

# **After ‘hybrid warfare’, what next? – Understanding and responding to contemporary Russia**

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### Tiivistelmä

Raportissa, "Hybridisodan jälkeen – mitä seuraavaksi?", korostetaan, ettei ole yksinkertaista vastausta tai käsitettä, kuten "hybridisota", jonka avulla voitaisiin arvioida Venäjän ulko-, turvallisuus ja puolustuspolitiikkaa sekä sen erilaisia syy- ja seuraussuhteita. Sen sijaan Venäjän vahvuudet ja heikkoudet tulisi analysoida erikseen. Projektin tutkijat esittävät raportissa oman tutkimusnäkemyksensä kokonaisuudesta, jotka esimerkiksi liittyvät propagandan käyttöön (informaatiosotaan) ja Venäjän yritykseen luoda itsestään kuvaa suurvaltana. Lisäksi tutkijat tarkastelevat, miten Venäjä yhdistää sotilaallista voimaa ja perinteistä armeijan käyttöä ulkopoliitikassa sekä Venäjän parantunutta kykyä koordinoida 2000-luvun sotaoperaatioita. Tutkijat pohtivat myös Venäjän sotilasmenojen tehottoman käytön pitkäaikaisvaikutuksia sekä pelotteen ja ehkäisevän toiminnan merkitystä Venäjän viimeaikaisten sotatoimien valossa.

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## Sammandrag

Rapporten "Efter hybrid krigföring - vad blir det sen?", understryker att det inte finns någon enkel karaktisering eller ett enda begrepp, såsom "hybrid krigföring", som är tillräcklig på egen hand att utvärdera Rysslands utrikes-, säkerhets- och försvarspolitik. I stället bör var och en av Rysslands styrkor och svagheter analyseras separat. Forskarna analyserar ett antal ämnen som effektiviteten av propaganda (information krig), Rysslands strategi för att bygga upp sin egen självbild som en stormakt, hur Ryssland kombinerar uppvisningen av militär makt och användningen av konventionell militär i sin utrikespolitik, vilka förbättringar har det varit i Rysslands förmåga att samordna krigsoperationer under 2000-talet, de långsiktiga effekterna av ineffektiv användning av den ryska militärbudgeten, samt effektiviteten av avskräckande strategi och vikten av förebyggande åtgärder.

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### Abstract

The report "After the hybrid warfare: - what next", stresses that there is no simple characterisation or a single concept, such as "hybrid warfare", which is sufficient on its own to evaluate Russia's foreign, security and defense policies. Instead, each of Russia's strengths and weaknesses should be analyzed separately. The researchers analyse a number of topics such as the effectiveness of propaganda (information war), Russia's approach to building up its own self-image as a great power, how Russia combines displays of military power with the actual use of the military in its foreign policy, what improvements there have been in Russia's ability to coordinate war operations in the 2000s, the long-term effects of the inefficient use of the Russian military budget, as well as the effectiveness of deterrence and the importance of preventative action in the light of Russia's recent military activities.

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## SUMMARY

More than two years after Russia's annexation of Crimea, the West continues coming to terms with the implications of this event. As discussed by the project's first report, the concept of 'hybrid warfare' quickly established itself, because it seemed to be particularly useful to explain recent changes in Russian defence and foreign policy. The report highlighted that the concept was indeed valuable in drawing the attention of policymakers to some new security challenges. At the same time, the report cautioned that beyond this initial usefulness, the concept of 'hybrid warfare' as an explanation for almost every Russian policy move is likely to do more harm than good to our understanding of developments in Russia, as well as to the process of identifying and implementing realistic responses.

The central purpose of the second report is to emphasise that there is no simple answer or concept, such as 'hybrid warfare', that can evaluate developments in Russia in all their complexity. In order to gain a nuanced understanding of changes in Russian foreign, security and defence policies differentiated questions should be asked about strengths and limitations of Russian military capabilities, developments in Russian thinking on the use of armed force, Russian foreign policy goals and intentions and possible responses to Russia, all of which need to be tailored to the concerns and requirements of specific actors and states. Such an approach enables a detailed understanding of what is really new as opposed to what merely *appears* to be new in accordance with the 'hybrid warfare' idea. Towards this end, members of the project's panel of experts provided detailed studies on the difficulties relating to the manipulation of more forces in war ('information warfare'); Russia's international image projection; changes in the use of Russian military force and conventional military power as a foreign policy tool; improvements in Russian capabilities to coordinate complex, 21<sup>st</sup> century military operations; long-term implications of inefficiencies in Russian military spending; the relevance of coercion and deterrence for understanding recent Russian military action; and international lessons in civil-military relations and their particular relevance for Finland.

The report concludes with the following recommendations:

1. **Russian politics is more complex than macro-level concepts, such as 'hybrid warfare' suggest.** Responses to recent changes in Russian foreign and defence policy need to bear this in mind.
2. **Strong Russian area studies should be supported.** In-depth understanding of Russia requires wide-ranging expertise of the country's politics, history, culture, society and economy.
3. **Context is key for understanding contemporary Russia. The recent focus on 'hybrid warfare' has overstated the newness and uniqueness of recent Russian actions, both militarily and in terms of foreign policy.** This has come at the expense of historical and comparative context, which has tended to overstate the 'uniqueness' of the Russian case.
4. **Unnecessarily overstating Russian strengths and Western weaknesses can have unintended consequences.** Western countries, Finland included, should stress their own strengths first and foremost.
5. **While making a strategy to deal with long term challenges coming from Russia, an important factor is openness and inclusion** – a key strength of liberal democracies, such as Finland.
6. **Bilateral relations with Russia are always also a part of larger context** – it is important not only to understand Russia, but also the perceptions of other actors, states and regions on contemporary security and Russia.

## YHTEENVETO

Yli kaksi vuotta sitten Venäjän liitti Ukrainalle kuuluvan Krimin niemimaan itseensä. Länsi ei ole vieläkään selvinnyt shokista. Tämän hankkeen ensimmäinen raportti totesi että käsite ”hybridisota” nopeasti vakiinnutti itsensä yleisessä käytössä. Konsepti vaikutti selittävän juuri silloin erityisen hyvin Venäjän ulko- ja turvallisuuspolitiikan viimeaikaiset muutokset. Raportissa todetaan ”hybridisota” konseptin olevan arvokas silloin kun piti kiinnittää päättäjien huomio uusiin turvallisuushaasteisiin. Samalla kuitenkin raportti varoitti, että tätä pidemmälle käsitteen ”hybridisota” hyödyllisyys ei välttämättä mene. Hybridisotaa ei voida antaa selitykseksi lähes jokaiselle Venäjän politiikan siirrolle. Jos käsitettä käytetään liian laajasti niin on todennäköistä että siitä on enemmän haittaa kuin hyötyä, arvioitaessa ja analysoitaessa Venäjän toimia sekä pohdittaessa oikeita reaktioita.

Keskeinen tarkoitus tässä hankkeen toisessa ja viimeisessä raportissa on korostaa, että ei ole yksinkertaista vastausta tai käsitettä, kuten ”hybridisota”, jonka avulla tai kautta voidaan arvioida Venäjän politiikkaa sekä erilaisia syy ja seuraussuhteita. Jotta voidaan saada nyansoitu ymmärrys kaikesta siitä, mitä Venäjän ulko-, turvallisuus ja puolustuspolitiikassa on tapahtunut ja muuttunut viimevuosina, Venäjän vahvuudet ja heikkoudet tulee analysoida erikseen kuten Venäjän sotilaalliset kyvyt, Venäjän strategisen ajattelun muutos, Venäjän ulkopoliittiset tavoitteet ja tarkoitukset sekä miten vastata niihin. Jokainen osa-alue on oma haasteensa. Arviot vaihtelevat usein riippuen eri toimijoista ja valtioista, jotka tilannetta arvioivat sekä mistä näkökulmasta arviota lähdetään tekemään. Vain yhdistelemällä eri osa-alueita ja näkökulmia pystytään arvioimaan paremmin, mikä on aidosti uutta ja mikä vain näyttää olevan uutta. Tähän raporttiin projektin asiantuntijat laativat oman tutkimusnäkemysensä kokonaisuuksista, jotka liittyvät propaganda käyttöön (informaatioisotaan), Venäjän yritykseen luoda itsestään kuvaa suurvaltana, miten Venäjän sotilaallinen voima ja perinteisen armeijan käyttöä yhdistetään ulkopoliitikassa, Venäjän parantuneeseen kykyyn koordinoida 2000-luvun sotaoperaatioita, Venäjän sotilasmenojen tehottoman käytön pitkäaikaisvaikutuksia sekä pelotteen ja ehkäisevän toiminnan merkityksestä Venäjän viimeaikaisten sotatoimien valossa ja lopuksi huomioita kansainvälisistä kokemuksista sotilas –ja siviiliviranomaisten suhteesta ja niiden merkityksestä Suomessa.

Raportissa esitetään seuraavat suositukset:

1. Makrotason käsitteet, kuten ”hybridisota”, eivät avaa Venäjän ulko-, turvallisuus- ja puolustuspolitiikkaa. Mietittäessä vastauksia viimeaikaisten turvallisuusympäristön muutoksiin tämä on hyvä pitää mielessä. Yksityiskohdat luovat kokonaisuuden.
2. Venäjän ja Euraasian aluetutkimusta olisi tuettava enemmän. Venäjän kokonaisuuden ymmärtäminen edellyttää laajaa asiantuntemusta mm. maan politiikkaan, historiaan, kulttuuriin, yhteiskuntaan ja talouteen.
3. Konteksti on avain nyky-Venäjän politiikan ymmärtämiselle. Tapahtumat tulisi asettaa laajempaan kokonaisuuteen, jotta se mikä on uutta ja mikä vanhan jatkumoa tulee selkeästi esille.
4. Länsimaissa, Suomi mukaan lukien, tulisi korostaa omia vahvuuksia ensisijaisesti. Tarpeettomalla Venäjän vahvuuksien ja lännen heikkouksien liioittelulla voi olla arvaamattomia seurauksia.
5. Venäjään liittyvä politiikka sekä laajemmin turvallisuuspolitiikkaan liittyvät strategiat tulisivat olla mahdollisimman avointa ja laajasti keskusteltua.
6. Kahdenväliset suhteet ovat aina myös osa suurempaa kokonaisuutta – tunnemme muiden toimijoiden, valtioiden ja alueiden Venäjä-kuvan ja miltä Suomen politiikka näyttää muiden silmissä.

## INTRODUCTION

More than two years after Russia's annexation of Crimea in spring 2014, policy-makers and analysts in the West continue to come to terms with the long-term implications of this event, both in terms of our understanding of the extent of the changes it signified regarding Russian capabilities and its intentions to assert itself as a global actor, and the responses required by its neighbours and the regions and parties beyond. As discussed in the first report issued by this project, 'hybrid warfare' quickly established itself as the concept of choice in the parlance of policymakers and many experts, because it seemed to be particularly useful to explain how Russia's approach in Crimea differed from previous, less successful military operations. The report highlighted that the concept was indeed valuable in drawing the attention of policymakers to the fact that changes in Russian capabilities had occurred and that there was a need to revise Western views of the Russian military, which up until this point had been excessively negative and had underestimated the ability of the Russian armed forces to deal with low-intensity conflicts. At the same time, the report cautioned that beyond this initial usefulness, the concept of 'hybrid warfare' as an explanation for almost every Russian policy move was likely to do more harm than good to our understanding of developments in Russia, as well as to the process of identifying and implementing realistic responses. The report raised the following three points for consideration, and recommended that the concept has outlived its usefulness:

1. **'Hybrid warfare' does not adequately reflect the content and direction of Russian military modernization. The concept understates Russian ambitions and overestimates Russian capabilities at the same time.** 'Hybrid warfare' is a Western construct that does not originate in Russian military thinking. Although Crimea demonstrated that Russia was not as stuck in Cold-War thinking about the use of military force as often assumed, the operation's success was circumstantial and not the result of a new, specifically Russian, war-winning formula. 'Hybrid warfare' at the same time underestimates Russian ambitions and overestimates the country's actual military capabilities. On the one hand, 'hybrid warfare' diverts attention from the fact that Russian military doctrine, the ongoing process of modernization, and the subsequent intervention in Syria demonstrate ambitions that go beyond the capabilities required for smaller scale contingencies, like Crimea, where only a limited amount of kinetic force and advanced technology is required. Ultimately, the aim of Russian military modernization is to create a global, conventional deterrent. On the other hand, 'hybrid warfare', with its emphasis on Russian strengths vis-à-vis Western weaknesses, glosses over the fact that Russian military modernization is far from complete and significant gaps remain between the capabilities of the Russian military and those of more technologically-advanced, Western armed forces.
2. **'Hybrid warfare' oversimplifies Russian international politics/foreign policy, which is more complex than the label implies.** In the aftermath of Crimea, 'hybrid warfare' evolved from a military concept into an idea that is now routinely used to describe Russian foreign policy in general. The use of an already ambiguous military concept in such a capacity obscures more than it explains and is likely to make



the identification of realistic policies vis-à-vis Russia more difficult. The idea that Russian foreign policy can be described as a 'hybrid war' against the West blurs the line between war and peace unnecessary. Furthermore the use of 'hybrid warfare' militarizes the West's language regarding its relations with Russia in an already tense situation. Finally, the implied notion of Western weakness in the face of superior, Russian 'hybrid warfare' capabilities might play directly into Putin's hands by making Russia and its leadership look stronger than it actually is.

3. **'Hybrid warfare' tells us nothing about Russian goals or intentions and mistakenly implies that Russian foreign policy is driven by a global 'grand strategy'.** Russian foreign policy has become more assertive in recent years, and in particular it has displayed a heightened level of frustration with the West. 'Hybrid warfare' has been used by some policymakers and analysts as a convenient shorthand label for this change. The problem is that within this context, 'hybrid warfare' explains very little in terms of why Russia would pursue such an approach. The application of the concept in this way disregards the fact that Russian foreign policy is driven by various geopolitical concerns and policy drivers, and that indeed it has its own weaknesses as well. What Russia wants to achieve vis-à-vis NATO, for example, is likely to differ from what it wants from its relationship with the US, the European Union, and with other individual states, such as Finland. Moreover, it is clear that the tools Russia uses to pursue its interests will vary depending on the specific policy goal. These tools include military force in certain circumstances, but also a combination of instruments, including information, which are not, as a rule, as new as the 'hybrid warfare' label implies and indeed should not be described as 'hybrid' if used in isolation.

If 'hybrid warfare' is unsuitable as a concept for understanding developments in contemporary Russia, and as a basis on which realistic policy responses can be built, what is the alternative? The central purpose of this second and final report is to emphasise that there is no simple answer and that developments in Russia are best evaluated in all their complexity. There has always been a tendency in the West to focus on macro-level conceptualisations of Russian politics; so from this point of view the recent focus on 'hybrid warfare' is nothing new. Examples for this are the totalitarian model of the Soviet Union during the Cold War and the transition model of Russian politics during the first decade of the post-Soviet era. Both models sought to conceptualise or sum up the political regime as a whole. Both models were also highly influential, with major developments in Russia being evaluated by many policymakers and analysts in the West within the respective frameworks of a totalitarian society or a state in transition to a market democracy. Although both models undoubtedly produced a multitude of insightful analysis, it is also clear that their focus on the macro-level of politics and society meant that important nuances were being missed. And this has led to the situation where Russia keeps surprising the West. The totalitarian model left little room for the study of issues such as interest groups, which did not fit into such a framework. Nonetheless the model was in general seen as strong and durable. The transition model with its focus on formal procedures and institutions neglected 'behind the scenes' processes, such as corruption, informal politics, the influence of the past, and personal networks that we clearly know are of central importance to Russian politics today.

Both models also left little room for international comparative analysis and therefore tended to overstate the 'uniqueness' of the Russian case.<sup>1</sup> In the same vein, whilst 'hybrid warfare' has been useful to highlight certain developments in Russia and has opened the way for research into areas that have previously been neglected, excessive focus on the concept risks the neglect of many important nuances.

In order to understand contemporary Russia, changes in its foreign, security, and defence policies and their implications for Russia's neighbours and the West, a meso-level analysis, focusing on the individual issues and developments that have arguably led to concerns about 'hybrid warfare' is the more suitable. Rather than focusing on assumed Russian 'hybrid warfare' capabilities and possible counteractions to 'hybrid warfare', differentiated questions should be asked about strengths and limitations of Russian military capabilities, developments in Russian thinking on the use of armed force, Russian foreign policy goals and intentions and possible responses to Russia, all of which need to be tailored to the concerns and requirements of specific actors and states. The study of these questions in a wider context – both historically as well as comparatively – is also important. Such an approach enables a detailed understanding of what is really new as opposed to what merely *appears* to be new. Furthermore it also avoids the danger of overstating Russian 'uniqueness'. Towards this end, members of the project's panel of experts were invited to react to a number of specific issues arising from the first report:

1. What are the limitations of manipulating moral forces in war and conflict in comparative perspective?
2. How is Russia projecting its image internationally now and in historical perspective?
3. How is Russia using military force as a foreign policy tool?
4. Why is Russia reviving its conventional military power now after a long period of neglect of these capabilities?
5. How strong are Russian capabilities to coordinate complex operations, including those often described as 'hybrid warfare' campaigns?
6. What is the likely impact of inefficiencies in Russian defence spending on its current and future military capabilities, and how does this compare to other states?
7. What do the theories of coercion and deterrence tell us about recent Russian military action and possible ways of responding to them?
8. Can international lessons in civil-military relations help Finland find better responses to Russian actions?

The experts' thoughts are summarised on the following pages before the report concludes with a series of final recommendations.<sup>2</sup>

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1 This point was made extensively in E Bacon and B Renz with J Cooper, *Securitising Russia: The Domestic Politics of Putin*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006, pp. 7-10.

2 The full versions of the papers provided by the project's panel of experts are available online at the following address: <http://www.helsinki.fi/aleksanteri/english/projects/VNK-report%20longerpieces.pdf>

# 1. Moral forces in war: Clausewitz and hybrid warfare

*Sibylle Scheipers, University of St. Andrews*

One of the core aspects of the concept of hybrid warfare is the use of information warfare for strategic aims. The use of 'information warfare', 'psy ops', or rather plainly: propaganda, with a view to creating an effect on the outcome of a military conflict is certainly not new. These means can collectively be described as efforts to manipulate moral forces in war, both one's own moral forces and those of the opposing side.

The Prussian 19<sup>th</sup> century general Carl von Clausewitz arguably pioneered the study of moral forces in modern strategic thought. Clausewitz introduced the notion of moral forces into the lexicon of strategic theory with a view to remedying the shortcomings of Enlightenment strategic thought. Clausewitz's intellectual situation is in a way not unlike ours today: **the West has emerged from the strategic confrontation of the Cold War and is searching for a new perspective on strategy and foreign policy.**

The notion of hybrid warfare emerged in the context of this search for new perspectives on armed conflict late 2000s. Unsurprisingly, hybrid warfare also includes the idea of non-linearity. Non-linear war, Vladislav Surkov, one of Putin's closest political advisors, wrote in his 2014 novel *Without Sky*, is a war of all against all, with fluid lines between opponents and a variety of incompatible and not necessarily rational aims: 'Most (combatants) understood war to be part of a process. Not necessarily its most important part.'<sup>3</sup> **In the context of hybrid warfare, rationality – the hallmark of Cold War strategic thinking – is disrupted. So if we need to recalibrate our focus on non-linear aspects of war, and if these non-linear aspects are to be found in moral forces in particular, it is worthwhile to consult Clausewitz.**

## 1.1 Clausewitz on moral forces

Clausewitz's premise is that the effects of physical and moral forces are 'amalgamated', meaning they cannot be separated from one another. Precisely because moral and physical forces are amalgamated, moral forces play a role when physical forces are unleashed in battle. Clausewitz observed that battles were often fought among opponents of largely equal physical strength, yet one side would suffer a crushing defeat while the other enjoyed a decisive victory. Why? Clausewitz's answer was that this happened because moral forces were at play: on the defeated side, it was the perception of losing, confusion, and exhaustion; on the winning side it was the accumulating effect of small gains. **Hence moral forces helped to turn a tactical victory into a strategic one, and even a political one, in as much as the defeated opponent has to declare defeat publicly. Still, Clausewitz thought that moral forces could not achieve this in isolation. Rather their effects occurred only in conjunction with physical forces.**

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3 Quoted in Peter Pomerantsev, 'How Putin Is Reinventing Warfare', Foreign Policy, 5 May 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/05/05/how-putin-is-reinventing-warfare/>

## 1.2 Moral forces in the history of strategic thought: From du Picq to Petraeus

Many efforts in strategic theory between Clausewitz and today have grappled with the central problems that Clausewitz had identified, namely that the effects of moral forces are bound up with the effects of physical forces, and that the former are difficult to quantify and control. The French 19<sup>th</sup> century officer Charles Ardant du Picq advocated a solution to the tactical predicament posed by late 19<sup>th</sup> century battlefields that was based on the augmentation of the French army's moral forces through training and prescribed tactics. His was explicitly a search for a *mathematical* basis for such moral forces. Du Picq's approach reflected the recognition of the importance of moral forces in war, but also highlighted the difficulties involved in controlling and channelling them.

**During the Cold War, the Western nuclear strategy emphasised rationality and the instrumentality of war, a scenario in which moral forces did not play a prominent role. This changed with the West's post-9/11 wars and the rise (and fall) of the counterinsurgency (COIN) discourse in their wake.** The centrality of moral forces in the COIN discourse was highlighted by the importance of 'winning hearts and minds', which was one of its most central catch phrases. The US Army Field Manual 3-24 (the 'COIN bible') speculated that it was more likely to produce positive moral effects if the use of physical force was restrained. Moral and physical forces were depicted as inversely proportional: the less 'kinetic' force is used, the greater the moral effect. At the same time, precisely because the progress of the COIN effort had to be assessed not as an effect of kill ratios or territory conquered, COINdinistas developed an obsession with metrics. This was essentially an attempt to measure the immeasurable. David Kilcullen, one of the central figures of the COIN debate, suggested that in COIN campaigns traditional military metrics such as body counts are unhelpful. Instead, the effectiveness of the COIN effort has to be measured in terms of its impact on the local population. Aspects such as voluntary reporting by the local population, progress in development projects, and stabilization of rule of law structures were crucial.<sup>4</sup> However, COIN proponents were soon challenged from within their own ranks as much as from COIN critics, who argued that security is paramount in a COIN situation and that without security, 'softer' aims such as development and rule of law could not be achieved. The COIN community never resolved this dilemma, and it is indeed a reminder that moral and physical forces are intertwined.

## 1.3 Implications

**Clausewitz's observations on moral forces have lost none of their relevance today. His analysis consists of three main considerations: first, that moral forces and physical forces are amalgamated; secondly, that moral forces are much more difficult to control and manipulate than physical forces; and thirdly that a defensive situation facilitates the harnessing of a population's moral forces into the war effort.** After Clausewitz, generations of strategic theorists have grappled with the problems that beset moral forces. Their efforts to separate, calculate, quantify, and control have proven rather futile.

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4 Thomas E. Ricks, 'Kilcullen (II): How to Tell the Effects of Your Operations on the Local Population', Foreign Policy, 9 February 2010, < [http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/02/09/kilcullen-ii-how-to-tell-the-effect-of-your-operations-on-the-population/?wp\\_login\\_redirect=0](http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/02/09/kilcullen-ii-how-to-tell-the-effect-of-your-operations-on-the-population/?wp_login_redirect=0)>

Russia's current strategic outlook also seems to confirm Clausewitz's observations. In conflict situations that can be construed as 'defensive' such as in the Crimea and, to a lesser extent, in eastern Ukraine, it is easy to harness the population's moral forces to the war effort. **In offensive situations, this moral force cannot be reckoned with.** Russia's operations in Syria were a case in point: Syria was not a 'hybrid', non-linear war in any sense of the term. It was fought mainly by 'traditional' means of air power.

**Rather than trying to devise counter-measures against alleged Russian 'hybrid warfare' targeting the West, countries on the border with Russia should remind themselves that a forceful manipulation of popular sentiments and energies is unlikely where a defensive strategic narrative is not plausible.** While Russia's immediate Western neighbours have substantial Russian-speaking minorities, these are well-integrated and hence unlikely to be manipulated into backing Russian cross-border military operations. Moreover, talk of Russian 'hybrid warfare' and its supposed innate superiority over Western military means is counter-productive. **If moral forces are subject to perceptions about chances of victory or defeat in a potential military confrontation, the impression of the inferiority of defensive measures is likely to diminish the latter's physical effectiveness.** In other words, the West's moral forces are more susceptible to self-manipulation than to Russian hybrid warfare measures. A focus on the traditional means of containment and deterrence is more likely to blunt potential expansionist ambitions on the part of Russia while at the same time reassuring domestic Western publics.

## 2. Russian image building – soft power before hard power

*Hanna Smith, University of Helsinki, Aleksanteri Institute*

**Strategic communication is a form of "soft power" or "cultural statecraft"**<sup>5</sup>. The Russian Information Security Doctrine from 2000 recognized the use of the information and an intensification took place from the start of Putin's third presidential term. While addressing Russian ambassadors in July 2012, he observed "The promotion of one's own interests and approaches through persuasion and the attraction of empathy towards one's own country, is based on its achievements not only in the material sphere but also in the spheres of intellect and culture" and he also noted that at that time "we must recognize that the image of Russia abroad is not formed by us and it is often distorted".<sup>6</sup>

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5 For the concept of "cultural statecraft" – deliberate policy of the state to gain influence and political goals through non-military and non-economic means, see Tuomas Forsberg and Hanna Smith

6 "Soveshchnie poslov i postoyannykh predstavitelei Rossii, 2012, July 9, <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/15902>

**Russian strategic communication, the aim of which is to promote Russia's interests and influence capabilities at home and abroad, manifests itself in four different strategic narrative arguments that have been identified by Roselle, Miskimmon, Antoniadès and O'Loughlin<sup>7</sup> as well as Feklyunina<sup>8</sup>.** The narratives are a) how the world structure - world order - is described, b) how stories of individual states are projected, c) interpretations of problems and how they could be solved – interest based, d) collective identity creation. At each of these narratives a different type of message is constructed. These narratives are seen by Russia as strategically important in Russia's place in the world, foreign relations, national interests, and internal strength.

**World Order-based: Post-Soviet Russia has never accept the unipolar world concept. This also explains why the West is most often singled out in Russian rhetoric as the adversary.** In a recent expression of this approach, in April 2016 Putin took part in the forum of the All-National People's Front "Truth and Justice." There he stated clearly the way Russia views its position in world politics: "a major nuclear power such as Russia cannot participate or be present in any event (international meetings) without being able to influence the making of final decisions".<sup>9</sup>

Russian Great Power aspiration, dealt with in the previous report<sup>10</sup>, **leads Russia to engage in particular forms of power politics, which in turn presents challenges for small states like Finland. In engaging in power politics, Great Powers start to build alliances and compete for friends, seek to demarcate spheres of influence, and develop military might with the aim of surpassing rivals.** Strategic communication then becomes a crucial part of the competition that such a strategy implies. For small countries, they may also become a target of the images presented in Great Power competition and this can seriously affect the framework of their relations with Russia. In some cases cultural statecraft may be used in order to create a specific alliance, but where it can be more destabilizing for small states is when the aim is to create confusion and keep the situation fluid.

**Individual states/bilateral relations:** Dmitry Trenin has argued that in relationship to the EU **Russia is waiting for the renationalization of EU countries' policies so that new opportunities would open up between Russian and EU member states at the bilateral level.**<sup>11</sup> Russian internal reporting of individual countries serves as a measuring mechanism of what will be the nature of bilateral relations. To give some examples: in the case of Turkey the observation has been made that Russian internal media reporting relating to Turkey is

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7 Andreas Antoniadès, Alister Miskimmon and Ben O'Loughlin, 2010, Great Power and Strategic Narratives, Working paper No.7, University of Sussex and Miskimmon A, O'Loughlin and Roselle L, 2013, Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order, London and New York, NY:Routledge

8 Valentina Feklyunina, 2015, "Soft Power and identity: Russia, Ukraine and the 'Russian world(s)'" , European Journal of International Relations, pp.1-24

9 "Эксперты: Путин отлично знает политическую жизнь страны Читайте больше на", 8 April, 2016, <http://www.politonline.ru/interpretation/22885869.html><http://www.politonline.ru/interpretation/22885869.html>

10 Bettina Renz and Hanna Smith, *Russia and Hybrid warfare- Going beyond the label*, Aleksanteri Papers 1/2016 [http://www.helsinki.fi/aleksanteri/english/publications/presentations/papers/ap\\_1\\_2016.pdf](http://www.helsinki.fi/aleksanteri/english/publications/presentations/papers/ap_1_2016.pdf)

11 Dmitry Trenin, 2016, A Five year outlook on Russian Foreign Policy – Demands, Drivers and Influence , March 18, <http://carnegie.ru/publications/?fa=63075>



much more negative than reporting about Russia in Turkey.<sup>12</sup> In this way, even if Turkey is an important bilateral partner in Russian foreign relations, the way the image of Turkey has been projected for years in Russia will put certain limits at least to short term *rapprochement*. In the case of Norway, there have been ups and downs, ending in 2016 on a new low point came with claims from the Russian side that Norway is the new watchdog of the US in the north.<sup>13</sup>

In the case of Finland up to about 2008, it seems that Finland in the Russian media was most of the time portrayed in “an amicable light”, and things that today would raise a media storm.<sup>14</sup> Since 2008 things has changed significantly. **It is still a bit unclear if the image of Finland in Russia has changed for good, but what is clear is that Russia has placed Finland inside of the concept of “West”.** With tensions rising high between the West and Russia, Finland as part of the West has suffered the same fate in the Russian media as Norway – Finland is often shown as a less-than-independent country: “It should be understood that Finland is in many respects not an independent player and a tool of anti-Russian policies of Washington and Brussels”<sup>15</sup>. At the same time it should be noted that the official line, with a couple of exceptions, sticks to the tone of Russian foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zaharova, who said that Russia and Finland have relations of “constructive interdependence”.<sup>16</sup>

**Interests-based: Russia is also actively seeking cooperation with various states. In the situation of emerging new rules in international politics, interests can play a strong calming role, but they can also be used as a tool in power politics.** No country survives in today’s world without cooperation and knowledge that world is more interdependent than ever before. This is a reality in which Russia also lives. In his book “International Relations – All that Matters” Ken Booth argues strongly that even if there have been tendencies towards renationalization in world politics, there is no alternative to interdependence<sup>17</sup>. This makes image building all the more important. Peter Rutland and Andrei Kazantsev have argued that the **Russian lack of economic success, which is an important prerequisite for soft power, undermines Russian’s own sense of optimism and progress and therefore makes it very difficult for Russia’s leaders to present a positive image to the world.**<sup>18</sup>

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12 Suat Kiniklioğlu and Valeriy Morkva, (2007) “An anatomy of Turkish–Russian Relations”, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, Vol. 7, No. 4, December, pp. 533–553, p. 537 and after the downing of Russia aircraft in November 2015, Paul Sonne (2015), “Russian Media Takes Aim at Turkey”, Wall Street Journal, 30 November, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/russian-media-takes-aim-at-turkey-1448919682>

13 “After Decades of Russian Goodwill, Norway Builds Up Military Against Russia”, (2016), *Sputnik News*, 26 June, <https://sputniknews.com/europe/20160626/1041982707/norway-anti-russian-military-buildup.html> and “Ten-Hut!, Norway All set to become a new US watch dog in the North”, *Sputnik News*, 16 June, <https://sputniknews.com/military/20160616/1041457680/norway-usa-nato-arctic.html>

14 Irina Busygina and Mikhail Filippov, (2008), “End comment: EU-Russia relations and the limits of the Northern Dimension”, in Pami Aalto, Helge Blakkisrud, and Hanna Smith, “The New Northern Dimension of the European Neighbourhood”, Centre for European Policy Studies, pp.204-219, p. 209-210

15 Ivan Proshkin, (2015), Россия и Финляндия: добрые соседи или скрытые враги? 8 July, <http://politrussia.com/world/rossiya-i-finlyandiya-894/>

16 Nadeszda Ermolajeva, (2016), Захарова оценила отношения между Россией и Финляндией, 4 June, <https://rg.ru/2016/06/04/zaharova-rossiya-i-finlandiya-sohraniat-nekonfrontacionnye-otnosheniia.html>,

17 Ken Booth (2014), *International Relations – All that Matters*, Hodder&Stoughton

18 Peter Rutland and Andrei Kazantsev (2016), The limits of Russia’s “soft power”, *Journal Of Political Power*

This has a huge impact on interests-based cooperation with Russia. Russia has a lot of interests in the energy sector (nuclear, gas, oil), but there are also a wide range of other strategically important interests that are linked to politics, and which depend on international cooperation: technology, agriculture, environment, education, the military, manufacturing industry etc. From the Russian perspective interdependence will make Russia more vulnerable to outside influence and pressure. **Russia is much more dependent on the West for its own development than the Western countries are on Russia. This is also the sphere where, inside Russia, people are much less disillusioned about the reality than people observing Russia from the outside.**

**Collective identity creations:** Great Powers are strong states. In this way the narratives, projected by the Russian media, of the weak West, growing instability, and security concerns (terrorism) in contrast to Russia works towards building an image of Russia as a strong and capable state. **The default position of turning the Russian image building policy upside down, that is, not arguing for capable and efficient Russia image but by arguing that the West is weak, has been a creation of a strong conflict potential with other Great Powers.** Challenging the West and its soft power narrative has thus become the other way for Russia to claim Great Power status and reinforce its greatpowerness. At the same time the question of Russia's own identity returned as top of the agenda in Putin's third presidential term. In 2000 when Putin started as the President of Russian Federation, he rejected the need for state ideology. **The failure to find Russia's place in the Western context and also in the larger international context, changed the presumptions from not needing an ideology to ideology becoming essential.** Ideology needs identity. To create a national identity narrative is never easy. Russian "identity" creation and thereby uniting the Russian people has been one of Putin's long-term political goals. **One of the reasons that this political goal might indeed be a Russian weakness rather than a strength, is the mere fact that the official policy is trying to push Russian society into a "one size fits all" model, and this makes the state weaker. "Us" and "them" divides Russia instead of uniting.**

## 2.1 Conclusion

From the four different strategic communication narratives a tentative conclusion can be drawn, that **Russian soft power in the form of strategic communication and image building is successful only in the areas where it already has some support or a real claim, whether we are talking about internally in Russia or in its external relations.** In the world order narrative, Russian-Western relations are in long term difficulties. In bilateral relations the long term relationship counts much more than short term trends. However, the way Russia has officially used image building will have negative future consequences in all four areas: Russia's position in the world order, bilateral relations, interest-based cooperation, and internally in Russia and in the wider Russian speaking community. **In the long term there is also a risk of becoming "a prisoner of your own arguments"** which would have very significant consequences for both bilateral relations and in the world order context. Interdependence has also exposed the security risks linked to it, but since there does not seem to be any alternative to it, those that oppose cooperation with common norms, will in the end be in a weaker position. Furthermore, Russian internal politics continue to be **Russia's Achilles' heel and hinder Russia from developing and becoming stronger not only militarily but also as a nation and state.**



### 3. Russia's use of military force as a foreign policy tool: key issues in light of recent developments

*Samuel Charap, International Institute for Strategic Studies*

#### 3.1 Introduction

Russia has used its military beyond its borders with unprecedented frequency in the period that began with the invasion of Crimea in February 2014. Depending on how one counts, there are up to five cases of the use of force that followed Crimea: support for/involvement in the insurgency in Donbas from March 2014; the late August 2014 direct military intervention that culminated in Ilovaisk; the January-February 2015 intervention that ended with Debaltseve; intervention in Syria from September 2015; and brinksmanship in the skies and on the seas with NATO.<sup>19</sup> This behaviour has understandably raised concerns about a new Russian militarism, particularly following Syria, Moscow's first major military operation outside the former-Soviet region since Afghanistan. **A close examination reveals significant commonalities across the post-2014 cases, which suggest that there is a pattern or even a logic to Russian behaviour.** Given the nature of the current international environment, it is likely that they will not be the last of such cases.

#### 3.2 Compellence and coercive bargaining processes

**All six cases of the use of force since 2014 share a fundamental similarity: Moscow deployed its military in order to achieve a policy goal.** Tactical military objectives were driven by the policy mission; put differently, there have been no purely military goals (e.g., taking control of a specific piece of territory for its own sake). Russia's use of force is thus best understood as a means of coercion. As Thomas Schelling writes, "the difference between coercion and brute force is as often in the intent as in the instrument."<sup>20</sup> Schelling classifies coercive military acts as either deterrence – aimed at preventing adversary behaviours – or compellence, i.e., threatening or taking action to force the adversary to do something. The adversary must do that thing for the pain to stop.

The six cases of the use of force clearly were acts of compellence. For example, the devastation of the Ukrainian forces at Ilovaisk did not result in their total defeat but it demonstrated Moscow's willingness to hurt, and thus (at least temporarily) forced Kyiv to change its behaviour. But Russia's intention was not only to change the Ukrainian military's behaviour; it also forced President Poroshenko to the table and produced Minsk I. As Vladimir Lukin, the former Russian Ambassador to the US who has been involved in Ukraine policy in several capacities since 2014, said: "Forget about DNR and LNR. The objective [of the August 2014 counteroffensive] is to explain to Poroshenko that he will never prevail . . . [The Kremlin] will send in however many troops are necessary to make Poroshenko

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19 I use NATO here as shorthand for the West more broadly, since there have been incidents of brinksmanship involving Finland and Sweden. That said, the most significant incidents were between Russia and NATO member-states.

20 Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 5.

understand this and sit down at the table with whomever Putin wants.”<sup>21</sup> We should therefore understand the military component as one element of a broader coercive bargaining process related to political outcomes.

Seen in this context, the six cases fit into three distinct coercive bargaining processes. All the Ukraine cases were elements of Russia’s campaign to block Ukraine’s Western integration that began in the summer of 2013. The Syria intervention is part of the international bargaining process over the civil war that dates from 2011. And the NATO brinksmanship seems to be linked to the efforts Russia has been undertaking for many years to push back against increased military activity – particularly US military activity – along its borders.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.3 Common threads

The three processes are similar on a number of levels. **First, and most importantly, the use of force has come after other, non-kinetic means have been tried and are seen to have failed.** Put differently, the use of force is a last resort. Russia tries to achieve its objectives using diplomacy, economic pressure, threats, etc., and only when it still has not succeeded does it resort to the military tool. Before the invasion of Crimea, Moscow threatened and then implemented economic sanctions, offered massive economic assistance, and engaged in diplomacy with the West prior to using the military. In Syria, Moscow had engaged in extensive diplomatic outreach, conducted arms transfers, and even attempted to organize the opposition before concluding that the only means of getting a settlement on its terms was to use the military to change the balance. **A key implication is that we should see Moscow’s failures to get what it wants as warning signs for potential use of force.**

But Moscow often fails to get what it wants. It has only intervened when the stakes are perceived to be high relative to other regional or global crises. Worst-case scenario outcomes in either Syria or (especially) Ukraine would have been very detrimental for Russia’s security (as seen by the Kremlin). **All three coercive bargaining processes that reach the threshold for the use of force were tied into core national security or “regime security” concerns.** Moreover, Moscow’s objective has been to prevent or reverse (perceived) geopolitical loss, not to advance make new geopolitical gain. Russia wants to *keep* Ukraine in its orbit; *sustain* the regime in Syria; and *block* new NATO deployments. We have yet to see military force used to extend Russian influence where it did not exist before or dramatically change existing balances in Russia’s favour.

**The military operations in all three processes also share several important characteristics. Moscow has used just enough force to get the policy job done, but not more.** For example, the late August 2014 intervention only came when the approach of using separatist proxies was on the verge of catastrophic failure. That intervention itself was

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21 Lukin interview with Marat Gel'man, August 30, 2014, available at <http://nv.ua/opinion/gelman/voennyi-plan-kremlya--9686.html>.

22 Schelling explicitly describes brinksmanship as a form of compellence through “manipulation of the shared risk of war”: “It involves setting afoot an activity that may get out of hand, initiating a process that carries some risk of unintended disaster. The risk is intended, but not the disaster.” The risk is “exploited [in order] to intimidate.” Ibid, pp. 99, 91, 102.

limited; no high-end capabilities were employed, and the majority of the forces massed at the border never crossed it. As soon as the Ukrainians agreed to Minsk I, the Russian regulars largely left.

Finally, Russia has portrayed the use of force in all these cases as consistent with international law. In Crimea, the Black Sea Fleet basing agreement and the principle of self-determination were invoked. In Donbas, the Russian leadership denies the intervention itself. In Syria, the Kremlin regularly notes that the military is there at Assad's invitation. These arguments serve two purposes. **Firstly, they provide a cover of international-legal "legitimacy" that allows Russia to bolster its reputation as a responsible Great Power. Secondly, they signal the Kremlin's commitment to the international system as defined by the UN Charter. In other words, by Russia's own standards, under which the P5 are allowed to bend the rules, its actions are not "revisionist."**<sup>23</sup>

**It is important to note that armed compellence can be self-defeating: coercive pressure can sometimes produce resistance, not compliance.** In Ukraine and Syria, the use of force has been far more effective at getting the West to the table than it has been in inducing compliance from actors on the ground. Even a significant escalation in Ukraine could not generate support for accepting Russia's terms. And while the bombing in Syria succeeded in getting US Secretary of State John Kerry on a plane to Moscow, the Syrian opposition has proven more resistant to such coercion.

### 3.4 Conclusions

Two conclusions can be drawn from the analysis presented here – one reassuring, the other disconcerting. **On the one hand, the clear patterns identified suggest that there is a logic to Russian behaviour, and that this limits the number of other potential circumstances that might lead to another military intervention.**<sup>24</sup> We should look for cases where the stakes are high for Russia, and Moscow is seeking to prevent a geopolitical loss. The operational environment should allow for avoiding a direct clash with the US military. Outside of the near abroad, it is difficult to think of circumstances that meet these criteria at the moment. However, a regional crisis in the Middle East or Eastern Europe could easily create those circumstances in the future. In any case, before force is used we are likely to see Moscow try and fail to get what it wants using other means. Preventative diplomacy might help stop this escalation before Russia falls back on the military tool. **On the other hand, the logic of Russia's actions suggests the potential for unintended Russia-NATO conflict is high and likely to grow.** We are in the midst of a coercive bargaining process between Russia and NATO in the Baltic region. Russia's compellence efforts so far have not worked, and will eventually produce resistance, not compliance: NATO will respond to Russia's brinksmanship by increasing rotational deployments, boosting the air policing mission, and so on. In addition to the brinksmanship moves, Russia has already started increasing manpower and building new infrastructure in the Western Military District. We can expect further efforts to compel a change in NATO's behaviour going forward.

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23 The European regional context is, of course, different to the international level since Russia has never fully accepted the European regional order as defined by the EU and NATO.

24 Small counterterrorism operations abroad are not considered here since these have been going on in limited ways for many years.

## 4. Why is Russia rebuilding its conventional military power?

*Bettina Renz, University of Nottingham*

A strong military is central to a state's ability to project power on an international level. As Hans Morgenthau noted, as long as anarchy obtains in the international system, 'armed strength as a threat or a potentiality is the most important material factor making for the political power of nations'.<sup>25</sup> During the Cold War, strong conventional military power – in addition to nuclear deterrence – singled out the United States and the Soviet Union as the world's two superpowers.

**When the Cold War ended, many believed that the centrality of military power in international relations would diminish**, not least because with the dissolution of the Soviet Union the threat of a global conflict had waned and, with the spread of democracy and economic interdependence, state competition in the future would revolve around economic and not military matters.<sup>26</sup> However, **such beliefs were short-lived as it emerged that military power continued to be seen as an essential instrument of statecraft, especially for Great Powers**, even though economic competition had become more important and there was no longer an immediate threat of a global war.<sup>27</sup> In the absence of an immediate adversary against whom to measure its conventional military capabilities, the United States defined the 'two-war' standard as a measure to size its conventional forces in 1991. This was because even though at this point there was no clear and present danger emanating from a specific state actor, conventional forces strong enough to deal with the eventuality of two simultaneous major regional contingencies were considered essential to ensure the country's 'ongoing demands for forward presence, crisis response, regional deterrence, humanitarian assistance, building partnership capacity, homeland defence and support to civil authorities'.<sup>28</sup> Contemporary China is another important example demonstrating the enduring relevance of conventional military power in the eyes of states aspiring to a Great Power status. Although China has established itself as one of the world's economic Great Powers, growing economic strength has been accompanied by a massive drive to establish a competitive conventional military arsenal. As the world's second largest military spender behind the US, and with its budget continuing to grow, these developments have evoked discussions similar to the Russian case about the country's intentions and its potential transformation into a 'revisionist state'.<sup>29</sup> Rather than causing a decline of the role of conventional military power in international politics, the end of the Cold War made permissible a situation where states, especially in the West, have displayed a growing readiness to use military force as an instrument of policy.<sup>30</sup> The utility of conventional military power endures.

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25 Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among nations*, 5th edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1973), 29.

26 Robert J. Art, "American foreign policy and the fungibility of force", *Security Studies*, 5/4 (1996): 7.

27 *ibid*: 8-9.

28 Daniel Goure, "The measure of a superpower: a two-major regional contingency military for the 21st century", The Heritage Foundation, Special Report 128, January 12, 2013: 1. <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/01/the-measure-of-superpower-a-two-major-regional-contingency-military-for-21-century>

29 Wei-Chin Lee, "Long shot and short hit. China as a military power and its implications for the U.S. and Taiwan", *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 43/5 (2008): 524.

30 Hew Strachan, *The direction of war: contemporary strategy in comparative perspective*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 22.

## 4.1 Russia and conventional military power

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia always maintained a strong nuclear deterrent and in this area remained equal to the United States. However, its conventional forces were left to decay for almost two decades. The drawn-out neglect of its armed forces, however, should not be confused with a statement of pacifism in the sense that the projection of military power was no longer seen as important. Russia's quest for Great Power status dates back centuries and its self-perception as such did not cease with the end of the Cold War in 1991.<sup>31</sup> Military power was central to the making of the Tsarist empire and it was also a strong military, above all else, which elevated the Soviet Union to the status of a superpower during the Cold War. **Relinquishing armed strength and accepting the resulting loss of Great Power status was never a serious option for Russia.** The first military doctrine of the Russian Federation issued in 1993 envisaged significant cuts to Soviet legacy force levels and prioritised the development of conventional forces able to deal with local conflicts, which were seen as the most immediate concern at the time. However, the idea that a global conventional deterrent was no longer needed was never a consensus view in Russia and traditional military thinkers from the outset argued in favour of more open-ended defence requirements that would prepare the country for a larger variety of eventualities.<sup>32</sup> In fact, the 1993 doctrine already reflected ambitions to maintain a competitive conventional deterrent. It envisaged investments in R&D towards the creation of high-tech equipment, including electronic warfare capabilities, stealth technology, and advanced naval weaponry. This was a direct response to the lessons Russian strategists had learned from the accomplishments of the 'revolution in military affairs' demonstrated by superior US conventional forces in the 1991 Gulf War.<sup>33</sup> Such ambitions were confirmed in the 2000 military doctrine, which explicitly reoriented priorities away from the focus on small-wars type scenarios and towards the need for the creation of conventional forces with global reach. This doctrine was published in the wake of NATO's high-tech operation 'Allied Force' over Serbia which, in the words of Alexei Arbatov, 'marked a watershed in Russia's assessment of its own military requirements and defence priorities'.<sup>34</sup>

Although the central components of the successful 2008 modernisation programme, such as the need to professionalise, create rapid reaction forces, and procure advanced technology, were considered in all reform attempts from the early 1990s, no programme before 2008 led to fundamental transformation. This was because, unlike the 2008 reforms, which were backed up by realistic financial means and unprecedented political will, Yeltsin-era plans for military transformation faltered owing to the country's dire economic situation and the lack of political clout required for pushing through changes unpopular with some elements of the

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31 Iver B. Neumann, "Russia as a great power, 1815-2007", *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 11 (2008).

32 Alexei G. Arbatov, "The transformation of Russian military doctrine. Lessons learned from Kosovo and Chechnya", *The Marshall Centre Papers*, 2, 2000: 7. Accessed October 12 2015. [http://www.marshallcenter.org/mcpublishweb/MCDocs/files/College/F\\_Publications/mcPapers/mc-paper\\_2-en.pdf](http://www.marshallcenter.org/mcpublishweb/MCDocs/files/College/F_Publications/mcPapers/mc-paper_2-en.pdf)

33 Richard Pipes, "Is Russia still an enemy?", *Foreign Affairs*, 76/5 (1997): 75-6.

34 Arbatov, "The transformation", 8-9.

military leadership.<sup>35</sup> The inability to turn ambitions for the conventional military into a reality, however, did not mean that conventional military power was no longer seen as desirable. Clearly, there was an understanding that a strong nuclear deterrent alone was insufficient to uphold Russia's Great Power status in the long term, especially when other countries' conventional armed forces continued to modernize at a rapid pace. **Conventional military power persists as an important attribute of state power and is deemed to have utility as an instrument of policy, even more so now than it was during the Cold War. As long as this is the case, it would simply be unrealistic to expect Russia not to want to remain a player in the game.**

## 5. Russian “Hybrid Warfare” and the National Defence Management Centre (NTsUO)

*Rod Thornton, Defence Studies Department King's College London*

One of the major problems for any military organization is command-and-control. This was pointed out in 2013 by General Valerii Gerasimov, the head of the Russian armed forces, in an article of his that articulated what has come to be known as the ‘Gerasimov Doctrine’. Here he laid out the type of warfare that both Russia's main adversaries and the Russian military itself envisaged fighting in the future. Gerasimov said that, given the nature of this form of warfare and the various modes and number of different agencies (both military and civilian) involved, it was obvious that coordination had to be a key element. He noted it was an ‘important matter’ to ‘develop a scientific and methodological apparatus for decision-making that takes into account the multifarious character’ of this form of warfare; adding that, to do this, it was **‘necessary to coordinate the joint work...of the pertinent ministries and agencies’**.<sup>36</sup> Thus a ‘broad-spectrum approach to conflict’ has been created in Russia, ‘which goes beyond the “whole of government” approach discussed in the West’.<sup>37</sup>

This emphasis on the need for greater coordination not just within the military itself but also between it and non-military bodies was made manifest in the construction, as a ‘top national security priority’, of the National Defence Management Centre (NTsUO) in 2014.<sup>38</sup> It is designed to act not just as a traditional command-and-control hub for directing military developments and movements (as in a General Staff Headquarters), but also as an overseer of the work of partner security agencies and of any other body or institution whose activities could have some bearing on national defence. The centre is seen to have ‘an incredibly expansive list of oversight, monitoring, and decision-making functions for state defense’. As part of its remit, it can direct the activities of state security structures such as the FSB,

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35 Alexei G. Arbatov, (1998). “Military reform in Russia. Dilemmas, obstacles, and prospects”, *International Security*, 22/4: 112-3.

36 General Valerii Gerasimov, ‘Tsennost’ Nauki v Predvidenii’ [‘The Value of Science to Prediction’], *Voenno-Promyshlennyi Kur’er*, Vol. 8, No. 476 (27 Feb.-5 March 2013), pp. 1-2, at [http://vpk-news.ru/sites/default/files/pdf/VPK\\_08\\_476.pdf](http://vpk-news.ru/sites/default/files/pdf/VPK_08_476.pdf), p.27.

37 Dave Johnson, ‘Russia’s Approach to Conflict – Implications for NATO’s Deterrence and Defence’, NATO Research Paper, No. 111 (April 2015), p.10 and p.6.

38 Pavel Felgenhauer, ‘Russia in Dangerous Transition, as Military and Political Tensions Mount’, Jamestown Foundation, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 11, Issue 198 (6 Nov. 2014), at [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=43049&no\\_cache=1#.V3O\\_iPI97IU](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=43049&no_cache=1#.V3O_iPI97IU).



FSO, SVR, MVD, MChS, Rosatom, Roshydromet<sup>39</sup> 'and more besides'.<sup>40</sup> And it is not just the breadth of the number of actors involved, it is also their depth. According to Leonid Ivashov, the president of the Moscow-based International Centre for Geopolitical Analysis, 'the novelty lies in the way the centre facilitates the joining of top-to-bottom government structures – at federal, regional and local levels'.<sup>41</sup> Wide-ranging cooperation is key here. As Roger McDermott sums it up, the NTsUO represents a step 'toward conducting more integrated security operations in the future'.<sup>42</sup>

The NTsUO is seen to represent a boon in terms of the conduct of operations applied by Russia against foreign adversaries or, indeed, as a defence mechanism employed by Russia against perceived foreign threats. **The NTsUO also certainly plays an important role in internal security terms.** It has the capacity to assess and monitor domestic opposition groups and any protests they might engage in, and Putin is seen now also to have 'better control over his various *siloviki* in the event of a genuine threat to his rule'.<sup>43</sup> As Dimitri Adamsky says: **'Since the boundaries between internal and external threats [to Russia today] are blurred, the threat is perceived as a holistic whole, and the military is expected to address it in a holistic manner'**.<sup>44</sup>

The scope of the NTsUO's responsibilities has been summed up by Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu. He said that 'The establishment of the centre is an important step towards forming a single information space for solving tasks in the interests of the country's defence...it will allow for the conduct of continuous analysis of the environment and for developing means of responding to changes and for rapidly coordinating the activity of federal bodies of the executive power in the defence sphere'.<sup>45</sup> This 'continuous analysis of the environment' is an important function of the NTsUO. It is designed to **'collect, collate and assess information on the "military-political situation" in the world as well as on strategic directions and the socio-political situation within Russia during peacetime and wartime'**.<sup>46</sup> This is a vital activity in terms of the decision-making capacity of Russian military and security service bodies. As Ivashov says, the **NTsUO is a 'breakthrough' in that it unites 'analysis, forecasting and planning' into 'a single integrated system'**.<sup>47</sup> And it would all, seemingly, be under the control of the military itself. It is the military which, in the NTsUO, is both in command and in control – it is the coordinator-in-chief.

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39 Respectively, the internal security agency, the foreign security agency, the Interior Ministry, the Ministry for Emergency Situations, the atomic energy agency and the body dealing with Russian environmental issues.

40 Roger McDermott, 'Russia Activates New Defense Management Center', Jamestown Foundation, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol.11, No. 196 (4 Nov. 2014), at [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=43041&cHash=60f76b139c88bc8177cb5cba105c4fe6#.V3O-6PI97IU](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=43041&cHash=60f76b139c88bc8177cb5cba105c4fe6#.V3O-6PI97IU).

41 Quoted in *ibid*.

42 *Ibid*.

43 'The NTsUO Chief', Russia Defense Policy, 9 Nov. 2014, at <https://russiandefpolicy.wordpress.com/2014/11/09/the-ntsuo-chief/>.

44 Dimitri Adamsky, 'Cross-Domain Coercion: The Current Russian Art of Strategy', Institut Français des Relations Internationales, Proliferation Papers 54 (Nov. 2015), p.26.

45 Op cit, Rogoway.

46 Op cit, McDermott.

47 *Ibid*.

The arrangement of the NTsUO means that the *quality* of decision-making by actors within this body is increased. As Ivashov puts it, the centre's structure 'makes it possible to adopt all-around, rather than single-focused, decisions'.<sup>48</sup> It also means that the actual *speed* of Russian decision-making can be increased. In technical terms, the decision-making cycle – i.e., the OODA (Observe-Orientate-Decide-Act<sup>49</sup>) loop – moves at a faster pace. As TASS puts it, 'The [NTsUO] centre greatly enhances information flows and reduces the time involved in...complex decision processes'.<sup>50</sup> Overall, command-and-control benefits as the decisions are reached more quickly.

Any ability to take decisions in a shorter time-frame creates an advantage for Moscow. Such a capacity can be set against the inability of Russia's principal adversary – NATO – to apply the same principles, given its collective nature and its lack of centralization. If those controlling Russian operations have a profundity of intelligence to handle, then they can take focused, tailored decisions commensurate with the demands of the situation, and do so at a pace much faster than their NATO counterparts.

Indeed, one of the most profound ways in which the Russian side can negate NATO power is to slow down NATO decision-making to the point where decisions are simply never made. Skilful, ambiguous warfare techniques, fashioned at least in part within the NTsUO, can result in wedges being driven between NATO partners that create enough division so that eventual and open Russian aggression is simply not countered by NATO.

## 6. Inefficiencies and imbalances in Russian defence spending

*Tor Bukkvoll - Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI)*

The rapid annexation of Crimea and the surprise Russian involvement in the Syrian civil war led many commentators to conclude that the West had seriously underestimated Russian military capabilities.<sup>51</sup> There may be some truth in that, but now overestimation is the greater danger. **The purpose of this analysis is to warn against forgetting all the problem of Russian military organization that will continue to negatively impact on its capabilities.** The efficiency of Russian defence spending suffers from a number of the predicaments common to most countries, but also some that are specifically Russian.

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48 Ibid.

49 In OODA loops, observations are analysed to produce a decision that is then acted upon.

50 Quoted in op cit, McDermott.

51 For examples, see Gustav Gressel, *Russia's Quiet Military Revolution, and What it Means for Europe*, European Council on Foreign Relations, Policy Brief, October 2015, at [http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/Russias\\_Quiet\\_Military\\_Revolution.pdf](http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/Russias_Quiet_Military_Revolution.pdf); Mitchell Yates, "How Putin Made Russia's Military Into a Modern, Lethal Fighting Force", *The National Interest*, 25 February 2015; Garrett I. Campbell, "Russia's military is proving Western punditry wrong", Brookings Institution at <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/order-from-chaos/posts/2015/10/23-russian-military-capabilities-syria-campbell>; and Franz-Stefan Gady, "How the West Underestimated Russia's Military Power", *The Diplomat*, 17 October 2015 at <http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/how-the-west-underestimated-russias-military-power/>.



Taking these problems into account will give a more sober estimate of both current and future Russian military capabilities.

1. **[Corruption] seriously undermines the effects of the big defence spending.**  
In 2015 Russia came in as number 119 on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. One Russian military observer estimated that corruption schemes can account for as much as 20–25% of the price of certain weapons systems.<sup>52</sup> In 2013, the Russian Military prosecutor Sergei Fridinskiy said that the number of officer-level corruption cases was at a ten year high. Although that number fell slightly in 2014, it rose again by 18% in 2015.<sup>53</sup> Russian officers are occasionally brought to justice for acts of corruption, but there is a strong tendency for early pardon that takes away from the deterrent effect of legal prosecution.<sup>54</sup>
2. **[The] continuing mix of conscripts (about 300 000) and contract soldiers (about 350 000) means that fewer units than announced have a high degree of readiness.** This means that if Russia needs to provide a lot of troops for a contingency, the military will have to create on the spot units consisting of sufficiently trained personnel from different detachments. As was pointed out by Mikhail Barabanov, the "permanently ready units" that were sent to the border with Ukraine in 2014 were usually not able to provide more than two thirds of their troops.<sup>55</sup> The rest were conscripts. This means that troops often will have to fight with people they have not trained with. The problem could be solved by splitting battle ready and non-battle ready troops into separate units, but that would in essence create a two tier army.
3. **Mnogotipnost, or many different versions of the same platform or weapon system, is a major problem.** This was a quandary already in Soviet times. Because of the need to keep up defence production in remote mono-towns for fear of social unrest, and because of intense lobbying from the defence enterprises, Russia continues to simultaneously produce five different kinds of Sukhoi fighter aircraft and two different kinds of MiG fighter aircraft.<sup>56</sup> The *mnogotipnost* tendency is also found in the production of naval vessels, armored vehicles, artillery systems, and air-defence.<sup>57</sup> That means a lot of defence money is spent on excessive maintenance and spare parts production.
4. **Russia has not established a well-functioning system for arms procurement.** This is also a problem inherited from Soviet times. It is admittedly a problem with which most other countries also struggle.<sup>58</sup> Still, numerous reforms that Russia has initiated in this area have had limited effect. It is a principal-agent problem in that the political and military leaderships have problems getting the defence industry

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52 Authors's interview with Ilja Kramnik, Moscow, September 2011.

53 Matvei Kozhukin, "Kazhdoe piatoe prestuplenie – korruptsia", *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 2 March 2016.

54 Sergei Mashkin and Ivan Safronov, "Eks-glavkomu sukhoputnykh voisk so sniatoi sudimosti nashli mirmoe primenienie", *Kommersant*, 24 April 2016.

55 Mikhail Barabanov, "Ispytanie novogo oblika", *Rossiia v globalnoi politike*, No. 5, 2014, at <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/Ispytanie-novogo-oblika-17097>

56 Gosudarstvennye programmy vooruzheniya Rossiiskoi Federatsii: problem ispolneniya i potentsial optimizatsii, 2015, Analytical paper from the Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies in Moscow, p.31, at [http://www.cast.ru/files/Report\\_CAST.pdf](http://www.cast.ru/files/Report_CAST.pdf)

57 A. Balashov and Ya. Martianova, "Reindustrializatsia rossiiskoi ekonomiki i razvitie oboronno-promyshlennogo kompleksa", *Voprosy Ekonomiki*, No. 9, 2015, pp. 31-34.

58 Max Hastings, "Wasting money saving lives", *The Daily Telegraph*, 5 February 2006.

to produce what they want. There are at least three principal ways to ameliorate [this] principal-agent problem. 1) Increase the trust between principal and agent in the hope that this will make the agent more eager to do what the principal wants, 2) introduce one or more third party arbiters, 3) the principal can try to maximise his control over as many aspects of the agent's activities as possible. The building of more trust was never really discussed as a strategy in Russia, but several arrangements for third party arbitration were tried in the post-Soviet period. Now, however, these efforts seem largely to have been abandoned in favour of monitoring, control, and punishment. Over the last three years in particular, many legal innovations have been proposed, including legislation that gives the state the right to nationalize private enterprises that do not deliver on time in fulfilment of the yearly State Defence Order, and personal fines against defence industry leaders that are late with deliveries.<sup>59</sup> Whether the defence industry actually can be controlled and punished into efficiency remains uncertain.

5. **Russian military budgets do not seem to take into consideration that a lot of new equipment is likely to lead to increased operating costs.** The official Russian goal is to have 70% new and modern equipment by 2020. In most cases that equipment is likely to be more costly to operate because the new technology is more sophisticated. This is a trend identified in Western nations, and there is no particular reason why it should be radically different in Russia.<sup>60</sup> Thus, it may increasingly become the case in Russia that some of the new equipment may be too expensive to operate and train with sufficient frequency, but there are no plans to significantly increase operating costs.

Moving to imbalances, **there currently seems to be a heavy emphasis on the navy at the cost of the other branches, first of all the army.** In the current 2011-2020 Main Armaments Programme (GPV), the navy gets 25% of the resources, the air force 24% and the army only 15%.<sup>61</sup> There are indications of even higher naval ambitions. In 2014 a new and very ambitious military ship-building programme until the year 2050 was adopted, and a statement from the spring 2016 meeting of the Ministry of Defence Collegium reads that “the broadening of Russian naval presence around the world demands an increased ability for our fleets to operate autonomously for long periods of time in important regions”.<sup>62</sup> According to CAST, there is a historical tradition in Russia where the army fights most of the wars and the navy gets most of the money.<sup>63</sup>

Finally, **the post-Crimea confrontation with the West seems to have consequences for the army that may undo some of the achievements of the Serdiukov reforms.** When these reforms were initiated in 2008, a strategic decision was made to rely mostly on nuclear weapons in terms of deterring the West. This decision was controversial domestically, but still relatively acceptable at the time, since the West was not seen as an immediate threat.

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59 Ivan Safronov, “V gosoboronzakaz vvodiat lichnuiu zainteressovannost”, *Kommersant*, 13 June 2013, and Alisa Shtykina and Svetlana Bocharova, “Za narusheniya pri sryve oboronnogo zakaza budet grozit natsionalizatsiya”, *RBK-Daily*, 12 March 2015.

60 Kjetil Hove and Tobias Lillekvelland, 2016, *Defence Specific Inflation (DSI) of Goods and Services*, FFI-report at <https://www.ffi.no/no/Rapporter/16-00175.pdf>.

61 *Gosudarstvennyye programmy vooruzheniya Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, op. cit, p.23.

62 Aleksandr Sharkovskii, “Moskva gotovitsiya k dalnemu zaplyvu”, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 1 March 2016.

63 *Gosudarstvennyye programmy vooruzheniya Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, op. cit, p.27.

As a consequence of this strategic thinking, the army was reorganized to largely fight limited wars in the former Soviet space. After Euromaidan, Crimea, and Donbas, the West has re-entered the stage as the main threat to Russian security. The new 2016 National Security Strategy for Russia in particular upgrades the West as a threat to Russian national interests in Eurasia.<sup>64</sup>

This renewed focus on the threat from the West has reopened the question of divisions versus brigades. In May 2016 Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu announced that Russia will create three new divisions on its Western flank. This turnaround in army organization will result in higher operating costs for the army that Russia may not be able to afford, and return the pre-Serdiukov problem of understrength units.<sup>65</sup> Thus, this is one more policy that may have as an effect that funds are used less efficiently than they otherwise would have been.

## 7. Coercion and Deterrence: A Closer Look

*Antulio J. Echevarria II - The US Army War College*

Once we strip away the hyperbole and the influence of modern information operations from Russia's so-called hybrid or "new generation" warfare, we find little more than basic coercive strategies at work. Therefore, this section probes a few of the more important theoretical and practical problematics of coercion and its complement, deterrence, and their implications for policy.

1. **Coercion is difficult to accomplish regardless of the coercive party's size or relative power.** This is true because resistance is easier than conquest and, by extension, easier than coercion.<sup>66</sup> For instance, despite being a superpower, the United States has been only moderately successful in coercing other parties, even those much smaller in size and much weaker in relative power; examples include Iraq in 1990/91 and Libya in 2011. Similarly, Russia's recent use of coercive strategies has yielded mixed results. On the one hand, Moscow has gained control over parts of Ukraine; on the other, its actions have led to a tightening of economic sanctions against it and a countervailing military build-up in Eastern Europe, thereby somewhat offsetting Russia's superiority in that region.
2. **Coercion and deterrence can be applied against friends as well as foes.** US President Dwight D. Eisenhower used economic coercion against two allies, Britain and France, during the 1956 Suez Crisis. Adolph Hitler employed coercive diplomacy against two adversaries, Britain and France, in 1936, when he reoccupied the Rhineland, and again during the Munich Crisis of 1938. The exercise of coercion or deterrence requires some degree of diplomatic, informational, military, or economic leverage. For Eisenhower, this leverage was chiefly economic; for Hitler, it was a combination of diplomatic and military pressure. Hence, **the question of whether small states can coerce or deter larger ones can be answered in the**

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64 The text can be found at the website of the Russian government newspaper *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, <https://rg.ru/2015/12/31/nac-bezopasnost-site-dok.html>.

65 Aleksandr Golts, "Novye divizii poniziat boegotovnost", *Ezhednevnyi Zhurnal*, 13 January 2016.

66 Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 357-59.

**affirmative**, though much depends on how favourably positioned the former are across the dimensions mentioned above vis-à-vis the latter.

3. **Most theories of coercion and deterrence are based principally, if not exclusively, on the use of, or threat of using, military force.** They rarely explore the other forms of power, or the use of military power in conjunction with them. Thomas Schelling's *Arms and Influence* (1966), the most cited work on coercion, is guilty of this error. His conception of "violence" was limited to military power; Schelling tried to draw a "qualitative" distinction between "making someone give you what you want" (coercion) and "forcibly taking it" (brute force).<sup>67</sup> Making this distinction may have enabled Schelling to isolate his object of study, but it also created the misleading impression that military force was the only, or at least the primary, means of coercion. Aside from using the threat of military force, **coercion and deterrence can also be achieved by following a strategy of "out-positioning," that is, acquiring advantages across each of the following lines: diplomatic (alliances, partnerships), informational (communication campaigns), military (defense hardware, training exercises, deployments), and economic (increasing/creating economic and financial strength).** Such advantages cannot only increase our leverage when applying coercive or deterrent pressure, they can also serve as bargaining chips for conversion into incentives or rewards, and as a basis for inviting cooperation rather than competition.
4. **Theories of coercion and deterrence assume parties will make strategic decisions based on the logic of "costs versus benefits:"** By increasing costs in casualties and destruction to beyond what foes can tolerate, they will be coerced or deterred into taking or refraining from specific courses of action. Deterrence, for instance, is commonly thought of as requiring a capability to respond, the willingness to respond, and clear communication over the terms of the response. A common pitfall of both theories, however, is the **tendency to mirror-image, to project our values and assumptions onto our rivals, and thus to expect them to calculate costs and benefits in much the same way as we would.**
5. **Coercion or compellence theories are many, and they do not agree.** Robert Pape's *Bombing to Win* (1996) suggested coercion was more effective when used against military targets rather than civilian ones.<sup>68</sup> In contrast, Daniel Byman's and Matthew Waxman's *Dynamics of Coercion* (2002) argued coercion was less a matter of punishment or denial than a function of the threat of pain to come.<sup>69</sup> In the process described by Byman and Waxman, we first threaten to use force, or even apply it, against key pressure points to achieve escalation dominance, the cumulative weight of which coerces our foe into taking the desired action.

The disagreements go much further than it is possible to describe here. Some theories consider coercion and deterrence to have been successful only when they arrive at permanent or durable solutions.<sup>70</sup> Others separate peacetime coercion from that which takes

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67 Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 5; emphasis original (but there is no emphasis in the quoted passages??).

68 Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Airpower and Coercion in War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

69 Daniel Byman's and Matthew Waxman's *Dynamics of Coercion: American Foreign Policy and the Limits of Military Might* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

70 For example, see Janice Gross Stein, "Deterrence and Compellence in the Gulf, 1990-91: A Failed or Impossible Task?" *International Security* 17, no. 2 (Fall 1992): 147-79.

place in wartime; they thus view efforts to coerce as failures if the parties refuse to comply and thereby force an armed confrontation. These two requirements – that coercion must always generate lasting results and that it may succeed only if it occurs short of war – create an exceptionally high bar; in fact, the bar is too high to find many examples of validation in the historical record.

Despite these differences, most contemporary theories of coercion and deterrence agree in one sense, their perspective: they are written from the standpoint of a major power, such as the United States, with the task of coercing another party only as strong as, or weaker than, itself. They **thus assume a condition of parity, if not superiority, relative to the party to be coerced. In the process, they overlook a requirement most states are likely to have – the need to gain leverage sufficiently to exercise coercion or deterrence.**

6. **Ambiguity and uncertainty are the rules, not the exceptions, with both coercion and deterrence, and neither is new.** We have always known that it is difficult to prove why something did not occur (deterrence). Yet, it is also frequently difficult to know why something did occur, that is, which of our activities, if any, or in which combination, contributed most to a particular outcome. For instance, in the Kosovo conflict of 1999, NATO bombed Serbian forces for more than seven weeks before President Slobodan Milosevic decided to withdraw. By then, NATO leaders had finally agreed to consider committing ground troops. Moreover, the Alliance itself showed no signs of fracturing, and the Russians, who had previously backed the Serbs, had begun to cooperate with NATO. Amid such developments, Milosevic's prospects for success had greatly diminished.

In summary, for the bargaining dynamic that lies at the root of coercion and deterrence to result in a favourable outcome, a state, small or large, must first acquire relevant leverage in diplomatic, informational, military, and economic terms. With that leverage, it may endeavour to do two things simultaneously: deny as many alternative courses of action as possible to its rival, and use incentives and rewards to “sweeten” the course of action it wants its rival to take.

## **8. Civil-military Relations and the Making of Strategy: the Democratic Dilemma**

*Sir Hew Strachan, University of St. Andrews*

Finland regards itself as a Western democracy, although it shares its Eastern border with Russia. It is a member of the European Union, which it sees as its principal strategic partnership. Until recently it has resisted any suggestion that it might wish to become a member of NATO, but a report published in April 2016 outlines some of the options that the possibility of NATO membership throws up.

This context is important because what follows is NATO-centric. It addresses the widespread assumption in Western democratic states that civil-military relations should be bounded by the expectation that the military is subordinate to political control. When NATO expanded after the end of the Cold War, through the Partnership for Peace process, those former

members of the Warsaw Pact which applied for NATO membership were required to conform to norms shaped by that assumption. These included the principles that the minister of defence should not be a member of the armed forces, and that the heads of the armed forces while serving should abstain from involvement in politics and should behave in a way that can be construed as apolitical.

In the current operating environment, shaped very largely by coalition warfare, and often (as in the case in Afghanistan) conducted in order to support a sovereign government, senior officers have little option but to be politically aware. A coalition commander in Afghanistan who was not able to relate to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan or to the political heads of the countries whose armed forces were under his command would simply not have been able to do a very good job. The proof of this point was in the eating: those NATO commanders who did best were those who were politically aware.

**We have forgotten what the true purpose of effective civil-military relations should be.**

They are not about subordinating the military to civilian control for its own sake; rather, they are a means to an end. That end is the production of effective strategy, a vital requirement in any sophisticated Western democratic state. No secure Western democracy needs to be concerned today about the possibility that the military will take over the government. So well entrenched is the norm of military subordination to civilian control that a coup is inherently unlikely.

The urgency of addressing the strategic deficit that comes from the current presumptions with regard to civil-military relations has been made evident by the record of the American-led coalitions in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as by NATO's failure in Libya. Each of these wars has been characterised by almost continuous reports of military progress, which have then failed to produce demonstrable and sustainable political outcomes. The strategy for these wars has been badly framed, not least because its formation has depended on an artificial division between the civil and military components which go into its formation.

**Too easily have the civil and military components been treated as alternative and competing polarities. Instead they need to be fused and integrated.**

Before the First World War, Julian Corbett, in his book *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, talked about the need for what he called 'conference' in the formation of strategy in democratic states. He recognised the need for each state to have an institutional framework within which military and civil advisors could debate the pros and cons of various lines of action across the table and as equals. Today's recognition of this need is the fashion, increasingly evident over the last five or six years in several European and NATO countries, to create national security councils or their equivalents, precisely in order to achieve similar outcomes. **There is, however, still a problem in matching military capabilities to political objectives, and that in itself reflects the reluctance on the part of many politicians to tone down their expectations of what can be achieved so that they are consonant with the capabilities and resources which they are prepared to devote to their accomplishment. Many political leaders in the West have set ambitious objectives for the use of military force, often using rhetoric derived from the experience of the Second World War, while then allocating insufficient resources to achieve those objectives, assuming that they were ever feasible in the first place.**



Russia provides a striking contrast in the making of strategy. President Putin has achieved so much because he has been better able to fashion his ambitions in relation to the opportunities which have been presented to him, and has kept them in line with his military's competence. As the report, 'Russia and Hybrid warfare – going beyond the label' by Hanna Smith and Bettina Renz, makes clear, hybrid warfare is largely an invention of the Western mind rather than of the Russian military. It has achieved traction within NATO for one very obvious reason: because Russia has coordinated its military and non-military instruments so effectively. **Putin has an understanding of strategy that is more military and operational, not least in its readiness to see strategy as something that is not reactive but proactive, and which requires a state to take the initiative and to exploit the vulnerabilities of others.** In other words, Putin has understood strategy as a soldier would rather than as a Western politician. As a consequence of taking the initiative, he has been able to concentrate his efforts where they will be effective. Self-evidently, the fact that Russia is acting as a unitary power gives it an advantage over a multi-national alliance such as NATO. The recent report on Finland and NATO says, almost with disapprobation, that Russia has made unpredictability a strategic and tactical virtue. **That is exactly the point: unpredictability has always been a strategic and tactical virtue, and the commander who has been able to exploit it has done well.**

When Clausewitz wrote On War, he developed the concept of 'the Trinity'. He defined 'the Trinity' as being made up of three elements: passion, probability, and reason. He associated the first of these with the people, the second with the armed forces, and the third with the government. As somebody who reached his maturity in the era of the French Revolution, he was extraordinarily aware of the role of popular participation in the making of war. **Today's democratic governments seem almost to leave the people out of account, or alternatively to see them as unreliable and unsupportive elements in the waging of war.** Given the fact that the populations of NATO member countries are both well-educated and open to a free press, the reluctance of democratic governments to engage them as responsible participants in the making of strategy is an extraordinary omission.

Today's Finland reflects a presumption about this aspect of civil-military relations which is shared by very few other Western democracies. **Precisely because Finland has a history of invasion, particularly from the East, it is only too well aware of the needs of its own defence. It is in this respect lucky that public awareness is all too conscious of the state's military priorities.**

The older members of NATO, lying further to the West, do not have a comparable sense of national engagement in the military. During the Cold War, article 5 of the NATO Charter derived its legitimacy from its close association to national defence. However, the alliance has only invoked article 5 once, after the 9/11 attacks on the United States in 2001. In other words, NATO was ready to act in an expeditionary way in order to serve the principles of article 5, rather than in terms which could be defined as local defence. Moreover, **since the end of the Cold War, European powers have increasingly abandoned conscription and the prioritisation of home defence. Thinking in more expeditionary terms, they rest their armed forces on professional military service, and in some cases not even on them but on Special Forces and the use of drones.**

Here the connection between the people and the armed forces is broken, or at least can be broken. Obama's use of Special Forces and drones is popular policy in the United States, but in the Federal Republic of Germany the employment of drones by the United States is seen as illegitimate. The concept of hybrid war has already been mentioned, largely disparagingly. If it exists at all, its strength lies precisely in its capacity for a state to be subverted from within, from the notion that elements of its own population might turn against its own government, and specifically that Russian-speaking elements within a particular state might act in support of Russia rather than in support of the state of which they are citizens. **In other words, the lure of hybrid warfare is its mirror-imaging: the argument that elements of your own population could be influenced in such a way that they undermine national resilience.**

The making of strategy is not just a matter for relationships between governments and their service chiefs, or just for governments and their electorates. It is also a relationship forged between the service chiefs and the people of the country whose armed forces they command. In other words it is not made of simple bilateral relationships, but – to go back to Clausewitz's trinity – is triangular. **If service chiefs and the armed forces are robbed of their capacity to speak openly in an era of transparent, rapid, and growing public communication, then strategy itself is undermined. It ceases to be owned by the nation as a whole.** The very fact that so much attention has been paid to the belief that the Russians are developing the tools of 'strategic deception' hangs on the notion that the people are somehow capable of being suborned by an alien government rather than by their own government. The corollary of a belief in hybrid warfare is that the people must become part of a strategic relationship. In this way domestic opinion can be a source of strength, rather than of weakness. **Deterrence capabilities are weakened if the people do not feel themselves genuinely owners of the strategy adopted in their names.**

Making strategy today is inherently complex. The implicit threat of major war has a capacity to focus and concentrate the minds of the component parts of a nation. Today the challenges are inherently more subtle and complex – whether they come from Russia, ISIS, Iraq or Afghanistan. Precisely because defence cannot be described in classical terms, as self-defence against invasion, it requires greater thought and perspicacity. **The memory of 1939-40 may shape Finnish public expectations with regard to defence, but it is unlikely that any scenario confronting Finland in the medium to short term would be quite as clear cut. The people need to share both in these difficulties and in the decisions that flow from them, and to do that they need to be able to know what service chiefs think as well as know what their political leaders consider desirable - because the people too are making the strategy.**



## RECOMMENDATIONS

**1) Russian politics is more complex than macro-level concepts, such as ‘hybrid warfare’, suggest – the situation is rarely as black-and-white as often asserted. Recent years have shown that too hastily made conclusions don’t always correspond to reality. The greater the knowledge there is, the better the understanding of Russian weaknesses and capabilities. Policy decisions based on narrow knowledge of the reality makes the Western countries and coordination among them weak.**

The allure of concepts such as ‘hybrid warfare’ is understandable as they offer a simple way of explaining most Russian actions under one convenient umbrella. Such concepts can be useful to draw attention to important changes or events initially. However, they have a tendency to uncritically become engrained in official parlance, precluding a flexible and comprehensive understanding of Russian actions in the long term. The uncritical adoption of concepts, such as ‘hybrid warfare’, can lead to an assessment of Russia that is too categorical. As discussed in the papers presented in this report, the situation is rarely as black-and-white as often asserted: Russian military capabilities have improved, but in comparative perspective they still have important limitations; a stronger Russian military does not necessarily mean that this will be used exclusively for offensive action, because military force as a foreign policy instrument is routinely wielded in a variety of kinetic and non-kinetic ways; achieving information effects or influencing populations through propaganda is notoriously difficult and the potency of Russia’s use of information as part of its soft power/cultural statecraft policy internationally should not be assumed a priori; a country’s ability to coerce or deter a potential opponent does not come down to the size of its military capabilities alone. Smaller states have a variety of tools at their disposal to stand up to potential external foes.

**2) Russian area studies should be revived in individual Western countries (Finland included). Especially expertise on Russia is needed in subject areas like Russian domestic politics, civil-military relations, decision-making, foreign, security and defence policy, including defence economy, strategy making and military. Qualified research results should be received with an open mind, even if their findings are controversial or unwelcome.**

Concepts attempting to encapsulate Russian politics at the macro level can result in analysis that is one-sided and misses potentially important nuances. As discussed in detail in the first project report<sup>71</sup>, the concept of ‘hybrid warfare’ overemphasises the security element of Russian policy and unnecessarily militarises the language and focus of analysis in an already tense situation. As indicated in several papers presented in this report, domestic processes, internal dynamics, and threat perceptions are important for our understanding of contemporary Russia. These are not easily incorporated in the ‘hybrid warfare’ framework, as the latter focuses predominantly on the external dimension of Russian policy, and especially its relationship with the West. It has become a commonplace criticism in Europe and in

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71 Renz, Bettina and Hanna Smith, 2016, Russia and Hybrid Warfare – going beyond the label, Aleksanteri Papers 1/2016, Helsinki, [http://www.helsinki.fi/aleksanteri/english/publications/presentations/papers/ap\\_1\\_2016.pdf](http://www.helsinki.fi/aleksanteri/english/publications/presentations/papers/ap_1_2016.pdf)

the US that in-depth area knowledge of Russia has diminished over the past two decades and the expertise required to decide on policy responses in the aftermath of Crimea was therefore not available. The closure of Russian studies departments in universities across Europe and the diversion of attention within state research agencies away from Russia and towards other regions of the world (China, Middle East) demonstrates that this is indeed the case. It is important that efforts to rebuild Russia expertise in Europe and beyond will not be geared entirely around recent events and limit their focus on specific aspects only, such as 'hybrid warfare', military capabilities, or Russia-West relations. As Mathew Rojansky recently cautioned, 'In pursuit of renewing and restoring the West's Russia expertise, we must embrace both caution and humility, since there are seldom demonstrably right answers in the study of human societies and cultures, and the most important insights are seldom those that seem obvious to most people [...] we must approach the study of Russia with a truly open mind, avoiding convenient but false assumptions'.<sup>72</sup> Finland in particular has an excellent tradition of multifaceted Russian area studies and this tradition should be maintained.

**3) Context is key for understanding contemporary Russia. When this is understood, confidence in dealing with Russia will grow in the Western countries, enabling a clearer and firmer policy of coercion and deterrence towards Russia. Study of case by case policy decision becomes also easier, as well as reactions that are needed in a particular case.**

The recent focus on 'hybrid warfare' has overstated the newness and uniqueness of recent Russian actions, both militarily and in terms of foreign policy. This has come at the expense of historical and comparative context, which is required in order to capture the complexity of the developments in question. Historical context is required in order to put the idea of a suddenly militarily resurgent Russia under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, as well as the implications of this for Russia's neighbours and the West, into perspective. As shown in several of the papers presented in this report, several aspects central to the 'hybrid warfare' idea, such as the use of information, the ambition to rebuild conventional military capabilities or the use of military force as a foreign policy instrument, are not a recent development. Comparative context is needed in order to put the perceived uniqueness of the Russian case – in the case of 'hybrid warfare' the idea that these are unique Russian capabilities that the West is unable to stand up against – into perspective. Some of obstacles for Russia are common to most states, whereas others are the result of the Soviet legacy or/and created by post-Soviet Russian policies. Russia's abilities to coerce or deter other states – be it with the use or threat of military force or other instruments, such as information – are affected by the same limitations other actors have routinely experienced, in Russia's case sometimes even more due to Russia's own conduct. From this point of view, a multidisciplinary approach to the study of Russia is the best way forward. Whilst area studies approaches drawing on language knowledge and context-based regional expertise are essential, such studies should be informed by comparative research findings and the methods and frameworks of relevant disciplines, such as political science, sociology, media studies, international relations, military history, and strategic studies.

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<sup>72</sup> M Rojansky, 'George F. Kennan, containment, and the West's current Russia problem', NATO Defense College, Research Paper No. 127, 2016, p. 11 <http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=893>.

**4) Unnecessarily overstating Russian strengths and Western weaknesses can have unintended consequences. Western countries, Finland included, should stress their own strengths first and foremost. Conflict situations might reveal weaknesses in systems or indeed in thinking, but the strengths are still there.**

The 'hybrid warfare' concept, with its emphasis on the uniqueness of Russian capabilities that the West is unable to counter, has led to a situation where Russian strengths in certain areas have been overestimated. As Tor Bukkvoll noted in his above paper, while up until Crimea Russian military capabilities were underestimated, 'now overestimation is the greater danger'. Overestimation of Russian strengths in various areas is not only problematic from the point of view of the correctness of such analyses, it also can have serious unintended consequences for the West's relations with Russia. As concluded in the last report, peddling the notion of superior Russian 'hybrid warfare' capabilities plays into Putin's hands, as it has been a 'cheap' way of gaining prestige as an international actor and making Russia look stronger than it actually is. Moreover, as several contributions to this report have demonstrated, the exaggeration of Western weaknesses, especially in the political and societal realm, can diminish the effectiveness of defensive measures available to Russia's neighbours and the West. Coercion and deterrence does not come down to physical military means available. Political and moral factors, such as unity, resolve, and faith in one's system of governance and values, are important resources that give leverage even to physically weaker states in achieving desired outcomes. As Sibylle Scheipers concluded above, 'the West's moral forces are more susceptible to self-manipulation than to Russian hybrid warfare measures'. From this point of view, the presentation of such strengths as weaknesses in the face of Russian 'hybrid warfare' measures can only be counterproductive.

**5) While making a strategy to deal with long term challenges coming from Russia, an important factor in public debates in the West is openness and inclusion of different opinions.**

There has been a lot of writing about how to create national resilience. However, seldom is advice given on how. In this report several authors point out how difficult it is to change perceptions from outside and that internal coherence makes a country stronger. In Russia's case it can be stated that one of its weaknesses is to try to impose a "one size fits for all" model onto a nation that is colourful and multi-ethnic with incredible diverse social fabric. This keeps Russia a weaker country than it should be. In the Western countries as Hew Strachan has suggested when making a strategy domestic opinion can be a source of strength, if all parties are included; people, officials, politician, and military. Deterrence capabilities are weakened if the people do not feel themselves genuinely owners of the strategy adopted in their names. Forced unity without openness, or populist policies appealing to feelings without consideration of facts and reality, can become Western weakness as well. Furthermore the rhetoric that is used, when thinking about threats for any country, by many political leaders in the West have set ambitious objectives for the use of military force, often using rhetoric derived from the experience of the Second World War, while then allocating insufficient resources to achieve those objectives, assuming that they were ever feasible in the first place. This type of behaviour gives tools to countries like Russia with which to ridicule Western policies.

**6) Bilateral relations with Russia are always also a part of larger context – not only to understand Russia but perceptions of other actors, states and regions on the international security situation and on Russia and how other actors, states and regions understand Finnish (or any other countries’) security and Russia policy.**

It is self-evident that all countries conduct bilateral relations while acting and cooperating on different multilateral levels. However this relationship between bilateral and multilateral is not always clear. In Russian image-building there is a strong attempt to separate aspects into larger, world order context, bilateral relations, interest-based issues, and cooperation arising from identity. In the case of Finland this presents challenges in the “after the hybrid warfare” world. As Antulio Echevarria showed in his contribution, for the bargaining dynamic that lies at the root of coercion and deterrence to result in a favourable outcome, a state, small or large, must first acquire the relevant leverage in diplomatic, informational, military, and economic terms. This requires in the case of Finland not only a deeper and better understanding of Russia but also knowledge of other actors’ perceptions and preferences. The international context for Finland is larger than the EU. With or without membership in NATO, it is important to understand the nature and dynamics inside of the organization. In the case of OSCE, not only is the Russian position important. To actually develop the organization to its full potential, all the other member states are in a more important position than Russia. In terms of Nordic cooperation, even if sharing a Nordic identity, the history of relation to Russia and to “West” are very different, as are defence solutions. The list could go on. The point here is that in order to build up leverage in diplomacy, more careful attention should be paid to how Finnish Russia policy looks from outside, and how Russia looks in other countries’ perceptive.

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