

# **“HYBRID WARFARE” – THE MILITARY SECURITY DOMAIN’S CONSIDERATIONS**

*Zdzislaw Sliwa*<sup>1</sup>



The term “hybrid warfare” became salient after the annexation of Crimea and as a result of the ongoing war in Ukraine. It is often used to denote the modernization of Russia’s armed forces as it sought to develop ‘muscles’ using methods other than military in order to challenge the West. The concept was also a demonstration that Russian military theory continues to develop and has moved away from the former Cold War type, force-on-force concepts that had aimed to exploit mass and the concentration of forces. The last decade has shown that the country is ready to use all available tools, both conventional and nonconventional, in a well-coordinated and sequential way, in order to achieve a desired end state. The topic has become very popular among military and academics who deal with security issues and the term ‘hybrid warfare’ is now commonplace. This paper covers the theoretical background of the term, establishes its origins, and offers some interpretations. This will be followed by a consideration of the conventional aspects of the concept in the context of Russia’s current activities, and their new means of conducting warfare.

## **The Perception of ‘hybrid war’ as a security threat**

The ‘hybrid warfare’ concept is not new as nations have utilized a variety of tools, and every available option in order to achieve their desired aims and challenge their opponents. Frank Hoffman discusses hybrid warfare in his paper published in *Joint Forces Quarterly* by introducing a historical case study of the wars between Sparta and Athens. He recognizes that wars have always been complex and are more than a simple struggle between armed forces. He adds, however, that these present hybrid wars are quite different in nature and recognizes that:

---

<sup>1</sup> Opinions expressed by the author are his own views and they do not reflect in any way the official policy or position of the Baltic Defence College, or the governments of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania.

*hybrid threats incorporate a full range of modes of warfare, including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts that include indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder. These multi-modal activities can be conducted by separate units, or even by the same unit, but are generally operationally and tactically directed and coordinated within the main battlespace to achieve synergistic effects in the physical and psychological dimensions of conflict<sup>2</sup>.*

Hoffman is emphatic in asserting that hybridity is not limited to non-state actors. Hybrid warfare tactics have been adopted by state actors, which makes them even more dangerous and potentially destructive, as any attack can be preceded by non-military actions, which can be directed at all an opponent's vital functions. This requires the military to be more adaptive and requires complex, Whole-of-Government Approaches toward security as "the political, security, economic and social spheres are interdependent: failure in one risks failure in all others"<sup>3</sup>. Hybrid warfare has also grown out of the regime changes in the Middle East when the leadership of multiple countries was unable to survive the public's discontent. Such the indirect and non-kinetic approach by local forces combined with external support, has changed the entire security situation in the region and consequently allowed radical movements' to find their 'window of opportunity' and advance their dangerous ideas. The ramifications are still evolving and the situation in the region as a whole remains volatile with increasingly global implications. North Africa is a continuous hot spot full of radical movements, rebels, religious groups and fractions fighting for power. A side effect of this has been a mass migration of refugees to Europe. Among these refugees there are also radicals who are ready to initiate 'hybrid warfare' in Europe and augment the war which is already underway.

'Hybrid warfare' is a general term that denotes the simultaneous and coordinated use of conventional and unconventional means and assets to achieve a desired political – military end state. It gained cachet after the paper published by General Valery Gerasimov<sup>4</sup>, the current Chief of the General Staff

---

<sup>2</sup> **Hoffman, F.** 2009. Hybrid Warfare and Challenges. – The Joint Forces Quarterly, Issue 52. 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2009. Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> **Whole of Government Approaches to Fragile States** 2006. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> About the concepts of the General *Valery Gerasimov* read in: **Герасимов, В.** 2013. Ценность Науки в Предвидении. Новые вызовы требуют переосмыслить формы и способы ведения боевых действий. – Военно-промышленный курьер, No 8 (476), Moscow, 27 February 2013. <<http://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/14632>> (accessed on 12

of the Armed Forces of Russia. However, in that interesting paper Gerasimov never uses the term of ‘hybrid warfare’, and instead discusses the changes in, and the new reality of, modern warfare. He recognizes that “the role of non-military ways in reaching political and military goals has increased, and in some cases significantly exceeds the power of armed forces”<sup>5</sup>. The upshot of this argument is illustrated in the series of graphics presented in the paper showing the utilization of both conventional and non-conventional means in a sequence of follow-up phases of an operation. His formulation is also called the ‘Gerasimov doctrine’. The role of non-military measures is significantly highlighted throughout all six phases, as presented on figure 1.

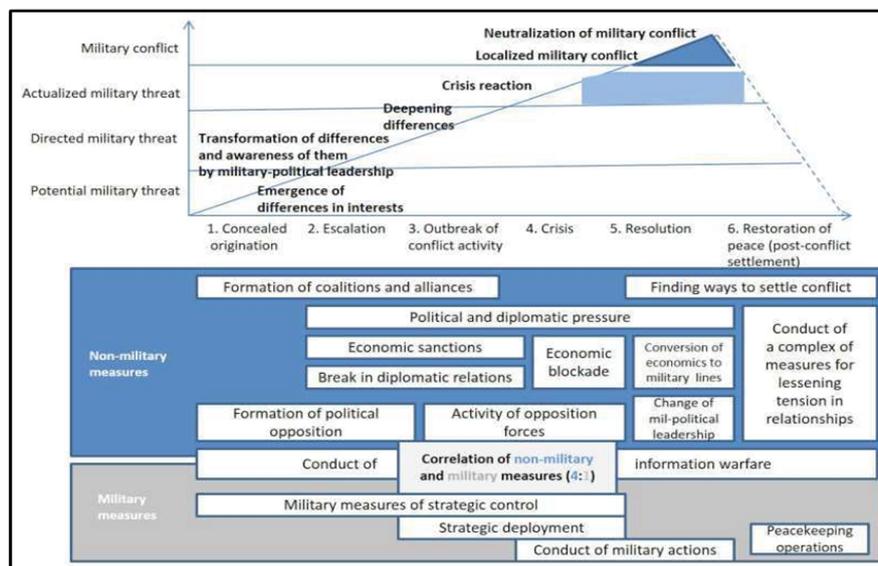


Figure 1. The Role of Non-Military Methods in the Resolution of Interstate Conflicts<sup>6</sup>.

September 2016) [Герасимов 2013] and also in: Thomas, T. 2016. Thinking Like A Russian Officer: Basic Factors And Contemporary Thinking On The Nature of War. April 2016. Fort Leavenworth: The Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO), pp. 16–19.

<sup>5</sup> Герасимов 2013, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> Harding J. 2016. Russia’s Perception Warfare – The development of Gerasimov’s doctrine in Estonia and Georgia and its application in Ukraine. – Wordpress.com, 22 June 2016. <<https://toinformistoinfluence.com/2016/06/22/russias-perception-warfare-the-development-of-gerasimovs-doctrine-in-estonia-and-georgia-and-its-application-in-ukraine/>> (accessed on 3 October 2016). Translated and created by Dr. G. Scott Gorman, School of Advanced Military Studies.

Military measures are only employed during the IV<sup>th</sup> Crisis phase, after the strategic deterrence and deployment phases, which are supplemented by continuous information operations. Phases I and II include the formation of coalitions and political opposition in relation to the opponent and its nation. Phase II and III, according to the doctrine, includes economic sanctions and diplomatic measures. Based on the graph it becomes apparent that when the non-military tools of phases I to III are taken into consideration, war is an all-encompassing, never ending struggle. As Russia is suffering as a result of the economic sanctions imposed by the west, the Kremlin considers itself to be under attack by the Western powers, which are using economic means in conjunction with political pressure to conduct a war in multiple domains including the information, and cyber realms. External support for opposition parties, and the building of broader coalitions, as well as the expansion of NATO and the EU are all perceived as direct threats against Russia. Therefore when, Gerasimov discusses his concept of ‘new generation warfare’ and ‘hybrid warfare’, although these external threats are never named directly, it is implicit that these measures are considered to be a type of warfare directed against Russia by external powers. This includes the intent to initiate a colour revolution to change the government and weaken the country. Anthony Cordesman explains how this suspicion has influenced Russia’s national military transformation: “Russian military officers now tied the term ‘Colour Revolution’ to the crisis in Ukraine and to what they saw as a new US and European approach to warfare that focuses on creating destabilizing revolutions in other states as a means of serving their security interests at low cost and with minimal casualties. It was seen as posing a potential threat to Russian in the near abroad”<sup>7</sup>.

NATO acknowledges the complexity of ‘Hybrid Warfare’ in its report: “Multiple Futures Project. Navigating Towards 2030”, which was released by the Allied Command Transformation already in 2009. The report explains that security must “identify potential roles within the military realm that NATO could consider emphasizing for 2030”. Among these is the need to adapt “to the Demands of Hybrid Threats”<sup>8</sup>. This has been highlighted as the

---

<sup>7</sup> **Cordesman, A.** 2014. Russia and the “Color Revolution”. Center for Strategic and International Studies, 28 May 2014. <<https://www.csis.org/analysis/russia-and-%E2%80%9Ccolor-revolution%E2%80%9D>> (accessed on 20 August 2016).

<sup>8</sup> **Multiple Futures Project. Navigating Towards 2030.** April 2009. Norfolk: Allied Command Transformation, p. 6. [Multiple Futures Project 2009]

primary focus area. The report predicts that this type of warfare will likely be adopted by NATO adversaries as well as those who are

*both interconnected and unpredictable, combining traditional warfare with irregular warfare, terrorism, and organised crime. Psychologically, adversaries will use the instantaneous connectivity of an increasingly effective mass media to reshape or summarily reject the liberal values, ideas, and free markets that characterise the Alliance.*<sup>9</sup>

As a result the enemy will use all opportunities within the engagement space to influence the NATO nations' economy, weaken their political unity, harm their societies, and shape their information domains. Thus the opponent will unconditionally exploit all recognized vulnerabilities. For the adversaries of a nation state the variety of possible tools is vast, and in a worst case scenario could even include the use of weapons of mass destruction. Generally speaking the "risks and threats to the Alliance's territories, populations and forces will be hybrid in nature: an interconnected, unpredictable mix of traditional warfare, irregular warfare, terrorism and organised crime"<sup>10</sup>.

Another striking feature of the report is that it does not mention Russia at all, despite the fact that the document was published after the Russian – Georgian war in 2008. However the report does state that it is necessary to "develop a culture where leaders and capabilities are well suited for irregular warfare or the hybrid threat, while simultaneously maintaining NATO's conventional and nuclear competency"<sup>11</sup>.

It also mentions that there are few individual nations powerful enough to challenge the NATO coalition. Nevertheless one danger that could be exploited concerns the well-known Article V of the Washington Treaty. In certain cases the treaty would be impossible to implement due to the amorphous and indefinite nature of a threat or threats. It is also important to mention that the peculiar nature of hybridity itself creates the need to more closely integrate European nations due to the fact that the primary threat is not military in nature. As any attack could originate from non-military, it compels all European actors to integrate more closely as cooperation among the European Union alliance will be one of key factors to subduing external threats.

---

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> **Multiple Futures Project** 2009, p. 33.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

Hybrid warfare is highlighted in the newly released US “Joint Operating Environment JOE 2035” which states that

*a number of revisionist states will employ a range of coercive activities to advance their national interests through combinations of direct and indirect approaches designed to slow, misdirect, and blunt successful responses by targeted states. These hybrid stratagems will be designed to spread confusion and chaos while simultaneously avoiding attribution and potentially retribution.*<sup>12</sup>

In this context Russia is mentioned as a country that seeks to forward its national regional interests and return to its former status as a great power on the global stage. The document also highlights that the US armed forces’ advantage in conventional war has compelled potential adversaries to look for means other than military, as well as the “development of asymmetric, unconventional, irregular, and hybrid approaches”<sup>13</sup>. The threats are categorized within a broader spectrum, also geographically, as the US is directly involved in many regions and each is possessing unique characteristics. Adaptation based on a thorough analysis of the specific dimensions of each of these areas is one of challenges that must be addressed in order to ensure that particular centre of gravity of a respective ‘hybrid war’ is properly recognized and decisively engaged.

NATO’s *Annual Report 2015* recognizes that the hybrid nature of security challenges, which are increasingly “combining military and non-military means of inflicting damage or creating instability”<sup>14</sup> and further acknowledges that this is not a new phenomenon. However, the scale, speed and intensity of these threats are unprecedented, and require new modes of preparation to face, deter and finally defend against such the evolving threats. This requires a consolidation of all available resources in order to ensure that “a wide range of overt and covert military, paramilitary, and civilian measures are used to disrupt, confuse, damage or coerce – Allies agreed to develop a strategy on NATO’s role in countering hybrid warfare”<sup>15</sup>.

For NATO it is imperative that there exists a consolidated strategy that is based on a consensus of all of the member nations as this will allow the

---

<sup>12</sup> **Joint Operating Environment JOE 2035**. Joint Force Development, J7, Washington, 14 July 2016, p. 6. [JOE 2035]

<sup>13</sup> **JOE 2035**, p. 15.

<sup>14</sup> **The Secretary General’s Annual Report 2016**. Brussels: NATO Public Diplomacy Division, p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

coalition to develop the proper tools to face the threat. The term 'smart defence' has come to denote the development of increasing interconnectivity between nations in order to complement mutual capabilities in a harmonized way. The report highlights the importance of preparedness of non-military assets as the military sector heavily reliant on civilian transportation, manpower, satellite communication and host nation support<sup>16</sup>. It is obvious that without these resources, readiness and support operations cannot be conducted for a protracted conflict, nor will their sustainment be reliable. The report mentions aggressive behaviour, which is manifested in military exercises next to NATO's borders, and further acknowledges that an unpredictable country is challenging Europe's security environment<sup>17</sup>. NATO is the main military arm of the Euro – Atlantic community, but close cooperation with the European Union as a strategic partner must be maintained and enhanced in order to utilize the full spectrum of political, economic and civilian instruments of power in conjunction with the military one.

In general, the definitions and perceptions of 'hybridity' differ but the essence remains the same as it is based on the need to utilize all possible tools which are suitable for a successful engagement of an opponent.

Implementation of all available tools is linked with the type of political system of a country. Decision-making and the latitude to use military and non-military means is easier in authoritarian systems, but only if the leadership of that nation is actually aware of the threat and ready to deal with it. This gives non-democratic nations an advantage over democratic nations, as non-military options can be subsumed based on a single authority's, or a ruling elites', decision pursue a course of action regardless of the will of the people. Armed forces and law enforcement troops can be deployed even faster, leaving an opponent no reaction time to face the threat.

### **The Role of Conventional capabilities**

Moscow wields the 'hybrid' approach very skilfully as it makes comprehensive use of both the political and military domains. This is amplified by the constant uncertainty regarding its military intentions and developments. These actions alone account for the partial achievement of their desired ambitions to of destabilize security in the border regions, restrict

---

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 18, 56.

the Eastward expansion of NATO and the European Union and challenge NATO by exposing its weaknesses and limited capabilities. Nevertheless, the nuclear capabilities of the West certainly continue to be a major deterrence. As of August 2016 the continuation of exercises and large scale mobilizations, has kept NATO guessing about what Russia's real intentions are. This unexpected demonstration of armed forces readiness<sup>18</sup> was a determinant of the outcome of the Warsaw Summit and NATO's decision to deploy four battalions to Eastern Europe. The scale of the snap check exercises was a way of making clear that the West's deployment of multinational battalions pales in comparison to the Kremlin's combat power and confirms its readiness to mobilize not only military but also non-military capabilities in short time frame to conduct large scale operations to achieve a desired end state.



**Figure 2.** Russian troops during snap readiness test in August 2016<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> **Внезапная проверка объявлена в трех военных округах, Северном флоте, ВКС и ВДВ.** – TASS News Agency, 25 August 2016. <<http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/3565111>> (accessed on September 2016). [**Внезапная проверка объявлена в трех военных округах, Северном флоте, ВКС и ВДВ 2016**]

<sup>19</sup> **Внезапная проверка объявлена в трех военных округах, Северном флоте, ВКС и ВДВ 2016.**

From the 25<sup>th</sup> until the 31<sup>st</sup> of August, selected units from three military districts (the Central, Western, and Southern MDs), the Northern Fleet, as well as Aerospace Forces and Airborne Troops were put on full combat readiness. This was the precursor to the Strategic level command-staff exercise of the Southern Military District, codenamed "Caucasus 2016" in which some 12500 troops, with air and heavy equipment support, took part. It was followed by another large scale four-day exercise at the beginning of October 2016 to verify the capacities of Russia's civil defence. The involvement of as many as 40 million people nationwide was a test to coordinate a variety of services in emergency scenarios based on each region's threat assessment. This comprehensive approach to operations involving all the national assets is supported by the newly created Russian *National Defense Control Center*<sup>20</sup> (NDCC), which could be compared to the war-time Stavka from the past.

Although Russia's large scale 'hybrid' warfare capacity in Ukraine came as a shock to the west, it was not developed overnight. Russian military thinkers have incorporated the lessons from the conflicts that are shaping Iraq, and Libya, and have also learned from the wars in Chechnya and Georgia. The concepts emerging from these conflicts have been used to underpin Russia's political objectives as it attempts to re-emerge as a global player, restore its influence over the so called 'near border' area, and in the long term to ensure a better position in relation to the ongoing changes in the security landscape of Asia. Russia's exercises and interventions have also been a presentation of its military capabilities ahead of the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections in order to gain support for the governing party among the population. The exercises were especially effective as they were held during the vacation season which is never a good time for a political campaign, especially one by the opposition. Thus the leadership was able to gain more support by advancing the perception of a strong and powerful armed force that is ready to challenge any threat. Russia's parliamentary election in September did indeed prove to be successful for the United Russia party as it received some 50% of the votes, and more seats in Duma than it had before. During the election there were no major riots, nor were there any protests as it was important for the ruling party to show that the situation in the country is under control. For now a pragmatic use of the available instruments of power sustains the current leadership, especially in relation to internal challenges. Externally Russia has become more visible as an international actor which now sits at the negotiating table with other Western nations for talks

---

<sup>20</sup> NDCC – also known as National Defense Management Center.

about Ukraine and Syria. The utilization of conventional military assets together with other instruments of power within the 'hybrid warfare' framework again allows the country to be recognized as an important European actor with a broader reach.

Russia has modernized its armed forces and trained them extensively in new modes of warfare. This should be taken very seriously. Russia has proven to other nations that it has new capabilities and is ready to act decisively in a limited timeframe using a very short chain of command and a diminished decision-making cycle to achieve a well-coordinated utilization of all of its available national assets. In this context it is worth mentioning the creation of the National State Defense Coordination Center (NDCC), which maintains the same structure, and has the same number of staff regardless of whether the country is at peace or at war. The Center is staffed has some 1000 military and civilian personnel from various defense related military and non-military state institutions, and can operate 24/7. The structure is comprised of: the Supreme Commander's Cell, the Military Command Cell and the Defense Support Cell. This structuring allows the NDCC to utilize all national non-military and military capabilities with a joint effort ratio of 5:1 (4:1), as was confirmed during the snap exercises, the national mobilization in August, and the civil defense exercises in October 2016, as well as during many other exercises. The system is constantly checked and verified via the 'snap exercises' series, thereby improving its efficiency in all types of operations, including the 'hybrid' approach. This unique assemblage of assets has the potential to facilitate a joint multi-institutional comprehensive approach and "if implemented as planned – should greatly improve Russia's speed of reaction and information exchange, assisting in honing its coordinated capabilities for hostile action still further"<sup>21</sup>. The reforms of the command and control system occasioned the establishment of four military districts, which were tasked with stabilization of the evolving situation after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the re-orientation of the military toward new threats. Russia's singular capabilities are recognized by other nations, so there is no attempt to challenge them in a conventional way. The Kremlin is aware of this and therefore fears non-conventional approaches, such as the initiation of a 'colour revolution'. Additionally, NATO is a defensive security organization in nature and will never attack Russia. This is obvious to both sides and Russia exploits this factor by challenging the alliance.

---

<sup>21</sup> **Keir, G.** 2016. Russia's 'New' Tools for Confronting the West Continuity and Innovation in Moscow's Exercise of Power. March 2016. London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs Chatham House, pp. 26–27.

Adjustments to the force structure remain ongoing as the initial focus on the creation of independent and more powerful brigades that were to be subordinated to the military districts was revised. This was demonstrated by the restructuring of the 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Tank Army in the West Military District, the reorganization of the 20<sup>th</sup> Army, and decision to create three new divisions based on existing combat, combat support and combat service support units<sup>22</sup>. It shows that the reform is still ongoing and lessons learned coming from exercises are still being implemented in order to create structures that will meet future requirements and operational needs. One of conclusions reached following the snap exercises was that brigades do not possess enough combat power, and as such are not able to conduct independent operations using separate avenues of approach. Other important changes include the professionalization of the armed forces, which was carried out in order to reduce the reliance on conscripts and to shift the military towards the use of contract non-commissioned officers, more time spent on training soldiers during exercises, and the consolidation of units. Large scale exercises, such as *Zapad* or *Caucasus*, have been well suited for that purpose. Nevertheless, the issue is still whether there are enough qualified candidates for military service. There is also competition with the newly created Russian National Guard (NG) which has similar needs. The snap exercises and their scale have surprised Western observers due to both their size and the possible scenarios, which include even nuclear strikes and the rapid deployment and concentration of forces not only within a single military district but also dispersed over a huge expanse of the country. Moreover, the deployment of air and land force units to Syria has proved that force projection capabilities are growing, although they are still limited when compared to the US, yet are still superior to smaller European nations. Despite Russia's economic situation these developments are provided with constant funding and sustained by the dedicated efforts of the national leadership to keep pace with the modernization the armed forces. The National Guard was created to supplement the concept of nonlinear war or hybrid warfare because it was recognized that if hostilities were to be directed against Russia, the entire territory would be under attack using a variety of capabilities.

The consolidated grouping of military and internal security forces within the NDCC is better suited to providing internal security and will allow the

---

<sup>22</sup> Read in details in: **Carik, J.; Sivineckij, A.** 2016. Беларусь в контексте противостояния Россия–НАТО. Центр стратегических и внешнеполитических исследований [Center for Strategic and Foreign Policy Studies]. Minsk 2016, pp. 5–9.

conventional forces to focus on fighting decisive engagements and battles. The National Guard (NG) can secure the critical political, military and economic infrastructure and will be ready to significantly contribute to territorial defense in the case of any attempt to endanger the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation. Already this structure is being used as an instrument to support the internal security in Crimea as the OMON is already very active there and oversees tasks related e.g. to border and critical infrastructure security. In the same fashion private security companies could also supplement the overall security as they possess trained personnel and a variety of special units that allow real support for internal security. They could be possibly a source of reserve soldiers/servicemen to enhance manpower of armed forces and the NG. Russia has a great deal of experience in uniting its society and using all of its available resources to defend its sovereignty, as has been proven by history. Even now the national effort of the Second World War is often referred to and celebrated as a testament to the country's role as a global player. It is also used to inculcate a certain mind-set among the younger generation and make them ready to dedicate their life to the country if necessary.

### **Private military companies as a tool of hybrid warfare**

The theory of 'hybrid warfare' is continually practiced abroad by the Russian military in order to gain more experience in dealing with any threat, whether it be external or internal. The internal threats include terrorist organizations operating inside and an internal 'colour revolution'. Combat units in Syria practice Hybrid warfare operations as do private military companies (PMC). The latter are still not legal in Russia, but nevertheless have Russian leadership and recruit Russian citizens. According to Foreign Policy magazine, already in 2013 Russian mercenaries from the "Slavonic Corps" were fighting the Islamic State in Syria. Also its successor, the PMC 'Wagner' "has been fighting major battles in both Ukraine and Syria – including battles of Palmyra"<sup>23</sup> with some 900 mercenaries who were paid 240,000 roubles a month (around \$3,500). They are equipped with not only small arms, but

---

<sup>23</sup> **Miller, J.** 2016. Putin's Attack Helicopters and Mercenaries Are Winning the War for Assad. – The Foreign Policy, 30 March 2016. <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/30/putins-attack-helicopters-and-mercenaries-are-winning-the-war-for-assad/>> (accessed on 12 September 2016). See also: **Они сражались за Пальмиру.** – Fontanka, 29 March 2016. <<http://www.fontanka.ru/2016/03/28/171/>> (accessed on 12 September 2016).

also heavy equipment and have also coordinated artillery fire and airstrikes. Compared to other nations, the PMC organizations linked with Russia are well armed and possess a variety of heavy weapon systems. Sky News has released a report and a video claiming that Russian mercenaries were deployed to Syria and according to military analyst Pavel Felgenhauer "the deployment of military contractors is consistent with the Russian take on 'hybrid-war'"<sup>24</sup>. The PMC units were sent to support the Syrian government Army, which was suffering significant losses. The report also highlights the close link between the Syrian government PMC's and the Russian Ministry of Defense. It is mentioning that PMC recruits are trained at Molmino, a Special Forces base in Krasnodar Russia. The commander of the Hong Kong-based company 'Wagner' was Dmitri Utkin, a retired lieutenant colonel and former Commander of the special unit of 2<sup>nd</sup> separate GRU Specnaz brigade in the Pskov oblast. Utkin has good connections within Russia's armed forces. Currently he is affiliated with the PMC Moran Security Group<sup>25</sup>.

Mark Galeotti reports that "Moran is run by FSB veterans, and FSB officers were involved in recruiting for the corps"<sup>26</sup>. Galeotti also reports that "the Donbas has been a testing ground for new state-controlled but notionally private initiatives, ranging from the Vostok Battalion, deployed in 2014, to a variety of other groups drawn from Cossacks, veterans, and adventurers, largely mustered by the FSB – or more usually, military intelligence, the GRU"<sup>27</sup>. If they were to be legalized, PMCs could become very effective within the 'hybrid warfare' sphere by circumventing the involvement of regular units of the armed forces for certain missions. However there is also the chance that they could be considered subject to Russian legislation, which would link them officially to the government. Such a status is not desired, as indirect control is the more comfortable option. This scenario has already been realized in Ukraine with the passage of the law 'Regarding the State Service of the Russian Cossacks', wherein the Cossack units have been

---

<sup>24</sup> Sparks, J. 2016. Revealed: Russia's "Secret Syria Mercenaries". – Sky News, 10 August 2016. <<http://news.sky.com/story/revealed-russias-secret-syria-mercenaries-10529248>> (accessed on 12 August 2016).

<sup>25</sup> The Moran Security Group is also managed by former military officers. See Website: <<http://moran-group.org/en/about/index>>.

<sup>26</sup> Galeotti, M. 2016. Moscow's Mercenaries in Syria. – War on the Rocks, 5 April 2016. <<http://warontherocks.com/2016/04/moscows-mercenaries-in-syria/>> (accessed on 12 June 2016). FSB – The Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

tasked with<sup>28</sup>: the prevention and amelioration of emergency situations and natural disasters, civil and territorial defense; the protection of public order, the protection of borders, and the fight against terrorism. Russian Cossacks have already been used in Ukraine and the same approach would be applied to the PMC's if they were to be legalized. In Russia there are already multiple companies such as: 'RSB-Group', 'Anti-Terror', 'MAR', 'Center R' and others, which are under the hidden control of state despite not being legal.

### Conclusions

Sun Tzu recognized that "Hence to fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting"<sup>29</sup>. This is the current strategic thinking in Russia. The old type of thinking related to the Cold War period is over, and Russia no longer has the capabilities to conduct such large scale operations and conquer vast territories. This is understood by the Kremlin. Thus they attempt to challenge the leadership of their opponents, such as NATO and EU by using non-military means in order to weaken them, destroy their internal cohesion, and augment internal divisions within societies. These efforts, combined with the continuous build-up of the armed forces, the establishment of the National Guard, and the rise of private security and military companies ensures that Russia remains secure from an external attack. It also ensures that the Kremlin retains close control over the internal situation, by neutralizing any opposition, managing terrorist threats and obviating any 'colour revolution' that could be incited by external powers. The Kremlin strategy is partially linked with the recognition that popular movements hold power over, and are capable of changing, any government. Historically there have been instances when Russian citizens were able to effectively change the entire political system.

The parallel developments of military and law enforcement capabilities facilitates the control over other instruments of power, which are merged through the skilfully utilization of the information and cyber domains. The 'hybrid' approach is conceptualized in the 'Gerasimov doctrine' and its

---

<sup>28</sup> Review of article by V. Gusarov, a security expert of 'Information Resistance' group. See: **Russian Private Military Companies As Licensed Tool of Terror**. <<https://informnapalm.org/en/russian-private-military-companies-as-licensed-tool-of-terror/>> (accessed on 12 June 2016).

<sup>29</sup> **Sun Tzu**. *The Art of War*. Translated by Lionel Giles, Part III: Attack by Stratagem. <<http://classics.mit.edu/Tzu/artwar.html>> (accessed on 12 September 2016).

capabilities are certainly apparent. The challenge is how long these policies can be sustained in light of the economic situation. In the short term, until 2020–2022, it is feasible but in the long term the economic situation must be improved in order to avoid the implosion of the current system.

The answer from Western nations must be decisive and must include all possible tools that will place continuous pressure on Russia. The members of European and Euro-Atlantic communities must be united and unwavering in their efforts, as any indication of a lack of cohesion or hesitation will be exploited. The 'hybrid' threat requires the intensive consolidation all of the available resources and security assets of each individual nation. NATO recognizes that in order to face these threats it too must adopt „a hybrid strategy to cope with the fast-moving challenges posed through a range of military and non-military means“<sup>30</sup>. The economic sanctions that were imposed by the West are having their effect on the Russian economy, albeit slowly. In the long term they will continue to affect the country and force it to make some difficult decisions. There is the danger that some of these decisions might entail hostilities. In order to effectively prepare for such a contingency the West must have a comprehensive array of 'new generation warfare' options.

---

<sup>30</sup> The Secretary General's Annual Report 2016, *op. cit.*, p. 10.