainian border. Of these, the U.S. military estimates that 12,000 were directly

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[51] Alezander Lanoszka, "Russian hybrid warfare and extended deterrence . . ., 175; Mehmet Syfettin Erol and Safak Oguz, "Hybrid Warfare Studies and Russia's Example in Crimea . . ., 271; and Andrei Josan and Cristina Voicu, "Hybrid Wars in the Age of Asymmetric Conflicts," *Review of the Air Force Academy* 28, No 1 (2015): 51.

[52] Michael Kofman and Matthew Rojansky, "A Closer look at Russia's "Hybrid War" *Kennan Cable*, No 7 (April 2015): 6.

[53] *Ibid.*

[54] Alezander Lanoszka, "Russian hybrid warfare and extended deterrence . . ., 175; and Roland Freudenstein, "Facing up the bear: confronting Putin's Russia . . ., 228-229.

[55] Pyung-Kyun Woo, "The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis . . ., 387, 391.

supporting pro-Moscow separatists in Eastern Ukraine.[56] These forces were made up of military advisers, weapons operators and combat troops.[57]

Interestingly, Russia deviated slightly from the model by enlisting the services of a third category of actor that fell neither in Russian nor pro-Moscow militias orders of battle. For example, the Cossacks—a caste of warriors who have guarded the borders of the Russian empire for centuries—are known to have played a key role in the Russian occupation of Crimea and reportedly served alongside the Russian military. It is suspected that groups of Chechen fighters were also used in that manner.[58] The Russians have also innovated by using a type of proxy that is typical of the post-Soviet environment: the "quasi-state." The Luhansk and Donetsk People's Republics are examples of such structures. With no features of classical states, these two self-proclaimed republics became inevitable elements of the peace process, allowing Russia to maintain its deniability and its *façade* as an external, albeit concerned, non-belligerent in the war.[59]

Putin it all together – A Three Step Recipe

As we have seen, because its conventional military forces were no match for those of the United States and NATO, any effort to destabilize Ukraine in a politically favorable direction for Russia had to involve a discrete combination of proxy and endogenous military and non-military moves backed by a strategic deception and disinformation campaign.[60] It is therefore argued that Russia used the *palette* of means described in Part II to its fullest extent. In fact, the

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[56] *Ibid.*, 392.
[57] *Ibid.*
[58] *Ibid.*, 391.
[59] Anna Dyner, "Hybrid Warfare: The challenge of our time . . ., 83.
[60] Stephen J. Cimbala, "Sun Tzu and Salami Tactics? . . ., 361; and Andrei Josan and Cristina Voicu, "Hybrid Wars in the Age of Asymmetric Conflicts . . ., 51.

intermingling of both conventional and non-conventional means was already recognized in

Russia's 2010 Military Doctrine. In it, modern warfare is described as entailing "the integrated

utilization of military force and forces and resources of a nonmilitary character," and:

> [. . .]the prior implementation of measures of information warfare in order to achieve
> political objectives without the utilization of military force and, subsequently, in the
> interest of shaping a favorable response from the world community to the utilization of
> military force.[61]

In light of its doctrinal foundation and the close analysis of its actions in Ukraine, it is

contended that Russia endeavored to apply the means of its power through three distinct,

simultaneous and synergetic lines of operations: the fixing of Ukrainian forces; the excitement of

pro-Russian nationalist groups and rebels; and the shaping of the ensuing unconventional conflict

through direct but limited actions.

Russia's first line of operation was mostly accomplished through the use of conventional

and Special Forces which were almost exclusively contained within its endogenous capabilities.

At once, Russia deployed conventional military forces in close vicinity of the Ukraine border,

forcing Ukraine to mass its own armed forces to respond to the threat.[62] Simultaneously, Russia

fueled the rebels in the southern and eastern areas by backing them with Special Forces, the

famous "little green men", mercenaries and Cyber War.[63] Bucharest National Defense University

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[61] Michael Kofman and Matthew Rojansky, "A Closer look at Russia's "Hybrid War" . . ., 2-3.

[62] Florin-Marian Barbu, "Considerations concerning Hybrid War," *Strategic Impact* 55 (2015): 51; and Erol and Safak Oguz, "Hybrid Warfare Studies and Russia's Example in Crimea . . ., 269: "Snap exercises became the main methodology to show the muscles of conventional capabilities. They started a snap exercise from 26 February to 3 March 2014 in the Central and Western District (on the Ukrainian border) with 150,000 troops. On 13 March, the Russian Defense Ministry announced another exercise near the Ukrainian border that include dropping 1,500 paratroopers into Rostov and deploying 8,500 pieces of artillery into the Belgorod area, along with rocket launchers, howitzers, anti-tank guns and other weapons. They also conducted different scale navy, air, and ground troop exercises in different locations inside Russia, including the Kaliningrad region, during the crisis. Russian troops stayed on the Ukrainian border as the sword of Damocles until the annexation of Crimea was completed."

[63] Florin-Marian Barbu, "Considerations concerning Hybrid War . . ., 51; Andrei Josan and Cristina Voicu, "Hybrid Wars in the Age of Asymmetric Conflicts . . ., 51; and Erol and Safak Oguz, "Hybrid Warfare Studies and Russia's Example in Crimea . . ., 269.

scholar Florin-Marian Barbu argues that this was probably the center of gravity of whole action, "which placed the Ukrainian forces in a very difficult position to disperse the military power in order to face all challenges coming from both threats."[64] The fixing effect the military actions had on Ukrainian forces was compounded by supporting non-military actions and information operations. For example, President Putin condemned Ukraine's authorities for "sending men to the frontlines as cannon fodder."[65] He cunningly encouraged citizens of Ukraine to evade the Ukraine call-up by "moving to Russia and waiting things out for a while here."[66] Directly on cue, Russia's Migration Service announced a change of rules, increasing the duration of stay in Russia, "particularly for citizens of Ukraine of military service age" for a periods of 90 days.[67]

The second line of operation had for objective the rallying of the rebel proxy. Russia started up with a good understanding of the psychological profile of the Ukrainian people. First, the *EuroMaidan* revolution in Kiev and the abolition of the law allowing the country's eastern regions to make Russian a second official language turned out to be perfect ingredients for Russian propaganda.[68] As a result, Russian media were able to play on the protection of the Russian minority in Ukraine to legitimize the uprising of a 42,000 men strong pro-Moscow irredentist movement.[69]

The third line of operation entailed Russia's lending of additional support to the rebels. This was accomplished not only to bolster the rebel's cause in southeastern Ukraine, but also to directly help them against Ukrainian anti-terrorist forces. In short, wherever the Ukrainian Army

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[64] Florin-Marian Barbu, "Considerations concerning Hybrid War . . ., 51.
[65] Pyung-Kyun Woo, "The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis . . ., 388.
[66] *Ibid.*
[67] *Ibid.*
[68] *Ibid.,* 387.
[69] Anna Dyner, "Hybrid Warfare: The challenge of our time . . ., 82; Pyung-Kyun Woo, "The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis . . ., 392; and Craisor-constantin Ionitas, "Is hybrid warfare something new?. . ., 67.

came close to making progress against rebel forces, a relatively low-key and cost-effective infusion of "deniable" Russian regular forces accompanied by Special Forces proved to be enough to repel Kiev's efforts.[70] A good example of this is the case where Russia used a humanitarian convoy as a cover for the insertion of heavy artillery into Ukraine. Not only was this a propaganda masterpiece, it paralyzed the Ukrainian army's reaction and caused serious legal problems for Kiev.[71] Russia is also known to have initiated cyber-attacks to help its rebel proxy. Dozens of Ukrainian computer networks, including government systems, were reportedly infected by aggressive cyber weapons during critical anti-rebel operations.[72] This analysis clearly demonstrates that Russia used a combination of endogenous and proxy means, in an integrated complementary manner at the operational and tactical levels so as to achieve its strategic effect against Ukraine. In this sense, Russia's actions are completely in accordance with the model.

Rowdy Ukraine

To complete the analysis, we should now turn our attention to the nature of Ukraine and the way its prevailing characteristics influenced the fungibility of the targets that Russia could strike. As previously discussed in Part II of this paper, the emergence of Hybrid Warfare is only possible when Aggressor and Victim states meet a set of specific conditions. The case of Russia and Ukraine meet these conditions. Like Russia, Ukraine has a troubled past that has shaped its current geo-political complexion. Since its independence in 1992, the country had been afflicted by ethnic divisions between Ukrainian, pro-Soviet and Russian nationalists groups. That fragile co-existence was delicately maintained until the 2013–2014 *EuroMaidan*. Former president Viktor Yanukovych's refusal to sign the EU Association Agreement caused widespread public

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[70] Pyung-Kyun Woo, "The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis . . ., 389.
[71] Anna Dyner, "Hybrid Warfare: The challenge of our time . . ., 84.
[72] Pyung-Kyun Woo, "The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis . . ., 388.

anger and inflamed the latent social schisms that were to become prevalent during the

EuroMaidan revolution, generating a spiraling cycle of Ukrainophobia and repression.[73]

Not helping the matter was Ukraine's weak state apparatus, plagued with criminal

collusion between the political and economic elites and with a corrupt justice system. Thus, the

violence that erupted during the *EuroMaidan* and the Donbas conflict were a reflection of the

authoritarian, criminal and thuggish culture common to Ukraine in general and to Crimea and the

Donbas in particular.[74] Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies' expert Taras Kuzio explains that

since the 1990's, Crimea had been a major source of organized crime and had the largest number

of murders of any Ukrainian region, with Donetsk coming second. [75] The fact that both regions

were strongholds of ousted president Yanukovich was not a coincidence. Indeed, when

Yanukovich was the governor of Donetsk, the powerful *Nemsadze* criminal group had worked

for him. Yanukovich was also known to be in cahoots with business oligarchs and the corrupt

Prosecutor-General assisted in protecting these ties between politics, business and crime.[76]

The nature and conditions prevalent in Ukraine created the necessary fungibility to allow

Russia to effectively target Ukraine's political perceptions and the international opinion. It has

done so chiefly through the exploitation of Ukraine's ethnic cleavages and by directly targeting

Ukrainian media. Thus, Moscow used the media outlets it already owned in Ukraine to

disseminate its own perspective to denounced the *EuroMaidan* movement in Ukraine and the

post-Yanukovych regime in early 2014.[77] Moreover, the Kremlin's aggressive information

warfare gave the pro-Russian militants the endorsement to rebel and to seek the breakaway of

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[73] Taras Kuzio, "A new framework for understanding nationalism in Ukraine: Democratic revolutions, separatism and Russian Hybrid War," *Geopolitics, History, and International Relations* 7, No 1(2015), 30.
[74] *Ibid.*
[75] *Ibid.,* 41.
[76] *Ibid.,* 43.
[77] Alezander Lanoszka, "Russian hybrid warfare and extended deterrence . . ., 184.

Crimea and the Donbass regions. Furthermore, it afforded Russia an aggrieved minority population to do its bidding. Not only did Ukraine brutal repressive measures entailed the unfair and harmful treatment of Russian minorities, it also prompted the Kremlin to act upon its self-proclaimed status as the defender of Russian rights.[78] By Russia's exploitation of social cleavages and targeting of mass perceptions, the targeting of the Ukrainian forces were thus incidental. By and large, it has been demonstrated that Ukraine offered all the necessary characteristics and conditions for Hybrid War to emerge and that Russia exploited the resulting fungibility to generate a situation favorable to its own interests.[79]

FINAL THOUGHTS AND CONCLUSION

In the final analysis, we can clearly see that Russia very closely followed the model presented in the second part of this paper. Both the political natures of Russia and Ukraine created the necessary conditions for Hybrid War to emerge. For one, Russia had the local escalation power and a strong need to maintain deniability in its actions. Furthermore, all of the telltale symptoms of Hybrid Warfare were also found in this conflict: the use of proxy and endogenous means; the mix of conventional and non-conventional, military and non-military actions at all levels of warfare; the exploitation of state weaknesses to strike at a variety of targets spanning all aspects of statehood; and the heavy use of information warfare. Hybrid Warfare naysayers, such as Kennan Institute scholars Matt Rojanski and Michael Kofman have argued that Hybrid War is but a catchy label and that Russia clumsily stumbled into the Ukranian conflict. For them, the conflict is unique and was not premeditated.[80] This paper has demonstrated otherwise. Based on the analysis of the Mechanics of Hybrid Warfare, established

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[78] *Ibid.,* 182.
[79] *Ibid.,* 186.
[80] Michael Kofman and Matthew Rojansky, "A Closer look at Russia's "Hybrid War" . . ., 1-5.

not only through the works of keen observers of conflicts in the post-soviet space but as well as from researchers on the Middle-East and Asia, a clear mechanical model has been developed. In turns, this analysis has shown that the model fits the current war in Ukraine with a high degree of fidelity. The question remains whether Russia has been successful. Frankly, this author has tried to refrain to any prospective analysis because it is simply too early to tell. Operationally and tactically, Russia's implementation of its Hybrid War seems to have met with a high degree of success in Crimea and with mixed results in Donetsk and Luhansk . Strategically, all bets are off. If the Russia-Georgia War of 2008 is any indication, it could be safe to predict that Russia's Hybrid War will result in yet another frozen conflict between a former soviet republic and an unrecognized self-proclaimed state. It remains to be seen how long this will give Moscow leverage over Ukraine before the latter spins irremediably into the West's orbit.

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