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# RUSSIA'S "HYBRID" WAR – CHALLENGE AND THREAT FOR EUROPE

Russia's aggression against Ukraine that started in February 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and is still going on in Donbas, demonstrated critical vulnerability of the Western world to Kremlin's "hybrid warfare" policy.

The West, divided and burdened with internal problems ("migrant crisis", Brexit) and external challenges (D. Trump "effect", Syrian war), is experiencing a critical deficit of unity and coordination of actions toward Russia, lack of public awareness as to the nature and goals of Putin's regime, fears of nuclear confrontation with Russia. Meanwhile, the far-right political movements, Euroscepticism, populism, isolationism – i.e., "LePenisation" of Europe – may gain ground after the elections in France and Germany. (Quite telling in this context have been the recent elections in Bulgaria and Moldova, where pro-Russian socialists won).

All of this is happening amid total depreciation of global and regional security structures, and is threatening not only with escalation of conflicts on the continent, but also with destruction of the European community.

The Western world has not generated adequate and effective means, mechanisms and policies to counter Russia's hybrid expansion. On the contrary, there is an increasing threat of disintegration of a single "sanctions front", which Kremlin will view with impunity and encouragement for further active actions. The conflict in Syria has proven that Kremlin's imperial policy is not limited to the post-Soviet space, and Ukraine is just a springboard for further expansion.

In the past three years, the Russia-Ukraine conflict has become deep-rooted and long-term causing tectonic changes in relations between Kyiv and Moscow. Russia's aggression has inflicted unprecedented human, territorial, economic losses on Ukraine, and from the entire range of bilateral relations (not to mention the war itself), for a long time to come has left Ukraine only the format of confrontational coexistence with Russia – limited, forced, and cold – depending on the unfolding situation.

The Russia-Ukraine hybrid war is not a local, peripheral conflict. Kremlin's aggression poses a threat not only to Ukraine's statehood and sovereignty, but also to the unity of the EU and, in general, to the political structure of Europe. Therefore, finding adequate, effective forms of response, developing a common policy of countering Russia's expansion is critically important.

## EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF RUSSIA'S AGGRESSION

In recent years, there have been a number of comprehensive analytical studies by national and foreign experts, which look at the goals, methods and means of Russia's hybrid aggression in Ukraine and Europe. For example, one of the latest (November 2016) – "The Kremlin's Trojan Horses", prepared by Atlantic Council group of experts, – exposes some facts of Russia's hybrid expansion in Germany, France and the UK.<sup>1</sup>

The scale of Russia's influence got so alarming that on 1 November 2016 in the first newspaper interview

given by an incumbent MI5 chief in the service's 107-year history, Andrew Parker said: "It [Russia] is using its whole range of state organs and powers to push its foreign policy abroad in increasingly aggressive ways – involving propaganda, espionage, subversion and cyber-attacks. Russia is at work across Europe and in the UK today".<sup>2</sup>

**The tactical tasks of Russia's hybrid aggression include gradual discrediting and erosion of basic European values that unite EU member states; disorientation of public opinion; formation of an influential pro-Russian lobby in European political establishment; accentuation of differences between**

<sup>1</sup> Marcel H. Van Herpen. Putin's Wars. Chechnya, Georgia, Ukraine: Undigested Lessons of the Past. – Kharkiv, 2015; Yu. Fedorov. "Hybrid" War A-La Russe. Centre for Army, Conversion and Disarmament Studies. – Kyiv, 2016; E. Magda. Hybrid Warfare: Survive and Win. – Kharkiv, 2015; Putin Hybression. Non-Military Aspects of New Generation Warfare. Centre for Global Studies "Strategy XXI". – Kyiv, 2016; V. Horbulin, O. Vlasjuk, S. Kononenko. Ukraine and Russia: the Tenth Wave or the Chinese Wall. NISS, Kyiv, 2015. [http://www.niss.gov.ua/content/articles/files/Gorbulin\\_Ukraine\\_08\\_05\\_pereverstka2.indd-2da77.pdf](http://www.niss.gov.ua/content/articles/files/Gorbulin_Ukraine_08_05_pereverstka2.indd-2da77.pdf); Information Challenges of Hybrid War: Content, Channels, Countermeasures. NISS Monograph, Kyiv, 2016. – [http://www.niss.gov.ua/public/File/2016\\_nauk\\_anal\\_rozrob/inform\\_vukluku.pdf](http://www.niss.gov.ua/public/File/2016_nauk_anal_rozrob/inform_vukluku.pdf); A. Arzhanovskiy. Discord between Ukraine and Russia: Dive Recovery Strategy. – Kharkiv, 2015; Yu. Felshtinski. S. Stanchev. Third World War: Battle for Ukraine. – Kyiv, 2015; J. Sherr. Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion. – Razumkov Centre, Kyiv, 2013; C.Vaissie. Les reseaux du kremlin en france. – Les Petit Matins. 2016; The Kremlin's Trojan Horses. – Atlantic Council – [atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/The\\_Kremlins\\_Trojan\\_Horses\\_web\\_1116.pdf](http://atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/The_Kremlins_Trojan_Horses_web_1116.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> The Guardian, 1 November 2016 – <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/oct/31/andrew-parker-increasingly-aggressive-russia-a-growing-threat-to-uk-says-mi5-head>.



European countries and EU institutions.<sup>3</sup> Today, it is not just about fending off Europe's influence in the post-Soviet space – “zone of Kremlin's privileged interests”, but also about a large-scale hybrid expansion across the EU with an ultimate goal of weakening/fragmenting (breaking apart) the European Union, minimising US presence on the continent, and rebuilding the European political system according to the Russian scenario.

#### Expert Opinion

Most experts (84%) are convinced that Russia conducts hybrid aggression against the EU states. They believe that the main goals of Russian aggression are: collapse of the EU, destruction of unifying values and formation of a new European system under the auspices of Russia (70%); restoring its “imperial grandeur” and ensuring dominant position in Europe (64%).

Russia's policy toward Europe is comprehensive and coordinated, and employs the entire available range of hybrid influence. First and foremost, this includes aggressive propaganda by Russian powerful overseas broadcasting (*Russia Today*, *Sputnik*) – an effective informational warfare and a tool for targeted distribution of Russian ideology and the “Russian World” concept.<sup>4</sup> J. Sherr believes that “Russian World is a world with its own discourse, logic and coherence. ‘Facts’ that come out of it can be disputed and even refuted. But the worldview of this environment cannot be broken down by facts... the divide between the ‘Russian World’ and the order based on Helsinki Accords cannot be bridged with a ‘sensible compromise’”.<sup>5</sup>

Just in October 2015-July 2016, experts of the special working group at the European External Action Service (East StratCom Task Force) have registered 1,649 instances of disinformation and fake messages from pro-Kremlin media, which were being distributed in Europe and worldwide in 18 languages.<sup>6</sup>

#### Expert Opinion

Experts believe that the most dangerous tools of Russia's hybrid aggression against the EU are: formation of a pro-Russian lobby among European politicians and civil society leaders (4.4 points on a five-point scale); interfering in elections (4.2); propaganda in the European information space (4.1); financial assistance to pro-Russian parties (4.1); espionage (4) and cyber-attacks (3.8).

Russia's hybrid warfare also includes a set of “traditional” means of influence – political-diplomatic pressure (including, the active use of international institutions), economic tools (to which the West is least susceptible), active use of “energy weapon” (an effective leverage, mostly in the post-Soviet space).<sup>7</sup> At the same time, Kremlin leadership is actively and extensively employing methods and measures from the special services arsenal. First of all, we are talking about operations for creating pro-Russian lobby among European politicians and community leaders via corruption schemes, bribery, and blackmail. This also includes various types of assistance (mostly, financial) to pro-Russian political forces in Europe (a well-known fact of Russia financing the French National Front party).<sup>8</sup>

In the framework of its hybrid aggression, Russia uses espionage, technologies of discrediting government institutions of other countries, provides support to radical right-wing, nationalist and populist movements, which create anti-NATO and anti-American sentiments across the EU; there are ongoing targeted operations among the “fellow countrymen”, etc. In European countries it forms a network of loyal political and civil society organisations, and the media.

At the same time, a “military component” of hybrid influence has also been used. In recent years, there have been more instances of “military testing” of NATO's defence system, i.e. provocations by Russian Armed Forces in European air and sea space. NATO Secretary General's Annual Report 2015 states: “Over the last several years, there has been a significant increase in Russia's military activity near NATO's borders, as well as a demonstrated willingness to use force in pursuit of its foreign and defence policy goals”. In particular, the document mentions that over the period from 2013 to 2015, Russian air activity close to NATO's European airspace increased by around 70%. Allied aircraft scrambled over 400 times to intercept Russian aircraft over Europe in 2015 – a further increase from 2014.<sup>9</sup>

Hybrid warfare also includes an extremely dangerous interference in election processes. For example, US intelligence agencies – the Department of Homeland Security and Office of the Director of National Intelligence, in a joint statement, accused Russia of cyber-attacks during the US election campaign.<sup>10</sup> In Germany, Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution made a statement regarding a possible threat of Russian interference in the country's election campaign. Experts of the American Foundation for Defence of Democracies believe that it has been Russia's intention to interfere in 2017 elections in the Netherlands, France, Germany.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the goals, tasks and means of Russia's hybrid aggression, see articles by O. Lytvynenko, M. Honchar, A. Piontkovsky, P. Baev, and roundtable materials published in this journal.

<sup>4</sup> See: article by L. Smola “Informational-Psychological Aspect of a ‘Hybrid’ War” in this journal.

<sup>5</sup> J. Sherr. Valdai-2016. Ukrainian Week, No.44, 2016, p. 31.

<sup>6</sup> EU experts discovered thousands of false stories by Russian media. – Deutsche Welle web-site, 26 July 2016. – <http://www.dw.com/uk>.

<sup>7</sup> For more information, see article by M. Honchar “From “Russia's Grandeur” to “Grand Eurasia”: Hybrid Type War as the Mechanism of Russia's Geopolitical Expansion” in this journal.

<sup>8</sup> This is mentioned in C.Vaissie's book “Les reseaux du kremlin en france”, a fragment of which is published in this journal.

<sup>9</sup> NATO Secretary General's Annual Report 2015. – [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_files2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2016\\_01/20160205\\_SG\\_AnnualReport\\_2015\\_ru.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static_files2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_01/20160205_SG_AnnualReport_2015_ru.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Official statement by the US Government: Kremlin ordered cyber-attacks to influence elections in America. – Voice of America web-site, – <http://ukrainian.voanews.com/a/vybory-ameryka-kreml-hakery-rozvidka/3541485.html>.

<sup>11</sup> US warn about Russia's possible influence on European elections. Deutsche Welle web-site, 6 November 2016. – <http://www.dw.com/uk>.



**Czech Republic.**<sup>12</sup> On 2 September 2016, Czech Security Information Service (BIS) reported that Russian secret services were conducting an informational war in the Czech Republic, trying to create a network of puppet centres and propagandists in the Republic, which could be used by Kremlin to destabilise the country. In its annual report, BIS said that Russia is trying to influence Czech media regarding the coverage of Kremlin's role in the Ukrainian and Syrian conflict.<sup>13</sup>

**Germany.** On 16 May 2016, representatives of Germany's special services accused Russian hackers of cyber-attacks on federal government's information servers. It is noted that Russia can also be a source of other types of serious risks – subversion at industrial and energy facilities. President of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution H. Maassen expressed his concern regarding the cyber-attacks from abroad: "In cyberspace, hybrid wars are being conducted and new possibilities arise for spying and subversion".<sup>14</sup>

On 29 November 2016, President of German federal intelligence agency (BND) B. Kahl said that hackers and trolls from Russia were influencing the US elections, and could now be targeting German elections in 2017. "Europe is in the focus of this attempted disruption, and Germany in particular".<sup>15</sup>

**Poland.** In June 2016, Polish media reported on the prospect of creation of a new military force against Russia's "hybrid" aggression. Defence Minister A. Macierewicz said it was planned to start recruiting volunteers to form new paramilitary groups. Their task would be to fend off the aggressor's attempts to start a "hybrid" war similar to the one that Russia organised against Ukraine in Crimea and Donbas.<sup>16</sup> On 20 October 2016, Polish Sejm passed the Declaration of Remembrance and Solidarity Over World War II Events and Russia's Aggression. The document notes that "Russia's aggressive foreign policy [...] informational hybrid

war pose a threat to peace and security of the entire Europe".<sup>17</sup>

**Latvia.** In April 2016, Latvian Saeima introduced changes to the Criminal Code to be used in the event of a "hybrid" war, in view of Russia's aggression toward Ukraine. They include punishment for anti-state activities, in particular, encroachment on Latvia's territorial integrity. This primarily applies to foreign citizens who are accused of separatist activities and their promotion.<sup>18</sup> In the spring of 2016, Latvia banned Russian TV channel "Russia-RTR" that claimed fascists were in power in Ukraine.<sup>19</sup>

Minister of Defence of Latvia R. Vejonis stated that the Baltic states are ready to confront Russia in a "hybrid" war. According to him, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are ready to respond to any type of aggression from Russia.<sup>20</sup>

**Montenegro.** Chief Special Prosecutor of Montenegro M. Katnic stated that he had facts and proof of "Russian nationalists" involvement in the attempted terrorist attack on the day of Parliamentary elections on 16 October 2016. According to the Prosecutor, to prepare the attack, a group of citizens from Serbia, Montenegro and Russia was created.<sup>21</sup>

**Croatia.** President of Croatia K. Grabar-Kitarovic said that she did not rule out a new conflict in the Balkans, as Russia was trying to actively influence events in the region, while involving waging a hybrid war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>22</sup>

**Sweden.** In November 2015, Swedish media reported that Sweden developed a strategy of countering Russia in the event of a hybrid war. Stockholm decided to strengthen the defence of Gotland. According to Swedish military academy, a hybrid war can start from the island being cut off from the outside world.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Clearly, this is only a partial and superficial element that illustrates the concern of a number of European countries of a hybrid aggression. But it gives some idea of the extent and threat of Russian expansion.

<sup>13</sup> Czech Republic Security: Russia is financing an information war in the country. – Deschide, September 2, 2016, [http://deschide.md/ru/russian\\_news/externe\\_ru/346](http://deschide.md/ru/russian_news/externe_ru/346).

<sup>14</sup> Dudina, G. Russian hackers have come to Berlin. – Kommersant, 2 May 2016, <http://kommersant.ru/doc/2988139>.

<sup>15</sup> German intelligence warns about the threat of cyber attacks from Russia. – The European Pravda, 29 November 2016, <http://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2016/11/29/7058134>.

<sup>16</sup> Poland creates new paramilitary groups against Russian aggression. – Mirror Weekly, [http://zn.ua/WORLD/polsha-sozdast-novye-voenirovannye-otryady-protiv-gibridnoj-agressii-rossii-215409\\_.html](http://zn.ua/WORLD/polsha-sozdast-novye-voenirovannye-otryady-protiv-gibridnoj-agressii-rossii-215409_.html).

<sup>17</sup> Polish Sejm supported the declaration of the Second World War and the Russian aggression, adopted by the Rada. – New Times, 21 October 2016, <http://nv.ua/world/countries/polskij-parlament-podderzhal-deklaratsiju-po-vtoroj-mirovoj-i-agressii-ri-prinjatiju-vr-249432.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Latvia declared its readiness to hybrid war with Russia. – Observer, <http://obozrevatel.com/abroad/63549-surovyie-nakazaniya-latviya-podgotovilas-k-vozmozhnoj-gibridnoj-vojne.htm>.

<sup>19</sup> Latvia has banned Russian channel broadcasts of the occupation by the Nazis in Ukraine. – Observer, <http://obozrevatel.com/abroad/74208-latviya-zapretila-rossijskij-kanal-veschayuschij-ob-okkupatsii-ukrainyi-fashistami.htm>.

<sup>20</sup> Latvia declared its readiness to hybrid war with Russia. – Observer, <http://obozrevatel.com/abroad/98231-latviya-zayavila-o-gotovnosti-k-gibridnoj-vojne-s-rossiej.htm>.

<sup>21</sup> Russia intends to intervene in elections in European countries. – Ukrainian Pravda, 6 November 2016, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2016/11/6/7125925>.

<sup>22</sup> Croatian President seriously accused Russia. – Segodnya, <http://www.segodnya.ua/world/prezident-horvatii-vydvinul-rossii-sereznoe-obvinenie-775376.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Sweden is preparing for a hybrid war. – Factly, 4 November 2015, <http://fakty.ictv.ua/ua/index/read-news/id/1565830>.



**The West proved to be unprepared for Russian expansion**, mostly, due to accumulation of internal problems, but also due to reluctance to believe in the possibility of a large-scale confrontation with Russia, previous hopes for liberalisation and democratisation of Russia, and the belief in the immutability of comfort, prosperity and security on the continent. Rather popular are such ideas that “one should not drive Russia into a corner”, “Putin should be given a chance to save face”, etc. European business circles favour a “purely pragmatic” approach that confrontation with Russia (in particular, sanctions) is impractical and inexpedient, as it causes financial and economic losses.

Renowned researcher Marcel H. Van Herpen notes in his assessment of western policy toward Russia: “The West – the United States, as well as the European Union – has made significant strategic and tactical mistakes [...] we must make at least three important conclusions:

1. The false premise of post-modern European politics;
2. Political mistakes by leading European politicians;
3. US President Obama’s wishful geopolitical thinking, leading to a wrong assessment of the Kremlin’s intentions and an ill-conceived foreign policy vis-à-vis Moscow”.<sup>24</sup>

There are reasons to talk about the lack of adequate assessment of European geopolitical situation by European political class. Overall, there is some reasoning behind the opinion that Europe, while being in “a post-modern complacency” has “demobilised and disarmed, despite clear signs that Russia, the successor state of the former Soviet Union, is becoming more and more assertive, ultra-nationalist and revanchist”.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, talking about the West’s weak points, experts often note that Russia is rather effectively exploiting man-centred features of western democracies – wide political pluralism, liberal rights of freedom of speech and association, respect for human rights, the rule of law, tolerance, political correctness.<sup>26</sup> All of these make EU states vulnerable to hybrid “special operations” carried out outside the norms, rules and ethics. According to authors of “The Kremlin’s Trojan Horses”: “Moscow views the West’s virtues – pluralism and openness – as vulnerabilities to be exploited. Its tactics are asymmetrical, subversive, and not easily confronted”.<sup>27</sup>

#### Expert Opinion

Experts believe that EU’s vulnerabilities comprise: the lack of unity and coordination of actions against Russia (67%), lack of political will of EU leaders (52%), and accumulating internal problems (50%). Also, effective response to Russia’s expansion is made impossible by the misconception of the nature, specifics and goals of the current Russian regime (46%).

**Russia’s hybrid aggression is the result of internal processes within Russia itself, which the West had to see and understand.**<sup>28</sup>

A most concise description of internal processes in Russia would consist of several points.

New ideological foundation of the Russian state has been developed – imperial values of grandeur and self-sufficiency, dominance in the post-Soviet space, isolationism, aggressive foreign policy and confrontation with other global centres of power.

Citizen rights and freedoms have been limited. Public persecution for disloyalty to the regime and persecution of opposition leaders have become a regular practice.

“Middle class in uniforms” has been created as the backbone of the regime. Responsibilities and powers of law enforcement agencies have been expanded; social status of their staff has been raised above other categories of citizens. “Personal army” of the Russian president – the National Guard – has been created.

Media has been completely nationalised, creating powerful pro-government “holdings of truth”, while small independent media have been eliminated or pushed out to the periphery.

Government has established total control over the “third sector”. Disloyal (mostly, human rights) organisations have been branded as “foreign agents”, and foreign NGOs have been banned.

The military strength has been boosted both in the country (increasing budget for national security, defence and law enforcement agencies) and in public consciousness (re-introducing hawkish rituals and practices of the Soviet era).

**Hence, Russia has created an authoritarian state with the cult of personality elements, totalitarian domestic and aggressive foreign policy, with disdain, cynicism and hypocrisy of international rules and regulations. This is the state, with which the West will have to co-exist in the nearest future.**

The West has to face the problem of building relations with Putin’s Russia in the geopolitical and philosophical context.

An attempt to formulate a strategy in relations with Russia was made at EU Foreign Affairs Council in March 2016. The Council agreed on five principles guiding the EU’s policy toward Russia:

- 1) implementation of the Minsk agreement as the key condition for any substantial change in the EU’s stance toward Russia;
- 2) the need for selective engagement with Russia on issues where there is a clear EU interest (crisis management in Syria, Middle East, fighting Islamic State, etc.);
- 3) strengthening the resilience of the EU;
- 4) strengthening relations with the EU’s Eastern partners and other neighbours, in particular, in Central Asia;
- 5) the need to support Russian civil society.

<sup>24</sup> Marcel H. Van Herpen. *Putin’s Wars. Chechnya, Georgia, Ukraine: Undigested Lessons of the Past.* – Kharkiv, 2015. p.4

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> This matter is discussed in the series of interviews published in this journal.

<sup>27</sup> The Kremlin’s Trojan Horses. – Atlantic Council – [atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/The\\_Kremlins\\_Trojan\\_Horses\\_web\\_1116.pdf](http://atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/The_Kremlins_Trojan_Horses_web_1116.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> We should also keep in mind that Moscow uses its own media and intelligence to create a “favourable image” – engaging in the process corruption of political elites of western countries, buying media and individual public opinion leaders.



EU's plan is rather a tactical scheme, which is a generalised statement of current practices. (Further discussion of joint policy toward Russia at EU summit on 20-21 October 2016 was not successful). What are we talking about? Long-term containment of Russia, its isolation? "Appeasing" Putin and limiting his geopolitical ambitions? Achieving the dream of democratisation and liberalisation of Russia? Building long-term relationships in the format of limited partnerships and "exchange of favours"?

The West is being pushed toward this "exchange" with increasing intensity by internal problems (refugee crisis, Brexit, approaching elections in France and Germany) and external challenges (Syria, ISIS, terrorist attacks in Europe, Brussels-Ankara conflict, North Korean "nuclear démarche", conflict in the South China Sea, etc.), and the lack of internal consensus both in terms of the norms of conduct toward Russia and sanctions against it. Clearly, Kremlin vests great hopes in a foreign policy course of the new US president and the 2017 elections in the Netherlands, Italy, France and Germany. Especially in France, where pro-Russian forces traditionally have a strong foundation and informational influence.

However, in this "quid pro quo" game, Putin has a number of clear advantages compared to western leaders. **First**, Russian President is not burdened with international legal and contractual "convenances" such as borders and treaties. **Second**, according to western standards, he possesses unique personal efficiency in decision-making and unconditional support of his decisions by other state institutions. **Third**, he relies on the utilitarian tradition and uncontrolled use of human resources (classified data on human losses in security agencies). **Fourth**, his level of public support greatly exceeds that of western leaders. This is further backed by reliable and effective mechanisms of ensuring public support.

**In response to Russia's aggression, the EU has implemented a number of different countermeasures.** Namely, in 2014, Europe introduced joint sanctions against Russia, approved a number of resolutions (in the framework of EU, OSCE, PACE) condemning Russian aggression against Ukraine. In March 2015, at EU summit, a decision was approved on the need to address Russia's disinformation campaigns, and in summer, East StratCom Task Force was established in the framework of European External Action Service in order to provide informational support of EU's policy and counter "external disinformation".

On 10 June 2015, European Parliament approved Resolution "On the State of EU-Russia relations", which stressed that Russia can no longer be treated as, or considered, a "strategic partner", and proposed to review the entire system of relations with Russia.<sup>29</sup> Brussels has taken a number of political, organisational and informational steps to counter Russian influence. In

July 2016, EU leaders and Secretary General of NATO signed a joint declaration on cooperation and countering hybrid threats. And on 6 December 2016, at the meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs, a decision was made for the European Centre for Countering Hybrid Threats to be established in 2017, and a corresponding set of measures (in seven areas) was approved for deepening EU-NATO cooperation.<sup>30</sup>

EU countries (in the framework of NATO programmes) take part in creating a protection system against cyber-threats. In 2014-2015, a comprehensive policy and a new military concept of cyber-protection were developed. In Riga, a new StratCom centre was created.<sup>31</sup> 20 European countries are taking part in NATO's Smart Defence programme.

In November 2016, the EU started moving toward strengthening of its "military component" On 14 November, a new defence and security plan was approved, which provides for the establishment of a separate institution ("permanent operational planning and capacity management") and formation of joint rapid reaction forces. (This does not entail the creation of a European army). Later, the European Parliament approved the Resolution on strengthening cooperation of EU member states in the defence sector and the need to increase corresponding expenditure in defence budgets of EU member states. A special fund will be established to finance the initial stages of Europe's military project.

The next step in countering Russia's aggression was the approval of the European Parliament's Resolution "On EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties" on 23 November 2016, which contains a set of measures to counteract propaganda influences coming from Russia (in particular, this involves RT TV channel, *Sputnik* agency, "Russian World" foundation and "Rossotrudnichestvo").

**In general, a number of important measures have been taken to counter hybrid threats in Europe. EU-NATO cooperation is being strengthened. However, it should be noted that the European community's policy toward Russia was largely palliative, sometimes inconsistent and contradictory, inadequate to the scale and characteristics of Russian expansion.** Often measures to counter Russian influence met with resistance from the leaders of certain EU member states were sporadic.

A breakthrough was NATO's Warsaw Summit, which documented real and adequate understanding of the nature of Kremlin's domestic and foreign policy, clear realisation of the need to implement extensive and powerful measures countering Russia's threat based on "forceful deterrence and readiness for dialogue". Currently, there are essentially two policies of the Western community toward Russia – EU's "civil" policy and NATO's "military" one.

<sup>29</sup> European Parliament urges not to consider Russia as a strategic partner. – Interfax, 10 June 2015, <http://interfax.com.ua>.

<sup>30</sup> EU and NATO to establish Centre for Countering Hybrid Threats in 2017. European Truth, 6 December 2016. – <http://www.euointegration.com.ua/news/2016/12/6/7058528/>.

<sup>31</sup> For more information, see article by P. Baev in this journal.



Clearly, EU's main challenges are internal problems, conflicts and disputes (economic crisis, refugee crisis, Brexit, growth of populist sentiments, strife between EU member states, insufficiently effective bureaucratic mechanisms and institutions in Brussels, etc.). Russia is actively using this complicated situation, as well as openness and liberalism of the European community to boost its own position and influence in Europe.

Internal political processes in the EU (national isolationism, xenophobia, increased activity of far-right) threaten to weaken and corrode the unity of the European community. In this situation, there are reasons to talk about the realistic threat of a change of policy toward Russia as the result of elections in key European countries – the Netherlands, Italy, France and Germany.

On the other hand, as a result of the US elections, there is some uncertainty as to further US-Europe relations, namely, the White House's stance on relations between NATO and EU. This is a concern for European policy makers. At the same time, Kremlin has certain geopolitical expectations from D. Trump's new foreign policy course. It is obvious that, at least, in the nearest future internal democratic transformations in Russia are hardly possible, and, consequently, the same goes for positive changes in Kremlin's policy on Europe.

Instead, Russia will continue (possibly will even intensify) its influence in Europe in order to disintegrate the EU, minimise US presence on the continent and reformat the current European order to fit its own plan.

Russian "hybrid" expansion is taking place amid total devaluation of global and regional security structures (OSCE is in crisis, and the UN Security Council, in particular, in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict is being blocked by Russia).

Thus, in the medium term, the West will have to coexist with Putin's Russia – a country with totalitarian internal and aggressive foreign policy, as well as disregard for international standards and rules.

In this situation, it is extremely important for the EU to maintain solidarity in relations with Russia, namely, maintaining sanctions against Russia since targeted and sectoral sanctions have an essential deterring political, economic and psychological effect. Lifting or easing sanctions in the current situation will be viewed in Kremlin as a sign of weakness in the West and encourage it to further action.

The unity of European community and its democratic system largely depend on successful resolution of internal problems, as well as on the effectiveness and coordination of actions countering Russian hybrid expansion on the continent.

## RUSSIA'S HYBRID AGGRESSION: UKRAINIAN FOOTHOLD

Russia's "hybrid" aggression has been going on for three years. It has cost Ukraine unprecedented human, territorial and economic losses – over 10 thousand Ukrainian citizens are dead, 21 thousand injured, 1.8 mln. of internally displaced persons, 44 thousand sq. km of land (7%) have been occupied, and 20% of Ukraine's industrial potential destroyed.

One of the root motives of Russia's aggression against Ukraine was its attempt to derail the realisation of Ukraine's "European project". The prospect of Ukraine becoming an example of introducing reforms and creating better living conditions for its citizens through realisation of European, instead of Eurasian integration course would create a serious threat for Russian regime.

According to the Chairman of the European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs E. Brok: "The worst thing that can happen to Russia is Ukraine becoming a democratic and economically successful state based on the rule of law. This will be a disaster for Kremlin..."<sup>32</sup>

On the one hand, if European reforms are successful in Ukraine, Russian citizens will logically question their leadership's inability to offer an attractive model of social development. On the other, Ukraine's European integration, leaving Russia's zone of influence will mean a failure of Russia-centred Eurasian integration project, fiasco of Moscow's claims for regional leadership and "special rights" in the post-Soviet space.

Implementation of goals of Kremlin's "hybrid" aggression can be achieved through different scenarios.

*The first* one includes driving the socio-political and socio-economic situation into a state of explosiveness and formation of a government loyal to Russia (controlled by it). This means creating sources of instability and conflicts in the society and political community, creating new lines of confrontation, atmosphere of uncertainty and fear (including, with the help of terrorist attacks).

*The second* scenario involves achieving the goals Russian leadership has announced numerous times, i.e. federalisation of Ukraine with the rights of regions to influence the country's foreign and security policy. This would hamper Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic integration, which, consequently, would cause resistance from the majority of citizens and a large-scale civil conflict. Means for realisation of this scenario are built into Minsk agreements, where the main demand is for Ukraine to grant special status to regions controlled by "DNR/LNR". The course of events taking place in Ukraine in 2014-2016 demonstrated a combination of both scenarios.

<sup>32</sup> Elmar Brok: the worst thing that can happen to Kremlin is democratic and economically successful Ukraine. – UNIAN, 23 December 2016, <http://interfax.com.ua/news/interview/392660.html>.



### Public and Expert Opinion

Experts believe that the goals of Russian aggression in Ukraine are: change of power and establishing control over Ukraine (66%), preventing its European and Euro-Atlantic integration (59%), destruction of Ukrainian statehood (36%).

Citizens believe that the main reasons of the Russia-Ukraine conflict are: Ukraine's attempts to leave Russia's zone of influence (46%), Moscow's inability to accept Kyiv's Eurointegration course and, in general, Ukraine as an independent state with an independent foreign policy (42%, each).

Russian aggression has caused tectonic, irreversible changes in relations between Kyiv and Moscow – intergovernmental institutions are destroyed, trade arrangements are dismantled, legal and contractual framework is de facto annihilated (around 350 documents).

Russia's aggression, from the entire range of bilateral relations (not to mention the war itself), has left Ukraine only the format of confrontational coexistence with Russia – limited, forced, and cold – depending on the unfolding situation.

**Normalisation of relations with Putin's Russia is impossible due to the following reasons.** *First*, there is a number of fundamental issues, where compromise is currently impossible. There are no prospects for resolving the problem of annexed Crimea. The conflict in Donbas will be frozen for a long time, in the best-case scenario. Kyiv's European and Euro-Atlantic integration are unacceptable for Kremlin.

*Second*, during the war, Ukraine has suffered colossal trauma from a "brother" country. *Third*, there have been long-term fundamental changes in the public consciousness. Over the years of conflict, attitudes of Ukrainian citizens toward Russia, its leadership, Kremlin's policy and prospects of relations with Russia have radically changed. There is a "chasm" of alienation, mistrust and hostility.<sup>33</sup>

**We should not be expecting any changes for the better in Kremlin's policy toward Ukraine in the foreseeable future.** Let us also remember that on 31 December 2015, V. Putin signed a new National Security Strategy, which mentions the "US and EU's support of the unconstitutional coup in Ukraine", and "strengthening of ultra-nationalist ideology".<sup>34</sup> These assertions were also repeated in Putin's following statements and speeches. In particular, at the press conference on 10 August 2016, V. Putin, while "accusing" Ukraine – the victim of Russia's aggression – of terrorism (!), had repeated a phrase "the people who seized power

in Kyiv" several times.<sup>35</sup> Putin also voiced similar assessments at the 8<sup>th</sup> Investment Forum on 12 October 2016.<sup>36</sup> This means that Russia continues to doubt the legitimacy of Ukrainian government and does not consider Ukraine's European choice final.

An example of unprecedented cynicism and hypocrisy is a passage on Ukraine in the new Russian Foreign Policy Concept (approved by V. Putin on 30 November 2016) – "Russian Federation is interested in developing political, economic, cultural and spiritual ties with Ukraine in all areas on the basis of mutual respect [...] Russia undertakes to make every effort to promote political and diplomatic settlement of the internal conflict in Ukraine".<sup>37</sup>

That being said, we should not rely on forecasts of Russia nearing the economic collapse and disintegration as well as changes in the top Kremlin leadership. (Such changes under authoritarian rule do not mean changes for the better). Based on results of a survey conducted by Russian Public Opinion Foundation on 25 December 2016, if elections took place next Sunday, 67% would vote for V. Putin, 8% – for V. Zhirinovskiy, 4% – for G. Ziuganov, and only 1% of Russian citizens would have voted for other politicians.<sup>38</sup> This "gap" between the 67% and 1% is quite telling about the lack of real competition for the incumbent Kremlin leader. It should be added that by the time of the 2018 elections in Russia, voters will include representatives of a new generation, who were born and raised under Putin's regime.

### Public and Expert Opinion

Experts believe that the most realistic scenario of further developments in Russia-Ukraine relations in the foreseeable future is the continuation of the conflict as it is (45%) or conservation of the conflict followed by a period of weaponless confrontation (40%). Most citizens think that in the nearest future relations between Russia and Ukraine will either deteriorate (35%), or remain without changes (35%).

Ukraine has defined its official position: Russia is the aggressor state and a military adversary; Kremlin's goal is the destruction of Ukrainian statehood; aggression has a long-term character; normalisation of relations is possible only upon return of occupied territories, compensation for losses resulting from the aggression, non-interference in Ukraine's internal affairs.<sup>39</sup>

**Along with military means of aggression (occupation and annexation of Crimea, military intervention in Donbas), Russia is using the entire range of "hybrid" warfare** – from informational and propaganda expansion, economic and energy pressure and discrediting Kyiv on the global arena to subversive activity, espionage

<sup>33</sup> For more information, see results of sociological studies in this journal.

<sup>34</sup> National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation. – Web-site of the RF President, [static.kremlin.ru](http://static.kremlin.ru).

<sup>35</sup> Press conference on negotiations with the President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan. – Web-site of the RF President, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/52684>.

<sup>36</sup> See: VTB Capital Investment Forum "RUSSIA CALLING!" – Web-site of the RF President, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53077>.

<sup>37</sup> See: Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (approved by the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin on 30 November 2016). – Web-site of the MFA of the RF, [http://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign\\_policy/official\\_documents/-/asset\\_publisher/CptCk86BZ29/content/id/2542248](http://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptCk86BZ29/content/id/2542248).

<sup>38</sup> V. Putin: rating, attitude, performance evaluation. Indicators of attitude to the head of state. – Public Opinion Foundation, <http://fom.ru/Politika/10946>.

<sup>39</sup> This position is clearly documented in acts of the Verkhovna Rada, Presidential decrees, new National Security Strategy and Military Doctrine. For more information, see: Prospects of Russia-Ukraine Relations. Analytical report by the Razumkov Centre. – National Security and Defence, 2015, No.89, p.78.



and sabotage operations in Ukraine, inciting separatist sentiments in regions and massive cyber-attacks on government electronic networks.

The various instruments of Russia's "hybrid" aggression against Ukraine include:

**First. Military aggression.** The military component of Russia's "hybrid" war against Ukraine is the military expansion – occupation and illegal annexation of Crimea, followed by invasion of Russian troops in separate parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

In February-March 2014, the peninsula was occupied, Ukrainian military units and fleet, as well as transportation infrastructure blocked, a pseudo-referendum was conducted, Crimean independence act and the decision on joining Russia approved. **Thus, a large-scale, swift, and carefully planned in advance military-political special operation was conducted.**

Politically motivated criminal persecution, abduction, torture, illegal detention became a common practice in the occupied Crimea. Massive violations of human rights are taking place, including freedom of speech, religion, the right to peaceful assembly. In April 2016, Russian authorities proclaimed Mejlis of Crimean Tatars an extremist organisation and banned its activities. International human rights organisations have no access to Crimea and cannot influence the situation.

All these crimes under the Russian occupation are described and documented in the United Nations General

Assembly Resolution "Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea..." dated 19 December 2016.<sup>40</sup> The international community has generally condemned the annexation of Crimea. Thus, back on 27 March 2014, United Nations General Assembly approved a resolution, in which it expressed its support of Ukraine's sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity.<sup>41</sup> The illegal annexation of Crimea was condemned by leading countries and international organisations – UN, EU, NATO, OSCE, PACE, G7, etc. The Crimean issue is being defined in the international discourse increasingly more often as **"illegal annexation", "temporary occupation",** and events in Donbas – as **"Russian military intervention", "military conflict between Russia and Ukraine"** (Table "Some international documents...").

Now the annexation of Crimea is turning into a "frozen", pending issue – no international legal, political, economic ways and resolution mechanisms have been found. For Russian leadership this problem does not exist. At the annual address of the Russian President to the Federal Assembly (3 December 2015) the Crimean issue was closed, "the reunion of Crimea and Sevastopol with Russia" was proclaimed "a crucial, fateful choice of further course".<sup>45</sup>

Three years of occupation have proven that Russian leadership views Crimea just as a strategic military base, a militarised foothold for strengthening its positions in the Black Sea region.

**Some international documents (2016) on Russian military aggression against Ukraine**

| Name of the document   | Excerpts  |
|--|---|
| <b>PACE Resolution</b> as of 12 October 2016<br>"Legal remedies for human rights violations on the Ukrainian territories outside the control of the Ukrainian authorities" <sup>42</sup>     | "2. It (PACE) reaffirms its position that the <b>annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the military intervention by Russian forces in eastern Ukraine violate international law and the principles upheld by the Council of Europe</b> , as stated in Assembly Resolution 2112 (2016), Resolution 2063 (2015), Resolution 1990 (2014) and Resolution 1988 (2014)."   |
| <b>Report on Preliminary Examination Activities of the Office of the Prosecutor of the Hague Tribunal</b> (14 November 2016) <sup>43</sup>   | " <b>The information available suggests that the situation within the territory of Crimea and Sevastopol amounts to an international armed conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation.</b> This international armed conflict began at the latest on 26 February when the Russian Federation deployed members of its armed forces to gain control over parts of the Ukrainian territory without the consent of the Ukrainian Government..."<br>"Additional information... points to <b>direct military engagement between Russian armed forces and Ukrainian government forces that would suggest the existence of an international armed conflict in the context of armed hostilities in eastern Ukraine from 14 July 2014 at the latest ...</b> " |
| <b>United Nations General Assembly Resolution</b> "Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)" as of 19 December 2016 <sup>44</sup> | The General Assembly...<br>... Recalling its resolution 68/262 of 27 March 2014 on the territorial integrity of Ukraine, in which it affirmed its commitment to the <b>sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders</b> , and relevant decisions of international organisations, specialised agencies and bodies within the United Nations system, <b>condemning the temporary occupation of part of the territory of Ukraine – the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (hereinafter "Crimea") – by the Russian Federation, and reaffirming the non-recognition of its annexation ...</b> "   |

<sup>40</sup> See: [https://twitter.com/UKRinUN/status/810925513413971969/photo/1?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw](https://twitter.com/UKRinUN/status/810925513413971969/photo/1?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw).

<sup>41</sup> The UN resolution was supported by 100 countries of the world, 58 – abstained. 11 countries voted against the Resolution – Russia, Belarus, Zimbabwe, Venezuela, Syria, Bolivia, Armenia, North Korea, Cuba, Nicaragua, Sudan.

<sup>42</sup> See: Legal remedies for human rights violations on the Ukrainian territories outside the control of the Ukrainian authorities. – PACE web-site, <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-DocDetails-EN.asp?fileid=23167&lang=EN&search=KjoqfHR5cGVfc3RyX2VuOJlc29sdXRpb24=>.

<sup>43</sup> See: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/otp/161114-otp-rep-PE-Ukraine.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup> See: [https://twitter.com/UKRinUN/status/810925513413971969/photo/1?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw](https://twitter.com/UKRinUN/status/810925513413971969/photo/1?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw).

<sup>45</sup> Annual address of the Russian President to the Federal Assembly. – Web-site of the RF President, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50864>.



Immediately after the annexation of Crimea, in March 2014, Russia instigated and supported riots in separate parts of Donbas, contributing to the formation of DNR and LNR separatist enclaves, and deployed its regular armed forces there.

Over the three years of "hybrid" occupation of Donbas, Russia has formed militarised de facto puppet governments and institutions. Only in the DNR there are 20 different "ministries" like: "people's council", "council of ministers", "prosecutor's office", "central bank", "supreme court". There are new trade unions, the union of journalists, etc. A system of media outlets has been created, including: seven TV channels, four radio stations and 13 newspapers. All this propaganda machine is controlled by the Ministry of Propaganda with 120 people on staff. The Donetsk Republic Social Movement which number exceeds 140 thousand people represents a DNR NGO sector.

The "republics" are creating their own (completely Russified) system of "patriotic" education that uses Russian methodology and celebrates the rebels' acts of heroism.<sup>46</sup> DNR/LNR higher education system is completely tied to Russia. There is open and total Russification of occupied territories. Along with this, Russian passports are being issued to local citizens in large numbers.<sup>47</sup>

In September 2015, Russian ruble was introduced as a mandatory currency in LNR/DNR, which is used for payments, including to militants.<sup>48</sup> The course for Russia is unequivocal and undeniable. DNR leader O. Zakharchenko, back in September 2015, in his address to DNR citizens said that they were not going back to Ukraine and were leading a "diplomatic battle with a ruthless terrorist gang". In May 2016, during conference calls with Odesa and Kharkiv residents he encouraged them to disintegrate from Ukraine: "Maybe choose an alternative, dismantle it [Ukraine], and start living your own life". He also congratulated Russians on the Russia Day in his address on 12 June 2016, and said that "each of us is defending and is ready to defend till the end the right to be a part of the Russian world".<sup>49</sup>

Russia has essentially created a LNR/DNR regular army, the backbone of which consists of Russian special forces officers and generals, and which is provided with Russian equipment and weapons, and operates under the command of the Russian Ministry of Defence.<sup>50</sup>

**According to data from the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, as of late December 2016 - early January 2017, DNR/LNR army consists of 40 thousand militants, out of which 5,000 is regular Russian troops.**

**The militants have approximately 600 tanks, 1,300 IFV, 860 artillery systems, 300 multiple rocket launchers.**<sup>51</sup>

Situation in the "republics" is under total control of Russian special services. Inspection visits to Donetsk by Russia's General Staff commissions have become a regular practice, as well as joint planning of military operations with participation of the Federal Security Service and local militants.

According to western sources,<sup>52</sup> Russian government manages the DNR/LNR socio-economic sector through an interdepartmental commission (six working groups created by five Russian ministries); sectors under control include finance, taxes, infrastructure, transport, energy, etc.<sup>53</sup>

**Hybrid aggression in Donbas created ORDLO\* – a hostile and alien to Ukraine militarised zone, mired in "Russian World" ideology, filled with weapons, covered with a vast network of Russian special services agents, controlled by the army of militants with Russian officers in the lead. That being said, for many militants converting them back to peaceful "miners and tractor drivers" is already impossible.**

We need to acknowledge that international diplomacy efforts in the framework of Normandy Four and the Trilateral Contact Group in Minsk have failed to resolve the conflict or even to reach a solid ceasefire in the East of Ukraine. On 19 October 2016, in Berlin, there was a meeting of leaders of Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia, who approved the decision on the development of a roadmap for implementation of Minsk agreements. However, on 29 November, negotiations of MFA heads in the Normandy format failed to reach any result. Reason – the blocking of negotiations by Russia, attempts of the aggressor country to include DNR/LNR terrorist formations into Ukraine, with official recognition of their "special" status in the Constitution. This is absolutely unacceptable for Ukraine.

Russia's plan to integrate DNR and LNR into Ukraine with their "special status" documented in the Constitution, turning militants into the "local militia", is essentially a time bomb for Europe. Integrating terrorist groups into Ukraine in their current form can cause large-scale social protests, start dangerous centrifugal trends in regions and critically destabilise the internal situation in Ukraine. This plan is especially dangerous amid a complicated socio-economic situation, increasing lack of trust toward current government. This is a direct threat to Ukrainian statehood and integrity of the country.

<sup>46</sup> E.g., in Horlivka lyceum No.14, Museum of Heroic Protection of DNR was created, first section of which is dedicated to "acts of atrocity" committed by the Ukrainian army.

<sup>47</sup> Just in May 2016, 35 thousand blank passports were sent to Donbas for registration of Russian citizenship. That is besides the local "passports" that are being issued since February.

<sup>48</sup> According to Bloomberg agency, Russia transfers almost 2.5 billion rubles to DNR each month. (Military intelligence of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine reports that in May 2016, almost 1.2 billion rubles and \$382 thousand was transported to DNR from the territory of Rostov oblast in cash).

<sup>49</sup> Address of the DNR Chief on the occasion of Russia Day. – DNR Donetsk News Agency, 12 June 2016, <http://dan-news.info/official/obrashhenie-glavy-dnr-po-sluchayu-prazdnovaniya-dnya-rossii.html>.

<sup>50</sup> For more information, see: article by K. Mashovets "Military Component of Russia's Aggression" in this journal.

<sup>51</sup> Poltorak revealed the size of Russian contingent. – UNIAN, 3 January 2017, <http://www.unian.net/war/1709736-poltorak-raskryl-chislennost-rossiyskoy-voennoy-gruppirovki-i-tehniki-rf-na-donbasse.html>.

<sup>52</sup> Putin's shadow government for Donbas exposed. – Bild, 29 March 2016, <http://m.bild.de/politik/ausland/ukraine-konflikt/donbass-shadow-government-45102202.bildMobile.html>

<sup>53</sup> This shadow government includes Vice Prime Minister D. Kozak, Deputy Minister of Economic Development S. Nazarov, Deputy Minister of Finance L. Hornin. On the part of Kremlin, "Donbas project" is headed by Russian President's advisor V. Surkov.

\* The occupied areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.



In short, resolving the Donbas conflict according to Russian scenario threatens with a major conflict in Europe, a new refugee crisis.

**At this moment, the situation in Donbas will remain dangerously explosive, with a threat of escalation leading to unpredictable consequences.**

**Second. Humanitarian and informational aggression.** Expansion in information space is an essential and most dangerous component of Russia's "hybrid" war against Ukraine. Moscow's media influence has been exerted throughout the entire contemporary history of Russia-Ukraine relations. But it is safe to assume that the active stage of the information war began in the fall of 2013, before the summit in Vilnius, during which the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement was supposed to be signed. Kremlin used a powerful propaganda machine against Ukraine, which included TV and radio broadcasting, print and electronic media, cinema, theatre, book publishing, concerts, festivals and exhibitions, youth subcultures and social networks in the Internet, different public and religious organisations.<sup>54</sup> The main instruments of Russia's global media expansion are powerful state-owned media corporations – *Russia Today* TV channel and *Sputnik* agency.

The Freedom House's annual report of 2015 stresses that Russia became the ground breaker of modern government propaganda. Russian government exerts active effort to manipulate media in geopolitically meaningful policy issues with neighbouring states – Ukraine, Moldova, the Baltic states.<sup>55</sup>

From October 2015 to July 2016, special working group at the European External Action Service (East StratCom Task Force) recorded 936 cases of deceptive information, fake messages of Kremlin's propaganda presented for the citizens of Ukraine, Belarus and the Baltic states in Russian.<sup>56</sup>

An important target of Russia's influence is the domestic situation in Ukraine, as well as separate political and public institutions: government system, local self-government, political parties and civil movements, religious organisations, media. The goal of Russia's informational (psychological) war is the destruction of Ukrainian society from within – through discrediting the acting government, hindering Ukraine's course for European and Euro-Atlantic integration, instigating social discontent and separatist sentiment in the regions, promoting the "Russian World" doctrine in Ukraine's cultural and information space, as well as by "protecting the fellow compatriots" on Ukrainian territory. This is generally about disintegration and destruction of Ukrainian statehood.

Russia's hostile propaganda methods include outright lies, distortion of facts and historical events, insinuation, slander, informational sabotage, provocations, etc. (Table "Top falsehoods of Russia's propaganda").

Hostile anti-Ukrainian propaganda over the three years of informational aggression has formed a persistent false image of a neighbouring state. For a common Russian citizen, Ukraine is a country, where: (a) an unconstitutional coup took place supported by the West, and "Banderites" took over, who started a genocide against

**Top falsehoods<sup>57</sup> of Russia's propaganda**

| Source               | Content  |
|----------------------|--|
| Russian MFA          | In its statement on 20 April 2014, Russian MFA reported that "Right Sector" militants attacked Sloviansk checkpoint. According to Russian journalists, "militants" were setting on fire the vehicles of pro-Russian citizens, leaving a special token at the crime scene – the red-and-black business card of D. Yarosh.   |
| Channel One          | According to Channel One, May 2014 elections in Ukraine resulted in the victory of the "Right Sector" leader D. Yarosh, who got 37.13% of votes. As the evidence, they demonstrated a screenshot of the web-site that looked similar to the CEC web-site.  |
| Channel One          | On 12 July 2014, Channel One showed a news piece, in which H. Pyshniak (a "mother and a wife of a rebel from Western Ukraine") told a story about a three-year-old boy who was crucified on the news-board in Sloviansk, and his mother, who also suffered abuse.  |
| NTV                  | On 2 November 2014, NTV channel showed a video piece, which told a story of "Ukrainian army men beating up the parents of a boy, drugging him afterwards and sending off to scout out pro-Russian fighters' checkpoint positions".   |
| "Russia 1"           | On 15 December 2014, TV channel told a story about teachers in Zaporizhzhia, who teach children to feed chickadees (yellow-and-blue, symbolising Ukraine) and to kill bullfinches (symbolising Russia).  |
| "Rossiyskaya Gazeta" | In the interview on 8 September 2015, Director of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation A. Bastrykin stated that A. Yatsenyuk, being a member of punitive squads "Argo" and "Viking", took part in torturing and execution of captive Russian soldiers in January 1995 in Grozny and was awarded the "Honour of the Nation" medal by D. Dudayev. |
| RIA News             | On 26 April 2016, the agency spread the information about the report of Russian Prosecutor General Yu. Chaika to the Federation Council, where he claimed that supporters of the "Right Sector" were preparing a <i>coup d'etat</i> in Russia.   |

<sup>54</sup> For more information, see: Prospects of Russia-Ukraine Relations. Analytical report by the Razumkov Centre. – National Security and Defence, 2015, No.89, p.1820.

<sup>55</sup> Level of media freedom in the world has significantly dropped, Russia became the ground breaker of government propaganda – Freedom House. – UNIAN, 27 April 2016, <http://www.unian.net/world/1331514-uroven-svobodyi-smi-v-mire-rekordno-upal-rossiya-stala-novatorom-gospropagandyi-freedom-house.html>.

<sup>56</sup> EU experts discovered thousands of false stories by Russian media. – *Deutsche Welle* web-site, 26 July 2016, <http://www.dw.com/uk>.

<sup>57</sup> *Falsehood* – "false, forged, unreal" information, forged photographs, videos, news, social network profiles, fake or edited with special technologies and computer software. Presented as truthful information.



Russian-speaking population and a fratricidal civil war; (b) Russophobic Kyiv government is conducting a counter-terrorist operation against Donbas rebels; (c) Russia's enemies are dragging Ukraine into the EU and NATO against the will of its people; (d) Ukraine is a "failed state" and without Russia it will degenerate and dissolve.

Kremlin's informational aggression has destroyed contacts between Ukrainian and Russian citizens, created deep alienation, hostility and mistrust between the two nations.

Ukraine has taken certain steps to counter Russia's informational expansion. Namely, in December 2014, a Ministry of Information Policy was established. Later, in October 2015, the International Broadcasting Multimedia Platform of Ukraine was launched. In 2015-2016, Ukraine introduced a package of sanctions against Russian media, artists, publishing houses, etc. (In particular, during 2014-2016, National Radio and TV Council banned retransmission of 73 Russian channels.) Broadcasting is being restored on the occupied territories of Donbas. In October 2016, under the auspices of NSDC of Ukraine, International Information Consortium "Bastion" was established to counter Russia's informational influence.<sup>58</sup>

However, Ukraine's countermeasures are largely situational, sector-specific and are far from fully matching the scale of Russian expansion. Deployment of effective resistance that would cover the entire humanitarian and socio-cultural spectrum is hindered by the absence of state humanitarian policy, and thus, comprehensive ideological support of information activities.<sup>59</sup>

It is clear that Russia (at least until its current political regime remains in power) will continue its informational aggression against Ukraine within its own and Ukrainian information space, as well as at the international level. It is also clear that even in the event of "freezing" of the Donbas conflict, we are to expect more active engagement of Russia's major means of warfare – information. Moreover, this expansion will be getting stronger with Ukraine's progress toward EU and NATO.

**Third. Economic war.** Starting from mid-2000s, Russia's important tool of political and economic pressure on Ukraine was the introduction of different trade restrictions. The goal of these actions was to block Kyiv's Eurointegration course and involve Ukraine in Kremlin's reintegration projects in the post-Soviet space.<sup>60</sup>

Large-scale trade wars began on 20 January 2006, when without a warning Russia banned import of all animal products, allegedly due to their poor quality. Later, Russia involved its ally countries in anti-Ukrainian trade measures. In particular, in June 2011, Customs Union (under Russia's pressure) introduced customs duties for Ukrainian metal, pipes, and raised customs duties for

FMCG – for example, sugar, buckwheat, potatoes, cabbage, etc. Import of Ukrainian confectionery was terminated altogether.

An acute crisis broke in the summer of 2013. Thus, on 14 August, all Ukrainian goods imported to Russia were categorised as high-risk, which created a situation for "customs war" – supplies of all Ukrainian products to Russia were blocked. It is not by chance that this economic blockade started on the eve of the Vilnius summit, where Ukraine and EU were supposed to sign the Association Agreement.

Russia used all of its available economic levers of influence: (a) increased customs duties; (b) banned import of Ukrainian goods; (c) discredited Ukrainian goods in the eyes of European consumers; (d) blocked supplies of Ukrainian goods to third party markets; (e) banned transit for Ukraine through its territory to the Caucasus region and Central Asia; (f) economic sabotage. All of this is done to destroy Ukraine's economy, establish economic and political protectorate and keep Kyiv in Russia's "zone of privileged interests".

The situation dramatically deteriorated after the start of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. The volume of trade declined rapidly (Table "Trade Volume between Ukraine and Russia"<sup>61</sup>). Even in the relatively "calm" 2013, the volume of trade between Ukraine and Russia dropped by 15%, and in the following 2014-2016, the annual decline reached 35-40%.

According to some estimates, closure of Russian market has already cost Ukraine \$15 billion.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, with the decline of trade with Russia, Ukraine has got rid of its monopolistic dependence on Russia in a number of industries, especially the gas sector. A milestone event was the termination of Russian gas imports for internal use from 25 November 2015. Ukraine broke off contacts in the field of military-technical cooperation with Russia, denouncing a package of corresponding agreements.

Now Russia has lost its exclusive value as Ukraine's main trade partner.<sup>63</sup> Based on results of the nine months of 2016, Ukraine's export (of products) to Russia has dropped by 30.1% (compared to the same period in 2015) and its percentage in the total exports is only 10% (in 2012, percentage of Ukrainian export to Russia was over a quarter of the country's total exports).

This trend will persist, including due to mutually restrictive measures (Russia-introduced restrictions for Ukrainian products and corresponding countermeasures by Ukrainian side).<sup>64</sup>

According to the President of Ukraine P. Poroshenko: "Perhaps, strategically, it is good that we had such a dramatic

<sup>58</sup> Oleksandr Turchynov called for establishing an information army that will give a proper response to Russia's propaganda. – Web-site of the NSDC of Ukraine, 28 October 2016, <http://www.rnbo.gov.ua/news/2622.html>.

<sup>59</sup> See: Prospects of Russia-Ukraine Relations. Analytical report by the Razumkov Centre. – National Security and Defence, 2015, No.89, p.19.

<sup>60</sup> For example, on 3 September 2013, Russian President's advisor S. Glazyev announced gas price for Ukraine – \$166 (for 1,000 cu. m) in case Ukraine joined the Customs Union, otherwise the price remained discriminatory – at that time Ukraine was purchasing gas at the price of \$422.

<sup>61</sup> Source: State Statistics Service of Ukraine, <http://ukrstat.gov.ua>.

<sup>62</sup> Annual Address of the President to the Verkhovna Rada "On Ukraine's domestic and foreign situation in 2016". – The official web-site of the President of Ukraine, [president.gov.ua/news/shorichne-poslannya-prezidenta-do-verhovnoyi-radi-pro-vnutri-38077](http://president.gov.ua/news/shorichne-poslannya-prezidenta-do-verhovnoyi-radi-pro-vnutri-38077).

<sup>63</sup> While in 2012 the share of trade with Russia in the foreign trade volume was approximately 24% of the total trade, in 2015 – already less than 13%. For more information, see: web-site of the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, <http://ukrstat.gov.ua>.

<sup>64</sup> In August 2015, Ukraine imposed sanctions on 388 individuals and 105 Russian enterprises, banks, TV companies and airlines. In August 2016, the Cabinet of Ministers added to this list another 259 individuals and 46 legal entities.



Trade Volume between Ukraine and Russia, \$ billion

|                     | Total export | Export to Russia |                         | Total      | Import from Russia |                         |
|---------------------|--------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
|                     | \$ billion   | \$ billion       | before previous year, % | \$ billion | \$ billion         | before previous year, % |
| 2012                | 68.8         | 17.6             | –                       | 84.7       | 27.4               | –                       |
| 2013                | 63.3         | 15.1             | 85.4                    | 77.0       | 23.2               | 84.7                    |
| 2014                | 53.9         | 9.8              | 66.3                    | 54.4       | 12.7               | 55.0                    |
| 2015                | 38.1         | 4.8              | 49.3                    | 37.5       | 7.5                | 59.0                    |
| Nine months of 2016 | 25.9         | 2.6              | 69.9                    | 27.6       | 3.6                | 65.7                    |

reduction of our dependence on the Russian market, which is reigned not by economic laws, but by political blackmail and imperial pressure”.<sup>65</sup> In general, Kremlin’s policy toward Ukraine aims at aggravating social crisis, bringing down the country’s defence capability, inciting protest sentiments, and, in the end, changing the current political regime. **Considering this, trade with Russia are questionable as they are seen as means of sponsoring the aggressor country.**

Although the total volume of Ukraine’s trade with the rest of the world has also gone down significantly, this has been the result of, *firstly*, general global decline in the rate of international trade, *secondly*, Russian aggression, which made Ukraine lose a fifth of its foreign trade potential, *thirdly*, Ukraine’s launch of structural changes to refocus on new markets and look for new competitive niches. In comparison, the share of Ukraine’s exports to European countries (in total exports) has grown from 24% in 2012 to 40% in 2016.<sup>66</sup>

Clearly, in the next years, Ukraine will keep restructuring its foreign trade to focus on the new markets (including the emerging economies), while retaining its strategic orientation on the developed countries of the EU and North America.<sup>67</sup>

**Fourth. Energy aggression.** For many years Ukraine remained dependent on importing Russian energy resources: natural gas (Ukraine had to import up to 50 billion cu. m/year), petroleum products, NPP fuel (today, the country purchases over 90% of nuclear fuel), and later – CHP, which turned gas, oil, nuclear fuel and coal into Russia’s levers of influence on Ukraine. This situation was created by historically close industrial cooperation based on access to cheap energy sources in the USSR, which turned them, and later the energy infrastructure, into Russia’s instruments of “hybrid” warfare against Ukraine

used to retain control over Ukraine and attain Russia’s own political goals.

Energy lever, used by Russia by blackmail Ukraine, was natural gas. Russia’s “gas war” against Ukraine started long before the beginning of military action: its first displays were gas disputes in 2006<sup>68</sup> and 2009, when Russia suspended transit of natural gas through Ukraine’s territory. Energy warfare became effective in conditions of Ukraine’s 100% dependence on gas supplies by the monopolist represented by *Gazprom*, which allowed Russia to set gas prices – since 2005 the price increased from \$50 for 1,000 cu. m to \$420 for 1,000 cu. m in 2012.

Meanwhile, a number of reforms implemented in the energy sector during 2014–2016 allowed to stop purchasing natural gas from Russia and, thus, disrupt Russia’s gas monopoly. Ukraine managed to diversify its natural gas supplies and in 2015 signed an agreement with the Hungarian operator to merge cross-border gas pipelines. (However, Ukrainian operator – *Ukrtransgaz* – cannot fully cooperate with operators of adjacent GTS of EU member states due to their current cooperation schemes with *Gazprom*. For example, the Russian company refuses to provide shipper codes (information about specific gas volumes transported through Ukraine) to the Ukrainian side.)

Having realised that Ukraine can manage without its gas, Russia started using the infrastructure component as energy weapon – creating routes to transport natural gas bypassing Ukraine, which is rather expensive, technically complicated and economically impractical. Such projects include South Stream,<sup>69</sup> Turkish Stream,<sup>70</sup> and Nord Stream-2,<sup>71</sup> the goal of which is to weaken Ukraine as a reliable transit country, as well as weaken energy security in Ukraine and Europe. With the start of operation of the Turkish Stream and increased pumping of natural gas

<sup>65</sup> Annual Address of the President to the Verkhovna Rada “On Ukraine’s domestic and foreign situation in 2016”.

<sup>66</sup> For more information, see: web-site of the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, <http://ukrstat.gov.ua>.

<sup>67</sup> An example is the refocusing of agricultural sector. The total volume of trade with Russia in the agroindustrial sector has dropped by 68% in 2015. Along with this, the geography of market outlets has changed: the share of Asian countries is 45%, EU – 28%, African countries – 14%, which already exceeds shipments to CIS countries. See, for example: Ukraine’s agricultural sector has moved to a new level of development. – Hronika.info, 4 February 2016, <http://hronika.info/mnenia/118846-agrosektor-ukrayini-viyshov-na-noviy-rven-rozvitku.html>.

<sup>68</sup> On the eve of the first gas dispute, Ukraine attempted to diversify its fuel purchases working with Turkmenistan, but the project was not implemented as Russian leadership banned transportation of Turkmen gas through the territory of Russia.

<sup>69</sup> “South Stream” was meant to transport gas through the Black Sea to Bulgaria and through the Balkans – to Hungary and Austria.

<sup>70</sup> On 10 October 2016, the meeting of Russia-Turkey Intergovernmental Commission on Cooperation in Trade and Economy took place, in the framework of which parties signed Turkish Stream project agreement, which is in conflict with European competition law and is an analogue of gas pipeline project South Stream, which Russia had to abandon in 2014.

<sup>71</sup> Nord Stream-2 project included building two gas pipelines with the total capacity of 55 billion cu. m/year from Russia’s coast through the Baltic Sea to Germany. On 9 November 2016, *Gazprom* terminated the shareholders’ agreement of *Nord Stream AG 2* consortium, which was created for the construction of this gas pipeline, when the European Commission allowed *Gazprom* to increase pumping of natural gas through the existing pipeline *OPAL* (on-land extension of the *Nord Stream 1* pipeline) bypassing Ukraine, which rendered building Nord Stream-2 unnecessary. European Commission confirmed exemption of *OPAL* pipeline from the provisions of Third Energy Package of the EU until 2033. See, for example: Bypassing Ukraine. European Commission makes concessions for *Gazprom*. – NV. Business, 28 October 2016, <http://biz.nv.ua/ukr/economics/v-obhid-ukrajini-jevrokomisija-pishla-na-postupki-gazpromu-255651.html>.



through OPAL Ukraine can lose significant volume of natural gas transit, which will reduce its foreign currency revenue from gas transit and will negatively affect operation of GTS.

Russian aggression caused huge losses for Ukraine's energy infrastructure. As a result of the annexation of Crimea, Ukraine lost a number of fuel and energy complex facilities and high-potential areas for the mining of hydrocarbon resources, while the military expansion in Donbas led to destruction of oil and gas infrastructure and energy facilities in Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Because of the fighting in the East, there was a significant decrease in production of anthracite coal, which resulted in increase of its imports, mainly from Russia (due to smaller logistics costs and timeframes). Meanwhile, anthracite supplies to our TPPs were repeatedly suspended by Russia, which posed risks to the uninterrupted power supply of the country.<sup>72</sup> In particular, until mid-2015, coal was not supplied from the occupied territories of Donbas, and Russia was blocking the supply of anthracite.

Currently, Russian energy expansion is aimed, on the one hand, at discrediting and eliminating Ukraine as energy transit country, on the other – at seizing/destroying Ukrainian energy infrastructure, which is a threat to sustainable operation of the country's life support system as a whole.

**Fifth. Russia's cyber-expansion.** An extremely dangerous component of Russia's "hybrid" war against Ukraine is aggression in cyberspace. In particular, this includes massive attacks on government and state companies' web-sites, war in social networks launched by Russian "troll factories", cyberspying. Russia has numerous hacker groups active, such as Sandworm, "Cyber-Berkut", "Sprut" (from the "DNR" territory), etc. Clearly, it is Russian intelligence services that are behind and control their operations. (To counter Russian cyber-expansion, in 2014, Ukrainian volunteers organised the "Ukrainian cyber-troops" group. Also, there is a "cyber-alliance" (an alliance of FalconsFlame, Trinity, "Ruh8" and "CyberHunta" groups).

Russia's "hybrid" war in cyberspace is growing in strength. CERT-UA group (Computer Emergency Response Team of Ukraine) at State Service of Special Communications has recorded 216 external cyber-attacks in 2014 (more than half of them – against government institutions).<sup>73</sup> In 2015, the number of attacks increased by 1.5 times. In the past three years, pro-Russian hackers performed massive attacks on government web-sites and web-pages of state institutions, e.g. web-sites of Presidential Administration, Cabinet of Ministers, State Service of Special Communications. There was a number of attacks on the web-sites of regional state administrations, where hackers uploaded anti-Ukrainian content and Russian symbols.<sup>74</sup>

The most dangerous cyber-sabotage took place on 23 December 2015, when a massive attack was launched on the traffic controller of *Ukrenergo* company and 6 other energy companies, which caused a power outage in 103 cities and villages in the West of Ukraine (caused with the help of a malware attack, known as BlackEnergy). US experts established that the massive sabotage was launched by Russia. And already in January 2016, IT resources of Boryspil airport suffered an attack.

On 27 January 2016, at the meeting of NSDC of Ukraine, dedicated to creating a state cyber-defence system, President said: "Cyberspace has now turned into another confrontation scene and a battlefield for the independence of the state ... attempts to use cyber-attacks for attaining political goals is just another small part of what Ukraine has already been facing from the very beginning of Russian aggression".<sup>75</sup>

On 15 March 2016, President signed the Decree that brought into force the NSDC decision "On Cyber-Security Strategy of Ukraine".<sup>76</sup> According to this document, the National Centre for Cyber-Security was created as part of NSDC. Despite the fact that Ukraine's security agencies had created special units for electronic security (including, the cyber-police department created at the MIA in 2015), the country was still unprepared for the Internet war.

Evidence of the magnitude of Russia's cyber-war against Ukraine was a recent major online sabotage against the Ukrainian financial and banking sector. On 6 December 2016, a hacker attack blocked the work of State Treasury, Ministry of Finance and Pension Fund web-sites. Later these attacks continued on the Ukrainian Railways and Ministry of Defence web-sites. According to National Security and Defence Council Secretary, O. Turchynov: "These attacks were pre-planned and coordinated from a single centre located in the Russian Federation".<sup>77</sup>

Russian aggression in the Internet space has caused serious concerns among intelligence services of several countries of the world. US intelligence agencies accused senior Russian officials of organising cyber-attacks during the US election campaign. Representatives of intelligence services in Germany, Czech Republic and other European countries are talking about the threat of Russian interference.

Obviously, the intensity and the scale of Russian Internet expansion against Ukraine will be increasing. Cyberattack is becoming one of the main components of Kremlin's "hybrid" war against Ukraine.

#### Expert Opinion

Experts believe that the most dangerous tools of Russian "hybrid" expansion are – propaganda expansion in Ukrainian media space (4.4 points on a five-point scale), military action in the CTO area (4.3), militarisation of Crimea and ORDLO (4.3), espionage by Russian special services (4.3). Other dangerous tool involve: support of the "fifth" column in the government and media, inciting separatist sentiments in regions, cyber-attacks on Ukrainian computer networks, etc.

<sup>72</sup> Due to shortage of power station coal at TPPs (as one of the main reasons), Ukraine had to reduce electricity production, which created the need to export it from Russia.

<sup>73</sup> At State Service of Special Communications there is also another similar unit – Centre for Antivirus Information Protection.

<sup>74</sup> Specifically, such attacks have been executed on the web-sites of Ternopil, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Zaporizhzhia and other oblast state administrations.

<sup>75</sup> President: A thorough National Cyber-Security system must be put in place immediately. – The official web-site of the President of Ukraine, 27 January 2016, <http://www.president.gov.ua/news/prezident-maye-buti-negajno-vidpracovana-nacionalna-sistema-36667>.

<sup>76</sup> Decree of the President of Ukraine "On the Decision of the Ukrainian National Security and Defence Council dated 27 January 2016 "On Cyber-Security Strategy of Ukraine" No.96 dated 15 March 2016.

<sup>77</sup> NSDC says that Russians are behind the latest cyber-attacks. – *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 14 December 2016, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2016/12/14/7129820>.



## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Kremlin's "hybrid" aggression poses a threat not only to Ukraine's statehood and sovereignty, but also to the post-Helsinki political structure of Europe in general. Kremlin is trying to discredit the fundamental European values, disorient the public opinion, form an influential pro-Russian lobby in the European political establishment, increase the differences between European states and EU institutions. This means major "hybrid" expansion happens in the EU countries in order to critically weaken/fragment (destroy) the European Union, minimise the US presence on the continent and reformat the established European political system according to the Russian scenario.

The Russia-Ukraine "hybrid" war is not a local, peripheral conflict. In this war Russia is using the entire available range of instruments – from military aggression, informational propaganda expansion, economic, energy sector pressure to subversive activity, espionage and sabotage operations, and massive cyber-attacks.

Currently, there are no available means and mechanisms for a comprehensive settlement of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which would encompass all areas of bilateral relations. (Normandy and Minsk formats are the instruments for resolving the Donbas conflict, while the annexed Crimea has become a "pending" issue).

Therefore, the most likely mid-term scenario is confrontational (hostile) co-existence between Kyiv and Moscow with the threat of escalating "hybrid" aggression. Moreover, this threat is likely to intensify as Ukraine moves forward with its European and Euro-Atlantic integration plans.

The ongoing "hybrid" war against Ukraine makes it impossible to resolve the situation in Donbas and to re-integrate the occupied regions into Ukraine, where the Russian government has now created militarised de facto "republics", which are alien and deeply hostile to Ukraine. "Express elections" scenario that would legitimate DNR/LNR is extremely dangerous and poses a threat of a large-scale military conflict in Ukraine and in Europe.

In this situation, it is extremely important for the West to maintain a unified position on Russia, as in the mid-term perspective it will have to co-exist with Putin's Russia – a state with totalitarian internal and aggressive foreign policy, as well as disregard for international rules and regulations. It is also important to prolong/expand Russian sanctions, which have a political, economic and psychological deterring factor. Their termination (relaxation) in the current situation will be viewed by Kremlin as the surrender of the West and encouragement to active action, and not just in the post-Soviet space.

Geopolitical developments in Europe and worldwide give reason to predict critical deterioration of the situation around the Russia-Ukraine conflict. This includes possible changes in the US foreign policy, the real possibility of coming to power of political forces loyal to Russia in several European countries, review of

western sanctions policy against Russia, and the unfavourable for Ukraine balance of power in the Normandy negotiations format. Therefore, Ukraine will be under strong pressure, in particular, to resolve the situation in Donbas according to the Russian scenario.

Under these circumstances, in confrontation with Russia, Ukraine has to rely mostly on its own strengths and capabilities. However, the support and solidarity of the European and international community is crucial, as well as their assistance in implementing effective internal reforms, primarily in curbing corruption. Foreign military and technical support is essential for strengthening the national defence sector and military capacity building.

**Considering the above, it seems reasonable to name a number of steps in countering Russia's "hybrid" aggression.**

**First. On a priority basis, to carry out a comprehensive reform and capacity building of the national security sector,** strengthen military potential, in particular, strengthen and modernise the Armed Forces and other power structures in Ukraine. For this purpose, we should intensify cooperation with NATO, both in the framework of Annual National Programmes, and in the Comprehensive Assistance Package format, and in future through the Enhanced Opportunities Programme. Based on the decisions of the NATO Warsaw Summit, to enhance bilateral military and technical cooperation with Alliance's members, in particular for getting lethal weapons.

**Second. Ensure participation in the European system of countering "hybrid" threats,** which is currently being created by NATO together with the EU (Centre for Strategic Communications (StratCom) in Riga, NATO Centres in Poland and Lithuania, also Centre for Countering Hybrid Threats planned to open in 2017 in Finland).

Organise effective cooperation of Ukrainian government agencies for cyber-protection with NATO and EU specialised centres and agencies (the NATO Communications and Information Agency (Belgium), the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (Estonia), the European Cybercrime Centre (Netherlands)). Participate in Alliance's "Smart Defence" projects as a partner state. Expand the "cyber-component" in the Annual National Programmes of NATO-Ukraine cooperation. A key area of partnership with NATO must be Ukraine's involvement in shaping NATO's protection system against cyber-threats based on the new cyber-defence concept.

**Third. Actively protect and promote national interests on the bilateral level and in international institutions.** In particular, Ukraine should make the most of its status of a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, support in the European Parliament, PACE, NATO, and actively advance its own initiatives (mainly, for the resolution of the situation in Donbas) in the OSCE framework. At the same time, it is essential to, at least, maintain the current level of international solidarity and support in confronting Russian aggression.



For this purpose, it is important, on the one hand, to strengthen partnerships with countries that support Ukraine (Germany, Poland, the Baltic states, other EU countries, Canada, Japan, Australia, etc.), as well as intensify relations with other leading countries (China, India, etc.), develop political and economic relations with countries of the Asia-Pacific, Middle East, Africa, etc. And on the other hand, to establish productive contacts with the new administration of the US president, his entourage, strengthen relations with the Republican majority in Congress, which has traditionally supported Ukraine.

**Fourth. Actively use Ukraine's participation in international organisations, bilateral contacts, various international platforms to find ways and mechanisms to solve the problem of the annexed Crimea** (in particular, in the "Geneva Plus" format). Make every diplomatic effort to maintain the relevance and priority of the "Crimean issue" in the global political and legal discourse. Activate and advance lawsuits regarding the illegal seizure of Crimea in international courts.

**Fifth. Gradually form a comprehensive nationwide system of countering hostile informational influence from Russia.** To this end, ensure the focus of state policy on support (legal, diplomatic, tax, financial) of Ukrainian cultural industries (television, cinema, publishing, translation, exhibition, touring, etc.). Effective countermeasures against Russia's massive informational expansion mainly include production and distribution of own high-quality competitive informational and cultural products. In this context, the urgent task is to develop the Concept of State Humanitarian Policy.

**Sixth. Implement a number of preventive measures in regard to Russia** taking into account the prospects of complications in the international political situation around the conflict in Donbas. With this purpose to:

- **document Ukraine's stance in negotiations on Donbas on the regulatory level** (ceasefire, disengagement of troops, withdrawal of Russian armed forces, border control, dissolution of DNR/LNR groups, etc.). It is necessary to adopt a special resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine with the list of requirements in regard to resolution of situation in ORDLO. This official Parliamentary act will, on the one hand, make impossible any bargaining in negotiations on fundamental issues of strategic importance for Ukraine, and on the other – will give a clear signal to negotiation partners on Ukraine's exhausting potential of making unilateral concessions;
- **adopt a special law on the occupied territories of Ukraine.** The law must regulate the status of the occupied territories in the political-legal, economic, cultural, humanitarian and other areas, eliminate the possibility of "scheming" and shadow economy, define the legal status and regime of the administrative

border with the occupied territories, place the responsibility for the situation in the occupied territories on the occupying power to comply with international law (Geneva Conventions of 1949). The adoption of this law should terminate the Law of Ukraine "On Protection of Rights and Freedoms of Citizens and Legal Regime on the Temporarily Occupied Territory of Ukraine" dated 15 April 2014;

- **at political and legal level, clearly define Ukraine's stance on the situation in Donbas.** Based on relevant decisions of the Verkhovna Rada, National Security Strategy, Military Doctrine, consider the possibility of terminating the CTO regime and imposing martial law in specific frontline areas;<sup>78</sup>
- **initiate the process of "freezing" the conflict in Donbas.** This is about the transformation of the first three provisions of Minsk Agreements (ceasefire, withdrawal of weapons and control) into a separate agreement without prior political conditions and requirements. The purpose of the document – stable suspension of hostilities, disengagement of troops, creating a 400-kilometer buffer zone along the frontline under international control. Approve this document in the Normandy Four framework;
- **seek broad involvement of international institutions and organisations in resolution of the situation in Donbas** in order to ensure maximum internationalisation of the process. This means expanding the international presence in Donbas – the UN, OSCE, PACE, EU, Red Cross, Reporters Without Borders, other international human rights and humanitarian agencies.

**Seventh. Define the conceptual framework of Ukraine's policy toward Russia.** With a purpose to:

- **develop a new law on domestic and foreign policy.** In particular, it has to define Ukraine's new foreign policy in view of the ongoing European and global developments. Document the state of war with the Russian Federation and the fact of occupation of Crimea and ORDLO. Define conditions for normalisation of relations with Moscow;
- **develop a mid-term concept of relations with Russia.** This includes a clear definition of the rules and norms of relations with the aggressor in the political-diplomatic, financial, economic, energy, scientific and technical, humanitarian and others areas.

**"Hybrid" aggression waged by Russia represents an extremely dangerous threat for Ukrainian statehood. Effective resistance on the "external front" together with allies will depend mainly on the efficiency and pace of Ukraine's internal transformations, and – on curbing corruption.**

<sup>78</sup> In case of decision on the inexpediency of imposing martial law and preservation of the CTO regime – consider the possibility of **recognising "DNR/LNR" as terrorist organisations.** This includes the system of pseudo-state institutions (security forces), formed by the occupation authorities within ORDLO. Grounds for this action – terrorist attacks, mass crimes against humanity, recorded in the documentary materials collected by SBU, Prosecutor General's Office, MIA, and sent to international institutions. (In particular, Report of the International Investigation Team on the crash of MH17 flight).

# RUSSIA'S "HYBRID" AGGRESSION: GOALS, CONSEQUENCES, COUNTERMEASURES

These series of interviews dedicated to the topic of Russia's "hybrid" aggression in Ukraine and Europe is essentially an extension of expert discussion, the materials of which were published in the National Security and Defence journal a year ago.<sup>1</sup> This exchange of ideas by correspondence is an introduction and a starting point for a broader expert discussion at the International Roundtable "Russia's 'Hybrid' War – Challenge and Threat to Europe" (14 December 2016).

Experts on international issues analysed the distinguishing features and goals of the "hybrid" war Russia is waging against Ukraine and Europe, outlined the vulnerabilities of western democracies in the situation of confrontation with Putin's Russia, summarised the Russia-Ukraine conflict experience. The most important and relevant are expert opinions on how Ukraine and Europe should confront Russia's "hybrid" aggression. The general ideas of the discussion are outlined below.

Russia's "hybrid" aggression is not Kremlin's know-how, but it is in this conflict with Ukraine that Russia is using almost the entire range of hybrid warfare tools – from direct armed aggression to a mix of economic, energy, information and other tools for destabilising the country from within. Such tools include informational sabotage, espionage, export of corruption, discrediting state institutions, support of destructive forces, and are actively used against European countries.

Russia's goals in the war against Ukraine are: blocking Kyiv's European and Euro-Atlantic course, returning Ukraine to the Russian sphere of influence, and ultimately – disintegration of Ukrainian statehood. As for the EU, Russia is trying to break the unity of the European community, discredit its basic values, strengthen Russian influence and control over processes on the continent, establish a new European order following Russia's rules.

Experts believe that Ukraine and Europe need to develop comprehensive strategic approaches in confronting Russia's "hybrid" aggression, create flexible and effective reaction mechanisms, strengthen European unity in tackling external threats.<sup>2</sup>

## EUROPE NEEDS A DISTINCT COLLECTIVE RESPONSE ALGORITHM AT THE FIRST SIGNS OF "HYBRID" AGGRESSION



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### – Characteristics, course and goals of Russia's "hybrid" war in Ukraine and Europe. What are the vulnerabilities of western democracies?

The goal of Russia's war against Ukraine is to solve those internal and external issues that the leadership of the Russian Federation is facing as the economy shifted from growth to decline.

A sharp increase of state budget revenues of the Russian Federation was accompanied by concentration of power, systemic corruption, as well as an increase of imperial ambitions of the Russian elite. The end of this period threatened with a sharp drop of legitimacy of power, a substantial decline of resources for distribution, unfulfilled foreign policy ambitions.

In order to prevent this course of events, Kremlin has launched the crisis scenario, which promised the best possible results for Russia.

With the destruction of Ukrainian statehood Kremlin aimed at (a) demonstrating its own people the catastrophic consequences of any protesting activity and assuring them of support of a "Strongman"; (b) creating an image of an enemy for the internal audience as represented by Ukrainian nationalism and western expansionism supporting it; (c) neutralising the threat of internal opposition against Putin – both liberal ("traitors and enemies to the people") and nationalist ("while they keep talking, Putin is doing much more for the greatness of Russia"); (d) seizing the geopolitical initiative from the West that is currently undergoing an identity and

<sup>1</sup> For more information, see: Ukrainian and Russian experts on the current state and future prospects of Kyiv-Moscow relations. – National Security and Defence, 2015, No.8-9, p.21-46.

<sup>2</sup> Interviews were conducted on 10-25 November 2016 and are published in the order they were received by editors.



political capacity crisis; (e) protecting its niche in the global division of labour; (f) converting its military advantages into stronger political influence.

Key vulnerability of western democracies is **that their policy goals and values that have been shaped in the context of liberal globalisation came into conflict with the reality of an outside world (beyond "the Golden Billion") and with the life of western societies themselves.** With his actions Putin offered another interpretation of political reality, based on the rule of force and national egoism. Naturally, this alternative was welcomed by all liberal globalisation losers, starting from the "blue collars" in North America up to armed fundamentalists in the Middle East.

**– Lessons and conclusions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. What are the countermeasures Ukraine and Europe should take in response to Russia's "hybrid" aggression?**

The Russia-Ukraine conflict is yet another demonstration that, if desired, any country (including, a European one) can be destabilised and brought to the brink of disintegration. And vice versa – it is very hard to restore stability and integrity of a country that fell a victim to "hybrid" aggression, which requires investment of efforts from almost the entire global community.

This conclusion could have been made based on the example of war on the territory of former Yugoslavia, but back then violence was interpreted as a characteristic feature of regional nature or one party to the conflict was charged as responsible for it.

So, if Europe finds a shared will to create a prevention system for such crises, it needs to develop (a) a clear system of indicators of "hybrid" aggression manifestations, and (b) a precise collective response algorithm against the first signs of such developments. ■

**AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO COUNTER "HYBRID" THREATS IS TO BUILD EFFICIENT STATE INSTITUTIONS**



**Anatoliy OKTYSIUK,**  
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**– Characteristics, course and goals of Russia's "hybrid" war in Ukraine and Europe. What are the vulnerabilities of western democracies?**

"Hybrid" war is a special type of an armed conflict, in which battlefield engagement has a secondary role. The goal of a "hybrid" war is to impose one's will on

the enemy through applying different types of force. In this situation fighting has a supplementary role and is used to weaken the enemy, serving only as a catalyst for destabilising processes launched prior to this using economic, political, informational and other methods.

Russia was not the first state to launch a "hybrid" war against other countries, and Ukraine was not the first victim of such war. Different manifestations of "hybrid" war and "hybrid" threats were demonstrated long before this terminology was coined. Yet Russia's aggression (of "hybrid" nature) against Ukraine has rapidly popularised the idea of "hybrid" wars especially in the countries that feel a threat to their national security coming from Kremlin.

Besides, the foundation for Russia's "hybrid" war against Ukraine had been laid long before the Ukrainian government and society realised these threats. For instance, all through the 2000s, Russia was actively recruiting Ukrainian national security, defence and law enforcement employees, who played an important role in helping annex Crimea and destabilise Donbas. Russia was also actively supporting the discredited regime of V. Yanukovich during the Revolution of Dignity in 2013-2014, due to which Ukraine, battered by the civil confrontation, was unable to counter Russia's aggression.

Russia's "hybrid" aggression preceded the war in Donbas, which became the classical example of "hybrid" warfare characterised by engagement of paramilitary forces, local criminal groups, as well as regular armed forces of Russia. Meanwhile, Kremlin is officially denying its involvement in the armed conflict and formally is not legally responsible for aggression against Ukraine.

European countries are also feeling a "hybrid" threat coming from Russia. For instance, Kremlin's active support of far-right political forces in France, Netherlands, Germany and other countries acts as a catalyst for their problems (financial and migration crises, Brexit<sup>3</sup>), which undermine European unity. Along with this, the anti-system forces coming to power in the EU countries will aggravate the problems that weaken EU's political and economic roles in the world even more.

Also, Russia's powerful information resources greatly influence the perceptions of European citizens, especially their views on the events in Ukraine and related topics. In this situation, liberal western democracies demonstrate their vulnerability to false information due to absence of censorship and formal responsibility of Russian media in the context of their national laws. Inaccurate publicity influences not only the public opinion, but also the stand of political powers making important state decisions, including those that directly or indirectly affect Ukraine. Dutch referendum, in which the majority of citizens voted against the ratification of EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, was one of Russia's tactical victories on the informational battlefield.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> United Kingdom's exit from the EU. – Ed.

<sup>4</sup> On 6 April 2016, the Netherlands held an advisory referendum on the ratification of EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. 61% of voters who took part in the referendum voted against the ratification. – Ed.



**– Lessons and conclusions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. What are the countermeasures Ukraine and Europe should take in response to Russia's "hybrid" aggression?**

"Hybrid" threats pose a different level of danger for Ukraine and EU countries. Firstly, unlike European countries, in Ukraine, the "hybrid" war is already an accomplished fact with active involvement of Russian military, mercenaries, and military aid through the uncontrolled border area. Secondly, unlike Ukraine, almost all EU countries are at the bottom of Fragile States Index<sup>5</sup> according to the sum of indicators that can lead to destabilisation. Efficient state institutions and low level of structural violence in these countries to a great extent neutralise "hybrid" threats coming from Russia. Thirdly, historically strong ties between Ukrainian political elite, financial-industrial groups and Russian leadership have made Ukraine more vulnerable to "hybrid" threats from Russia, which in 2014 have developed into a "hybrid" war.

Because "hybrid" wars and "hybrid" threats are asymmetric challenges to national security, countries' response should also be asymmetric.

As Ukraine's experience demonstrated, a "hybrid" war is a threat, foremost, to weak countries unable to withstand hybrid warfare waged by countries with much greater military and economic capacity **Thus, an effective countermeasure against "hybrid" threats is building efficient state institutions that can guarantee security, human rights and freedoms, and represent society's interests.**

Another step toward countering "hybrid" threats is to increase information and analytical capacity of government bodies so they are able to provide timely response to potential threats and appropriate assessment of their danger.

Developing political culture and education can be an important asymmetric method of countering "hybrid" threats. It will allow to prevent the reinforcement and intensification of activity of marginalised groups, which are usually used as a tool in the interests of the aggressor state.

The global community should also direct its efforts to define a "hybrid" war and introduce a mechanism of responsibility under international law for such actions. The UN has to adopt a multilateral document that will define the concept of a "hybrid" war, contain a list of its manifestations and forms of legal accountability.

Thus, the armed conflict in Donbas is a classical example of a "hybrid" war, which can become a motivating factor to research this modern phenomenon and coordinate international effort to counter it. Also, Russian "hybrid" warfare includes the use of many tools, from spreading panic rumours to mobilising church potential, agents of influence in economy, political institutions or the use of the so-called "soft power". ■

**RUSSIA'S "HYBRID" WARS ARE MEANS OF SURVIVAL FOR MODERN RUSSIA**



**Vadym TRIUKHAN,**  
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"European Movement Ukraine"

**– Characteristics, course and goals of Russia's "hybrid" war in Ukraine and Europe. What are the vulnerabilities of western democracies?**

The "hybrid" war that Russia started in February 2014 against Ukraine is not something new for the European continent. It would be a major methodological error to state that the world faced an unexpected phenomenon.

Essentially, Russia started a series of "hybrid" (by their nature) wars on the CIS territory back in the period of disintegration of the Soviet Union, while at the same time preparing its expansion into the "far abroad".

At least three armed conflicts would not have transformed into frozen ones without Kremlin's support of one of the parties.

**First, the Transnistria conflict.** If Russia fulfilled its obligations undertaken in the framework of 1999 Istanbul OSCE Summit and pulled out its 14<sup>th</sup> army troops from the territory of Moldova in 2001, the conflict would have long been settled.

**Second, Nagorno-Karabakh.** Without Russia's direct support of one party to the conflict, – Armenia, it would not have transformed into a frozen conflict.

**Third, Georgia.** Without Russia's open aggression against Georgia in 2008 and prior support of self-proclaimed leaders of Abkhazia and North Ossetia, Georgia would not have lost 20% of its territory.

These situations differ from the war Russia is currently waging against Ukraine only by their scale.

The question is why Russia dared to openly neglect international law and started a war against Ukraine? Obviously, Russian analysts predicted the negative reaction of the international community, which however did not stop Putin's regime.

The answer to this question lies on the surface.

First of all, Russian leaders, choosing between two courses of action, – the "catch-upstrategy" and "break

<sup>5</sup> *Fragile States Index* – is produced by the Fund for Peace for all countries (since 2005). The list aims to analyse states' ability to control the integrity of their territory, their political, demographic, economic and social situation. In the ranking, "fragile" states receive a higher score and are at the top of the list, while successful ones – receive a lower score and are at the bottom of the list.

Here, for instance, are some of the rankings of the Fragile States Index in 2015: **84 – Ukraine**, 137 – Croatia, 139 – Hungary, 146 – Estonia, 153 – Poland, 160 – France, 163 – Belgium, 165 – Germany, 167 – Austria, 175 – Denmark. Fragile States Index 2016: **85 – Ukraine**, 135 – Hungary, 136 – Croatia, 146 – Estonia, 152 – Poland, 158 – France, 164 – Belgium, 165 – Germany, 167 – Austria, 175 – Denmark. – Ed.



down strategy", – have chosen the second one.<sup>6</sup> Having pragmatically estimated that the course of economic modernisation is thorny and unpredictable in the situation of a desperate gap between Russia's GDP and that of the leading countries of the world, Russia's government made a decision in the spirit of former USSR leaders, – using arms and money earned through energy and other raw materials exports, to break down the unfavourable for Kremlin geopolitical balance in the world.

At the same time, it is likely that in the decision that was made domestic factors played an important role as well. Current political "elite" in Russia feels threatened to have economically successful European democracies at its borders. As, potentially, examples of successful Ukraine, Georgia or Moldova would make Russian citizens start thinking whether things would be as good in Russia as well? Political chaos in the "near" and, if possible, "far abroad", wars, economic stagnation, and regular "maidans", – are the horror stories that allow to keep Russians in check. Like, here we have stability and peace thanks to the President and the government, which have almost become sacred. Along with this, Russian propaganda machine has trained to expertly use perfectly stage-managed images, in most cases manipulating facts and inventing stories about crucified boys, babies' blood drunk by Ukrainian Nazis, etc. It is due to mass everyday propaganda that Russian society has an image of Ukraine as a semi-state and the West – as Russia's enemy.

Analysing the goals pursued by Kremlin, we can arrive at the following conclusions.

*The immediate goal* of Putin's regime is to prevent EU and NATO membership of countries on the territory of the former USSR – with focus on Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

*Secondly*, break down Euro-Atlantic and European cohesion and establish regimes dependent on Moscow in as many European countries as possible, as well as ensure endorsement from the US.

*Thirdly*, gain access to cheap, and even better, free (as is the case in the so-called DNR and LNR, where industrial equipment is being extracted in bulk) resources, including, human.

*The ultimate goal* – to reach the point of something like "Yalta-2", where the world will be divided into new influence zones, as it happened after World War II, and which eventually led to the Cold War. It is with this in mind that stakes are being raised in the big geopolitical game through Russia's involvement in Syria and regular brandishing of its arms at all Russian borders.

After almost two years since the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which resulted in over 7% of our territory being occupied, it became clear that European-style democracy is extremely vulnerable when faced with wild Eurasian expansion. We must admit that decision-making process in Russia turned out to be much more effective than the one that was being developed in the EU through decades.

The key difference being the principle of "the ends justify the means" professed by Moscow. While Russia's leadership has no problem throwing tens of thousands of its own citizens into the furnace of war as cannon fodder, no matter what type of war it is and where it is taking place, – for European democracies, and for Ukraine, in particular, human life remains the highest value. Realising its advantage in making decisions regarding war and peace, with every year and month Kremlin's actions are becoming bolder, and include open blackmail of Ukrainian and other European leaders.

Consequently, the situation has become extremely explosive not just for the European continent, but for the entire world, and can result in a large-scale continental war, possibly with the use of mass destruction weapons.

The end of 2016 is largely similar to the situation shortly before World War II. Back then, European leaders separately tried all possible methods to appease Hitler. Now the same is observed in regard to Putin and his regime. Do we learn nothing from history?

**– Lessons and conclusions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. What are the countermeasures Ukraine and Europe should take in response to Russia's "hybrid" aggression?**

Since February 2014, there has been an ongoing war in the middle of Europe. There can be different names for the events in the beginning – Russia's special operation to annex Crimea and Sevastopol, as well as the events in the East of Ukraine, but from the moment first administrative buildings have been seized, according to international law, this has been a war. It is up to future history experts to give it a name. However, similar to the war between Croatia and Serbia in the 1990s, we can already assume that the parties to this war will for a long time have a different view on the events.

For Ukraine, de facto, this is a war of independence and restoring territorial integrity of the state within its internationally recognised borders. Whatever names are used for these events in Russian television and official speeches of Russian leadership, it makes no difference for Ukraine and the international community. Because, having started this war, Russia has positioned itself outside of international law and standards of civilised international life. The longer this war is going on, the more international organisations and individual countries acknowledge the real situation of Russian aggression, which will bring them to gradually abandon the shy vague wording in the official documents and statements that we saw in the first months after the annexation of Crimea.

Terms and phrases like "civil war", "mine workers and tractor operators uprising", "Ukrainian crisis", etc. are disappearing. Instead, we hear others – "aggression", "Russia's occupation of Ukrainian territory", "the Russia-Ukraine war".

The Russia-Ukraine war has to make Ukraine, Europe and the international community in general draw several conclusions.

<sup>6</sup> For more information, see: O. Yakhno. Audit of External Policy. What Ukraine's "Russian Strategy" Should Be Like. – "European Truth", 18 September 2016, <http://www.eurointegration.com.ua/articles/2016/09/28/7055124>.



*First*, there are still enough fanatics in the world ready to start a war or commit a terrorist attack to satisfy their own pathological ambitions. This means that without membership in an efficient international security system and/or an efficient modern army, no country in the world can feel safe.

*Second*, self-declared independence of a non-bloc or even neutral state without international guarantees of independence and territorial integrity is a time bomb, which sooner or later will explode.

*Third*, only consolidated efforts of all European states, US and other democratic countries of the world are an assurance against domination of countries whose main principle is the rule of force and not the rule of law.

Right now, there is still a chance for Russia to return to the civilised coexistence framework. However, the window of opportunity is closing very fast, as at any moment another provocation by Russian armed forces or a guerrilla group may lead to sporadic hostilities escalating into full-scale war.

With bated breath the world is watching where Putin's Russia will decide to go next. However, the time for observation is over. It is necessary to develop a clear strategy of countering Kremlin's actions and finally translate it into practice. Economic and political measures should be the foundation of the strategy. The longer we wait, the harder it will be to avoid the use of military force. ■

#### UKRAINE MUST LEARN TO EFFECTIVELY RESPOND TO "HYBRID" WAR CHALLENGES



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#### – Characteristics, course and goals of Russia's "hybrid" war in Ukraine and Europe. What are the vulnerabilities of western democracies?

Russian "hybrid" war is a complex phenomenon. Leading researchers and analysts from around the globe argue about the novelty of this phenomenon, yet integrated operations that included means of informational and psychological pressure on the enemy, sabotage activity or economic pressure have always been the elements of military campaigns. All of them are also employed in Ukraine today, specifically, in Crimea and Donbas.

Russia is using the following key components of measures in the framework of its "hybrid" war against Ukraine:

- traditional military means (use of regular military units and weapons, as well as special operations forces);

- quasi-military activity (creation and support of illegal armed groups, support and radicalisation of separatist movements);
- non-military influence operations, first of all, special information measures, economic pressure, cyber-attacks, diplomacy, etc.;
- provoking political instability in Ukraine through funding of certain political forces, attempts to trigger political crisis in the country and a permanent mayhem in the system of public administration;
- interference with Ukraine's social and economic life aimed at spreading the feeling of fear and panic among the population.

Along with this, it is clear that our country is not the ultimate goal of Kremlin's aggressive efforts. The "hybrid" war waged by Russia has a larger scale and is more global. It became possible because of a systemic crisis of the modern world order and, in fact, is its consequence. Kremlin takes full advantage of the effects of this crisis (in the regional and global planes) in order to undermine the foundation of western civilisation and thus realise its imperial ambitions and have its revenge for losing the Cold War.

The success of Russia's "hybrid" attacks is also furthered by the vulnerability of Europe's current security situation, spread of xenophobia and anti-immigrant attitudes. Europe, which until recently has been the centre of stability and prosperity is now weakened by the wave of terrorist attacks and the onset of Euroscepticism. Russian military intervention in Syria has aggravated the existing problems even more, having caused an unprecedented increase in the number of un-integrated Muslim migrants in European countries.

As a result, far-left and far-right anti-European movements and parties are gaining more and more popularity. This is what made Brexit possible, while in France, socialists have no chances in the Presidential election in April 2017, and France will probably face a tough choice between right candidates (F. Fillon or A. Juppe) and far-right (M. Le Pen), both sides supporting the improvement of relations with Putin's Russia. The situation in Germany is similar, – political experts increasingly talk about the possible victory of moderate social democrats favouring friendship with Moscow, over Christian democrats and A. Merkel in September 2017 elections.

Another manifestation of the "hybrid" war is Russian propaganda trying to exploit the complicated moments of Ukraine-Poland relations in order to demonise the image of Ukrainians in Poland due to the events 70 years ago. Warsaw is just about the only remaining ally of Ukraine which fully realises the threat coming from Russia, so bringing the 1943 Volyn tragedy to the foreground now plays well into Moscow's hands. This makes Warsaw Kyiv's situational opponent at a difficult time, when Ukraine is suffering from acts of armed aggression and the lack of stability in society and political arena.



**Vulnerability of western democracies, which is increasingly evident in recent years, is caused by the growing gap between basic liberal values that make up the foundation of Western ideology, and their real policy.** Value-based view of the world typical for post-bipolar era is giving way to the aggressive onset of Realpolitik under the pressure of today's challenges and threats, unprecedented in number and scale. The young generation of western leaders brought up on traditions of liberalism and humanism is incapable of an adequate reaction and effective response to these challenges, and thus, gives a chance to come to power for populists and nationalists, whose activity is not limited by value-based guidelines of the liberal world.

**– Lessons and conclusions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. What are the countermeasures Ukraine and Europe should take in response to Russia's "hybrid" aggression?**

Russian "hybrid" war against Ukraine is still going on, so it is too early to say that all consequences of Russia's aggression have been defined and lessons – learned. Some of them, however, can be already named.

First of all, Russia's aggression against our country has demonstrated a deep crisis of international law, which created a precedent for regulating relations between states with force instead of law. **The world essentially divided into countries and leaders that respect international law, and those, who disregard it.** Russia's followers may be tempted to use its negative example to achieve their own goals on the international arena using their power and status in international organisations (foremost, UNSC). The conditions are now perfect for dismantling the system of international relations that has established after World War II.

The "hybrid" war against our country has also demonstrated the inefficiency of international global and regional security institutions (UN, OSCE, EU, Council of Europe, CIS) in resolving international conflicts and local wars and, as a result, the loss of their international prestige.

Conflict in Eastern Ukraine has drawn out many of Russia's characteristics and new approaches in the military area. The occupied by Russian troops Crimea and ORDLO<sup>7</sup> have been turned into testing grounds for new Russian armaments and military machinery, as well as for assessment of new concepts of using Russian troops and conducting undercover operations.

The main lesson learned from the propaganda-based "hybrid" war waged by Russia against Ukraine is its scale and multidirectional character. It is aimed not only at our state as the target of aggression, but also at the audience within Russia itself, as well as western countries, obviously, with different content, goals and tasks.

**Ukraine must learn to effectively respond to "hybrid" war challenges, despite the complexity of this task.**

Intensity of response in the military plane will depend a lot on external factors, namely, on international help.

<sup>7</sup> ORDLO – the occupied areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

In the nearest future, Ukraine will likely still require substantial support from its partners specifically in the military sector in order to be ready to respond to military aggression in case of further escalation of the "hybrid" war.

Equally important is the task of developing a system for analysis of threats and protection of critical infrastructure. Obviously, protection of energy infrastructure facilities (especially in the area close to CTO) has to become a state policy priority.

Response to informational aggression has to become more comprehensive. We have already introduced a number of measures on the state level (primarily of restrictive character), but they can hardly be considered a comprehensive response to such challenges. The lion's share of Russian propaganda often cannot be limited by our state, so we need to create conditions, in which it will be substituted by our own high-quality information product.

State information policy on the occupied territories of Crimea and Donbas has to become more efficient. Ukraine must find mechanisms of communicating information to Russian audiences, despite the complexity of working in Russian information space, its isolation from external influences, legal restrictions and censorship.

We are not fully using the potential of informational resistance in the international arena: although our Ministry of Foreign Affairs is doing a lot, it can hardly cover all problem areas. So we have to invest more effort in using public diplomacy methods. ■

#### MAIN LEVER OF A "HYBRID" WAR IS USING THE DEMOCRACY VULNERABILITIES



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**– Characteristics, course and goals of Russia's "hybrid" war in Ukraine and Europe. What are the vulnerabilities of western democracies?**

It is the vulnerability of western democracies that in my opinion is the key to success of Russia's "hybrid" aggression.

The main goal of Putin and his circle is to preserve the legitimacy of their almost unlimited power and control over society inside Russia.

This goal can only be reached through weakening the external political influence of the US and European countries on the general context, dynamic and course of



development of countries in the post-Soviet area. Namely, this includes Ukraine, Belarus and Russian citizens.

The Revolution of Dignity accompanied by other events that played in favour of preservation and development of independent Ukraine, became the catalyst which excessively accelerated all response processes of Putin's machine to the threats to their *status quo*. These threats are the inevitable evolution of civil society through intensive development of information space.

Thus, all Russia's actions are somehow directed at:

1. preservation of the *status quo* of Putin's leadership group;
2. return of Ukraine into Moscow's orbit or manipulation (or, in case of failure, turning it into a long-term severely unstable buffer zone between NATO and Russia);
3. maximum weakening of the US and European countries in the context of mutual influence (the perfect option for Kremlin would be to: (a) continue active business cooperation with the West based on production and trade of carbohydrates; (b) continue keeping assets in the West and educating children there, using all the benefits that the West has to offer; (c) prevent political pressure on Russia).

Obviously, the experience of V. Putin and his closest circle that they got while working in special services gave them effective instruments and methodology of influencing other countries' policy through influencing their state and public opinion leaders. In fact, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century both the US and the Soviet Union were engaged in this activity (and the Soviet Union had considerable progress in this area).

Let us just look at UN voting on topics relevant for Ukraine like the non-recognition of annexation of Crimea or human rights on the occupied territory. Voting results showed that most African countries vote in support of Russia. In my opinion, this is due to successful use of Soviet Union's external policy legacy on this continent.

However, such technologies could be effective before and in times, when Putin's main goal was to keep hold of internal control in the country. Now his "KGB measures" have no effect at all, and sometimes even do damage to Putin himself. (Remember for one the episode with the Russian President's Labrador and A. Merkel<sup>8</sup>).

So other countries external policy can only be influenced through the decision-making of their leaders. Which turned out to be very hard for V. Putin at this stage. Yet, it is obvious that for western democratic leaders it is typical to make political decisions that are based on the demands of society and voters.

While for Russia this makes no difference, for European and American countries it is very important that their state policy meets expectations of their citizens

and voters, as otherwise, political leaders will have no prospects in politics. So according to this, state leaders and politicians in western democratic countries turn as a weathervane in the direction of voter expectations and demands.

Thus, it is necessary to change a country's information space and society's agenda in such a way that there are initial conditions for pressuring the government, and turning political and state mainstream, as a weathervane, into the right direction.

This is the classical example of using *soft power* tools, which V. Putin has perfected. He has added a lot of aspects that form destructive processes and bring entropy and chaos to a maximum. A manager with experience in special services and intelligence is comfortable amidst chaos. A state leader, who is used to constructive creation – quite the opposite.

The main efficiency lever for the work of "hybrid" war tools is the use of "vulnerabilities" of democratic systems. One of such "vulnerabilities" is the "freedom of speech". Development of mankind reached a point, where information (content and units of virtual dimension) makes absolutely real transformations in the real world, through changing people's minds.

For instance, the information about the tragic fire in Odesa on 2 May 2014, presented accordingly, inspired thousands of Russian volunteers to go to Donbas in order to "kill fascists".<sup>9</sup>

Kremlin is using ample resources to change information space, which translates into changes in society that influence the political discourse. With some reservations, we can say that this is what happened with the US elections. At least V. Putin is convinced that D. Trump's victory is the result of his use of the levers described above. This is why he has such high hopes for this result.

Our task is to determine and single out those basic aspects of democratic society that turned from advantages into vulnerabilities, as for instance, the freedom of speech. And develop innovative approaches to make these democratic foundations powerful again.

**– Lessons and conclusions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. What are the countermeasures Ukraine and Europe should take in response to Russia's "hybrid" aggression?**

Lessons learned from the Russia-Ukraine conflict are rather apparent:

1. State as a public enforcement tool and an administrative system of state agencies is incapable of protecting society from "hybrid" threats while still preserving democracy. This is physically impossible, as it creates a great number of fundamental contradictions that destroy the state from within.

<sup>8</sup> Reference to the event that took place in Sochi in 2007. Into the room, where V. Putin and A. Merkel were engaged in negotiations, came Russian President's dog and frightened the German Chancellor, who is afraid of dogs. It is widely believed that in this way V. Putin, who knew about Merkel's fear, wanted to influence the negotiations. – Ed.

<sup>9</sup> Reference to the fire in the Trade Union Building, in which over 40 people died. In Russian media, it was widely circulated that the fire was set to burn the supporters of Anti-Maidan alive in the building. – Ed.



2. The legal system of the state (laws and regulations) is also incapable of developing and adhering to approaches of responding to "hybrid" threats. Essentially, hybrid threats are created in such a way to be as polymorphous as possible. We either need to be changing laws every day or use them voluntarily, as is demonstrated by Russia.
3. Keeping the democratic course of development of society and simultaneously implementing the state function of ensuring security in a situation of hybrid and informational threats is also theoretically impossible (although Ukraine is gradually managing to do exactly this). Realisation of security function will be imminently in conflict with ensuring human rights. And freedom of speech will inevitably come against the issues of ensuring protection from threats.
4. Ukraine's experience demonstrated that despite expectations, media community did not become the means of rehabilitating the information space and society, quite the opposite – it aggravated certain risks. And this happened not due to some malicious intent, but due to unreadiness and unpreparedness of journalists to fight and protect themselves from threats that have been and still are being produced by "hybrid" aggression.
5. Despite everything said above, Ukrainian society has demonstrated incredible results of increasing its "resilience" to "hybrid" threats and their informational aspects, which is a sign of "growing-up" and developing a critical thinking and independence.

How do Ukraine and Europe resist Russia's "hybrid" aggression? This is a very complex issue for a brief answer, as "the devil is in the detail", and responding to "hybrid" threats requires an extensive and complex matrix of simple steps and actions that collectively make up a solid shield against aggression.

**First** – we cannot win this war with symmetrical methods. I.e. – "Russia invested \$1 billion in the British *Russia Today*, so we should also create several TV channels". This only leads us to the war of budgets and we will imminently lose this war, as eurocrats will not be spending such massive funds on confrontation, as Kremlin does.

**Second** – we must take away the prerogative of "figuring out the game of "hybrid" war and propaganda" from journalists. Not because they are "taking sides" and not because they are not smart enough. But simply because they do not think in such categories and do not have the adequate training that would help them correctly assess and respond to "hybrid" aggression.

**Third** – acknowledge that a state must have information policy, and a state has the right to realise it through its agencies. Call it "state propaganda", "counter-propaganda", "information policy" – whatever you wish.

Propaganda that comes from a state is a natural, normal phenomenon. It is right, when a state tells its citizens: "pay taxes", "love your Motherland", "respect your heroes" ... All of this is propaganda. And this is NORMAL!

**Four** – involve public sector and civil society in the development and implementation a information policy as deeply as possible. This will allow to minimise the risks of turning propaganda into an authoritarian instrument and, essentially, will transfer this function from the state to civil society. Basically, the perfect situation is when the response to "hybrid" aggression is provided by civil society, not the state, as the state is simply incapable of accomplishing this task. ■

#### INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL MEANS OF COUNTERING RUSSIAN AGGRESSION



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#### – Characteristics, course and goals of Russia's "hybrid" war in Ukraine and Europe. What are the vulnerabilities of western democracies?

In general, the goals of Russian "hybrid" aggression in Ukraine and Europe are similar – to weaken the state (the union of states – EU) in order to strengthen its influence and control and, therefore, standing in the world.

However, although Russia is using a well-established scheme in Ukraine, Moldova and the Caucasus, there are certain country-specific differences.

#### The goals of Russia's "hybrid" war against Ukraine are:

1. to undermine Ukraine's pro-European course and prevent its integration into EU and NATO;
2. to create and maintain Russia-controlled internal political crisis in Ukraine against the backdrop of weakened economy;
3. to bring Ukraine back under Russia's influence in order to gradually reintegrate it into Russia's post-Soviet structures;
4. to prevent the spread of liberal and democratic attitudes characteristic for Ukrainian society in Russia.

Ukraine's country-specific aspects, which are essential in the context of the conflict, are: unsevered post-Soviet ties of Ukraine's dependence on Russia, immediate



geographic proximity, integration of Ukraine's pre-conflict (and, partially, current as well) information space with Russia's media space, blurred boundaries of national identity (language, way of thinking, etc.), corruption in Ukraine, support of Russian policy by many political leaders, absence of a securely protected border with Russia, weak army (extremely weak prior to the war, and insufficiently strong at the moment), weak economic system, constant balancing of external policy priorities.

All of these factors defined the following areas of Russia's aggression against Ukraine:

1. causing maximum economic and infrastructural damage to Ukraine (including through destruction of infrastructure and industrial sectors during military operations);
2. restoring Russia's informational influence in Ukraine;
3. damaging Ukraine's reputation in the world;
4. preventing the strengthening of political institutions and government agencies in Ukraine as the foundation of state system;
5. discrediting Ukraine, its pro-European choice and democratic course, foremost, in the eyes of Russian population;
6. damaging Ukraine's relations with neighbouring states and the leading countries of the world;
7. step-by-step renewal of Russia's influence on Ukrainian territory (Crimea-Donbas-...).

**Regarding the EU in general, Russia's goal is to weaken it through provoking internal tensions and division.** Unsuccessful attempts to influence EU institutions, which operate under strict bureaucratic rules, prompted Russia to seek workarounds to influence EU through political players and different population groups (national minorities, social and fringe groups, Russian diaspora) within EU member states, and also to provoke conflict situations meant to disrupt European unity and EU values. EU member states can be nominally divided into "lines (groups) of influence by the Russian aggression". A state can belong to several groups at once.

*Closest* to the "Ukrainian scenario" of "hybrid" war are Baltic states (first line of vulnerability), where Russian aggression is possible with the use of similar powers and methods as used in Ukraine (namely: protection of Russian-speaking population, twisting history, territorial claims, economic and energy pressure, force threats, etc.).

*Second line* of Russian aggression includes other EU member states, which have a common border with Russia (Poland and Finland). Besides "general European" methods used by Russia, it also applies military threats in relation to these countries.

*Third line* of Russia's influence is focused on influential EU states – Germany and France. Sometimes, this line also includes other states, for instance, Belgium and the Netherlands. Having no sufficient influence at the moment, Russia seeks any possible opportunities to create momentum and strengthen its influence, including: support

and funding of political parties; creating pro-Russian non-government actors; spread of propaganda through its own foreign and "bought" local media; causing deterioration of internal political situation in a country and provoking internal discontent, etc.

*Fourth line* – countries, with which Russia has (had) close ties (economic, energy sector, cultural, religious, party, etc.). Russia influences these countries (Italy, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary) using and strengthening these ties.

*Fifth line* includes other EU member states, which do not experience Russia's powerful influence and do not feel it directly.

Russia's lines of aggression and influence are not invariable and change according to the situation Russia wants to use in order to reach its ultimate goal of aggression against the EU. In any case, at this point Russia cannot make any strong and decisive actions, and thus is using the weak spots of EU member states. **Today, these weaknesses are related to western countries' respect for humanistic and democratic values: providing assistance to refugees, inability to make unfounded accusations of violating the law, liberal economic market, protection of human rights and national minorities, non-use of force in resolving conflicts, liberal democratic procedures of internal political activity, freedom of speech, thought, opinion and religion.**

**– Lessons and conclusions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. What are the countermeasures Ukraine and Europe should take in response to Russia's "hybrid" aggression?**

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has demonstrated an important fact – Russia is not ready for open military confrontation, even against a state with a weak military sector, and resorts to direct military action in exceptional cases, which threaten it with outright defeat. Classical war until a decisive victory is not a mechanism that Russia is ready to use, as this mechanism would ruin its "defensive" image that is being forced, first of all, on Russian citizens, and is also used by Kremlin to justify its aggressive actions both inside and outside of the country.

**At the same time, national defence capability of another state is an important indicator for Russia to define the character of "hybrid" warfare to be employed.** Ukraine's example was a confirmation – stronger and better equipped Ukrainian armed forces and national guard forced Russia to abandon large-scale military operations (latest – seizure of Debaltsevo in February 2015) and change the tactics to the use of other "hybrid" war instruments: acts of terrorism and sabotage; ongoing propaganda; economic and energy sector pressure; creating internal political instability and crisis situations in different regions; using Ukraine's weaknesses (lack of political culture, corruption, smuggling, shadow economy, etc.) to discredit Ukraine's course of development; support of different national and ethnic population groups (e.g. Rusini); influencing socially disadvantaged groups; using its international status (nuclear state and permanent member of the UN Security Council) to do damage to Ukraine's interests and international image, etc.



Ukraine's countermeasures in response to Russia's aggression should be classified by planes: internal and external; military and civil.

**In the *internal plane* the goal is to strengthen the State of Ukraine through eradicating corruption, creating an effective state system, weakening the influence of oligarchic structures on operation of the state, internal reforms in all sectors,** introduction of human-centred state policy, creation of attractive investment climate and conditions to stimulate domestic business, especially small and medium, developing and implementing a mechanism of cooperation between state and non-government agencies and organisations, support of national integration initiatives, implementing and ensuring the rule of law, protection of human rights, strengthening the influence on population in the temporarily occupied areas (foremost, informational), acknowledgement and official record of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the temporary occupation of ORDLO, strengthening military organisation of the state.

**In the *external plane*, Ukraine should focus on retaining and strengthening international support, and increasing international pressure on Russia to cease the aggression.** Possible key areas for Ukraine's external policy activity aimed at countering Russia's aggression are: strengthening bilateral relations with neighbouring states and states important for Ukraine; international exposure of facts of direct and indirect aggression of Russia against Ukraine and other countries; working with international organisations and courts to internationalise the area of conflict (ORDLO and Crimea), explicitly define Russia as the "aggressor", expose and investigate military crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Russia, receive assistance, cause Russia's international isolation, force Russia to cease its "hybrid" war and restore territorial integrity of Ukraine.

The first steps in the *external plane* should be: activation of preparing lawsuits to international courts against Russia; ratification of the Rome Statute; preparation of facts and international recording of Russia's crimes (military, against humanity, human rights and national minorities rights violations); international recording of Russia's violations of international law and filing corresponding lawsuits or propelling international institutions to punish Russia; furthering official documentation of Russia's aggressive acts against Ukraine on the international level; severing ties between Russia and Ukraine as much as possible and ensuring diversification in relevant areas (economy, energy, culture, information, science and education).

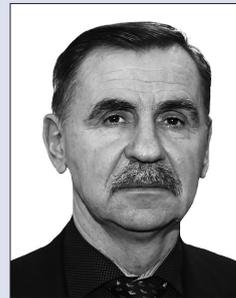
**In the *civil plane*, Ukraine should implement measures aimed at strengthening and economic development of the country, countering Russian propaganda in the information sector, strengthening informational influence in the temporarily occupied territories, enhancing the attractiveness of Ukraine** etc. Simultaneously, measures must be taken to neutralise Russian pressure on Ukraine, especially accusations of Ukraine not carrying out the Minsk agreements. It is desirable to transfer conditions of carrying out these

agreements into the context of international organisations, foremost, OSCE and UN, as Russia will never agree to implementing agreements based on principles and rules of these organisations.

**In the *military plane*, Ukraine should be bringing its military organisation to the level, where it is able to provide proper military response to external aggression of any neighbouring state or at least make it abandon its aggressive plans.** Currently, the key indicator is Russia. In other words, Ukraine should be getting ready for the war against Russia for the liberation of the occupied territories.

Such preparations must not necessarily lead to direct large-scale military action, but should make Russia abandon its aggression due to the following reasons: reliable protection of the border; efficient law enforcement and special services system; demonstration of sufficient power and means to liberate Ukrainian territory, including through holding military exercises, production and purchase of modern military equipment capable of providing protection against a nuclear state, test shootings and launches, etc. ■

#### WE NEED TO CONCENTRATE ON SCALING DOWN OUR VULNERABILITIES AND OVERCOMING OUR WEAKNESSES



**Hryhoriy PEREPELYTSYA,**  
*Professor of International Relations and Foreign Policy Chair at the Institute of International Relations of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Director of Foreign Policy Institute*

#### **– Characteristics, course and goals of Russia's "hybrid" war in Ukraine and Europe. What are the vulnerabilities of western democracies?**

One of essential reasons for the Russia-Ukraine war was the failure of Putin's reintegration projects, which Ukraine was meant to become part of and, thus, lose its state sovereignty. Another radical change of situation in the Russia-Ukraine relations was Euromaidan and the escape of President V. Yanukovich to Russia, which took away V. Putin's last hope to hold Ukraine under control and preserve the pro-Russian puppet regime that was preparing to give up Ukraine's sovereignty to Russia.

Objective causes on a more global scale include the change of international situation. First of all, the change of balance of powers in Europe, and not so much due to Russia becoming stronger, but due to the West growing weaker. This was largely demonstrated by suspension of NATO and EU enlargement to the East, as the vision of such enlargement disappeared, and disappointment with the new members – grew.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Edward Lucas. *The New Cold War: Putin's Russia and the Threat to the West*. – St. Martin's Griffin, 2009, 288 p.



As far as subjective reasons, the behaviour of western leaders demonstrated their lack of political will to adequately respond to Russia's violation of the existing world order, which strengthened V. Putin's belief that they are psychologically weak. V. Putin simply lost respect for them and stopped taking their opinion into consideration. He was also convinced that the US will concede Ukraine in order to preserve strategic partnership with Russia, and that the US needs Russia more than vice versa. Projection of such perception of the US as a washed out giant extrapolated to NATO as well. After the Russia-Georgia war, Russia was absolutely sure that NATO will not dare intervene with the Russia-Ukraine war to protect Ukraine.

As for the EU, Russia does not consider it a worthy opponent. Kremlin is deeply convinced that Europe will not be ready to pay the required price to protect its principles and values.

Having realised this weakness and the geopolitical paralysis of the West, Russia made a decision to start a war against Ukraine and, thus, disrupted regional and global balance. So, going into this war, V. Putin was not expecting any reaction (even less so – countermeasures) from the West, thinking of it as completely neutralised.

Thus, Russia's goals in this war are complex. **The main strategic goal of the Russia-Ukraine war for Russia, as previously, is complete destruction of Ukraine's statehood and liquidation of its state sovereignty.** In this way, Russia is making yet another attempt to resolve the eternal antagonistic contradiction in the Russia-Ukraine relations – the conflict of identities.

In regional and global context, reaching this strategic goal would mean gaining control over the buffer zone (central state), which would provide Russia a continental strategic advantage in its confrontation with the West. Taking over Ukrainian geopolitical foothold in this revenge-like manner allows Russia to implement its next goal – revise the post-Cold War balance of interests in Europe and even out the asymmetry in the balance of powers on the European continent. So Russian military aggression has diverse angles and the ultimate goal of the war Russia started is also multi-level.

**On the domestic level** – creating an empire-type development model for the Russian state and consolidation of authoritarian pro-fascist regime through a policy of expansion and hegemony.

**On the transfrontier level** – destroying Ukraine as the state, Ukrainians as the nation, as an alternative to Russia's authoritarian state system, occupation of Ukraine's territory as the foothold for geopolitical expansion into the Central and Eastern Europe.

**On the regional level** – changing the balance of powers in favour of Russia and revision of Cold War results, followed by a return to Yalta-Potsdam system in Europe. With this goal in mind, Russia is trying to ruin

the existing security infrastructure in Europe that based on NATO, EU, and OSCE.

**On the global level** – restructuring of the global system of international relations through ruining the world order that formed after the Cold War, and building a new system on the ruins, in which Russia will take the place of a global leader able to control global processes. We are talking about Russia's global governance.

**– Lessons and conclusions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. What are the countermeasures Ukraine and Europe should take in response to Russia's "hybrid" aggression?**

Russia's successes in this war against Ukraine are not as massive as it has been predicted in Kremlin's grand military and political plans. This allows to state that **Ukraine is able to defeat even such enormous enemy as Russia given the right strategy.** Following the principles of asymmetric defence strategy, we should focus on reducing our vulnerability and overcoming our weaknesses, among which the major one is an **internal mental division of Ukrainian society** that is characterised by the presence of the Malorussian segment. It was formed and is still being formed not only due to Russian colonial policy toward Ukraine, but also due to Ukraine's geopolitical location.

So **Ukraine's second weakness is the curse of the "buffer zone"**, as it has always found itself in the epicentre of geopolitical confrontation between major European and global players, trying to occupy these "middle" Ukrainian grounds. Possibly, this geopolitical location is what makes a part of Ukrainian elite give up their statehood and national identity for the sake of survival and look for a better life under the umbrella of stronger Russian statehood, having paid the price of their own freedom. Another part of Ukraine's elite is trying to fight for their statehood and state unity, uniting Ukrainian nation. These two opposite views of Ukraine's future still exist, even despite the fact that Ukraine has been an independent state for over 25 years.

Today, this mentally Malorussian segment gives Russia hope and confidence that it will eventually bring Ukraine back to the Russian orbit using business interests of Ukrainian power elite and propensity for treason, while on the other side, not only a part of Ukrainian ruling elite, but also a part of society vest their hopes and future in Russia and continue believing in it, not perceiving it as the enemy state. Due to the presence of this segment of population, Russia views its "hybrid" war as productive and scenarios of "absorbing" Ukraine or a "satellite" scenario as entirely possible.

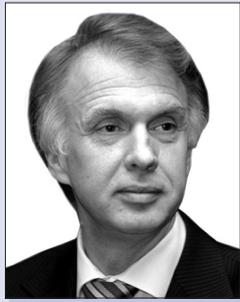
In order to solve this problem and avoid the fatal prospects, we first need to:

- eliminate a little brother complex and realise the permanent nature of the threat to Ukraine and its national existence emanating from Russia;

- overcome the "buffer zone" curse by joining the Euro-Atlantic civilisational space or creating a new union like Baltic-Black Sea Cooperation;
- dismantle the kleptocratic oligarchy in Ukraine, which can remain intact if close ties with Russia are restored.

**To overcome the permanent threat coming from Russia, we need to win the war of identities.** To do this, it is imperative to expand and deepen Ukrainian identity, transplanting it, first of all, to the Malorussian segment. This operation will allow to bring back Donbas population, and together with it, the Ukrainian territory occupied by Russia, and restore state sovereignty there, avoiding much worse scenarios of ending the Russia-Ukraine war. ■

#### THE GOAL OF RUSSIA'S AGGRESSION IS TO DESTROY UKRAINE'S STATEHOOD



**Volodymyr OHRYZKO,**  
*Head of the Centre for Russian Studies, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine*

#### **– Characteristics, course and goals of Russia's "hybrid" war in Ukraine and Europe. What are the vulnerabilities of western democracies?**

First of all, we should proceed on the basis that the goals of Russia's "hybrid" war against Ukraine and the West are different. These are two separate objects of Russian expansion. Talking about Ukraine, **the goal of Russia's advance literally and metaphorically, is to destroy Ukrainian statehood.** The reason is clear: successful Ukraine is an existential threat for the current Kremlin regime. Moscow fully realises that successful Ukraine is European Ukraine. Not in the geographical, but in the ideological and practical sense. So the instruments used by Kremlin to prevent Ukraine from reaching this goal involve any political, economic, ideological, informational, and, as demonstrated by the latest two years, even military measures, if the other ones proved unsuccessful.

Relations between Ukraine and Russia after disintegration of the Soviet Union confirm this conclusion: at different stages Russia used different instruments of influencing Ukraine, and now this pressure turned into outright aggression. Along with this, we can state that the goals of this "forced love" policy not only did not lead to the desired result, but had an opposite effect. Moscow was unsuccessful in its attempts to bring Ukraine back under its protectorate either in political, economic, foreign policy or security sectors. This was further demonstrated by the failed "Novorossia project", that led to international

isolation of Russia, introduction of economic sanctions against it, and the final breakup with Ukraine and its society.

So, today, Kremlin's tactic in regard to Ukraine is undergoing major changes. **Focus is shifted to internal destabilisation, support of anti-Ukrainian political forces and individual populist politicians.** In Kremlin's opinion, they will erode the unity of Ukrainian society from within and will become Ukraine's Trojan Horses, speculating on the inefficiency of systemic economic reforms.

**Moscow believes that another effective tool to aggravate Ukraine's internal conflicts is strengthening its religious divide.** This is why serious activity has been started to bring to the foreground the topic of "protecting canonical Orthodox Christianity in Ukraine", preventing the transition of UOC MP parishes under the jurisdiction of Kyiv Patriarchate, etc. Provocations in the form of the so-called "Cross Processions", organised "protests" against the transition of religious parishes to Kyiv Patriarchate, statements on "harassment" of UOC MP priests, etc. are expected to continue and become more widespread.

**Another instrument to deepen the divide inside Ukraine is the "language" issue.** It is no accident that Russia has documented on the state level the task of ensuring the official special status of the Russian language in the post-Soviet space. Clearly, taking into account Ukraine's role, Russia will pay special attention to our country. In connection with this, we should expect Russia's further attempts to use international political organisations to accuse Ukraine of harassing Russians and Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine. Of course, there may also be attempts to organise "language maidans", instigate discontent of certain population groups with decisions on the wider use of the state language, in particular in TV and radio broadcasting.

So, having understood that it cannot reach its set goals through direct military action, political and diplomatic as well as economic pressure, Moscow is shifting its main target from external to internal factors, and is attempting to activate its fifth column in Ukraine.

Kremlin's goals in regard to Europe are slightly different. It cannot set up a task of destroying the statehood of any, even smallest, EU or NATO state. Its goal is different: to divide these unions, intensify contradictions between their individual members, and thus give the impression of inefficiency of such unions. This approach has two subtasks: weaken these structures from within and prove the irrelevance of choosing the democratic path of development to the Russian society.

This is why Moscow's policy focus in regard to Europe is to stimulate far-right and far left movements, populists of all colours and shades, Eurosceptics, anti-globalists, remnants of Communist Party cells in EU and NATO countries, especially in Eastern Europe, using the "greens", Muslim communities, different religious sects and groups to serve its goals. **The goal is clear – to break down the western system of values and public order, create an atmosphere of chaos and uncontrollability, and, as a result, bring to power, at least**



in several European countries, political forces that will undermine European unity.

Realisation of this goal is objectively furthered by Brussels' excessive bureaucracy, distance of European bureaucracy from the needs of common people, lack of direct contact with them, economic slowdown in many western countries, and, as a result, – deterioration of their economic situation. As of today, the prospect of coming to power of Eurosceptic, populist forces in some EU and NATO countries is very real and, therefore, requires the development of a response strategy against Moscow's "hybrid" war.

**– Lessons and conclusions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. What are the countermeasures Ukraine and Europe should take in response to Russia's "hybrid" aggression?**

Russia's aggression is not over yet, so it is premature to talk about final conclusions. However, we can talk about preliminary conclusions.

**For Ukraine:**

- no international legal documents that guaranteed Ukraine's independence and territorial integrity worked. Thus, the disarmament course proved wrong. So, today, Ukraine has to accelerate building up its military capability, namely, start the production of short-range and especially mid-range missiles as an important element of deterrence against aggression. In this context, Ukraine should disregard provisions of those international legal documents that limit its rights in this area.;
- Ukraine should initiate the creation of an international anti-Putin coalition, the main task of which would be to develop the policy of total deterrence of Russia in political and diplomatic, economic, military and technological and other areas. It is up to Ukraine to offer the corresponding course of action.
- Ukraine should use the full potential of international legal mechanisms to record the facts of military crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Russia's armed forces during its aggression in Ukraine, and make the guilty parties accountable.;
- We should intensify our awareness activity in western countries regarding the danger of appeasement policy.

**For Europe:**

- Europe should proceed from the fact that Russia views the West as its existential enemy and plans to weaken it as much as possible;
- Realise that in connection with this, the policy of "involving" Russia in resolution of different international issues is being used by it to the detriment of interests of the West. The example of Syria is the perfect illustration of this;
- Develop a realistic strategy against Russia, that would include developing a new security concept for the North-Atlantic space, but this time excluding Russia, and conduct hard deterrence policy in regard to the latter. ■

**WITH TIME ADVANTAGES OF AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES TURN INTO FLAWS AND PROBLEMS**



**Leonid POLIAKOV,**  
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Centre for Army, Conversion  
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**– Characteristics, course and goals of Russia's "hybrid" war in Ukraine and Europe. What are the vulnerabilities of western democracies?**

Generally speaking, we need to understand that Russia's "hybrid" war against Ukraine has started well before the disintegration of the USSR, when the closest circle of then Russian President B. Yeltsin stated directly: "If you do not give us Crimea, there will be a war". Obviously, today, led by V. Putin, *first of all*, Russia started much more systemic actions to undermine Europe's unity – both inside the continent, as well as between Europe and North America. Second, after the victory of the Orange Revolution, Russia launched extensive and targeted activity to prepare a real Anschluss of Ukraine.

**The answer to the question about the course and goals of Russia's "hybrid" war against Ukraine and Europe is very clear and obvious – full control of Ukraine, weakening Europe and putting it in a dependent position.** To fulfil this goal, a whole range of instruments is being used: from economic, informational, energy sector to military and even terroristic.

It is impossible to describe the nature of this "hybrid" war briefly. So, I will dwell only on the main characteristics of how the Kremlin's authoritarian regime conducts this war.

For this purpose I will systematise sources and driving impulses that motivate the regime and define the specific mode of action of the Russian President, urge him to act in a certain way, combine different instruments in the course of making "hybrid" decisions. These motivations and characteristic features include:

- traditional authoritarian management style characteristic for Russian leaders;
- significant influence of Soviet ideological heritage on the present leadership of Russia, particularly in the defence and security sector;
- distorted institutional mentality of people whose personality formed under the repressive Soviet KGB, and who are setting the political course of Russia today;
- Russia's vast territory and multi-national ethnic composition of Russian population, governing which requires a huge repressive administrative apparatus;



- establishing “the only correct” authoritarian ideology and corresponding pro-regime political party domination;
- limiting the freedom of speech and access to information for population, persecution for criticising the regime;
- reviving Russia’s old imperial doctrines and traditions of positioning itself as the defender of not just its citizens, but also all Orthodox Christians and Russian-speaking people in the region and the world;
- increasing ideological influence of Moscow’s Orthodox messianism, etc..

So, the enemy state is headed by the authoritarian leader, who is single-handedly making monumental strategic decisions. Along with this, to govern the vast territories settled by the multitude of different ethnic groups, a huge repressive administrative apparatus is employed. This apparatus is trained to execute orders fast and without discussion. At the top of this machine are people from the closest circle of the supreme leader, who are personally indebted to him, do not doubt his decisions and are trying to please him.

This particular nature of **authoritarian leadership** style is the key systemic factor that essentially defines both, advantages and vulnerabilities of the regime. Other factors and motivations play an important auxiliary role in shaping Russia-specific policy and strategy characteristics, and in developing plans and preparation of individual decisions.

Advantages of such authoritarian regime as compared to democratic European countries that influence the “vulnerabilities of western democracies” are:

- ability to concentrate significant resources much faster;
- ability to make decisions much faster;
- ability, if necessary, to easily circumvent laws, ethics, and international law, – insidiously violate international obligations, destroy political opponents, corrupt politicians and management of other countries, etc.;
- capacity for more extensive and faster use of different instruments of influence: economic, energy sector, diplomatic, informational, special, and, of course, military;
- ability to invest extensive resources and properly train (often, better than in other countries) tactical and operational specialists in selected security agencies;
- permanently high level of mobilisation of government and people for military action;
- stronger secrecy order.

**Clearly, the abovementioned “advantages” if used against the “relaxed” democratic European countries or neighbouring countries will be successful, but only for a limited amount of time, – until the democracies regain their senses and find an appropriate answer.** So, we observe a typical scenario, when the authoritarian regime conducts long-term concealed sabotage activity against its victims, then launches a surprise attack and quickly achieves operational success.



However, on the strategic level, these operational advantages turn into weaknesses and problems. In particular, because the authoritarian leader gets information that is often distorted by obsequious assistants. In other cases, he is often presented with fallacious analytical conclusions on the situation, as the information is being processed by ideologically constrained, narrow-minded specialists. Level of professionalism of these specialists is often determined not so much by their professional qualities, as their trustworthiness or loyalty.

Besides this, essential limitations of the authoritarian regime include personal flaws of the top leader. Up to a certain point, concentration of power and the initial successes of a subordinate authoritarian system provide him with more and more confidence, followed by a steadily growing of presumptuousness of the leader, which then turns into a firm belief into his own infallibility, his special mission in history, etc.

This leader now must always support his strong influence and demonstrate the strength of his power, as the extensive Russian government apparatus, as well as its multi-ethnic population can only be held under control for a long time with authority and fear. The Supreme leader becomes the hostage to the system.

As a result of this combination of advantages and weaknesses of authoritarian rule and high maintenance characteristics of the leader’s figure, at a certain moment the situation comes to a climax – the making of a fateful, yet erroneous strategic decision. All advantages of the system are wrongfully directed at its implementation – prompt decision-making, concentration of resources, well-trained personnel. And, thus, advantages de facto turn into weaknesses, and consequences of the wrongful decision turn into irreversible failures, as it happened with Hitler, Brezhnev, Hussein, Milosevic or Gaddafi.

The situation with today’s Russia and its authoritarian leadership is similar. They made a wrong fateful decision to attack Ukraine that is supported by western democracies; they started aggressive actions and blackmail against the West itself. Now, it is a matter of time, during which the fight against Russian aggressive authoritarian regime will go on, and price, which the nations will have to pay for yet another victory of democracy over an authoritarian regime. ■



### CIVIL SOCIETY SHOULD BE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN COUNTERMEASURES AGAINST RUSSIA'S "HYBRID" AGGRESSION



**Oleksandr KHARA,**  
*Expert at Maidan  
of Foreign Affairs*

#### **– Characteristics, course and goals of Russia's "hybrid" war in Ukraine and Europe. What are the vulnerabilities of western democracies?**

Fuelled by high energy prices V. Putin's geopolitical ambitions determine his attempts to create leverage with EU countries and restore control over post-Soviet space, undermining integration processes and eroding transatlantic unity. Ukraine is simultaneously the object and the instrument, using which Kremlin is implementing its plan. That being said, Kremlin understands the difference in resources, as well as the ambivalence of a nuclear weapons and missiles argument, and prefers to employ non-linear/asymmetric means, using military power in a limited, precisely targeted way. Kremlin's main advantage over the West is that the political will of its leaders is not limited by the popular opinion (at least to the extent that it is in democratic countries) and they can use almost any available resources to implement if not the strategy, than the situational plans connected by a single agenda.

**Kremlin is quite successful in using the current crisis of western liberal project, which has brought about decentralising, isolationist trends, scepticism about the exceptional value of democracy.** So, strategic victory over Putin's Russia and other actors who disagree in principle with this civilisational trajectory is possible only if the West rediscovers "itself", restores its passion.

Although responding to Moscow's various aggressive actions is an important task in the nearest future, the focus should be on taking away its advantages of initiative and the ability to strike in any place at any time. Above all, this means taking the confrontation to the enemy's territory – undermining the economic base that provides the capacity for implementing aggressive policy (sanctions in the financial and energy sector), technological containment (restrictions on the transfer of technology for military and dual-use purposes, microprocessor technology and high precision machine tools, modern information and communication technologies – i.e. creating a modern version of the Cold War Coordinating Committee), conducting information and psychological campaigns (aimed at Russia and its satellite states, Belarus, Central Asian and Caucasus countries).

The relative advantages of rigid vertical decision-making in Russia (ability to concentrate resources to implement certain tasks) over consensus systems of other countries can be balanced and even turned against Kremlin, as this system is weak given a large number of irritants (real and artificially created, of a distracting nature). So, the reboot of the system will cause its malfunction and inability to control the situation.

At the tactical level, it is necessary to enhance the resisting capacity of countries that are the objects of aggression, and create horizontal network links between public institutions, expert communities, journalists, academics and researchers, as well as civil societies.

#### **– Lessons and conclusions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. What are the countermeasures Ukraine and Europe should take in response to Russia's "hybrid" aggression?**

In Ukraine's case, Russian ("hybrid") aggression is a secondary threat. The key problem is in the deep-rooted contradictions between the ruling elite and most active segments of society, and thus the lack of a unifying ideology and agenda (the issue of new political identity, Ukraine's development course, etc.). This problem is aggravated by weakness of state institutions created to support the status quo, and not to transition to the new model of government, as well as by susceptibility of state institutions to corruption and other influences not determined by legislation. Therefore, without a fundamental change of political model (more democracy and transparency in the government) that will lead to regeneration of political elite, and reform of government apparatus, the chronic problems that we have today will keep progressing and "encouraging" the use of "hybrid" warfare against us.

Involvement of all government sectors in the issues of national security indicates that the present government mechanisms do not allow to solve problems at lower levels, causing their rise to the level where they pose a threat to the entire nation. This problem must be solved not by the cumbersome government apparatus, but by changing it into a flexible system of agencies with better options for horizontal cooperation, as well as involvement of civil society, and not just for independent monitoring, but for developing and implementing policies in different sectors.

Most demotivating for Kremlin's aggressive behaviour is not reaching its set targets. Therefore, Ukrainian government cannot accept "compromises" regarding NATO and EU membership, agreeing to a non-bloc, neutral, or any other status that limits its sovereignty.

Meanwhile, more technical matters include the issues of developing countermeasures against "hybrid" threats, such as preventing the use of Ukrainian financial infrastructure to carry out destructive actions (expanding the scope of work of financial intelligence, determining the acceptable level and bringing the presence of Russian business in critical sectors of economy, especially in financial and energy sectors, to this level). Creating the channels for cooperation of government agencies with



expert community and civil society organisations, which could carry out certain functions for the benefit of the state (there are great examples of civil society initiatives in cyber- and informational space).

**Generally speaking, we need to change from the peace-time regime with elements of war to the logic of a long-term conflict, which means mobilisation of society, making decisions not based on economic benefits, but as best serves the tasks of national survival.** ■

**EUROPE WILL HAVE TO CHANGE –  
IN ITS CURRENT STATE IT IS  
VULNERABLE TO RUSSIA'S  
"HYBRID" WAR TECHNOLOGIES**



**Yevhen MAHDA,**  
*Executive Director of the  
Centre for Social Relations*

**– Characteristics, course and goals of Russia's "hybrid" war in Ukraine and Europe. What are the vulnerabilities of western democracies?**

"Hybrid" war in Ukraine happened because we had not introduced proper reforms at the proper time. For a long period of time Ukraine was simply imitating reforms, while the Orange Revolution of 2004 seriously frightened Russian ruling elite. Kremlin had been preparing for aggression against Ukraine for a while. Annexation of Crimea was not a sporadic action, more likely, we are talking about advancing the previously prepared plans forward out of necessity.

This "hybrid" war has several lines, and military action itself plays an auxiliary role. This is the particular nature of "hybrid" confrontation. **The main line is informational, where Russian media that work as private and government associations disinform Ukrainian society and exert efforts to create a negative image of Ukraine in the West.** One more important line – energy sector, where Russia is trying to regain control over Ukraine in this area at any cost.

Scaling down economic cooperation, discrimination of Ukrainian producers at Russian markets, – is another line of Russia's "hybrid" war against Ukraine. Let us also take note of "pulling historical strings" through "privatisation" of some characters (Volodymyr the Great) and discrediting others (Roman Shukhevych, Stepan Bandera, Ivan Mazepa). I would also like to stress Russia's high level of activity in the "hybrid" war in pop culture that significantly influences attitudes of the public on both sides of Russia-Ukraine border.

Russia's main goal in Ukraine is not to integrate Ukraine into the Russian Federation, but to establish in Ukraine a political regime loyal to Moscow, neutralising Ukraine as Russia's competitor in the post-Soviet space,

destroying the positive experience of democratic changes in Ukraine. Kremlin is not interested in Ukraine that is independent from its influence and integrated into EU and NATO.

In Europe, Russian activity involves fewer areas, which include support of radical and counter-system political powers, undermining European unity, increasing tensions inside EU countries, for example, using refugees, targeting consolidating European values. The main goal of Kremlin's activity in the EU is to weaken it as the agent of international influence, forcing it to the outer margin of the multipolar world.

**– Lessons and conclusions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. What are the countermeasures Ukraine and Europe should take in response to Russia's "hybrid" aggression?**

Surprisingly, Russia's aggression in Ukraine gave our state a chance to become an independent subject of international relations. We found ourselves in a crisis, when changes in domestic and foreign policy, and formation of national interests became the guarantee of our survival, a prerequisite for our further progress.

Boxing up the situation and hoping to resolve the problems later, under better circumstances, is not an option, – Russia will not give us this chance.

Ukraine has enough possibilities to export its experience of resisting "hybrid" warfare to interested countries. These include not only post-Soviet countries (Belarus, Moldova, Georgia), but also Baltic states, Poland, Romania. All of them can become Ukraine's allies, as to some extent they all realise the current threat hanging over them. Along with this, we should not develop high expectations from this cooperation, as there are not many states willing to go against Russia directly.

Russia's advantage is the decision-making system that works much faster than the European one. Putin is intentionally taking a break in order to wait out the unfavourable political situation and return to *business as usual* in his relations with the EU, ruining European democratic values.

Europe will have to change, as in its current form it is vulnerable to Russian "hybrid" warfare. So, the immediate goals are: working with Russian-speaking EU population, adjustment of European values and approaches to working with Russian media, ending flirtation with Kremlin in the energy sector and foreign policy. It would seem that what EU member states need today is extraordinary, yet mutually agreed solutions. ■

Russian World Values, Panel Discussion (Suzdal, 2015)





**IF THE WEST AND EU LEAVE UKRAINE ONE ON ONE WITH THE AGGRESSOR, THIS WILL ONLY INFLAME RUSSIA'S AGGRESSIVE INSTINCTS**



**Volodymyr FESENKO,**  
Chairman of the Centre for  
Applied Political Studies "Penta"

**– Characteristics, course and goals of Russia's "hybrid" war in Ukraine and Europe. What are the vulnerabilities of western democracies?**

Special nature of Russia's "hybrid" war against Ukraine is that Russia is conducting armed aggression against our country, but is doing so covertly, not directly. Officially, Russia is denying the fact of its involvement in the Donbas war, but Russian military are actively and broadly involved in military action in this region, professional Russian servicemen head separatist groups, besides, in the conflict area in Donbas, modern Russian weapons are being used against Ukraine. Without Russia's military, technical and financial support, the separatists would not have lasted even a couple of weeks. So, currently Russia is waging a real war against Ukraine, even though now this war is of relatively low intensity.

**Also, in its "hybrid" war against Ukraine, Russia is actively using special operations instruments.** This was particularly demonstrated in 2014, during the so-called "Russian spring". Occupation of Crimea, separatist pro-Russian "uprisings" in Donbas, Kharkiv and Odesa, which were often headed by Russian citizens, – were special operations led by Russian secret services. Now, it is very likely (based on our secret services' data) that Russians are also trying to destabilise the domestic situation in Ukraine. However, now they have fewer opportunities than back in 2014.

Lately, Russian secret services have been extensively using different provocations against Ukraine and Ukrainian citizens, even on the territory of Ukraine and occupied Ukrainian territories (scandals with allegedly Ukrainian "spies" and "saboteurs"; imitation of shelling of territories controlled by separatists allegedly by the Ukrainian military, etc.).

Also, Russia is conducting an active informational and propagandist war against Ukraine, for example, dissemination of false information about the events in Ukraine. Psychological warfare is also being used. Thus, in 2014, Ukrainian leadership and population were regularly intimidated by the possibility of a full-scale war against Ukraine. In spring and in August 2014, and also in February 2015, rumours were actively spread to instigate

panic. Another tool of political and psychological pressure on Ukraine are regular military exercises by Russian armed forces close to Russia-Ukraine border.

An important tool of Russia's "hybrid" war against Ukraine is economic pressure (different trade bans, economic sanctions, even suspension of transit of Ukrainian goods via Russian territory). More than threefold reduction of goods turnover between Ukraine and Russia was one of the main reasons of an extensive economic crisis in Ukraine in 2014-2015.

Russia is also using cyber-warfare against Ukraine (cyber-attacks on government web-sites, energy systems, etc.).

In the "hybrid" war against western democracies Russia is mainly using informational and propagandist influence tools. For this purpose it employs specially created English-speaking Russian media (especially *Russia Today* TV channel), as well as some western media. To undermine western democracies, Russia is actively supporting different radical (both, right and left) and populist political movements, as well as different "Eurosceptics". To further its goals, Russia is also using certain business groups and political elites of some European countries interested in preserving far-reaching economic relations with Russia.

There are great suspicions that to support "Russia's friends" in the West, financial and even corrupt schemes are being used. Russia is attempting to undermine the unity of western, and in particular, European elites, as regards the sanctions against Russia, their support of Ukraine, non-recognition of the annexation of Crimea by Russia, etc. Lately, it has been apparent that Russia is actively working on boosting crisis tendencies inside the EU. It is suspected that Russian secret services played their role in the so-called European refugee crisis (an outbreak of refugees arriving from the Middle East).

Certainly, Russia is trying to use for its benefit some vulnerabilities that western democracies have, for instance the freedom of speech. **However, I believe that the main problem is that modern western leaders and political elites were just not ready (psychologically and politically) to a "hybrid" warfare, in particular, its informational and propaganda components used by Russia against the West.**

**– Lessons and conclusions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. What are the countermeasures Ukraine and Europe should take in response to Russia's "hybrid" aggression?**

A lot can be said and written on this topic. I will stick to key ideas.

The main lesson learned from this conflict is that to stop Russian "hybrid" aggression, we need to employ active countermeasures. And this has to be a joint effort. If the West and EU leave Ukraine one on one with the aggressor, this will only inflame Russia's aggressive instincts, and will ultimately lead to a defeat of the West and the European Union. Passive reaction or opportunistic "adapting" leads to defeat and will be viewed by the aggressor as a sign



of weakness. As there are special aspects of Russia's "hybrid" war against Ukraine and the EU, response should be different as well.

**Russia's military aggression has to be met with demonstration of Ukraine's readiness to give a harsh military response.** Ukraine's strong defence capabilities will deter Russia from continuing its armed aggression. Banning Russian propagandist TV channels in Ukraine was absolutely right and rather effective. Yet, informational policy in Donbas and Crimea was weak and inefficient.

Our informational response to Russia's propaganda in other countries, particularly, in the EU, was very weak and inert. But this is mainly connected with the lack of resources for such response. Counterpropaganda response to Russian propaganda in the Internet and social networks is present, but coming mainly from NGOs. We have learnt to rather promptly refute the lies of Russian propaganda, but our counterpropaganda is lacking assertiveness and coordination between government and civil society sector.

As for confronting Russia in trade wars, we had to act more flexibly and asymmetrically, instead of resorting to mirror sanctions, which caused us great damage.

Assessments of actions coming from the West and EU in countering Russia's "hybrid" aggression are rather critical. The most effective tools for containment of this aggression were economic sanctions against Russia, which however, were introduced too late (only after the Malaysian airliner crash), and currently there is a risk of them being gradually eased. Military and technical support of Ukraine by the US and a number of other countries in response to Russia's military aggression proved to be very limited.

The EU happened to be insufficiently capable of countering informational and propagandist warfare directed at it by Russia. Only now there started to appear some decisions and resolutions in regard to this issue. **But the EU (and the West in general) still does not have a clear strategy and tactic of responding to informational and propaganda attacks coming from Russia.** European elites also need to think about a way to counter Russian lobby in their countries. Surely, western democracies cannot abandon their democratic standards and principles. But maybe relevant special services and law enforcement agencies need to take a closer look at the work of pro-Russian agents in some western countries, especially, from the point of view of the possible use of corruptive instruments to advance Russia's interests.

Taking into account numerous scandals related to cyber-attacks during the presidential election campaign in the US, as well as cyber-attacks on Ukrainian energy networks, there is an immediate need to develop a common strategy and tactics of confronting Russia's cyber-warfare, and coordinate actions of Ukrainian and western special services in this area. ■

**RELY SOLELY ON OUR OWN RESOURCES AND ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR UKRAINE'S DEVELOPMENT**



**Oleksiy SEMENIY,**  
*Director of Institute for Global Transformations*

**– Characteristics, course and goals of Russia's "hybrid" war in Ukraine and Europe. What are the vulnerabilities of western democracies?**

Generally, Russia's "hybrid" war is not something unique – history has many examples of the use of different means and instruments used by Russia against Ukraine and other European countries in the past few years. What is new is their combination, order and way of use, as well as some new technical means and models (due to technical progress). Also, there is the special characteristic of the "personality factor", i.e. actions or reactions of those who were making decisions in Russia and those at whom they were directed. One more important element is a great degree of risk that Russia took in the past few years: its leadership started the "all in" game, putting at stake almost everything, including their own country's future.

We can identify several targets, on which Russian leadership concentrated in their actions with regard to Ukraine and Europe. **First**, weakening Ukraine as a state (up to its disintegration) and homogenous society, and consequently, undermining its capacity for resistance. To reach this target, a broad spectrum of tools was employed – political, energy sector, informational, propagandist, economic and financial, as well as military. The "*Russian World*" concept was used in the context.

**Second** – deterring the West (particularly, NATO) from drawing closer to Russian border and explicit demarcation of Russian zone of influence with visible red lines, crossing which will be followed by a harsh response. A side-goal here is to create and strengthen Russia's security infrastructure in the post-Soviet space. The ultimate goal is leading a dialogue with the West on equal terms, followed by a strategic agreement about new security order at least in Europe (and possibly in the Euro-Atlantic region), with Russia taking its rightful (in its own opinion) place there.

**Third** – receiving arguments for taking a hard line in domestic policy (the idea of a fortress surrounded by enemies, the "fifth column" and "unreasonable liberals") and justifying domestic social and economic problems by unfavourable (or hostile) external environment. A side-goal (which is of corporate nature – interests of military and security forces and defence industry representatives)



is building a military capacity to influence neighbours and partners with the mere presence of such powerful military component.

Geographically speaking, Russia's "hybrid" activity includes actions against Ukraine and post-Soviet countries, and actions against the EU and other European countries. All of them have their own specific aspects, which are taken into account rather well by Moscow's planners, but there are also similarities. First of all, this includes attempts to address societies of these countries "through the heads" of their governments and political elites. This is supported by extensive preparatory work done by media and presenting societies with a different narrative than the one given by local elites and media.

*Second* – active work with political movements and elites, cultural and creative elites, and creating centres (non-official networks) of Russia's active or passive supporters.

*Third* – active contacts with opinion leaders and top figures in corresponding societies. Special emphasis is placed on establishing contacts with youth, their ambitious segments. And finally (although, by importance, this is often in the first place) – work with business circles (especially those that have relations with Russia): energy, industry, finance, export/import, etc.

Western democracies' vulnerabilities are defined by their current internal crisis, as well as by Russia's successful use of modern tools of the democracies themselves but this time against them. To a certain extent it is true that after Russia rejected (failed) the chance to integrate into the European democratic system, it made a decision to radically change the rules of the game (allegorically, Russia is playing "the Chapaiev game", when all the pieces are swept off the board after realising that losing a regular chess game is guaranteed and only a matter of time).

Currently, we can say that western democracies are experiencing a crisis due to their failure (inability) to follow their own proclaimed principles and the growing gap between the leading elites and societies (on many levels), which is a major destabilising factor in many countries. Besides, due to the overall economic crisis there

is a problem of providing sufficient resources for functioning of a current democracy model. And in the very moment of this weakness, they have to respond to challenges coming from Russia, considering that in the military and security sector they are critically dependent on the US. All of this together creates a very dangerous situation of uncertainty, which provokes considerable turbulence for the entire European space likely to continue over the next decade.

**– Lessons and conclusions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. What are the countermeasures Ukraine and Europe should take in response to Russia's "hybrid" aggression?**

The main lesson for Ukraine is the need for serious comprehensive work on a sustainable socio-economic system, speeding up the processes of smart internal consolidation, immediate reforming of the military and security sector, and revising its naive black-and-white approaches to foreign and security policy. **One of the main conclusions (that society has already made by intuition, and most of the elites still do not dare say aloud) is the necessity to rely solely on our own resources and assume responsibility for Ukraine's future development, instead of waiting for different "stimuli" from abroad or hoping for someone's help.**

Countermeasures against Russia's "hybrid" aggression are different for Ukraine and Europe due to entirely objective circumstances. Although one recipe is common for both parties – become internally strong or ensure internal strength (in politics, economy, social, and information sector, etc.). In addition, on the level of government decisions and statements we must address the real situation, instead of remaining a prisoner to our own illusions or stereotypes of the past. This should be the basis of our balanced policy, which must be reinforced (and preferably in advance) with required resources.

For Ukraine this means intensive and consistent work aimed at starting its "economic engine", "sewing the country back together" socially and politically (bridging the enormous gaps between social groups and resolving regional conflicts), developing a realistic vision of the future for the entire population (where we want to go and how we go there) that would unite the majority of the people.

A special area for urgent action is active, consistent work on improving the country's military and security component, the ultimate medium-term aim of which should be to achieve such parameters that would allow to inflict colossal (even deadly) harm on the aggressor. In addition to this, there should be regular work on building active and smart foreign policy and corresponding diplomacy (questions of strategy and tactics, resources and staffing). In relations with Russia, the comprehensive approach should also include preparation of countermeasures and instruments that would allow proactive or counterbalancing action in response to possible unfriendly steps from Russia.

For Europe, the recipe is more complex, as Europe is first divided into EU members and non-members, and



then each group has its own subgroups with different interests and assessments in regard to Russia. There is however a certain pattern or phenomenon of all European countries that have borders with Russia making a thorough revision of their military and security resources and capabilities in the past two years, as they regularly express their concern with Russia's actions and call on the countries to come together for effective deterrence.

At the same time, countries located farther from Russia are trying to find possibilities for dialogue with Russia in different areas and reduce tensions through this. In this situation, it is rather hard to talk about one single EU or European stance on Russia, even more so to give advice on potential actions, as actions are defined by specific preliminary assessment (which is different) and interests (which are often not very homogenous even within one country). ■

**UKRAINE MUST CEASE BEING A TRAINING GROUND, WHERE KREMLIN TESTS ITS "HYBRID" INFLUENCE TECHNIQUES**



**Volodymyr KOPCHAK,**  
*Deputy Director of the Centre  
for Army, Conversion and  
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**– Characteristics, course and goals of Russia's "hybrid" war in Ukraine and Europe. What are the vulnerabilities of western democracies?**

It is true, Russia's "hybrid" war against Ukraine and European countries has similar nature, the ultimate objective, however, is different.

Moscow's "hybrid" offensive, which escalation and complexity we have been observed since the beginning of 2014, is nothing else but a tool to implement Russia's modern geopolitical concept.

A number of experts believe that Kremlin has moved to the active stage of restoring a neo-imperial state structure in the format of Soviet Union-2, where the presence of Ukraine is not the only, but a critically important condition of existence. In my opinion, Kremlin's strategic goal that is being reached by methods that we today call "hybrid" – is somewhat simpler and less global. **It is to save the existing regime and power structure in Kremlin that is held together by a symbiosis of military and security forces and ruling oligarchs.** It has been getting harder to support this unsteady structure without external "expansion". Most of all, due to precarious economic situation. This is where the

roots of creating enemy images are by using all possible tools of black propaganda and information terror as inseparable elements of "hybrid" war.

Implementing the "multiple conflicts" strategy, Kremlin is trying to push away the boundaries of strategic confrontation with other global centres of power by creating and provoking a controlled zone of unrest outside of its own borders. The entire post-Soviet space has to transition to vassalage or become a grey "buffer zone" (or as Russia has repeatedly declared a "historical zone of its interests and influences"). In the plan of Kremlin's "hybrid" visionaries, no one but Moscow should influence this "zone" and even cooperate with it.

Kremlin's persistent bet on escalating tensions and confrontation in different regions of the world, creating and demonstrating leverage in different conflict areas, perfectly fits into the concept described above. Kremlin is preparing a foundation for later bargaining with other global power centres, mainly Washington (hoping that this moment will inevitably come). So that it can finally get exclusive rights for Ukraine and the entire post-Soviet space by making certain other concessions. Part of the same scenario is also undermining the unity of EU and NATO, provoking tensions between different geopolitical actors (US-China, US-Iran, etc.). According to Kremlin's ideal scenario, in the nearest future, the world will plunge into a new stage of "multipolar Cold War", where Russia sees itself as one of the main players and centres of influence.

Ukraine's special situation is that by now it has already survived the entire range of Kremlin's "hybrid" warfare, which combines military action and other non-military, destructive factors of influence aiming to destroy Ukrainian statehood and existence as it is. We are talking about subversive activities and fuelling of social and political conflicts by agents of influence, economic pressure and informational "terror" (at this stage, it can hardly be called propaganda), cyber-attacks and blackmail in the energy sector... It is the forceful integrated application of the entire range of pressure tools against one victim that led to the definition of "hybrid" war. Ukraine's uniqueness is that it has so far been able to withstand this invasion, causing new fits of hysteria in Kremlin. We can state that Kremlin's "Novorossia project" has completely failed, but victory is still far ahead because now the Kremlin's goal is – all of Ukraine in a vassal or grey buffer zone status...

Talking about vulnerabilities of western democracies, we have a demonstration of a classical example of "our weaknesses being the extension of our strengths". European democracy with its basic values and freedoms will always be unprepared to withstand rough external influences. Recent loud terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels that had religious context were a prime example. As aptly noted by Russian journalist O. Nevzorov: "There is one fundamental difference between our world and the world of fanatics and savages: they cannot have 'Charlie'. While we have it".



Currently, Kremlin is aptly using for its own benefit the entire set of problems that erode the EU in its present form from within – from the dysfunctional immigration policy to the lack of secret services coordination system, including in the area of terrorist threats response. Kremlin's relation to the acts of violence in European capitals requires separate study. However various frenetic hints coming from Kremlin like *"let's cooperate, lift the sanctions and give us Ukraine – and there will be no more explosions..."* say it all.

**– Lessons and conclusions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. What are the countermeasures Ukraine and Europe should take in response to Russia's "hybrid" aggression?**

I would like to say that the word "conflict" is not the proper definition. When German or French politicians or experts are starting to abandon definitions like "Ukrainian crisis" or "civil war in Ukraine" and start using "Russia-Ukraine conflict" – this is obviously a progress against what is happening in reality. But Ukrainians need to clearly understand that there is a brutal Russia-Ukraine war going on, the war that is meant to destroy Ukraine as an entity, which is Kremlin's main goal.

Past year has been marked by fundamental studies of the phenomenon of "Kremlin's hybrid war", both in Ukraine and abroad. Impressive is the number of studies and their geography (from France to Russia, where especially prominent is the work of Russian author Yu. Fedorov<sup>11</sup>). Obviously, all of these studies must be reviewed and analysed. However, above all, we should pay attention that different theoretical schemes do not offset and outshadow the main fact and current lesson – in case of Russian aggression against Ukraine we are dealing with a presumptuous war of aggression, which in the absence of a proper global response can destroy the existing international security system.

A number of European countries are realising that they have become the target of Russia's "hybrid" influences. Step by step they are making exemplary, even though very

overdue, institutional decisions in response to it. Thus, the latest European Parliament resolution on countermeasures against Russian media is a blow to the very heart of Moscow's propaganda machine, which is, naturally, causing a fit of hysteria among Kremlin puppeteers.

Berlin and Paris, Sofia and Bucharest, Warsaw and Vilnius – all Europeans need to realise that Kremlin's "hybrid" war against them is already going on and that it has a system-wide nature. We can hold debates about its stages or preliminary steps.<sup>12</sup> However, this does not cancel the need for providing a consistent response to these "hybrid" influences.

It is rightly believed that no European country alone can effectively resist the "hybrid" aggression, although Ukraine sometimes disproves this statement in practice. **Certain trends also demonstrate that in the short-term, Kyiv de facto will have to face the enemy one-on-one.**

The list of recipes to keep our balance is very long and includes almost all areas of state operation. Talking about reforms and anti-corruption measures seems mundane, but Ukraine that has asserted itself as a democratic European state is Moscow's biggest nightmare and the most effective weapon against Kremlin for all times, regardless of who its leader is – Putin or anyone else...

Security sector reform in order for it to be able to respond to new challenges and "hybrid" threats is already underway. The county has to set a separate strategic goal of building a real professional army as soon as possible with corresponding level of training, provision of social guarantees to the military. Military servicemen have to become the elite of the society. Territorial defence system requires reforming as well (and in some places, a brand new one must be created).

Talking about international cooperation in providing response to Russia's "hybrid" aggression, **Ukraine must cease being a training ground where Kremlin is testing its "hybrid" influence techniques.** Kyiv should move to action and initiatives. As a specific step, in 2017, Ukraine is launching "Centre for Countering Hybrid Threats" (working title) with support of NATO, which is meant to bring together state and civil society efforts in the security sector. A corresponding decision has been adopted, now it must be implemented.

In establishing international relations for the purpose of finding partners to resist Kremlin's "hybrid" aggression, it would be wise to expand the geographical scope. Special attention should be paid to countries that are considered Kremlin's dependent allies. Milestone events are now happening in Moldova. Corresponding signals are also coming from Minsk. There is hardly any doubt that Astana realises the entire depth of new risks and threats in the context of Kremlin's "hybrid" aggression. Very soon, we might have new, most unexpected allies in this "hybrid" war... ■

<sup>11</sup> This likely refers to the book "Hybrid War in the Russian Style" – Ed.

<sup>12</sup> The most thorough study of these ideas is presented in the work of colleagues from the Centre for Global Studies "Strategy XXI", who among other things introduced the accurate term "Hybression".

# RUSSIA'S "HYBRID" AGGRESSION IN UKRAINE AND IN EUROPE: EXPERT OPINIONS AND ASSESSMENTS

Expert surveys conducted by the Razumkov Centre on external policy issues represent a picture of experts' opinions and assessments. In the past years, there have been a number of expert surveys on the topic of Russia-Ukraine relations. The latest three studies – previous (October 2014, November 2015) and the current one (November 2016) unveils the thoughts of Ukrainian expert community on the causes and consequences of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, as well as the dynamic of expert opinions during the three years of Russia's aggression.<sup>1</sup>

The latest study continues with this topic and also presents opinions and assessments of Ukrainian experts on the forms and means of Russian "hybrid" aggression not only in Ukraine, but also in Europe. Today, Kremlin is conducting an extensive and coordinated campaign aiming to disintegrate the European community, weaken the Euro-Atlantic Alliance, attract allies from among the EU countries and, generally, redraw European space according to its own scenario.

Currently, Russia conducts active informational expansion in European media space, creates pro-Russian lobby among politicians and civil society activists, interferes with elections, performs espionage, intelligence operations, etc.

Such "hybrid" aggression poses a serious threat considering complicated electoral processes in Europe characterised by the growing presence of far-right, nationalist forces, increasing Euroscepticism and anti-Americanism.

The views of representatives of expert community are important for understanding the means, mechanisms and consequences of Russia's aggressive policy on the European continent, making predictions about further developments and, accordingly, searching for a new model of responding to Russia's influence in Ukraine and Europe.

Survey results provide the basis for further observations and conclusions.

## Reasons and Consequences of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict

Most experts agree that the Russia-Ukraine conflicts can be characterised by the currently popular term "hybrid" war. Which means that we are talking about integrated, multidimensional aggression that includes different components: military, economic, energy sector, informational, etc.

Experts believe that the goals of Russia's aggression are the change of power and establishing control (protectorate) over Ukraine, preventing its European and Euro-Atlantic integration. Also, the vast majority of respondents stressed that by starting a war against Ukraine, Kremlin is trying to disintegrate Ukraine and destroy its statehood completely.

The most dangerous tools of Russia's "hybrid" aggression are propagandist expansion in Ukrainian media space, military activity in the CTO area, militarisation of Crimea and ORDLO. Also, experts believe that danger comes from espionage by Russian secret services, government and media support of the "fifth" column, inciting separatist sentiments in regions.

Experts note that the most negative consequence of the Russia-Ukraine conflict is the increasing negative attitudes of Ukrainian citizens toward Russian citizens

and vice versa. Notably, in the previous survey experts mostly mentioned the destruction of economic ties. We can assume that poor economic relations are already accepted as an established fact, while increasing mistrust and alienation between the peoples of both countries will define the nature of relations between Kyiv and Moscow for a long time.

Ukraine should not be making concessions to Russia and the separatists in order to resolve the conflict. This opinion is shared by the majority of respondents. Most experts disagree with the statement that Ukraine should abandon its claims regarding the illegal annexation of Crimea and for the sake of reconciliation give up its plans to join the EU and NATO. Also, the majority opted against the special status of Donbas.

Views on tactics and strategy of Ukraine's actions in regard to Russia differed. Experts were rather critical about the tactics and strategy of Ukrainian leadership. At the same time, compared to previous studies, the number of respondents who agreed that the country's leadership does have a certain tactics in regard to Russia has significantly grown. Yet, assessments of the strategy remain sceptical. Along with this, most experts have no doubt that Russian leadership has both tactics and strategy developed toward Ukraine.

Most realistic scenarios for further development of Russia-Ukraine relations are either continuation of the

<sup>1</sup> The latest expert survey was conducted by the Razumkov Centre on 17-28 November 2016. It included 92 experts – representatives of central and regional government bodies, state and non-governmental research institutions, independent experts, media representatives.

Results of this survey are compared to results of previous surveys published in National Security and Defence journal, 2015, No.8-9, p.53-58.



conflict in its current form, or its freezing followed by a period of weaponless confrontation. The opinions split almost in half between these two options. Few experts also predict further escalation of the conflict.

**A bigger threat for Ukraine compared to “freezing” the conflict is giving ORDLO a special status within Ukraine.** Out of these two options of resolving the conflict in eastern Ukraine, expert community representatives consider “autonomisation” of Donbas the most threatening one, which is actively promoted by Russia in the Normandy and Minsk peace talks.

### Russia’s “Hybrid” Aggression: European Dimension

**Most experts believe that Russia is conducting “hybrid” aggression against the EU countries.** Only each tenth expert believes differently. Clearly, Russia’s aggression in Europe is different from the “hybrid” war against Ukraine in its goals and means (in particular, military ones).

**Kremlin’s goals in Europe are to destroy the EU, crush the unifying values and establish a new European order under the guidance of Russia.** This generally agrees with Russia’s other goal – revival of “imperial grandeur” and ensuring the dominant position in Europe.

**The most dangerous tools of Russian aggression are building a pro-Russian lobby among European politicians and civil society leaders, interference in electoral processes, propaganda in the European information space.** Along with this, among highly dangerous means, experts also name financial support of pro-Russian parties, espionage operations and cyber-attacks. Conspicuously, experts believe that Kremlin’s economic sanctions against the EU pose a comparatively smaller threat.

**EU’s vulnerability is created mainly by the lack of unity and coordinated response to Russia, lack of political will in EU leaders, as well as accumulation of internal problems.** Also, experts think that what stands in the way of effective countermeasures against Russian expansion is the false image of the nature, specific aspects and goals of the current Russian regime.

**Assessments of the efficiency of western sanctions against Russia are rather reserved.** Experts gave their efficiency 3.2 points (on a scale from one to five). This is slightly higher than in the previous study.

**Most experts believe that the West will be gradually lifting the sanctions looking for compromise with Russia.** Only each fifth expert predicts that the Russia-West confrontation will remain at the current level. We can assume that such predictions are driven by the US presidential election results, elections in Bulgaria, pre-election situation in Austria and France, where leading positions are taken by forces planning to search a compromise with Russia.

**Most experts do not exclude the possibility that Russian military expansion will spread (after Ukraine and Syria) to other countries.** Stressing this possibility, the experts first named the Baltic states (first of all, Latvia), as well as Belarus, Moldova, and Kazakhstan. In other words, the experts believe that Russian expansion might spread to the neighbouring states.

### Prospects of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict

**The majority of experts believe that the most preferable model of relations with Russia is “limited coexistence”,** which includes taking a hard line on national interests with smart compromises, along with a package of issues, where compromise is unacceptable (the issues of Crimea, Ukraine’s European integration, its political system, etc.). Yet now, there is a significant number of experts, who support tough option of “hostile coexistence” – terminating cooperation and contacts with Russia as the aggressor country. None of the respondents support the idea of returning to a previous practices of declarative strategic partnership.

**Among the most important steps for countering Russia’s aggression** experts name: (a) strengthening and modernisation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other law enforcement agencies; (b) implementing effective domestic reforms; (c) resisting Russia’s informational influence. Experts believe that other important steps are shunning off economic, energy dependence on Russia, and taking a firm stand in regard to national interests with the help of partner states.

**Experts generally do not expect any changes in the Russian political regime.** Most of them expect preservation of the current regime (next term of V. Putin as the President). Moreover, compared with the previous study, the number of those who share this opinion has significantly grown, while at the same time, the share of those, who expect positive democratic changes has drastically dropped (almost fourfold).

**The alienation between the citizens of Russia and Ukraine may be overcome only in distant future.** This opinion, as previously, is supported by the majority of experts. At the same time, the share of those, who think this will be possible in the nearest 1-10 years, has dropped. While the number of respondents who believe that this alienation between the people of two countries will never be bridged, has grown.

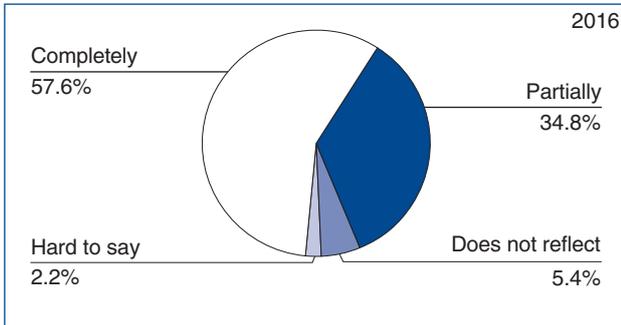
**In the nearest future (1-3 years) Ukraine’s attitude to Russia will be defined by the consequences of Russia’s aggression.** Experts believe that Kyiv’s attitude to Moscow will be determined by: human losses in the war in eastern Ukraine; territorial losses (annexation of Crimea, occupation of certain territories in Donbas); mistrust in current Russian leadership. Also, a significant influence on bilateral relations will have the alienation between the citizens of Ukraine and Russia, and financial and economic losses as a result of Russian aggression. These are the factors that according to experts will define relations between Russia and Ukraine for a long time to come.

To summarise, Russia’s “hybrid” aggression poses a great threat not only to Ukraine, but also to the entire Europe. Today, at risk are the Ukrainian statehood, the unity of the EU, and current European order. Therefore, it is of utter importance to search for ways and means to oppose Kremlin’s imperial expansion.

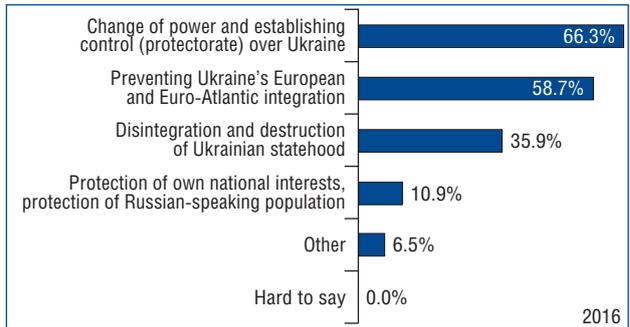


## REASONS AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

**To what extent does the term "hybrid" war reflect the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict?**  
% of experts



**What are the goals of Russian aggression against Ukraine?\***  
% of experts



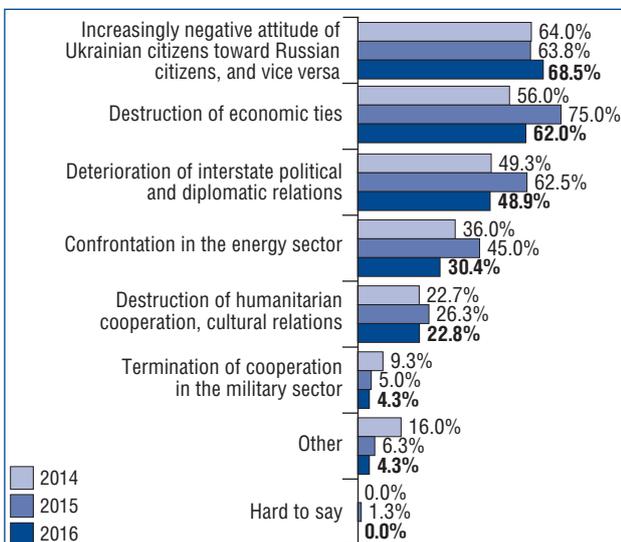
\* Experts were asked to mark all acceptable options.

**Assessment of threat coming from the instruments Russia is using against Ukraine\*, average score**



\* On a scale from 1 to 5, where "1" is the minimum threat, and "5" – the maximum.

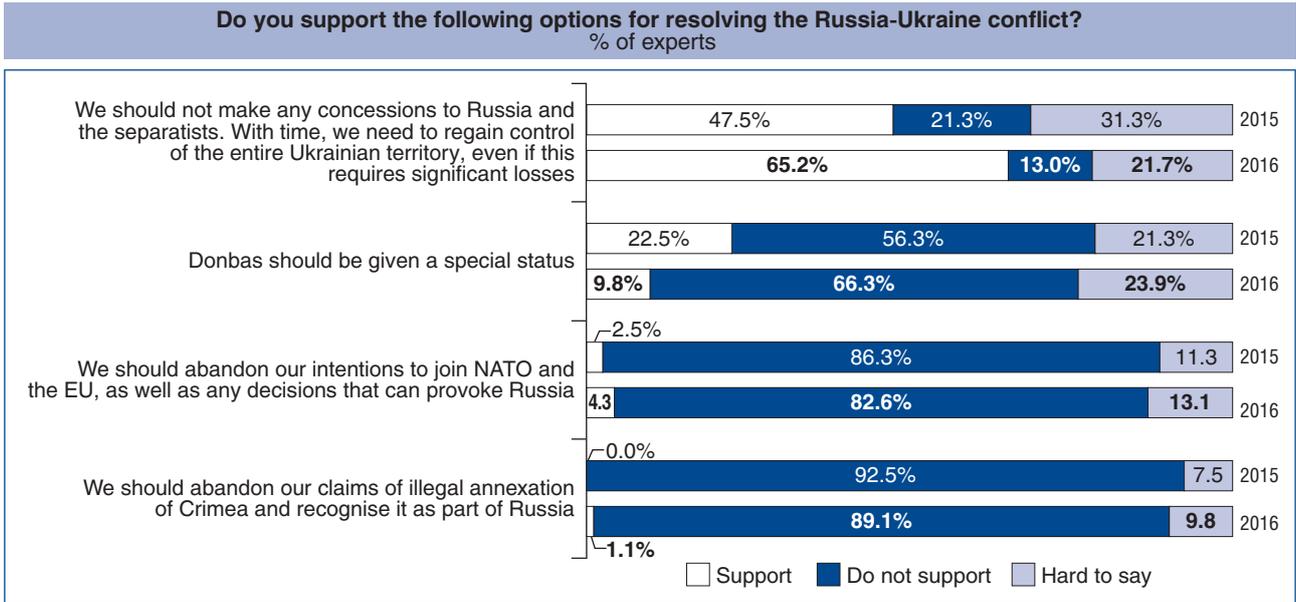
**What are the most negative consequences of the Russia-Ukraine conflict for bilateral relations?\***  
% of experts



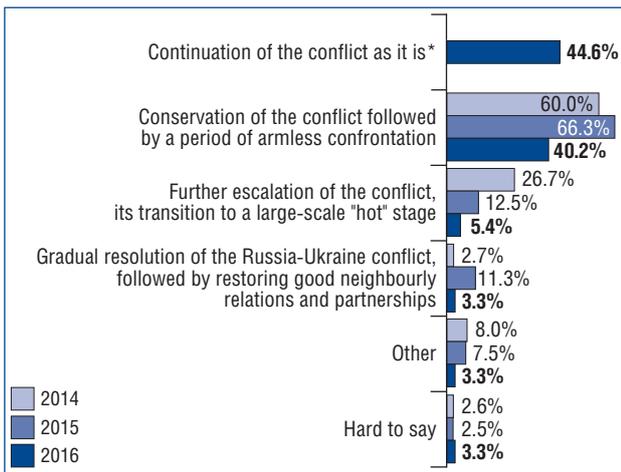
\* Experts were asked to select three acceptable answers.

**Does the leadership have the tactics and strategy?\***  
% of experts

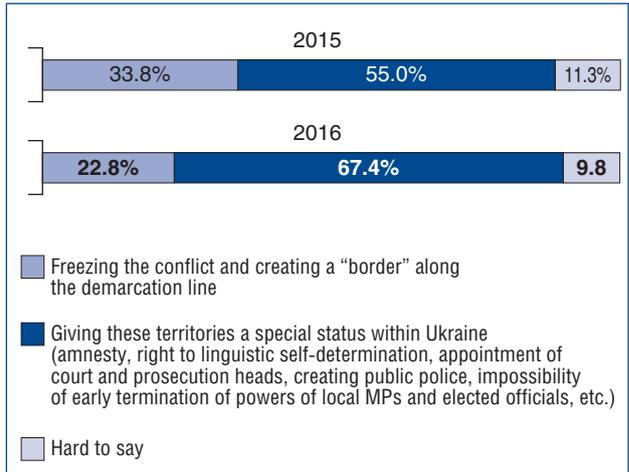




### What is the most realistic scenario for Russia-Ukraine relations in the nearest future (1-2 years)? % of experts

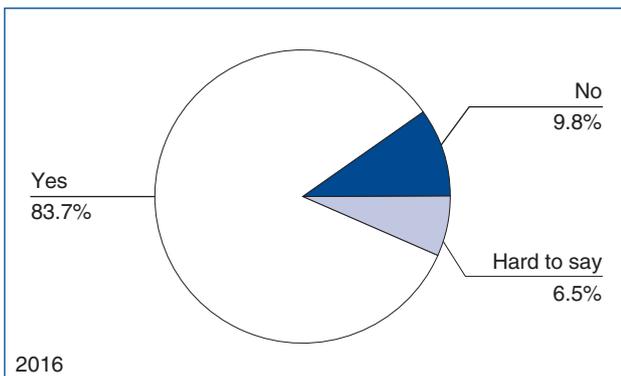


### Which option for resolving the conflict in eastern Ukraine poses a bigger threat to Ukraine's stability and development? % of experts

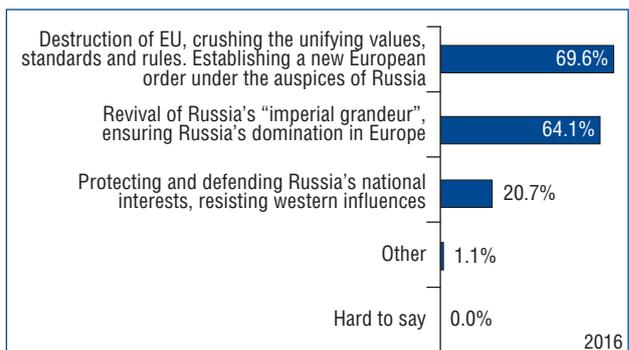


## RUSSIA'S "HYBRID" AGGRESSION: EUROPEAN DIMENSION

### Does Russia conduct "hybrid" aggression against EU member states? % of experts



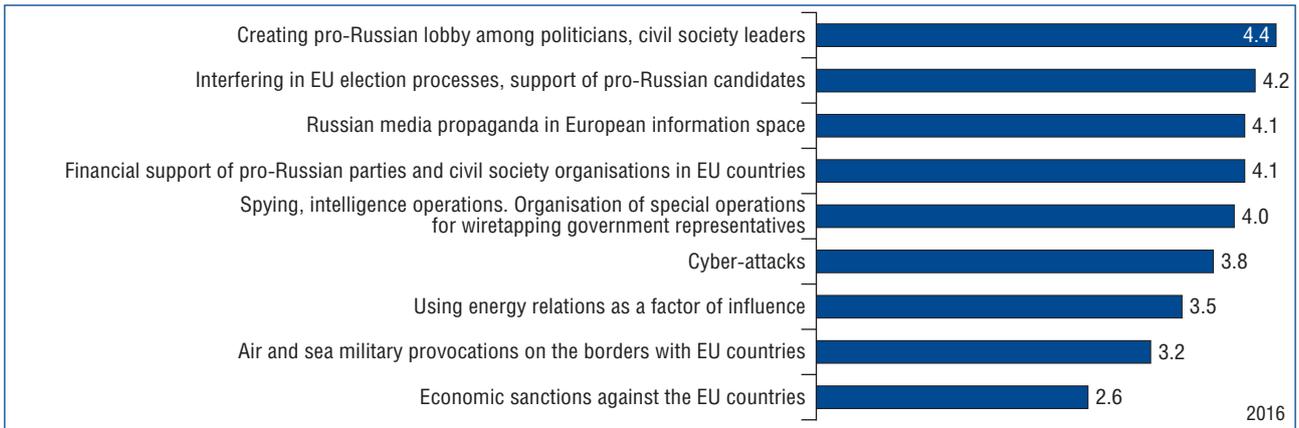
### What are Russia's goals in regard to Europe?\*



\* Experts were asked to mark all acceptable options.



**Which instruments of Russia's "hybrid" aggression are the most dangerous for the EU?\***  
average score



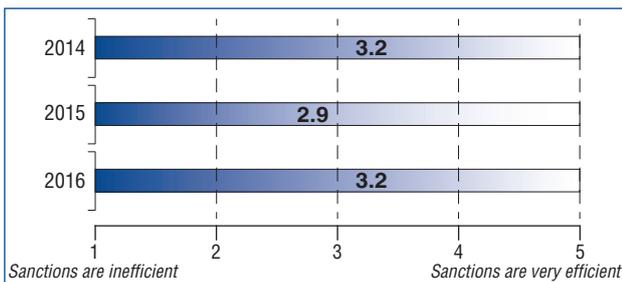
\* On a scale from 1 to 5, where "1" is the minimum threat, and "5" – the maximum.

**What is the EU's biggest vulnerability in the conflict with Russia?\***  
% of experts



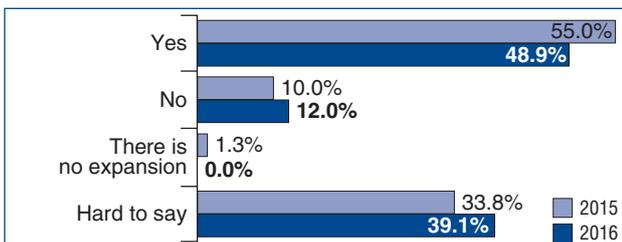
\* Experts were asked to select up to three acceptable answers.

**In your opinion, how efficient are Western sanctions against Russia in resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict?\***  
average score

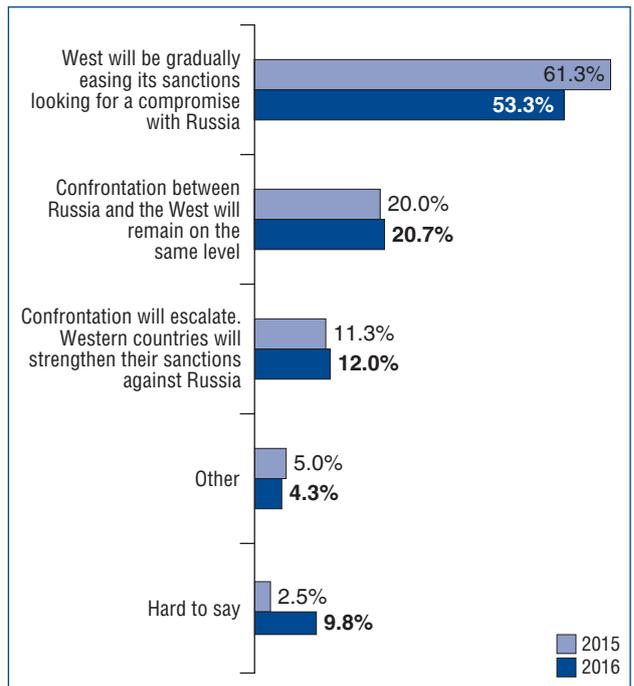


\* On a scale from 1 to 5, where "1" means inefficient sanctions, and "5" - very efficient.

**Can Russian military expansion spread to other countries (after Ukraine and Syria)?**  
% of experts



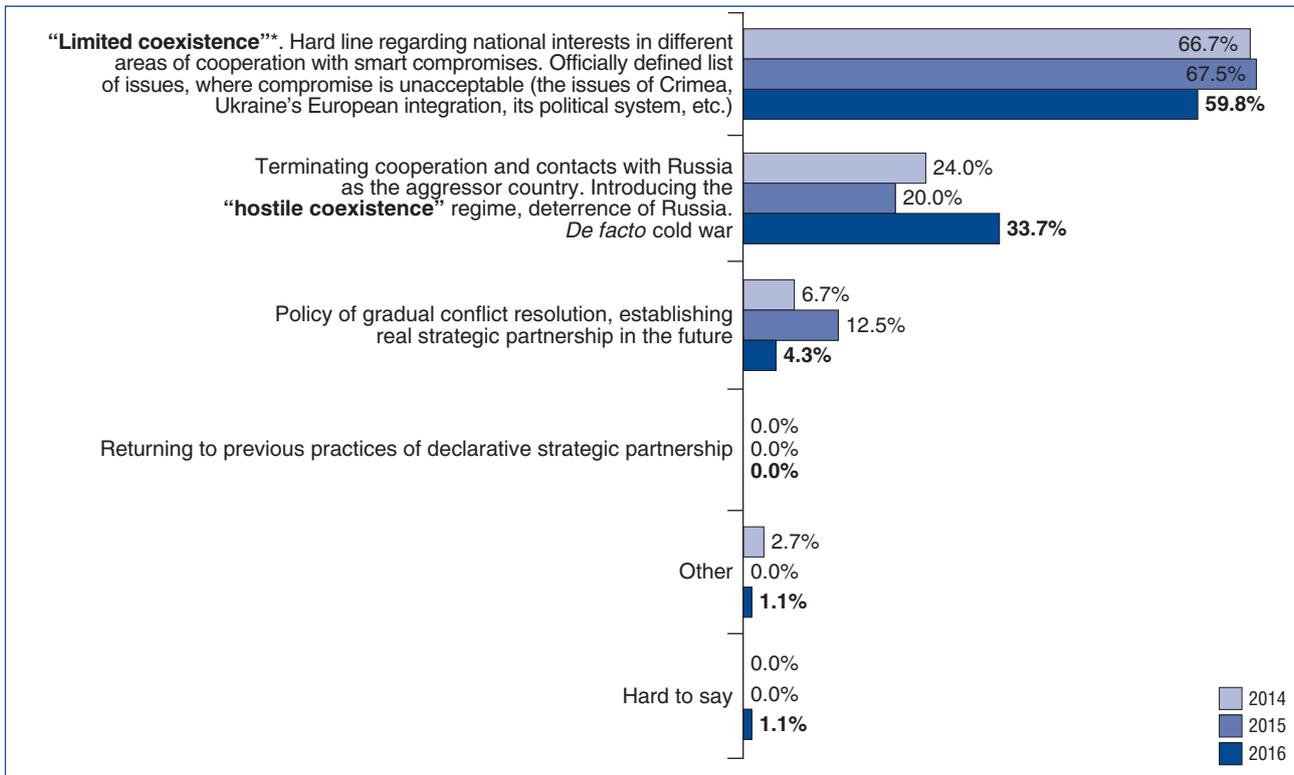
**Will Western countries change their policy toward Russia in the nearest future (1-3 years)?**  
% of experts





## PROSPECTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

**What is the most preferable model of relations with Russia at this stage?**  
% of experts



\* In the 2014 survey this option was called “limited partnership”.

**Assessment of importance of Ukraine’s further practical steps in responding to Russia’s aggression\***, average score

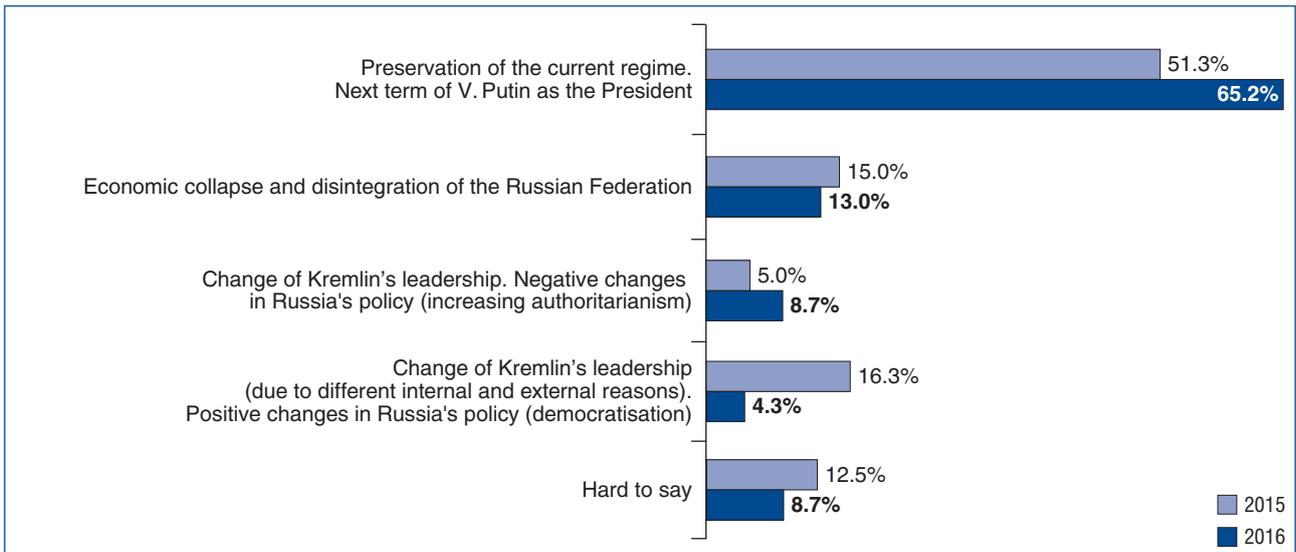
|   | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|------|------|
| Strengthening and modernisation of Ukraine’s Armed Forces and other law enforcement agencies (including, using outside help), ensuring secure protection of borders | 4.8  | 4.8  |
| Efficient internal reforms (anti-corruption reforms, reform of judicial, law enforcement systems, etc.)   | 4.8  | 4.8  |
| Countermeasures against Russia’s informational influence  | 4.6  | 4.6  |
| Taking a firm stand in regard to national interests, involving third parties (Ukraine’s partner states and international organisations) in negotiations with Russia | 4.5  | 4.5  |
| Moving away from excessive economic and energy dependence on Russia   | 4.7  | 4.5  |
| Effective use of foreign financial and economic support, and political and diplomatic solidarity  | 4.6  | 4.4  |
| Following NATO integration course with prospects of accession   | 4.3  | 4.3  |
| Successful integration into the EU  | 4.5  | 4.2  |
| Review (restriction/cancelling) of contacts with Russia in different areas and sectors (foremost, in the military-industrial complex)                               | 4.2  | 3.9  |
| Review of legislative framework of Russia-Ukraine relations to reflect the current state of bilateral relations   | 4.0  | 3.7  |
| Review of bilateral institutional mechanisms of Russia-Ukraine relations  | 3.8  | 3.7  |
| Introducing visa regime for Russian citizens  | 3.5  | 3.3  |
| Implementation of Minsk agreements  | 3.7  | 3.1  |
| Restoration of Ukraine’s nuclear status   | 2.8  | 2.5  |
| Other   | 3.0  | –**  |

\* On a scale from 1 to 5, where “1” means “not important”, and “5” – very important.

\*\*In the 2016 survey this option was not provided.



**What is the most realistic scenario for further development of Russia's internal situation?**  
% of experts



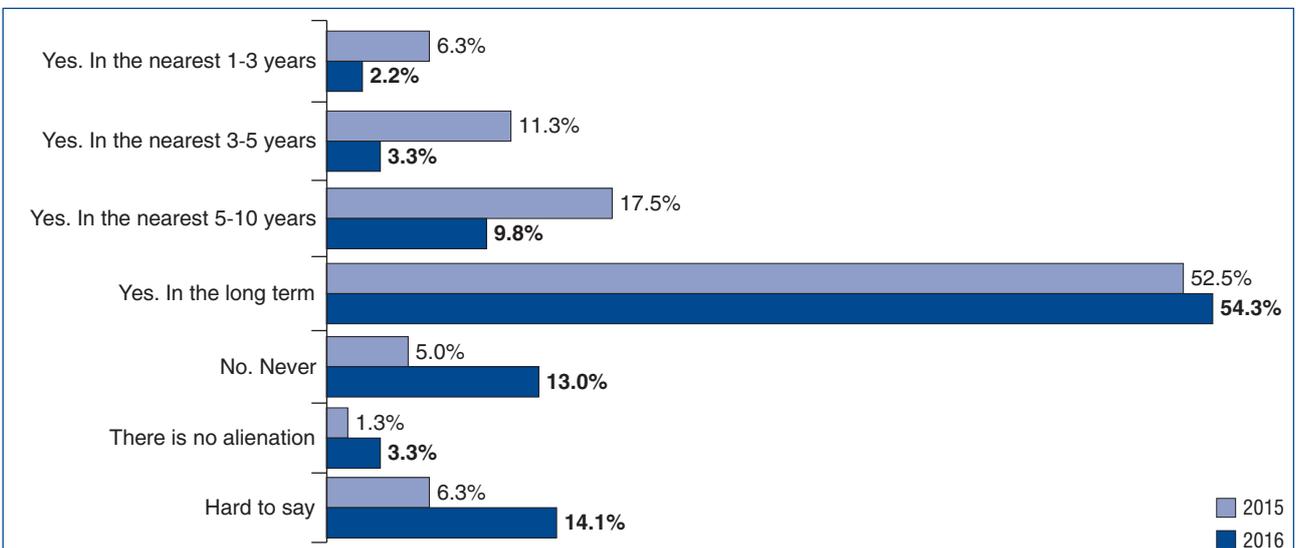
**What factors will be most important in defining Ukraine's attitude to Russia in the nearest future (1-3 years)?\*\***  
average score

|  | 2015 | 2016 |
|--|------|------|
| Human losses in eastern Ukraine  | 4.6  | 4.5  |
| Territorial losses (annexation of Crimea, occupation of certain territories in Donbas) | 4.5  | 4.5  |
| Mistrust in Russia's current leadership  | 4.3  | 3.9  |
| Financial and economic losses from the Russian aggression                              | 4.0  | 3.8  |
| Alienation between Russian and Ukrainian citizens                                      | 4.0  | 3.8  |
| Political and economic situation in Ukraine  | 4.0  | 3.8  |
| Opinions and influences of western countries   | 3.4  | 3.3  |
| Political and economic situation in Europe and in the world                            | 3.6  | 3.3  |
| Political and economic situation in Russia   | 3.6  | 3.2  |
| Other  | 4.3  | —**  |

\* On a scale from 1 to 5, where "1" means "not important", and "5" – very important.

\*\*In the 2016 survey this option was not provided.

**Can the alienation between Russian and Ukrainian citizens be bridged?**  
% of experts



# THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT IN THE EYES OF CITIZENS

A part of Razumkov Centre's foreign policy studies is monitoring public opinion to show the dynamic of Ukrainian citizens' geopolitical orientations, to find out their opinions on relations with other states and international organisations, determine their attitudes to current events in Europe and in the world.

Obviously, Russia's aggression is a tragic event for Ukraine, which has brought a lot of suffering and losses – over 10 thousand Ukrainian citizens have died, 44 thousand sq. km of territory has been occupied, 20% of industrial potential has been destroyed. In the three years of war, Ukrainian citizens have gained an enormous traumatic experience, which caused a drastic change in their opinions and ideas regarding the state of relations with Russia, its government institutions, Kremlin's policy toward Ukraine, the nature and prospects of Kyiv-Moscow contacts.

Latest sociological data (2014-2016) demonstrate the emergence and deepening of the cycle of mistrust and alienation from the aggressor state. It is clear that this is not a local splash of emotions, not situational mood fluctuations – Russia's "hybrid" aggression has caused deep lasting changes in attitudes and beliefs. Therefore, there are reasons to say that this "mental component" of the Russia-Ukraine conflict will determine the nature, atmosphere and specifics of relations between Kyiv and Moscow in a long time.

The Razumkov Centre conducted a new poll dedicated to Russia-Ukraine relations in November 2016.<sup>1</sup> The citizens gave their assessments of the current state of Russia-Ukraine relations, defined reasons and consequences of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, assessed Russia's policy on Ukraine, made predictions as to the further development of bilateral relations.

## CURRENT STATE OF RUSSIA-UKRAINE RELATIONS

Most often people described relations between Russia and Ukraine as hostile. 46% of respondents supported this point of view in November 2016. (The highest percentage (57%) of such assessments was observed at the time of escalation of fighting in Donbas in October 2014). The share of those, who think that relations are poor is 37%. Only 12% chose a neutral characteristic – "unstable"; and almost no one (2%) thinks they are good. Given the lack of any prospects of solving the problem of annexed Crimea and uncertainty regarding peaceful settlement of the situation in Donbas – there are no grounds to predict that assessments of bilateral relations will improve any time soon.

Notably, the closer to the conflict area, the smaller is the share of those who think of Russia-Ukraine relations as hostile – their percentage drops from 55% in the West of Ukraine to 41% in Donbas<sup>2</sup> (while the number of those, who think of them as poor or unstable increases). This can be explained by the fact that residents of eastern regions have traditionally had a more friendly attitude to Russia, the pro-Russian sentiments have always been more prominent there, – hence the tendency to give Russia-Ukraine relations more "moderate" characteristics.

The main reasons for the Russia-Ukraine conflict are Ukraine's attempts to free itself from Russia's influence, Moscow's inability to accept Kyiv's Euro-integration ambitions or simply Ukraine as an independent state with an independent foreign policy. All of these are tied to one main reason – Russian leadership has

always considered and is still considering Ukraine its zone of "privileged" interests in the post-Soviet space, and its independence – an "artificial" and "temporary" phenomenon, a "historical incident". It is obvious then, that Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic integration are viewed by Moscow as an attempt to leave Russia's zone of influence. In order to prevent it, Kremlin has started a "hybrid" war using the entire range of destructive methods – from military expansion in Donbas to economic pressure, energy blackmail, informational sabotage, inciting separatism and support of terrorist organisations in Ukraine.

Special attention should be paid to the fact that the percentage of citizens who believe that the reason for the conflict is the violation of rights of Russian-speaking population in the East, is rather small (5%). As we know, this was the main reason for the conflict in Donbas as announced by Russian leadership and its state controlled media.

The most negative impact of the Russia-Ukraine conflict is the destruction of economic ties between the countries. The majority of respondents (60%) support this point of view. In the second place is the deterioration of political and diplomatic relations between the countries (44%), in the third – an increasingly negative attitude of Ukrainians to Russians and vice versa (38%). Notably, compared to the previous study (November 2015), the number of respondents who chose energy aspect slightly dropped, while the number of those, who underlined negative consequences of humanitarian nature – grew.

Relations between the people of Ukraine and Russia have deteriorated in the past year. This is the

<sup>1</sup> We used the results of studies conducted by the Sociological Service of the Razumkov Centre in the past years. The latest study was conducted on 18-23 November 2016. There were 2,015 respondents aged 18 and above, from all regions of Ukraine, except Crimea and the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. Theoretical sampling error does not exceed 2.3%.

<sup>2</sup> The following division of territories into regions is used: **West:** Volyn, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Rivne, Ternopil, Chernivtsi oblasts; **Centre:** Kyiv, Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Kirovohrad, Poltava, Sumy, Khmelnytskyi, Cherkasy, Chernihiv oblasts; **South:** Mykolayiv, Odesa, Kherson oblasts; **East:** Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv oblasts; **Donbas** – Donetsk, Luhansk oblasts.



opinion of the majority of respondents (61%). However, percentage of these responses dropped in comparison with the maximum indicator recorded in October 2014, when respondents compared these relations with relations at the end of 2013, – i.e. situation before the Donbas conflict. It can be said that another negative sign is that almost a third (29%) of respondents stressed that these relations (which are currently considered to be poor) have not changed.

**Attitudes to Russian leadership and state institutions remained negative in 2014-2016.** In November 2016, the number of those who had a negative attitude to Russian President was 74%, which is almost the same as in April 2014. Similar is the dynamic of attitudes to other Russian state institutions – the Government and State Duma.

**Attitude to Russian citizens is more reserved compared to Russian leadership.** Compared with April 2014, the number of Ukrainians who have a positive attitude to Russians has notably dropped – from 45% to 29%, while the level of negative attitude has not changed significantly – from 17% to 21%, and the percentage of those who have a neutral attitude has slightly grown – from 33% to 39%. Thus, most often, the citizens of Ukraine expressed neutral attitude to Russians. But in general, such assessments that are clearly dominated by neutral and negative attitudes, can be viewed as the sign of distancing, mistrust and alienation of Ukrainians from Russians.

The respondents' assessments by regions were quite expected. The number of people with negative attitude to Russian leadership and Russian citizens is the highest in the West and Centre. Also, negative attitude to Russian leadership is prevalent in absolutely all regions.

The logical consequence of the Russia-Ukraine conflict is that the majority of respondents (57%) admit the fact of alienation between citizens (societies) of Ukraine and Russia.

## PROSPECTS OF KYIV-MOSCOW RELATIONS

**People's assessments of the prospects of Russia-Ukraine relations in the nearest future are rather pessimistic.** In 2014, after the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas, the percentage of respondents who hope for the improvement of relations between Russia and Ukraine has rapidly dropped, while the number of those who believe that they will keep deteriorating has significantly increased. (While in April 2012, this opinion was supported by 8% of respondents, in November 2016, this percentage was 35%). Negative predictions can also include answers of those, who said the these relations will not change, – i.e. the Russia-Ukraine conflict in its current form will go on.

**Most respondents do not expect any change for the better in Kyiv-Moscow relations in the nearest future (1-5 years).** According to the relative majority (40%) of respondents, it is more likely to happen in the longer term – 5-10 years.

**In recent years, citizens' opinions as to what Ukraine's policy toward Russia should be like have significantly changed.** In 2002-2012, a stable majority of respondents supported more intense cooperation with Russia. Starting from 2014, public opinion landscape has greatly changed – most respondents noted the need

to distance from Russia: either reduce cooperation with Russia and Russian influence on Ukraine, or terminate cooperation with Moscow altogether. In November 2016, the percentage of supporters of deeper cooperation between Russia and Ukraine was 21% (a lower number – 15%, was recorder in November 2015).

Residents of eastern, southern and Donbas oblasts support advancing cooperation with Russia more often than residents of western and central oblasts.

## Conclusions

Summarised results of studies make it possible to track the dynamics of citizens' opinions and assessments that lead to the following conclusions.

Russia's aggression has changed citizens' opinions and attitudes to Russia, the state of bilateral relations, Russian leadership, prospects of relations with Russia, etc. Given the uncertain prospects for resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict, there are hardly any grounds to expect any improvement in Ukrainian citizens' attitudes toward Russia any time soon.

Most often people assess relations between Ukraine and Russia as hostile, the reason being Russia's aggression against Ukraine, Kremlin's hostile policy toward Ukraine.

People believe that the Russia-Ukraine conflict was caused by Ukraine's attempts to leave Russia's zone of influence, Moscow's inability to accept Ukraine as an independent nation with an independent foreign policy, and its course for European and Euro-Atlantic integration. Thus, Russia views Ukraine as part of its controlled zone of influence and resists Ukraine's attempts to shrug off this influence, using the entire range of instruments – from economic pressure to military aggression. Only a small share of respondents believe that the reason for the Russia-Ukraine conflict is the violation of rights of the Russian-speaking population in eastern Ukraine.

People believe that the most negative consequences of the Russia-Ukraine conflict are destruction of economic ties between the countries, deterioration of political and diplomatic relations between the states, confrontation in the energy sector, etc.

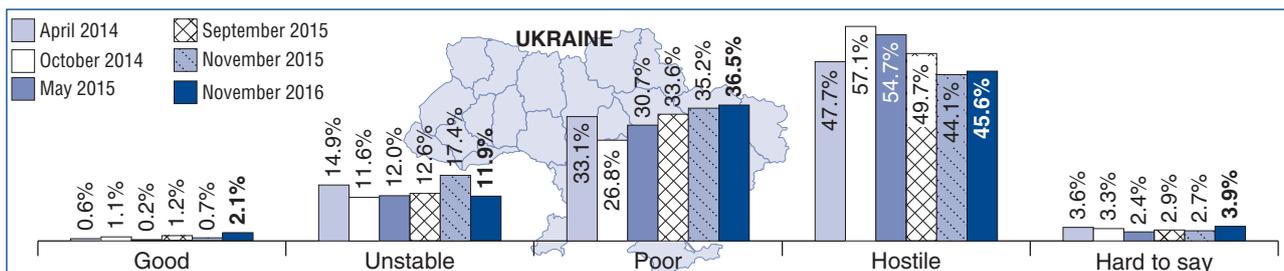
Stable is the negative attitude of Ukrainian citizens to Russian state institutions – President, Duma, Government. At the same time, in 2014-2016, the attitude to Russian citizens has also changed – percentage of Ukrainians with positive attitude to Russian citizens has dropped. Although, the relative majority of respondents share a neutral stance. That being said, the majority of respondents noted that in the past year relations between the peoples of two countries have deteriorated and they experience increasing alienation between Ukrainians and Russians.

People are very sceptical about the prospects of Russia-Ukraine relations. They believe that at least in the mid-term perspective (1-5 years) we are not to expect any positive changes in relations between Russia and Ukraine.

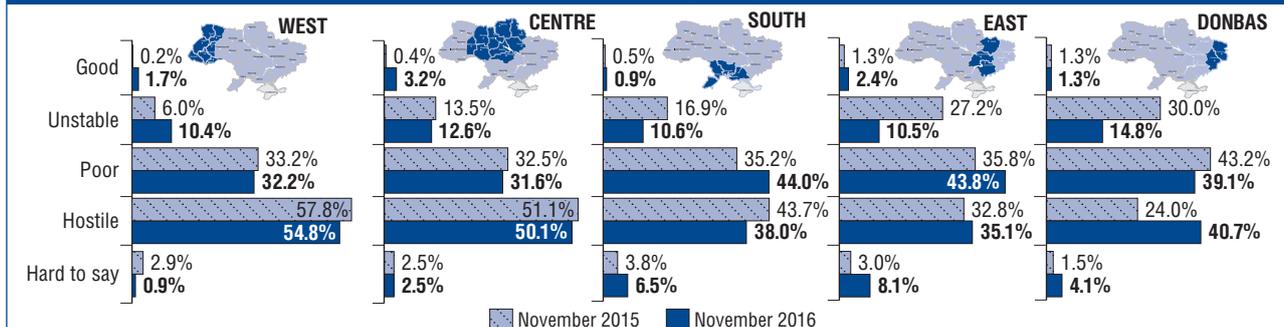
Generally, people's opinions and assessments show that there is an increasing tendency of distancing from Russia. Thus, most respondents stressed the need to reduce cooperation with Russia and Russian influence on Ukraine, or to terminate cooperation with Moscow altogether.



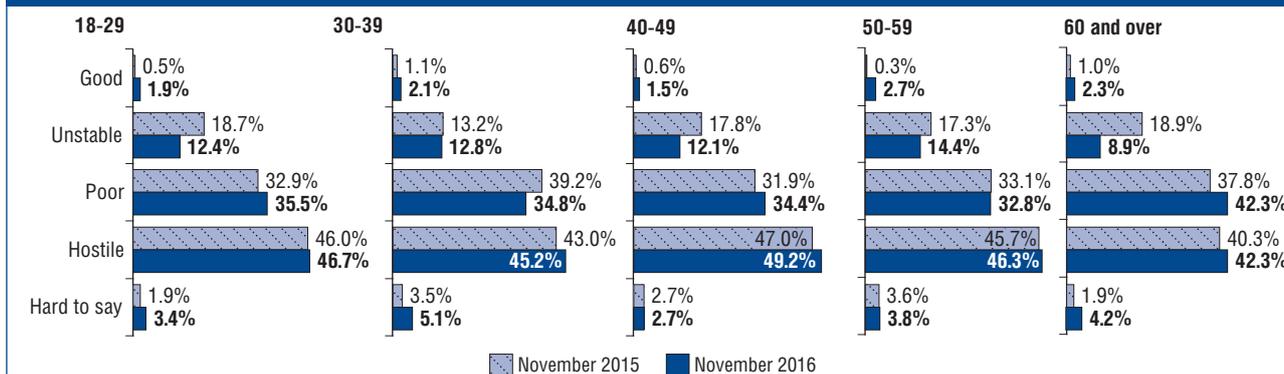
**How would you describe current relations between Ukraine and Russia?**  
% of respondents



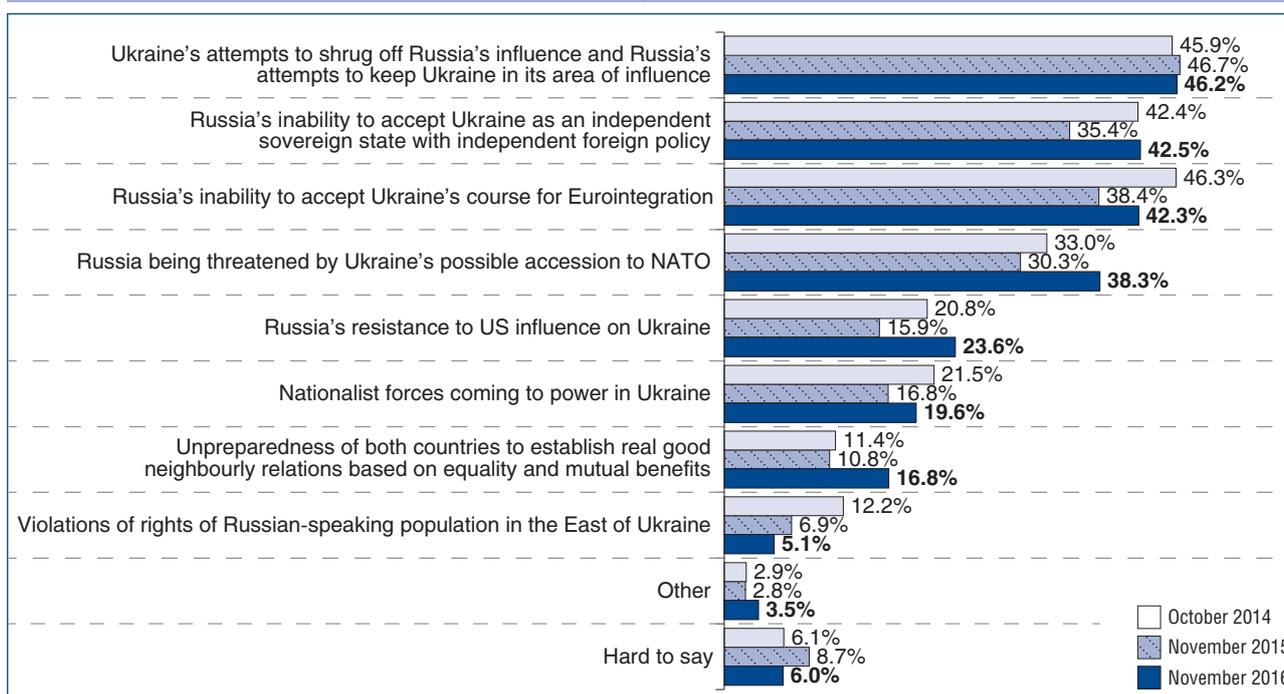
**REGIONS**



**AGE**



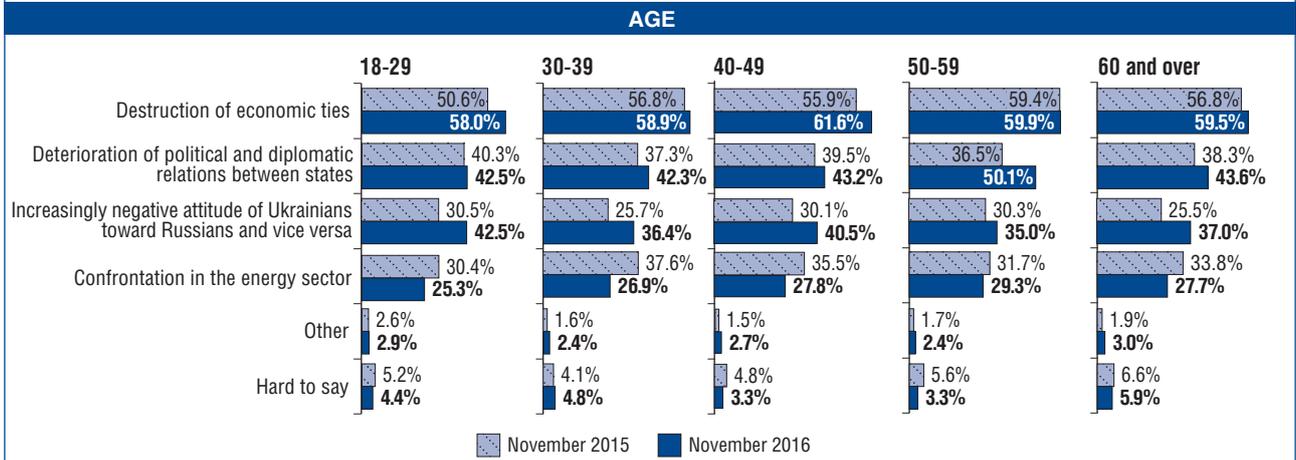
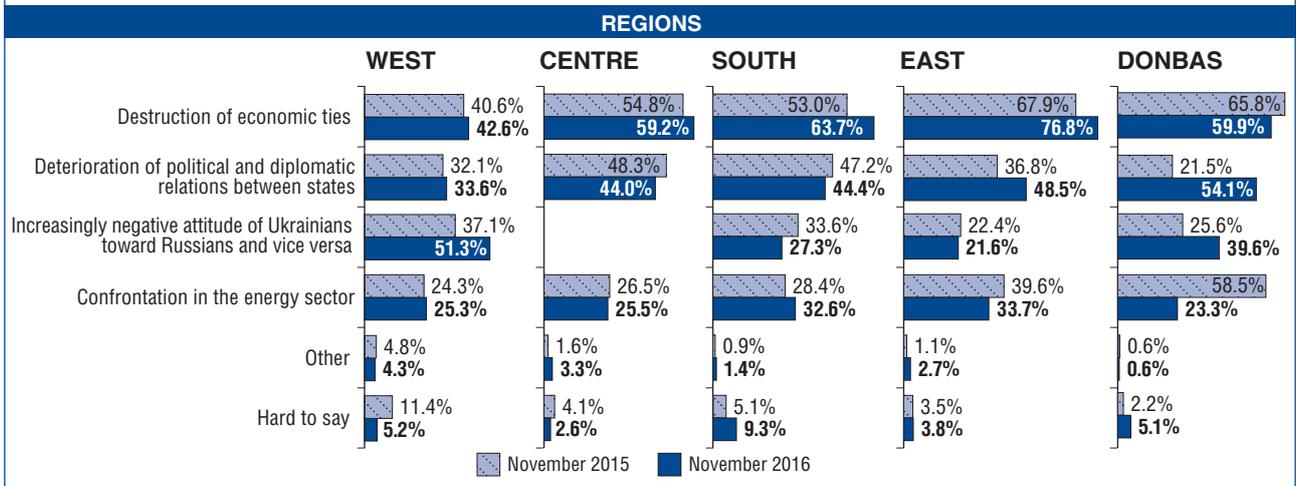
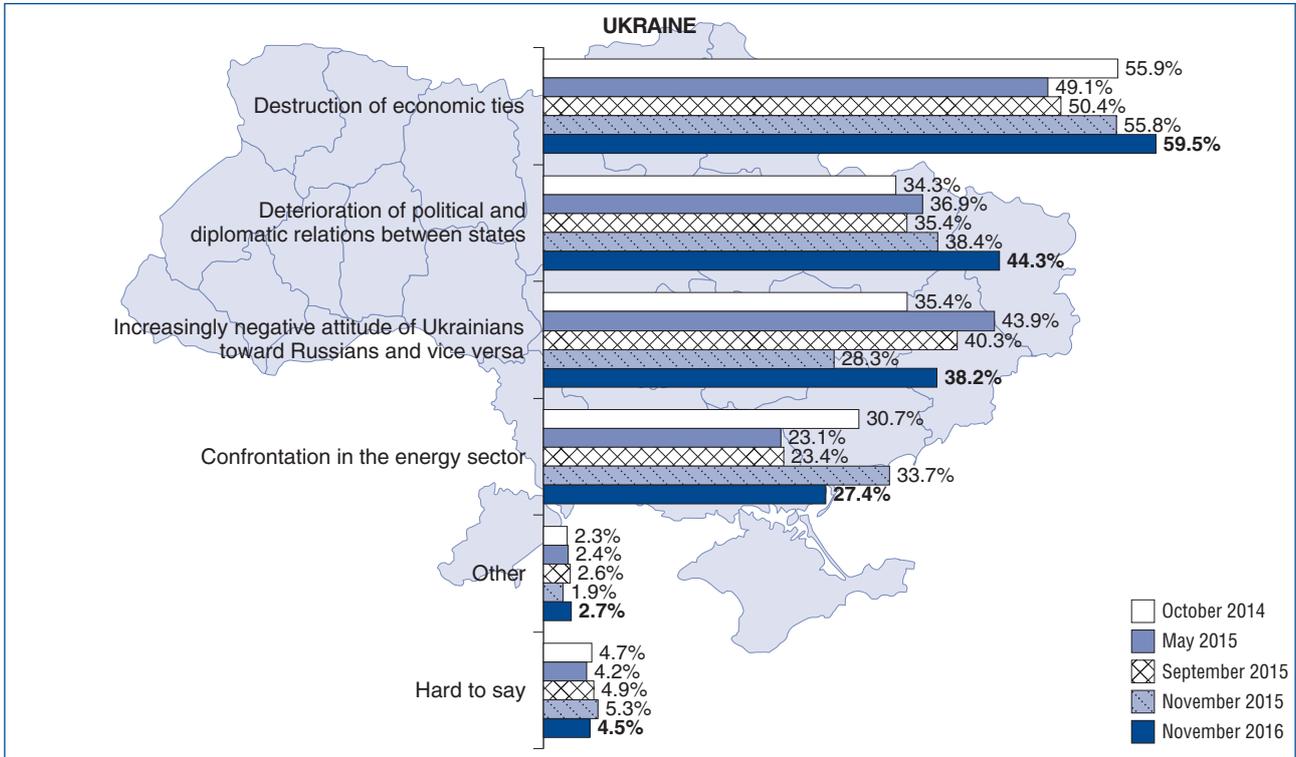
**What are the main reasons for the Russia-Ukraine conflict?\***  
% of respondents



\* Respondents were asked to mark all acceptable options.

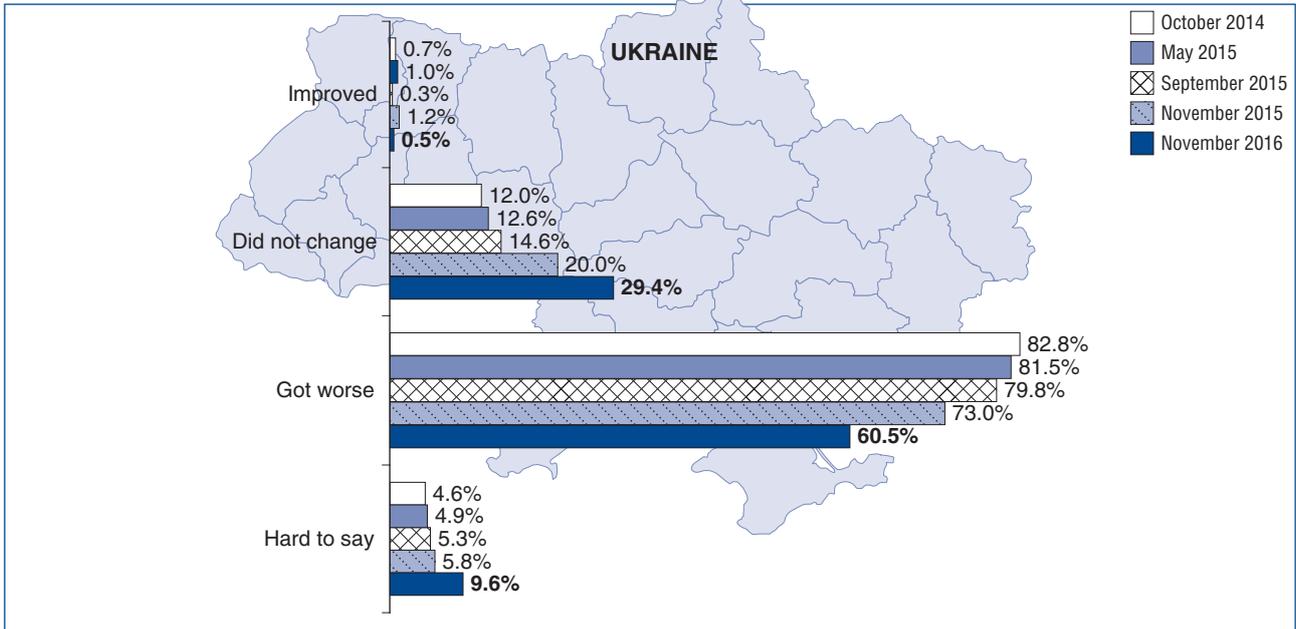


**What are the most negative consequences of the Russia-Ukraine conflict for bilateral relations?\***  
% of respondents

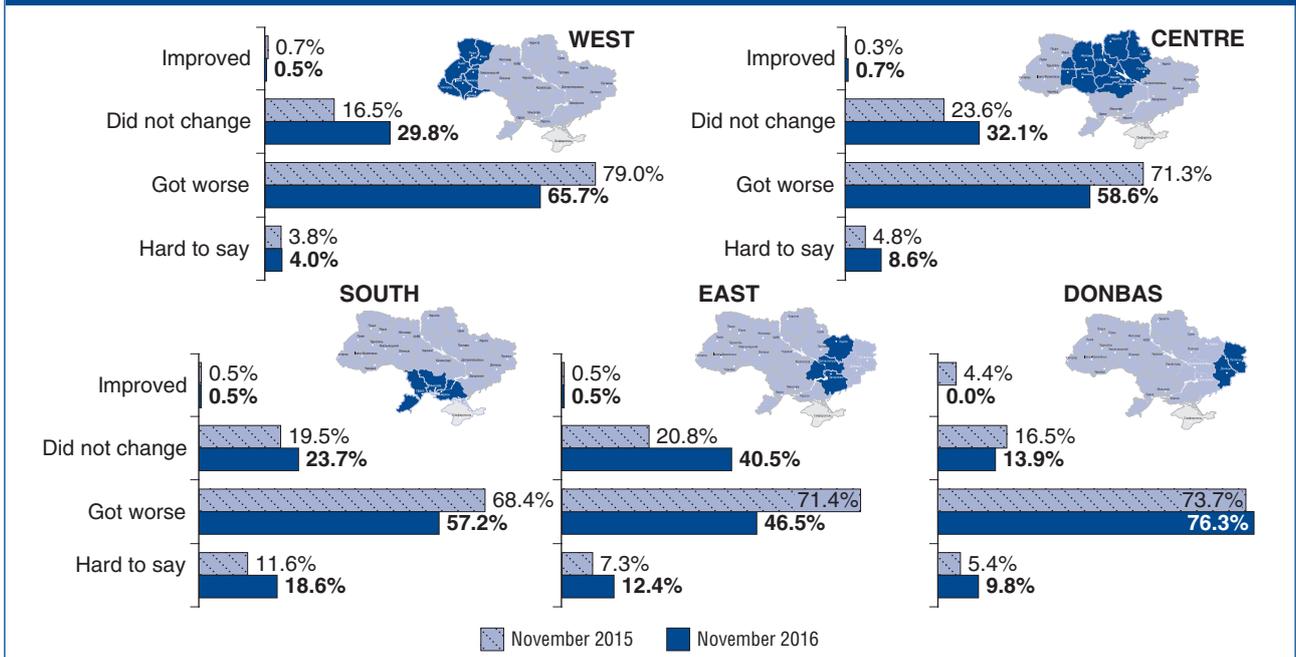


\* Respondents were asked to select two acceptable answers.

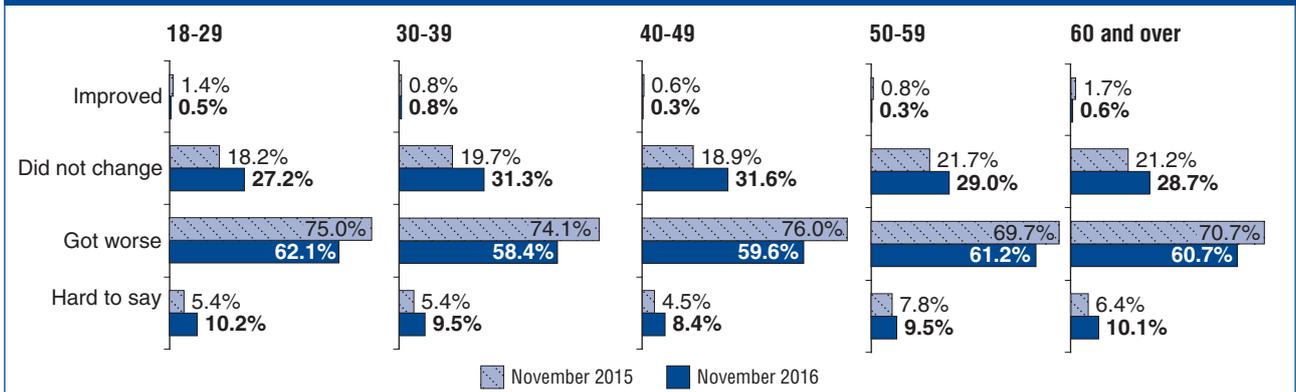
**How did relations between the peoples of Ukraine and Russia change in the past year?**  
% of respondents

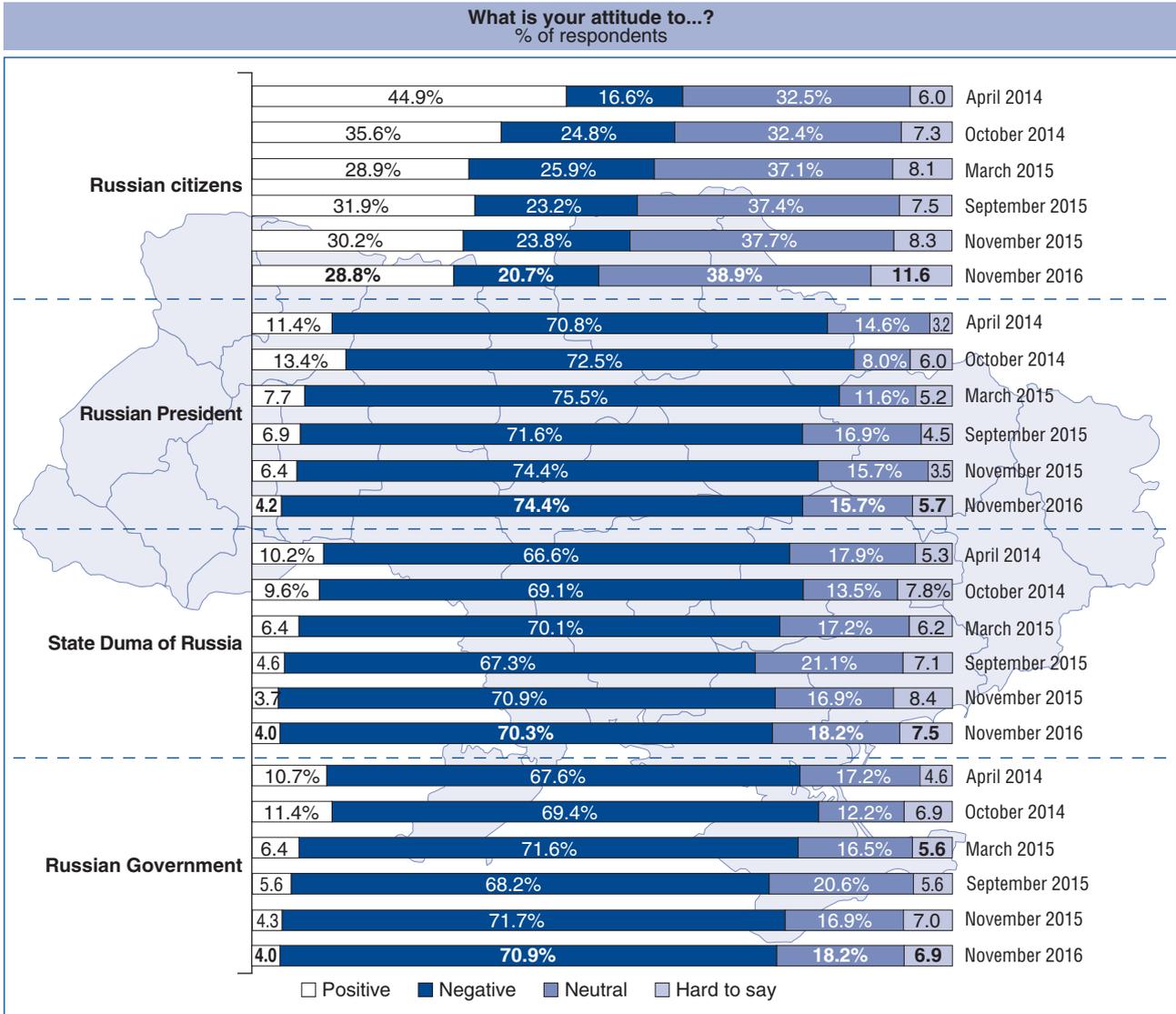


**REGIONS**



**AGE**





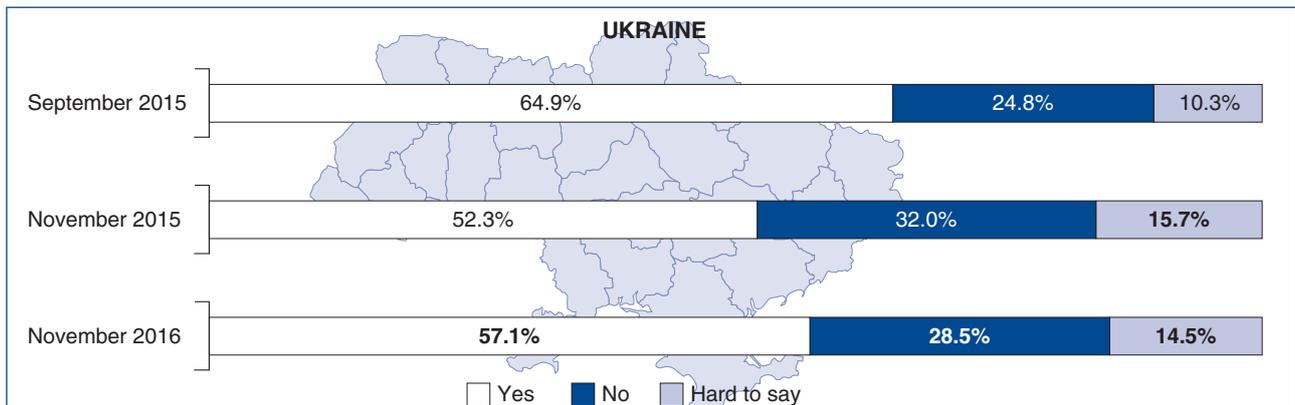
**REGIONS (November 2016)**

**AGE. y.o. (November 2016)**

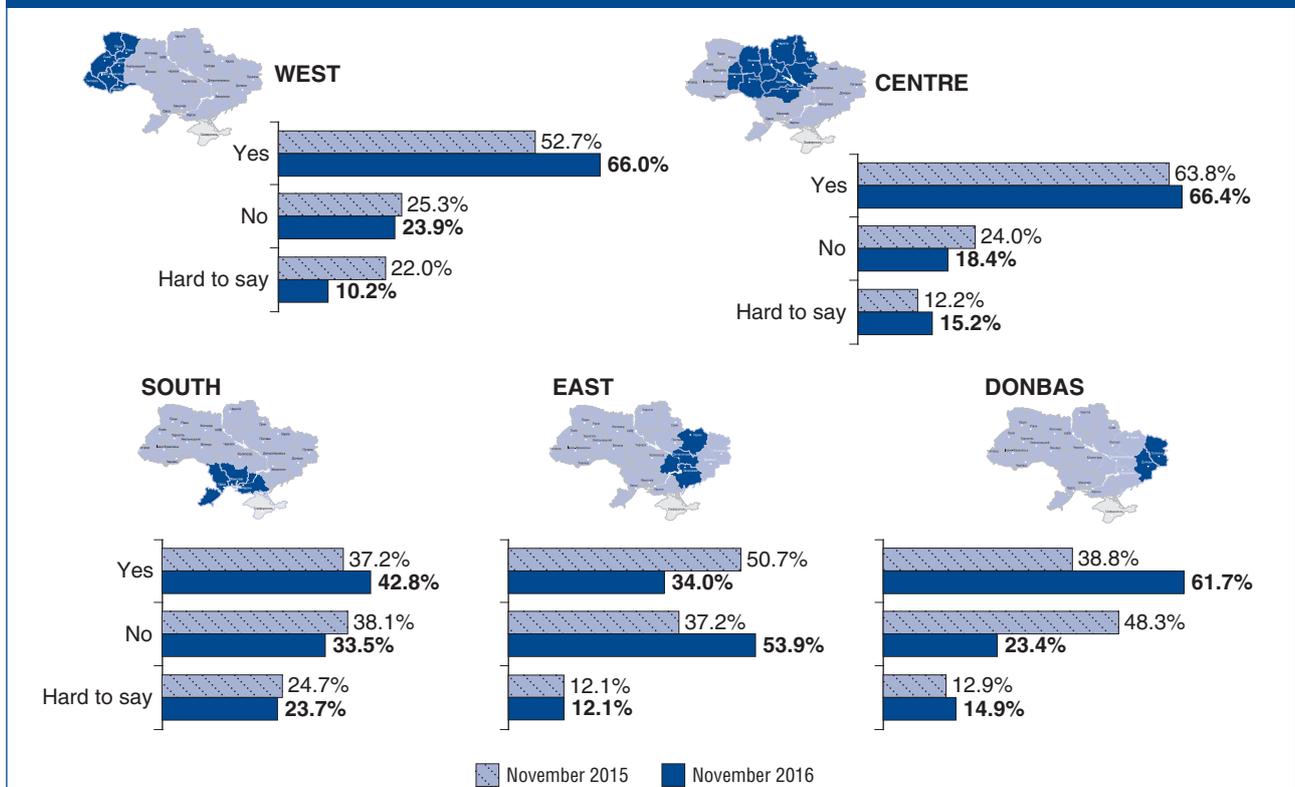
| Russian citizens     |      |        |       |      |        |             |       |       |       |       |             |
|----------------------|------|--------|-------|------|--------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|
|                      | West | Centre | South | East | Donbas |             | 18-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60 and over |
| Positive             | 16.3 | 23.7   | 35.8  | 53.4 | 23.3   | Positive    | 19.5  | 26.3  | 32.6  | 28.8  | 35.6        |
| Negative             | 31.4 | 23.1   | 10.7  | 5.7  | 25.2   | Negative    | 21.9  | 21.8  | 18.4  | 22.8  | 18.8        |
| Neutral              | 44.9 | 39.6   | 40.0  | 29.1 | 40.1   | Neutral     | 45.0  | 37.9  | 39.0  | 37.2  | 36.1        |
| Hard to say          | 7.3  | 13.6   | 13.5  | 11.9 | 11.4   | Hard to say | 13.6  | 14.1  | 10.0  | 11.1  | 9.5         |
| Russian President    |      |        |       |      |        |             |       |       |       |       |             |
|                      | West | Centre | South | East | Donbas |             | 18-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60 and over |
| Positive             | 1.2  | 1.6    | 3.7   | 9.7  | 7.9    | Positive    | 1.7   | 3.4   | 4.5   | 4.6   | 6.5         |
| Negative             | 92.0 | 86.6   | 61.6  | 53.9 | 57.0   | Negative    | 76.0  | 75.6  | 75.9  | 75.9  | 69.8        |
| Neutral              | 6.1  | 9.3    | 20.8  | 25.9 | 26.9   | Neutral     | 18.0  | 15.4  | 14.8  | 12.5  | 17.1        |
| Hard to say          | 0.7  | 2.5    | 13.9  | 10.5 | 8.2    | Hard to say | 4.4   | 5.6   | 4.8   | 7.0   | 6.6         |
| State Duma of Russia |      |        |       |      |        |             |       |       |       |       |             |
|                      | West | Centre | South | East | Donbas |             | 18-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60 and over |
| Positive             | 0.9  | 2.3    | 4.6   | 8.9  | 5.7    | Positive    | 2.2   | 2.7   | 4.2   | 4.6   | 5.9         |
| Negative             | 90.5 | 81.7   | 54.6  | 47.0 | 56.5   | Negative    | 72.4  | 72.9  | 70.5  | 72.6  | 65.1        |
| Neutral              | 7.1  | 12.3   | 25.5  | 29.3 | 28.1   | Neutral     | 19.1  | 17.8  | 18.7  | 14.4  | 20.3        |
| Hard to say          | 1.4  | 3.6    | 15.3  | 14.8 | 9.8    | Hard to say | 6.3   | 6.6   | 6.6   | 8.4   | 8.7         |
| Russian Government   |      |        |       |      |        |             |       |       |       |       |             |
|                      | West | Centre | South | East | Donbas |             | 18-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60 and over |
| Positive             | 0.9  | 2.3    | 4.2   | 8.1  | 7.0    | Positive    | 2.2   | 3.2   | 3.6   | 4.1   | 6.1         |
| Negative             | 90.8 | 82.6   | 54.0  | 49.3 | 55.7   | Negative    | 74.7  | 73.2  | 71.3  | 73.1  | 64.8        |
| Neutral              | 6.9  | 12.0   | 26.0  | 28.8 | 28.8   | Neutral     | 17.5  | 16.7  | 19.0  | 14.9  | 21.5        |
| Hard to say          | 1.4  | 3.0    | 15.8  | 13.7 | 8.5    | Hard to say | 5.6   | 6.9   | 6.0   | 7.9   | 7.6         |



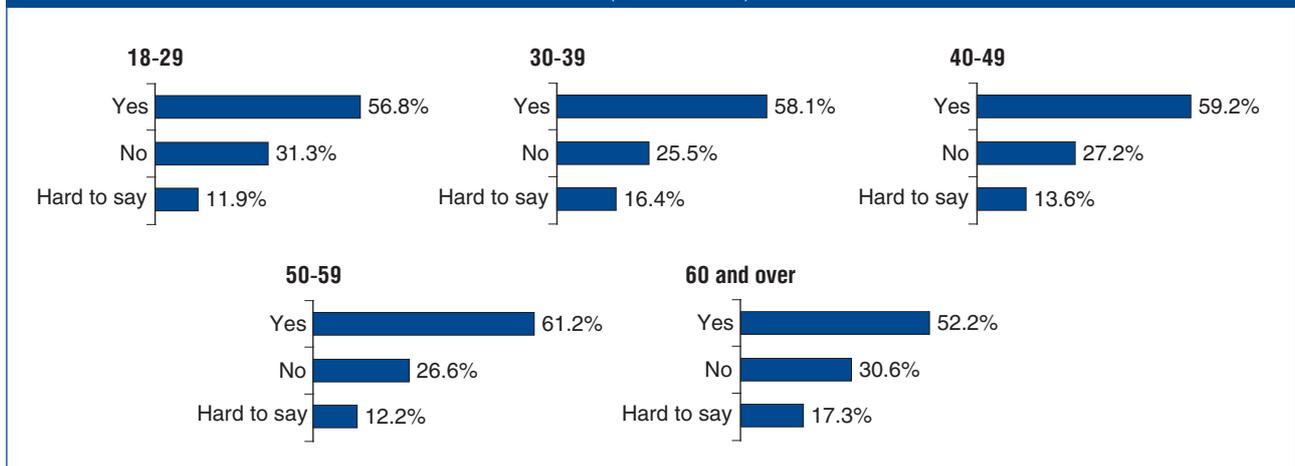
**Do you feel the alienation between the citizens (societies) of Russia and Ukraine?**  
% of respondents



**REGIONS**

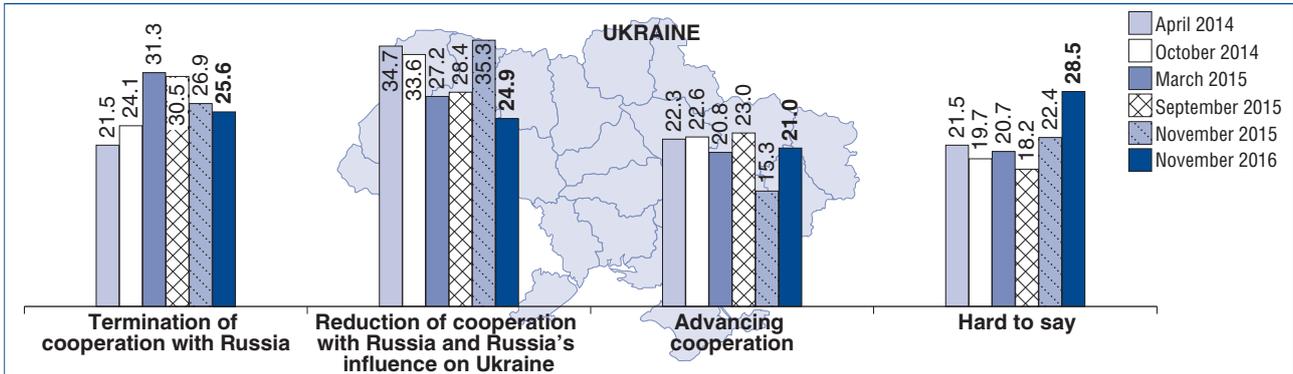


**AGE (November 2016)**

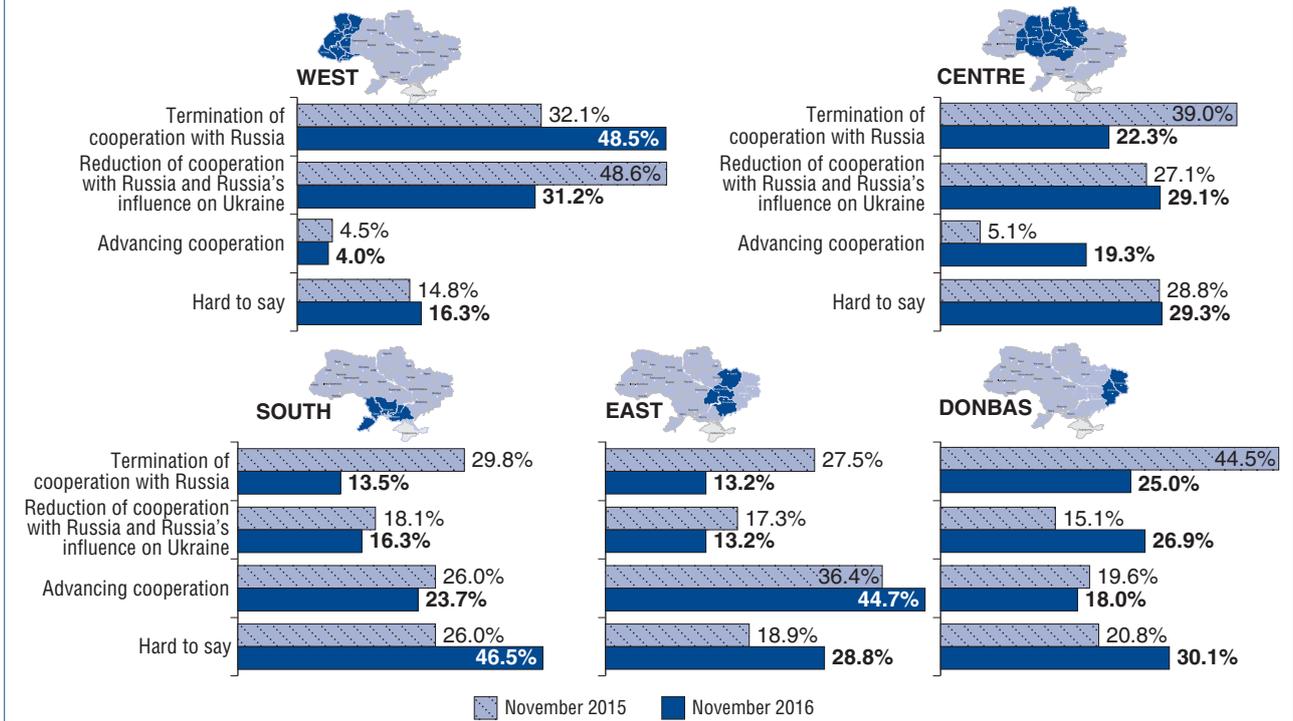




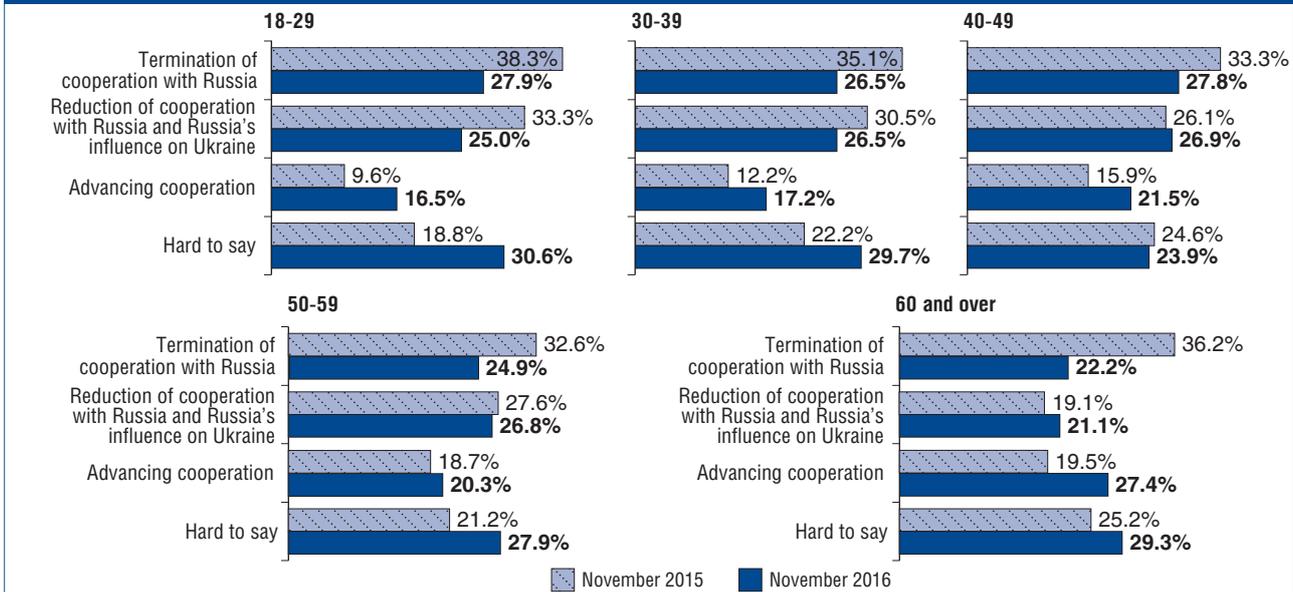
**What should be Ukraine's policy toward Russia?**  
% of respondents



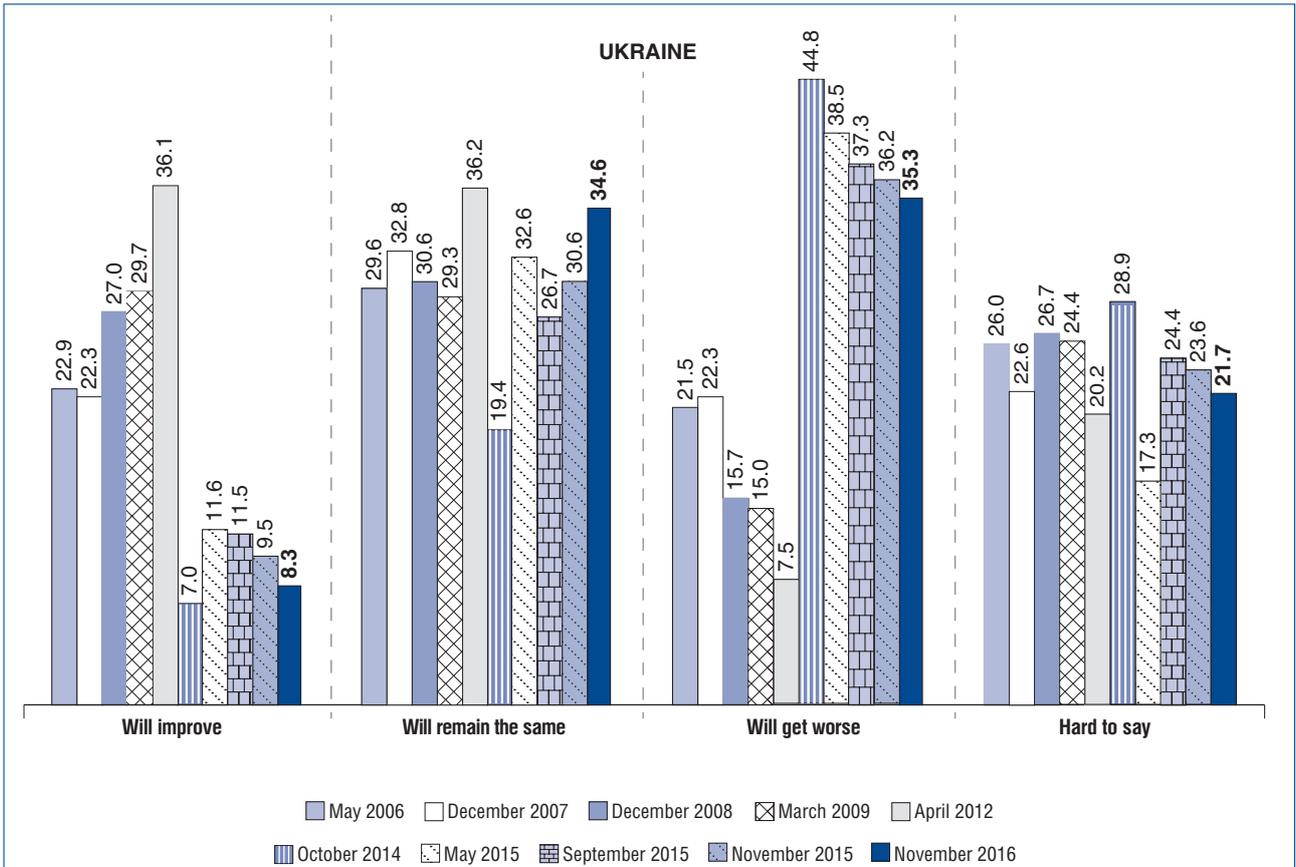
**REGIONS**



**AGE**

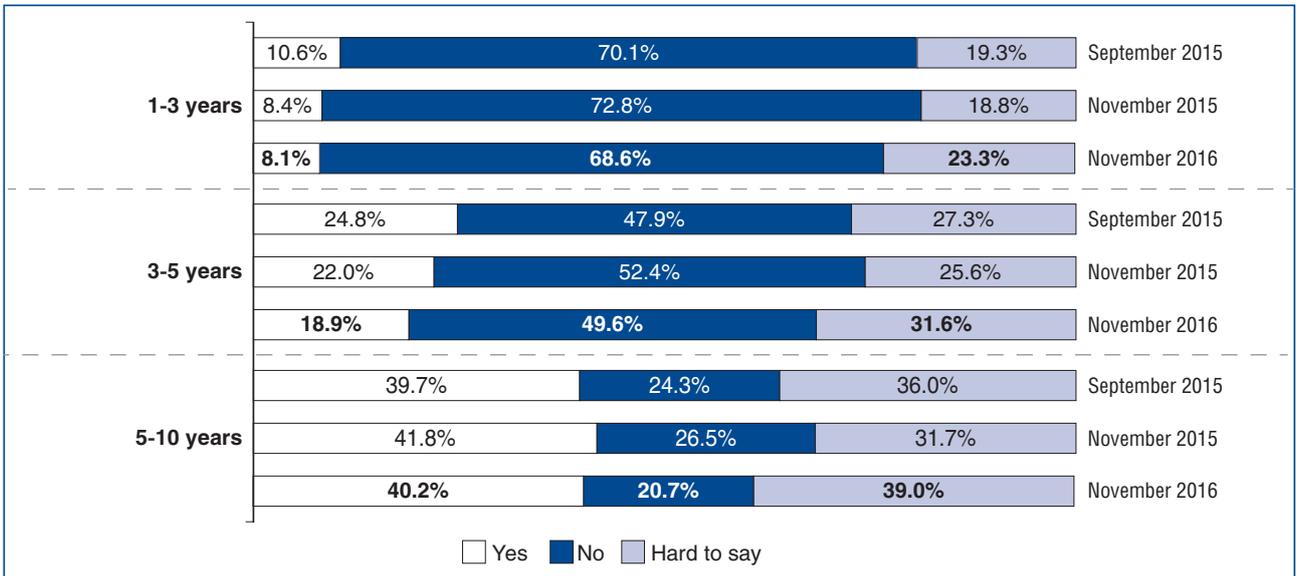


**How would you assess the prospects of Russia-Ukraine relations development in the nearest future?**  
% of respondents



|                      | Regions |        |       |      |        | Age        |            |            |            |                   |
|----------------------|---------|--------|-------|------|--------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------------|
|                      | West    | Centre | South | East | Donbas | 18-29 y.o. | 30-39 y.o. | 40-49 y.o. | 50-59 y.o. | 60 y.o. and older |
| Will improve         | 3.8     | 8.4    | 7.9   | 12.9 | 8.9    | 4.1        | 7.2        | 6.9        | 10.0       | 12.2              |
| Will remain the same | 39.7    | 35.6   | 31.5  | 34.2 | 28.2   | 33.7       | 36.6       | 33.5       | 36.5       | 33.1              |
| Will get worse       | 41.4    | 35.8   | 29.2  | 27.2 | 40.2   | 35.7       | 34.5       | 37.2       | 37.3       | 33.3              |
| Hard to say          | 15.1    | 20.2   | 31.5  | 25.6 | 22.8   | 26.5       | 21.8       | 22.4       | 16.2       | 21.5              |

**Can there be changes for the better in Russia's policy toward Ukraine?**  
% of respondents



# CHARACTERISTICS AND CONSEQUENCES OF RUSSIAN EXPANSION: EXPERT DIALOGUE

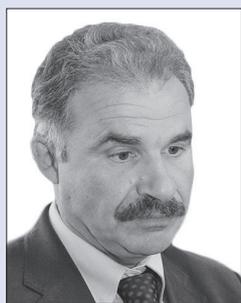
On 14 December 2016, Roundtable “Russia’s ‘Hybrid’ War – Challenge and Threat to Europe” took place. Discussion participants included people’s deputies of Ukraine, representatives of ministries and agencies, governmental and non-governmental research institutions. During the Roundtable, participants analysed the current state and prospects of relations between Russia and the West, defined key confrontation lines, discussed “vulnerability factors” of the Western world.

Experts spent a lot of time discussing characteristics, methods and instruments of the “hybrid” war led by Russia, in particular, on the European continent. They also covered special aspects and nature of Kremlin’s informational expansion, its use of economic and energy levers. They also talked about espionage and secret activity of Russia’s intelligence services, formation of a pro-Russian lobby among European politicians and public figures, meddling in elections, etc.

The principal topic of discussion was Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. The participants stressed that Kremlin’s expansion is extremely dangerous for the country’s sovereignty and Ukrainian statehood. They underlined that in order to stand up to this threat Ukraine needs to implement effective domestic reforms, strengthen national defence capability, ensure international support and solidarity.

Presented below are the speeches of discussion participants,<sup>1</sup> mostly of those, whose ideas and opinions were not presented in the Expert Interviews Section “Russia’s ‘Hybrid’ Aggression”: Goals, Consequences, Countermeasures”.<sup>2</sup>

## THIS IS A WAR AGAINST THE SYSTEM OF EUROPEAN VALUES



**Viktor YELENSKYI,**  
*Deputy Chairman of  
the Verkhovna Rada Committee  
on Culture and Spirituality*

Talking about Russia’s “hybrid” war conducted in conventional way, as well as in economy, cyberspace and information space, as they say, “afloat and ashore”, we understand that this war has been mainly waged against Ukraine. However, Russia is also going against the West – both, its system of values, and its people.

Once Winston Churchill said that in wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies. This is not his best quote, but it was this one that Joseph Stalin liked the most.

**The war against Ukraine is conducted using lies, it is based on lies.** As recently aptly noted by one journalist, – Russian President is lying, Prime Minister is lying, the Patriarch of Moscow, high- and low-level officials are all lying. Another pillar that supports this “hybrid” war is Moscow’s attempts to use western values in the war against the West. I.e., the freedom of assembly, speech, movement, political freedom to destroy all of these freedoms. This is a major problem, challenge and demand for societies and governments of European countries.

On the one hand, we cannot act like the enemy in his methods of warfare. On the other – when the agenda and news feeds of one of the largest TV channels are planned together with the Ministry of State Security of the so-called “DNR” – this situation is not normal. Abnormal is also the situation of the terrorists’ presence (albeit indirect) and the broadcasting of DNR ideas developed by Kremlin on Ukrainian TV channels. This is not freedom of speech in the truest sense of the word.

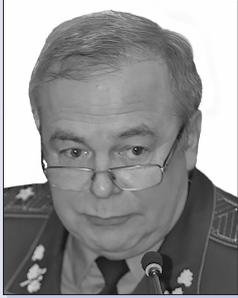
These paradoxes is another reminder of intellectual problems, practical and theoretical, that our roundtable participants have to deal with. Breaking through to reality, to the core, will not be easy. This is why we have to draw some serious conclusions. ■

<sup>1</sup> Participants’ opinions are published in the order they were presented at the Roundtable. Texts have been prepared using discussion transcripts and are presented in somewhat shortened form. Some presentations include references made by editors.

<sup>2</sup> For more information, see: interviews in “Russia’s ‘Hybrid’ Aggression: Goals, Consequences, Countermeasures” section of this journal.



**FOR UKRAINE IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO FIND NEW ALLIES AND OFFER NEW METHODS OF COUNTERING AGGRESSIVE RUSSIA**



**Ihor ROMANENKO,**  
Reserve Lieutenant General,  
Deputy Chief of the General  
Staff of Ukrainian Armed Forces  
(2006-2010)

“Hybrid” from Latin is a “mix” of something that results in new qualities and possibilities. The main tool of “hybrid” war is creating internal conflicts and contradictions in the victim state by the aggressor state in order to use them for achieving political goals. Experts believe that “hybrid” war is a type of conflict that will be used in the 21<sup>st</sup> century increasingly more often.

In the past month, security situation around Ukraine, unfortunately, has not improved. In general, in light of recent positioning in the international arena, risks for Ukraine’s future have increased. The main reason for this is Russia’s active use of diplomacy in the attempt to prepare a reformed format of relations with the Administration of the new US President while escalating its destructive actions against Ukraine. Informational warfare experts register tougher rhetoric coming from Kremlin, artificial situations created to defame Ukraine’s image in the world, including, through so-called espionage projects, when Ukrainians are arrested with the purpose of isolation and being branded as participants of future terrorist attacks.

**Currently, Russia’s expansion is entering another active phase. Overall, the Western world today is too slow, extremely bureaucratic and inert. It cannot make dynamic and timely decisions. Searching for consensus within a large group of states is not just harmful for the West, but is also making Ukraine more vulnerable.** In connection with this, expectations that Washington will take the leading role and will propose efficient and innovative steps, may turn out unrealistic. At this time, D. Trump is facing a dilemma – take the lead in the fight against “putinism”, or go for a compromise with Ukraine’s enemy and agree on new rules of the game. So, the situation is turning into a challenge for Ukraine.

There is a real threat of a reconciliation plan. For the US this idea can be beneficial under certain conditions. Whereas for Ukraine it will be a tough blow. Today, it depends on many factors, whether it will be possible to convince the new US administration to uphold consistent countermeasures and change the “Normandy” format. For Kyiv, it would be beneficial to combine the “Normandy” format with cooperation with countries

that would be the guarantors of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity in line with the Budapest Memorandum. I.e., involve the US and the UK in the negotiations. Under these conditions, the balance of power would be in favour of the West – even if Russia rejected this format.

However, we must admit that there is no undisputed Western leader at this moment. This increases risks for Ukraine. Emergence of such leader, even if represented by unpredictable new President D. Trump, would be a tough psychological blow for Russia, as Putin is a psychologically vulnerable individual, even though his risk sensitivity threshold is high.

For Ukraine, the period of uncertainty is dangerous, as all members of the Normandy Four are currently not interested in radical changes. Until the administration of the new US president is fully formed, until it becomes clear what D. Trump’s position is, no new developments are expected.

On the other hand, it is possible that military activity will intensify as the enemy regularly uses the military lever of the “hybrid war” as an argument in political negotiations. Ukraine is formulating and announcing at the international level demands and “red lines” that the government cannot cross.

In the nearest future we need to solve the very difficult task of communicating Ukrainian position to the US President, including the idea of necessity of involving Budapest Memorandum signatories in the “Normandy” format.

It is important to understand that **Ukraine’s main frontline today is the West – i.e. finding new allies and proposing new formats and methods of countering Russia’s aggression.** Political science experts predict the danger and likelihood of intensification of Russian foreign policy at least until February 2017. They believe that until D. Trump’s inauguration, V. Putin will be doing his best to erode the situation around Ukraine and inside our country, using all available methods and means. There is a possibility of numerous provocations inside the country, activation of pro-Russian politicians, agents, involvement in confrontation of certain population groups specially trained by government agencies.

Kremlin is using low intensity war to deplete the military personnel of Ukrainian Armed Forces. Precision fire is launched from guns and mortar launchers prohibited by Minsk agreements, large-calibre – 120-mm and 152-mm, howitzers. Occasionally, there are incidents of the use of “Grad” multiple launch rocket systems. And this is proof of Kremlin’s games in the international arena. Essentially, this is implementation of strategy, which, according to Kremlin’s plan, has to make the West conduct negotiations with Moscow as equals, the latter coming from a position of strength.

Secretary of Ukrainian National Security and Defence Council O. Turchynov noted that in December-January, before the inauguration of the new US President, Russians may try to exacerbate the situation through local offensive



operations. Mariupol area in this context remains critical. The city, with its ports and factories, is the militants' strategic goal. Besides, this can be the beginning of an effort to create a land corridor to Crimea.

The mutilated economic model of Donbas cannot operate independently without Russia's financial assistance. Besides the two army corps which are a mix of different militants, there are also Russian regular military units in Donbas, up to 10 thousand people in total.

Assessing the likelihood of intensification and expansion of hostilities, we must admit that this is quite possible. Besides, former Director of US National Intelligence J. Clapper predicted in November 2016 that Russia will continue its aggressive policy against Ukraine and NATO.

**Speaking about the current state of "hybrid" war against Ukraine, we can note a major positive consequence – activation of civil society, emergence of massive volunteer movement in all areas – from helping the army to expert volunteer organisations that develop reform policies in different sectors.**

Russia – Soviet Union's successor in destructive policies – is leading its "hybrid" war against Ukraine on the basis of lies, provocations, and distortions. This tactic, which back in the day has destroyed the Soviet Union, will lead to the destruction of Russian "hybrid" society and state in general. ■

#### INFORMATION AND ENERGY COMPONENTS OF RUSSIA'S "HYBRID" AGGRESSION



**Anzhela DANELIAN,**  
Head of European Law  
Association

Based on studies of the "hybrid" war in Central Europe, European Law Association presented its own research that analyses characteristics, nature and methods of Russia's informational aggression, as well as the energy component of Kremlin's policy in Europe. It outlines Russia's goals and interests. I would like to present some results of our study to the Roundtable participants.

Once, famous Bolshevik revolutionary L. Trotsky wrote that we may not be interested in war, but war is

interested in us.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, this is what happened to our world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The world turned out too infantile, unprepared for dangerous threatening events, did not provide a proper response to Russian aggression against Georgia. Since 2008, Russia has been testing the world, defining the limits, within which it can operate. Policy of reconciliation, to which Western Europe and America resorted after the Russia-Georgia armed conflict, resulted in recognition of Russia's zone of influence. A famous researcher of Russia, General R. Shirreff, author of the book "2017: War With Russia: An Urgent Warning",<sup>4</sup> believes that the war in Georgia was the beginning of what is now happening in Ukraine. Without the Georgian conflict, or in case of a different reaction of the West to it (e.g., imposing sanctions) – the Crimea situation and the aggression in Eastern Donbas would likely have not happened. But we are where we are. Russia is testing the world and is doing so very skilfully both in the information and energy sectors.

**We can state that Russia has become a platform for informational warfare.** As a reaction to Maidan 2004-2005, such media outlet as *Russia Today* was created, later one more tool of influence appeared – "*Russkiy Mir*". The technology of war had another extension – international information resource "Sputnik" was later created. All of these are means of Russia's "hybrid" warfare. The use of these information technologies and resources is rather effective.

Another important component of Russia's warfare in Central Europe and post-socialist countries is energy expansion, its energy resources monopoly that it established back in the Soviet Union times. Right after the disintegration of the USSR, Russia was going through a "weak period", which was used by a number of post-socialist countries to integrate into the West, in particular, into NATO and the EU. But later, when Georgia decided to do the same in 2008, and Ukraine in 2013 – Russia was already powerful enough to resist it. Information and energy warfare was used deliberately and effectively.

The depth of Central Europe's dependency on Russian energy can be demonstrated using Poland's example. 75% of Poland's natural gas consumption and 93% of oil consumption are covered by Russian energy supplies. I.e., Europe itself provides Russia with money for militarisation. Let us remember that Russia's military expenditures in 2015 were \$66.4 billion, which is number four in the world after the US, China and Saudi Arabia.<sup>5</sup>

On 9 December 2016, at the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting, Mr. Lavrov said that NATO countries must stop military activity and development of infrastructure close to Russian borders, and go back to the situation as it was at the end of 2013. On the other hand, in 2015, the Russian Ministry of Defence ordered 125 railroad cars in Belarus, in 2016 – only 50, and

<sup>3</sup> Original saying: "You may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you".

<sup>4</sup> Original name "2017: War With Russia: An Urgent Warning From Senior Military Command".

<sup>5</sup> For more information, see: World military spending resumes upward course, says SIPRI. – SIPRI, 5 April 2016, <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2016/world-military-spending-resumes-upward-course-says-sipri>.

in 2017 – 4,126.<sup>6</sup> What for? Obviously, for large-scale exercises and manoeuvres. Many Western analysts are very concerned about this.

An important aspect is the so-called “Suwalki gap” issue. This is the 70 km zone of Lithuania–Poland border between Kaliningrad and Belarus. A lot of experts predict that it can become a new foothold for the “little green men” from Russia, a hot spot outside Donbas.

**Russia is conducting active “hybrid” aggression in Central European countries – Czech Republic, Hungary and others.** Recently, Czech services made a statement that Russian intelligence is conducting an informational war in Czech Republic, creating a network of controlled groups and propaganda means, which are meant to be used to destabilise the country. Hungarian sources inform that the number of Russian agents in Hungary has grown to 600-800 persons in recent years. This is mostly the number of diplomats in the Russian Embassy. Just the Embassy’s fleet has 100 vehicles. Recently, there was a shooting between the police and the leader of the Hungarian National Front Gyorkos, during which he killed a policeman. The investigation uncovered a huge stock of weapons, close contacts with Russians. Gyorkos himself had contacts with the Main Intelligence Agency (GRU). This shows that Russia is using all available tools and opportunities to destabilise European countries.

One element of “hybrid” warfare is wiretapping, “tapes” scandals. Starting from 2012, they were staged in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Lithuania, Macedonia. The main objective was general destabilisation of the country, undermining trust in state institutions, political parties, early elections. In Poland, the wiretapping involved the so-called “waiters”. “Tapes” scandal in Poland started on 14 June 2014. The wiretapping itself was being done since the beginning of 2013. It coincided with elections in Poland and the events in Ukraine – the end of Maidan, the beginning of war. As a result – in autumn, the party in office lost the elections. This scandal led to Poland’s inability to effectively support Ukraine in its worst times in 2014. The government was paralysed, society did not trust it and could not support its ideas. This scandal also hit a group of Polish entrepreneurs, among whom was Ukraine’s great friend (today already diseased) Jan Kulczyk, who always helped our country.

The Roundtable Discussion, 14 December 2016



Russia is “setting on fire” the information space of the entire Europe, and is doing so rather effectively, – this is its first frontline... Will there be a second one? What will it be?

Very symbolical is the interview of V. Nikonov – the grandson of the USSR’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, in which he said that after Brexit, elections in the US, Bulgaria, Moldova and elections in France in 2017... “Russia will be choosing its strategy based on the old Chinese proverb: If you wait by the river long enough, the bodies of your enemies will float by. That is what I wish for myself and all the citizens of Russia”.

They have gone far in words, what will the next actions be? ■

**WE MUST STOP SPONSORING THE AGGRESSOR**



**Aleksandr SAVCHENKO,**  
Rector of the International  
Institute of Business

I would like to outline some of the economic aspects of the “hybrid” war. In my opinion, Ukraine is not responding adequately to the challenges posed by Russia’s “hybrid” aggression. Oddly, Ukraine is the main sponsor of Russia’s war. We are a huge importer of Russian goods. During the war, we are buying Russian goods – not just oil (we have finally stopped buying gas), but also household chemicals, agricultural products, etc. Each *hryvnia* we are spending to purchase Russian goods is a plus for Russia’s GDP and a minus for Ukraine’s GDP.

**The easiest and a very primitive way to respond to the “hybrid” war is a total ban on exports from Russia to Ukraine. And this goes for both goods and services.** Software as well. Right now, in strategic areas we are using Russian software. Also, in my opinion, we need a total ban on concerts of Russian entertainers in Ukraine. Certain services should be imported only as an exception. This is what a normal country’s policy should be. This will give us advantages, not disadvantages. Oddly, we are not using this.

Second point. **We are the main foreign sponsor of Moscow Orthodox civilisation, the Russian world.** We are the main buyers of Russian films, books, services – through church channels we are buying spiritual services. We are paying for it, which seems absurd during the war. The recommendation is simple – we do not need to invent anything “hybrid”, we just need to ban the use of Ukrainian resources for building the Russian world.

There are also more complex recommendations. I am still surprised, why we have not pursued any possible

<sup>6</sup> See: Russia is going to move 4 thousand wagons of soldiers and military equipment to Belarus – media. – Segodnya.ua, 26 November 2016, <http://www.segodnya.ua/world/rossiya-sobraetsya-perebrosit-v-belarus-4-tysyachi-vagonov-soldat-i-voennoy-tehniki-smi-773909.html>.



litigation for the seizure of Ukraine's resources, land, banks in Crimea. For example, the National Bank should have long initiated a claim against Russia for the sum of \$1.5 billion. PrivatBank has done it, and the state bank – has not. And this concerns lawsuits not just against the Russian state, but also against commercial entities, which have money. We cannot collect money from the Russian state, will only get moral satisfaction, but from commercial entities – we can.

Ukraine enjoys the most favoured nation status when it comes to Russian investments. Moreover, it is effective in areas that are very sensitive specifically in the context of “hybrid” war – culture, information, banking. **We must at least introduce a special regime for investment in these sectors on the legislative level.** We can go further – create development institutions for the Baltic states, Poland, Romania – in order for them to start investing in our economy. This is advanced mathematics. So far, we need to demand simple and obvious actions from our government. ■

#### UKRAINE'S CONTRIBUTION ON THE INFORMATION AND PROPAGANDA SCENE – IS ITS ABILITY TO FIGHT FOR VALUES AND IDEALS



**Taras STETSKIV,**  
*Member of the Central Office  
of a political party  
Republican Platform*

I would like to add some points and thoughts on the topic under discussion. “Hybrid” war that has been the subject of discussion in Ukraine and in the world in recent years, is not something that modern political Russian elite has just invented. I think that this “hybridity” has its origins in Middle Ages. Since Russia had adopted “Moscow as the Third Rome” doctrine.

**Russian policy in Ukraine was a success due to three conditions. First – Ukraine had an internal social basis for aggression and attack. Second – bribing the elites. Third – imposing ideas on the Ukrainian society that were corroding it from the inside.** In the 17<sup>th</sup> century it was the Orthodox Universalism doctrine, in 18-19<sup>th</sup> – the imperial grandeur doctrine, in 19<sup>th</sup> – social Bolshevik propaganda, which decomposed Ukraine, and only after this, the military offensive was launched.

What do we have now? I would not underestimate the danger of Russia's information policy in Ukraine and Europe, as well as bribery, economic pressure, etc. Also, I do not rule out the possibility of Russia's military attack in

one way or another under the pressure of time or Russia's internal economic problems. I would like to articulate my assumption that from a strategic point of view, today's Russia-Ukraine opposition can be defined as “strategic stalemate”: we cannot push them out of Donbas, and they do not dare or cannot go forward (which in this case is the same).

I can say that the main reason that determines such actions of V. Putin is not the oil price, or anti-Russian sanctions, or Ukrainian army's resistance in the East. I think that the main reason is that V. Putin and his entourage understand that currently there is no social basis for Russian invasion in Ukraine, which is what holds them back from further attacks.

Ukraine's main problem at this moment is that the world is most likely entering a phase of intensification of nationalist trends in many countries, isolationism, and some people even believe that the era of globalism is coming to an end (D. Trump's victory is a sign of this). This will create major threats and challenges for Ukraine.

What should be Ukraine's place in terms of European and global security? I think, Ukraine should now focus on three main points, which would make it essential for international and European security.

First – **Ukrainian political elite has to adopt the concept of a country at war based on Israel's model.** Then, for the global community, Ukraine will shift from having a problem to solving the problem, because a state's ability to protect itself makes it essential and increases its chances of getting help.

Second point is that **Ukraine must move forward with internal social and economic modernisation without Crimea and Donbas as temporarily occupied territories.** I am convinced that Ukraine's successful modernisation will be the end of Russia's imperial project in its current form. Then, the return of Donbas and Crimea will only be a matter of time. But there is a question about the ability of Ukraine's ruling class to do it. If the society believes that it lacks the corresponding ability – it will be replaced. And no talk about the “fifth column” or a “Moscow's hand” will help.

Third point – **Ukraine's government should focus its efforts on carrying out targeted information and advocacy work not only to explain the “hybrid” nature of Russian aggression, but also to define Ukraine's place and mission in the world – both for Ukrainians and Europe.** A grand-scale idea is always consolidating and mobilising. For instance: right after Yanukovich fled the country, a prominent French intellectual Levy, speaking at Maidan, articulated what its mission could be – Ukrainians can remind the tired and drowned in bureaucracy Europe of European values and principles. By coming out to Maidan, Ukrainians have proven that they are true Europeans and that it is in Ukraine that Europe's future that is now being defined.<sup>7</sup> This third point is our contribution to the informational and propaganda space, which can secure Ukraine's place in the world and consolidate Ukrainian society. ■

<sup>7</sup> Bernard Levy gave a speech at Maidan on 9 February 2014. Full text available at: <https://gaming.youtube.com/watch?v=FXk7MJ0Z4II&list=PL5Dwy5112ULfKadpL3jE7V0ne00dx24uv>.



## UKRAINE HAS TO BE INTERESTING FOR WESTERN PARTNERS



**Ruslan SYDOROVYCH,**  
*People's Deputy of Ukraine*

Talking about the problem of “hybrid” war, we need to distinguish between global and local aspects.

Let us look at the global aspect. **What is Russia's goal? A change of world order that prevents it from achieving all of its ambitions, which are to a certain extent revanchist.** All conflicts started in Europe and beyond its borders are a threat to the global order. We see Russia blocking certain decisions of the UN Security Council, influencing other international institutions, including OSCE. Russia's objective is to show that the current world order is ineffective, because it does not work. Russia wants to use its leverage to have important decisions made, achieve some quasi-new Yalta. These are the things we need to counter.

Ukraine is a country that understands this context very well and experiences it first-hand. So we need to cooperate with our international partners, communicate this context to them, as we see it. A crucial task for our diplomacy is cooperation with the new administration of the US president, and making Ukraine the focus of the White House's agenda.

A sound opinion was voiced here that we have to stop playing the victim. **Ukraine needs to create its own agenda, propose its own decisions – only then we will be interesting to our Western partners.** Examples of such work of Ukrainian diplomacy are, regrettably, very few. On a positive note, I would remember the work of Ukrainian deputies at PACE – the resolution condemning Russian aggression is unprecedented.<sup>8</sup> Maybe this is not an extraordinary victory, but the opposition that our colleagues had to overcome at the Assembly and in the Council of Europe, the efforts that Russia exerted to prevent the vote on this resolution, opposition from PACE President, – show how important each victory is for Russia at all international diplomatic events, and how well they understand the importance of this for advancing their goals.

Why was Russia so aggressively opposing this PACE resolution? What would Russia's gain have been, if the voting had not happened? I believe that they would have

gained a very simple benefit – complete undermining of the PACE status. **Actions aimed at discrediting and undermining the status of international institutions – is the mechanism through which Russia is trying to establish a new world order, in which it will take central position.**

How do we survive and resist Russia's wide-ranging aggression? Firstly, we need to pay attention to national military sector. Ukrainian army is closed off from society and politicians on an unprecedented level. This is not a typical model for democratic countries. Today, the Pentagon and US congressmen are disclosing more data on US army procurements, than our MPs can get (even with the highest level of clearance) regarding the equipment that is being procured for our army. Without establishing parliamentary control, civil control, we are unable to deal with improper practices that, unfortunately, take place in defence procurement.

Next item – overarching reforms that have to take place in Ukraine. The Revolution of Dignity happened, we got a new Parliament, a new Government. **But did we get the new quality of public administration? Clearly, no.** There are some minor improvements and achievements – and we need to talk about them. However, regrettably, a major philosophy-changing tectonic shift in state governance did not happen. This is a task for the Parliament, for us as MPs, for the Government, and the President – to implement the changes that will improve governance, will enable the realisation of a social agreement that should have been achieved after the revolution. Because all of the world's revolutions end in two ways – either by concluding a new social agreement, or establishing new authoritarian government. Ukraine is unlikely to have another authoritarian government. And yet, sadly, we also have no new social agreement. So we, as politicians, need to work on this.

A very important factor is ensuring security in the energy, finance and other sectors. These are the strategic assets that are essentially under Moscow's control. There may be a very dangerous situation, when Russia, for example, decides to block Ukrainian banks, communications, energy system. These are the areas we need to be working on – reforms, changing state governance, strategic changes in economy. ■



<sup>8</sup> Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, on 12 October 2016, with an overwhelming majority adopted the resolution on Ukraine “Political consequences of the Russian aggression in Ukraine” and “Legal remedies for human rights violations on the Ukrainian territories outside the control of the Ukrainian authorities”. For more information, see: PACE adopts two resolutions on Ukraine with amendments. – UNIAN, 12 October 2016, <http://www.unian.ua/politics/1569597-pare-priynyala-dvi-rezolyutsiji-schodo-ukrajini-z-popravnkami.html>.

# TOTAL WAR PUTIN-STYLE: RUSSIA'S "HYBRID" WAR AGAINST UKRAINE



**Oleksandr LYTVYENKO,**  
Doctor of Political Science, Professor

*Why should we, o good people,  
Be chasing novelties?  
Maybe sometimes it's better  
To remember older things.*

*Lesya Ukrainka*

**H**ybrid war is a trendy concept in modern Ukraine that has been known and used before – at least since the times of Thucydides (5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.). Each time period and many countries have examples of actions during conflicts that can be united under a common name “hybrid” war.

The class of concepts for which this term is used is very broad; in this article, “hybrid” war means comprehensive influence by the aggressor state with the use of political, economic, informational and military means against the victim country. In C. Clausewitz’s trinity of army-government-people, the main target of a “hybrid” war is people, to be more specific, – society, and less so – government, while army (armed forces) have a subordinate role.

## “Hybrid” War: Some Theory

**The primary target of “hybrid” warfare is the management system of a victim state.** This includes not just military command, and not just state governance, but management in a broadest sense – foremost, political sector of society, business, incl., private, as well as civil society. These tools are especially effective against weak, unstable democracies, typically with insufficiently effective democratic institutions.

**“Hybrid” war tools aim to undermine society and government’s willpower to continue resistance.** This explains the key role of informational warfare in this type of war, as well as almost complete subordination of military tasks to political and media goals.

“Hybrid” war is conducted by the aggressor state not just with the armed forces, but using the entire range of political, economic, and information capabilities. Decision about further escalation of the “hybrid” war

into a large-scale war is made in accordance with either achievement or failure to achieve the set goals, and based on the analysis of the situation. Essentially, we are talking about a sharp increase of the value and importance of military means in achieving political goals.

Aggressor’s most important task is to destroy trust between society and government, which in a democratic state makes state defence extremely difficult and enables change of political direction in the future. For this purpose, both political (creation and support of political movements, destabilisation of social and political situation, etc.), and informational (propaganda) means are employed.

**An important component of a “hybrid” war is economic warfare, in particular, trade wars,** restrictive economic measures aimed to undermine the economy of the victim state, and through this, destabilise socio-political situation and destroy the willpower to resist.



Systemic application of "hybrid" warfare can be treated, on the one hand, as an independent approach to warfare, and on the other, – as preparatory action before the use of military force on a large scale, as a pre-war period. Given the special characteristics of the modern world, it is difficult to speak about established boundaries between war and peace as the absence of war. (For example, can we consider the period of western democracies' war on terrorism as peace?).

Instruments used in a "hybrid" war have high latency, and their effects are of "below-threshold" nature. Even officially recorded acts of "hybrid" war in many cases do not allow to announce the state of war and set in motion the procedures for conventional war. If desired, many manifestations of a "hybrid" war can be interpreted as conflict, not war. On the one hand, this significantly increases the uncertainty, and thus complicates the development of winning strategies, on the other, – frees the hands, significantly expanding the field of opportunities for all parties to the conflict in the "hybrid" war format.

**Special aspects of "hybrid" warfare greatly increase the importance and value of intelligence services in its application.** In a sense, "hybrid" war in the form that it has in Ukraine can be considered a series of successive secret, or "Chekist-military" in Russian terminology, operations, which follow one logic and are part of one plan.

Progress in information technologies has a special meaning for "hybrid" wars, as it allows to implement new approaches, for example, in subversive activities of special services. Social networks enabled remote creation of support groups and control of their actions. Cyberspace has become a new arena of confrontation.

Specific forms of "hybrid" warfare depend on strategic culture of the aggressor state. Each state conducts its "hybrid" war according to its own "mode of warfare". These styles can be very different from one another. **Therefore, understanding the aggressor's strategic culture is crucial for understanding the nature of "hybrid" war in each specific case.**<sup>1</sup>

Specific displays of national style can be very different depending on historical socio-political, economic, security and technology circumstances. "Prussian" style of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century is not the same as "German" style of the 1st half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, and of course is very different from the "German" style of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### "Hybrid" War.ru

In my opinion, Russia's strategic culture today has the following basic characteristics.<sup>2</sup>

**First, the cult of force and hyperrealism as the basic explanatory paradigm of international relations.** Russians understand hard power and pay attention almost exclusively to it. Any attempts to reach a compromise

are seen as a sign of weakness. Russia will go straight ahead until it is stopped.

Along with this, immensely important in Russia's foreign policy is informational activity, to be more precise, – propaganda, which is conducted in the framework of special operations and intelligence activity. Its speciality is creating a world, in which, in vivid description of P. Pomerantsev, "nothing is true, and everything is possible". Next to Land, Air, Space, Sea and Cyberspace, – Information Space, the space of ideas, is crucial in Russia's strategic culture. Let us remember, that Russia's priority targets in Crimea at the end of 2013 – beginning of 2014 were television and telecommunication networks.

**Second, there is constancy of political ideas and means of their implementation, along with incredible flexibility in the way they are used.** The goal determined at the highest political level is hardly changing, the range of instruments, including "hybrid" warfare, remains rather constant. Meanwhile, the way the instruments are used, interim targets, tactical approaches are incredibly flexible and are constantly reviewed according to the changing situation. In combination with traditional contempt for pre-designed plans as a "German figment",<sup>3</sup> the idea that Russians have no strategic thinking becomes clear, which however is far off the mark. An illustrative example of the flexibility of actions and interim targets were Russian/Soviet operations for establishing control over Eastern Europe countries in 1940-1948.

**Third, Russia's traditional strategy is extensive use of proxy powers.** The first historical fact of this strategy's application was Qasim Khanate, created in 1452 and re-absorbed in 1681, which played a significant role in Moscow's contention for Golden Horde's inheritance. Extensive use of puppet states started in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, beginning from the Far Eastern Republic, as well as different "revolutionary governments", including Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. After the disintegration of the USSR, puppet formations exist in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Trans-Dniester.

**Fourth, aggressive nature of Russia's actions.** "The best defence is a good offence". This approach is the direct consequence of thinking of itself as a fortress under siege, typical for Moscovia/Russia at least since the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Russian military strategy involves an attack on the enemy's capital, which has to finally break the will to resist and end the war. In the "hybrid" war against Ukraine, Russians view Kyiv as the critical point for application of efforts, which was demonstrated in September 2014 after Ilovaik events, and in 2016 during the attempt to organise Maidan-3.

**The use of completely justified dissent, based primarily on the difficult socioeconomic situation, for social and political destabilisation has been and still remains a key area of work for Russian intelligence**

<sup>1</sup> Hereinafter, strategy means the combination of goals, instruments and means of achieving them.

<sup>2</sup> Hereinafter, Russia (Russian Federation), Russians mean a group of people who govern the Russian Federation, make decisions and represent the state.

<sup>3</sup> Compare to L. Tolstoy's description of dispositions prior to the Battle of Austerlitz in the "War and Peace" novel.



**services.** Not every protest is provoked by Russians, but they are definitely using each one.

**Fifth, "Chekism".** Russia's leadership typically focuses on indirect action, clandestine, subversive activities, along with takeover by military force. At the same time, professional training and experience form perfect tactical and even operational thinking, with certain neglect of strategic issues.

For example, let us remember Russian state's close ties with organised crime established back in the times of power takeover by the Bolsheviks. The criminal world played a very important role in Bolshevik social engineering, special relations between Soviet intelligence and criminal groups established back in 1920s. In the war against Ukraine, Russians are also extensively using organised crime, which is an important component of separatists' support base. Tellingly, while preparing the temporary occupation of Crimea and ORDLO, Russian intelligence services actively facilitated involvement of government agencies representatives, mostly law enforcement officials, in different illegal practices, e.g. corruption and smuggling.

**Sixth, orientation and close connections with a wide range of radical forces from far-left to far-right.** And it is not just in Ukraine, where these groups have been deeply infiltrated by USSR KGB back in the Soviet times, but also in Europe, US, Middle East, etc. The use of Communist International heritage and labour movement are an important feature of Russia modern approach to foreign and security policy.

This is also close to traditional Soviet/Russian focus on working with lowest classes of society as the main target audience for Russian propaganda and subversive activity.

**Seventh, Russians today devote a lot of attention to "protection of compatriots", using linguistic, cultural and ethnic diaspora as the basis for formation of the "fifth column" in foreign states.**

Regarding the theoretical basis of Russia's "hybrid" war, we would like to note the following. The overall approach used by Russians today in Donetsk and Luhansk regions was designed back in 1920s in the framework of *Comintern*, NKVD and ID GS WPRA (Intelligence Division of the General Staff of Workers' and Peasants' Red Army), and was widely used by the USSR in Europe until 1950s. For example, in the late 1940s-early 1950s, within the USSR Ministry for State Security a special bureau was created led by Lieutenant General P. Sudoplatov, which was supposed to use "hybrid" warfare against European NATO states in the "pre-war period".

In the 1970-1980s, Soviet special services and military were actively using "hybrid" warfare in "third world" countries. Special attention should be paid to approaches used by the Head of the First Chief Directorate of USSR KGB (1955-1971) Colonel General A. Sakharovskiy, with whom some researchers<sup>4</sup> associate intensification of

Soviet intelligence activity in the Middle East and corresponding changes in operation of different political forces in this region. This also includes active use of terrorism.

Meanwhile, the new conditions were being analysed as well. In 1960, Russian political emigrant Colonel E. Mesnner published a book "*Mutiny, or the name of the Third World War*", where he stressed the increasing role of popular movements as the main subject of military action. According to the researcher, in this situation, psychological factor becomes the essential one – "the battle for minds and hearts" – becomes the fourth dimension in the confrontation.

A strong example of application of "hybrid" war approach in the post-Soviet space were the events in Abkhazia in 1992. At that time, typical particulars were worked out afresh: total propaganda in media, especially on television, full-scale use of elite special forces of the Russian Army, active sabotage by intelligence services.

Certain Russian approaches to understanding modern "hybrid" warfare have been conceptualised by the Chief of General Staff of Russian Armed Forces General V. Gerasimov in his speech published in February 2013 in newspaper "*Military Courier*". It should be noted that many of the ideas of Russian-style "hybrid" war are meant to be applied in the countries without a major language and cultural barrier. Thus, this approach requires a thorough review if used outside of post-Soviet space.

### "Hybrid" War: Ukrainian Context

Aggression against Ukraine has been prepared purposefully and consistently at least since 2001. This means, first of all, step-by-step formation of influence system in politics, economy, energy sector, and media space. This system was mostly formed by 2008, with Orange Revolution of 2004-2005 being another special stimulus for its development. In 2008, Russia started preparations for military aggression, first of all, in Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk and Kharkiv regions.

**Economic war against Ukraine has been conducted for at least the last decade.** Special attention should be paid to energy sector with gas wars in 2005-2006 and 2009. After 2013, Russia's restrictive measures caused an over threefold decline of bilateral trade in three years.

**Subversive activities today employ forces, means and infrastructure created, among other, on Ukrainian territory, mostly after 2001.** Communist environment and the so-called "political Orthodoxy", and sometimes church parishes in Eastern and Southern Ukraine, are being actively used by anti-Ukrainian forces. Some of their activists take part in subversive activities against Ukraine directly.

Agent networks established previously are now active and extensively used. It is agents of Russian special services, foremost Chief Intelligence Division of the General Staff of Russian Armed Forces, that control

<sup>4</sup> Ion Mihai Pacepa and Ronald J. Rychlak *Disinformation: Former Spy Chief Reveals Secret Strategies for Undermining Freedom, Attacking Religion, and Promoting Terrorism*. WND Books, 2013.



the actions of criminals and terrorists. Most important combat missions, in particular, in the first stage of Russia's operation with forced takeover of government buildings, were executed by the military of special operations units and Chief Intelligence Division (GRU). Sabotage and reconnaissance groups have been and still are extensively used.

Federal Security Service also plays an important role. In the border-zone next to Ukraine and in Crimea there are commando training camps. With participation of Russian Federal Security Service, "government agencies" have been created for administration of power in the occupied territories of separate parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

With time, the work of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service is becoming more noticeable. It has already led to the use of more sophisticated means of informational influence, intensified actions against Ukraine's interests in Europe and other regions of the world.

**Events of autumn 2015 have demonstrated the effectiveness of cyber-warfare against critical infrastructure elements**, including privately owned ones. Confrontation in cyberspace is becoming more important and dangerous.

Most combat-effective units of Russian occupation troops have consisted and still consist of Russian mercenaries. Local residents are mainly used as "cannon fodder" and to get the desired "picture" in the media. Private military companies (for example, "Wagner group") extensively used by Russians deserve special mention; this allows to execute military tasks without direct involvement of the Russian military.

Starting from June-July 2014, operational ground forces of the Russian Army are increasingly more often involved in military action, mostly for the maintenance of complex weapons and military equipment, which is being transferred to DNR and LNR in large quantities. This includes tanks, MLRS "Grad", anti-aircraft defences, etc.

In the summer of 2014, Russia extensively practiced launching artillery strikes against Ukrainian troops from the territory of Russia using advanced military weapons. In particular, they used multiple rocket launcher Tornado-G, introduced into service in Russian armed forces only in 2012.

In the third decade of August 2014, realising the impotence of pro-Russian forces defeat as a result of the military advance of Ukrainian army, Russians were forced to send in their regular units. **This period can be considered the moment, when Kremlin was forced to move from "hybrid" warfare to direct military involvement.**

Having reached their short-term goals, Russians have brought down the intensity of confrontation, and continue controlling the conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, among other, via supplying weapons, ammunition, fuel and lubricants, as well as qualified personnel, foremost, for staffing command structures.

In 2015-2016, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Army Corps have been created on the territory of ORDLO with the total strength of 35 thousand persons, operating under Russian leadership and according to Russian statutes and guidelines, completely integrated into the Russian command and control system through the Territorial Forces Centre of the 12<sup>th</sup> Reserve Command of Russian Armed Forces Southern Military District.

ORDLO is actively used as a military training area for practicing tactical manoeuvres, testing new weapons and military equipment. This includes communication systems, automated troop control systems, electronic warfare, reconnaissance equipment, including radio and unmanned machines, etc.

**Today, military activity in these regions of Ukraine is an important, but one of many elements of the overall strategic plan to destabilise Ukraine. This destabilisation is the precondition for the change of Ukraine's political course and bringing it back under Kremlin's control.**

In this situation, Russia's leadership remains flexible and can, as required, involve the "military component". Corresponding capabilities in the form of military infrastructure along Ukrainian borders are being actively and consistently created.

Although Ukraine has survived an almost three-year confrontation with Russia, Kremlin's strategic goal – complete submission of Ukraine and **gradual destruction of Ukrainian statehood, is still on the agenda. Therefore, it is premature to say that the worst part of the crisis is behind.**

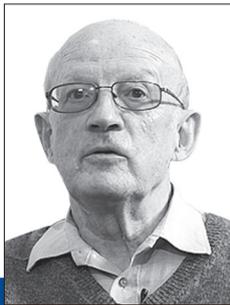
For Ukraine, the victory will come when Russian elite and society recognise Ukrainians as a separate state-forming nation and their right to self-determination. Such recognition would require radical transformation of modern Russia and its re-invention on a different foundation. Everything else after this recognition can be discussed, and mutually acceptable solutions can be worked out.

Even under the most favourable conditions, such transformation will take a very long time. **Thus, the conflict with Russia will be long-term.**

**To survive and, moreover, to win, Ukraine needs to have sufficiently mature institutions. So, in this situation, Ukraine's strategy is simple – build its security and defence capabilities; in order to do this, ensure economic development, and involve assistance of international community. As the weaker party to the conflict, Ukraine is most interested in its internationalisation. However, we should clearly realise that protection of Ukraine is primarily the objective of Ukrainian citizens and Ukraine itself.**

**Presenting a strategic idea is very simple, but as always with the simplest ideas – the hardest is to implement them. This will require Ukrainian society to put forth all energies and build a new, mature and democratic state.** ■

# “HYBRID” WORLD WAR IV (2014-2016). THE RISE AND FALL OF THE “RUSSIAN WORLD”<sup>1</sup>



**Andrey PIONTKOVSKY,**  
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**W**orld war IV is not my meme – it was coined by Kremlin’s propaganda specialists. It was especially popular during the intoxicating Russian fascist spring of 2014. Since that time, we heard it less often, and today, it seems to have disappeared completely. I often use this meme, I like its expressiveness that reflects provincial geopolitical and historiosophic “phantasms” of Kremlin dreamers. This numbering (IV) clearly reads as a dream about taking revenge for USSR’s defeat in World War III (the Cold War), same as World War II was an attempted revenge of Germany for its defeat in World War I.

## Strategic Plan

Hitler’s foreign policy ideology (divided people, bringing together lands, the right and even the sacred duty to “protect” ethnically close people all around the world) was most fully and unabashedly presented *urbi et orbi* in the famous Crimean address of the “Russian World” leader to the Federal Assembly on 18 March 2014, meticulously copied from Hitler’s Sudetenland speech of 5 October 1938. The next ideological document of World War IV were his revelations in the meeting with the beloved people in April 2014:

- the plan of a specific military operation “Novorossia” on annexation of 10-12 of Ukraine’s oblasts;
- racial explorations regarding the genetic superiority of an Aryan tribe with an extra spirituality chromosome that has descended from the Carpathian mountains.

This Hitler-Putin triptych was topped off with the Valdai speech of Vladimir Putin in the fall of 2014 to bowing and scraping western “experts”. For this speech, an unknown speechwriter has carefully selected extensive excerpts from two of the last unanswered letters from Hitler to Chamberlain of 23 and 25 August 1939.

**In general, World War IV ideology was developed (Russian World), a “legal” justification for the territorial (protection of ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking**

**people around the world). A new type of troops for hybrid war was created and tested – Special Operations Forces (SOF) – “polite little green men”, engaged in terrorist activities abroad without an official declaration of war.**

Common people were being persistently introduced to the idea of global “hybrid” war of the “Russian World” against the godless Anglo-Saxon world, against the West led by the US. The possessed showmen on TV filled our heads on a daily basis with the idea that we are not fighting against Ukraine, but against the US on the territory of Ukraine.

It was announced by the leaders of the “Russian World” that the goals of this war were to overcome the biggest geopolitical crisis of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to bring back home the historically Russian lands, new Yalta-based division of the world, in which Putin’s Russia would be recognised as the supervisor of, at least, the entire former USSR territory. According to Kremlin’s plan, the fuel for the launched war were Russians and Russian-speaking people living in Russia’s neighbour countries – desperate “ordinary miners and tractor operators”, inspired by the idea of the “Russian World”.

Brotherly assistance was supposed to be provided at first by the “polite little green men” hiding *behind the*

<sup>1</sup> Translated from Russian.



*backs of women and children*, and later – by Russia’s regular troops. The task of the first stage was brotherly partition and full subordination of Ukraine – “Novorossia” project.

Even the most modest practical realisation of the ambitious idea of “collecting historically Russian lands together” requires changing the national borders of at least two NATO members – Latvia and Estonia. So what possible tools, except for the famous “spirituality” and “little green men”, could be used for successful confrontation with NATO and annexation of territories of its member states by the country that is dramatically weaker than the North Atlantic Alliance in economic, scientific and technical development, conventional armed forces capacity?

No state and no regime would start a war being dead sure it would lose it. The leader and the General Staff must have some strategic plan in their head, the implementation of which, in their mind, will lead to victory. Let us try to understand this plan.

“Hybrid” world war tools are varied: they include statements by Russian Foreign Ministry on harassment of ethnic Russians, regular incursions by Russia’s military aircrafts into the airspace of neighbouring countries, Putin’s regular “jokes” about how many days it will take him to reach Riga, Tallinn, Vilnius, Warsaw and Bucharest, and many others. But the key place in the hybrid warfare (and not only in relation to the Baltic States) is occupied by the growing demonstration of nuclear weapons, nuclear intimidation, direct blackmail with threats to use nuclear weapons.

“Are you prepared to die for Narva?” – Putin practically repeated to the West Hitler’s classical question from the 1930s asked in relation to Danzig. His propaganda specialists and “experts” were openly threatening that if the “little green men” appear in the Baltic states, and NATO, honouring its commitment, dares to come to their rescue, – Russia will use its nuclear arms. Putin felt it necessary to personally share his memories of how in the process of annexation of Crimea, he put Russian strategic nuclear forces on full combat alert.

But, you will wonder, is it not common knowledge that in the nuclear weapons sector Russia and the US (same as half a century ago) are at a stalemate of mutually assured destruction (MAD) doctrine and, consequently, the nuclear factor can be excluded from strategic calculations.

The thing is that this is not quite so, to be more precise – this is not true at all. **In a difficult geopolitical situation, a nuclear state that wishes to change the status quo and has a stronger political will for such changes, as well as less regard for human lives (own and the enemy’s), and a certain share of adventurism, can achieve serious results in foreign policy just through the threat or very limited use of nuclear weapons.** After all, nuclear strategy is not dry mathematical analysis of nuclear exchange scenarios, but in many respects – a dramatic psychological duel. Putin was not going to play nuclear chess with NATO and the US, instead he chose nuclear poker, gradually raising the stakes and expecting them to blink and step down in a critical moment.

If Mr. Kim Jong-un can make the entire “civilised world” dance around him with just one bucket of nuclear

slop, what can “Mr. Crime Put-in” do with this world having a huge nuclear armoury up his sleeve?

Putin’s World War IV agenda did not include the destruction of detestable US as a goal, which indeed could be only achieved today with the price of mutual suicide in the course of a full-scale nuclear war. This agenda was much more modest: maximum expansion of the “Russian World”, collapse of NATO, discreditation and humiliation of the US as a guarantor of Western security.

Over two years ago, I offered global expert society one possible scenario of World War IV, which thanks to me became widely discussed. In order to realise the morale-boosting concept of bringing together the historically Russian lands, as announced in Putin’s historical speech on 18 March, the passionate and pushed to the brink Russian-speaking residents of Narva (Estonia), who possess a unique genetic code, announce a referendum on joining the “Russian World”. In order to help them conduct it, heavily armed “polite little green men” with badges or without them, having taken special leave are arriving to Estonia and hastily placing new border posts.

What will NATO’s actions be in this situation of aggression? According to key Article 5 of this organisation’s statute, all of its member states will have to provide Estonia immediate military assistance.

Unwillingness of Estonia’s allies to carry out their commitments will be the milestone event of historical significance: it will mean the end of NATO, the end of the US as a major power and guarantor of Western security, and complete political domination of Putin’s Russia not only within the territory of the “Russian World”, but in the entire European continent.

And yet, the answer to the question whether NATO will protect Estonia in case of “an attempted rape” by a major nuclear power and a neighbour, is not at all obvious. Especially, considering that Putin makes it clear (through Zhirinovskiy, for instance, or leakage of staff games scenarios) that in case of a threat from NATO’s prevailing conventional armed forces to the new sacred borders of the “Russian World”, he will have to respond with a very limited nuclear strike: will destroy, for example, one European capital.

In response to such threat, a lot of people in the West are ready to scream: “*We do not want to die for Narva! Estonian crisis does not have a military solution. It is necessary to immediately dispatch to the demarcation line between the polite little green men and Estonian Defence Forces an OSCE mission headed by Ms. Tagliavini, who is already an expert in these things*”.

“The Narva paradox” – Putin’s ability by one single move to make the entire West face an unthinkable choice – humiliating capitulation and marginalisation, or a nuclear war with someone who *lives in a different reality* – was a truly serious psychological and political challenge for the West.

To make its threats more effective, Kremlin even initiated a public discussion of its far-reaching nuclear plans in Russia’s New Military Doctrine, having thus ensured their respectability and legitimacy to a certain extent. The fundamental provisions of the then effective doctrine on the conditions for the use of nuclear weapons by Russia had been revised:



*“The Russian Federation reserves the right to use nuclear weapons in response to the use of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction against itself or its allies and also in response to a large-scale aggression involving conventional weapons in situations that are critical for the national security of the Russian Federation and its allies”.*

So once again, spelling it out: Russia will be the first to use nuclear weapons only if there is an external aggression that threatens its national existence.

Why does this, in our opinion, very precise and thorough formulation of nuclear deterrence does not satisfy, for instance, Mr. Patrushev, who is leading his 70-year war against the Anglo-Saxon world? He told about it in his interview to newspaper “Izvestia” before the Ukrainian crisis: *“We adjusted the conditions of the use of nuclear weapons in response to aggression with conventional weapons, not just in a large-scale but also in a regional and even local war”.*

With the author’s temper, this little word “even” is very passionate. Even in a local war, even in a hypothetical conflict around Crimea, Narva or any other conflict taking place as a result of realising the “Russian World” concept, even if the Secretary of Russia’s Security Council wants to use nuclear weapons or, at least, threaten with their use.

This is the plan of World War IV. It has been going on for over two and a half years. The day it started is not engraved on the medals for the return of Crimea awarded in Russia – 20 February 2014. We can already draw some conclusions. They are disappointing for Kremlin.

### Fundamental Defeat

World War IV is not over yet, but strategically, Putin has already lost it. A good Hitler, as a prominent Kremlin’s propa-ganda specialist A.Migranyan obsequiously and awkwardly called Putin, has suffered three fundamental blows.

**The most painful was the defeat in Ukraine.** Not even in the military sense. Clearly, in the military sense, Russia is incapable of a large-scale operation, as it will bring such losses that will be unacceptable for the Russian society. Kremlin’s fundamental defeat in Ukraine is rather metaphysical. The ideology of “Russian World” was rejected by Ukraine’s Russians, who in their overwhelming majority stayed loyal to Ukrainian state and its European choice. **The radiant “Novorossia” shrivelled to lawless “Luhandonia”, which Moscow is desperately trying to push into Ukraine’s political body as a cancerous tumour. And Russian citizens of Ukraine are fighting the aggressor together with ethnic Ukrainians.**

The war imposed by Kremlin in Ukraine is not a territorial dispute over Crimea or Donetsk, and not an ethnic conflict. This is a decisive ideological clash of the heirs of Kievan Rus and the heirs of Ulus of Jochi of the Golden Horde, in which the latter were doomed.

**The second defeat – Kremlin’s nuclear blackmail of to the Baltic states failed.** NATO July summit in Warsaw answered the good Hitler’s question not only in words, but also in deeds (deployment of military contingent to the Baltic States and Poland). The Alliance will defend the Baltics, just as any other territory of NATO member states.

The question ricocheted to the thug who asked it – “And you, Mr. Putin, are you ready to die for Narva?”. But the chieftain of the Aryan tribe did not steal \$250 billion from his tribe in order to die for Narva. He played nuclear poker with the West, threatening with his readiness to start a nuclear war. His bluffing, however, did not work.

At once, Moscow started speaking in different tones: “We are too smart to use nuclear weapons and start World War III, we are underdogs compared to NATO, yes, we are Scythians, we are Asians, there are millions of us, but there is a gazillion of you, the entire 600 million in NATO countries”.

And, finally, Putin’s imaginary television victory in Syria, where he wipes his feet on America, and under the pretext of fighting terrorism has been destroying any opposition to Assad. **But this so-called victory branded him as a war criminal and turned into the prospect of a new Afghanistan, which had buried the Soviet Union.** The entire Syrian campaign altogether was planned mostly to distract the “hybrid” nation from the already obvious at that time failure of the initial hybrid World War IV plan.

Three major defeats on the foreign policy arena. World War IV is strategically lost. There is not the slightest prospect in any of its key fronts. This is clear to everyone in Kremlin, except, perhaps, the nuclear maniac Patrushev. When the connoisseur of the Russian soul was saying *“For us, Russians, meeting death is no fear when we have got people round us”*, – he meant any Russians but himself. Which means that we need to jump off the escalation ladder and, as analysts close to Kremlin have been writing for a while, start searching for a certain type of “new peaceful co-existence” with the eternally damned and eternally attractive West.

### “Hybrid” Capitulation

Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia, General V. Gerasimov, has enriched world’s military science with a pioneer concept of “hybrid” war. Unfortunately, it lacked a very important section – **“hybrid” capitulation.** Let us try to fill this unfortunate gap of the prolific thinker. The art of “hybrid” capitulation is to inform the “hybrid” opponent about it in such a way that the domestic “hybrid” patriotic society under no circumstances finds out about it.

In recent months, delegations of Russian “progressive society” – the so-called diplomatic *Track 2* – have been coming to the US in waves to discuss with Washington conditions of “hybrid” capitulation. Negotiations were conducted with people close to the future Clinton Administration. Despite all sympathies for Trump’s pro-Putin and anti-NATO escapades, and despite providing informational support related to *Wikileaks*, in earnest, no one in Kremlin hoped for Trump’s victory.

From different sources, I know quite well about the details of these consultations. The original talking points of different Kremlin’s envoys were the same: we are gradually creeping away from Donbas, but Crimea is ours, our sacred Chersonese is there; we were never thinking anything about the Baltics, this is all your Russophobic fiction; neither we, nor you need Syria, it is disintegrating anyway, let us have the “Alawi enclave” with a naval and air base; Donbas sanctions are lifted, and Crimean – do not really bother us.



Late in the evening, in a free bar, certain liberties were allowed – the most cutting-edge members of the Russian delegation allowed for the possibility of years long drawling negotiations with Ukraine regarding condominium over Crimea, and the most debauched and hammered would desperately and helplessly blurt out: “*We can take this Kyiv in two hours!*”

What was the reaction of the American side represented by Clinton’s team? We have a unique document that answers this question. “Kommersant” newspaper on 8 (!) November 2016 published Michael McFaul’s interview on relations between Russia and the US with Clinton’s administration. Michael was wrong in his predictions of the outcome of US elections, but this is not about it. We all were wrong.

Here is the key passage of the interview: “*First of all, I believe that a reboot is possible. But only in case if Vladimir Putin changes his policy. Why is it always the Americans who have to change their policy? Why does n’t Putin change something for once? For example, he could come to a TV channel and announce: we are pulling out separatists from eastern Ukraine and restoring its borders. This would have an **incredibly** positive impact on US-Russia relations.*”

This interview clearly shows that Moscow’s request for “hybrid” capitulation was accepted as a foundation for mutual understanding. But without jokes – pulling out from Donbas means pulling out from Donbas. And one more remark, just in case: “*What will happen, if we, for instance, start “leaking” information on Russia’s officials? This will cause great damage to our relations. I hope it will not come to this stage.*”

What changes for Putin in the light of Trump’s election victory, who keeps stubbornly repeating the swallowed bait cast by Kremlin about the need to fight the Islamic State (IS) together?

Faced with fierce resistance of globalists and leftists in media and in streets, Trump is unlikely to go for major differences in foreign policy with traditional Republicans, who won the elections to both houses of Congress. The same Republicans, who adopted the Law on support of Ukraine and demanded from Obama to sell lethal weapons to Kyiv. Even more so, as in key issues that brought Trump his victory – migration, *obamacare*, loss of jobs – they enthusiastically support him and will dismantle Obama’s legacy together with him.

Key foreign policy appointments will bring final certainty to the situation. But in any case, fundamental strategic reasons for the defeat of the “Russian World” in World War IV will not go away.

The euphoria in Duma and on Russian TV channels on 9 November over Clinton’s political death was as sensible as in the Berlin bunker in April 1945 caused by the news of Roosevelt’s death.

And lastly. The two months before the inauguration of the new president on 20 January 2017 will be the period of complete paralysis of the demoralised Obama

administration. The “good Hitler” who has not yet been finished off will be definitely tempted to use this time to change the situation in the world. First of all in Syria, and then, maybe, you never know, in Ukraine as well. In order to get additional bargaining chips in negotiations with Trump.

This behaviour could only drastically damage his conditions of “hybrid” capitulation and increase his chances of leaving the Russian political arena. Due to *insurmountable circumstances*, as has been lately insistently repeated by the informed insider with Kremlin ties, V. Solovei.

But if in Syria, he could still cling to the false myth of the joint fight against the IS, – in Ukraine, any escalation like an attempt to take Mariupol or make a land corridor to Crimea, will have sharp response from the West, and just at the moment when all of Kremlin’s foreign policy efforts are aimed at lifting the sanctions.

Sanctions are very painful for Kremlin, and all actions of Russian leadership are now aimed at having them lifted. It is no coincidence that after the meeting with the Japanese Prime Minister, one by one, media started publishing news that Putin, our great assembler of Russian lands, is ready to give up Kuril Islands if the Japanese can guarantee him lifting the sanctions of the entire G7.

**In this situation, any large-scale military escalation of the conflict in Ukraine would be suicidal for the regime.** It is possible only if inspired by anti-Putin elements, who criticise his actions and consider him a traitor, and who has not given enough support to “Russian liberation movement” in Ukraine.

For dictators, the hardest moments to retain power are the moments of foreign policy failures.

So, among Russian leadership, the authority of Akela, who has missed on a number of important issues, is now very unsteady. This is the root of all sorts of disorders within it. And Putin’s save would, of course, be the soft version of “hybrid” capitulation, which he is offering the West, and the lifting of sanctions. If he can do that, the likelihood of a coup is small. Despite the elite’s discontent with Putin, they understand that a change of “personal brand” always means weakening of the regime as a whole, it is always risky. But if the West continues its pressure and does not agree to the conditions that Putin’s representatives put forward in Washington, then the dictator is no longer able to perform his primary function, for which “the team” is keeping him. Because the kleptocracy is impossible without the West partaking in its economic crimes. It is the West that allows them to keep, multiply, and use the pillaged treasures kept in the Western banks.

**If Trump’s key Republican appointees keep the same line they have had their entire political life in regard to Putin and his ventures, this will be one more severe foreign policy blow to the dictator.** ■

# INFORMATIONAL- PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECT OF A “HYBRID” WAR



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**M**military-political conflicts at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> – beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century demonstrate the change of approaches to understanding and conducting the new type of war. Information technologies that led to revolutionary changes in communication space provided not just great opportunities for exchange of information, but also created conditions for the effective use of informational-psychological influence. According to A. Meneghetti, the immense informational network that we had created got out of our control and made us witnesses of an event with a global reach.<sup>1</sup> And developing, led to results that surpass our ability to manage and control.

Internet created conditions for more effective and high-quality informational influence of “mental viruses” (according to R. Brody) and emergence of “matrix simulation of truth representation” (according to J. Baudrillard). As a result, the philosophy of war changed. Researcher of war Martin van Kreveld persuades us that war in its classical sense will completely cease to exist in the nearest future, and will be replaced by low-intensity conflicts with military clashes, terrorist attacks, mass killings of civilians and total propaganda, which will become an effective element of controlling the population.<sup>2</sup> It is natural that experts started substantiating the emergence of “new wars” and the need to conceptualise them.<sup>3</sup>

So, the relevance of the issue and the need to re-define the informational-psychological aspect in the situation of “hybrid” war determine the importance of analysing approaches to understanding informational-psychological aspects of “hybrid” war, their particular characteristics in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war.

Analysis of scientific and journalistic works demonstrates lack of a common approach to terminology and methodology of the issue and numerous attempts of researchers to define this concept. I would like to note that in the context of studying war strategies, the notion of “hybrid war” is only one of many concepts that looks at the new formula of victory.<sup>4</sup> In scientific, specialised literature and journalistic pieces there is no single interpretation of this phenomenon, instead, a number of definitions of modern types of war are used. It is called *non-linear war*, *unconventional warfare*, *hybrid warfare*, *compound warfare*, *irregular warfare*, “*a war without frontlines*”, *partisan warfare* or “*low intensity*

*conflict*”. Most commonly used are “*non-linear war*” and “*hybrid war*”, yet they do not have a unified definition in international legal documents and official doctrines.

Despite the fact that in the implementation of this type of war countries use long proven and effective tools and methods, these concepts are new in the military-political discourse. They mean broad use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian and other non-military means that are supplemented with covert military actions, and also involve the use of special forces.

Analysing the depth of scientific take on the problem, we need to note that currently there is a lack of fundamental

<sup>1</sup> Antonio Meneghetti. *Ontopsychology and Memetics*. (tr. from Ital. E.U.s.) (general editing by P. Bernabei). – Moscow, 2002, p.11.

<sup>2</sup> M. van Kreveld. *The Transformation of War*. – Moscow, 2005, p.308-309.

<sup>3</sup> Mats Berdal “The ‘New Wars’ Thesis Revisited” in Hew Strachan and Sibylle Scheipers (eds), *The Changing Character of War*. – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp.109-110.

<sup>4</sup> Renz Bettina and Smith Hanna, *Russia and Hybrid Warfare – going beyond the Label: Project “Russia and Hybrid Warfare: definitions, capabilities, scope and possible responses”*. – Report 1/2016: Aleksanteri Papers, 1/2016.



studies that would analyse the informational and conceptual content of the “hybrid” war phenomenon. The underlying rationale for “hybrid” war was studied by Frank van Kappen, D. Kilcullen, D. Lasica, etc.<sup>5</sup> It is believed that the first definition was made by N. Dubovitsky (alias of a political advisor to the Russian President, V. Surkov, author of Russia’s “managed democracy” doctrine) in the story “Without Sky” that describes the first non-linear war – World War V, in which everyone fights against everyone.

Participants of non-linear war include not just the armed forces soldiers on both sides, but also saboteurs, mercenaries, hackers, manipulated by the enemy propaganda persons who participate in military action, and the bribed by enemy’s intelligence services government representatives of the opponent.<sup>6</sup> However, it should be noted that modern non-linear warfare was analysed previously in the work of R. Arzumanian “Non-linear Nature of War” (2005). The author stated that non-linear aspects of war lead to various consequences and unexpected course of military engagements that are not necessarily visible and predictable in the pre-war period.<sup>7</sup> Non-linear war theory is presented in the “Gerasimov Doctrine” – report of the Chief of Russian General Staff (2013), which defines the main aspects of this

war: not proclaimed, conducted according to an unusual scenario, which is different from the customary tradition of the art of war, the line between war and peace is blurred, the lion’s share of spending in the war goes to propaganda, open use of military groups is done under the disguise of peacekeeping missions and anti-crisis measures.<sup>8</sup>

Non-linear analysis of political processes has been done for a long time by leading think tanks (RAND Corporation, University of Michigan and Columbia University, etc.). The basis for the analysis was the statement: environment is a complex non-linear system that under goes certain changes that are hard to predict. Non-linear processes can have a wide range: from weather changes, catastrophe theory to strategy and tactics of military operations or international security issues. According to P. Pomerantsev, we do live in a non-linear epoch.<sup>9</sup>

Conceptual basis of non-linear war and its components are built and defined based on recognition of “non-linearity” of laws that govern societies. These components include: global battle of ideas; blurring the line between war and peace; increasing role of non-military means to achieve political and strategic objectives which, by their efficiency surpass the power of weapons; confrontation of not just individual states, but their territorial units; creating allies of the local population; the use of domestic opposition to weaken the enemy; the growing role of large-scale use of information warfare and financial manipulations.

Ukrainian specialists did not pay enough attention to these topics. Among researchers of this phenomenon is Y. Mahda with “Hybrid Wars”, where the author presents his own interpretation of the war, its components, namely: the desire of one state to impose on the other (others) its political will through a complex of political, economic, informational means and without a declaration of war in accordance with international law.<sup>10</sup> The occupation of Crimea and a part of territory in eastern Ukraine have triggered publication of a number of articles on the nature and aspects of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Frank van Kappen. Interview to Radio Svoboda. – Radio Svoboda, <http://svoboda.org/content/article/25362031.html>; Kilcullen D. Out of the Mountains: The Coming Age of the Urban Guerrilla. – Oxford University Press, 2013, p.384, <http://svoboda.org/content/article/25362031.html>; Kilcullen D. Out of the Mountains: The Coming Age of the Urban Guerrilla. – Oxford University Press, 2013, p.384, [http://www.amazon.com/Out-MountainsComing-UrbanGuerrilla/dp/0199737509#reader\\_0199737509](http://www.amazon.com/Out-MountainsComing-UrbanGuerrilla/dp/0199737509#reader_0199737509); Lasica D. T. Strategic Implications of Hybrid War: A Theory of Victory: Monograph, US, 2009, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA513663>.

<sup>6</sup> Dubovitskii N. Without Sky. – Russian Pioneer, 12 March 2014, <http://ruspioneer.ru/honest/m/single/4131>.

<sup>7</sup> Arzumanian V. Non-linear Nature of War. 21st Century, 2005, No.1, p.117.

<sup>8</sup> Gerasimov V. The Value of Science is in Foreknowledge. New Challenges Make Us Rethink the Forms and Means of Warfare. – Military-Industrial Courier. <http://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/14632>.

<sup>9</sup> Pomerantsev P. How Putin Is Reinventing Warfare. – Mode of access, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/05/05/how-putin-isreinventing-warfare>.

<sup>10</sup> Mahda Y. Hybrid Wars K., 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Horbulin V. “Hybrid war” as a Key Tool of Russia’s Revenge Geostrategy. – Mirror Weekly, 2015, No.2, №2, [http://gazeta.dt.ua/internal/gibridna-viyna-yak-klyuchoviy-instrumentrosyskoyi-geostrategiyi-revanshu-\\_.html](http://gazeta.dt.ua/internal/gibridna-viyna-yak-klyuchoviy-instrumentrosyskoyi-geostrategiyi-revanshu-_.html); Kostyk V. Russia Will Persistently Continue to Lead the Hybrid War. – Ukrainian Press, 30 October 2014, <http://uapress.info/uk/news/show/45176>; Honchar M. Kremlin’s Hybrid War Against Ukraine and the EU: Energy Component. – Mirror Weekly, 23 October 2014, [http://gazeta.dt.ua/energy\\_market/gibridna-viyna-kremlya-protiukrayini-i-yes-energetichniy-komponent-\\_.html](http://gazeta.dt.ua/energy_market/gibridna-viyna-kremlya-protiukrayini-i-yes-energetichniy-komponent-_.html); Chernysh V. What is Happening in the East of Ukraine. Once Again on Terminology. – MediaSapiens, [http://osvita.mediasapiens.ua/media\\_law/law/scho\\_vidbuvaetsya\\_na\\_skhodi\\_ukraini\\_sche\\_raz\\_pro\\_terminologiyu](http://osvita.mediasapiens.ua/media_law/law/scho_vidbuvaetsya_na_skhodi_ukraini_sche_raz_pro_terminologiyu).

Most researchers interpret “hybrid” war as a “war that combines different types and means of warfare used in a coordinated way to achieve common goals”.<sup>12</sup>

I would like to point out the difference of opinion on the importance and role of informational-psychological aspect in confrontation. Most authors state that the informational component is only supplementary and mainly accompanies the military phase of the war. However, this component’s capacity is much broader than is usually believed.

Some researchers note that, in a certain sense, a war with the use of informational-psychological aspect can be called “the war of senses”.<sup>13</sup> A meme as an information virus (according to D. Rushkoff) is a tool of communicating individual to collective, a broadly understood symbol, which not only impacts reality, but also shapes it. The term is recorded in the Oxford Dictionary in 1988, where it is defined as a form of transfer of information. As artefacts, memes have three characteristics: virtual physicality, social and cultural role, purposeful production and consumption.<sup>14</sup>

### Memetic Warfare

A special characteristic of the Russia-Ukraine war is the effective use of memetic warfare. The emergence and spread of memes is analysed in the works of R. Dawkins, D. Rushkoff, J. Gillett, J. Balkin, P. Levi, G. Meikle, S. Blackmore, T. Brett, etc. However, a prominent physiologist and psychiatrist V. Bekhterev in his work “Suggestion and Its Role in Social Life” (1898) has shaped the concept of “mental microbes” that “like real physical microbes act everywhere and are transmitted through the words and movements of people around, through books, newspapers, etc., in other words, wherever we are, in the environment that surrounds us we are already exposed to the impact of mental microbes”.<sup>15</sup>

Internet and social networks have provided extensive possibilities to spread and absorb the necessary information in the simplified and comprehensible form (meme). In this context, it is important to note the small number of studies of new informational-psychological technologies’ influence, in particular, the use of memes and memetic weapons in “hybrid” war.

**New informational technologies are a rather complex phenomenon that may be interpreted as a social process of human interaction aimed at stabilising or changing the existing situation (or achieving a certain goal) with a predicted result of these actions.** This should be emphasised, as rather often they are interpreted just as means, tools or mechanisms of interaction, which narrows the meaning of this concept.

R. Dawkins said that examples of memes are ideas, trendy words or sayings, advertising slogans and jokes, tunes, or even certain elements of architecture. In the same way as genes are disseminated in the genetic pool, memes are passed from person to person through imitation. **In the society, there is a constant, unceasing transmission of ideas, emotional and value paradigms from representatives of elites (political leaders, business, sports, science, arts, army, special services, intellectuals, and just people with a lot of money) to large society groups.** This phenomenon is based on the desire of most people to belong somewhere.<sup>16</sup> Analysis of effective application of this technology requires an understanding of the term “meme” itself.<sup>17</sup> There are several approaches to interpretation of this term:

- an idea, image or any other object of non-material world that is spontaneously transmitted from person to person verbally, non-verbally and via the Internet (D. Rushkoff);
- the collective unconscious in the moment of assuming verbal or other sign form and an effective way to overcome the protective barriers in the minds of a large number of people (S. Zhabotynska, M. Kaminska);
- a unit of cultural information that replicates socio-cultural processes and has a capacity for self-duplication and competition (R. Dawkins);
- a specially created informational message that is being disseminated in the information space and the goal of which is to shape people’s minds and their corresponding decisions as required (V. Dudatiev);
- informational virus (R. Brody).

As to spreading memetic information and possibilities of using it in an armed conflict, according to R. Brody, there are three ways. The classical approach that is often used in propaganda technologies and advertising: when information is repeated multiple times. With time, these messages are accepted by the consciousness and become beliefs or principles. Memes can be introduced to our consciousness through cognitive dissonance. This is how marketing structures operate. Another effective way – to use the “Trojan horse” method, i.e. “sore spots” of the subject of influence: “on the glorious future”, “patriotism”, etc.

**The precondition for the birth of media viruses as a phenomenon was commercialisation of all spheres of public life, media space, emergence of Internet communities as virtual societies and formation of a society of total consumption, which creates the need for the so-called information mainstream.** The information

<sup>12</sup> Polishchuk I. Informational Aspect of Ukrainian Hybrid War. – Newsletter of the National University “Yaroslav the Wise Law Academy of Ukraine”, 2015, No. 3 (26), p.242-243.

<sup>13</sup> Bogdanov A. Informational Aspect of a Hybrid War. – Information Technology and Security, January-June 2015, Vol.3, Iss.1 (4).

<sup>14</sup> Wilkins, John S. What’s in a Meme? Reflections from the perspective of the history and philosophy of evolutionary biology. – Journal of Memetics, 1998, <http://jom-emit.cfm.org>.

<sup>15</sup> Bekhterev V. Suggestion and Its Role in Social Life. – Moscow, 2001, p.162.

<sup>16</sup> Dawkins R. The Selfish Gene. – Moscow, 1993.

<sup>17</sup> Brett Thomas Meme Manual: A Cybnaut’s User’s Guide to Mind Viruse. – <http://asocial.narod.ru/en/articles/memes.htm>.



overload and the need to make an effort to understand complex processes increase the demand for a simplified understanding of reality, and this demand is satisfied with memetic viruses.

Internet and social networks gave media viruses broad possibilities and communication channels for distribution of viral memes to huge audiences. And not just on the target audience, but on other communities as well. As it happened with the “*Putin...la la la*” meme, that got to the pages of British *The Guardian*.<sup>18</sup>

### Russia-Ukraine War: Informational Aspect

*Memetic warfare* as a “hybrid war” tool has already played its important part. Memes: *ukropy*, *kolorady*, *krymnash* (*Crimea is ours*), *polite people*, *vatniki*, *maidanuti*, *banderlogy*, *svidomity*, *cyborgs* became elements of mental warfare and influenced the worldview of opposing sides. In this context we have to stress the prevalence of audio-visual information with enhanced emotional component: “*we saw a boy crucified*”, “*Russia was struck in the very heart by the betrayal of the brotherly Ukraine*”, “*we are brotherly nations, all the problems are created by the Ukrainian junta*”, “*there was no famine genocide in Ukraine – this was a tragedy shared by all USSR nations*”, “*Ukraine wanted to ‘pig out’ on Russia’s gas and Rostov oblast*”, “*Taras Shevchenko is the son of Ukraine, and the student of Russia*”, “*Novorossia is a new democratic country*”, “*Ukrainian army is fighting against peaceful Russian-speaking population: miners and farmers*”, “*we need a small victorious war*”.

Some researchers believe that most memes in the Russia-Ukraine conflict can be divided into three categories:

- Russian-produced and targeting Russia’s supporters;
- Ukrainian-produced and targeting Ukraine’s supporters;
- neutral or without a specific reference to a side.<sup>19</sup>

While developing their propaganda context, Russian informational warfare specialists started actively using meme technologies in social media. A. Chen, *The New York Times* journalist, studied and proved the existence of Russian centres for working with social media spreading certain memes.<sup>20</sup> Semantic field was filled with phrases like “*treason*”, “*we are being dumped*”, “*all is lost*”, etc. The aim was to increase conflict intensity and panic among the population. Analysis of posts in social networks proved that key statements were messages on the necessity of “*social revolution*”, “*third Maidan*” and “*overthrowing the power of oligarchs*”.

A separate line was producing phantom words that filled the semantic field: “*maidanuti*”, “*ukropy*”, “*pravosiieki*”, etc. Russian propaganda specialists have ruined the traditional worldview of not just their own people,

where Ukrainians ceased to be “brothers”, but also made changes to the collective consciousness of Ukrainians, who mostly started identifying Russians as “enemies”. Despite the fact that the majority of good memes are the result of work of volunteer organisations only, memetic warfare is gradually becoming an informational response tool used by Ukraine’s defence and law enforcement agencies, as proved, for example, by the introduction of Mykola meme.<sup>21</sup>

### The use of memetic warfare can become an effective response tool to Russia’s informational expansion.

Analysis of popular Ukrainian memes (for example, “*vatnik*”, “*kolorad*”) has demonstrated their influence on Russia’s semantic field and reaction of government structures. Thus, in a number of Russian universities prospective students were told to write an essay on the following topic: “*This proud name – vatnik*”; and school students: “*We are not ‘kolorady’, but the proud successors of grandfathers with St. George Ribbons*”.

The Russia-Ukraine war has brought to light and expanded the range of issues related to special aspects of informational warfare, propaganda campaigns and the entire complex of actions aimed at achieving military and political goals without large-scale military operations. New communication technologies are already shaping the content of social interaction and are spreading to the entire spectrum of political power, political processes and public administration, they are being used both in legitimate processes of administration of power, and in non-conventional ones that include illegitimate actions (manipulating public opinion, intimidation technology, terrorism, psychological manipulations, etc.). Analysis of transformation processes amid global changes and information society development shows that behind the obvious signs of expanding communication interactions and information technologies possibilities (and the corresponding consequences of these processes), there are changes in the cultural foundations of the system: shared values, stereotypes, myths, symbols and attitudes in the society.

War in eastern Ukraine has yet again provided proof of the obvious change of paradigm in modern warfare; demonstrated the demand for a fundamental study of this phenomenon and development of completely new approaches to achieving political and military goals. Changing mechanisms of worldview formation in a person, group and society in general causes the so-called “mental evolution” that requires reinventing the category of “informational and political security of a country/society/state”. Such influence on a state’s information resources is a potential threat for the national security of any country, no matter how developed and powerful. ■

<sup>18</sup> Shaun Walker. Ukraine minister’s abusive remarks about Putin spark diplomatic row. – *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/15/ukraine-minister-deshchytisia-abusive-putin-russia>.

<sup>19</sup> Popfalushi D. The role and classification of memes in the Russia-Ukraine war. – Free Voice Information Analysis Center, <http://iac.org.ua/rol-i-klasifikatsiya-memiv-u-ramkah-rosiysko-ukrayinskoyi-viyni>.

<sup>20</sup> Chen A. Russian Trolls Spread False Information On The Internet. – NPR, <http://www.npr.org/2015/06/04/412046928/russian-trolls-spread-false-information-on-the-internet>.

<sup>21</sup> General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine: “Mykola is our hero!”. Where did the Bill meme come from and how Yulia got in trouble with it. – Novynarnia, 29 January 2016, <http://novynarnia.com/2016/01/29/genshtab-zsu-mikola-nash-geroy-abo-zvidki-vzyavsvya-tsey-mem-i-yak-promahnulasya-yulya>.

# FROM “RUSSIA’S GREATNESS” TO “GRAND EURASIA”: HYBRID WAR AS A MECHANISM OF RUSSIA’S GEOPOLITICAL EXPANSION<sup>1</sup>



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The key characteristic of a hybrid-type war is the prevalence of non-military influences over the military ones. Another characteristic – actions inside the victim country can be more intensive than the actions outside of it. Influences used against the enemy can be varied by the supreme leadership according to the algorithm that can also change in the course of war. The changing character of influences, which in addition can be combined in different proportions, is its defining characteristic. “Hybrid” war scenario can be created in the course of war itself. Strategy is determined and realised with the help of different instruments, in particular, false-target programming (organisational warfare) and energy forming.

## False-Target Programming

The term “organisational warfare” will not say a lot to people who are not familiar with technologies of non-conventional warfare. It was used back in the Soviet times by developers of organisational management systems, S. Nikanorov and later S. Solntsev, although they are not its authors. They were engaged in applied research of the issues of “organising organisations”, “managing management systems”, “genetic design” of management systems, both in the Soviet period and in post-Soviet Russia. One of reports to pro-Putin’s Izborsk club explains the essence of organisational warfare: “With its help, you can send the opponent’s policy into a strategic tight corner, wear down its economy with ineffective (overwhelming) programmes, inhibit the development of weapons, distort the foundations of national culture, create a “fifth column” from a part of the population. As a result, the country will end up in the state of domestic policy, economic, and psychological chaos”.<sup>2</sup>

The work of S. Nikanorov and S. Solntsev for the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff of Russia in different years is considered the foundation of Russia’s conceptual approaches in understanding and developing

hybrid warfare, especially the stage of crypto-forcing (the period of covert, hidden preparations of unfriendly character). The abovementioned report to Izborsk club contains characteristics of organisational warfare: “Essentially, organisational warfare is a technique that activates a pathological system inside the functional system of the target state, when the pathological system absorbs the carrier’s resources for its own development. A characteristic feature of the pathological system (application of organisational warfare) is that it impacts the functional system of society, first of all, ‘from the outside’, from the top (government) level in the hierarchy of the system... One of the main conditions of application of organisational warfare – **substitution of basic values of the target country with the values of the initiating country as the most promising**”. Thus, the pathology inconspicuously introduced into the state body of the target country by the aggressor country turns off its immune system (national security system) and re-programmes its operation according to the algorithm that does not identify threats to the life of the body and does not fight them.

<sup>1</sup> Based on research of the Centre for Global Studies “Strategy XXI” – “Non-military components of the new generation of wars”.

<sup>2</sup> Ovchinskii V., Sundiev I. Functional genesis and the system of XXI century technologies. – Report to Izborsk Club, <http://www.dynacon.ru/content/articles/1466>.



In consideration of the above, organisational weapons could have a different name, which would reflect their fundamental nature more precisely – **false-target programming (FTP)**. Early in its relationship with the victim, the aggressor country creates and sets attractive

yet false programme settings, implementation of which strengthens the aggressor and weakens the victim. The opponent (future victim) does not perceive these programme settings as dangerous, because they seem neutral or based on universal values.

**Examples.** Standard programme statement of the pre-war period on the development of economic cooperation between Russia and Ukraine. Seems neutral, universal, does not cause objections. This statement is present in relations between different countries, as everyone seeks development of economic cooperation. This programme guideline is never treated with criticism, and moreover, is supported by the future victim in any way possible. Media of both countries promote this idea by all means. Here are two media-illustrations: “Azarov: there is no alternative to cooperation between Ukraine and Russia”,<sup>3</sup> “Yanukovich stressed the importance of further development of trade and economy cooperation between Ukraine and Russia”.<sup>4</sup> However, in this context, the Russian side offers a different from the Ukrainian vision format of cooperation, which includes Ukraine’s participation in post-Soviet reintegration projects: “I believe that Ukraine’s more active participation in multilateral integration processes, primarily, of course, Customs Union and Single Economic Space, would bring new opportunities for the participants of economic life, for the businesses of our countries”, – said V. Putin before the session of economic cooperation committee of the Russia-Ukraine interstate commission on 7 June 2011.<sup>5</sup>

Each time during high-level meetings countries proudly presented big bilateral trade numbers as an indicator of successful economic cooperation. But the reality is very different. *First*, these relationships are asymmetrical because of the difference in economic potential and economies of the countries in general. *Second*, the shares of parties in each other’s total foreign trade were very different – on the average, Ukraine had about 5-6% of Russia’s foreign trade turnover, while Russia took up to 25-30% of Ukraine’s foreign trade, which caused the effect of mutual dependence of different grades. *Third*, balance of foreign trade is always positive for the aggressor country and always negative for the victim. *Fourth*, the structure of trade was further transformed with consideration of interests of the aggressor country. In this case, toward the growing volume

of energy procurement, which was becoming more and more difficult for the victim, and also increased its dependence, debt issues, etc. Fifth, a demand is formed for increasing the import of costly energy resources (natural gas), which gives a positive effect for the aggressor and a negative effect for the victim, increasing GDP energy intensity and producing an even stronger dependence on the supplier. In general for Ukraine, account deficit in economic relations with Russia was dynamically growing: 2010 – \$3.0 billion, 2011 – \$10.2 billion, 2012 – \$14.3 billion, 2013 – \$16.5 billion.<sup>6</sup>

So, the seemingly good programme principle of developing economic cooperation between Russia and Ukraine leads to strategically vulnerable state of economy of the victim country if the aggressor chooses to use the aggression. Dependent economy, weakened by high prices for energy imports and debt problems in relations with the aggressor country is incapable of fast refocusing on other markets, etc. In this way, FTP created the “predator-prey” model of relations, where the victim lived with illusions of “equal partnership” between the countries.

Another example concerns Russia’s FTP of the West. I mean Russia’s campaign in Syria. Moscow started its propaganda in 2015, presenting its actions as support of Syrian government in fighting against Islamic State. According to Kremlin’s plan, this would persuade the West to create a wide anti-terrorist coalition together with Russia, and turn the attention away from Russia’s war against Ukraine. In the beginning, this was partially successful, when the President of France after terrorist attacks “on Friday, 13<sup>th</sup>” arrived to Moscow on 26 November 2015 to discuss the coalition for fighting the “common enemy”. Later, the West saw that Kremlin’s real goals are very different from what it declares. Only 20% of Russian air strikes in Syria are targeting IS, while the others are targeting anti-Assad forces.<sup>7</sup> FTP provided only a short-term and partial effect for Kremlin. The strategic exchange of “the West abandoning its positions in the Ukrainian issue in exchange for Russia’s help in fighting IS” did not happen.

<sup>3</sup> Ukraine’s political course for cooperation with Russia. – Rianews, 9 July 2010, [http://ria.ru/trend/new\\_relationship\\_between\\_russia\\_ukraine\\_25032010](http://ria.ru/trend/new_relationship_between_russia_ukraine_25032010).

<sup>4</sup> Yanukovich told the new ambassador how to be friends with Russia. – TSN.ua, 2 July 2010. – TSN.ua, 2 June 2010, <http://ru.tsn.ua/ukrayina/yanukovich-rasskazal-novomu-poslu-kak-nuzhno-druzhit-s-rossiyei.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Putin suggests that Ukraine integrate into Single Economic Space more actively. – NEWS.ru, 7 June 2011, <http://rus.newsru.ua/finance/07jun2011/agaz.html>.

<sup>6</sup> In commemoration of the second anniversary of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. – National Institute for Strategic Studies, 20 February 2016, [http://www.niss.gov.ua/public/File/2016\\_book/Verstka\\_RNBO.indd.pdf](http://www.niss.gov.ua/public/File/2016_book/Verstka_RNBO.indd.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Nato-Geheimpapier Russland ist Nato-Kräften in Syrien überlegen (5 March 2016). – [http://www.focus.de/politik/ausland/nato-geheimpapier-russland-ist-nato-kraeften-in-syrien-ueberlegen\\_id\\_5336051.html](http://www.focus.de/politik/ausland/nato-geheimpapier-russland-ist-nato-kraeften-in-syrien-ueberlegen_id_5336051.html).



In Ukraine's case, using the blown out of proportion dependence of its economy on Russia's gas deliveries, and increasing gas prices, Russia was methodically and consistently draining Ukraine's economy financially. Along with this, Russia was imposing non-transparent gas business schemes, cultivated corruption among top government officials, which increased Ukraine's dependence on Russia.

### False Start-2009

Russia's "hybrid" invasion in Ukraine could have taken place in the previous decade. In this context, special attention should be paid to Russia's gas aggression acts against Ukraine in 2006 and 2009. In Europe, they are called "Russia-Ukraine gas disputes", which reflects traditional political desire of the Old Europe to avoid calling things their real names, also continued today, as western politicians avoid using phrase "Russia's aggression against Ukraine".

Halted gas supplies to Ukraine and reduced transit through Ukraine to the EU in 2006 was Russia's "pay-back" to Ukraine for the Orange Revolution in 2004, and to Europe – for supporting Ukraine. During the Orange Revolution, Russia had a plan to accelerate the process of ruining Ukraine's statehood launched in the early 2000s. Moscow acted in several planes. The main goal was to undermine the economy, which is easily seen by looking at the above dynamics of prices for natural gas exported to Ukraine. Notably, escalation of gas prices for Ukraine was mentioned by Deputy Head of Russian State Duma V. Zhirinovskiy back in 2005, before the 4-day gas crisis of January 2006, which was the trigger for the later course of events. "They [*the government of Ukraine – author's note*] have to understand that they will always have to buy Russian gas and that it will be getting more and more expensive. We will demand the price of \$300 in 2007, \$400 – in 2008. Each year we will raise it by \$100 so that in 2012-2013 it is \$1,000 for a thousand cubic metres"<sup>8</sup>, – this is what V. Zhirinovskiy said two weeks before the gas crisis in his interview, regarding which Moscow rightfully commented: Zhirinovskiy is saying out loud, what Putin is thinking in his head.

Russia started launching its separatist projects under the slogan of federalisation, which meant the start of "re-programming" of Ukraine's political system. The first one – "South-East Ukrainian Autonomous Republic" – in 2004. This project failed, but already at the end of 2005 emerged the project of "Donetsk Republic", as the successor of Donetsk-Krivoy Rog Soviet Republic of

1918. This was also unsuccessful, as the organisation with the same name was banned in Ukraine, but it continued its work underground, with Russia's full support. It came back to active operation in the beginning of 2009.

Gas crisis of 2009 had far-reaching goals. It had to become the trigger for provoking a political conflict in Ukraine along the East-West line. Kremlin's plan was that in case of complete termination of gas supplies (for internal use + transit to the EU), Ukrainian government will be unable to provide gas supply from the main UGS located in the West of the country to the East, the main industrial centres, which will be left without heat. Thus, according to Russia's strategy, this had to provoke "a social explosion in the East and South of Ukraine". Not surprisingly, on 12 January 2009, Russian media published articles on "revision of CIS borders" and Russian politicians made similar statements: "**Deputy of Russian State Duma K. Zatulyn does not rule out the possibility that Russia "at the right time will give a sign" to south-eastern regions of Ukraine to become part of Russia**".<sup>9</sup> This sign could have been given already in a couple of days, if the Ukrainian side agreed to *Gazprom's* proposal of 13 January<sup>10</sup> on resuming gas transit to the Balkans and Turkey according to its scheme. Chairman of Naftogaz Ukraine O. Dubyna rejected this proposal: "**The proposal that we received from Russia, to pump gas through Ukraine's pipeline with entry to "Sudja 1200" gas-metering station to Moldova, Bulgaria and Romania, creates a threat that we will have to cut Odesa, Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk from gas supply**".<sup>11</sup> If Kyiv had accepted *Gazprom's* proposal, the population of million-cities as well as a number of other smaller industrial cities in the East and South of Ukraine, being left without gas and heating with outside temperatures below -10°-15°C, would have definitely gone into the streets with protests. And these protests, no doubt, would have had political demands and would have been supported by regional governments, communists, Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate, which had always leaned toward Russia and had funding from Russian sources.

Possibly, K. Zatulyn's statements were based on the results of a joint meeting of the Security Council and Russian State Duma on 25 December 2008, which focused on the special role of interregional ties in the framework of CIS, the integrational nucleus of which are CSTO and Eurasian Economic Community. In regard to Russia-Ukraine relations, interregional ties mean relations with eastern and southern oblasts of Ukraine that

<sup>8</sup> Quoted from V. Zhirinovskiy video interview of 15 December 2005 (quotation at 6'56"-7'18"). – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fINxtYwPLsY>.

<sup>9</sup> Zatulyn on Khmelnytskyi, Yushchenko and a sign at the right moment. – UNIAN Information Agency, 12 January 2009, <http://www.unian.net/world/179446-zatulyn-o-hmelnytskom-yuschenko-i-znake-v-nujnyiy-moment.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Resuming transit of gas through Ukraine. In line with the agreement reached today at 10:00 Moscow time, *Gazprom* resumes suspended through the fault of Ukrainian side gas supplies to European consumers through the territory of Ukraine. The volume of the first gas supply at Ukrainian GTS entry point through gas-metering station "Sudja" is 76.6 mln. m<sup>3</sup> per day. Out of this volume – 62.7 mln. m<sup>3</sup> according to contracted volume to the Balkans through gas-metering station "Orlovka", and 13.9 mln. m<sup>3</sup> to consumers in Moldova. – *Gazprom* web-site, 13 January 2009, <http://www.gazprom.ru/press/news/2009/january/article56905>.

<sup>11</sup> Naftogaz saves Odesa and Donetsk by refusing gas transit to the Balkans, <http://www.epravda.com.ua/news/2009/01/13/177416>.



have common borders with Russia and a wide range of different contacts, cooperation areas, which can help “blur” state borders with their volume.

In 2009, gas crisis scenario has not worked as a trigger, as Ukraine's GTS was reversed and central, eastern and southern regions of Ukraine received gas from UGS located in the west of the country. We were able to avoid “Holodomor” (*“genocide through cold”, reference to man-made famine in Soviet Ukraine in 1932-1933 – transl.*) and the social explosion in the South-East of Ukraine.

### Restart-2013

Russia thoroughly studied the lessons learned as a result of “False Start-2009”. Notably, strategic exercises “West-2009” and, especially, “West-2013” were the most large-scale exercises, which now can be identified as preparation of armed forces for not only conventional military action, but also for non-conventional. Russian and Belarus media stressed the innovative character of these exercises. Their meaning for further development of events around Ukraine was noted by a leading American military expert P. Karber, who spoke about the particular significance of these two exercises in his article *“Russia's ‘New Generation Warfare’”* in spring of 2015.<sup>12</sup> Europe obviously ignored these exercises. Russian armed forces started the practical application of the experience gained during trainings in 2014, according to the improved plan of “hybrid” war – hybression.

Russia started its “hybrid” war against Ukraine not in April 2014 – with the beginning of events in Donbas, and not in February – with the beginning of annexation of Crimea, as many people still continue to believe. Beginning of Crimean action symbolises the engagement of the military component, which Moscow did not require until then (although everything was ready for the military scenario), as everything was going according to the “anschluss plan” as it was. Essential elements of this plan were de-Atlantisation and de-Europeisation of public administration system through institutional changes. Especially noteworthy is how under Kremlin's influence institutional changes were made to the government system of Ukraine. After election of V. Yanukovich as the President of Ukraine in 2010, key institutions responsible for cooperation with NATO and EU were “amputated”, among them: National Centre for Euro-Atlantic Integration under the President of Ukraine, Coordination Bureau for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration under the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. The Law “On Domestic and Foreign Policy” was adopted that determined Ukraine's “non-bloc status”, which does not have an international legal mechanism of recognition. Key ministries and institutions responsible for security, defence and foreign policy had their databases on cooperation with NATO destroyed. And, it was done in a relatively short period of time – in half a year after V. Yanukovich was elected President. A number

of persons appointed by him to posts in the defence agency and special services bore signs of Russian secret services agents. With such leadership, ministries and agencies of the national security system essentially began working in the external management regime. This allowed Russia to turn Ukraine's foreign policy away from the European and Euro-Atlantic course and toward the Eurasian one, leaving only Kyiv's pro-European rhetoric unchanged.

Realisation of Putin's blitzkrieg for incorporating Ukraine into the “*Russian World*” through Eurasian integration started from the Russian President's speech on 27 July 2013 in Kyiv on occasion of celebrating 1025<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christianisation of Kiev Rus at a conference with a rather revealing symbolism in the name “Orthodox Slavic Values as the Foundation of Ukraine's Civilisational Choice”, which was organised by pro-Putin's “Ukrainian Choice” of V. Medvedchuk.

It should be noted that the basis for the blitzkrieg were Russia's years-long efforts to re-programme the “control module” of Ukraine – presidential vertical of power – from being pro-European to pro-Eurasian, in line with the FTP technique. Initially it was done in the mode of soft influences on the ruling political-oligarchic groups in Ukraine, beginning from L. Kuchma's presidency. These efforts (not just soft anymore, but also semi-hard) reached their peak in the period of kleptocratic autocracy of V. Yanukovich, who monopolised political and economic power in the country. **According to FTP, it is enough to re-programme the main module of public administration system of the autocratic state, and this will lead the entire country into a strategic tight corner, which is exactly what Russia needed.**

“Semi-hard” influences according to Kremlin's plan of “hybrid” aggression (hybression) have gained new quality from 14 August 2013. Without official announcement and on a wide scale, Russia terminated Ukrainian exports, thus causing Ukraine's economic losses. The goal was obvious – stop Ukraine from signing the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement and drag Ukraine into the Customs Union. Essentially, this was the anchluss scenario – take Ukraine without a single shot, just with the carrot and stick approach, compelling the Yanukovich regime to make an irreversible geopolitical turn toward Russia. In the summer-autumn of 2013, Russia applied the “stick” and hard pressure approach, which was increased through the enforced contacts in October-November, shortly before the Eastern Partnership Vilnius Summit.

“Left Bank” media outlet in its editorial investigation of V. Surkov's (main hybrid processes engineer) activity footprints in Ukraine noted: *“Along with economic levers, Moscow also deployed special ‘shuttle diplomacy’ techniques – high-ranking guests from Moscow were meeting with first-league Ukrainian businessmen*

<sup>12</sup> Phillip A. Karber. *Russia's New Generation Warfare*. – Magazine of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency “Pathfinder”, 2015, Vol.13, No.2, pp.11-13, [http://issuu.com/nga\\_geoint/docs/47080\\_pf\\_final\\_lr](http://issuu.com/nga_geoint/docs/47080_pf_final_lr).



in private, using different means to “re-programme” them. The highest-ranking official to visit Ukraine was Russian President’s Advisor V. Surkov. His first “unofficial” visit to Kyiv was **in the middle of August 2013**. Stress on the “unofficial”, as this visit was not run through the MFA (as should be the case with officials).<sup>13</sup> This is a characteristic touch in the picture of the lead process engineer personally participating in the “re-programming” of public administration “control module” – the President, and of business modules – leading oligarchic conglomerates – using FTP methods. And, as further events demonstrated, this had been done rather skilfully.

On 24 October, V. Yanukovich flies to Minsk to attend the meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council on the level of the Heads of States, where he meets with V. Putin, on 27 October, he flies to Sochi to meet V. Putin, on 9 November – another meeting, and again – in Russia, this time at a military base in top-secret conditions.

Reprogramming of public administration “control module” ensured Yanukovich’s refusal to sign EU Association Agreement. Resolution of the CMU No. 905 dated 21 November 2013 was the embodiment of the expected in Kremlin result of FTP use. The gist is in two paragraphs: “*With the purpose of taking measures to ensure the national security of Ukraine, conducting a more detailed study and elaboration of a set of measures necessary to take in order to recover lost production volumes and areas of trade and economic relations with the Russian Federation and other member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States [...] suspend preparations for signing the Association Agreement between Ukraine on the one side and the European Union, European Atomic Energy Community and their member states, on the other side*”. In November-December, Russia used “carrots” – promises of multibillion orders for Ukrainian defence industry companies.

In early December 2013, the express analysis of Nomos Centre mentioned the following: “...Russia is preparing, through the agents of influence in the Ukrainian government, to establish control over major industrial assets. This is confirmed by the “promo tour” of the main enterprises of the defence industry complex urgently organised on 2 December by Deputy Prime Minister Y. Boiko for the Russian Deputy Prime Minister D. Rogozin... Russia requires industrial facilities to place military orders. It requires Ukrainian defence industry complex facilities, but wants to take them under its own full control, as well as prevent Ukraine’s participation in the unfriendly to Russia (in its own view) alliances – NATO and EU... Negotiations with the EU, continuation of which has been announced for the next week by M. Azarov, in view of these tendencies, do not have many prospects”.<sup>14</sup>

The highlight of the use of “carrots” was Kremlin’s promise to provide \$15 billion of credit resources, \$3 billion of which were allocated immediately, as well as gas at a “special discounted price for Yanukovich”, \$268.5 for 1,000 m<sup>3</sup>, as reflected in Moscow agreements between Putin and Yanukovich on 17 December 2013. Largely, this was the final capitulation of Yanukovich’s kleptocracy, and Kremlin’s success in using FTP, which resulted in a turn of Ukraine’s foreign policy vector from Europe to Eurasia and substitution of the declarative Eurointegration model for basic phrases of the aggressor country: “*Orthodox Slavic unity*”, “*Russian World*”, “*customs union*”.

Thus, “Restart-2013”, compared to 2009, turned out rather successful. However, Euromaidan was an unexpected scenario, in which the uncontrolled energy of Ukrainian society burst outside. This made Kremlin move to engage the military component on 20 February 2014.

### Russia’s Energy Forming and Energy Militarism

Talking about strategic non-military measures, the most important ones are tied to energy resources and energy infrastructure. Russia is traditionally rich in energy resources, one of its concepts of Eurasian and global domination being the “energy super-power”. With such approach, hydrocarbons and the infrastructure of their supply are more than just a product or a pipeline. Seeing itself as a global energy super-power is a dominant concept in Russia’s self-understanding and self-identification. Because Russia is the biggest country in the world by its territory and the richest one in energy resources, most of all, hydrocarbons, which are the foundation of global economy, in Kremlin’s view, as the population of the planet grows, the world will struggle with the shortage of energy resources. According to these beliefs, as well as to country’s historical retrospect as the object of territorial takeover attempts because of its resources, Russia will have to defend its sovereignty over the territory and the right to manage resources without any foreign influence. These ideas make up a part of Russia’s militarism, as well as energy hegemonism. Russia wants to sell its energy at the highest possible price, which is understandable, yet Kremlin believes that this can be achieved not only by improving its competitive position in world markets, but first of all by creating a dominant, and ideally – monopolistic status for its companies.

In order to ensure this status, actions to neutralise competition with non-competitive methods are used. Thus, Russia conducts the so-called **energy forming – shaping the new energy map of the world, which corresponds to Russia-centred model of the “Grand Eurasia”**. This logic leads to energy and military expansion that mutually validate each other. Russia’s energy expansion is necessary to tap into more markets and gain more profit, which is necessary for building Russia’s military capacity and protecting it from potential response to its aggressive behaviour. At a certain stage, military expansion becomes necessary to take control of

<sup>13</sup> Koshkina S. “Vladislav Surkov. Ukrainian Footprint”. – Lb.ua, 22 April 2015. [http://ukr.lb.ua/news/2015/04/22/302707\\_vladislav\\_surkov\\_ukrainskiy\\_slid.html](http://ukr.lb.ua/news/2015/04/22/302707_vladislav_surkov_ukrainskiy_slid.html).

<sup>14</sup> NOMOS: Energy policy contexts. – Express analysis of the current situation in Ukraine and around it, No.2, 4 December 2013, <http://geostrategy.org.ua/ua/analitika/item/240-ekspress-analiz-potochnoyi-situatsiyi-v-ukrayini-ta-navkolo-#2-4-grudnya-2013-roku&Itemid=146>.



prospective regions for extraction of energy resources of global value, neutralisation of competitive energy flows, routes from non-Russian sources and routes independent from Russia, which must ultimately lead to expanding businesses of both state, and private companies, and yield additional profit for Russia's budget.

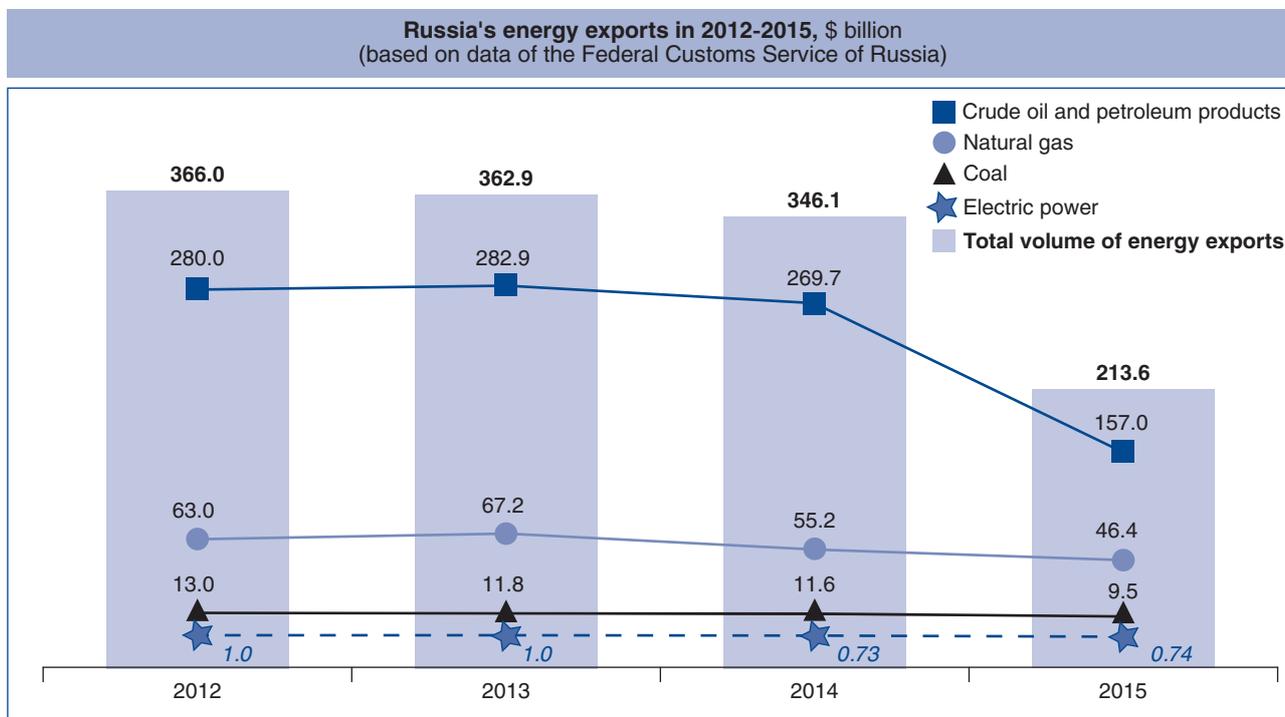
Russia's intervention in Syria, which western analysts often tie to Putin's desire to keep Assad in power and demonstrate to the West that "Russia does not leave its allies behind", has in fact cast light on Moscow's energy motives, goals and interests in its global expansionism. Russian media stated rather openly back in the fall of 2015: "Syria is one of few troubled zones that inhibits the formation of geographically correct and cheaper ways of delivering Qatar fuel to Europe".<sup>15</sup> In a year, there was even more frankness coming from a leading Russian commander, former head of the Main International Cooperation Directorate of the Russian Ministry of Defence, Colonel General L. Ivashov: "If Russia didn't come there [to Syria – author's note] and help Assad hold his regime, today we would be faced with a very serious problem of Russia's budget survival. Because three gas pipelines are fighting there...".<sup>16</sup> Clearly, three gas pipelines was a reference to prospective gas flows from Iran, Qatar, and Iraqi Kurdistan, which in various times and circumstances could have come to the EU market via different routes through Syria. Obviously, the increased supply of gas to EU energy markets, which have reached the peak of

their consumption and are increasingly more using energy from renewable sources, means reducing the share of Russian supplies, and, consequently, falling revenues from exports of natural gas for Russia. Although the latter is not as critical, as exports of oil and petrochemicals, it still makes up a significant share in total revenues from Russia's sale of energy abroad.

Russia continues to implement its strategy of preventing competitors with alternative gas flows from entering European markets. In the focus of Kremlin's attention – Caspian region and South Caucasus. "Start of work of TAP/TANAP pipelines at full capacity will lead to displacement of Gazprom from key markets in the South of Europe – Turkey and Italy... One option for Russia's counteraction could be an attempt to destabilise South Caucasus... In order to realise his dream of Eurasian empire, Putin needs weak South Caucasus, where Moscow is the main external power that exerts military influence and controls the flow of Caspian oil and gas in the region"<sup>17</sup> – this is the analysis of regional military experts in regard to South Caucasus.

### "Hydrocarbon Engine" of Russia's Expansion and Weaponisation of Russian Energy Policy

Russia's budget directly depends on production and export of mineral raw materials, and most of all, energy resources – oil, petroleum products, natural gas, coal, and electric power. Russia's structure of exports as the main source of foreign currency inflow, speaks for itself.



<sup>15</sup> Topalov A. Syrian risks for Gazprom. How events in Syria can impact competition in the EU gas market. – Gazeta.ru, 1 October 2015, <https://www.gazeta.ru/business/2015/09/30/7787825.shtml>.

<sup>16</sup> RUSSIAN WORLD. General Ivashov has admitted that Russia is not fighting IS in Syria, and explained why it intruded. – Kavkazcenter.com, 6 October 2016, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2016/10/06/113352/russkij-mir--general-ivashov-priznal-cto-rossiya-v-sirii-ne-voyuet-s-ig-i-obyasnil-dlya-chego-vtorglis-.shtml>.

<sup>17</sup> Russia sold to Armenia TBMS Iskander-E and MLRS Smerch. – Milkavkaz.net, 17 September 2016, <http://www.milkavkaz.net/2016/09/17/prodala-armenii-iskander-i-smerch.html>.



**Russia's energy exports in 2012-2015**  
(based on data of the Federal Customs Service of Russia) *(continued)*

| Export products                  | 2012<br>\$ billion<br>(%)<br>[%] | 2013<br>\$ billion<br>(%)<br>[%] | 2014<br>\$ billion<br>(%)<br>[%] | 2015<br>\$ billion<br>(%)<br>[%] |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Crude oil and petroleum products | 280.0<br>(76.5)<br>[53.4]        | 282.9<br>(77.9)<br>[53.7]        | 269.7<br>(77.9)<br>[54.3]        | 157.0<br>(73.5)<br>[45.4]        |
| Natural gas                      | 63.0<br>(17.2)<br>[12.0]         | 67.2<br>(18.5)<br>[12.7]         | 55.2<br>(15.9)<br>[11.0]         | 46.4<br>(21.7)<br>[13.4]         |
| Coal                             | 13.0<br>(3.5)<br>[2.5]           | 11.8<br>(3.2)<br>[2.2]           | 11.6<br>(3.3)<br>[2.3]           | 9.5<br>(4.4)<br>[2.7]            |
| Electric power                   | 1.0<br>(0.0027)<br>[0.0019]      | 1.0<br>(0.0027)<br>[0.0019]      | 0.73<br>(0.0021)<br>[0.0014]     | 0.74<br>(0.0035)<br>[0.0021]     |
| Total volume of energy exports   | 366.0<br>[69.7]                  | 362.9<br>[68.9]                  | 346.1<br>[69.5]                  | 213.6<br>[61.7]                  |
| Total volume of Russia's exports | 524.7                            | 526.4                            | 496.9                            | 345.9                            |

Notes: In parenthesis ( ) is the share in the total volume of exports of all energy resources, in square brackets [ ] – the share in the total volume of all exports.

A special role is then given to state companies, for instance, *Gazprom*. “Developing *Gazprom*, turning it into a state-building, empire-building structure is Putin’s epic achievement, with the help of which he, having scattered pipelines all across Eurasia, has connected them with Europe, Belarus, Ukraine, republics of Central Asia. And this space held together by steel pipelines became the first foundation of the future great state. *Gazprom* is the civilisational achievement of Putin’s Russia. ...*Gazprom*... has saved the country, laid the foundation of the future Eurasian statehood. *Gazprom* is a steel flower bud, which will eventually blossom as the fifth Russian empire”,<sup>18</sup> – this is the vision of *Gazprom* among pro-Putin’s intellectuals of the Izborsk club.

High oil prices, starting from 2000s, have stimulated not just the economic development of Russia, but also the dangerous processes in the minds of its political establishment that had a fixation of being the defeated party in the Cold War. Desire for a global revenge, recreation of a bipolar world, in which Russia is the main pole, in combination with the idea of “gathering lands together” in the post-Soviet space, stimulated Russia to look for means and ways to achieve the desired. And while in the Soviet period, this was achieved through military build-up, in the situation of globalised world economy, hydrocarbons and pipelines can very well add to the military capacity.

The core of Russia’s foreign policy in Putin’s period is for Russia to regain the status of a super-power, which was the USSR. Back in 2005, V. Putin expressed his opinion that the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 was the “biggest geopolitical disaster of the century”. Thus, Russia under Putin’s rule is trying to restore the Soviet *status quo ante* in the international arena. In this sense, Russia’s energy strategy aims to achieve an ambitious geopolitical goal.<sup>19</sup>

However, the EU and its leading member states have not been noticing this approach or have chosen to ignore it. Assessment of Russia’s energy activity was done only in the business context. In February 2006, E. Simpson of the BBC wrote the article “*Russia wields the energy weapon*”. She said that **energy would bring Russia considerable political power and the world was waiting to see how that power was going to be used**. After 10 years we can acknowledge that Russia is quite successfully using energy and its supply infrastructure to achieve its geopolitical and geo-economic goals. Energy motivation is also present in Russia’s actions, including, geopolitical, geo-economic and military ones. Weaponisation of Russia’s energy policy did not start today, or in 2006, when E. Simpson took note of this.

Analysis of Russia’s behaviour in the 2000s shows that it was consistently moving toward using energy resources as energy weapons, carefully masking it as commercial conflicts with the buyers of Russian hydrocarbons in the post-Soviet space. Few pay attention to the fact that official document “Energy Strategy of Russia until 2020”, adopted in August 2003, begins with a statement: “**Russia has considerable reserves of energy and a powerful fuel and energy complex, which is the basis of economic development, an instrument of domestic and foreign policy.**”<sup>20</sup> Two major gas disputes in the Russia-Ukraine relations happened after this – in 2006 and 2009. EU countries also experienced their effects, as Russia was suspending gas transit to Europe through Ukraine.

Notably, concept proposals for the new edition of Energy Strategy of Russia until 2030 contained the following provisions: “...main priorities of energy policy at present are [...] **efficient use of Russia’s energy potential in its international economic and political relations [...], ensuring Russia’s geopolitical and geo-economic interests in Europe and the neighbouring countries, as well as in Asia-Pacific region.**”<sup>21</sup>

Main provisions of Energy Strategy until 2035 openly present an additional plane of foreign energy policy: “As a responsible state, Russia views external energy policy

<sup>18</sup> Aleksandr Prokhanov: Keystone of Russia’s statehood. – Politikus.ru, 22 December 2013, <http://politikus.ru/articles/10111-aleksandr-prokhanov-zamkovyy-kamen-rossiyskoy-gosudarstvennosti.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Sadeti S. In the confrontation with the US Russia is regaining its role of a super-power. – Military Review, 6 September 2014, <http://topwar.ru/page,1,2,57672-v-protivostoyanii-s-ssha-rossiya-vo-zraschaet-sebe-rol-sverhderzhavy.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Energy Strategy of Russia until 2020.

<sup>21</sup> Concept of Energy Strategy of Russia until 2030 (draft). – Energy Strategy Institute, Supplement to the “Energy Policy” journal, <http://www.energystrategy.ru/editions/concept.htm>.



not from the narrow point of view of an exporter that capitalises on short-term gains, but as means to solve not only national, but also global problems”.<sup>22</sup>

It should be noted that the use of energy as a tool for “ensuring geopolitical and geo-economic interests of Russia” is not just political rhetoric, but also a popular practice. Below are precedents in Russia’s relations with other states when energy resources were used as a tool to exert pressure on these countries:

- complete termination of transit of Russia’s oil through Latvia in 2003;
- *Gazprom* limiting gas supplies to Belarus in winter of 2004 and 2006;
- termination of gas and electricity supply to Georgia in winter of 2006;
- *Transneft* blocking the transit of Kazakhstan oil to Lithuania through the territory of Russia in 2006 and complete interruption of oil supply to Lithuania.

These examples lie in the post-Soviet space. But it would be illogical to believe that these instruments cannot be applied to EU and NATO member states, considering the announced by Russia approaches to the use of energy resources and infrastructure to “solve not only national, but also global problems”. In connection with this, illustrative is the incident of sharp reduction in oil supplies to the Czech Republic in the summer of 2008, when Prague signed the agreement to place on its territory a radar of the American ABM system. The idea that has been in the air since 2015 is to terminate transit of petroleum products through Baltic ports, foremost, Latvian, the main oil harbour of which, Ventspils, is traditionally the main point of transshipment of Russian petroleum products in the Baltics.

### Energy Forming of the “Grand Eurasia”

In practice, energy resources in Kremlin’s hands have a dual use as a tool of influence in the framework of energy forming of the “Grand Eurasia”. The abovementioned practice of “hydrocarbon sticks” is not the only tool. Kremlin also has “hydrocarbon carrots”. Export of energy not only brings revenue to the budget of Russia and state corporations, but also enables them to fund “solving the world’s problems” by covertly sponsoring certain political forces, lobbying organisations, extremist groups, whose services Russia requires to achieve its goals. In order to imagine the possible volume of shadow funding of Russia’s influence abroad, it is enough to look at the volume of energy exports in monetary terms and deduct 1% from this sum. The 1% figure is assumed for reference by analogy with specific share of expenses for charity of

*Gazprom* in 2010, when it first published its expenses for sponsorship.<sup>23</sup> It is easily calculated that with this model, in recent years, up to \$3 billion annually could have been used for the secret funding of different projects abroad in line with Kremlin’s plans and directions. Thus, in reality, there could have been lots of €9 million loans, such as the one issued to Marine Le Pen’s French far-right party “National Front” at the First Czech-Russian Bank,<sup>24</sup> as well as lots of those willing to secure such loans in different radical parties and movements in Europe in order to come to power.<sup>25</sup> Apparently, according to Kremlin’s plan, this is a way to change political landscape in European countries in its favour. Russia is conducting a rather successful secret war against Europe from the outside and from the inside of the EU, as a weak link in the transatlantic community. Its results are visible:

- derailing the signing of association agreements between Eastern Partnership Countries and the EU (successful in case of Armenia and Ukraine in 2013);
- wide-scale Russian destructive propaganda in Europe;
- strategic communications with radical left- and right-wing groups;
- advancing, with a different degree of success, non-transit gas pipeline megaprojects in order to strengthen EU’s dependence on Russian gas supplies;
- blocking gas flow transit from Central Asia to Europe through Russia’s territory, as well as gas supply projects to EU from non-Russian sources along the routes that bypass Russia;
- intervention in Syria, as a trigger of “migration generator” for Europe in 2015 and sidelining potential competitive projects;
- cyber-interference with the work of governments, European Commission, companies, political parties, election systems, in a number of EU countries and in the West in general.

One can understand more about Russia’s self-esteem and the scale and course of its further actions from the speech of the President of the largest and currently most influential in Russia oil company *Rosneft*, I. Sechin, at the V Eurasian Forum in Verona in October 2016: “In Eurasia there are objective conditions for the movement to restore the economic integrity of the continent. We can make it possible only on the basis of integrating transport flows, streams of energy, energy resources, technologies, and financial sectors... Russia, due to its unique geographic location and resource potential, was destined to be the connection, the “bridge” between Europe and Asia...

<sup>22</sup> Energy Strategy of Russia until 2035 (main provisions). – Energy Strategy Institute, <http://www.energystrategy.ru>.

<sup>23</sup> “Charity expenses of *Gazprom* with the average exchange rate of the Central Bank of the Russian Federation in 2011 exceeded \$400 million, which is less than 1% of the company’s pre-tax profit.” See: *Gazprom* reveals its charitable contributions for the first time. – RENEWS, <http://runews.org/gazprom-vpervye-raskryl-rasxody-na-blagotvoritelnost>.

<sup>24</sup> Marine Le Pen’s “National Front” secures a loan from a Russian bank. – RIA News, 23 November 2014, <http://ria.ru/economy/20141123/1034667007.html#ixzz3Pm7gLT7d>.

<sup>25</sup> For more information on this situation, see material of C. Vaissie “Kremlin’s Networks in France” in this journal. – Ed.



President of Russia, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin has set the task of building Eurasian partnership with a broad integrational border...<sup>26</sup>

In reality, the energy bridge model, which looks a lot like an element of FTP, is hiding the energy penetrator model – the mechanism of penetrating the leading European and Asian countries and making them dependent on Russia through energy supplies, their geopolitical reorientation to the Eurasian model, in which Russia occupies the dominant position. In this context, Putin's phrase that Russia's border does not end anywhere, does not look like a joke.<sup>27</sup> EU does not identify Russia-“energy bridge” as a threat for itself. Thus, non-military techniques are prevalent in Russia's expansion of hybrid type. Yet, Russia has also prepared military tools to advance the model of “Grand Eurasia” to be applied to those, who turn out resilient to Russia's propaganda, FTP and energy forming.

### Certain Conclusions, Predictions and Possible Recommendations

False-target programming, large-scale propaganda with the use of suggestive methods of mass influence and energy militarism, form the foundation of Russia's model of new generation wars.

Russia's actions are preventive, those of the West – reactive. Russia is always several steps ahead, as it has one decision-making centre, while western alliances, EU and NATO – 28 centres on the national level, as well as corresponding procedures of searching for consensus and making mutually agreed decisions.

Western democracies are powerless in countering Russian propaganda and interference in their internal affairs through loyal to Russia political forces (principle of *Comintern*). Russia is using legal possibilities for anti-Western activity mainly via proxy methods.

Supply of energy resources through the newly created infrastructure of their delivery from Russia to EU is treated by Moscow as an instrument for energy forming of the “Grand Eurasia” with Russia's dominant influence.

The infrastructure creates a new environment, suitable for Russia's energy and geopolitical expansion.

Russian energy exports to the EU create a legal financial basis for establishing an infrastructure to support certain political forces in Europe, and are also a mechanism for disguised export of corruption along the way. Russia, according to the logic of the new generation war, will do a lot from the inside, not outside, including through lobbying and corruption mechanisms, well-developed in the past decades of hydrocarbon supplies to Europe.

Russia is using and will continue using proxy methods for creating disguised obstructions for Europe's attempts to diversify energy supplies to the EU and implement projects of gas supplies from non-Russian sources, while at the same time imposing on the EU the Russian-centred vision of Europe's energy future and the lack of alternatives in this context.

Russia will continue its cyber-attacks on European energy networks, trying to provoke a major blackout. An artificially created blackout, which will look like a logical consequence of the high percentage of renewable energy in networks, in Kremlin's opinion, will create additional demand for Russian gas supplies to the EU, which will facilitate the development of Russia-centred infrastructure of its delivery.

NATO and the EU should ensure security of the South energy corridor leading to Europe from the Caspian region through South Caucasus and Turkey (gas from Iran, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan). But Europe's rejection of Turkey and internal changes in both call in question the overall existence of this EU megaproject. This automatically increases Russia's chances to advance projects like Nord Stream-2 and Turkish Stream, which are currently the basis for energy forming of “Grand Eurasia's” western part.

Instead of rejecting Russia's politically motivated EU gas supply projects, at least, for the period until Russia restores Ukraine's *status quo* (withdrawal of Russian troops from Crimea and ORDLO), creating favourable conditions for increased supply of LNG to Europe from North America in substitution of Russian gas, replacing Russian *Urals* with similar oils from non-Russian sources, EU keeps evolving in the direction of guaranteed cooperation with Russia in the energy sector, which contributes to implementation of Russia-centred model of “Grand Eurasia” via hybrid methods.

According to technology of countermeasures in response to hybrid type aggression, we need an alternative model of coercing aggressor to peace via non-military means (Europe is limiting its imports of Russian hydrocarbons and substituting them with non-Russian) or creating an internal multi-crisis situation in Russia using the same hybrid methods. ■

<sup>26</sup> Report of the Chief Executive Officer of OJSC NK Rosneft I.I. Sechin “Eurasian Synergy” – V Eurasian Forum, Verona, Italy, 20 October 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Putin: Russia's border does not end anywhere. – Russian RT, 24 November 2016, <https://russian.rt.com/russia/news/335286-putin-granica-rossii>.

# MILITARY COMPONENT OF RUSSIA'S AGGRESSION



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A key element of Russia's "hybrid" aggression against Ukraine is the use of armed forces. It is important to understand that the intensity and volume of their involvement by the aggressor state come directly from its goals and tasks – retaining political, financial and economic, cultural control and domination over Ukraine.

Russia's current political leadership does not view the use of armed forces against Ukraine as the main tool or method of reaching these goals. Moreover, we should admit that today's forms and methods of using armed forces against Ukraine are quite limited and have a narrow focus. However, this is dictated not by peaceful disposition or an urge to observe international rules, rather on the contrary. This is about reaching goals in the most efficient way, including the use of armed forces.

In a modern globalised world full-scale employment of military force, associated with significant casualties and critical level of infrastructure destruction, looks very outdated and puts the aggressor at a disadvantage. Especially, when the technological level of development of its armed forces is not suitable for a "targeted", "ethical" war, and there is a fairly high probability that the victim will respond with asymmetrical warfare, and the global community – with fatal international obstruction and isolation.

This is why Kremlin's current regime, after a comprehensive assessment and analysis of the situation, chose this ("hybrid") form of warfare. Undoubtedly, already in the course of annexation of Crimea, Kremlin came to the conclusion that a blatant and large-scale use of armed forces in Ukraine as a way to defeat the enemy absolutely and definitively, and forcing it to abide by demands of Russian leadership, will not just face harsh opposition inside Ukraine itself, but also cause a negative response from the global community.

This is why Russia's later actions in Ukrainian regions, especially in Donbas, that involved the use of armed forces were limited, carefully legendised in the informational space, as well as concealed by Russian leadership, even when they were critically important and necessary for the aggressor. Also, we need to keep in mind that the scale of using armed forces in this conflict is very dependent on the unfolding situation – from illegal clandestine shipments of weapons and military equipment to direct military engagement of Russian soldiers against Ukrainian troops.



## Russia's Occupation Contingent

The main destabilising factor in Ukraine's Donbas today is the presence of Russia's occupation contingent, which consists of disguised officer corps, regular units and divisions of Russian armed forces, as well as illegal military groups (IMG), created and supported by the neighbouring state in the frame of occupying a part of Ukrainian territory.

But it would be a big mistake to think of IMG in Donbas only as a type of aggregation of irregular armed groups that Russia supplies with arms and equipment from time to time in order to support their ability to resist Ukraine's regular army (this is how Russian propaganda is trying to present the current situation). The reality is quite different...

**Relevant state structures of the Russian Federation have been and are still involved on an unprecedented scale in building regular (!) armed forces in the occupied part of Donbas,** which are able not only to prevent the reestablishing of Ukrainian government's jurisdiction on these territories, but also to serve the far-reaching geopolitical goals of current Russian regime in all of Ukraine, and possibly, in the entire Eastern Europe.

Not by accident, these groups today are in possession of modern heavy weapons from Russia, and not as single items, and a significant part (up to 60-65%) of their personnel are Russian citizens. Besides, we need to keep in mind that building regular (!) armed forces on the occupied territory is an element and a tool of Russia's hybrid warfare against Ukraine, in order to achieve Russia's military and political goals. This is not a consequence, but rather – a reason and method.

**During the last one and a half years, the current Kremlin regime and its intelligence services, as well as the leadership of Russia's armed forces (General Staff) were able to achieve rather considerable progress in military capability development on the occupied Ukrainian territory. Essentially, they have created a regular expeditionary force in Donbas.**

What are IMG (as they are called in Ukraine) today? In addition to regular Russian troops, two so-called DNR/LNR "army corps" (AC) are deployed in the occupied territory of Donbas. First AC – "DNR Army" (headquarters in Donetsk, a number of "offices" – in Makeevka), Second AC – "LNR Army" (Headquarters in Luhansk). For comparison – prior to the war, all ground forces of Ukrainian army consisted of 3 army corps.

These "army corps" are the backbone of separatist government military forces in both quasi-states, organised by Russian intelligence agencies in the occupied



parts of Ukraine's Donbas. The structure of these corps is non-uniform, and in the time of its existence has undergone a number of reformations and changes.

The number of militants in different IMG fighting against regular armed forces of Ukraine is currently as follows: in "AC 1" – 19-19.5 thousand militants, in "AC 2" – 11-11.2 thousand, as well as about 6-6.5 thousand Russian servicemen in regular units and squads in the occupied Ukrainian territory.

This force, owing to Russia's efforts and "immensity" of its military supply depots and reserve stock, is now in possession of quite a significant arsenal of weapons. **"1<sup>st</sup> Army Corps" (DNR) – about 285-290 tanks, 575-580 armoured fighting vehicles (AFV), up to 220 artillery weapons, out of them at least – 45-50 self-propelled guns, the rest – towed artillery. Besides – up to 34-40 MLRS of different type. "2<sup>nd</sup> Army Corps" – about 135-140 tanks, not less than 340 armoured fighting vehicles, up to 130 artillery weapons, out of them not less than 30 self-propelled guns, up to 25 MLRS (mostly, BM-21 "Grad").**

### **1<sup>ST</sup> and 2<sup>ND</sup> "Army Corps": Some Characteristics**

**"1<sup>st</sup> Army Corps of People's Militia of the DNR Ministry of Defence"** (full name of the armed forces of separatist quasi-state formation in the occupied part of Donetsk region). This is the most powerful organisation with the largest number of soldiers. The structure of this "corps" is made up of "brigades" (of which there are six, one of them being an artillery brigade and one more – "separate special forces" brigade), as well as 3 separate regiments and 8 separate battalions.

Besides, this "corps" includes up to five separate company units. A separate structure within the DNR MoD are at least five separate territorial defence battalions (with the "Republican Guard" status).



In the past six months, the so-called Operative Command “Donetsk” was being actively set up, which according to the Russian plan, will include a number of other armed groups of the “republic”, besides AC 1.

Let us look more closely at 5<sup>th</sup> “Oplot” “brigade” of DNR’s 1<sup>st</sup> Army Corps.

The total number of militants in “Oplot” is about 3,600-3,700, this is the largest gang in AC 1. Essentially, this is a “personal army” of current DNR leader A. Zakharchenko. This is why it has best supply support from Russian sources, including combat equipment, weapons, logistic resources, including fuel and ammunition. Besides, today, the “brigade” is the most combat-effective unit of “DNR Army” according to its manning, equipment and technology support. It is called “Donetskaia”.

#### The “Oplot” structure is as follows:

- **Brigade command and staff** (up to 320 militants, including direct reporting units).
- **1<sup>st</sup> battalion** (this is the former battalion “Oplot”, additionally manned by the remainder of “Russian Orthodox Army”, militia of Petrovskii district of Donetsk, and the remainder of Kadyrov’s “Death” squad).
- **2<sup>nd</sup> battalion** (the “Svarozhychi” battalion, additionally manned by the militants from “Strelkovskaia brigade” and “International battalion”, a.k.a. “15<sup>th</sup> unit”).

Together, the two battalions have not less than 2,000 militants (according to other sources, up to 2,500), about 126-128 different AFV, separate trench-mortar battery (12-14 82-mm mortar-guns, up to 6-8 120-mm mortar-gun). Each battalion has anti-tank batteries – 6 pieces of 100-mm anti-tank cannon MT-12 “Rapira”, each.

- **Tank battalion** – not less than 40 tanks (according to other sources, over 50). Most of battalion’s equipment was located in several “combat vehicles parks” in north-western and western parts of Donetsk, currently relocated to Budenovskii district of the city (at the front there are up to 10-12 vehicles on rotational basis).
- **Reconnaissance-commando battalion** (up to 240-260 militants).
- **Artillery division** of cannon artillery (up to 14 pieces of 122-mm self-propelled guns 2C1 “Gvozdika”, possibly 4-6 pieces of 152-mm self-propelled guns 2C3 “Akatsia”, possibly a battery, 6 pieces of 152-mm self-propelled guns 2C19 “Msta-S”) and an artillery group of rocket-launching artillery (10-12 pieces of 122-mm MLRS BM-21 “Grad”).

**Air defence missile division** is represented by air defence missile battalion (about 8 ADMS “Strela-10M”, there is information about 6 AAMAS 2C6 “Tunguska” and 3 AAMGS “Pantsir – 1S”, for sure, there are at least 12-14 MPADS “Igla-M” on the basis of MTLB). Also, brigade battalions have ZU-23-2, altogether possibly up to 6-8 pieces.

“Brigade” has its own transportation assets in supply divisions, as well as in repair and evacuation, and directly at bases and “combat vehicle parks” (incl., tow trucks and extraction equipment), for supply and resupply, as well as for transportation of equipment and personnel, incl., “requisitioned for the needs of the republic” civilian units – buses, passenger cars, SUVs. (The brigade has the total of about 85 pieces of military-grade motor transport – mainly represented by various modifications of KAMAZ/URAL-type trucks).

“**2<sup>nd</sup> Army Corps of People’s Militia of the LNR Ministry of Defence**”. Compared to Donetsk corps, this “force” is weaker and is rather an assortment of illegal military groups with very different combat capacity, than a proper operational-tactical formation. However, this armed group is actively building its combat capacity while receiving regular support and military assistance from Russia.

As of today, “2<sup>nd</sup> LNR Army Corps”, besides command and staff, consists of:

- Four brigades (2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> brigades, separate special purpose brigade “Odessa” and separate artillery brigade);
- Two regiments (6<sup>th</sup> regiment, a.k.a. “Cossack”, and separate commandant regiment);
- Six battalions/divisions (4<sup>th</sup> battalion, a.k.a. “August”, separate anti-aircraft missile battalion, separate reconnaissance battalion, separate maintenance and repair battalion, logistics battalion, security and control battalion);
- Two separate troops (engineer troop and electronic warfare).

Also, like “DNR”, “LNR” has created its Territorial Guard, which is not part of the “corps”. However, unlike that of the DNR MoD, LNR’s version seems to be more effective, as it is fully formed, deployed, and combat-ready. Militants’ leadership was able to achieve this through reforming the already existing separatists’ gangs armed forces into territorial guard battalions on an area basis.

Today, almost all large cities and small towns in the occupied part of Luhansk region have such units, which are 8 in total (11<sup>th</sup> battalion – “Ataman”,



Luhansk, 12<sup>th</sup> battalion – “Rome”, Sverdlovsk, 13<sup>th</sup> – “Kulkin”, Rovenky, 14<sup>th</sup> – “Ghost”, Alchevsk, 15<sup>th</sup> – “Brianka-USSR”, Brianka, (is being disbanded for “military crimes”), 16<sup>th</sup> – “Leshii”, Antratsit, 17<sup>th</sup> – “Bolshoi”, Perevalsk, 18<sup>th</sup> – “Pokhodnyi”, Krasnyi Luch). And in most cases, they are fully staffed with militants, provided with weapons and military equipment in the required volume.

For example, composition and structure of **second separate motor rifle brigade of 2<sup>nd</sup> LNR Army Corps** looks like this.

This brigade is a kind of “guard” fighting force/part of Luhansk militants’ army, the equivalent of “Oplot” brigade in DNR, as it was formed on the backbone of “Zaria” personal battalion of the current LNR leader Plotnitsky.

It has the total of about 2,200-2,400 militants and consists of:

- **Command and staff** (headed by a “colonel Trunov” and some “Russian volunteer military”, so to speak, “specialists by order...” (about 70-80 militants and “specialists”. They have 6 BTR-80 vehicles);
- **1<sup>st</sup> battalion** (a.k.a. former “Lugansk People’s Liberation Battalion Zaria”, Plotnitsky’s personal shooters);
- **2<sup>nd</sup> battalion** (a.k.a. “Don”, actually a battalion of Russian mercenaries, also includes the remainder of Russian “National-Bolsheviks” division and so-called “Interbrigade”);
- **3<sup>rd</sup> battalion** (a.k.a. “Hooligans” – formed partly from Luhansk “militia”, and partly – from Rostov lumpens).

Together, the three battalions have up to 1,700-1,800 militants, about 72-74 AFV, up to 16-18 BTR-80 vehicles, each battalion – 120-mm trench-mortar battery, there is an anti-tank battery – up to 6 100-mm anti-tank guns MT-12 “Rapira” and 6-8 AT guided missile launchers “Fagot” or “Konkurs” each, according to some sources, 4-6 AT guided missile launchers “Kornet”.

- **Tank battalion** (4 troops instead of 3), up to 30-32 tanks total. However, according to other sources, the number of tanks in this “battalion” is up to 46-48;
- **Brigade artillery group**. In the inventory – up to 10 122-mm self-propelled guns 2C1 “Gvozdika”, up to 12 122-mm howitzers D-30 and D-30A, up to 16 BM-21 122-mm MLRS “Grad”;
- **Air defence unit** (2 batteries – one on ADMS “Strela-10M”, 8 pieces and second – up to 12 MPADS “Igla-M” on MTLB);
- **Reconnaissance troop** “Metis” is part of a battalion, but carries out tasks for the benefit of the whole brigade;
- **Supply troop** (up to 45 trucks);
- **Medical troop, signal troop** (up to 110 militants).

It is worth mentioning as a separate point that a whole number of armed units of the so-called “republics” have the following infamous Russian and foreign groups fighting on their side:

- Communist volunteer squad (“Ghost” battalion, up to 160 militants with a consistent tendency to grow);
  - Russian imperial legion (up to 80 militants, also growing);
  - Volunteer squad “*Unite Continentale*” (up to 40 militants);
  - Serbian troop (up to 60 militants);
  - Volunteer RNE squad (“Russian National Unity”, up to 80-100 militants);
- ...and a number of others.

The flow of heavy weapons – tanks, armoured combat vehicles, different types of artillery, infantry arms, as well as echelons of fuel, ammunition and outfits in the form of “brotherly help” from Russia, does not stop for a minute and is not about to decrease. This is what helps Russian regime to deploy not just its own skeleton forces disguised as “local militia” in the occupied territories of Ukraine, but the entire “army corps”, “brigades”, “regiments” and “battalions” that consist of Russian mercenaries, are supported by local collaborationists, and use Russian weapons. Add to this the unending stream of “volunteers” (mostly paid from the Russian budget), and we can see a complete picture of Russia’s aggression in Ukraine and military occupation of a part of its territory.

**In the end, it should be noted that Kremlin is creating regular armed forces in the occupied part of Donbas, which include local terrorist and criminal groups, a large number of radical right-wing and left-wing “Russian volunteers”, as well as Russian commanding personnel.** ■

# THE CHALLENGE OF “HYBRID WAR”



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Although “hybrid war” is a Western term devised to describe something new, it is in fact a highly accurate description of a Russian mode of warfare that has existed for centuries. This loss of historical perspective not only reflects the sharp decline of Western expertise in Russian military art since the Cold War, but an unbalanced perspective created by the Cold War itself. The Cold War, like the Great Patriotic War before it, provide a decidedly incomplete picture of Russia’s military tradition. They respectively envisaged and involved combat between large, combined arms formations on operational and strategic scales, latterly (since the early 1950s) including nuclear exchanges within and beyond intended thresholds of escalation. Whilst the Russian concepts, “non-linear war” and “network war” are also intended to describe something new – the intense interconnection between political, military, economic, social, psychological and informational dimensions of war – they rest upon and rejuvenate much older modes of conflict characteristic of the Russian Civil War and the Tsarist era.

By the time of its collapse in 1917, the Russian Empire had amassed a rich inheritance in irregular warfare. Since the time of Ivan Grozny, if not before, wars on the imperial periphery were untidy, vicious and often treacherous. They were prosecuted by regular military units, para-military formations and bands, as well as client (dependent) societies and elites, whose aims were broadly convergent with, but not always identical to those of the imperial authority. As in Tatar times, these also were wars of subterfuge, intimidation, cunning and deception, political as well as military. These modes of conflict were central not only to waging war, but the shaping of Russia’s wider geopolitical surroundings and, hence, the political influence of the Russian state.

Today, a prime characteristic of hybrid war has become central to its purpose: to erode customary demarcation lines between political and military, internal and foreign, and peace and war. In these aims, Russia’s purposes are advanced by the modalities of the “network state” that has been established inside Russia and which, by design and default, has blurred the distinction between “state” and “private” and established a *sub rosa* web of

patron-client relationships inside the country and beyond it. Thus, the participants in the Donbas war are not only serving officers of GRU and FSB, but retired servicemen and deserters, the private security forces of oligarchs (Ukrainian and Russian), Cossacks, Chechen and South Osetian fighters, volunteers from outside the former Soviet Union, adventurers and criminals. By the same token, finance comes not only from the coffers of the Russian state, but nominally private banks and businesses.

It follows that such a mode of warfare has the greatest chance of succeeding where the state is neither trusted nor competent, where civil society is weak and divided, where informal “shadow” structures of power are more important than public institutions and where the boundaries between the official, private and criminal worlds are difficult to discern. The authors of Ukraine’s first and most lucid National Security Concept (1997) rightly stated that these weaknesses, rather than conventional military shortcomings, were Ukraine’s most fundamental vulnerabilities which, if not addressed, would be open to exploitation by an external enemy. In short, the Concept raised the spectre of hybrid war.



For all this, hybrid war does not stand in isolation or diminish other components of the art of war. First, as events in Ukraine illustrated, Russia continues to attach enormous importance to strategic surprise and the “initial period of war”. In Soviet/Russian practice, this generally is perceived to be the period before the opponent registers that war has begun. Penetration of Ukraine’s defence, security and law enforcement structures over many years, and the co-optation of business and political interests, well preceded the initial period of war. But they created an environment that made initial operations in early 2014 (e.g. the eradication of SBU records, the crippling of communications, the sabotage of command-and-control, the betrayal of forces by their commanders) effective, and these measures ensured strategic surprise. NATO now understands that a prime purpose of future hybrid war will be to act below NATO’s threshold of reaction and achieve key objectives before an effective defence is mounted.

Second, as noted by Stephen Covington of SHAPE, hybrid war is but one ingredient of “an approach to conflict in peace, crisis, and war that couples large-scale conventional and nuclear forces to the application of non-attributable, ambiguous means of destabilisation”.<sup>1</sup> The Russian military offensives, carried out by general purpose forces that preceded the first Minsk accord and the second confirm this point to anyone who would doubt it. Not incidentally, they also demonstrated the failure of Russia to accomplish its objectives in Ukraine by ambiguous and non-attributable methods alone. To this can be ascribed the consolidation of civil society and the country, which had become stronger than that described seventeen years earlier in the 1997 National Security Concept.

Third, infowar has acquired a direct relevance to military operations of all types, arguably exceeding the customary parameters of the much older discipline, “reflexive control”. The wider, political purpose of infowar is well encapsulated in the *Conceptual Views* (2011) of the Ministry of Defence:

undermining the political, economic and social system, and massive indoctrination of the population for destabilising the society and the state, and also forcing the state to make decisions in the interests of the opposing party.<sup>2</sup>

But its direct military potential was demonstrated in the prelude to the Minsk II accord. The Donbas offensive launched on 21 January 2015 not only brought new weapons systems and electronic warfare capabilities



onto the field. It was accompanied by rumours on the Russian grapevine of yet more lethal weapons (e.g. fuel-air explosives) and deliberations to escalate the conflict to the nuclear level. There is reason to believe that these “threats” were intended to reach the ears of Angela Merkel.

It would be entirely erroneous to regard Russia’s military operations in Syria as divorced from these revisions in thinking and practice. President-Elect Donald Trump’s widely reiterated refrain that “Russia is fighting ISIS” is tribute to Russia’s success in controlling the narrative of the conflict (with arguably greater effect than the military operation itself). The non-expert finds it uncommonly difficult to understand that for Russia, Daesh [ISIS] is not so much an enemy as a variable, one of many players in a complex game, to be infiltrated, combatted and, if possible, used.

The unofficial (but officially inspired) refrain that “Russia is at war with the West” illustrates the extent to which Russia’s political and military leadership regard war today as different from wars of the past. Not only is it erroneous to view hybrid war in isolation from other tools of Russian military art. It is equally erroneous to view it in isolation from other modes of political struggle. Rather than ask, as many inside NATO are wont to do, whether Russia’s “hybrid war” can be repeated in other places (e.g. the Baltic states), it would be better to ask how Russia’s political objectives there compare with those in Ukraine and how its mix of military and other tools are being deployed to these ends. Without an equally integrated approach, Russia’s opponents are likely to find themselves at a disadvantage and at risk of defeat. ■

<sup>1</sup> SR Covington, *Putin’s Choice for Russia*. – Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center, August 2015, p.12.

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<sup>2</sup> “Conceptual Views Regarding the Activities of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in the Information Space”. – RF Ministry of Defence, 2011, p.5

# RUSSIA AND CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE: BETWEEN CONFRONTATION AND COLLUSION



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Three indicative developments at the start of 2016 may give us a clue to the complicated pattern of interactions across the new fault-line of confrontation that now divides Europe no less drastically than the Iron Curtain did back in 1946, when W. Churchill described it in his famous Fulton speech. First, in Estonia, three men were convicted for espionage and supplying information to Russian security services, and that only a few months after an old-fashioned “spy exchange” on the bridge connecting the two strikingly dissimilar parts of the former Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> Second, in Bulgaria, Prime Minister B. Borisov admitted that Moscow, using the levers of energy supply, had put pressure on his cabinet to break ranks with NATO solidarity and not express support for Turkey in its conflict with Russia.<sup>2</sup> Third, Russian Defence Minister S. Shoigu announced a directive for building three new army divisions in 2016 in the “Western direction”.<sup>3</sup>

These dissimilar turns of events indicate **the range and intensity of new security challenges** that the states of East Central Europe – many of them less than 30 years ago members of the Warsaw Pact or indeed Soviet republics – face in the new confrontation, which has some features resembling the Cold War but also has the nature of what, for lack of a better term, is often described as “hybrid war”. The threat of such confrontation was looming as NATO deliberated on the Strategic Concept (adopted at the November 2010 Lisbon summit), which is aimed at combining the “reset” with Russia with “reassurance” for the allies who are most exposed to this threat.<sup>4</sup> The explosion of the Ukraine crisis in spring 2014 confirmed the worst predictions of the “alarmists” among Western security experts, and marked a stark watershed in NATO’s relations with Russia. There is space for argument on whether Moscow’s choice for unleashing the confrontation was preventable, but there are sound reasons to assume that the aggressive decision-making in the Kremlin was underpinned by the corrupt-authoritarian evolution of Putin’s regime. **Russia now puts a strong emphasis on the traditional projection of military power as an instrument of policy, and assumes that West European states, even when coming together in the NATO sessions, have neither the will for nor the skill in wielding this instrument, particularly in support of such “indefensible” positions as Estonia or Latvia.**<sup>5</sup> At the same time, Moscow engages in experimenting with various non-traditional instruments of pressure, from the combination of “black propaganda” and espionage to the blend of corruption and energy exports.

<sup>1</sup> See: Mardiste D. Estonia Jails Three Men over Spying for Russian Security Services, Reuters, 23 February 2016, available at: [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com); Russia and Estonia Exchange Spies after Kohver Row. – *BBC News*, 26 September 2015, available at: [www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com).

<sup>2</sup> See: Bulgaria Was Pressured to Choose between Turkey, Russia – PM, *Novinite.com*, 19 January 2016, available at: [www.novinite.com](http://www.novinite.com).

<sup>3</sup> Shoigu: Defence Ministry Will Form Three New Divisions in the Western Direction in 2016, *TASS.ru*, 12 January 2016, available at: <http://tass.ru>.

<sup>4</sup> On the link between reset and reassurance, see R. Asmus, S. Czumur, C. Donnelly, A. Ronis, T. Valacek and K. Wittmann, “NATO, New Allies and Reassurance”, CER Policy Brief, May 2010, available at: [www.cer.org.uk](http://www.cer.org.uk).

<sup>5</sup> On the reluctance to commit to protecting this NATO vulnerability, see R. Peters, “Defending the Indefensible: NATO’s Baltic States”, *Strategika*, Issue 23, 12 May 2015, available at: [www.hoover.org](http://www.hoover.org).



## New Geopolitics of the “Frontline Zone” with Russia

At the start of the 2000s, much as through most of the 1990s, Moscow paid remarkably scant attention to the big group of medium and small states that constituted the unstructured and incoherent region of East Central Europe. Russia had many opportunities to influence the transition processes reshaping the newly born states in the Balkans and in the Baltic, but preferred to engage in more high-profile dialogues with Germany, France, Italy and Turkey. There was no committed effort at steering the debates in these states on the big issue of accession to NATO, and the expansion of the Alliance, completed in spring 2004, was not seen in the Kremlin at that time as leading to a significant deterioration in Russia’s security posture.<sup>6</sup>

The discourse changed into a forceful argument against further enlargement around 2008, when Putin addressed the NATO summit in Bucharest and managed to block the proposition for granting Georgia and Ukraine the Membership Action Plans. He probably still perceives it as a major political victory (reinforced by the week-long war with Georgia), but there is no way to deny the fact that NATO expansion happened on his “watch” and continues to progress as Montenegro has acceded.<sup>7</sup> Putin wastes no opportunity to condemn this process, and the revised National Security Strategy approved on 31 December 2015 takes issue with the strategy of containment executed by the United States and its allies (Article 12). It elaborates in much detail on the threat from NATO: “The buildup of the military potential of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the endowment of it with global functions pursued in violation of the norms of international law, the galvanisation of the bloc countries’ military activity, the further expansion of the alliance, and the location of its military infrastructure closer to Russian borders are creating a threat to national security.” (Article 15).<sup>8</sup>

As the new post-Crimea confrontation between Russia and the West evolves and rigidifies, **Moscow is**

**paying greater attention to relations with the states of East Central Europe, constituting a “frontline zone” in this confrontation, where perceived threats to Russia’s security are encountered and have to be neutralised.** This geopolitical perspective is not monochrome but has many peculiar nuances, which can be summarized in three particular features.

*First*, NATO expansion is seen not as a determined effort of the nine states of the region (and more in the Balkans) to join, but as a hostile initiative originating in and driven by US leadership. This “objectification” makes it possible for Moscow to develop bilateral relations with particular states notwithstanding their engagement with the Alliance. Thus, for instance, Putin confirmed that Russia perceived Bulgaria as a “close friend” and was not “bothered” by its NATO membership.<sup>9</sup> Foreign Minister S. Lavrov argued in a recent article that former members of the Warsaw Pact had not achieved liberation but merely exchanged one “leader” for another.<sup>10</sup>

*Second*, the issue of NATO enlargement is intertwined in Russian strategic thinking with the problem of the US missile defence system, identified in the Military Doctrine (approved in December 2014) as one of the main “external military dangers”.<sup>11</sup> Putin’s obvious personal fixation on this problem determined the heavy priority on the modernisation of strategic forces in the 2020 Armament Programme, but it has also become one of the focal points in the propaganda offensive.<sup>12</sup> There was never a shadow of a doubt in the Russian threat assessment that the deployment of the “first echelon” of US radar and interceptor missiles in Eastern Europe was aimed at neutralising Russian strategic deterrence capabilities, despite the obvious difference between the scale of NATO efforts and the strength of the Russian land-based missile forces.<sup>13</sup>

*Third*, up to late 2013, EU enlargement – unlike NATO expansion – had not been perceived as a threat to Russia’s interests, but the Euromaidan revolution in Ukraine, orchestrated according to the Kremlin’s assessments by European politicians and networks,

<sup>6</sup> One useful analysis from that period is M. Kramer, “NATO, the Baltic States and Russia: A Framework for Sustainable Enlargement”, *International Affairs*, vol. 78, No. 4, October 2002, p. 731-756.

<sup>7</sup> See: R. Gramer, “The New Thorn in Russia’s Side: Why Moscow Doesn’t Want Montenegro Joining NATO”, *Foreign Affairs*, 24 December 2015, available at: [www.foreignaffairs.com](http://www.foreignaffairs.com).

<sup>8</sup> Author’s translation from “Ukaz Prezidenta Rossijskoj Federatsii o Strategii natsional’noj bezopasnosti Rossijskoj Federatsii” [Presidential decree on National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation], Kremlin.ru, 31 December 2015, available at: <http://kremlin.ru>.

<sup>9</sup> See: “Putin: Rossiiu ne bespokoit chlenstvo Bolgarii v NATO” [Putin: Russia is Not Bothered by Bulgaria’s Membership of NATO], RIA Novosti, 17 August 2015, available at: <http://ria.ru>.

<sup>10</sup> He also argues that the choice for expanding NATO is the root cause of the systemic problems that afflict Russia’s relations with the United States and Europe. See S. Lavrov, “Russia’s Foreign Policy in a Historical Perspective”, *Russia in Global Affairs*, 30 March 2016, available at: <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru>.

<sup>11</sup> It ranks No. 4 in the list of 14 “dangers”; the strengthening and expansions of NATO are ranked No. 1; see D. Trenin, “Russia’s New Military Doctrine: Should the West be Worried?” *National Interest*, 31 December 2014, available at: <http://nationalinterest.org>.

<sup>12</sup> See: “How Putin Uses Missile Defence in Europe to Distract Russian Voters”, *NATO Review*, 29 January 2015, available at: [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>13</sup> For a sober analysis, see S. Pifer, “The Limits of US Missile Defence”, *The National Interest*, 30 March 2015, available at: <http://nationalinterest.org>.



changed that view. **Currently, the EU is seen as a major sanctions-enforcing adversary**; this makes it imperative to focus on weakening it, and the National Security Strategy (2015) implicitly acknowledges this in Article 16: “Increase of migration flows from Africa and the Middle East into Europe signified a failure of the Euro-Atlantic security system built around NATO and the European Union”.<sup>14</sup> This proposition has yet to be proven, and President of the European Council D. Tusk argued that “as a direct consequence of the Russian military campaign ... thousands more refugees are fleeing toward Turkey and Europe”, while US General Ph. Breedlove, NATO Supreme Allied Commander, accused Russia of “weaponizing” migration.<sup>15</sup>

**Moscow tends to overestimate the intensity of centrifugal forces inside the EU, and seeks to exploit ties with East Central European states in order to aggravate this crisis**, while NATO is typically perceived as a more cohesive and disciplined organisation. One possible change in the big geopolitical picture, which is seen as a major challenge to Russia’s position in the Northern/Baltic flank of the European theater, is rapprochement with and accession to NATO of Sweden and Finland, so Moscow is trying to combine military pressure with political dissuasion in order to prevent this development.<sup>16</sup>

### Russian Energy Policy in ECE: A Broken Tool?

**The Kremlin considered export of oil and gas as a highly efficient direct-action instrument of policy.** The fundamental shifts in the global energy market, which coincided with the development of the Ukraine crisis, have to all intents and purposes destroyed this instrumentalisation – but this new reality has yet to be recognized. Putin used to think that he understood the workings of the energy business better than Western leaders and was eager to press forward his advantage, but now he is profoundly at a loss, and still clings to the old game, while having no winning options.

### Gazprom’s pipelines, prices and promises

Putin’s big European energy designs in the mid-2000s were aimed primarily at the major powers, above all Germany, while the smaller states of East Central Europe

(some of them quite severely affected by the Russian-Ukrainian “gas war” in January 2009) were seen as targets of secondary importance. The main goal in these designs was to conquer a greater part of the European market, but the key strategic proposition was to establish export corridors that circumvented Ukraine. The paradox of this policy was that acting on this proposition to all intents and purposes made the achievement of the goal impossible, while also creating significant differences in Russian energy policies on the northern and southern flanks of the “gas offensive”.

In the northern direction, the central project was the *Nord Stream* gas pipeline going the length of the Baltic Sea; the persistent even if ineffectual opposition from Poland convinced Moscow of the political hostility of this corner of the gas market. It made some half-hearted attempts to acquire energy infrastructure in the Baltic States and Poland, but the temptation to punish these “trouble-makers” by making them pay the highest price for imported gas was too strong, so that energy “networking” was curtailed.<sup>17</sup> Despite their limited resources, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have worked hard to create alternatives to the Russian supply monopoly by building liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals and making deals with Norway, so now they feel far less vulnerable to energy pressure.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, they feel emboldened to criticize Germany for exploring the possibility of constructing *Nord Stream-2*, which goes against the EU diversification guideline and answers only Russian obsession with excluding Ukraine from its energy ties with Europe.<sup>19</sup> Moscow has essentially given up applying energy pressure on the Baltic trio and hopes that its better behavior with gas supplies will secure approval for the *Nord Stream-2* project in the bureaucratic maze of the European Commission; however, a very probable negative decision on this enterprise could make the desire to punish opponents irresistible.<sup>20</sup>

In the southern direction, Russia originally planned to expand energy ties with quite a few politically friendly states and to build a network of “special” gas customers. The key project here was the *South Stream*, and the peculiar feature of its competition with the EU-backed *Nabucco* project was that neither had even

<sup>14</sup> *Op. cit.* [8]. Gramer R. The New Thorn in Russia’s Side: Why Moscow Doesn’t Want Montenegro Joining NATO.

<sup>15</sup> See: G. Baczyńska, “EU’s Tusk Says Russian Bombings Make Situation in Syria even Worse”, Reuters, 9 February 2016, available at: [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com); G. Dyer, “NATO Accuses Russia of ‘Weaponising’ Immigrants”, *Financial Times*, 1 March 2016, available at: [www.ft.com](http://www.ft.com).

<sup>16</sup> See: J. Benitez, “The Bully to the East”, *US News and World Report*, 6 August 2015, available at: [www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com).

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, “Lithuania Looks for Alternatives to Counter Russia’s High Gas Price”, *EurActiv*, 8 July 2013, available at: [www.euractiv.com](http://www.euractiv.com).

<sup>18</sup> See: C. Oliver and H. Foy, “Poland and Baltic States Set to Sign Deal to Build Gas Pipeline”, *Financial Times*, 12 October 2015, available at: [www.ft.com](http://www.ft.com).

<sup>19</sup> See: J. Dempsey, “Germany, Dump Nord Stream 2”, *Strategic Europe*, 25 January 2016, available at: <http://carnegieeurope.eu>.

<sup>20</sup> See: A. Mineev, “Severnyi potok 2 peregorodili plotinoj. Nuzhen li on Evrope?” [Nord Stream-2 is Stopped by a Dam. Does Europe Need It?], *Novaya Gazeta*, 18 April 2016, available at: [www.novayagazeta.ru](http://www.novayagazeta.ru).



a half-solid economic foundation, and thus both have duly collapsed.<sup>21</sup> What makes this old story still relevant is the odd design of that Russian mega-project, which instead of one pipeline involved a sequence of several pipelines, and the fact that Moscow is still seeking to make this model work.

The main political advantage of such an organisationally nonsensical project was the opportunity to negotiate separately with each of the parties along the gas “corridor” and to establish profitable relations with local partners, which cannot come together to gain strength sufficient to refuse *Gazprom’s* offers. Moscow was deliberately cutting out Romania from its energy designs and focusing on Bulgaria, which was seen as historically friendly and usefully corrupt, until its political class found the determination to reject this sleazy energy-political stratagem.<sup>22</sup> Greece then became the key target for Russian gas intrigues, but Prime Minister A. Tsipras has played his weak hand remarkably well, using the fruitless talks with Putin for gaining a better deal in Brussels.<sup>23</sup> The Kremlin has sought to cultivate underhand ties with the *Syriza* party and is still exploring options for circumventing Ukraine by the south, but the severe crisis in relations with Turkey from November 2015 to mid-August 2016 undercut these maneuvers, and the restoration of relations between the two countries does not seem to underpin a serious action plan.<sup>24</sup>

Without an operable pipeline plan, Moscow’s attempts to build an energy foundation for “special relations” with Serbia have remained inconclusive, so Putin’s displeasure about Belgrade’s expanding ties with NATO has made little difference.<sup>25</sup> The attempts to pull strings in Slovakia in order to prevent Ukraine from finding an alternative gas supply were not only quite awkward but backfired, resulting in the EU-backed arrangement for reverse gas flow from Germany.<sup>26</sup> Overall, Russia cannot find any useful way to harvest political dividends from its residual energy assets in East Central Europe; instead, it has to expend political capital in order to preserve its positions in this important market, and quite often this political interference turns out to be counter-productive.

## Nuclear energy track

One very particular element of Russia’s global energy policy is the expansion of its nuclear power complex, which is seen in the Kremlin not only as one of the few areas where Russia possesses advanced and exportable technologies **but also as a major means of establishing and cultivating special political relations.** The nuclear energy policy is strictly centralised and channeled through the state-owned *Rosatom* corporation, managed by the very capable S. Kiriyenko (former prime minister), who has set the far-fetched goal of increasing the number of contracts for building nuclear reactors abroad from the current 29 to 80 within a few years.<sup>27</sup> East Central Europe constitutes a particular direction in this ambitious expansion.

Most of the ties in the nuclear energy sector go back to the Soviet era, during which 24 reactors were built in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, East Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, and Slovakia by the USSR (Romania contracted Atomic Energy Canada Ltd to build the Cernavoda nuclear plant). The Chernobyl disaster in April 1986 provoked professional and public concerns about reactor safety, so the Greifswald plant in East Germany was closed in 1990, and Bulgaria, Lithuania and Slovakia were forced to decommission the eight reactors of early designs (VVER – the Water-Water Energetic Reactor and RBMK – the High-Power Channel-type Reactor) as a condition for joining the EU.<sup>28</sup> Russia sought to turn the Chernobyl page and to comply with the regulations established by the European Commission in Moscow’s persistent efforts to win competitive contracts for constructing new reactors, focusing particularly on Bulgaria and Hungary. In the former, the plan to construct a new nuclear power plant at Belene was cancelled in September 2012, to *Rosatom’s* bitter disappointment, while in the negotiations on constructing a new reactor at the old Kozloduy plant *Westinghouse* is the key partner.<sup>29</sup> In Hungary, which operates four Soviet-built reactors at the Paks nuclear plant, *Rosatom* succeeded in securing a contract to construct two more reactors, but the European Commission has not yet approved the deal, made

<sup>21</sup> See: P. Baev and I. Overland, “The South Stream versus Nabucco Pipeline Race”, *International Affairs*, vol. 68, No. 5, May 2010, p. 1075-1090.

<sup>22</sup> See: D. Kalan, “Bulgaria’s Turn: Sofia Gives Moscow Some Attitude”, *Foreign Affairs*, 9 June 2015, available at: [www.foreignaffairs.com](http://www.foreignaffairs.com).

<sup>23</sup> Ghemawat P., Bastian P. Tsipras and Putin: Does Greece Have a Russia Option? – The Globalist, 30 июля 2015г., [www.theglobalist.com](http://www.theglobalist.com).

<sup>24</sup> On the ties with Syriza, see M. Champion, “Syriza’s Dangerous View of Russia”, Bloomberg, 3 February 2015, available at: [www.bloombergview.com](http://www.bloombergview.com); on the most recent intrigues, see V. Socor, “Gazprom Promotes Greece-Italy Transit Route to Obstruct European Corridor”, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 3 March 2016, available at: [www.jamestown.org](http://www.jamestown.org).

<sup>25</sup> See: P. Himshiashvili, “Putin ponial pozitsiiu Serbii po NATO” [Putin has Understood Serbia’s Position on NATO], RBC.ru, 10 March 2016, available at: [www.rbc.ru](http://www.rbc.ru).

<sup>26</sup> See: C. Harrison and Z. Princova, “A Quiet Gas Revolution in Eastern and Central Europe”, *Energy Post*, 29 October 2015, available at: [www.energypost.eu](http://www.energypost.eu).

<sup>27</sup> See: C. Harrison and Z. Princova, “A Quiet Gas Revolution in Eastern and Central Europe”, *Energy Post*, 29 October 2015, available at: <http://globalriskinsights.com>.

<sup>28</sup> A useful source of data is “Nuclear Power in the World Today”, World Nuclear Association, January 2016, available at: [www.world-nuclear.org](http://www.world-nuclear.org).

<sup>29</sup> See: “Cancelled Russian Nuclear Plant May Cost Bulgaria €1 billion”, *EurActiv*, 11 September 2012, available at: [www.euractiv.com](http://www.euractiv.com).



without an open tender and with a \$10 billion loan from Russia.<sup>30</sup> The only success story for *Rosatom* was the deal on constructing a new nuclear power plant in Finland (Hanhikivi), finalised in 2015 with the condition of a loan being arranged to cover 75% of the costs (estimated at €7 billion); the works on the site started in early 2016.<sup>31</sup>

Russian aggressive marketing of its nuclear power technologies has yielded rich results in many parts of the world, but in East Central Europe it has been singularly unsuccessful. While **some states (such as Lithuania) are reluctant to partner with Russia**, the most important obstacle is the policy designed by the European Commission. Russia is not directly handicapped by **this policy, but its way of doing business, in which political horse-trading is underpinned by corrupt profit-sharing, is severely curtailed.**

### Russian Export of Corruption as a Policy Instrument

The long period of record high oil prices in the 2000s brought a massive inflow of petro-revenues to Russia. Much of this easy money was redistributed and accumulated under direct control of the Kremlin; considerable and unaccounted-for financial resources thus became available for its foreign policy networking. By the start of the present decade, as M. Khodorkovsky argued from behind bars, **the export of corruption had become the second most important lever for advancing foreign policy goals, particularly in Europe, after the export of oil and gas.**<sup>32</sup>

### From buying friends to cultivating malcontents

The prime market for Russian export of corruption up to the start of the 2010s was Western Europe. While the outflow of dubious private money was pushing up real-estate prices in London and Nice, lucrative contracts helped Putin to build special friendships with such peers as Gerhard Schroeder and Silvio Berlusconi. East Central Europe was overlooked in that high-level networking, and opportunities to cultivate ties with the old guard were gone for good. If Putin's special attention to Germany was underpinned by a rich variety of clandestine connections with former *Stasi* agents and operatives going back to his years in the Dresden office of



the KGB, there is remarkably little evidence that similar connections among the former members of the Warsaw Pact were exploited for building new business-political channels of influence.<sup>33</sup>

The joy of rubbing shoulders with European peers was not quite the same on Putin's return to the Kremlin in 2012, but it was the explosion of the Ukraine crisis in early 2014 **that destroyed it completely – and forced Putin to look for new useful counterparts in East Central Europe.** Previously, Moscow used financial branches in this region mostly as conduits for transferring money to valuable “friends” in the West; for instance, the First Czech Russian Bank was used for providing a loan to the National Front in France.<sup>34</sup> Currently, however, they are increasingly used for clandestine funding of various left-wing and rightist populist parties in the ECE region.<sup>35</sup> There is little hard evidence of direct money transfer from Moscow to the coffers of such “malcontents”, but their access to greater financial resources than ever before is underpinning the steady growth of their impact.<sup>36</sup>

Putin was not satisfied with recruiting allies in the political fringes and sought to engage mainstream political leaders in his networks. He saw no potential allies in Poland and few if any political forces in the three Baltic states that could qualify as “pro-Russian”, but he discovered interesting opportunities in Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, the states that

<sup>30</sup> On the poor prospects for this deal, see M. Samorukov, “Russia and Hungary's Fruitless Friendship”, *Carnegie.ru*, 19 February 2016, available at: <http://carnegie.ru>.

<sup>31</sup> See: “Rosatom nachal raboty po stroitel'stvu AES v Finliandii” [Rosatom has Started the Construction of a Nuclear Plant in Finland], *Lenta.ru*, 21 January 2016, available at: <https://lenta.ru>.

<sup>32</sup> See: M. Khodorkovsky, “A Time and a Place for Russia”, *The New York Times*, 28 January 2010, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com>.

<sup>33</sup> One of the most prominent cases of cultivating the old Stasi connections involving Matthias Warnig is examined in K. Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?*, New York & London, Simon & Shuster, 2014, p. 50-56. On the significance of the GDR experience for Putin's worldview, see also F. Hill & C. G. Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*, Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 2015, p. 145-147, p. 181-183.

<sup>34</sup> See: I. Oliveira, “National Front Seeks Russian Cash for Election Fight”, *Politico*, 19 February 2016, available at: [www.politico.eu](http://www.politico.eu).

<sup>35</sup> For a useful overview, see “In the Kremlin's Pocket”, *The Economist*, 14 February 2015, available at: [www.economist.com](http://www.economist.com).

<sup>36</sup> One detailed account of this trend is the report by A. Polyakova and A. Shekhovtsov, “What's Left of Europe if the Far-right Has Its Way?”, Issue Brief: Atlantic Council, Washington D.C., March 2016, available at: [www.atlanticcouncil.org](http://www.atlanticcouncil.org).



*The Economist* labeled as “big, bad Visegrad”.<sup>37</sup> He worked carefully on these opportunities: Slovak Prime Minister R. Fico was warmly welcomed to Moscow in June 2015; Hungarian Prime Minister V. Orban received red-carpet treatment in February 2016; M. Zeman, the President of the Czech Republic, attended the Victory Day parade in Moscow on 9 May 2015, and former president V. Klaus was invited to address the Valdai Club meeting in October 2015.<sup>38</sup> They all duly advocated the lifting of EU sanctions against Russia, but to little avail.

Putin may have developed some personal chemistry with Orban, but he cannot really see these politicians as his equals.<sup>39</sup> The funding channeled to their campaigns amounts to small change by the standards of Russian corruption.<sup>40</sup> Russian money may have had some influence on the outcome of the elections in Slovakia in March 2016, but Fico has confidently secured the outcome he was aiming for.<sup>41</sup> In Serbia, for that matter, the anticipated and well-funded success of the pro-Russian nationalists in the April 2016 parliamentary elections failed to materialize as the pro-EU coalition of Prime Minister Vucic scored a solid victory.<sup>42</sup> It is probable that the revelations of Russian “sponsorship” and the strong demand for greater financial transparency in the aftermath of the “Panama Papers” scandal will squeeze Russian political networks. Putin, indeed, reacted extremely nervously to this scandal, despite the absence of any evidence of his personal involvement in the money laundering.<sup>43</sup> All the dubious offshore transactions have been executed by his courtiers and confidants, which earned Russia first place in the “crony capitalism” index.<sup>44</sup>

The Kremlin works on the assumption that these small Central European states are major contributors to the profound crisis that has eroded the EU institutions and is threatening to paralyze decision-making in the European Commission.<sup>45</sup> There is a no small dose of wishful thinking in these calculations; many mainstream experts

in Moscow are eager to predict the inevitable breakdown of the EU, weakened by unsustainable financial policies and overwhelmed by the inflow of migrants.<sup>46</sup> In reality, Orban and Fico and other “friends of Putin” in the region (as well as Tsipras in Greece) are not interested at all in breaking the EU apart; they are seeking to play on their ties with the Kremlin in order to secure better conditions in some particular deals in Brussels, and to deflect criticism of their mistreatment of opposition and media. In that, they are more successful than Putin is with his strategy.

### The art of propaganda war

A new feature of Russia’s policy toward East Central Europe and the West more generally is the massive public relations campaign, which combines the traditional methods of Soviet-style propaganda and the new channels of information circulation. Since the beginning of the Ukraine crisis, this campaign has reached such an unprecedented level of intensity and acquired so vicious a character **that it can be characterized as a key dimension of Russia’s “hybrid war” on the European theater.**

The urgency of countering this offensive has been duly recognized, and NATO is focusing its response with the newly created Strategic Communications (StratCom) Center of Excellence in Riga.<sup>47</sup> Plenty of attention is being given to the risks generated by Russian propaganda, yet several features may be usefully illuminated.

*First*, Moscow has targeted primarily, through its state-controlled TV channels, the Russian-speaking communities in Europe. Germany has been the prime focus of this campaign, which was supplemented by other means of outreach to the numerous (1.5-2.0 million) and politically active expats.<sup>48</sup> No less important foci were the Russian-speaking communities in Estonia and Latvia, where Moscow expected to stir long-existing grievances.<sup>49</sup> It has achieved remarkably little success, and nothing resembling

<sup>37</sup> The key point in that criticism, which was equally applicable to Poland, was the disagreeable stance on migration; see “Big, Bad Visegrad”, *The Economist*, 28 January 2016, available at: [www.economist.com](http://www.economist.com).

<sup>38</sup> See: Václav Klaus: Valdai’s Debate about Threats: The Threat Is Us”, Valdai Discussion Club, 27 October 2015, available at: <http://valdaiclub.com>.

<sup>39</sup> See: T. McNamara, “Is Hungary’s Viktor Orban a Miniature of Vladimir Putin?”, *Policy Review*, July 2014, available at: [www.policyreview.eu](http://www.policyreview.eu).

<sup>40</sup> According to recent research, the total amount of money that was transferred from Russia by the end of 2014 is estimated at \$US 1.3 trillion; see H. Stewart, “Offshore Finance: More than \$12tn Siphoned out of Emerging Countries”, *The Guardian*, 8 May 2016, available at: [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com).

<sup>41</sup> See: L. Ragozin, “Putin’s Hand Grows Stronger as Right-Wing Parties Advance in Europe”, Bloomberg, 15 March 2016, available at: [www.bloomberg.com](http://www.bloomberg.com).

<sup>42</sup> See: “Pro-Russians Set for Comeback in Serbia”, *EurActiv*, 21 April 2016, available at: [www.euractiv.com](http://www.euractiv.com).

<sup>43</sup> See, for instance, M. Leiva, “Putin nazval ‘informatsionnye ataki’ na sebja reaktsiej na ukreplenie Rossii” [Putin Explained the ‘Information Attacks’ on Him as Response to Russia’s New Strength], *RBC.ru*, 25 April 2016, available at: [www.rbc.ru](http://www.rbc.ru).

<sup>44</sup> See: “Our Crony-Capitalism Index: The Party Winds Down”, *The Economist*, 5 May 2016, available at: [www.economist.com](http://www.economist.com).

<sup>45</sup> See: D. Frants, “Sammit ES stolknioť Vostochnuiu Evropu s Zapadnoju” [EU Summit will See a Clash Between Eastern and Western Europe], *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 18 February 2016, available at: [www.ng.ru](http://www.ng.ru).

<sup>46</sup> See: V. Inozemtsev, “Mantra dlia neudachnikov” [Mantra for the Losers], *The New Times*, 16 March 2016, available at: [www.newtimes.ru](http://www.newtimes.ru).

<sup>47</sup> See: R. Emmott, “NATO Looks to Combat Russia’s ‘Information Weapon’: Document”, Reuters, 27 January 2016, available at: [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com). Activities and publications of StratCom are presented on its website, available at: [www.stratcomcoe.org](http://www.stratcomcoe.org).

<sup>48</sup> One extensive examination is M. Amann et al., “The Hybrid War: Russia’s Propaganda Campaign Against Germany”, *Der Spiegel*, 5 February 2016, available at: [www.spiegel.de](http://www.spiegel.de).

<sup>49</sup> See: V. Veebel, “Russian Propaganda, Disinformation, and Estonia’s Experience”, FPRI E-Notes, October 2015, available at: [www.fpri.org](http://www.fpri.org); C. Ranks, “Tret’ia mirovaia v Pribaltike: mozhet li Latgaliia stat’ vtorym Krymom” [World War III in the Baltic States: Can Latgale Become the Second Crimea?], Carnegie Moscow Center, 11 March 2016, available at: <http://carnegie.ru>.



a proverbial “fifth column” has been mobilised in either of these two front-line states, as N. Ušakovs, the young mayor of Riga, keeps asserting.<sup>50</sup>

Second, special efforts have been concentrated on influencing public opinion in the several states (Bulgaria, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovakia) that are considered “friendly” to Russia due to historic or “civilisational” reasons. In addition to Russian TV, special programmes in the respective languages (that happen to be Slavic) aim at fanning anti-American sentiments and accentuating irritation against EU policies, including fiscal austerity and especially migration. Bulgaria has been the prime target for this campaign; a Bulgarian Defence Ministry report concluded that the Russian information war was “directly attacking the national democratic values, spirit and will”.<sup>51</sup> Yet the yield from these efforts is far from impressive; as I. Krastev argues, “while Bulgarians sympathise with Russians, it is precisely because of their familiarity with Moscow’s ways that they do not consider the Putin regime as a model to be followed”.<sup>52</sup>

Third, besides the TV channels, the new opportunities of social networks have been explored and used for adding power to the propaganda offensive, in particular by hiring so-called “trolls”, who swarm popular websites with aggressive commentary. Investigations into the workings of these “troll factories” expose journalists to vicious personal attacks.<sup>53</sup> Such crude abuse of the information space (often combined with hacker attacks, the most damaging of which targeted Ukraine’s power grid) is generally counter-productive.<sup>54</sup> Some states of East Central Europe are eager to develop joint cyber-defence capabilities and some feel compelled to do it, while Sweden was prompted to join NATO’s StratCom Center of Excellence.<sup>55</sup>

Fourth, the propaganda activities are often linked with both traditional espionage and new kinds of clandestine activities closely tied to the export of corruption.<sup>56</sup> In East Central Europe, Poland and the three Baltic states are at the top of the list of destinations for this spy-work, and the newly established NATO Counter-Intelligence Center of Excellence in Poland, whatever about the unnecessarily rough start to its work,<sup>57</sup> is intended to deny Russia the advantage of having both greater experience and resources.

In the spring of 2014, the forcefulness and aggressiveness of the Russian propaganda/espionage offensive took by surprise the EU, NATO and most states of East Central Europe, but gradually they have jointly gathered the will and the resources for putting together an expanding set of counter-measures. At the same time, given the economic crisis, Moscow must reduce funding for its propaganda machine. The balance of forces in the information warfare is thus shifting against Russia to such a degree that some astute commentators are warning against replicating the hostility of the Kremlin’s political discourse and arguing that “the debasement of much public discussion of Russia does us a disservice”.<sup>58</sup>

### Russian “Hard Security” Designs for East Central Europe

With all the attention on energy matters and all the manipulations of corrupt networks, what the Russian leadership currently perceives as the most reliable instrument of policy is military power. Indeed, the rather unconventional character of the Russian “hybrid war” takes shape around the main trait – the readiness to project military force and to accept the risks associated with such old-fashioned aggressiveness. From this strategic perspective, the patchy region of East Central Europe is disaggregated into two “theaters”, the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea, where Russia has usable options for projecting military power, and the middle zone between, which includes Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary (where in the 1960s-1980s large groupings of Soviet forces were stationed), which is separated from Russia by the Ukrainian “buffer”.

### Experimenting with military pressure in the Baltic theater

Russia’s capacity for and propensity to project military force toward Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania was already a serious concern at the start of this decade, when these countries insisted on planning collective responses to Russia’s military modernisation, but it was the shockingly efficient operation of annexing Crimea that intensified these concerns into a top priority. The BBC documentary “World War Three: Inside the War Room” generated strong public awareness of these esoteric scenarios and produced sharp emotional reactions

<sup>50</sup> See: Sh. Walker, “Riga mayor: ‘I’m a Russian-speaking Latvian and patriot of my country’”, *The Guardian*, 15 June 2015, available at: [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com).

<sup>51</sup> See: “Bulgaria Accuses Russia of Waging ‘Information War’”, *Balkan Insight*, 29 August 2014, available at: [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com).

<sup>52</sup> See: I. Krastev, “What Central Europe Really Thinks about Russia”, *New York Times*, 27 April 2015, available at: [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com).

<sup>53</sup> See: N. Miller, “Finnish Journalist Jessikka Aro’s Inquiry into Russian Trolls Stirs Up a Hornet’s Nest”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 March 2016, available at: [www.smh.com.au](http://www.smh.com.au).

<sup>54</sup> See: H. Kuchler and N. Buckley, “Hackers Shut down Ukraine Power Grid”, *Financial Times*, 5 January 2016, available at: <https://next.ft.com/>; T. Fox-Brewster, “‘State Sponsored’ Russian Hacker Group Linked to Cyber Attacks on Neighbours”, *The Guardian*, 29 October 2014, available at: [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com).

<sup>55</sup> See: G. O’Dwyer, “Sweden Seeks to Join NATO Info-War Agency”, *Defence News*, 1 November 2015, available at: [www.defencenews.com](http://www.defencenews.com).

<sup>56</sup> See: M. Calabresi, “Inside Putin’s East European Spy Campaign”, *Time*, 7 May 2014, available at: <http://time.com>.

<sup>57</sup> See: A. Chapman, “Why Did Poland Raid a NATO-Linked Training Center?”, *The Daily Beast*, 20 December 2015, available at: [www.thedailybeast.com](http://www.thedailybeast.com).

<sup>58</sup> See: M. Galeotti, “By Matching Moscow’s Paranoia, the West Plays into Putin’s Hands”, *The Guardian*, 14 March 2016, available at: [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com).



both in the Baltic States and in Russia.<sup>59</sup> The Kremlin's willingness to engage in a real military conflict with NATO will hopefully not materialise, **but the impact of its brinkmanship is real, and the risk of only partly controllable escalation will continue to influence political developments in the Baltic region.**

Moscow demonstratively increased the scale of provocative military activities in the Baltic theater in parallel with the development of violent conflict in eastern Ukraine in summer 2014, quite possibly seeking to divert Western attention from the Donbass battlefields. The main instrument for these sustained provocations was the Air Force (which was not engaged in the operations in Ukraine), while the Baltic Fleet remained relatively passive (the excited reports about a submarine spotted in the Stockholm archipelago never had any credibility).<sup>60</sup> Russia also staged large-scale military exercises in the Western and Central military districts aimed at establishing the fact that it could conduct strategic operations at short notice despite being engaged in protracted and inconclusive battles in Donbass.<sup>61</sup> What is striking in the dynamics of these activities is that, since the launch of Russian military intervention in Syria in late September 2015, the intensity of demonstrations of air power in the Baltic theater has sharply decreased, and the snap exercises in March 2016 as well as the strategic command and staff exercises "Caucasus-2016" involved only the troops in the Southern military district.<sup>62</sup> However, the aggressive mock attacks on USS *Donald Cook* and intercepts of USAF RC-135 surveillance aircraft in mid-April 2016, and the violation of Estonian and Lithuanian airspace in September 2016 might signify a new surge in Russian provocations.<sup>63</sup>

This analysis suggests that Moscow's sustained (but effectively discontinued) effort at putting military pressure on the vulnerable NATO frontline in the Baltic region has been far from successful, and even counter-

productive. One aim of this effort could have been to expose Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as "free riders", who are not prepared to do anything to upgrade their defence capabilities and who merely exploit "Russophobic" discourse to gain attention and aid from Germany and the US. These states, however, have managed to make a strong case for the need to build capacity for "deterrence by denial" and to demonstrate their readiness to mobilise the necessary resources.<sup>64</sup> The political crisis in Poland inflicted some damage on this collective effort, resulting in the resignation of several prominent generals, but there is no evidence of any involvement of Russian special services in that "purge".<sup>65</sup>

Another possible aim of Russia's power demonstrations was to convey the impression that the three Baltic states were "indefensible", so that it made no strategic sense for the allies to reinforce this pre-determined failure. This impression was confirmed by the controversial RAND war-gaming study, which elaborated the scenario of an unstoppable advance of Russian tank columns toward Tallinn and Riga.<sup>66</sup> However, instead of accepting the futility of attempts to build a credible defence force for this exposed front-line, **NATO has refused to compromise on its integrity** and concentrated on increasing its options in partnership with Sweden and Finland.<sup>67</sup> There is, obviously, still much work to do before the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force becomes a combat-capable unit, but what is essential to emphasize here is that Moscow's demonstrations of deployment of overwhelming force involve much strategic deception. The operation that resulted in a swift occupation of Crimea cannot be a reference point for the Baltic theater; it was a special and irreproducible case. For that matter, the stationing of the S-400 surface-to-air missiles in Kaliningrad and the trial deployment there of a brigade of the *Iskander* (SS-26 *Stone*) short-range ballistic missiles are intended to impress the US and NATO with the "Anti-Access/Area Denial"

<sup>59</sup> See: A. Chapman, "Latvia: Third World War – Inside the War Room", *Baltic Review*, 5 February 2016, available at: <http://baltic-review.com>; A. Shirokorad, "Zlaia kinoshka pro vojnu ponaroshku" [An Evil Film about a Phoney War], *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, 12 February 2016 available at: <http://nvo.ng.ru>.

<sup>60</sup> One timely analysis was Th. Frear, L. Kuelsa and I. Kearns, "Dangerous Brinkmanship: Close Military Encounters Between Russia and the West in 2014", *ELN Report*, 10 November 2014, available at: [www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org](http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org). See also the follow-up report: Th. Frear, L. Kuelsa and I. Kearns, "Russia-West Dangerous Brinkmanship Continues", 12 March 2015, available at: [www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org](http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org).

<sup>61</sup> One useful Russian assessment is A. Golts, "Bolshaia repetitsiia bolshoj vojny" [Big Rehearsal of a Big War], *Ezhednevny zhurnal*, 24 March 2015, available at: <http://ej.ru>; an informative overview is I. Kearns, L. Kuelsa and Th. Frear, "Preparing for the Worst: Are Russian and NATO Military Exercises Making War in Europe more Likely?", *ELN Report*, 12 August 2015, available at: [www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org](http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org).

<sup>62</sup> See: A. E. Kramer, "Russia Announces Surprise Military Drills in South", *The New York Times*, 8 February 2016, available at: [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com).

<sup>63</sup> See: P. Felgenhauer, "Russian Jets Fly Close to US Ship and Recon Aircraft Over Baltic Sea", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 21 April 2016, available at: [www.jamestown.org](http://www.jamestown.org).

<sup>64</sup> One convincing examination of the shift to the "deterrence by denial" strategy is A. Weiss Mitchell, "A Bold New Baltic Strategy for NATO", *The National Interest*, 6 January 2016, available at: <http://nationalinterest.org>.

<sup>65</sup> One informed Russian commentary is S. Ivanov, "Pol'sha izbavliaetsia ot sovetskikh generalov" [Poland Dismisses Soviet Generals], *Gazeta.ru*, 11 March 2016, available at: [www.gazeta.ru](http://www.gazeta.ru).

<sup>66</sup> The study is available at D. A. Shlapak and M. Johnson, "Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defence of the Baltic", *RAND Research Report RR-1253-A*, 2016, available at: [www.rand.org](http://www.rand.org). See also D. A. Shlapak and M. W. Johnson, "Outnumbered, Outranged, and Outgunned: How Russia Defeats NATO", *War on the Rocks*, 21 April 2016, available at: <http://warontherocks.com>.

<sup>67</sup> A useful examination of these options is A. Wieslander, "Who will Defend the Baltics? NATO, the US and Baltic Sea Security", *NATO Source*, Atlantic Council, 7 March 2016, available at:



(A2/AD) capabilities. However, in fact, this isolated “bastion” remains highly vulnerable.<sup>68</sup> One singularly striking departure from common strategic sense was the order of Defence Minister S. Shoigu to transform three brigades into full-size divisions in the Western “direction”, which corresponds neither to the reality of a shrinking pool of conscripts nor to the necessity to reduce defence spending, so that the real combat-readiness of the army grouping may actually decrease.<sup>69</sup>

Overall, Russian military pressure has failed to produce fissures within the Atlantic solidarity, or to demoralise the Baltic states directly subjected to it, or to isolate them from the more risk-averse and budget-conscious European allies. The reduction of this pressure due to the demands for sustaining the military intervention in Syria provided for NATO a useful pause, which allowed the allies to assess the true scope of the threat and to prepare contingency plans, which were finalised at the Warsaw summit in July 2016.

### Post-Crimea reconfiguration of the Black Sea theater

Russia’s August 2008 war with Georgia brought military-security matters into the focus of debates on the strategic profile of the wider Black Sea region, yet only briefly; until spring 2014, this theater had been largely neglected in NATO strategic planning. The shockingly effective military operation leading to the swift annexation of Crimea counteracted that neglect, and made it imperative for the Alliance to reassess the military balance on this isolated flank.<sup>70</sup> **Russia wasted no time in building up a powerful military grouping on the peninsula, making use of old Soviet infrastructure that had degraded over 25 years but was quickly made serviceable with minimal investment.** By the end of 2014, the initial phase of remilitarisation of Crimea had been completed, and Moscow gained confidence that its new possession was secure.<sup>71</sup>

During 2015 and early 2016, less effort and attention was devoted to increasing the Crimean grouping beyond the initial phase, and Russian military experts were left entertaining their fantasy of the “unsinkable aircraft carrier”.<sup>72</sup> The Black Sea Fleet is being strengthened with three *Varshavyanka*-class (Project 636) diesel-electric submarines, with three more to be delivered in 2016-2017, to form a new division, which will be based not in Crimea but in Novorossiysk.<sup>73</sup> The plan to add to the Black Sea Fleet a division of six *Admiral Grigorovich*-class frigates (Project 11356M) has had to be cancelled, however, because the gas-turbine engines for these ships were produced in Ukraine (*Zorya-Mashproekt* plant in Nikolaev), so even the three ships that have been launched cannot be properly serviced.<sup>74</sup> The Russian high command is now aware, apparently, that the logistics for the military forces in Crimea, where every parcel of supplies has to be delivered by sea, is extremely complicated.

Moscow was eager to challenge in a provocative and risky manner the US Navy ships showing flag in the Black Sea, but refrained from any demonstrations against the Bulgarian and Romanian navies or airspace.<sup>75</sup> Nor have the air and naval assets deployed in Crimea been used to put pressure on Ukraine, even during the escalation of fighting around Mariupol in late summer 2014. Up until late November 2015, Russia had been particularly circumspect about Turkish maritime interests and activities in the Black Sea, seeking to emphasize that the special strategic partnership with this neighbour was more important than its membership in NATO. Even during the crisis in bilateral relations caused by the downing of a Russian bomber in Syria by Turkish fighter on 24 November 2015, Moscow preferred not to resort to any military demonstrations in the Black Sea.<sup>76</sup> The possibility of Turkey closing the Straits for the Russian Navy, in full accordance with the clause on “direct military threat” in the Montreux

<sup>68</sup> See: G. Howard, “Lithuania’s Key Role in Countering Russian A2/AD Challenge to the Baltic”, Delfi, 2 March 2016, available at: <http://en.delfi.lt>.

<sup>69</sup> This point was made in A. Golts, “Novye diviziony poniziat boegotovnost” [New Divisions Will Degrade Combat Readiness], *Ezhednevny zhurnal*, 13 January 2016, available at: <http://ej.ru>.

<sup>70</sup> See: S. Blank, “The Black Sea and Beyond”, Proceedings, US Naval Institute, vol. 14, No. 10, October 2015, available at: [www.usni.org](http://www.usni.org).

<sup>71</sup> For an upbeat summary, see A. Chaplygin, “Rossijskaia armiiia v Krymu god spustia: sil’naia i sovremennaia” [Russian Army in Crimea One Year Later: Powerful and Modern], RIA Novosti, 13 March 2015, available at: <http://ria.ru>.

<sup>72</sup> See: for instance, A. Luzan, “Krym kak nepotopliaemyj avianoset” [Crimea as an Unsinkable Aircraft Carrier], *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, 24 July 2015, available at: <http://nvo.ng.ru>.

<sup>73</sup> See: J. Bender, “Russia’s Black Sea Submarine Fleet is Getting a Serious Upgrade”, Business Insider, 14 July 2015, available at: <http://uk.businessinsider.com>.

<sup>74</sup> See: N. Novichkov, “Russia Hoping to Export Three Sanctions-Hit Admiral Grigorovich-Class Frigates”, IHS Jane’s Navy International, 15 October 2015, available at: [www.janes.com](http://www.janes.com).

<sup>75</sup> One useful brief account is G. Jean, “Russian Su-24s Make Multiple Passes by USN Destroyer in the Black Sea”, IHS Jane’s 360, 2 June 2015, available at: [www.janes.com](http://www.janes.com).

<sup>76</sup> One exception was the appearance of a soldier with a portable surface-to-air missile on board the Caesar Kunikov large landing ship when going through the Bosphorus; see “Turkish FM Slams Russia’s Missile ‘Provocation’ in Bosphorus”, *Hurriyet Daily News*, 6 December 2015, available at: [www.hurriyetaidailynews.com](http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com).



Convention (1936) and with the full support of NATO, was obviously taken very seriously.<sup>77</sup>

Overall, Russia certainly possesses a very strong, perhaps even dominant military position in the Black Sea, and can effectively interdict maritime and air traffic along the coasts of Bulgaria and Romania, using the partially upgraded military infrastructure in Crimea. At the same time, Russia has been visibly reluctant to experiment with projecting military power in this region, unlike in the Baltic theater; thus, for instance, the deployment of US F-22 fighters to Romania in April 2016 was left unanswered.<sup>78</sup> During the “Caucasus-2016” maneuvers in September 2016, Moscow had no real choice but to intercept the US reconnaissance planes, but the Crimean scenario elaborated for this exercise was merely defensive. This self-restraint means that the assessments that focus on the sum total of capabilities and conclude that Bulgaria and Romania are as much under threat as Estonia and Latvia could be seriously off-target.<sup>79</sup> In fact, Moscow is concerned about NATO gaining superiority on this flank.<sup>80</sup> The need to sustain military intervention in Syria (even if in a reduced format) makes Russia even more cautious in asserting its position of power in the Black Sea theater, with the possible exception of Georgia.

### The nuclear threat and the missile defence irritant

For the states of East Central Europe, one crucial element of their security posture vis-à-vis Russia is the threat of non-strategic nuclear weapons. At the same time, one of the major strategic issues for Russia has been the development of the US missile defence system and its European “echelon”, which is supposed to be deployed primarily in East Central Europe. This interplay of immediate and true risks (about which little data is available) and the perceived dangers from reciprocal plans (that have been revised many times) generates much political tension, which is often manipulated to serve particular expediencies.

Controversy around the US “missile shield” goes back to the Gorbachev-Reagan era, but has acquired new content since the breakdown of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty (1972), at the initiative of President George W. Bush in December 2001. President Putin has referred to the US unilateral withdrawal on so many occasions that it is fair to characterise him as having a strategic obsession about the matter.<sup>81</sup> This fixation of the Commander-in-Chief determined the top priority given to the modernisation of strategic forces in the 2020 Armament Program (which remains in force despite the severe shortage of funding) and the reorganisation of command structures, in which the air-defence and space forces were integrated with the air force in one Air-Space Forces command.<sup>82</sup> It has also driven a series of back-and-forth steps that were supposed to “neutralise” the US assets deployed in East Central Europe. The deployment of *Iskander* (SS-26 *Stone*) short-range ballistic missiles to Kaliningrad was promised a number of times and tried during several exercises, invariably attracting negative attention in Poland.<sup>83</sup> The deployment of long-range Tu-22M3 (*Backfire*) to Crimea was announced as a direct response to the stationing of US missile defence assets in Romania, but then disavowed.<sup>84</sup> There has been much speculation about delivering and storing nuclear warheads of various kinds in Crimea, but nothing definite has taken place.<sup>85</sup>

**This ambivalence originates in the combination of strategic bargaining with the US and political intrigues in the East Central Europe** aimed at turning public opinion against partaking in the NATO missile defence system. Moscow has never believed that huge investment in building this system could be justified by a hypothetical threat from Iran, and has assumed that, in the East European states, the Iranian option cannot be taken seriously. By playing on the fear factor, the Kremlin has expected to amplify the reluctance in Romania, the Czech Republic and even Poland to contribute to the project, which cannot in any foreseeable

<sup>77</sup> A Russian view on the legality of such a closure is I. Remeslo, “Kontrol’ nad prolivami Bosfor i Dardanelly i nevyuchennyye uroki istorii” [Control Over the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits and the Unlearned History Lessons], RIA Novosti, 27 November 2011, available at: <http://ria.ru>.

<sup>78</sup> See: O. Pawlyk, “F-22 Jets are in Romania to Keep Tabs on Russia’s Black Sea Antics”, *Air Force Times*, 25 April 2016, available at: [www.airforcetimes.com](http://www.airforcetimes.com).

<sup>79</sup> One example is J. Bugajski and P. B. Dolan, “Black Sea Rising: Russia’s Strategy in Southeast Europe”, *CEPA Report*, February 2016, available at: <http://cepa.org>.

<sup>80</sup> These concerns are spelled out in V. Mukhin, “Nuzhen zaslon v sektore ugroz” [We Need a Counter in the Threatened Sector], *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, 22 January 2016, available at: <http://nvo.ng.ru>. See also “MID dopustil otnetnyye mery pri sozdanii flotilii NATO v Chernom More” [Foreign Ministry Hints on Counter Measures in case NATO Squadron is Deployed to the Black Sea], RBC.ru, 27 April 2016, available at: [www.rbc.ru](http://www.rbc.ru).

<sup>81</sup> See: S. Pifer, “Putin’s Nuclear Saber-Rattling: What is He Compensating For?”, Order from Chaos, 17 June 2015, available at: [www.brookings.edu](http://www.brookings.edu).

<sup>82</sup> For a brief evaluation, see A. Golts, “Vozdushno-kosmicheskie sily nuzhny tol’ko generalam” [Air-Space Forces are Good Only for Generals], *Ezhednevny zhurnal*, 4 August 2015, available at: <http://ej2015.ru>.

<sup>83</sup> See: T. Weselowsky, “Kaliningrad, Moscow’s Military Trump Card”, RFE/RL, 18 June 2015, available at: [www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org).

<sup>84</sup> See: I. Petrov, “Tu-22M3 ne budut razmeshchat’ v Krymu” [Tu-22M3 will not be Deployed to Crimea], *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 27 July 2015, available at: <http://rg.ru>.

<sup>85</sup> See: O. Odnokolenko, “Krym mozhet stat’ raketno-iadernym” [Crimea Could Become Nuclear-Missile], *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2 June 2015, available at: [www.ng.ru](http://www.ng.ru).



future provide effective defence against Russian missiles but could make them targets for preventive, perhaps even nuclear, strikes.<sup>86</sup> In synch with the propaganda campaign, this accentuation of threats was also expected to augment the anti-American sentiments still present in the “new Europe”, but the net result has been rather the opposite.<sup>87</sup> Russia is increasingly seen as a dangerous and unpredictable neighbor, so that only closer ties with the US and NATO could bring protection against its military escapades.

### Conclusion: The Shifting Interplay of Dirty Politics and Military Risks

Since the start of the Ukraine crisis in early 2014, **the states of East Central Europe have become increasingly important targets of Russian economic, political and military pressure.** Finding itself involved in new confrontation with the West and facing an unexpected unity of EU and NATO member states in enforcing sanctions, Moscow has been looking for weak links in these collective efforts. Its policy of exploiting vulnerabilities has been remarkably flexible, relying on energy ties with some states (Bulgaria and Slovakia), corrupt political ties with others (Czech Republic and Hungary), and military pressure on yet others (Romania and the Baltic trio). **None of these means – reinforced by a furious propaganda campaign – has produced the desired results.**

The usefulness of energy levers has been undermined by the shifts on the global and European energy markets that have granted greater leverage to buyers; Russia’s capacity for providing credit and buying assets has been curtailed by the crisis in its finances; the dividends from the export of corruption have been seriously reduced by several high-profile investigations; and the military pressure has been effectively countered by NATO’s determined stance. It may be assumed that, in the immediate future, Moscow will not gain any additional leverage in this region and is nearly certain to experience a further contraction in its influence.

There are signs, as yet inconclusive, that Russia is reducing reliance on military force as the most reliable instrument of policy and cutting down on its provocative activities – which generally correspond to the inescapable cuts in its defence spending. Latvian,



Estonian and Lithuanian politicians are typically pressing for an even tougher position to be taken against Russian aggressiveness, rather than seeking to engage Moscow in tensions-reducing dialogue.<sup>88</sup>

Much in Russia’s relations with and capacity for putting pressure on the states of East Central Europe will depend upon the trajectory of the Ukraine crisis. Moscow is manipulating the intensity of hostilities in the Donbass war zone, but its main working assumption is that the series of quarrels in the domestic political arena would aggravate the economic crisis in Ukraine – and accentuate the feeling of “Ukraine fatigue” in the EU.<sup>89</sup> Providing that this crisis situation does not take a cataclysmic turn, possible developments in the Baltic and the Black Sea theaters could still have a strong impact on Russia’s management of the confrontation with the West. In the Black Sea area, risks are mainly related to the future of relations between Russia and Turkey and the Turkish policy in Syria. In the Baltic area, a key trend is the closer military cooperation between NATO and Sweden and Finland, which Russia seeks to block, but every stern warning it issues propels the two states to take new steps forward. The question of joining the Alliance might acquire a practical character, and that would signify an improvement in the geostrategic vulnerability of the three Baltic states – and would be seen in Moscow as a major deterioration of its position.

**Russia finds itself in the process of geopolitical retreat on the Western “front”, and seeks to slow down this process** by mobilising every economic, political and military asset in East Central Europe, where various weak points in the European and Atlantic unity exist – and are typically overestimated by Moscow. Attempts to reverse this retreat, however tactically smart, risk provoking acute political crises, and are invariably accelerating Russia’s decline. ■

<sup>86</sup> See: R. Gramer, “How Should NATO Counter Putin’s Nuclear Threats?”, *Newsweek*, 13 July 2015, available at: <http://europe.newsweek.com>.

<sup>87</sup> A recent Gallup opinion poll shows that 69% of Poles, 58% of Estonians, and 57% of Romanians see Russia as the main threat, while 14% of Bulgarians identify the US as the biggest threat; see N. Esipova and J. Ray, “Eastern Europeans, CIS Residents See Russia, US as threats”, Gallup World, 4 April 2016, available at: [www.gallup.com](http://www.gallup.com).

<sup>88</sup> See: L. Linkevicius, “Enough: NATO Should Stop Feeding the Russian Troll”, *Politico*, 5 March 2016, available at: [www.politico.eu](http://www.politico.eu).

<sup>89</sup> See: A. Moshes, “Will Europe Blink First on Ukraine?”, *PONARS Eurasia Memo No. 422*, March 2016, available at: [www.ponarseurasia.org](http://www.ponarseurasia.org).

# KREMLIN'S NETWORKS IN FRANCE (Book Excerpt)



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For already several years, Kremlin has been conducting an aggressive seduction campaign in the European Union in order to influence the internal affairs of its member states. Russia is using a "mixed technique" of soft power and traditional KGB methods, which have shaped many people that are now in power. Meanwhile, Russian economy is experiencing a serious structural crisis, which is exacerbated by a large-scale corruption, Russia's financial support of foreign associations, think tanks, media propaganda, "troll factories", and even political parties, which form its network of influence. In France, representatives of Kremlin are actively developing relations with dissidents, Russian diaspora, French politicians of different factions, journalists, businessmen and everyone, who for different reasons admires V. Putin. This raises the important question, whether this intervention policy poses a threat to France's national security or European unity? During the research, I have come upon the footprints of KGB officers, orthodox billionaires, successors to the throne who are nostalgic about the lost greatness, numerous "useful idiots" and seriously big money...

## **RUSSIA'S SOFT POWER AND A THINK TANK IN THE HEART OF PARIS**

### **Ambitions and Failures of Russian-Style Soft Power**

What does the term "*soft power*" mean as used so much by V. Putin? It was coined by J. Nye Jr., a Harvard instructor. He is using this term in the book that studies "how power can change in modern international relations".<sup>1</sup> "Power", as defined by R. Dahl, is the ability to make others do what they would not decide to do otherwise. Nye believes that advantages that used to be critical (geographical location, population, raw materials), are gradually giving way to others: technology, education, economic growth, etc. To obtain what it desires, a country may use force and threats, or, alternatively, rewards and motivating incentives; another way to reach a country's goal on the international level is when other countries are beginning to want to follow the example,

imitate or start agreeing with the system that causes this effect. This is *soft power* (or "*ability to co-opt*"), which launches the system of "transnational creators of impressions".

Nye also notes that after World War II, USSR "has been using its exceptional advantages to promote strategic attractions", which included communist ideology, the imminence myth and transnational communist institutions. "However, the United States managed to be more effective – their soft power proved more efficient, partly, due to their industry and culture: from TV shows and jeans to music and cinema. Besides, "American language became the *lingua franca* of the global economy", and American universities are taking leading positions in the world of knowledge. And, finally, democratic values and respect for human rights are also becoming a source of international influence," says Nye.

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In this journal, the material is published with shortenings and minor editorial corrections, which do not in any way influence the content. All formatting of the text (bold, italics) was done by editors.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Nye Jr, *Le Leadership américain. Quand les règles du jeu changent*, Presses universitaires de Nancy, 1992.



At the same time, other countries are also beginning to use their soft power advantages: Chinese products are sold all over the world, just like Japanese manga, German cars, French technologies and wine, etc. As for the values and lifestyles of Europe, they win people over far beyond its territory. Meanwhile, the situation in Russia is far from perfect: it has no multinational companies, no development of economy (except for areas that have nothing to do with *softness* (extraction of raw materials, space, weapons). Russia does not sell fast moving consumer goods, does not invent Apple, Sony, or Coca-Cola. Thus, no one in the West is a regular consumer of Russian goods, except for gas, oil and, in some circles, the Kalashnikov gun. With its amazing cultural heritage, post-Soviet Russia has failed to build a popular culture “for export”: has not created any TV shows or clothing brands that would be sold globally. Most universities attract only students from third world countries and even those – for translation training, and western tourists, despite the beauty of Russian nature, are not in a hurry to visit it. And what started working even better than before, is the *creators of impressions*.

So, when Russia's leaders decided to develop its soft power, they did not try to copy America, but made every effort to communicate with the outside world.<sup>2</sup> Their strategy – to shape opinions and create networks that will promote their opinions. In particular, they have been very successful in working with white emigration in France in 2003.

Author of the book on Russia's soft power Marcel van Herpen speaks in harsher tones. According to him, Kremlin views soft power as a “simple manipulation tool in the hands of hostile governments”. According to secret services, for instance, American NGOs are the “agents of influence”. Thus, Kremlin believes that its soft power is to “influence foreign governments and manipulate public opinion”, completely losing the meaning of the term as given by Nye, moreover, turning it upside down. Marcel van Herpen thinks that in Kremlin's view “even such illegal actions abroad as *pots-de-vin* and espionage can be presented as useful tools in the soft power ‘armoury’ of a country”.<sup>3</sup> Yeah, right. In any case, four standard most convenient tools that are used in France are: Russian language, culture, church and history.

### Russian Language: Overly Political Vector

Russian Centre of Science and Culture that depends on *Rossotrudnichestvo*, organises language courses in Paris and regions: this is one of its primary functions. Besides, in 2013, Russian Government decided to create a network of cultural centres, Pushkin institutes, in order to coordinate Russian language studies and cultural programmes abroad. There is a need to hurry: V. Nikonov, head of the “*Russian World*” organisation reports “a 50 million decline in the number of Russian-speaking people around the world in recent years”. So far, all of this looks like actions of other countries.

Later, actions become more politicised and aggressive: Kremlin is trying to get the EU to recognise Russian language as one of its official languages – this would open doors to European institutions for Russia and would add

grounds to ‘assert’ the rights of post-Soviet Russian-speaking people”. On behalf of Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs this desire was expressed by O. Chepurin during the Forum of Compatriots of 2011. The first attempt took place in Latvia: pro-Kremlin forces in this country were able to push for a referendum on 18 February 2012 on recognising Russian as the second official language,<sup>4</sup> which would automatically make it an official EU language. Quite expectedly, on 12 January 2012, “*Russian World's*” web-site published a big article in support of such referendum. However, despite the significant turnout (69.23%), 75% of Latvians including the Russian-speaking ones, voted against granting Russian language this status.

Right after the Latvian referendum was over, on O. Chepurin's recommendation, gathering of petition signatures was started to conduct another referendum, this time – on the level of the EU. Who initiates this petition on France on 6 May 2012? Union of French Russophones, represented by D. Koshko and I. Krivova. Thus, this Union of French Russophones acts as an obvious tool for political lobbying. Did the Union pay for this, as it paid for the visit of Ukrainians, or as it paid at least some promoters of the Latvian referendum? After all, launching and coordination of such a petition requires time and effort. Compensation can be direct or indirect – in the form of targeted charitable contributions (subsidies).

For instance, in Latvia, politician T. Zhdanoka and organisations she works in received €30 thousand for their work, the main part of it being the promotion of the Russian language as an official EU language.<sup>5</sup> In 2015, for the same purposes, Zhdanoka, her pro-Kremlin party and/or her NGO,<sup>6</sup> will get €224 thousand. The money is being transferred – and, clearly, Kremlin thinks of it as an investment. In any case, the petition fell through: D. Koshko urged to gather 54 thousand signatures, and as of 20 March 2015, only 1,229 people signed.

### Culture and Church: Between Seducing and Forcing

At the same time, as all large countries, Russia is trying to promote its culture, even if currently it is far from its best shape. Kremlin likes partnership years (as, for example, 2010 – the year of Russia in France and the year of France in Russia), book festivals, trade fairs, film festivals, and grand exhibitions (such as icon exhibition in the Louvre): cultural diplomacy works to create a more attractive image of the country. D. Koshko is busy here as well: the Union of French Russophones is organising Russian Book Days, during which *Russophonie* literary prize is awarded for the best translation of Russian books into French. The award was founded in 2006, funded by Boris Yeltsin Fund and supported by “*Russian World*” organisation, as well as Russian Centre for

<sup>2</sup> Natalia Burlinova, “Russian soft power is just like Western soft power, but with a twist”, *Russia Direct*, 7.04.2015, [www.russia-direct.org](http://www.russia-direct.org).

<sup>3</sup> Marcel van Herpen, op. cit.

<sup>4</sup> “Le camp russophoneé crasé par référendumen Lettonie”, *Libération*, 19.02.2012.

<sup>5</sup> “Spreading Democracy in Latvia, Kremlin Style”, *re:baltica*, 19.03.2012, [www.rebaltica.lv](http://www.rebaltica.lv).

<sup>6</sup> “Kremlin's Millions: How Russia Funds NGOs in Baltics”, *Delfi*, 4.09.2015, [www.en.delfi.lt](http://www.en.delfi.lt).



Science and Culture in Paris (i.e. *Rosstrudnichestvo*). Of course, award winners are great translators of important literature pieces, and the jury, under the honorary presidency of T. Yumasheva-Yeltsina, daughter of Russia's first President, is comprised of merited professionals. However, this award is causing more and more disputes between teachers and translators, so in recent years, some people decided not to help with this process, as the award seems to be targeting political goals.

Even more heated conflicts are developing around Orthodox churches in France and in other countries. In truth, Kremlin is using Russian Orthodox church as a tool for spreading new state ideology, the anti-democratic, anti-Western, anti-human one (according to Marcel van Herpen). Besides, in 2000, Moscow Patriarchate under Kremlin's influence is beginning the process of re-subordination of Russian Orthodox parishes, – i.e. church buildings and the land under them! – which in the Soviet period were subordinated to Constantinople Patriarchate, considering that church is above borders, in order to avoid any interference by the Soviet state. So, Russian leaders today are trying to repeat what under Stalin's orders was already attempted after World War II: control over parishes allows to control their property.

This may seem funny. For example, there was fierce fighting around the church in Nice, – court trials, political pressure at the highest level (Putin, Sarkozy-Fillon), attempts to shame and even engagement of special services. And even though Moscow Patriarchate reached its objective, the entire Orthodox community of France is now against them. Besides, there is a conflict regarding the Biarritz church and the Cathedral in the Daru street. For the same reasons, similar conflicts are taking place in the US.<sup>7</sup> Who wants to subordinate French parishes to Moscow Patriarchate, are those, who support V. Putin, for example with "Prince's letters". The straight line that divides the Orthodox community and successors of Russian immigrants is becoming more obvious.

Along with this, there is the issue of construction of Russian churches that will be subordinate to Moscow Patriarchate: in Strasbourg, the project has not started yet, but in Paris the work is under way. The church that is about to rise next to the Eiffel Tower will take hundreds of million Euros in expenses, and will include a primary school and a "Slavic Institute", the functions of which are rather obscure. Negotiations were conducted directly between V. Putin and N. Sarkozy, "who gave a promise to Putin".<sup>8</sup> The controversy surrounding this project refers not only to aesthetics, – many immigrants or descendants of Russian immigrants fear that this place will become a new centre of Putin's propaganda. While others, on the contrary, support the construction that "marks the reinvention of Russian influence" in France.<sup>9</sup> The community is divided along the line described above.

### Using History as a Tool and Stalin's Rehabilitation

Interpretation of certain pages from history is on the rise as one more piece of evidence that demonstrates the spending of many bills by the Russian side. The issue is especially delicate in Russia's relations with Ukraine or the Baltics, as aspects of this issue are related to specific relations inside the USSR, as well as Russia's inheriting these relations. At the same time, Russia has not defined its position in regard to certain facts of 20<sup>th</sup> century and

continues to collect inconsistencies: for example, honouring the family of the last emperor and, at the same time, there is a growing number of certain groups that honour Stalin. Besides, officials are using these issues as an instrument of seduction (in particular, for immigrants' descendants) or accusation (e.g., in "Ukrainian Nazism"). Thorough efforts were made to attempt to spread ideas about "Putin's conservatives" in France. The first notable attempt was publication of N. Narochnitskaya's book "*What is left of our victory?*" in French.<sup>10</sup> The book appeared in Russia in 2005, in France – in 2008, when the author opened Institute for Democracy and Cooperation (IDC) in Paris. This institute would become the key element in Kremlin's networks in France and in the concept of becoming their "soft power".

N. Narochnitskaya (born 1948) presents herself as a historian, although she is more of a politician and high-level official. As a person close to the government, just like others, she was representing V. Putin during the presidential campaign of 2012 in Russia. At MGIMO, she founded a school that was attended by Russian elite and her own children, so Narochnitskaya declared her absolute loyalty to regime's rules.

Having graduated in 1971, she first worked at the Economy Institute, then, in 1982-1989, – at the United Nations in New York, where she obviously met V. Yakunin, – who at that time already was a member of the Board of Directors of the "*Russian World*" organisation, just like her. The fact that this lady worked for the UN demonstrates that she had strong ties with the KGB. Later, Narochnitskaya would say that she "became a dedicated Slavophile"<sup>11</sup> and that her political career started under Putin's regime. Having become an "Orthodox patriot" and a "dedicated crusader for a strong country",<sup>12</sup> this member of the nationalist party "Rodina" was a State Duma deputy from 2003 to 2007. She also heads Historical Perspective Fund established in Moscow in 2004, which organises "economic, political and cultural forums", inviting prominent Russians and foreign guests<sup>13</sup> – exactly what the Institute for Democracy and Cooperation does in Paris.

In her book "*What is left of our victory?*", N. Narochnitskaya assures that western attempts to portray Stalin as the worst "criminal of all time", in reality, are just the desire to "demonise Russia's unique success in the 20<sup>th</sup> century", – his victory in World War II – and, thus, stigmatise all of Russia. For Narochnitskaya it is important that in the past many Russians – former fearless fighters – were exposing Stalin's crimes in the name of the same values with which they defended their land! For the author, if the West criticises Stalin, it is only because he "treated the "decaying West" with deep contempt and transformed the "country" into a powerful geopolitical force. Meaning

<sup>7</sup> Marcel van Herpen, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> Frédéric Mitterrand, *La Récréation*, Robert Laffont, 2013, p.277.

<sup>9</sup> GaïdzMinassian, "Les réseauxfrançais de Poutine: une intelligentsia hétéroclite", *Le Monde*, 18.11.2014.

<sup>10</sup> Natalia Narochnitskaïa, *Que reste-t-il de notre victoire? – Russie-Occident: le malentendu*, éditions des Syrtes, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Natalia Narochnitskaya, *Russian World*, Aleteia, 2008, p. 93-94.

<sup>12</sup> Natalia Narochnitskaya, *Russian Development Code*, Book World, 2013, p.9.

<sup>13</sup> Natalia Narochnitskaya, 2008, op. cit., p.303.



that the West cannot deal with a strong Russia. In N. Narochnitskaya's book, besides the voluntary merger of Russia and the USSR, there are two lines of thought very popular in modern Russia: on the one hand, fear that the "country" will disappear like the USSR; on the other, a very Soviet belief that the end justifies the means. Incidentally, the politician wants to impose the idea that everyone, who defends human rights in Russia, is "denying [national] history". Because, "historical and cultural experience" of the country demands following the state, whatever it does, and not caring too much about protection of individuals, as this is historically wrong: it is enough to read Pushkin to be clear about it.

Her book officially rehabilitates Stalin and this process will keep on going, as demonstrated by Kurochkin's spectacle in Sevastopol.<sup>14</sup> Everything is forgiven to those, who have experienced Russia's "might", i.e. size of territory and fear felt by neighbours, which explains a certain reaction after the illegal annexation of Crimea. "What is left of our victory?" – is not only a history book, it is a political textbook that forms the "discourse" of Russian "conservatives".

Who published the French version of this politicised book? *Syrtis* publishing house headed by Serge de Pahlen, who is a member of the Honorary Council of Saint Basil the Great Malofeev Charitable Fund, and who signed "the Prince's letter".

Who wrote the introduction and conclusion? Economist J. Sapir and Fr. Coquin, former instructor at Collège de France: we are able to find both at once. Little by little we start seeing the network in its true form. And N. Narochnitskaya will continue developing this network through the Institute for Democracy and Cooperation.

### Institute for Democracy and Cooperation

The Institute is an important tool of Putin's soft power in France: it allows Kremlin's officials to be present at public debates, advance arguments of Russian leaders, establish connections with people and groups of people. O. Bronnikova confirms this in her thesis: the main goal of this "emanation of Russia's power" is to "promote abroad the political course of Russia's current government".<sup>15</sup> IDC, the luxurious office of which is located in the city centre, just a few steps from Hôtel Matignon, demonstrates Kremlin's desire to present itself at its best: close to Western government offices and able to pay the rent. IDC was founded in 2008 as Russian equivalent of American NGO *Freedom House*<sup>16</sup> and has a "twin" in New York, which was closed down in 2015. Here is how they present themselves:

*"The mission of IDC is to participate in debates on the interrelation of state sovereignty and human rights; study East-West relations; talk about the role of NGOs in democratic life of world's countries; discuss interpretations of human rights and the way they are applied in different countries. We are also interested in preserving memories of the great moments in history, in particular, the two major wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Institute supports the classical approach to international law; we believe that state-people is the best framework for protection of human rights and that "humanitarian" interference can cause conflicts in this context; we support the international system that has respect for sovereignty of states and people. We also believe that political order has to be based on virtue, in particular – on Judeo-Christian ethics that unites both – eastern and western parts of Europe. The Institute participates in debates*

*on these issues, invites experts to express their opinions during forums and roundtables. The Institute welcomes the expression of different points of view."*<sup>17</sup>

This brief description contains three "human rights" references, two "sovereignty" and "East-West" references. Clearly, "human rights" is not Russian leadership's strong suit. There is a desire to have a base in Paris, in the place that is traditionally associated with the West, in France, but with the goal to defend Kremlin's concept, concept that is de facto (neo-)Soviet and eliminates the possibility of "humanitarian" interference, because a state's "sovereignty" comes first. Three following points are shocking: reference to "Judeo-Christian ethics" – this will be very effective for attracting certain groups of French society; bringing "state-people" to the foreground, when N. Narochnitskaya in her speeches defends the empire and its equivalents in the issues related to Russia and its neighbours; importance that is given to 20<sup>th</sup> century history, moreover, history presented by "two major wars", which are very demonstratively not called "World Wars".

IDC has removed one paragraph from its description: until recently it mentioned "funding by Russian NGOs". In 2008, responding to a German journalist's question about the €60 million budget for "Russian democratic institutions",<sup>18</sup> N. Narochnitskaya assured that she relies on "donations made by representatives of Russian business world" and explained that IDC is asking for financing – budget funds – through the facilitation of the Civic Chamber.<sup>19</sup> In December 2013, she claimed at a Russian web-site that the Institute is not using "Kremlin's money", and is keeping its head above water solely due to donations from companies<sup>20</sup>: there was a mention of the "Tatarstan Bank" and a "company from Moscow".<sup>21</sup> New versions come up regularly, but all of them alike are very obscure; funding sources remain hidden. But this is not important: Russian state, *Gazprom*, "Russian World" organisation – all of these are just wordplay. It does not matter, which oligarch will be ready to fund IDC, once instructed to do so "from the above" – these are the rules.

### Natalia Narochnitskaya's Posts

At Natalia Narochnitskaya's IDC works Briton J. Laughland, Research Director, who among other things wrote about "political processes from Charles I to Saddam Hussein", "the trial of Slobodan Milosevic and the corruption of international justice" and about "Europe destroying [...] political society foundations". He calls himself "a eurosceptic and a conservative". Thus, his position is very close to the nationalistic Soviet Russian one.

Brought up under the Soviet system, Ms. Narochnitskaya is an elegant, well-dressed woman with perfect hairdo, unusually pale and cold. She has published a lot of

<sup>14</sup> See: Cécile Vaissie *Les Réseaux du Kremlin en France*, Les Petits Matins, 2016, p.44.

<sup>15</sup> O. Bronnikova, op. cit., p. 196.

<sup>16</sup> Marcel van Herpen, op. cit.

<sup>17</sup> IDC, [www.idc-europe.org](http://www.idc-europe.org).

<sup>18</sup> Others believe that IDC budget is \$3 million. – see: "How much is Russia spending for informational war with Ukraine?", Inform Napalm, 20.12.2015, [www.informnapalm.org](http://www.informnapalm.org).

<sup>19</sup> Natalia Narochnitskaya, *Russia and Russians in the Modern World, Algorithm*, 2010, p.289.

<sup>20</sup> Natalia Narochnitskaya, *Russia's Concentration. Battle for the Russian World. Book World*, 2015, p.298.

<sup>21</sup> Lorraine Millot et Veronika Dorman, "Les sept familles dans la manche du Kremlin", *Libération*, 24.10.2014.



books, most of which are collections of short articles and interviews, which have already been published before. As for modern Russia, IDC director stresses the importance of Orthodox religion and family, although she herself came to faith rather late in her life and has only one child. While the official message of the IDC in its five years of work declared its main goal as “creating a bridge of close friendship between two major European nations – French and Russian”, N. Narochitskaya herself has a strongly anti-Western position: West wants to subordinate Russia, impose its rules, “break it up”.<sup>22</sup> She and other “conservatives” acknowledge only “Russian civilisation”, “Russian code” – things that differ Russia from the rest of Europe, – Russian world, that will become the alternative to the West”.<sup>23</sup>

IDC director does not like either dissidents, or those, who want the rule of rights and freedoms in Russia. She says she has “no illusions as to the system called democracy”: “In the entire world this is the least democratic form of society operation”. She also does not believe in either “the philosophy of progress, or the construction of a perfect society”: “We are fishermen and we have what we deserve to catch”.<sup>24</sup> She believes that “the topic of human rights” is getting too much attention in the West, that these human rights are being used against some states. Here, in particular, she means Yugoslavia, USSR and, of course, Russia. This is why IDC criticises western interpretation of human rights, while stressing that it is human rights that form the foundation of its activity. This allows Narochitskaya to discard accusations of Putin’s Russia in this regard and, in her turn, blame European institutions. Thus, for Narochitskaya the Council of Europe is a “fundamentally ideological organisation”, which is “dominated by almost Trotskyist messianism – forced instilment of criteria without any regard for nationality or religion”.<sup>25</sup>

For her, there are no spontaneous societies or social movements: these are simply manipulations of different strength. IDC director believes that “colour” revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia have been provoked by the West. She condemns the entry of the Baltic states into NATO. “*Russian World*” has to be “broader than the borders of Russia itself”.<sup>26</sup> In cold blood, N. Narochitskaya presents arguments in favour of Russia’s expansion to the South and West, as well as arguments for the need to retain its traditional zone of influence; she also does not hide her view that disintegration of the USSR was a “tragedy”: “It was not the Soviet Union that was destroyed – it was the Russian state,”<sup>27</sup> – this is how she sees it. Like for most “conservatives”, for her Russia is the same as the Russian Empire and the USSR. Such imperial concept allows to establish ties with descendants of white emigration, but on condition that they agree that USSR was a form of the Russian empire. This concept justifies operations conducted in Crimea, Donbas and in other places.

### IDC Mission

IDC’s mission is to present Russia in a favourable light. This undisguised desire was publicly admitted, when on 13 December 2013, N. Narochitskaya announced on her *Facebook* page for her “dear friends” that she “started a new project, the goal of which is to build a positive image of Russia abroad”. In this specific

case, it was done via creating an English-language webpage – *From Russia with love*, where she was publishing shots of beautiful nature, golden palaces, tasty food, along with bears, dogs and children.

N. Narochitskaya and her colleague J. Laughland would carry out this mission more seriously when they started working with media, which they currently do – regularly and often. Their speeches are always a 100% match with Kremlin’s line. Both of them participate in public demonstrations, conferences, roundtables, practically all around the world. In France, IDC organises meetings and colloquiums, which do not look like scientific events at all; place – either IDC office, or most prestigious meeting halls, for instance, Senate or National Assembly. Among others, IDC invites persons with history of French-Russian contacts (Republican MP T. Mariani, O. Trubetskoi, former paratrooper K. Mauro, etc.), far-right representatives, supporters of separation, some public figures, intellectuals, military, for instance, Jean Dufourcq, chief editor of national security journal (“*Revue de défense nationale*”), or retired colonel J. Ogar – there, all guests can meet the “conservatives” close to President Putin, for example, economist S. Glaziev or D. Rogozin, who incidentally is Russia’s permanent representative to NATO.

Simply by looking at names of IDC speakers and topics that are discussed, one can understand in which circles and according to which lines N. Narochitskaya is building her networks for even greater successes of Kremlin. This is even easier, as these speakers often also appear on Kremlin’s French-speaking media: networks overlap and reinforce each other.

### EXCHANGE OF COURTESIES WITH FRONT NATIONAL

Thus, after ties were established between FN and Kremlin, it became possible to openly provide favours to one another. On the one hand, FN, just like other radical right-wing parties in Europe, approves Kremlin’s actions in Crimea and Donbas, even though Russia has violated all international rules and commitments that she assumed in regard to Ukraine.<sup>28</sup> In turn, FN received Russian money that allows to fund election campaigns, transferred through institutions run by “former” KGB officials. The role of Marine Le Pen’s party (and several others in Europe) is quite clear: *FN has to call legitimate things that are not legitimate*.

### Referendum in Crimea and Those Who Legitimate It

Let us go back to the events of February 2014, when “little green men” – Russian military – flooded Crimea on V. Putin’s orders (as he later admitted himself, and

<sup>22</sup> Natalia Narochitskaya, 2008, op. cit., p.111.

<sup>23</sup> Natalia Narochitskaya: “*Russian World is an alternative to the West and this causes jealousy.*” *Narochitskaya.ru*, 3.09.2015..

<sup>24</sup> Natalia Narochitskaya, 2013, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> Natalia Narochitskaya, 2008, op. cit., p. 170-171.

<sup>26</sup> Natalia Narochitskaya, 2008, op. cit., p. 297.

<sup>27</sup> Natalia Narochitskaya, 2013, op. cit., p. 268.

<sup>28</sup> Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov openly lied on 26 January 2016 saying that Russia’s only commitment in the frame of the Budapest Memorandum was not to threaten Ukraine with the use of nuclear weapons (see p. 57).



as everyone who was following the events could have guessed). On 1 March 2014, A. Chauprade, FN candidate in the elections to the EP, justifies Russian intervention in the official communiqué of FN, where we see many contradictions: “There is no legitimate government in Kyiv; the present government is acting under the pressure of radical armed groups that have destroyed democracy, are violating language rights of Russian-speaking population, restricting opposition TV shows, attacking Ukrainian Orthodox churches of Moscow Patriarchate and threatening to revoke the guaranteed by agreements autonomy of Crimea”. According to him, “it was quite logical to predict that Moscow will not allow the new government to threaten Russian-speaking population in the East and Crimea”. Just as French intervention in Mali, Russian intervention in the East of Ukraine and in Crimea aimed at first disarming the population that had been dangerously armed, ensuring the rights of Russian-speaking population, which had already been violated in Kyiv, and, which is also pretty obvious, on the lines of France in Saharan region of Africa, retaining certain own strategic interests in the entire area of historic influence.<sup>29</sup>

This speech was made up of Kremlin’s false arguments, but, at least, he admitted “the little green men” were Russian, and that Russia invaded Crimea and Donbas in order to preserve its “area of influence”. So, it is not guaranteed that Russian leadership liked this communiqué.

Pseudo-referendum for annexation of Crimea by Russia took place on 15 March 2014, slightly later than two weeks after Russia’s intervention in this Ukrainian territory. None of recognised international organisations expressed their desire to observe the “referendum”: violated all rules and did not show any signs of legitimacy. However, there appeared a strange Eurasian Observatory for Democracy and Elections (EODE), which accepted “observers” representing far-right forces from all Europe: Forza Italia, Northern League from Italy, Hungarian Jobbik, Bulgarian Attack, Austrian FPÖ, Belgian Vlaams Belang. This so-called mission was, in reality, a Moscow-registered NGO with the task “to oppose Western ideology” and specialising in monitoring elections in “republics” whose declaration of independence is not recognised by any country: Abkhazia, Transnistria and others.<sup>30</sup> It is headed by a Belgian, military man, right-wing radical, L. Michel, who was already spotted among the guests at *La Voix de la Russie* and who, according to V. Jauvert, “is financially supported by Moscow”.<sup>31</sup>

A. Chauprade and J.-L. Schaffhauser were also among the military men invited to Crimea, while Marine Le Pen claimed that “officially FN did not send any observers”.<sup>32</sup> A. Chauprade carried out the task he was invited for: he gave an interview to the “Voice of Russia” stating that he “did not observe any pressure”. Later he said: “I think that the referendum was a success, as the Russian majority took their destiny in their hands, but the minorities also took part in this! This was an important result – the motherland of Russia uniting with its historical province!”<sup>33</sup>

The same evening, A. Chauprade approved this referendum on *RT*. Later, as claimed by a Russian media outlet, he flew to Moscow, where he took part in a “closed meeting” with K. Malofeev, oligarch, who finances separatists: “The conversation was private and took place in one of the halls of Glazunov Gallery”.<sup>34</sup>

On March 17, Marine Le Pen held a press conference, where she stated that “referendum results are, indisputably,

legitimate”.<sup>35</sup> The following day, V. Putin ratified accession of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, which prior to that had a special status, to Russia. On March 19, Jean-Marie Le Pen stated at *BFM TV* that “Putin’s position [...] is undisputable” and that “Crimea has always belonged to the Russian Empire”. Clearly, Mr. Le Pen was not aware that in August 2008, right after Russia-Georgia war, German TV channel *ARD* asked Putin, whether Crimea would be Russia’s next goal. According to Russian agency “RIA News”, Putin’s answer was: “Crimea is not a disputed territory. Russia has long recognised Ukraine’s existing borders”.<sup>36</sup>

Did FN legitimise Kremlin’s actions just because it shared its ideology and society development concepts? In a few months, hackers from *Anonymous International* made public the documents of T. Prokopenko, responsible for the Internal Policy Department in Kremlin. The intercepted messages are dated March 2014 and, according to *Mediapart*, show contacts between Russians and Front National regarding acceptance of the far-right party’s official position in favour of Russia’s annexation of Crimea. Besides, these materials “discuss financial matters”. After Marine Le Pen’s press conference on March 17, Prokopenko was cheerfully communicating with a man (most likely, K. Rykov, former MP and an influential blogger):

“15:49 Marine Le Pen officially recognised results of Crimean referendum.

15:51 Yes, she lived up to expectations. ;)

15:57 We need to somehow thank the French. It is important.

16:09 Yes, super!”<sup>37</sup>

In a few days, web-site *Pont russe* said that they “share the happiness of Russians and the people of Crimea in this moment of historical reunification after 23 years of artificial separation”, a T. Shakhovskaya told about the “perfect referendum, conducted [...] in perfectly calm and transparent conditions”.<sup>38</sup> Although the methods of work with white emigration were special, the result was the same: full and unconditional approval.

### Quid Pro Quo

In April 2014, Marine Le Pen returned to Moscow, this time – with a private visit. Some even said that this was her second visit after February 2014, when she met V. Putin and discussed possible financing. In any case, in April, according to *Le Monde*, she was “received with open arms” by the Duma and S. Naryshkin, who wished her success in the European elections. Marine Le Pen was thankful for the welcome and assured that she opposed

<sup>29</sup> “Communiqué’ Aymeric Chauprade [...]”, official web-site of Front National, 1.03.2014, [www.frontnational.com](http://www.frontnational.com).

<sup>30</sup> Mitchell A. Orenstein, “Putin’s Western Allies”, Foreign Affairs, 25.03.2014. See also EODE web-site: [www.eode.org](http://www.eode.org).

<sup>31</sup> Vincent Jauvert, “Vladimir Poutine, grand frères des fachos”, op. cit.

<sup>32</sup> Agathe Duparc, Karl Laske, Marine Turchi, “Crimée et finances du FN: les textos secrets du Kremlin”, *Mediapart*, 2.04.2015.

<sup>33</sup> Alexandre Artamonov, “En direct de la Crimée: A. Chauprad et émoigne”, *La Voix de la Russie*, 16.03.2014, [www.fr.spuniknews.com](http://www.fr.spuniknews.com).

<sup>34</sup> Marin Le Pen, “Look up to Putin!”, op. cit., p. 12-13.

<sup>35</sup> Agathe Duparc, Karl Laske, Marine Turchi, op. cit.

<sup>36</sup> “Putin: Russia recognises borders”, *RIA News*, 30.08.2008, [www.ria.ru](http://www.ria.ru).

<sup>37</sup> Agathe Duparc, Karl Laske, Marine Turchi, op. cit.

<sup>38</sup> Tamara Schakhovskoy, “Crimée 2014: le travail de mémoire”, *Russky Most*, 26.03.2014, [www.russkymost.net](http://www.russkymost.net).



sanctions introduced as a result of war in Ukraine and, by the way, supported the project of federalisation of Ukraine cherished by Moscow and rejected by Kyiv. Thus, Kremlin received words and gestures of support from an ally that will protect its interests in French and European media. As for Marine Le Pen, she gains appreciation and international status, and on top of that – ample funding, as quickly discovered in the study conducted primarily by M. Turchi for Mediapart.<sup>39</sup>

### Sanctions Against Russia

Russian military intervention in Crimea stunned the West, which numbly stood by and watched Russia brutally violate the rules of international relations. America was the first to react: on 6 March 2014, President Obama signed the document that allowed to introduce sanctions against persons who violate sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. On 17 March, Council of the European Union introduced sanctions against 21 Russian and Crimean politicians and officials. After the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia on 18 March, the US, EU, Australia, New Zealand and Canada imposed Level I sanctions. Each country or group of countries compiled a list of persons, companies and organisations that are considered responsible for actions committed. Their assets were arrested, visas – cancelled, it was prohibited to do business with them, their participation in summits and international meetings was cancelled.

Sanctions were also discussed in April-May, while the situation in Donbas was deteriorating due to Russia's actions. Other countries were making their own list of sanctions and expanding the already existing ones. On 18 July, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development terminated its funding for new projects in Russia.

These sanctions are affecting several levels: persons, Russian organisations and institutions (e.g. banks) and the Russian state (cancellation of summits). They are imposed by countries (the US, Canada, as well as Albania, Germany, France, Iceland, Japan, Georgia, Ukraine, etc.), as well as groups of countries (EU), therefore, there are cases when one country has imposed sanctions on an entity, and another – has not.

After a long phase of negotiations with the purpose of giving Kremlin a chance to change its policy without “losing its face”, on 29 July 2014 everything changed drastically. Malaysian Airlines plane was shot down over the territory of Ukraine's East, occupied by pro-Russian separatists. On July 30, Council of the European Union imposed a ban on investments and business operations with Crimea in certain sectors. On July 31, Council of the European Union imposed truly severe sanctions against Russia's economy: strict restrictions were applied on access to the capital market for certain financial institutions, as well as restrictions on the sale of arms and certain technologies necessary for certain energy resources. At first, the sanctions were imposed for a year, later they were extended until 31 January 2016, then – until 31 July 2016.

In turn, on 6 August 2014, Russia responded by blocking the import of certain food products from 28 EU member states, US, Canada, Norway and Australia. At first, these “anti-sanctions” were introduced for a year, then – extended until 5 August 2016. Prior to that, Russia announced cancellation of visas for certain Americans, Canadians, and Europeans (this list was not published).

Kremlin can also count on other allies. At the time when France, for instance, did not send its diplomatic missions to Crimea and did not advise its citizens to go there, a very symbolical forum was organised in Yalta on 11 May 2014: “Russian Crimea: historical and civilizational roots”. The forum was attended by a “Russian aristocracy delegation”, which included P. Sheremetiev, who attended it as a sign of recognition of the new government. Without denying that he had visited Crimea dozens of times, he expressed his “boundless joy of returning to Russia”.<sup>40</sup> So, was the photo that illustrated D. Shakhovskii's interview in the “*Russian Gazette*” in December taken in Yalta? The former teacher poses with a stiff smile in front of something that looks like a boat and several other grey boats. He carries a message that all of this illegal annexation – result of segregation, cruelty and lies – will be legitimate.

On 25 May 2013, 23 candidates from Front National became Members of the European Parliament. At that time, France did not know that FN had received Russian money, which was spent for the party's election campaign. A. Chauprade and J.-L. Schaffhauser were among those 23 elected officials. For the first one, this was initiation and compensation for his lobbying for Moscow. For the other – a miracle: J.-L. Schaffhauser, a former centrist, who was not even a FN member, and in the fall of 2013 unexpectedly substituted number one on the FN list in city elections in Strasbourg, was later promoted by A. Chauprade to number three on the list for EP elections. His specialty is “launching companies abroad and searching for funding for communities”. In particular, he worked for Dassault, Total and Auchan; is close to *Opus Dei* and, according to Mediapart, at the request of his friend Jean-Paul II,<sup>41</sup> was working on rapprochement between the Vatican, Russia and the Orthodox Church since 1991. His contacts and skills seem to be well-paid. He became the key element in the mechanism of relations, especially, financial, between FN and Kremlin.

These FN MPs got a chance to hold the anti-European line within, at least, one European institution that was paying them generously. Thus, a month after the elections, J.-L. Schaffhauser convened a hearing in the European Parliament regarding Ukraine and organised an address by J. Laughland, who stated that, supposedly, there were “Nazis” in the Ukrainian army and among the government in Kyiv<sup>42</sup> (Laughland was invited by the deputy again on 7 July 2015). It was through him that the far-right deputy that represented a Russian think tank in Paris addressed the European Parliament twice presenting Kremlin's view on the situation in Ukraine. Some investment happens to be helpful.

### “Congress of Vienna” and Elections

Time from time, there were other, more clandestine meetings that show that FN-Kremlin relations are part of a bigger plan of using European far-right forces as an

<sup>39</sup> See.: Cécile Vaissie Les Réseaux du Kremlin en France, Les Petits Matins, 2016, p.105.

<sup>40</sup> “Crimea is visited by representatives of Russian noble families”, Crimea news, 11.05.2014; “Petr Sheremetiev: Ukraine is part of Russia”, Crimea news, 12.05.2014, [www.komtv.org](http://www.komtv.org).

<sup>41</sup> Agathe Duparc, Karl Laske, Marine Turchi, “Argent du FN: le shommes de la filière russe”, Mediapart, 8.12.2014.

<sup>42</sup> “L'IDC au Parlement européen”, Institut de la démocratie et de la coopération, 24.07.2015, [www.idc-europe.org](http://www.idc-europe.org).



instrument. For example, on 31 May 2014, K. Malofeev held a top-secret meeting with a hundred people, mainly representatives of parties that had been present as “observers” in Crimea on 16 March, or who promoted radical nationalist ideas. Officially, the multimillionaire organised this event in an incredibly beautiful palace in Liechtenstein as a celebration of “the future of fundamental values of Christian civilisation in Europe, as a family”.<sup>43</sup> This raises a question, on the one hand, what is the connection between these two topics, and on the other, – if the meeting was indeed dedicated to this theme, why was it closed for press and public (participants were not allowed to take photos).

After several data checks, we were able to find out that the meeting was attended by A. Chauprade, obviously, Marine Le Pen, eurasist O. Dugin and artist I. Glazunov, as well as count de Pahlen, Spanish royalist Don Sixto Enrique de Borbón-Parma,<sup>44</sup> also, there were Russian ultranationalists, representatives of Austrian FPÖ and controversial Bulgarian Attack party. Schaffhauser later told *Dernières Nouvelles d'Alsace* that he was invited, but was deterred by his other responsibilities. According to a daily, he “was abroad – in Russia – with Marine Le Pen and, apart from other things, met with the head of State Duma – also within Putin’s circle – S. Naryshkin”.<sup>45</sup> In Vienna, Dugin urged to create a “fifth column of pro-Russian forces” from “representatives of intelligentsia, who wish to strengthen their national identity”.<sup>46</sup> Swiss newspaper “*Tages-Anzeiger*” covered this event under the ironic name “Summit with Putin’s fifth column”. Everyone came to talk about methods of “saving Europe from liberalism and homolobby” as well as to honour Putin’s achievements.<sup>47</sup> Love cannot be completely unconditional.

Everything comes at a price. Thus, when on 2 November 2014, “republics” supported by Kremlin organised something similar to elections in Donetsk and Luhansk without any hint of legitimacy, OSCE – an internationally recognised organisation with official responsibilities, in particular, to observe the course of democratic elections around the world – did not send any observers. However, representatives of European far-right forces came again, in order to give those elections the appearance of a serious event. Shortly before this, L. Michel’s EODE and a Polish puppet organisation created ASCE (Association for Security and Cooperation in Europe). The similarity of names was intended to make fun of OSCE and confuse people. A. Shekhovtsov in his blog published 44 names of these “observers”: the only Frenchman on this list was J.-L. Schaffhauser.<sup>48</sup> His MEP status gave him significance that Belgian F. Baur, from L. Michel’s close circle, did not have.

This “mission” of observers at illegitimate elections – was it not, with a few exceptions, a gathering of semi-marginals? Yes and no. Because among them was also

L. Slutskii, who gave commentary on “the Prince’s letter” to “*Komsomolskaya Pravda*”.<sup>49</sup> A member of Zhirinovskiy’s party, head of Duma Committee for CIS Affairs, Eurasian Integration and Relations with Compatriots, and also – Russian Fund for Peace – organisation that *Le Monde* ties to the “Orthodox church and Russian special services”.<sup>50</sup> The sovietologist was saying, almost with emotion, that talks “about peace” were being used again to mobilise and use western “useful idiots”, and that it was working. Such statements, as defined in the 1950 Stockholm Appeal, were one of Soviet post-war propaganda tools, which was based on a simple, yet false division: USSR was defending peace in the entire world, while the capitalist West – according to him – “was just talking”. So, many naive people in the West voluntarily supported Soviet initiatives.

According to A. Shekhovtsov, the “observers” were first checked into the prestigious Metropol hotel in Moscow,<sup>51</sup> which requires significant investments, and then, illegally, without Ukrainian government’s permission, crossed the Russia-Ukraine border to go to Donetsk.

### Mediapart’s Exposure

Three weeks later, a scandal erupted. On 22 November 2014, M. Turchi announced in Mediapart that in September 2014, Marine Le Pen received a loan of almost €9 million from the First Czech-Russian Bank (FCRB), and almost €2 million was already transferred. FN got the loan with an interest of 6% and the right to withdraw funds “as needed for funding”. Thus, this “funding” received after the intensive lobbying in favour of Moscow’s leaders, raised a question about the source of money. As well as about specific terms of the agreement: what did FN promise in return? Besides, it seemed very “responsible” to establish financial relations with a country, whose five big banks were sanctioned. And why didn’t FN let the public know about this loan? As gifts and grants from abroad are banned by the French law?

Perplexed FN very quickly started assuring everyone that the loan would be repaid and that they did not have any other choice as no Frenchman would give them this amount. This, again, was surprising. It was hard to imagine that all French banks refused to give a loan on ideological grounds. Or did FN bring to FCRB reasons, in which French institutions were not interested? And the revelations continued: the talk was already about €40 million, instead of €9 million (in the end, it turned out that the real amount was indeed €9 million<sup>52</sup>). Mediapart stressed that “the funding raised the question of a foreign state’s interference in the political life of France”.<sup>53</sup> Did the loaned money belong to the bank or to the Russian state, which only used the bank as a cover?

Let us also remember that since 1980s, KGB managed to reclaim, at least, part of the money that belonged to Soviet Communist Party, and invested it in new banks

<sup>43</sup> AFP, “Réunion proruse à Vienne départis d’extrême droite européens”, *Libération*, 4.06.2014.

<sup>44</sup> Marine Turchi, “Le FN ren force ses connexions russes”, *Mediapart*, 11.06.2014.

<sup>45</sup> “Jean-Luc Schaffhauser, désormais un des “personnages clés” des connexions russes du FN?”, *Dernières Nouvelles d’Alsace*, 11.06.2014.

<sup>46</sup> “The Black International”. How Russia is feeding right-wing parties all over the world”, op. cit.

<sup>47</sup> Bernhard Odehnal, “Gipfel treffen mit Putins fünfter Kolonne”, *Tages-Anzeiger*, 3.06.2014.

<sup>48</sup> “Fake monitors “observe” fake elections in the Donbass”, Anton Shekhovtsov’s blog, 1.11.2014, [www.anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.fr](http://www.anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.fr).

<sup>49</sup> Aleksandr Gamov, “Russian white emigration is defending Mother-Russia again”, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 25.12.2014.

<sup>50</sup> Matthieu Goar, Benoît Vitkine, “À l’UMP, la tentation de Moscou”, *Le Monde*, 13.04.2015.

<sup>51</sup> “International “observers”: Moscow – Rostov – Donetsk”, Anton Shekhovtsov’s blog, 8.11.2014, [www.anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.fr](http://www.anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.fr).

<sup>52</sup> Marine Turchi, “Front national, l’œil de Moscou”: enquête sur l’alliance avec la Russie de Poutine”, *Mediapart*, 2.11.2015.

<sup>53</sup> Marine Turchi, “Le FN attend 40 millions d’euros de Russie”, *Mediapart*, 26.11.2014.



and enterprises headed by “either KGB servicemen or informants”,<sup>54</sup> according to A. Kokh, an official responsible for privatisation. Besides, top command of KGB took positions in security services of these banks and enterprises: all of Russia’s banking sector is in the hands and under control of former KGB officers.

FCRB was established in Czech Republic in 1996, and also has a branch in Moscow. Since December 2002, Stroigaz (STG), leader in gas pipeline construction, little by little bought out 94.5% of FCRB capital, and since then, it is headed by 30-year-old R. Popov, former deputy CFO of STG. His wife is the daughter of V. Babusenko,<sup>55</sup> who headed KGB’s government communications department, then became number two in STG’s security, and later – deputy director of this company. Actually, KGB networks have a lot of such people: currently, they are the leadership of Russia. In February 2007, STG officially withdrew its capital from the bank, in which R. Popov, as a private entity, kept 74.45% of shares (today – 100%). In 2008, Babusenko headed FCRB’s Supervisory Board, and in 2011, became its First Vice President.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, it becomes obvious that FCRB has never given FN loans without the approval of the Russian government, or rather – without its orders.

The intermediary in the loan transaction was Schaffhauser, who unhesitatingly approved the loan.<sup>57</sup> Clearly, it was he who in February 2014 first introduced Marine Le Pen to A. Babakov (deputy of “United Russia” party), whom the Alsace businessman had met in the middle of 2000s by chance in an orthodox church.<sup>58</sup> Although A. Babakov is a member of the Duma Committee on International Affairs, he mostly acts as “special representative of President Putin in relations with compatriots’ organisations abroad”.<sup>59</sup> So, as it turns out, we came back where we started. According to A. Navalny’s evidence, A. Babakov has the following achievements: majority shareholder of Ukrainian energy companies and different hotels, with a lovely estate in Saint-Léger-en-Yvelines and an apartment in the luxury part of Paris. He also establishes companies in Czech Republic. Everything is so great that Navalny is asking a question, whether Babakov could be behind “this Czech-Russian bank that gave loans to Le Pen’s party”.<sup>60</sup> In the spring of 2014, Babakov was included in the list of persons sanctioned by Canada.

Schaffhauser was acting solely based on idealism principles: he admitted to receiving a €140 thousand bonus as an intermediary, which this good Christian at first forgot to include on his income declaration that he submitted as an MP.<sup>61</sup>

### Favour Games

In Paris new events were taking place. In 1988, FN founded a microparty headed by Jean-Marie Le Pen – *Cotelec*, which worked as a small bank: collected donations, gave loans to FN candidates and saved this party a number of times. On 29 November 2014, Mediapart found out that at the time of providing the abovementioned loan, in April 2014, *Cotelec* also received (right before the elections to the European Parliament) “two million Euros from a company in Cyprus”<sup>62</sup> – *Vernonsia Holdings Limited*. This money allowed FN to replenish its candidates’ funds.

The abovementioned Cyprus bank belonged to Yu. Kudimov (who denied everything). He was also, most likely, a former KGB officer, who changed his colours

to a financial sector worker. In the Soviet period, Yu. Kudimov presented himself as a journalist – a popular cover, – but he was exposed and deported from London in 1985. According to Russian *Forbes*, he made a successful career in finance and became a millionaire due to his ties with military and security forces (a priori – KGB). In 2009, Yu. Kudimov received a task to create “WEB-capital”, which he also headed. “WEB-capital” manages some assets of VEB – an important “*Vnesheconombank*” (Foreign Trade Bank),<sup>63</sup> which is a holder of 100% of “WEB-Capital” shares and 100% of whose shares belong to the Russian state; it is also close to secret services, just as Soviet banks, where it originated. In 2011, Kudimov was a member of strategic council of *Rostelecom* group together with K. Malofeev. In 2013, he left “WEB-Capital” and created “Pangeo Capital” with the capital of \$700 million. Astounding success.

Jean-Marie Le Pen pretended to be naive, stating that the \$2 million was a loan from a Cyprus institution, and that he did not see a Russian source there. Several months later, it turned out that the old fellow was in Moscow in late October – beginning of November 2014. He said that Crimea “has always been a Russian province” and met with O. Dugin and K. Malofeev. Possibly, he was introduced by Z. Chavchavadze, who said that he had known the former head of FN for over 20 years. But the key part was played by A. Chauprade. Jean-Marie Le Pen clearly said: “Mr. Chauprade introduced me to people that he knew [...]. Through Chauprade I met K. Malofeev. You know how it happens, – we had lunch, dinner, and I was told ‘I know someone, who can help you find someone, who will give you a loan’”.<sup>64</sup>

Former FN head admitted to Mediapart that at first Chauprade wanted to receive a “personal loan” from the Russian side: “He wanted a personal loan [...]. I recommended that he doesn’t do it. I told him that “it would be better to take a loan from *Cotelec*, follow the standard procedure, without exceptions [...]. So he went through *Cotelec*. Took a €400 thousand loan. And since then, he has already paid it back.”<sup>65</sup>

Having established a connection with Malofeev and his rich friends, Chauprade killed three birds with one stone: received the required funding for his election campaign to the European Parliament; did the FN patriarch

<sup>54</sup> Alfred Kokh, Igor Svinarenko, *A Crate of Vodka*, Vol. 1. “Eksmo”, 2003, p. 81; see also Yuri Shchekochikhin, *With love*, *Novaya Gazeta*, 2006, p.129-150.

<sup>55</sup> Agathe Duparc, Karl Laske, Marine Turchi, “Argent du FN: les hommes de la filière russe”, op. cit.

<sup>56</sup> Agathe Duparc, Karl Laske, Marine Turchi, “Argent du FN: les hommes de la filière russe”, op. cit.

<sup>57</sup> Marine Turchi, “Le Front national décroche les millions russes”, op. cit.; Agathe Duparc, Karl Laske, Marine Turchi, “Argent du FN: les hommes de la filière russe”, op. cit.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Alexander Mikhailovich Babakov, [www.ru.wikipedia.org](http://www.ru.wikipedia.org).

<sup>60</sup> “Russian MP with Ukrainian money is looking for funding for French political groups that supported DNR”, *Navalny.com*.

<sup>61</sup> Karl Laske et Marine Turchi, “Le troisième prêt russe des Le Pen”, *Mediapart*, 11.12.2014.

<sup>62</sup> Fabrice Arfi, Karl Laske et Marine Turchi, “La Russie au secours du FN: deux millions d’euros aussi pour Jean-Marie Le Pen”, *Mediapart*, 29.11.2014.

<sup>63</sup> Anton Verzhbitsky, “Credit of trust: the right way to manage a billionaire’s money” *Forbes*, 26.02.2015.

<sup>64</sup> Karl Laske et Marine Turchi, “Le troisième prêt russe des Le Pen”, op. cit.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.



a good turn; positioned himself as an intermediary between FN and Kremlin's money, and thus, did not give this role up to Schaffhauser and did gain trust. In France, Jean-Marie Le Pen reminded people about his "fascination" with V. Putin and "how he leads the country toward revival after the 70 years of communism".<sup>66</sup> Revival? What revival? The ruble went into freefall, the economy is in decay. However, this does not prevent Kremlin from "giving loans" through Malofeev or offering money to European political parties. These investments are, obviously, viewed as cost efficient in the mid-term.

Meanwhile, the exchange of courtesies continued: two Russian politicians were invited to FN congress on 29-30 November 2014: A. Isaiev, the 50-year-old Deputy Speaker of Duma, who had become quite rich since the beginning of his political career as an anarchist in Gorbachov's times; and A. Klimov, member of the Federation Council, head of Committee for Foreign Affairs. During the FN Congress, A. Isaiev openly spoke against Ukraine, Euromaidan, almost exploded with harsh criticism of the US and EU: because he did see the interconnection.

After that, the events were happening at lightning speed: on 11 December 2014, Mediapart published its article "Le Pen's third Russian loan". Jean-Marie Le Pen indeed disclosed information on the transfer of another sum (no details) to his micro-party *Cotelec*. In any case, the information leaked about the sum of €20 million.<sup>67</sup> But while the sum of €20 million was quickly forgotten, questions kept piling up: in this light, how do we understand Front's pro-Kremlin stance on Crimea, as well as on the sanctions? Is it the voice of heart or exchange of favours?

Meanwhile, the number of instances of supporting the necessary position in the Europarliament increased. Thus, in the communiqué on 9 August 2014, FN confirmed its protest against the anti-Russian sanctions and described their consequences for French agricultural sector. In September 2014, 23 FN MEPs voted against the Association Agreement on and free trade with Ukraine, which was still adopted. On 27 November 2014, Chauprade assured that the decision not to give Russia the first Mistral might "adversely affect equipment sales projects in the arms industry".<sup>68</sup> At the FN Congress, Marine Le Pen also expressed her regret regarding the report on provision of those ships, and submitted a complaint "to Europe from Atlantic to the Urals". Political analyst P. Perrino, present in the hall, said: "I have never seen them so concerned with Russia's issues. I had the impression of obligation. Moreover – this proves that pro-Russian lobby is making a manoeuvre".<sup>69</sup>

In 2015, a collection of interviews of the head of FN was published in Russia, which contained more evidence – statements that she constantly repeated fully reflected Russian leadership's views:<sup>70</sup> on protection of values,

protests against EU stereotypes, Eurozone and NATO, statements regarding "Nazis" coming to power in Kyiv, statements that France has no real democracy and that the country is subordinate to the US, etc. According to these statements, the ultimate goal became quite clear: destroy the EU in its current form, which can be done if France withdraws from the union. This is in tune with the project formulated by O. Dugin, or with the analytical material by British journalist L. Harding, who rightly emphasised that Kremlin has also involved other radical right-wing parties in Europe.<sup>71</sup>

### Loans, Presents or Exchange?

Another question that is brought up: aren't all these "loans", at least partly, buying the influence that can be exerted through having the corresponding entities accept the pro-Kremlin stance? There is no definitive evidence, but there are certain elements that allow for a better understanding of the situation and Russia's methods.

Researcher T. Kondratieva showed the extent, to which the Soviet system has adopted Russian feudal processes. The government is concentrated on its functions of "retaining": each present has to create a connection between government and subordinates, and any element of power has to become the source of own enrichment.<sup>72</sup> As different privatisation problems showed, these connections grew even stronger after the fall of the USSR.

I. Khakamada, a famous Russian politician, before finishing this career, told in her book (2006) about some practices that she witnessed.<sup>73</sup> There, she explained that personally passing envelopes with money or paying television crew – was the "stone age of corruption": it was easier to pay for a "fake" study or make a "present" to the foundation – these practices are now being used in France as well, but in Russia their number has greatly increased. In addition, one can understand the role of certain foundations, which turn out to be very convenient for receiving transfers, in short – money laundering. The term "bribe" is not even worth mentioning now – this is too commonplace: in Russia, supporters are paid "financial compensation" to ensure their loyalty. Exchange of favours is made easier through blurring the line between public and private property, as the example below will demonstrate.

Until 2009, Russian media was talking about possible introduction of a tax on importing USB Keys and discs to Russia – a tax that was meant to financially support performing artists. In September 2010, press announced, that this tax would be given to filmmaker M. Mikhalkov, who created Russian Union of Right-Holders for this purpose. In November 2014, famous journalist A. Nosik wrote that this tax brought an "additional 600 million rubles" (€12 million) for M. Mikhalkov in three years. Where did Nosik take the 600 million rubles figure?

<sup>66</sup> Fabrice Arfi, Karl Laske et Marine Turchi, "La Russie au secours du FN: deux millions d'euros aussi pour Jean-Marie Le Pen", op. cit.

<sup>67</sup> Karl Laske et Marine Turchi, "Le troisième prêt russe des Le Pen", op. cit.

<sup>68</sup> Aymeric Chauprade, "Début des conséquences de la non-livraison du premier BPC Mistral: la panique de M. Le Drian", official Front National web-site, 27.11.2014, [www.frontnational.com](http://www.frontnational.com).

<sup>69</sup> "Au congrès du FN, la "camaraderie" russe est bruyamment mise en scène", Mediapart, 29.11.2014.

<sup>70</sup> Marine Le Pen. Look up to Putin! op. cit.

<sup>71</sup> Luke Harding, "We Should Beware Russia's Links With Europe's Right", *The Guardian*, 8.12.2014.

<sup>72</sup> Tamara Kondratieva, *Gouverner et nourrir. Du pouvoir en Russie (xvi e - xx e siècles)*, Les Belles Lettres, 2002.

<sup>73</sup> Irina Khakamada, *Sex in big politics*, "Novaya Gazeta", "Book Club 36.6", 2006.



Also, why does he think, as most Russians do, that this money will not go to the Union's activity, but instead will end up in the filmmaker's pocket?<sup>74</sup> The filmmaker is famous for his support of V. Putin.

Where there is power, there is money. According to surveys published by Mediapart in July 2015, the US campaign transferred at least €7.6 million worth of bribe to Russian officials to preserve their dominant position in the market. Later this bribe helped Putin take under control Russia's legal system.<sup>75</sup> In a broader sense, money allows to bribe people, make them obliged and dependent, and consequently, vulnerable. This is how Putin's Russia operates, and all Russians know it.

The legitimacy of "favours" to the National Front is doubted on the grounds that, at least, one other such "favour" was already provided in 2002 during Presidential elections: Russians offered to cover costs for François Bayrou's campaign. The offer was made through an intermediary – a Frenchman, whose name is unknown. The message was very clear: "We have long observed your career, we believe in your political future, and we are ready to sponsor you..." Bayrou declined the offer and made it public. This was later commented upon by H. Blanc in 2004: "He was not the first or the last one in this context. Other European politicians are also receiving similar proposals".<sup>76</sup>

### Situation in Other European Countries

Russians' buying of political influence, regardless of their representation of Kremlin, is also a practice observed in post-Soviet states. Scandals took place in Lithuania and Estonia, especially in the case of Tallinn's mayor: he asked for €1.5 million from Russia for his party, and the same amount – for construction of an Orthodox church, many times met with V. Yakunin. In Czech Republic, rumours are circulating regarding ex-President V. Klaus and the incumbent President – M. Zeman. Certain facts have been established: Zeman agreed to "accept money from lobbyists tied to Russia". Along with this, Zeman spoke against anti-Russian sanctions a number of times.<sup>77</sup>

Besides, it is not just the French who take notice of the ties between far-right forces and Kremlin, – more attention is being paid to them by university instructors and journalists. On 3 February 2014, Ukrainian researcher A. Shekhovtsov published an article on his blog, in which he analysed the pro-Russian network (in Europe) behind the anti-Ukrainian defamation campaign. He named N. Narochnitskaya and J. Laughland, as well as told about "a wide network that works to promote anti-Western, pro-Russian and pro-Eurasian ideas", "breeding right-wing radicals".<sup>78</sup> V. Jauvert wrote in the same spirit in May 2014: "To weaken the Union, Kremlin's leader supports

far-right parties". The journalist quotes "Russian ties" – a study published in March 2014 by a Hungarian political analyst P. Kreko, who reached same conclusions.<sup>79</sup> In November 2014, popular German newspaper *Bild* said that for months "Kremlin has been building a network of right-wing populists in Western Europe", in particular, by giving them loans through "banks ties to secret services".<sup>80</sup> An American telegram published on WikiLeaks in 2011 showed that in Bulgaria either Attack or its leader "pocket large amounts of money coming from Russia".<sup>81</sup> Some talk about Russia's sponsorship of Golden Dawn – Greek neo-Nazi party<sup>82</sup> and Austrian FPÖ.<sup>83</sup>

On 27 November 2014, Russian-language web-site *The Insider* published a long article titled "The Black International. How Russia is feeding right-wing parties all over the world". The text included email exchange of K. Malofeev's team from email boxes hacked by *Anonymous International*. The discovered documents proved that Malofeev and his team were "recruiting" (word from the lexicon of Russian special services) and "supporting marginals and ultraconservatives in the West". According to this article, politicians and intellectuals, "who criticise liberal values and support Kremlin's policy" receive funding, as well as "dozens of parties, movements and media outlets with ultraconservative platforms around the world", as confirmed by *WCF* Moscow conference in September 2014. Thus, Malofeev was the key figure in those operations; some of them involved (this should be treated with caution) "his business partner, O. Trubetskoi" – signatory of the "Prince's letter" and a member of "Compatriots" Coordination Council, and businessman S. Rudov. According to this web-site, Malofeev, Trubetskoi and Rudov also relied on contacts established by *Russia Today*.<sup>84</sup>

Naturally, there is a lack of official evidence, and it will remain so until the opening of archives. In any case, certain aspects noted by *The Insider*, point to information about other actors. The situation seems absurd: Kremlin is funding radical right-wing parties in Europe after decades-long support of communist parties around the world (evidence of this fact has already been published in media in the early 1990s). Besides, Kremlin accusing Kyiv government of being "fascist", while supporting far-right, shady parties looks like a paradox as well. In any case, going back to FN, – its acceptance of Russian money, at least in part, as a loan in the frame of "favour exchange" means that FN according to Russian law is a "foreign agent", i.e. – almost a traitor to the homeland. But there is no legal framework for dealing with this situation in the decaying European Union... ■

<sup>74</sup> Anton Nossik, "Besogony prosjat babla", LiveJournal, 11.11.2014.

<sup>75</sup> David Crawford et Marcus Bensmann (Correct!V), "Le système Poutine (1/6): argent sale et effondrement de l'État", 25.07.2015; "Le système Poutine (2/6): quand les fonctionnaires allemands fermaient les yeux", 27.07.2015, "Le système Poutine (3, 4, 5): trois baleines, un espion et des "raids", 1.08.2015, Mediapart.

<sup>76</sup> Hélène Blanc, KBG Connexion. Le système Poutine, pub. Hors Commerce, 2004, c. 314.

<sup>77</sup> Marcel van Herpen, op. cit.

<sup>78</sup> "Pro-Russian Network Behind the Anti-Ukrainian Defamation Campaign", [www.anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.fr](http://www.anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.fr).

<sup>79</sup> Vincent Jauvert, "Vladimir Poutine, grand frère des fachos", op. cit.

<sup>80</sup> "AfD-Chef im Bild-Verhör. Lassen Sie sich von Putin finanzieren, Herr Lucke?", *Bild*, 26.11.2014.

<sup>81</sup> Mitchell A. Orenstein, "Putin's Western Allies", op. cit.; Vincent Jauvert, "Vladimir Poutine, grand frère des fachos".

<sup>82</sup> Leyteris Xaralampopoulos, "Le financement de l'Aube dorée. Ses liens avec l'extrême droite russe, les hommes d'affaires grecs et russes", Greek students' and Paris workers' initiative, 3.07.2014, [www.initiativegrecqueaparis.wordpress.com](http://www.initiativegrecqueaparis.wordpress.com).

<sup>83</sup> Ludovic Lamant, "Prêt russe au FN: le Parlement européen s'empare de l'affaire", Mediapart, 3.12.2014

<sup>84</sup> "The Black International". How Russia is feeding right-wing parties all over the world", op. cit.