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A NEW WAY IN WAR? RUSSIAN 'HYBRID' WARFARE IN THE UKRAINIAN CONFLICT OF 2014

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INTRODUCTION

The Russian annexation of Crimea caused consternation among Western observers who witnessed a rapid victory by secretive forces with hardly a shot fired. This approach relied heavily on information and media manipulation to influence the opposition, striking at the minds of the population and leaders instead of their military forces. These varied tactics fused irregular forces with strategic communications and achieved escalation dominance through the threat of a significant conventional strike. Such a fusion of effects led many to brand this intervention a realisation of 'hybrid' fourth generation warfare by a state.[1] This paper will first seek to understand the characteristics of hybrid warfare and their integration in Russian force development in order to analyse their subsequent application at the various stages of the Ukraine conflict. Ultimately this will demonstrate that while the fusion of Russian tactics represents a new concept of state power it cannot be classified as a new way of war. The Clausewitzian fundamentals of war remain extant as, beyond the unique regional circumstances of Crimea, territorial gains were primarily achieved by regular military force employed in decisive battles. These forces are however reinforced by a growing range of irregular and psychological capabilities exploiting the 'grey zone' where neither war nor peace are apparent.[2]

THE GENERATIONAL CONSTRUCT OF WARFARE

Assessing a 'new way in war' first requires an understanding of war as a concept. Clausewitz postulated war as an act of physical force to compel the enemy to do our will – a definition which has endured in the modern world.[3] Yet the ways of applying this force, and its very nature, have evolved through history. The line and column tactics of early battles gave way to conflicts of fortification and concentrated firepower in the First World War which in turn were broken by manoeuvre and infiltration in the latter half of the 20th Century. William Lind, writing for the US Marine Corps, sought to cluster these forms of war into generations and suggested the world was on the verge of a fourth, decentralised, way of war where lines of conflict became increasingly blurred.[4] This is defined by Thomas Hammes as the use of 'all available networks – political, economic, social and military to convince the enemy's political decision makers that their goals are either

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[1] Jānis Bērziņš, *Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defence Policy*, National Defence University of Latvia, https://www.sldinfo.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/New-Generation-Warfare.pdf, accessed 15 Oct 2018, 3.

[2] Andrew Monaghan, 'Putin's Way of War: The "War" in Russia's "Hybrid Warfare"', *Parameters*, (Vol.45, No.4, Winter 2015-2016), 66.

[3] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Oxford:OUP, 2007), 13.

[4] William Lind, 'The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation', *Marine Corps Gazette* (Vol.73, No.10, Oct 1989), 22-27.

unachievable or too costly for the perceived benefit'. Crucially it does not seek to defeat the enemy's military forces but instead aims directly for the political will of the enemy.[5]

The shoehorning of war into generations is subject to much criticism, notably for glossing over historical uses of modern tactics.[6] The construct of a new generation of hybrid war is however a useful frame to assess contemporary conflicts. The 2006 US National Security Strategy recognised the threat from state backed irregular forces who used unconventional methods to challenge traditional Western advantages.[7] Hezbollah, benefitting from Iranian technical expertise, subsequently employed a successful hybrid strategy against the Israeli Defence Force after the invasion of southern Lebanon.[8] This fused modern anti-armour weaponry and a strategic rocket capability with an efficient media campaign to win the battle of global opinion.[9] Yet it was not just non-state actors who were utilising new forms of warfare.

In 1999 two People's Liberation Army colonels published a book titled 'Unrestricted Warfare'. Here they proposed China could defeat a technologically superior opponent by employing a variety of means including economic, political and terrorism. They recognised the huge importance of modern networks and argued these could be attacked via unconventional means to defeat an aggressor economically.[10] This new warfare was to be underlined by various principles including: its omni-directional nature, as there would be no mental pre-conditions to setting the bounds of the battlefield; synchrony, as actions would be simultaneous and coordinated across battlespaces and asymmetric in the use of particular capabilities to target weak points in the stronger force.[11] These insights frame the successful practice of hybrid warfare but further clarity is required to question a change in the way of war.

The hybrid threat is defined by Frank Hoffman as: '*any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism, and criminal behaviour in the battlespace to obtain their political objectives*'.[12] The fusion of tactics described here is perhaps the key element of hybrid warfare. Terrorism, militias and conventional force have been used for millennia but modern hybrid strategy, as defined by NATO, now seeks to deliver these in a coordinated and decisive manner such that the potential of each tactic is leveraged by their combination.[13] This can be contrasted with the traditional 'way' in war which seeks the coordination of regular forces on the battlefield and supports these with subordinated irregular and information capabilities.

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[5] Thomas Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone*, (Minneapolis: Voyageur Press, 2004), 2.

[6] Lawrence Freedman, 'War evolves into the fourth generation, A comment on Thomas X. Hammes', *Contemporary Security Policy* (Vol.26, No.2, Aug 2005), 260.

[7] US Government, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, March 2006, http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2006.pdf, 17 Oct 18.

[8] Marc DeVore, 'Exploring the Iran-Hezbollah Relationship: A Case Study of How State Sponsorship Affects Terrorist Group Decision-Making', *Perspectives on Terrorism* (Vol.6, No.4-5, 2012).

[9] Frank Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century*, 21.

[10] Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare* (Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, 1999), 4.

[11] Frank Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century*, 21.

[12] Frank Hoffman, 'Hybrid Threats: Neither Omnipotent nor Unbeatable', *Orbis,* (Vol.54, Iss.3, July 2010), p.443.

[13] NATO 'BI-SC Input to a New NATO Capstone Concept for the Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats', NATO Brussels, 25 Aug 10, https://www.act.nato.int/images/stories/events/2010/20100826_bi-sc_cht.pdf, 2-3.

THE 'NEW' RUSSIAN APPROACH

Russia in the 2000s faced the dual pressures of a shrinking defence budget, which could not support the modernisation of a sprawling antiquated conventional force and the need to deter Western expansion into the Russian sphere of influence.[14] An operational concept which did not require extensive costly conventional capability but could realise limited political aims offered an attractive path for the military. When Sergei Shoygou became Minister of Defence in 2012 he set a new strategic direction focussed on highly trained airborne forces which could be rapidly deployed to fight a full spectrum of conflicts.[15] There was little revolutionary thought contained in the new force structure but it empowered military planners with a flexible professional capability supported by a new focus on information operations. Command was also centralised at the new National Defence Management Centre in order to intensify coordination between branches of the military and civilian agencies.[16] These developments reflected a much wider modernisation of the Russian state apparatus launched in Putin's 2012 'May Edicts'.[17]

The so called 'Gerasimov doctrine' has been subject to much hype in Western media and military circles.[18] The construct is outlined in a fiery article by General Valery Gerasimov, the Russian Chief of the General Staff, in February 2013. Gerasimov analysed recent conflicts in the Middle East and Libya to argue that the rules of war had changed as non-military means usurped conventional force to achieve political aims.[19] Recent Western success in Libya had effectively amalgamated precision strike, a no fly-zone nominally for humanitarian reasons and a local militia force which Gerasimov contrasted with the poor coordination of Russian formations in the Georgia conflict of 2008.[20] The article recognises the potential for greater coordination of resources and new capabilities to exploit enemy weaknesses particularly in the opening stages of a conflict where war may not be declared – 'military means of a concealed character' are referenced as a key asset.[21] While largely focussed on the threat of Western action this updated military thought also pervaded the Kremlin with Vladislav Surkov, one of Putin's closest advisers, alluding to the obsolescence of war as a process for achieving political objectives. He argued that in a globalised world networks transcended state power and governments must therefore exploit and influence non-state groups from corporations to social networks.[22]

It is easy to look at the publications of military leaders and the Kremlin from 2008 onwards and conclude that Russian strategy had fundamentally changed but this would be an exaggeration of Russian thinking which has ensnared many commentators.[23] Much of the Gerasimov article focusses on the exploitation of hybrid tactics by NATO members and seeks to counter the threat which internal opposition could pose to Russia. This may explain a new emphasis on developing National Guard units which would be the first to face an internal revolt and possibly the centralisation of

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[14] Andrew Monaghan, *Putin's Way of War,* 71.

[15] Paval Baev, 'Ukraine: A Test for Russian Military Reforms', Ifri Defence Research Unit, *Russei.Nei Paper No 19,* May 2015.

[16] Andrew Monaghan, *Power in Modern Russia,* (Manchester: Pocket Politics, 2017), 72.

[17] Ibid, 24.

[18] Ibid, 5.

[19] Charles Bartles, 'Getting Gerasimov Right, *Military Review*, Jan-Feb 2016, 30-35.

[20] Valery Gerasimov, 'The Value of Science is in the Foresight', original *Military-Industrial Kurier* 2013, translated by Robert Coulson, published in *Military Review* (Jan-Feb 2016), 27.

[21] Mark Galeotti, 'The Gerasimov Doctrine' in *Moscow's Shadows*, https://inmoscowshadows.wordpress.com/, 15 Oct 2018.

[22] Peter Pomerantsev (2014), 'How Putin is Reinventing Warfare', *Foreign Policy Online*, http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/05/05/how-putin-is-reinventing-warfare/ 15 Oct 2018.

[23] Andrew Monaghan, *Putin's Way of War,* 68.

defence and security command.[24] Russian officials and commentators may still view hybrid warfare as a Western concept, admittedly one which has significant relevance, but do not consider it a central component in strategy. Russian doctrine, republished in 2014, places emphasis on information operations but shows little change in the method of war.[25] Yet when deniability is an additional tenet of hybrid warfare its exclusion from published military doctrine and the state-controlled media is perhaps unsurprising.

There was no doctrinal revolution apparent prior to the Ukrainian intervention but Russian units had been trained and equipped to operate in diverse environments. No longer did Russia expect victory by defeating fielded forces with large armoured formations as both the Kremlin and General Staff recognised the potential of a leaner more agile force. The role of influence operations had taken a much higher position in the Russian order of battle and these were arguably central in the Ukrainian intervention.[26]

PRIORITISING COMMUNICATION

Russia had assembled an impressive capacity for strategic communications prior to the Ukraine intervention. The Russian Military Academy offers an all-encompassing definition of information operations '*informatsionnaya voyna*' which can be contrasted with a much more limited tactical focus among Western nations.[27] Cyber activity was to be a facilitator of operations to shape perceptions of Russian activity in the pursuit of legitimacy.[28] Credibility was not to be the metric of success nor was selling the superiority of Russian state, instead it sought to erode 'truth' and provide a narrative to undermine Western interests.[29] Russian agencies specialised in developing a series of conflicting narratives which manipulated Western media and fringe political actors – anti-war stories for protest organisations, anti-LGBT for religious groups and anti-capitalist discourse for socialist parties.[30]

Not only had Russia developed a formidable capability in traditional media but an expanding social media presence took advantage of this new information space where false stories could be easily shared with minimal scrutiny.[31]

This new 'web brigade' recruited youth activists to the Kremlin Nashi organisation. Originally established in 2005 to provide 'on-tap' demonstrations in support of Russian foreign policy the group transitioned to the online arena in the late 2000s. Members were paid to post content which discredited anti-Russian media and created social media groups supportive of Putin.[32] A more focussed effort was conducted by the Internet Research Agency, a St Petersburg based Russian operation initiated in 2013 by a former Nashi activist. According to leaked documents the organisation is thought to have gained 600 employees by the summer of 2014 to deliver targeted content and criticism of Western government policy.[33] Media and diplomacy have been intrinsically linked for centuries but the expansive campaigns launched by the Russian government indicate a

[24] Mark Galeotti, 'In Moscow's Shadow', https://inmoscowsshadows.wordpress.com/, 15 Oct 2018.
[25] Andrew Monaghan, *Putin's Way of War*, 69.
[26] Jānis Bērziņš, *Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine,* 6.
[27] Keir Giles, *The Next Phase of Russian Information Warfare*, NATO Communications Centre of Excellence, 2016, 2.
[28] Ibid, 4.
[29] Michael Crowley, 'Tit-for-Tat: Putin's Maddening Propaganda Trick', *Time,* 1 May 2014.
[30] Peter Pomerantsev, 'How Putin is Reinventing Warfare'.
[31] Jolanta Darkzewska, 'The Anatomy of Russian Information Warfare', *OSW* (Vol.42, No.5, May 2014), 8.
[32] Miriam Elder, 'Polishing Putin', *Guardian,* 7 Feb 2012.
[33] Max Seddon, 'Documents Show How Russia's Troll Army Hit America', *Buzzfeed,* 2 Jun 2014.

significant change in the practice of information operations. The role of media was expanded from simple favourable coverage of government policy to support the complex narrative of the Russian state.[34] As David Patrikarakos concludes in his recent book *War in 140 Characters* the 'more doubt you can sow in people's minds about all information, the more you will weaken their propensity to recognize the truth' and this overarching goal lay at the heart of Russian propaganda.[35] This greatly enhanced communications capacity may not wholly represent a 'new way in war' but does indicate a major shift in the application of state power.

RUSSIAN INFLUENCE OPERATIONS FOCUS ON UKRAINE

In the months preceding the Ukraine intervention Russian coverage simultaneously attacked and discredited Western governments while exploiting new media to reach a diverse and easily influenced audience. This established the pre-conditions for intervention by shaping Western opinion and fostering nationalist sentiments among ethnic Russians residing in Ukraine.[36] The ferocity of Russian campaigns forced Ukraine to ban Russian broadcasters domestically, but this did not prevent continued social media activity which included the 'polite people' campaign portraying extremely courteous Russian special forces entering Crimea and calling for their expansion across Ukraine. This term was picked up by many Western outlets including the Daily Telegraph and the Guardian, giving a very different veneer to what was arguably an invasion force.[37] Information warfare no longer relied on military actions to form the basis for favourable stories but now led the campaign in forming a favourable media environment to permit military operations.[38]

Russia's efforts prior to the Ukrainian intervention were not just limited to the information domain. In 2013 the government of President Yanukovych was inching towards an EU Association Agreement but faced increasing threats from Russia. These included restriction of exports and the disruption of Ukrainian industry, much of which was controlled by oligarchs with close ties to the Kremlin.[39] Russia offered significant financial incentives to encourage Ukraine to join the Eurasian Union and disassociate from the EU. These were possibly combined with political blackmail as Russian intelligence officials threatened to expose government corruption and hinted at the forced annexation of Crimea.[40]

Reflecting on the events which led to the outbreak of the violent 'Maidan' protests Russia had deployed a limited hybrid strategy to shape public opinion, threaten government policy and ultimately achieve the political direction Moscow desired.[41] Yet their campaigns had been insufficient to influence the will of the Ukrainian people and Russia subsequently deployed several intelligence officers to support the heavy-handed response of the Ukrainian security services.[42] These protests ultimately overcame the Russian sponsored government operation and succeeded in replacing the Yanukovych government with an interim administration.

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[34] Irina Khaldarova and Mervi Pantti, 'Fake News', *Journalism Practice* (Vol,10, Iss.7, April 2016), 2.

[35] David Patrikarakos, *War in 140 Characters,* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 151.

[36] Max Seddon, 'Documents Show How Russia's Troll Army Hit America', *Buzzfeed,* 2 Jun 2014.

[37] Roland Oliphant, 'Ukraine crisis: "Polite people" leading the silent invasion of the Crimea', *Telegraph*, 2 Mar 2014.

[38] András Rácz, 'Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine', *Finnish Institute of International Affairs Report 43,* Jan 2017, 58-59.

[39] Shaun Walker, 'Ukraine's EU trade deal will be catastrophic, says Russia', *Guardian,* 22 Sep 2013.

[40] Lawrence Freedman, 'Ukraine and the Art of Limited War', *Survival* (Vol,56, No.6, 25 Nov 2014), 12.

[41] Jolanta Darkzewska, 'The Anatomy of Russian Information Warfare', *OSW* (Vol,42, No.5, May 2014), 22.

[42] Reuters, 'Yanukovich planned harsh clampdown on protesters: Ukraine deputy', 24 Feb 2014.

THE CRIMEAN ANNEXATION: A HYBRID SUCCESS

As the limits of psychological operations and political persuasion became apparent Russia deployed unmarked military personnel to protect pro-Russian protesters in the semi-autonomous region of Crimea. Protests were aided and led by Russian gangs, primarily the Night Wolves motorbike gang led by Alexander Zaldostanov, a close associate of Putin.[43] The local government had initially pledged support for the new regime in Kiev but was quickly deposed and following a questionable vote, where many representatives were being held by unidentified gunmen in the parliament building, Sergey Aksynov was conveniently elected leader. An ardent Russian supporter with alleged links to organised crime his pro- Russian party had received only 4% of the vote in the previous election – a likely indicator of significant meddling in the political process and the increasing integration of political action into Russian strategy.[44]

The Ukrainian government claimed an invasion had taken place, but Russia countered with an assertion their military were simply providing security patrols in the region of the Sevastopol military base. This did not claim responsibility for the hundreds of unidentified armed individuals or so called "little green men" but Russian media sought to portray their valuable role in providing security. These armed groups blocked the Ukrainian military in their bases and stifled any response by security forces.[45] The threat of force combined with the extensive information campaign to spread confusion and disinformation prevented any military response from Ukrainian troops.[46] In this permissive environment large scale conventional forces were unnecessary as vital national infrastructure could be held by small numbers of specially trained Russian forces.

Finally, the new Russian leadership sought legitimacy by winning a huge majority in a hastily organised referendum. This asked Crimean voters whether they should accede to Russia or return to the 1992 constitution of Ukraine – a vexed question giving the complexities of the latter option.[47]

The process of Russian annexation had taken little over a month and demonstrated a new and potent combination of capabilities. The information operations which portrayed the Ukrainian government as fascists had fostered strong nationalist sentiment. This permissive information domain was exploited by Russian influenced networks including local political actors and gangs, who organised protests to delegitimise the national government.

Hard power was delivered by a limited deployment of deniable special forces who could prevent a Ukrainian government while the hastily organised democratic process completed the process by applying a veneer of legitimacy to the new rulers. This fusion of tactics fulfils the tenets of hybrid warfare and achieved Russia's limited political objective without the need for a conventional invasion. Yet if this strategy really represents the first stage of a new way in war it must be considered in the wider context.

Russia benefited from a sprawling military base in Sevastopol and a regional majority of Russian speakers with their associated political networks. Launching an unconventional operation, they surprised a weak new Ukrainian government which had barely assumed command of the country. The historic and geographic isolation of Crimea further eased concerns of escalation and greatly complicated any response by Ukrainian forces. It must therefore be concluded that while the

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[43] Simon Shuster, 'Russia Ups the Ante in Crimea by Sending in the "Night Wolves"', *Time,* 28 Feb 2014.
[44] Reuters, 'Insight – How the separatists delivered Crimea to Moscow', 12 Mar 2014.
[45] Jānis Bērziņš, 'Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine', 4.
[46] Yuhas, A (2014), 'Russian propaganda over Crimea and the Ukraine: how does it work?', *Guardian,* 17 Mar 2014.
[47] BBC 'Crimea referendum: Voters "back Russia union"', 16 Mar 2014.

Crimean annexation demonstrated a new fusion of hybrid tactics it achieved a limited and comparatively easy political objective. A new 'way' in war must have wider applicability and a greater test of Russian strategy would come in the forthcoming attempt to destabilise and unseat the new Ukrainian government.

EASTERN UKRAINE AND THE LIMITS OF THE RUSSIAN HYBRID CONCEPT

The success of the Crimean annexation combined with continued hostility to the new EU leaning government sparked pro-Russian demonstrations in Eastern areas of Ukraine centred around the cities of Donetsk and Luhansk. The Ukrainian government claimed that Russian agents were key in organising these protests which were successful in occupying several government buildings[48] while the gatherings were also supported by 'protest tourists' who travelled from Russia.[49] Ukrainian security forces were again slow to respond and by April the protesters controlled several Eastern districts.[50] Advancing military columns were confronted by a complex series of civilian barricades, irregular forces armed with stolen police weapons and unidentified professional troops who guarded vital infrastructure. This led to the embarrassing loss of several armoured vehicles and strengthened the separatists' credibility and military capability.[51]

These early successes demonstrate the epitome of a successful hybrid strategy as a large Ukrainian military force was seemingly impotent against an organised protest movement. The Ukrainian military called in fighter-bombers and attack helicopters to conduct 'shows of force' over separatist areas but with no clearly identified enemy troops they could not strike to support the armoured units stopped by civilians. Kinetic action was constrained by Russian escalation dominance as massed armoured forces stood poised to invade the separatist region given the slightest Ukrainian provocation.[52] Yet this seizure of territory also exposed the limits of the hybrid Russian strategy which had been effective up to this stage.[53]

The separatist regime secured their rule with the covert assassination of former local leaders and supporters of the Ukrainian government.[54] This combined with increasing use of heavy weapons eroded local support and gave the Ukrainian government a clearer mandate, and target set to prosecute with air and ground forces.[55] The successful counter-attacks in May 2014 regained much of the separatist region as heavy armour supported by air strikes easily defeated the poorly coordinated militias even when reinforced by Russian special forces. Russia was forced to deploy further unmarked military hardware to the region including the advanced BUK anti-aircraft system which downed a Malaysian airliner in July 2014.[56] Recruiting and organising proxy forces in a hybrid environment had disrupted traditional military command and greatly weakened Russian authority to control actions, particularly those which might provoke escalation and international response. The validity of these methods as a 'new way in war' must therefore be questioned given the difficulty Moscow faced in directing their effects.

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[48] Reuters 'Protests in Eastern Ukraine aimed at bringing in Russian troops, warns PM', 7 Apr 2014.

[49] Andrew Roth, 'From Russia, "Tourists Stir the Protests"', *NY Times,* 3 Mar 2014.

[50] Lawrence Freedman, 'Ukraine and the Art of Limited War', 15.

[51] BBC 'Ukraine crisis: Military column "seized" in Kramatorsk', 16 Apr 2014.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Andrew Monaghan, 'The Ukraine crisis and NATO-Russia relations', *NATO Review Online* 2014, https://nato.int/docu/review/2014/Russia-Ukraine-Nato-crisis/Ukraine-crisis-NATO-Russia-relations/EN/index.htm, 17 Oct 18.

[54] BBC 'Ukraine crisis: Revel adviser "admits executions"', 2 Aug 2014.

[55] Lawrence Freedman, 'Ukraine and the Art of Limited War', *Survival* (Vol.56, No.6, 25 Nov 2014), 15.

[56] Ibid, 16.

Russia suffered international condemnation, economic sanctions and a further erosion of its legitimacy even when deploying its impressive media machine to claim the airliner was downed by the Ukrainian military. Yet the Russian media proved highly effective at aligning domestic opinion behind the campaign with only 3% of Russians believing the airliner had been downed by separatists.[57] Meanwhile extensive media efforts sought to dismantle the organisation of domestic anti-war movements.[58] The covert deployment of regular Russian battalions including heavy armour and artillery stopped the Ukrainian advance and allowed the separatists to solidify their frontline but the attempts at a Russian backed national revolution had failed. Sustaining the conflict was an unappetising prospect for military planners as Russia had committed almost all mobile army units to either active deniable participation in hostilities or the deterrence force held at the border.[59] The supposed light footprint of hybrid operations had not been realised as the conflict had reverted to traditional warfighting.

TRADITIONAL WARFIGHTING – AN ENDURING CONCEPT

The fragility of the subsequent Minsk ceasefire highlights the difficulties of the Russian hybrid concept which is reliant on irregular forces. A principal-agent problem has arisen as the Russian government seeks to match its new limited policy aims of Ukrainian destabilisation with the unlimited aspiration of the separatists to form a state and capture further Ukrainian territory.[60] The region now faces another 'frozen conflict' where no solution will be agreeable to the two major states while the separatists lack both the military and economic power to take an independent path. It is difficult to gauge the success of the Ukrainian intervention without a clear understanding of the Russian goals.

Andrew Monaghan in his 2017 book 'Power in Modern Russia' concludes Russia is now correcting for the 'mistake' of isolationist policies in the 1990s and early 2000s with a new strategy which will take offensive actions even in defensive scenarios.[61] Yet the desired vertical integration of state power is still resisted by an extensive and cumbersome bureaucracy.

It would therefore be an oversimplification to suggest that all Russian reactions to disruptive global events are from the playbook of an assiduous strategic plan.[62]

As Russian efforts to halt the 'Maidan' revolution failed the immediate need to secure the Sevastopol naval base was achieved via novel hybrid operations which demonstrated Russian capability and resolve to the Ukrainian government. Subsequent operations in Eastern Ukraine did not incite the desired national revolution. Instead they damaged Russian legitimacy, added costly economic sanctions and forced Russia to support a financially weak proxy state. The constant need to maintain deniability prevented Russia from applying its capable air assets and limited the control they could exert over the conflict.[63] Ultimately the hybrid tactics employed by Russia could not achieve the desired strategic outcomes as they constrained the employment of conventional force which might have proved decisive.

The active role of regular forces throughout the conflict undermines suggestions that the Ukrainian intervention represents an entirely 'new way in war'. Russia relied on its massed conventional forces

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[57] Julia Ioffe, 'Why Russia's Alternate History of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 Matters', *NY Times,* 13 Oct 2015.
[58] Lawrence Freedman, 'Ukraine and the Art of Limited War', 20.
[59] Igor Sutyagin, 'Russian Forces in Ukraine', *RUSI Briefing Paper,* Mar 2015, 8.
[60] Andrew Radin, 'Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics', *RAND Corporation* 2017, 11.
[61] Andrew Monaghan, *Power in Modern Russia,* 90.
[62] Ibid, 86.
[63] Pavel Baev, 'Ukraine: A Test for Russian Military Reforms', 25.

held at the border to supress the Ukrainian response and maintain local escalation dominance – a key element of hybrid warfare.[64] Subsequently as the separatists attempted to gain ground they fought a series of pitched battles against the Ukrainian army.[65] These battles consistently favoured the force with the greatest conventional warfighting capability and the developed structures of command and control to deploy it effectively.[66] Hybrid and irregular tactics proved effective in supporting protest movements in cities and confusing the Ukrainian response but could not achieve victory. In order to defeat the Ukrainian state, fighting on its own territory, regular forces were required to threaten escalation and win battles – warfare while initially supported by hybrid operations ultimately returned to traditional norms.

The underlying weakness of the Russian 'way in war' must also be viewed in the global theatre of operations. Ukraine and NATO were initially shocked by the Russian ability to conduct a fast-moving deniable operation but extensive preparations have now enhanced resilience. NATO has deployed new surveillance capabilities and governments have reappraised the integration of ethnic Russians into the population thereby limiting the potential of a subversive operation.[67] The battles of Eastern Ukraine demonstrated the shortcomings of an irregular force when faced by organised military opposition. The NATO Enhanced Forward Presence may be insufficient to face an onslaught of Russian armour but provides the conventional capability to quickly disrupt hybrid tactics. This would ultimately escalate any attempted intervention towards a full-scale war, a wholly unappealing prospect for the Russian leadership. A 'new way in war' cannot be solely reliant on the shock of initial use and must demonstrate longer term validity. The reinforcement of the Baltic states suggests that while NATO recognises the potential of these tactics any future use could only be successful via escalation to conventional warfighting.[68]

The Ukraine intervention was not a revolution in the way of war. It should instead be viewed as an evolution in the employment of state power as methods diverge from traditional military means. The potential for hybrid operations had been recognised for several decades but the Ukrainian intervention represents the first significant direct employment by a nation state. There was no single radical tactic, but the fusion of capabilities fulfilled the concept of hybrid warfare by leveraging individual effects and was effective in securing the annexation of Crimea. Patrikarakos argues Russia has successfully identified and exploited the modern reality of 'grey zone'. In this new domain military victories can be secondary to the effects of 'coercive communication' on the population.[69] Yet the subsequent failure to achieve Ukrainian regime change and the primacy of conventional forces in battle highlight the limits of this strategy. The intervention was not therefore a 'new way in war' but highlighted the potential for a culmination of means which prioritise information dominance. These means primarily operate below the threshold of war but are nevertheless valuable in achieving limited political aims when employed in a suitable environment.

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[64] Alexander Lanoszka, 'Russian hybrid warfare and extended deterrence in Eastern Europe', *International Affairs* (Vol,92, Iss.1, Jan 2016), 176.
[65] Andrew Kramer, 'Ukraine Reports Russian Invasion on a New Front', *NY Times,* 27 Aug 2014.
[66] Lawrence Freedman, 'Ukraine and the Art of Limited War', 17.
[67] Andrew Radin, 'Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics', 33.
[68] Ibid, 34.
[69] David Patrikarakos, *War in 140 Characters* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 261.