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**RUSSIA: FROM COLD WAR VIA “PEACE DIVIDEND” TO HYBRID  
WAR IN EUROPE. HOW TO RECONCILE EUROPE'S STRATEGIC  
INTERESTS WITH RUSSIA'S LEGITIMATE INTERESTS**

***Abstract:***

*As of today, Europe has to face new asymmetric threats, including Hybrid Warfare, terrorist attacks, and illegal migration that transcend the common security aspects and have further roots beyond its borders, in unsolved hot spot areas, like Eastern and Southern neighbourhood. For many military theorists, the Ukrainian Crisis represented a huge opportunity to restart debates regarding hybridity in future warfare. Some definitions and conceptual elements regarding hybrid threats and hybrid challenges have been developed since the Second Lebanon War of 2006 and were improved after the 2008 Chechen War. Hybrid Warfare theory has been developed by Russia since 2004, as the future conflict concept to counter NATO's expansion to the East and the installation of the US Anti-Missile Shield in Europe. meanwhile, Western Governments has defined the hybrid threat as an issue rather than as an operating concept that requires a solution. as a result, up to now no American National Strategy or doctrine has incorporated this theory as a new form of future conflicts. In conjunction with reviewing and adjusting strategies and war fighting concepts, the defence community must re-evaluate the force structure needed for future conflicts and build adequate capabilities. With a*

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*wider range of threats that may require the need to employ various capabilities simultaneously, NATO and member states must continue their efforts to strive for greater joint operations and possibly inter-dependence. With EU support, they must transform their industrial-era organizational structures into more agile, information-, and knowledge-based enterprises, which requires a large investment in ideas, technology, and people.*

**Keywords:**

*Hybrid War, Hybrid Threat, Non-Linear Warfare, Information Warfare, Propaganda, Cyber War, National Strategy, Military Strategy, Armed Forces Doctrine*

## Introduction

The Ukrainian Crisis of 2014 represented a new opportunity to reopen a very important and demanding issue regarding the security of our continent - Russia and her hybrid threat for Europe. At the same time, this subject has also become a continuous topic of current military debates, namely "Hybrid Warfare Theory".

Why is this topic important for Europe? First of all, the physiognomy of conflict has evolved when new situations of political-economic and strategic insecurity have arisen in Europe, exemplified by the annexation of Crimea, Ukrainian Crisis, turmoil situation in Turkey, populism in Europe, extremism, terrorism, migration crisis, Great Britain leaving the EU (BREXIT), divided Europe etc. It is also worth noting the revival of Geostrategic spheres of influence and the need for vital space for some regional powers, like the rising hegemony of Russia.

In turn, the military arena has been influenced by new objectives, types of forces, and specific means to act, including increased importance and usability of Special Operations Forces (SOF), the Cyber space, a new conceptual Comprehensive Approach (CA), increased intensity for conducting military actions, a systemic analysis of the enemy (Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information and Infrastructure/PMESII), the multi-dimensional battle-space (energy, space, virtual, electromagnetic, nano), a huge variety of dominant types of mili-

tary and non-military actions, more sophisticated and unexpected modes to conduct violent actions<sup>2</sup>.

What is important to note here is the idea of replacing strategic interests of regional powers for controlling/influencing events instead of territorial occupancy. This new Geostrategic approach is based on the idea of physical presence in the favour of control to influence and, if necessary, interfere, by avoiding, as much as possible, direct armed confrontations. It also changes the necessity to produce substantial damages to the enemy with the one of avoiding them and highlights the possibility to act at the edge of International Laws.

This article focuses on answering some questions including; Is Comprehensive Approach (CA), a new military theory, or an old hat with a new name? Is it still valid today? Is Europe ready to face this new challenge? Are member states prepared to counter a foggy type of war?

### **Russia Approach to Hybridity**

It is obvious that the fall of the Soviet Union and the rise of the so-called “Gorby” Era (1985-1991) have influenced both, politically and militarily, the way in which the new established Russian Federation started to think on how to keep its geostrategic interests.

From the beginning, Mikhail Sergeyevici Gorbachev was willing to make radical changes in the Russians’ way of political thinking and started to teach the world two new words: “perestroika” (restructuring) and “glasnost” (openness)<sup>3</sup>. On foreign policy, he decided that the USSR would no longer meddle in the affairs of East European Soviet satellite states, attempting to limit sovereignty under the “Kvitsinsky doctrine”. Therefore, some satellite republics got independence, the two German countries reunified and the Berlin Wall fell down<sup>4</sup>.

Of course, not everything went well Gorbachev’s time, if we think back to the 1989-1992 Abkhazia and South Ossetia’s separatist regions conflict and the

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<sup>2</sup> P. Smith, *Hybrid Threats and Irregular Warfare*, presentation made at the USMC Center for Irregular Warfare, on 10 Sep 2013, <<http://indianstrategicknowledgeonline.com/web/Brief%20DirCIW%20chop.pdf>> (30.04.2018).

<sup>3</sup> In Mikhail Gorbachev’s doctrine “perestroika” allowed private business ownership for the first time in decades, while “glasnost” brought the country’s problems out into the open.

<sup>4</sup> *Mikhail Gorbachev. President of USSR*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mikhail-Gorbachev>> (21.04.2018).

fact that Georgia experienced two violent ethnic conflicts, as well as a short two-phase civil war, which was transformed into a so called “frozen” conflict. This situation also happened with the Transnistria War that started in November 1990 as a limited conflict between pro-Transnistria forces, including the Transnistrian Republican Guard, militia and Cossack units, and supported by elements of the Russian 14<sup>th</sup> Army, and pro-Moldovan forces, including Moldovan troops and police. Fighting intensified on 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1992 and, alternating with ad hoc ceasefires, lasted throughout the spring and early summer of 1992 until a ceasefire was declared on 21<sup>st</sup> of July 1992, which has held and became another “frozen” conflict<sup>5</sup>.

The good thing was the arms race with the US, which took a U-turn and one arms control treaty followed another. This is why he won the 1990 Nobel Peace Prize.

The “Gorby” Era finished with hard-liners attempting a coup and Boris Yeltsin was elected new President. The “Yeltsian” period of 1991-1999 started and a string of republics declared independence. This period was considered the period of democratic neglect, under the “Koziryev-doctrine”<sup>6</sup>.

On 8<sup>th</sup> of December 1991, Presidents of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus met in the Belovezh Forest in Belarus and signed the Belavezha Accords<sup>7</sup> which put an end to the USSR, replacing it with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Currently, there are nine former Soviet countries in the CIS (Georgia withdrew in 2009 and Ukraine and Tajikistan did not ratify the treaty).

Because Yeltsin’s reforms went wrong, a 1993 deadlock with the increasingly frustrated legislators pushed the country to the verge of civil war. Yeltsin called in the tanks and he shelled his way out of the conflict. Tanks were needed again between December 1994 and August 1996, when the southern republic of Chechnya wanted to break away. Yeltsin pledged to crush the resistance in days, but the botched operation grew into a bloody war finalized with a peace treaty in 1997<sup>8</sup>.

On 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1999, President Boris Yeltsin resigned and Vladimir Putin became acting President. The day before, a program article signed by Putin, called “Russia at the turn of the millennium”, was published on the Rus-

<sup>5</sup> G. E. Curtis, *Russia: A Country Study*, Washington 1996, pp. 72-76.

<sup>6</sup> Russian foreign minister Andrey Kozyrev called for strengthening a “unified military strategic space” in the CIS and protecting Russia’s major interests there.

<sup>7</sup> The provisions of the Belavezha Accords can be accessed on: *Belavezha Accords*, <<https://www.scribd.com/document/210457213/Belavezha-Accords>> (15.05.2018).

<sup>8</sup> S. Markedonov, *Post-Soviet Russia: Torn Between Nationalism and Separatism*, “Russia in Global Affairs”, 27 Dec 2012, <<http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/The-Belavezha-Accords-Legacy-15814>> (10.05.2018).

sian government web site, in which the first task in Putin's view was the consolidation of Russia's society and shifting from democracy towards a police state. He had three tours as president and in between, he nominated Medvedev as a mascot – “tandemocracy” between the two<sup>9</sup>.

In June 2000, the “Concept of the Russian Federation's foreign policy” was elaborated, in which, among older foreign objectives, there were established two new ones regarding the formation of the “Neighbourhood zone” around the perimeter of the Russian borders and protecting the rights and interests of Russian citizens and compatriots abroad. It was, in fact, a tentative to rediscover the region in the NATO-EU enlargement context.

After 2000, the “Putin doctrine” evolved from a geo-economic approach (“Russians are back: instead of tanks, in banks”) to a more aggressive geo-strategic one. Putin's tendency for bringing back the perception of a “super-power Russia”<sup>10</sup>, as well as his new KGB methods and tactics of wagging war were experienced during the Second Chechen War (August 1999 - March 2009), when a punishment operation was launched by the Russian Federation in response to the invasion of Dagestan by the Islamic International Brigade (IIB). The new way of conducting warfare consisted of a mix of guerrilla warfare and terrorist actions, including bombings, suicide attacks, assassinations, and hostage taking.

These new tactics were also demonstrated in September 2004 during the Beslan school siege, when FSB Spetsnaz forces used an unknown incapacitating chemical agent. Shortly after the Beslan terror act, Putin revitalised the old forms of propaganda campaign by enhancing a Kremlin-sponsored program aimed at “improving Russia's image” abroad. One of the major projects of the program was the creation in 2005 of Russia Today, as a rolling English-language TV news channel providing 24-hour news coverage, modelled on America's CNN<sup>11</sup>. A three-week wave of massive cyber-attacks on the small Baltic country of Estonia took place in April-May 2007, the first known incidence of such an assault on a state – erupted at the end of Mar 2007 over the Estonians' removal of the Bronze Soldier Soviet war memorial in central

<sup>9</sup> For discussion of the evolution of the tandem and the relationship between Medvedev and Putin, see: A. Monaghan, *The Russian vertikal: the tandem, power and the elections*, Chat-ham House - Russia and Eurasia Programme Paper REP 2011/01, May 2011.

<sup>10</sup> S. Aleksashenko, *Russia's Economic Agenda to 2020*, “The International Affairs”, No. 88, 1(2012), p. 33.

<sup>11</sup> N. Țibrigan, *Strategic Priorities of the Russian Propaganda in Romania and Moldova*, <<http://larics.ro/prioritati-strategice-ale-razboiului-informational-rus-romania-si-r-moldova/>> (30.04.2018).

Tallinn, the country has been subjected to a barrage of cyber warfare, disabling the websites of government ministries, political parties, newspapers, banks, and companies. The Russo-Georgian War, between 7<sup>th</sup> of August and 8<sup>th</sup> of September 2008, also considered the first European war of the 21st century, was a large scale war between Georgia, Russia and the Russian-backed self-proclaimed republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The fighting, which took place in the strategically important Transcaucasia region, bordering the Middle East and Russia used first elements of hybridity; like a propaganda campaign between Russia and Georgia, recognition of separatist regions, use of proxies and a notable cyber-attack during an actual military engagement happening at the same time<sup>12</sup>.

2012 represented a major shift in Russian internal and external policy being influenced by the economic slowdown, which threatened Putin's political bargain with the populace, as well as the NATO bombing of Libya in 2011, perceived as an "abuse" of Russia's abstention from the vote on the UN Resolution. These caused a decline in Putin's approval ratings from 80% to 60%, translated in mass political protests that took place in Russia in late 2011 and early 2012.

After assuming office in May 2012, Putin moved quickly to suppress political opposition, enacted a stream of anti-liberal legislation and adopted a social conservatism that intruded into people's private lives, touching on such matters as faith, sex, the family and education. He promoted the new geopolitical theory of "Eurasianism", in which his celestial task as a tsar was to "reconstitute the Great Russian Space", by reviving the geostrategic, economic and political spheres of influence of temporarily "lost Eurasian territories"<sup>13</sup>.

In the international arena Putin also made a continuous effort to build/enhanced paralleled regional organisations to minimise the existing ones' importance and activity in the Eurasian region<sup>14</sup>, trying to act at the edge of established international laws and rule. Those regional organisations are shown in figure No. 1.

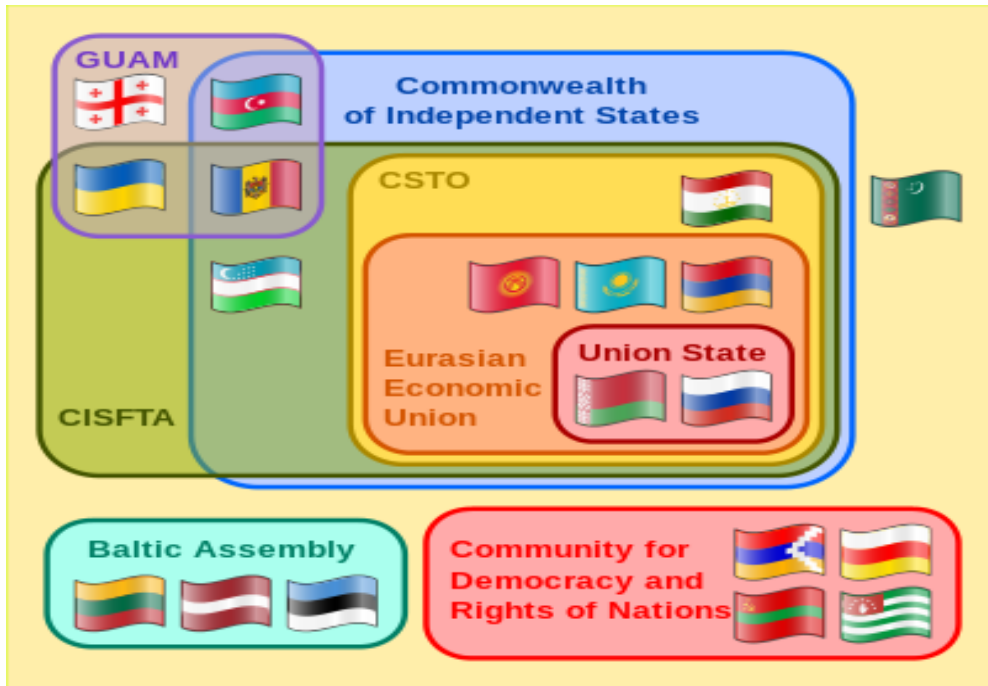
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<sup>12</sup> G. T. Donovan Jr., *Russian Operational Art in the Russo-Georgian War of 2008*, U.S. Army War College, 2009 USAWC Strategy Research Project, p. 21.

<sup>13</sup> M. Bassin, *Eurasianism Classical and Neo – The lines of continuity*, "Slavic Eurasian Studies", No. 17, 2008, p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> "Eurasia" is sometimes referred to in terms of a geopolitical region, either in between the political definitions of Europe and Asia or the states which are parts of both continents, i.e. the Russian Federation and other states of the former Soviet union, especially the Central Asian states and the Southern Caucasus states.

Figure No. 1. Russia's international efforts to build paralleled regional organisations



Source: *NATO Relevance in Eurasia*, a PowerPoint presentation on <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/> (30.05.2018).

The most important regional organisations act in the fields of common security, free trade and union economy. The Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) was established in 1992 as the CIS Collective Security Treaty meant to counter NATO's expansion and influence in the former USSR' sphere of influence. It is an observer organisation at the United Nations General Assembly and comprises seven states (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) and started to conduct some common military exercises after 2005. At the same time, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine formed a non-aligned, more pro-Western group known as the "GUAM" (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova).

In order to face the new economic expansion of the EU in their proxy, the CIS countries agreed to create a free trade area (CISFTA), signing the agree-

ment in October 2011. Even if it was signed by eight of the eleven CIS prime ministers at a meeting in St. Petersburg, it has been ratified by Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Moldova, and Armenia and is in force only between those states. The free trade agreement eliminates export and import duties on a number of goods but also contains a number of exemptions that will ultimately be phased out. An agreement was also signed on the basic principles of currency regulation and currency controls in the CIS at the same October 2011 meeting. But corruption and bureaucracy are serious problems for trade in CIS countries.

Same, the Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC) was formally created in May 2001, by Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan to form the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space. Uzbekistan joined EAEC in 2005. Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine hold observer status. EAEC was working on establishing a common energy market and exploring the more efficient use of water in central Asia. The Eurasian Economic Community was terminated on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015 in connection with the launch of the Eurasian Economic Union.

### **Hybrid Warfare Theory – Hybrid War in Europe**

We can notice, at the beginning of the new Millennium, a swift change in the physiognomy of conducting wars, particularly after Al Qaeda became an international terrorist organization, followed by the appearance of the first theory of hybrid threats, incorporating Chechens and Iraqi insurgents, fanatical and religious factions in the Middle East - like Hezbollah and Hamas - and foreign jihad's fighters in Afghanistan. Later, using the lessons learned in Afghanistan and Iraq and the analyses carried out after the Chechnya War of 2002 and the Second Lebanon War of 2006, Americans were the first military analysts' who came with the theory of the hybrid threats as US military theorists added failing states and some hybrid groups into the definition of new hybrid threats.

Indeed, it was William J. Nemeth who coined the respective name in 2002, by describing the Chechen insurgency as a "mix of guerrilla warfare with modern military tactics and use of technology"<sup>15</sup>.

Later, in 2009, using lessons learned from Afghanistan and the 2008 Russian-Georgian Conflict, theorists put together hybrid threats with hybrid challenges (traditional, irregular, terrorist, and disruptive), as well as the physical and conceptual dimensions of conflict - the former, a struggle against an armed enemy and the latter, a wider struggle for, control and support of the combat

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<sup>15</sup> Definition adopted in support of U.S. Joint Forces Command during the Hybrid War Conference, held in Washington, D.C., February 24, 2009.



zone's indigenous population, along with the support of the home fronts of the intervening nations, and the support of the international community<sup>16</sup>.

Until the end of 2012, the term Hybrid Warfare was not found in any official doctrinal publications, being considered as a non-doctrinal term, yet unaccepted by military planners. The first attempt to officially define this new threat was made by the Supreme Allied Command Transformation (HQ SACT) in 2009, when it described the hybrid threat as "one perceived from any established or potential adversary, be it the states or non-state actors and terrorists, which has the ability, proven or probable to use simultaneously and in a way adaptable for conventional and unconventional means to achieve these objective"<sup>17</sup>. NATO's concerns in this area, as well as the US Military implication were stopped in 2013.

It was the 2014 crisis in Ukraine that restarted the Western preoccupation for what was considered by Gen Breedlove, a former SACEUR, "a new type of war, a hybrid war, where armies do not always take on the role of direct aggressor. Instead, they serve to intimidate, while imported sabotage groups [do the fighting] together with local extremists and criminal gangs fight on the ground"<sup>18</sup>.

More and more, military analysts started to consider that future military conflicts will manifest three trends, particularly depending on the combatants' ability and willingness to face the new demands of the modern battle-space: 1. conventional super-technical, ultra-fast and highly expensive warfare, which can be sustained by a limited number of countries only (most economically and militarily developed); 2. hybrid warfare, in which a mix of new technology and old fashion doctrines will be used, blending different types of tactics and technologies in innovative ways and luring the war forms in combinations of increasing frequency and lethality; 3. generalization of irregular/asymmetric conflicts, where both conventional forces and unconventional, atypical means (terrorism and organized crimes included), as well as cyber<sup>19</sup> will be employed.

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<sup>16</sup> C. S. Gray, *Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare*, London 2006, p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> *Multiple Future Projects. Navigating towards 2030. Findings and Recommendations*, April 2009, <[www.act.nato.int/nato-multiple-futures-project-documents](http://www.act.nato.int/nato-multiple-futures-project-documents)> (10.05.2018).

<sup>18</sup> *Hybrid War, Hybrid Response?* NATO video <<https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2014/russia-ukraine-nato-crisis/russia-ukraine-crisis-war/en/index.htm>> (30.04.2018).

<sup>19</sup> J. N. Mattis, F. Hoffman, *Future Warfare: The Rise of Hybrid Warfare*, "U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings", November 2005, pp. 30-32.

Amazingly, the term Hybrid Warfare is a Western description of Russian military practice, rather than a conceptual innovation originating in Russia. In Gen. Gherasimov's 2014 Military Doctrine, signed by Putin on 26 Dec 2014, the term used is "Non-Linear Warfare", but describes exactly what Russians did in Crimea and Donbas Region. According to this doctrine, the nature and characteristics of modern warfare conflict integrate the use of military force, as well as political, economic, informational and other non-military measures nature, implemented with the extensive use of the protest potential of the population, and special operations forces.

The Russian Military Doctrine considers all aspects of mixing and massive use of precision, hypersonic weapons systems and military technology. Their electronic warfare means, weapons based on new physical principles, comparable in efficiency with nuclear weapons, information systems management, and unmanned aircraft and autonomous marine vehicles controlled robotic weapons and military equipment. The scope is to increase effects on the enemy throughout the depth of its territory, simultaneously in the global information space, aerospace, land and sea. Those effects will be achieved by selectivity and a high degree of destruction of objects, the use of various mobile forces and the fire.

At the same time, it is envisaged to establish in the territories of the warring parties of permanent war zones, participation in hostilities irregular armed groups and private military companies, as well as the use of indirect and asymmetric methods and actions, including the use of externally funded and run political forces and social movements.

All Gherasimov's ideas have been utilized in both the annexation of Crimea and the Eastern Ukrainian Conflict; these internal actions were not enough to terminate the conflict. In order to prevent going further to Southern Ukraine, Russia had to act in places where it might achieve rapid diplomatic and political victories against the West - the Baltics, Moldova or the Caucasus - while encouraging Ukraine's government to collapse into gridlock and developing bilateral relations along the Estonia-Azerbaijan line. This would prevent a U.S. strategy of containment that worked during the Cold War and one that the Europeans are incapable of implementing on their own.

A divided Europe works well for Russia. Kremlin analysts came to the conclusion that the Eastern European countries might represent the weakest point of Europe, a vital corridor to defeat the USA and NATO (see figure No. 2). A lack of consensus between NATO and the EU member states is a political objective for Russian propaganda in preserving security. Different countries have different perceptions of Russia and different concerns.

Figure No. 2. The Safety Corridor



Source: G. Friedman, *From Estonia to Azerbaijan: American Strategy After Ukraine*, "Geopolitical Weekly", 25 March 2014, <[http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/estonia-azerbaijan-american-strategy-after-ukraine?utm\\_source=freelist-f&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=20140325&utm\\_term=Gweekly&utm\\_content=readmore](http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/estonia-azerbaijan-american-strategy-after-ukraine?utm_source=freelist-f&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=20140325&utm_term=Gweekly&utm_content=readmore)> (15.03.2018)

The propaganda strategy used by Russia against the corridor states is based on aggravating internal and external disputes and weaknesses, inflaming xenophobic, chauvinistic and separatist sentiments and restarting old territorial disputes where they exist between states,. Some methods used are about focusing on historical injustice, revisionism, increasing distrust and hate between nations, fear of migration, euroscepticism, anti-American and pro-Russia sentiments.

Moreover, in some Eastern European countries paramilitary organizations with some tight relations with Russia have been established using the Russian military clubs type of structure – like the National Guard (NHG) and Czech Reservists (CSR) in the Czech Republic, Slovak Military (SB) and Kosice Action and Resistance Group (VK) in Slovakia -, or extremist movements/parties (Hungary, Austria) have been used to poison relationships with neighbours. These organizations are trained by Spetsnaz experts,

are infiltrated in the security and military forces and participated, covertly, in the Eastern Ukraine offensive. They use extremist rhetoric and put political-social pressure on official Governments as directed by Moscow (e.g. establishing a Donbas Republic's Consulate in Ostrava, Eats Czech Republic)<sup>20</sup>.

Countries that were at risk from 1945 to 1989 are not the same ones at risk today. Many of these countries were part of the Soviet Union then, and the rest were Soviet satellites. The old alliance system was not built for this confrontation. The Estonia-Azerbaijan line has made retaining sovereignty in the face of Russian power its primary interest. The rest of Europe is not in jeopardy, and these countries are not prepared to commit financial and military resources to a problem they believe can be managed with little risk to them<sup>21</sup>. Therefore, any American strategy must bypass NATO or at the very least create new structures to organize the region.

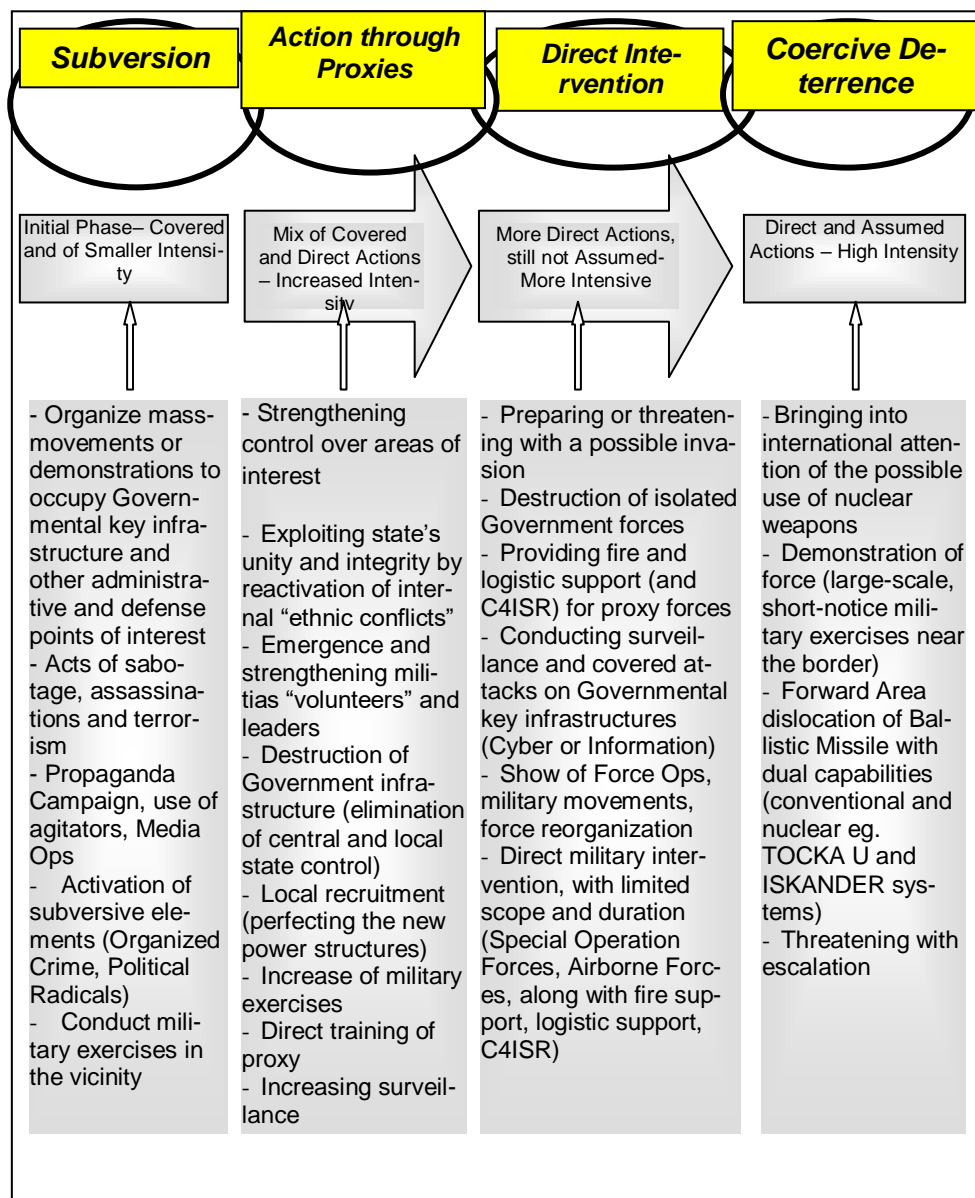
Hybrid challenges are not limited to state or non-state actors. This is because of the repercussions of the Ukrainian Crisis abroad. Those challenges might also include regional or even international actors that could lose their neutrality or impartiality. The repeated statement of Mr. Putin regarding "the defence of Russian ethnics is not ensured by respective Governments and their Constitutions, in countries where they leave, but by Russia" has provoked a breach in the International Law system. This statement caused international or regional organizations, like OSCE, NATO and the EU to take adequate measures for sanctions or assurance of threatened countries.

According to Romanian strategic military planners, Hybrid Warfare has four main phases, which can be delimited by the degree of intensity and assuming of responsibility. In essence, as can be seen in figure No. 4, it is about generating social chaos and its orientation to achieve the ultimate political objective. These phases include deception and disinformation campaigns, economic coercion and corruption, in support of military action. Also, there is another aspect when analyzing the Russian type of Hybrid Warfare – Russia's "nuclear signalling", as part of a strategy of political intimidation.

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<sup>20</sup> G. Friedman, *From Estonia to Azerbaijan: American Strategy After Ukraine*, "Geopolitical Weekly", 25 March 2014, on <[http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/estonia-azerbaijan-american-strategy-after-ukraine?utm\\_source=freelist-f&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=20140325&utm\\_term=Gweekly&utm\\_content=readmore](http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/estonia-azerbaijan-american-strategy-after-ukraine?utm_source=freelist-f&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=20140325&utm_term=Gweekly&utm_content=readmore)> (15.03.2018).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*.

Figure No. 3. *Phases of the Hybrid War*

Source: own work

According to NATO's 2015 Strategy on its role in countering Hybrid Warfare, the use of hybrid strategies in conflict are not new, what is new for international organisations like NATO and the EU is the way a wide range of political, civil and military instruments are combined and coherently applied, aiming at particular vulnerabilities of targeted nations and international organisations in order to achieve strategic objectives. Common to the state and non-state models is the simultaneous, opportunistic, synergetic and sophisticated combination of conventional/regular, subversive/irregular and criminal/corrupt actions in designated geographical areas to achieve political aims<sup>22</sup>.

### **European Approach in Countering the Hybrid Warfare – an European Nation Perspective**

Both, NATO and the EU, have from the beginning, recognised that the primary response to hybrid threats or attacks rests foremost with the targeted nation, but the wider international community must also be prepared to play an important role. No single nation, supranational entity or international organisation has all necessary means to coherently counter hybrid warfare<sup>23</sup>. Moreover, the current national strategy, war-fighting concepts, and force structures are ill-suited for this emerging blend of warfare. Therefore, cooperation at a multilateral level is essential. As part of their planned response, nations may turn to Allies and to the wider community for assistance, which should be coordinated by the receiving national authorities in concert with their national plan for countering the challenge that they face.

When a strong security organization like NATO or a member state is attacked by conventional land, sea or air forces, it is usually clear how to best respond. Even if an asymmetric attack, either terrorist or insurgent occurs, it is more difficult but also more clear how to react. But what happens when the attack is a mixture of conventional forces and irregular adversaries? Is there any best response?

Is having a strategy to define its role in countering hybrid warfare and a strategic partnership with the EU to closely work on this topic, as well as preparing an implementation plan for this strategy is enough for both NATO and the EU to effectively react? Not developing adequate capabilities, modifying joint doctrines and experimenting with specific concepts in this regard, makes

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<sup>22</sup> *NATO's Role in Countering Hybrid Warfare Strategy*, PO(2015)0673, issued in Nov. 2015, on <[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_125368.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_125368.htm?selectedLocale=en)> (12.04.2018).

<sup>23</sup> *NATO Comprehensive Report on Hybrid Warfare*, PO(2015)0317, Office of the NATO SecGen, June 2015, p. 3.

security organizations, their member states and military intellectually and institutionally unprepared for the changes in warfare theory.

In order to successfully counter hybrid warfare, NATO, the EU and their member states must be able, firstly, to recognise and attribute hybrid actions in a timely manner, followed by having the resilience to resist hybrid actions. They should be ready to resist by having necessary processes that allow rapid assessment and decision making, as well as necessary capabilities to be able to respond effectively.

In the Strategy there are included adequate measures from which both NATO and the EU can address the changing character and hybridization of warfare by defining their roles for the three interrelated functions of prepare, deter and defend.

In the EU's related strategic report of 2015 "Relevance of Hybrid Threats for European Security", those functions are: assess, deter and respond.

At the national level, the Government needs to improve planning and inter-agency integration to increase its capacity to address non-military aspects of the conflict, by coordinating military efforts with institutions that have responsibilities in the security and defence, areas as well as expertise in the private sector, including NGOs and academia. Beyond diplomatic and military powers, the Government needs to develop a more effectively integrated stabilization and reconstruction capacity, ensuring necessary resources and, later, coordinating efforts between civilian agencies and different categories of military forces.

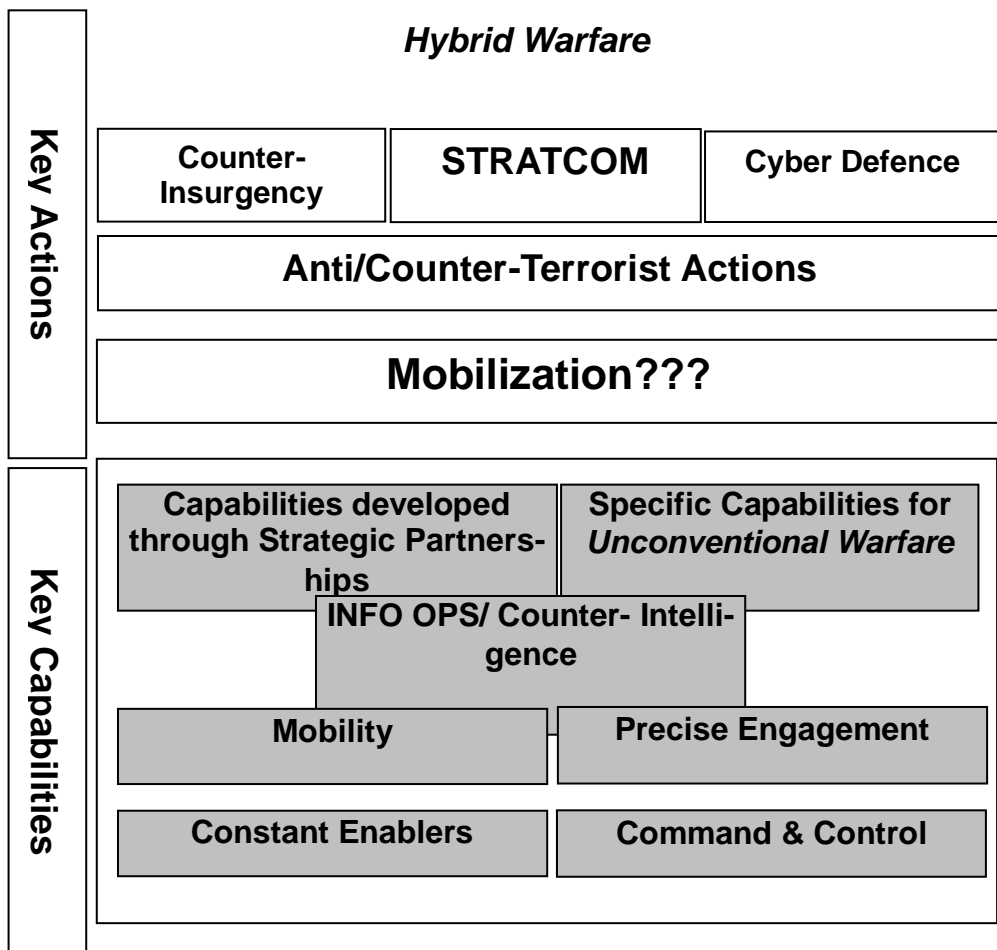
As a result, the new approach to counter the Hybrid War should be an integrated, comprehensive, civil-military, based on engaging all elements of national power – diplomatic, informational, military and economic, inter-institutionally. The most urgent national measures, which need to be taken to counter such an emergent conflict are: establish Inter-Agencies Working Group, at experts' level, on operations planning issues and their respective Sub-Groups on different ministerial issues; include the Hybrid Warfare Concept within the doctrinal documents; establish an overall national strategy and implementation plan, to include responsibilities and preparatory measures for all involved institutions, both in the strategic and defence areas – political, social, economic, administrative, rule of law – Involving military and non-military capabilities; establish the legal framework for inter ministerial cooperation at the political and experts' levels, as well as transferring national decision-making process at the ministerial level; develop and deliver required capabilities for countering such conflicts in major area of expertise (like police, military police, civil protection, administration, justice); and provide differentiated specific training, together with military components

For the last two proposed possible measures is mandatory to establish Operational Needs to define the required adaptation of the existing capabilities, in order to effectively participate in the established counter-actions against the Hy-

brid War, such as: Organizational Flexibility; Early Warning through Surveillance and Collection of Information; Mobility, Manageability and Modularity, including Management Structures; Adaptability and Flexibility; Decentralized Execution; Simultaneity and Continuity; Rigor in Organizing and Preparing of Actions; Initiative, Speed and Accuracy; Use of Technology; Actions in Densely Populated Areas; and Establishing a Favourable Legal Framework to Participate.

There are still debates amongst national decision-makers and planners regarding what should come first in a Strategy to counter Hybrid War – specific actions at the Strategic level or the development of new dedicated capabilities (see figure No. 5).

Figure No. 4. *Key Actions versus Key Capabilities*



Source: own work.



In addition to the specific training for the existing capabilities to face this new type of war, it would be advisable to develop specific military capabilities to counter hybrid war, such as those related to planning and preparedness to counter/carrying Irregular Warfare (IW), Cyber Defence, waging Information Operations (INFO OPS), Civil-Military Operations (CIMIC), Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) and Counter-Insurgency Operations (COIN), synchronization of Strategic Communications (STRATCOM), internal use of Special Operation Forces (SOF), as well as assess and evaluate IW Campaign and Operations.

I didn't mentioned anything about specific non-military capabilities, because there is no study/analysis at the civilian society level yet to determine what is needed in countering this new type of war from their perspective.

The development of new capabilities to counter specific Hybrid War implies, at the beginning, the existence of joint bases, achieving strategic transport, SOF, logistics operations management system, achieving interoperability of C2 and logistic support. Not of a less importance is considered realizing recognized Common and unique Operational Picture of the engagement environment and possible rapid assess of the situation, as well as embarkation / disembarkation, force structure / scalability / flexibility, force protection and exploitation of high-tech. Finally, it needs a common legislation / legal issues and joint training and action.

I consider the hybrid warfare theory to be a new approach of unconventionality against the very-high theology, in which states or groups could select from the whole menu of tactics and technologies and blend them in innovative ways to meet their own strategic culture, geography and aims when crashing modern Westernized Armed Forces. It is not about blending the modes, only, but also it seems to blend the levels of warfare, using hybrid tactics and techniques to obtain strategic effects and achieve political objectives.

There is a large group of military theorists, led by Frank Hoffman and dr. Russ Glenn who considers that the hybrid wars are not new, but different, in which the compression of the levels of war is complicated by a simultaneous convergence of modes. It is not about facing the hybrid threat, but it's about conceptualizing the future of conflicts.

Despite the idea of using those techniques as a new approach, there is evidence to indicate that nothing is new for Russia. A quick remember of the Estonian cyber-attack in 2007, as well as the invasion of Georgia in 2008, demonstrate that the hybrid warfare theory has been developed by the Russian military theorists since the beginning of this Millennium, as the future conflict concept to counter NATO's expansion to the East and the installation of the US Anti-

Missile Shield in Europe. It was either overtly experimented, with obvious moves, or using more subtle moves, economic warfare, cyber-attacks, conducted under the cover of being activists at work. What the crisis in Ukraine shows to the experts is the combination of them as a set of tactics that has been deployed to one degree or another, for the last five or six years.

The worse idea regarding this type of warfare is the impossibility of European security and defence organisations, like NATO and the EU, to interfere in member states at the beginning of the conflict. According to International and national laws, until a country's violent actions against another is not recognised as such, it is an internal issue and the respective nation should react and take all necessary measure to solve it. Only after the International Community considers the respective intervention as a hostile act against a nation, which means an open conflict between two or more nations, than NATO or the EU can support and conduct counter actions against the Hybrid Threat.

This is why member states should develop enough capabilities to resist, especially at the early phases, to a Hybrid confrontation and try to recognise and internationally demonstrate the use of Hybrid unconventional and conventional tactics and techniques by another state or a proxy organisation.

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