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ABSTRACT (MAXIMUM 200 WORDS) When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, there were 300,000 US military personnel stationed in Europe; now there are 30,000. For the past 25 years, the US and other Western powers hoped Russia would eventually emerge as an open, democratic, and non-threatening nation; this has not happened. In 2000, Russia elected Vladimir Putin to the presidency. Putin, a former Lieutenant Colonel in the KGB, set out to return Russia to the status of a great power once again; reforming the military was a crucial part of his plans. The ways Russia has employed the military are alarming: a mix of military and non-military actions, covert and undeclared operations, and a heavy use of Information Operations. Since its war with Georgia, Russia's belligerence has increased. Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, and has been heavily involved in combat in Eastern Ukraine since that same year. To deter Russian non-linear warfare in Eastern Europe, the United States should reassure NATO allies by increasing the size and capability of the ground based military force in the Baltic States to deny Russian infiltration efforts while enabling the flow of follow-on forces ashore within twenty-four hours of indications and warnings of hostile actions.			
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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

**Russia's Non-Linear Warfare and the US Military's Role in Countering the Threat to the
Baltic States**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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Executive Summary

Title: Russia's Non-Linear Warfare and the US Military's Role in Countering the Threat to the Baltic States.

Author: Major Isaac D. Moore, United States Marine Corps

Thesis: To deter Russian non-linear warfare in Eastern Europe, the United States should reassure NATO allies by increasing the size and capability of the ground based military force in the Baltic States to deny Russian infiltration efforts while enabling the flow of follow-on forces ashore within twenty-four hours of indications and warnings of hostile actions.

Discussion: When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, there were 300,000 US military personnel stationed in Europe; now there are 30,000. For the past 25 years, the US and other Western powers hoped Russia would eventually emerge as an open, democratic, and non-threatening nation. To that end, most nations adopted policies of non-threatening and open relationships with Russia. During the 1990s, Russia was in a fragile state, suffering from an extremely weak economy and a crumbling military. Also during this time, violent insurgencies raged on its periphery in the Balkan States and within its borders in Chechnya. At the turn of the century, the Russian economy began to improve as gas and oil prices increased, but its military remained weak. In 2000, Russia elected Vladimir Putin to the presidency, a seat he held from 2000-2008, and again from 2012-present. Putin, a former Lieutenant Colonel in the KGB, set out to return Russia to the status of a great power once again; reforming the military was a crucial part of his plans. In 2008, immediately following a poor military performance in a short war with Georgia, Russia began the most significant and broad reaching military reforms since 1918. What emerged is a smaller, more expeditionary force. The ways Russia has employed this force is alarming: a mix of military and non-military actions, covert and undeclared operations, and a heavy use of Information Operations resulted in a highly effective and difficult to counter military force. Since its war with Georgia, Russia's belligerence has increased. Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, and has been heavily involved in combat in Eastern Ukraine since that same year. Most recently, Russia deployed troops to Syria, and is currently executing air strikes there. Furthermore, Russian violations of air and maritime borders has risen dramatically, and an increasingly aggressive and belligerent rhetoric from Russian officials, especially from Putin himself, has neighboring States rightfully concerned. The first part of this paper explains the roots, evolution, and current methods of Russia's non-linear warfare; the second part assesses the threat of future Russian non-linear warfare employment and how to counter it.

Conclusion: Russia poses a significant threat that needs to be addressed through positioning military force on its periphery. For the past decade, Putin's Russia has refined and employed non-linear warfare and other methods to regain territory and degrade the legitimacy of NATO; the US placing a robust and capable force in the Baltic States is a fiscally possible and effective way to assure allies and deter Russian aggression.

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Preface

I began this research project with the intent of better understanding what Russia was doing with its military and what threat Russia posed. My interest was driven in large part by Russia's recent operations in Crimea and Ukraine. As I began research for this paper, Russia began moving troops into Syria, adding to my interest in Russia's actions. I was fascinated and alarmed by the use of unmarked and undeclared Russian "little green men" executing combat operations—both "low end" and "high end" while Russia denied any involvement. I became concerned as I watched the international community seem to be frozen with indecision about what should, and could, be done about this denied intervention.

Knowing that partisan activity, guerilla, irregular, and hybrid warfare have been and will forever continue to be relevant methods of combat to wage war, it seemed to me that Russia was implementing something new and different. As I researched what many (but not all) scholars and Russian experts refer to as "non-linear warfare,"¹ I realized the significance of the threat posed by non-linear warfare coupled with the will and intent of Russia's leaders. I conclude in this paper that as much as we would like to believe Russia will eventually become a responsible, open, and democratic nation, this is not the goal of Russia's current leaders. I identify one specific and tangible step that the US should take to counter Russia's increasing and relatively unchecked belligerence—increasing the size and capability of military forces in the Baltic States. While this alone will not solve the problem of a belligerent Russia, with an evolving method of employing its military; it is a necessary and logical step that should have a positive impact.

¹ General Valery Gerasimov, Russian Chief of the General Staff is widely considered as the primary champion of non-linear warfare. In an article published in 2013 he describes methods for a nation to impose its will through a combination of military and non-military means. Effective methods include "...the broad use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian, and other nonmilitary measures..." Russia's non-linear warfare in Crimea and Ukraine employed unmarked, undeclared forces. Non-linear warfare is described in a later section of this work.

“If you want to talk about a nation that could pose an existential threat to the United States, you’d have to point to Russia,” “If you look at their behavior, it’s nothing short of alarming.”

General Joseph Dunford, U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
Congressional Testimony
9 July, 2015²

Introduction

The US military presence in Europe has decreased from 300,000 when the Cold War ended in 1991, to 30,000 currently.³ This force may not be adequate to deter Russian aggression and assure NATO allies of the US’ commitment to assist in their defense. Moreover, Russia continues to demonstrate the intent, will, and ability to expand its influence through an evolving Non-Linear Warfare methodology⁴ as demonstrated by actions in the Crimea and Ukraine. Left unchecked, Russia will likely continue to use non-linear warfare as a method to further its national goals as published in its recent strategy.⁵ With US military presence receding in an age of fiscal austerity it is unrealistic for the US Army to return hundreds of thousands of personnel and their equipment to the European theater.

The purpose of this work is to answer the following questions: As Russia reasserts itself within Eastern Europe, employing its military in unique ways that are challenging to defeat, how

² General Joseph Dunford, U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated this about as he testified at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on his nomination as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Matthew Rosenberg, “Joint Chiefs Nominee Warns of Threat of Russian Aggression,” *The New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/10/us/general-joseph-dunford-joint-chiefs-confirmation-hearing.html?_r=0.

³ The US currently has about 30,000 troops in Europe, compared to a height of 300,000 soldiers at the end of the Cold War. U.S. forces often have to borrow equipment from allies, such as British helicopters. Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, the Army’s top general in Europe stated, “we have to figure out how you make 30,000 feel like 300,000.” Daneil Wiser, “U.S. General: We’ve ‘Hugged’ the Russian Bear for Too Long,” *Washington Free Beacon*, (January 7, 2016), <http://freebeacon.com/national-security/u-s-general-we-have-hugged-the-russian-bear-for-too-long/>.

⁴ Non-linear warfare has no specific definition, however it is characterized by an increased reliance on non-military means such as political, economic, informational, humanitarian, and other nonmilitary measures – applied in coordination with the protest potential of the population. This is supplemented by military means of a concealed character, information operations, and “declared” military action only in the final stages of conflict. Russian non-linear warfare is dynamic and evolving; I explain the methodology throughout this paper.

⁵ On 31 December, 2015, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree that updated Russia’s National Security Strategy out to 2020. Carl Schreck, “Putin Signs New Security Strategy Warning of Heightened Risks From West” *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, (December 31, 2015), <http://www.rferl.org/content/putin-signs-new-security-strategy-warning-of-heightened-risks-from-west/27460849.html>.

should the United States adjust to prepare for, deter, and potentially respond to a crisis caused by Russia's Non-Linear Warfare?

Despite the military draw-down and fiscal constraints the US needs to support its NATO allies by preparing to respond to further Russian aggression in Europe. Due to their strategic location, historical relationship, and an ethnic Russian minority, the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) are at risk to Russian aggression in the form of non-linear warfare. For example, if Russia were to apply a similar model to Latvia as it did in Crimea, first Spetsnaz and other "little green men"⁶ would arrive in Latvia's urban areas; within 24 hours additional motorized, mechanized, and helo-borne forces (all undeclared) would arrive in force. This undeclared force would seize all key government buildings and, significantly, all key infrastructure—such as port facilities, airfields, rail heads, bridges and power plants within 48 hours.

If these events occur, the US and NATO have minimal means to apply military forces on the ground—the US military currently lacks the ability to rapidly aggregate sufficient motorized, mechanized, and armored forces ashore in the Baltics. Russia would then have the time and space to flood more forces into position, while employing their robust Information Operations capabilities and using "netwar"⁷ to dominate the narrative of events within the Baltics, for Europe, Russia, and the world. To deter Russian non-linear warfare in Eastern Europe, the United States should reassure NATO allies by increasing the size and capabilities of the military

⁶ "Little Green Men" is a term commonly used to describe armed, uniformed, organized Russian speaking military forces that are commonly believed to be unmarked Russian soldiers operating in an undeclared status in Crimea and Ukraine.

⁷ The term "netwar" is commonly used by the Russian military and security services to describe what the West usually terms "cyber-warfare." A below section within this paper expands on the concept of "netwar."

force within the Baltic States to deny Russian infiltration efforts while enabling the flow of follow-on forces ashore within twenty-four hours of indications and warnings of hostile actions.

PART I: Origins, Theory, and Practice of Russia's Non-Linear Warfare

The Origins of Russia's Non-Linear Warfare: Relative Weakness to NATO

Russia's adoption of what has come to be known in the west as non-linear warfare originates from Russia's overall relative weakness in comparison to the combined military forces of all NATO forces following the collapse of the Soviet Union. This has been the case for decades; however, it should be noted that the gradual withdraw of US forces from Europe since the fall of the Soviet Union has been significant, and the relative combat power of Russia has increased recently as NATO forces, specifically US forces, have been reduced sharply. At the conclusion of the Cold War, the US had approximately 300,000 military personnel in Europe, now the US troops in Europe number just 30,000. Moreover, the US reduced its military presence not just in overall numbers, but in relative "posture" within Europe, meaning the 30,000 personnel are not a cohesive fighting unit that is deployed along key terrain in a heightened state of readiness. Rather, these 30,000 personnel are spread out across multiple large joint headquarters, with smaller operational forces scattered throughout Eastern Europe and conducting liaison and security cooperation.

Realizing the US has been withdrawing steadily from Europe, and becoming engaged in Iraq and Afghanistan, Russia remained relatively weak militarily for almost two decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union; however, Russia over the past eight years has significantly transformed its military to be a smaller, more responsive force.⁸ As Russia looked

⁸ One of the major goals of the military transformation was to reduce the size of the military from 1.3 to 1 million total personnel. In essence this was "...the de facto renunciation of a mass mobilization army in favor of a more professional and combat-ready outfit." Mikhail Barbanov, "Military Reform: Toward the New Look of the Russian Military," *Valdai Discussion Club, Moscow*; (July 2012) P15.

to reinvigorate its military, it did not choose to grow it in size, instead, it did the opposite—choosing not to compete with size and mass, but instead by creating a more efficient and flexible force to be applied differently. Russia’s non-linear warfare is less of an adoption of a brand new way of war, and more of a refinement of old practices applied in new ways with new technology (I will expand on this point in detail later in this paper).⁹ Though Russia’s recent full embrace of non-linear warfare is a relatively new phenomenon, major reforms in 2008 significantly changed the overall military structure and established a new vision for how the military would be used in the future.

Russia’s Military Transformation over the Past Ten Years

“In Russia, you need to enact reforms quickly; otherwise they mostly do not work out and are inhibited.”¹⁰

Count Sergei Witte, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Russian Empire, 1903-1906.

The sentiment of the above statement is clearly understood by Russia’s top leaders, especially Russia’s long standing leader, Vladimir Putin. In 2008, the Russian military began a comprehensive military reform effort. Anatoly Serdyukov, who had never served in the Russian military, but rather in the tax services, was appointed by Putin in 2007. There were constant failed attempts to reform the Russian military since the collapse of the Soviet Union, all of which met resistance for a myriad of reasons such as corruption, entrenched personnel who fought change, lack of financial resources, and lack of political will.¹¹ In reality, Putin, Serdyukov and

⁹ Russian scholar Charles K. Bartles, argues that though the West commonly attempts to categorize Russia’s methods as new, “...there have been many Russian commentaries that state this concept is nothing new, that the aspects of hybrid war mentioned by Western analysts have been practiced since warfare began.” Charles, K. Bartles, “Getting Gerasimov Right,” *Military Review*, (Jan-Feb 2016).

¹⁰ Mikhail Barbanov, “Military Reform: Toward the New Look of the Russian Military”, Valdai Discussion Club, Moscow; (July 2012) P3.

¹¹ Historian Athena Bryce-Rogers, in her detailed study of Russia’s Military Reforms, finds that instead of Russia’s advertised 1.3 million man military, the force was in reality much weaker—numbering approximately only 900,000

others had been aggressively working towards significant military reforms for several years and were making progress; however, poor Russian military performance in the five-day war with Georgia in August 2008 served as a catalyst that enabled bold and comprehensive reforms in quick order; Russia was embarrassed.

Following the poor performance against Georgia, Vladimir Putin forced intensive and broad reaching military reforms that came to fruition in just over a year. The primary goals were as follows:

- Shrink the armed forces to 1 million by 2012 [down from 1.35 million];
- Eliminate 200,000 officer positions to make the military less top-heavy;
- Eliminate under-strength units until all were fully manned and at permanent battle-readiness;
- Streamline command structure by replacing the divisional structure with flexible brigades under four strategic territorial commands;
- Improve training and enhance the military education system; and
- Modernize weapons systems.

Anatoly Serdyukov, Russia's defense minister announced the reforms in October, 2008; by December, 2009, Russia had implemented "the most radical transformation of the country's military since the creation of the Red Army in 1918."¹² One of the major changes to the military was a decreasing focus on mass in favor of an increased focus on smaller, elite forces capable of fighting "limited-scale conflicts" such as in Georgia, and also capable of influencing local populace before and after armed conflict occurs.

The reforms significantly increased the amount of money spent on increasing the technological capabilities required for the smaller, more elite, and more specialized forces to be

total. Furthermore, her analysis found the force suffered from outdated technologies and structural inefficiencies that would be "...swept under the rug or lead to mere 'window dressing' efforts at improvement. Therefore, despite nearly non-stop reforms since 1992, the main problems inherited from the Soviet era remained more than a decade later." Athena Bryce-Rogers, "Russian Military Reform in the Aftermath of the 2008 Russia-Georgia War," P355. https://www.gwu.edu/~ieresgwu/assets/docs/demokratizatsiya%20archive/GWASHU_DEMO_21_3/T0320R1173M61414/T0320R1173M61414.pdf.

¹² Mikhail Barbanov, 7.

effectively employed. In support of the “New Look” transformation, “The State Armament Weapons Program”—this covered the period from 2011 to 2022—allocated 616 billion dollars to weapons and technology purchases.¹³ Of note, one of the top priorities of the program was to increase the command, control, communications, computer, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR) systems. This increased focus on command and control, rather than simple and hierarchical massed formations, reflected a significant shift in how Russia intended to employ military force: less as a massive blunt instrument capable of overwhelming force, and more as a tool-kit of specialized elements capable of multiple simultaneous and complex operations.

Though the reformed military would still call for the strategic containment of NATO to be done primarily through strategic nuclear deterrence, Russia sought to reform its military into a more useful and relevant force capable of furthering its national interests. The Russian military reforms that began in 2008 started with a rapid and bold rearrangement of forces (firings, staff “flattening,” and consolidation of commands). This significantly reduced the overall size of the military, and simultaneously increased the actual readiness of the overall force. Prior to the reforms the officer ranks were mid-grade and staff heavy (an egg-shape instead of a pyramid shape hierarchical structure—as depicted in the below graphic). By making the force smaller Russia aimed, in part, to create a more professional military.

¹³ Mikhail Barbanov, 3.

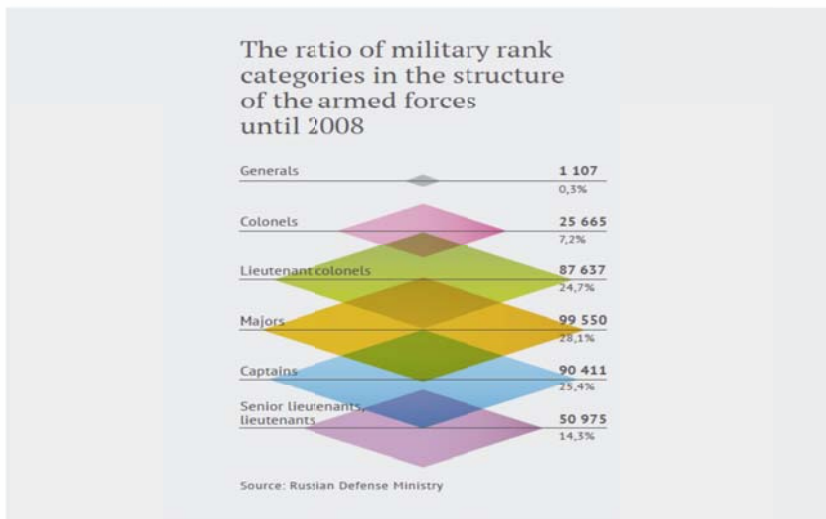


Figure 1. Source: Barbanov, Mikhail, "Military Reform: Toward the New Look of the Russian Army." Valdai Discussion Club Analytical Report, Moscow, July 2012.

And the military, though large at over 1.3 million, was characterized by “skeleton” units that relied on a long recall and build up process to become operationally ready. In an article titled *Being Strong: National Security Guarantees for Russia*, Putin stated:

In 1999, when gangs of international terrorists directly attacked Russia, we found ourselves in a tragic situation. To put together a 66,000-strong task force, we had to scrape it up, literally, piece by piece, with composite battalions and detached companies. Nominally, the personnel of the Armed Forces exceeded 1,360,000. Yet we had practically no combat-ready units that would be prepared to go into action without additional preparations.¹⁴

The idea of having a 1.3 million-man military that was in reality not combat ready was rooted in the Cold War thinking that if a conventional war (without nuclear weapons) began, Russia would have time to mobilize and mass forces. This was good for the defense, but when the Cold War ended the bloated but hollow structure persisted. To conduct offensive operations a nation needs a ready force, and in 2008 Russia did not have that; this greatly contributed to

¹⁴ Vladimir Putin, “Being Strong: National Security Guarantees for Russia,” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, (February 2012).

poor performance in Russia’s war with Georgia in 2008.¹⁵ The below table from the Russian Defense Ministry reflects that the plan prior to the military reforms called for the military mobilizing up to 4.2 million during a time of war—the problem being that this would take a full year to achieve, and prior to mobilization, the overall readiness of units was abysmal. The below figure graphically depicts Russia’s plan for mobilizing and massing up to 4.2 million personnel; note that the peacetime status of this military maintained only a handful of units in a “permanent combat readiness” status (only 17% of the Army for example was combat ready).



Figure 2. Source: Barbanov, Mikhail, “Military Reform: Toward the New Look of the Russian Army.” Valdai Discussion Club Analytical Report, Moscow, July 2012.

Overall, the goal of giving Russia’s military a “New Look” was to change it from the massive army of the Soviet Union into a more adaptable and flexible force capable of

¹⁵ Following the war with Georgia then President Dmitri Medvedev identified five areas of reform necessary to improve the performance of the military; the first item on the list was bringing all combat formations to permanent-readiness status (i.e., elimination of cadre units). Ariel Cohen, and Robert E. Hamilton, “The Russian Military and the Georgia War: Lessons and Implications,” *Strategic Studies Institute*, (June 2011) P 49.

employment in more limited and unconventional ways. The reformed military has evolved and morphed along with Russia's national military strategy over the past few years. As the military has transformed, so have new ideas as to how best to employ it as a means to achieve national strategy. In 2013, President Putin's hand-picked, top military leader, Valery Gerasimov gave these new ideas structure and called for continued refinement of a new type of warfare.

Valery Gerasimov: Old Tactics with New Technology = "Non-Linear Warfare"

On 27 February, 2013 an article appeared in Russia's *Military-Industrial Courier* (*Voенно-promyshlennyi kur'er*) entitled "The Value of Science in Prediction."¹⁶ The article outlines dynamic and creative methods for a nation to impose its will through a combination of non-military and military means. In hindsight this article presents a clear picture of how Russia viewed the ways force (both military and non-military) could be effectively applied in the current and future operating environments. The author was General Valery Gerasimov, Russian Chief of the General Staff. At the time the article appeared and in the months that followed it seemed that nobody even noticed it. However, since its publication less than three years ago Russia has annexed Crimea and caused major unrest in eastern Ukraine—all the while executing the methods described in Gerasimov's obscure article.

In both Crimea and Eastern Ukraine (with operations in Ukraine still ongoing) Russia employed the theories and practices explained in Gerasimov's article precisely. Indeed, one can read Gerasimov's article and match each major concept highlighted in print with specific events within Russian operations in Crimea and Ukraine. Below is a description of how Russia executed Gerasimov's intent in Crimea and Ukraine, and a brief discussion of what observations Russia made as well as future implications for the West.

¹⁶ General Valery Gerasimov, "The Value of Science in Prediction," *Military-Industrial Courier*, (February 27, 2013) P1.

Gerasimov's article begins with the following: "In the 21st century we have seen a tendency toward blurring the lines between the states of war and peace. *Wars are no longer declared* [italics author's] and, having begun, proceed according to an unfamiliar template." This statement is significant as it is true that in both Crimea and Ukraine Russia never "declared war," in fact Russia never admitted to any level of involvement. Gerasimov goes on to state that effective methods include "...the broad use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian, and other nonmilitary measures — applied in coordination with the protest potential of the population."¹⁷ It is noteworthy that in Crimea the annexation, though military personnel were involved, was almost a bloodless affair due to Russia's political, informational, and nonmilitary measures.

There is a tendency to view non-conventional tactics that have been used before as new when they are employed in challenging ways. It should be noted that Russia has a long history of using political, informational, nonmilitary measures, and partisan activity in conjunction with conventional forces; also that Russian history reflects a tradition of dynamic and ever changing applications of force, both military and non-military to achieve strategic goals.¹⁸ Gerasimov in his 2013 article demonstrates this understanding when he quotes the Soviet military scholar Aleksandr Svechin as stating "It is extraordinarily hard to predict the conditions of war. For each war it is necessary to work out a particular line for its strategic conduct. Each war is a

¹⁷ Valery Gerasimov, 2.

¹⁸ Renowned Russian Scholar David M. Glantz describes that what the West refers to as non-linear warfare is rooted in Russian military traditions of pragmatism and adaptation and is more of a continual evolution of warfare than an entirely new form of war. He states, "Beneath the Surface appearance of apparent chaos and confusion in military affairs, Russian military thought remains remarkably vibrant and imaginative." Glantz describes that there are "...continuing debates within the Russian military-theoretical community over the nature of future war and the shape and form of forces necessary to conduct it..." and that this has been true since the early 1900s. David M. Glantz, "The Continuing Influence of non-linear warfare on Russian force structuring," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 9:2, (December 18, 2007), 336-337.

unique case, demanding the establishment of a particular logic and not the application of some template.”¹⁹

What Gerasimov described in his article is a type of warfare that is significantly different from the type employed by Russia in the past century. Specifically, there are aspects of Russia’s non-linear warfare that are new—such as “netwar” and use of new information technologies. Perhaps most importantly the ratio of “non-military” to “conventional military” methods is extremely high. In his article Gerasimov states that “the role of nonmilitary means of achieving political and strategic goals has grown, and, in many cases they have exceeded the power of force of weapons in their effectiveness.” This statement shows the head of the Russian military believes that the future of warfare is changing; indeed, the article highlights some of the methods he intends on employing to keep pace with an evolving world.

Some of the more effective methods of non-linear warfare—and the ones most challenging for a conventional military force to counter—are old methods being employed with new technology. Specifically, Information Operations (IO) are enabled like never before through the internet, social media, twitter, and the proliferation of cell phones throughout all socio-economic levels in most European countries. And though all countries in Europe have access to this new technology, Russia has shown itself to have both the will and the vision to use and refine the most effective ways to use technology in support of its national objectives. Effective IO is central to Russia’s non-linear warfare— Spetsnaz²⁰ infiltration and agitation, state run media, cyber-attacks, and a network of “trolls” (described below) enable and contribute to all

¹⁹ Valery Gerasimov, 5.

²⁰ Spetsnaz is a Russian term for “special forces;” since the fall of the Soviet Union several former Soviet states outside of Russia, such as Ukraine and Belarus have forces they call Spetsnaz as well.

other methods of non-linear warfare. Russia is effective at IO and keeps getting better through practice.

Russia's Information Operations: Theory and Practice

At the heart of Gerasimov's non-linear warfare is a heavy reliance on what may be termed Information Operations (IO) throughout all phases of non-linear warfare. This was demonstrated in Russia's annexation of Crimea and its operations in Eastern Ukraine. Central to the annexation of Crimea was Russia's use of IO.²¹ Russia and the Russian military specifically, use slightly different terms to categorize, understand, teach and conduct IO than the US and most western nations do. The sheer volume of definitions coupled with differing well developed IO theories studied within Russia, speaks to how important it is to Russian political and military strategy. For example, according to Jolanta Darczewska of the Warsaw Center for Eastern Studies, there are two main schools of thought within Russia regarding IO—the Panarin school, and the Dugin school. Both of these are comprehensive, modern, and evolving philosophical and practical approaches to executing information operations, and both have one over-arching targeted adversary—western powers led by the US.

A leading figure within Russia's Information Operations is Igor Panarin. Panarin is a highly educated and well respected psychologist and professor within the Russian military.²² His early writings formed what would become the fundamentals of the Russian Federation's Information Security Doctrine; and his later writings—specifically a book called *Information World War III – War Against Russia*, he claimed that "...all the so-called 'colour' revolutions in

²¹ Jolanta Darczewska, *The Anatomy of Russian Information Warfare: The Crimean Operation, a Case Study*, *Warsaw Center for Eastern Studies*, (May 2014).

²² Igor Panarin was born in 1958, he first entered the KGB in 1976, and subsequently performed duties and taught at multiple institutions, he is currently a professor at the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. He also teaches at MGIMO and the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

the CIS area and the ‘Arab Spring’ were a product of social control technology and information aggression from the United States.”²³

The Panarin school believes the best way for Russia to execute IO is through a centralized planning mechanism he refers to as the *Information KGB*, who then task and employ *Information Spetsnazes*, their activities being broken down into the following categories:

Propaganda (black, grey and white), intelligence (the service which collects information about the opponent), the analytical component (media monitoring and current situation analysis), the organizational component (coordination and steering channels, secret agents influencing the media which shapes the opinion of politicians and mass media to take the shape desired by the state involved in information warfare, and other combined channels, including special operation forces (sabotage operations conducted under a foreign flag).²⁴

Most if not all elements of this IO “school” of thought were employed during Russia’s annexation of Crimea—as will be described in the next section of this paper.

The other major Russian IO school of thought is the Dugin school.²⁵ Similar to Igor Panarin, Dugin suggests that the “colour revolutions” were “artificial processes plotted in the West aimed at destabilizing entire regions in the post-Soviet area,” with an ultimate goal of the “...disassembly of Russian statehood.”²⁶ Dugin believes the internet, social media, and the use of new technologies form an important new dimension to engage in conflict with an adversary. The main way in which the two “schools” differ is primarily in the nuance of how Russia’s netwar mechanism should be structured. Ultimately though, like Panarin, Dugin argues the

²³ Jolanta Darczewska, 14.

²⁴ Jolanta Darczewska, 14.

²⁵ Aleksandr Dugin was born in 1962, and is a well-known and highly renowned political scientist within Russia. He is a geopolitician, philosopher, and religious historian that has published over ten books and hundreds of articles that have been published both within and outside Russia. He is the founder of the Eurasian Youth Movement, and the International Eurasian Movement.

²⁶ Jolanta Darczewska, 17.

importance of creating what he calls the “Eurasian Network” to wage netwar on the “Atlantic Network.”

Both Panarin and Dugin are scholar-philosophers, and both were embraced and therefore empowered by the most powerful man in Russia, Vladimir Putin. Putin appears to recognize the two men as true experts whose teachings will inform and add value to the military and other security entities.²⁷ Said another way, Putin seems to embrace their ideas about IO and netwar.

In 2012 as Russia’s military was being transformed Putin, in his article “Being Strong:” *National Security Guarantees for Russia* formally stated the following:

We need to learn to look ahead, ‘over the horizon,’ and estimate threats for 30-50 years ahead. It is a serious task that requires that we mobilize the resources of civilian and military science and algorithms of reliable long-term forecasting. What kind of weapons will the Russian Army need? What kind of technical requirements will our defense industry have?” He goes on to state “...information and communications technology, has fundamentally changed the nature of armed conflict...” and that “...Space-based systems and IT tools, especially in cyberspace, will play a great, if not decisive role in armed conflicts.”²⁸

Panarin and Dugin inspire, coach, and lead an incredible (and somewhat ambiguous) network of practitioners, often referred to as “trolls.”²⁹ The strong focus on IO is a fundamental of Russia’s current method of non-linear warfare. In 2014, Russia put its IO theories into practice, and achieved impressive results. In the annexation of Crimea, Russia used its state run media to first deny involvement, and then spread disinformation to build public support within Russia. Simultaneously Russia used information operations and netwar within Crimea to foment

²⁷ It is noteworthy that Putin chose not to “purge” these two stalwarts of IO theory and practice as it is a significant departure from methods of power consolidation and threat elimination historically used in Russia by top leaders—such as Josef Stalin—as both Panarin and Dugin were prominent figures in IO during previous regimes.

²⁸ Vladimir Putin, “Being Strong: National Security Guarantees for Russia,” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, (February 2012).

²⁹ Russia’s “troll army” reportedly consists of hundreds of paid bloggers who work shifts 24 hours a day in which they flood internet forums, comments sections, and social networks, often working in teams through proxy servers to spread propaganda that praises Putin, Russian domestic and international policy, and seeks to discredit the West.

unrest within ethnic Russians and Russian-sympathizers. The results were a nearly bloodless annexation of Crimea.

The Crimea Operation: An Example of the strength of Russian IO and Non-Linear Warfare

When Russia annexed Crimea, it tested its ability to use non-linear warfare in the contemporary environment—true to Gerasimov’s article, non-military measures were at the heart of the operation and IO were present before, during, and after Russia annexed Crimea. The annexation was a gamble of sorts, or at least a calculated risk. It appears that Putin bet on the fact that most NATO member states would be outraged—but would not take military action to repel the incursion because Ukraine was not worth a war with Russia; he was right.³⁰ In the months following Russia’s annexation of Crimea, nations around the world proclaimed their disapproval and NATO nations were outraged; however, aside from sanctions and other diplomatic pressure, exactly zero military action was taken to force Russia to withdraw.

Just prior to Russia’s actions in Crimea events referred to as the Euromaiden movement took place in Ukraine. On 21 November 2013, protests took place in *Maidan Nezalezhnosti* (“Independence Square”) in Kiev, Ukraine’s capital. The protests were in response to the news that the pro-Russian Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich had suspended preparations for signing the Ukraine–European Union Association Agreement with the European Union. Instead, Yanukovich sought closer economic relations with Russia. This news was met with outrage in Kiev and elsewhere as the majority of Ukrainians supported moving towards closer ties and eventual membership with the European Union. The below figure depicts the result of a poll

³⁰ Marvin Kalb in his book “Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War,” argues that Putin’s “gamble in Crimea (and it was a gamble) was reckless, even dangerous,” but was based in part on the lack of military intervention after Russia’s invasion of Georgia in 2008. Kalb is a nonresident senior fellow with the Foreign Policy program at Brookings, a Harvard Professor, and former Moscow bureau chief and host of Meet the Press.

conducted in October, 2013, by GfK³¹ Ukraine. It shows three times as many Ukrainians favoring the association agreement with the European Union as supporting the Russian-led Customs Union:³²

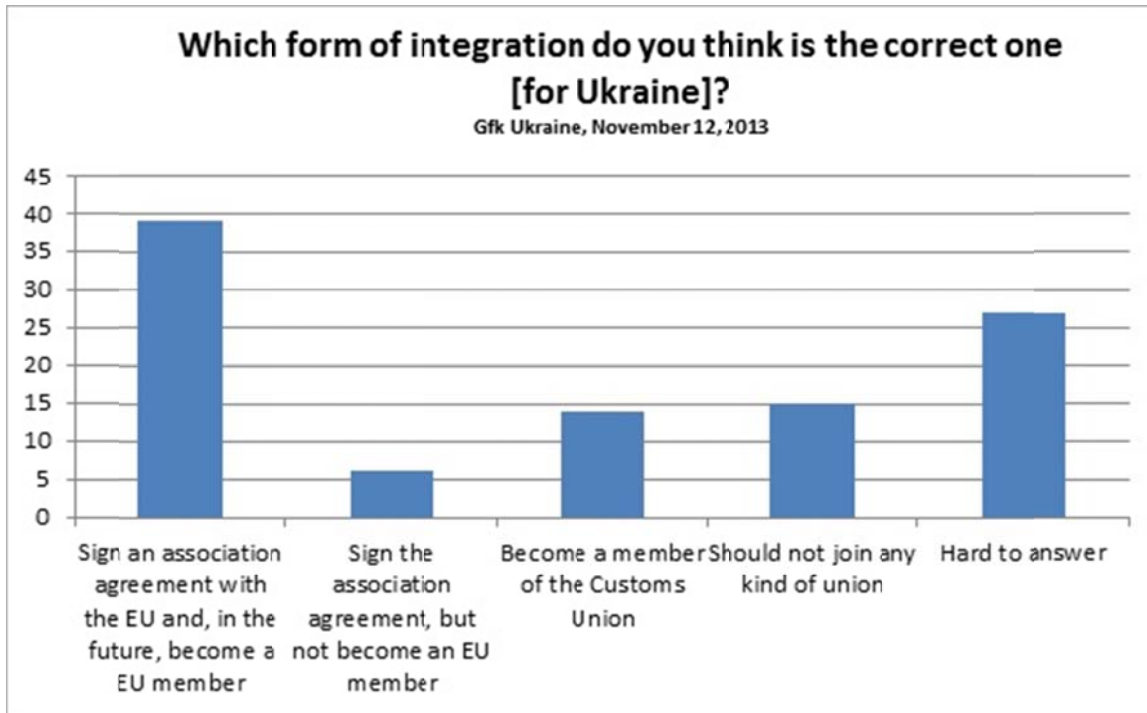


Figure 3. Stevea Pifer, and Hannah Thoburn, "Viktor Yanukovych: Losing Europe...and Losing the Ukrainian Public?," Brookings Institution (18 November, 2013) <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2013/11/18-viktor-yanukovych-losing-europe-ukrainian-public-pifer-thoburn>

As protests continued, and grew in size and number throughout Kiev, police response escalated and on 24 November, 2013, clashes became violent and police employed gas and batons against protesters. The police crackdown had the opposite of the government’s intended effect and the protest movement grew and evolved into a call for the removal of Yanukovych and his supporters within the government. In late February, 2014 enough of Yanukovych’s followers within parliament fled the country to give his opposition members within parliament a quorum;

³¹ The GfK SE, was established in Germany in 1934 as Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung (Society for Consumer Research). It is the fourth largest market research organization in the world.

³² Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS), "The Ukraine Crisis Timeline" <http://csis.org/ukraine/index.htm#292>.

parliament voted to remove Yanukovich from power, to end the police anti-protest operations, to release dozens of detainees, and to adopt the political provisions of the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement.

On 22 February 2014, as civil unrest and the Euromaiden movement called for the removal of Yanukovich, Putin held a meeting of his top military and security service commanders. It was in this all night meeting that Putin alleges that he ordered his commanders to prepare to swoop into eastern Ukraine to rescue Yanukovich; it was also at this meeting that Putin claims to have stated to his commanders that “we are obliged to start working on the return of Crimea to Russia.”³³

According to Putin, that order was given on the morning of 23 February 2014. That same afternoon there were pro-Russian demonstrations held in the Crimean port city of Sevastopol. A mere four days later, on 27 February, armed troops wearing masks and uniforms but no Russian insignia (popularly referred to as “little green men”), seized key buildings and infrastructure in Crimea—including the Supreme Council building of Crimea.³⁴ Just three days later, on 1 March, while the “little green men” occupied the Crimean parliament building the parliament held an emergency session and voted to terminate the government of Crimea, fire Prime Minister Anatolii Mohyliov, and appoint Sergei Aksyonov (a member of the Russian Unity Party) as prime minister. Aksyonov immediately issued a formal request to Putin for military support; Putin in turn received authorization from the Federation Council of Russia for a military intervention in Ukraine; the next day, 2 March, Russian troops from Sevastopl and the mainland

³³ The Telegraph, “Putin Reveals the Moment He Gave the Secret Order for Russia’s Annexation of Crimea,” *The Telegraph* Online Newspaper, (9 March 2015), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/vladimir-putin/11458426/Putin-reveals-the-moment-he-gave-the-secret-order-for-Russias-annexation-of-Crimea.html/>.

³⁴ Simon Shuster, “Putin’s Man in Crimea is Ukraine’s Worst Nightmare,” *TIME*, online magazine, (10 March 2014), <http://time.com/19097/putin-crimea-russia-ukraine-aksyonov/>.

moved into Crimea by the thousands—what followed was a rapid, nearly bloodless annexation. Why was Russia so effective? how did it happen so quickly? Perhaps it only seemed to happen quickly because the world only observed the last phases of non-linear warfare in execution.

In the span of a mere nine days a crisis occurred, a decision was made, and military forces had occupied and annexed Crimea—that is, if one believes that the process started on 23 February. There is likely more to the story than the official timeline of events offered by Putin and the Kremlin. Indeed, Gerasimov’s article, and the way of waging war that he outlined therein describes clearly the importance of preparatory and shaping operations when executing an adapted form of non-linear warfare. An objective look at the timeline of events, informed by Gerasimov’s article, leads to the conclusion that Russia was engaged in non-linear warfare in Crimea well before the 22-23 March all night meeting. The following is a graphic depiction of Russia’s non-linear warfare methods over time.

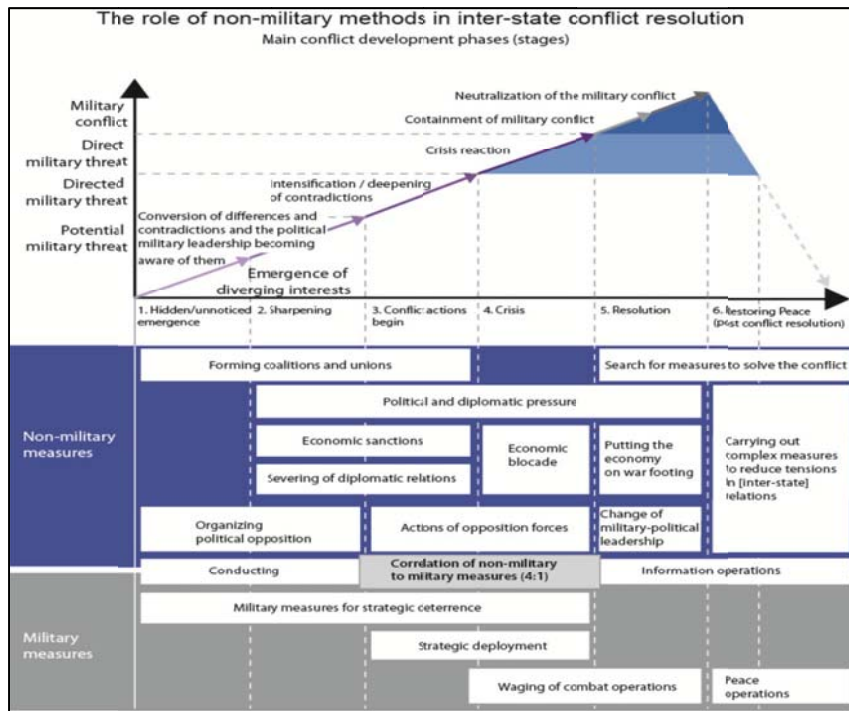


Figure 4. Niklas Ganhölm, Johannes Malmelin, and Gudrun Persson (eds.), "A Rude Awakening - Ramifications of Russian Aggression Towards Ukraine." Swedish Defence Research Agency, Stockholm, June 2014, p. 33 (available at http://www.foi.se/ReportFiles/foir_3892.pdf, accessed April 21, 2015).

The above model shows direct military action only occurs in phase 3 when conflict actions begin. This implies that on 23 March when Putin oriented his commanders onto taking back Crimea, there were possibly two phases “hidden/unnoticed emergence” and “sharpening” already underway in Crimea. Even if one believes that Russia was not involved in shaping and preparing Crimea prior to 23 March, 2014, then one must be rightfully impressed by the speed and flexibility in which Russia’s military can decide, communicate, and execute non-linear operations.

The operation was strategically risky for Russia. It was unclear how the West, specifically NATO, would respond—that said, because the West did nothing to intervene militarily in Georgia in 2008 Russia had reason to believe that again the West would not intervene. Still, Russia’s Crimea operation was a calculated risk; however, Russia’s non-linear warfare mitigated threat to Russia in numerous ways. By initially deploying plain-clothed Spetsnaz forces into Crimea, the Russian military was able to effectively coordinate with pro-Russian elements within the region to identify local military and law enforcement composition, disposition, and strength.³⁵ Additionally, Spetsnaz forces rallied local support to begin seeding unrest and in turn support for Russia; this began shaping the battlefield both militarily and within the civic and political realms for the actual deployment of Russian troops into Crimea.

True to the teachings of Panarin and Dugin, Russia dominated the narrative of what was actually happening in Crimea. Russia waited to admit its involvement in Crimea until its forces had firm control of Crimea, until it was certain that events would remain peaceful, and until it was clear that NATO would not become militarily involved; only then did Russia admit to its involvement, and even then Russia never admitted the extent of its operations there. Instead

³⁵ CSIS, ‘The Ukraine Crisis Timeline,’ *CSIS.org*, <http://www.csis.org/Ukraine/index.htm>.

Russian IO pushed disinformation, spread rumors and falsities, and made counter-accusations against the West, in keeping with usual practices.

Within Crimea, Russian IO effectively encouraged and enabled the population not to resist and also that falling under Russia was in their best interest. Outside Crimea, NATO and other nations were slowed down as they sought to establish the truth about what was happening. Meanwhile within Russia, IO (including state run/influenced media outlets) controlled the narrative of what took place to great effect, pushing the message that Putin and his military had intervened masterfully—ensuring peace, and only upon Crimea’s request.

Effective Russian IO contributed to an incredible rise in Putin’s domestic approval ratings.³⁶ This is important as it demonstrates how Russia’s recent non-linear warfare methods have not only achieved some of Russia’s strategic objectives, the methods have also yielded success in ways that reinforce Putin’s overall strength within Russia. Therefore, it is not likely that Russia will abandon or significantly diverge from this type of non-linear warfare. Other types of operations, like Russian air strikes in Syria for example may occur, but non-linear warfare methods in bordering nations are likely to continue as they contribute to Putin’s power. With Crimea, non-linear warfare had now been tested and proved effective in achieving its immediate goals in the contemporary environment.

With such success in Crimea, due in large part to the effectiveness of IO, Russian operations in Eastern Ukraine offer some glimpses into the shortcomings of non-linear warfare. Though at this point Russia has achieved some of its objectives there, currently Eastern Ukraine is far from under Russian control in the way that Crimea is. In Eastern Ukraine events on the ground certainly demonstrated the lethality and effectiveness of Russian non-linear warfare;

³⁶ Before the Crimean operation, in January 2014, Putin’s domestic approval rating was 65 percent; this spiked to 80 percent in March. By June of 2014 Putin’s domestic approval rating was 89 percent—the highest of Putin’s 15 years in office.

however, Ukraine's successful resistance (so far) against Russia's efforts offers insight into ways to resist non-linear warfare.

Russia Stalls in Ukraine

Russia's annexation of Crimea was, relatively speaking, an efficient and effective event. Overall the conflict resulted in very little actual violence or loss of life. This was, however, not the case when Russia became involved in Eastern Ukraine. Russian involvement in both Crimea and Eastern Ukraine is essentially a part of the same overall operation,³⁷ with Russia's primary objectives being to gain influence and even territory while preventing Ukraine from aligning with what Russia sees as a US/NATO/ "Atlantic" sphere of influence.³⁸ It is instructive therefore to examine some of the reasons for non-linear warfare's varying levels of success between Crimea and Eastern Ukraine's Donbas Region.

In April 2014, an amalgamation of pro-Russian insurgents seized control of key terrain, government buildings, and infrastructure within the cities of Luhansk and Donetsk in the Donbas region of Eastern Ukraine. Through examination of factors preventing (at least for now) Russia from success in eastern Ukraine, one finds implications for how to counter non-linear warfare. The rapid adaptation of Ukrainian conventional combat power to circumstance on the ground was Russia's first stumbling block. Ukraine's military proved capable of reacting to and

³⁷ In their research on Russia's mobilization of "compatriots," Zakem, Saunders, and Antoun note that the annexation of Crimea was linked to the Euromaiden events unfolding in Ukraine; they explain that "If Crimea's reintegration into Russia had been a central goal of Vladimir Putin's foreign policy without regard to conditions in Ukraine, Russia could have acted at almost any time over the last decade. The Crimean parliament had voted more than once for greater autonomy and even independence from Ukraine well before March 2014." Vera Zakem, Paul Saunders, and Daniel Antoun, "Mobilizing Compatriots: Russia's Strategy, Tactics, and Influence in the Former Soviet Union" *Center for Naval Analysis*, (November, 2015).

³⁸ Daniel Dewitt, in an article published in *Small Wars Journal* describes that "Putin...sees the United States and the NATO Alliance as fundamentally opposed to Russia's interests. He is determined to drive wedges between NATO member states, thereby weakening the Alliance and raising questions of its credibility as a defensive and deterrent force in European affairs." Daniel Dewitt, "The Inauguration of 21st Century Political Warfare: A Strategy for Countering Russian Non-Linear Warfare Capabilities," *Small Wars Journal*, (Nov, 2015).

countering the actions of Russian backed separatists and “little green men” (likely Russian military personnel with no Russian insignia) once they began appearing in the Donbas.

By US standards, the Ukrainian military forces at the onset of conflict were only moderately ready for combat operations and suffered from older more lightly armored equipment. At the beginning of the conflict, Ukraine’s military consisted of approximately 130,000 total personnel, and the structure of the military reflected its Soviet roots – large “skeleton” units that were undermanned and reliant on a mobilization effort to reach full strength. By the end of the 2014 the mobilization did in fact occur, yielding a large increase in personnel and bringing the overall number up to approximately 232,000 Ukrainian military personnel.³⁹ Also reflective of the history as a member of the Soviet Union, the majority of Ukrainian units were located in the west of the country. Furthermore, much of the equipment and vehicles of the Ukrainian military was old and had not been updated since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. That said, the fact that conventional military forces were present and in fact began fighting stalled the initiative of the “little green men,” the “separatist rebels” and even the conventional Russian forces that eventually crossed the border and engaged in combat.

Russian conventional military action—still never declared by Russia at present—inflicted thousands of casualties on Ukrainian forces. Current estimates place the total number of Ukrainian military service personnel Killed In Action (KIA) since 2014 at over 2,500. In November 2015, the Ukrainian General Staff reported a total of 2,673 KIA.⁴⁰ For a conflict that started less than two years ago, the war in the Donbass has proved a lethal event, and though

³⁹ GlobalSecurity.org “Military Personnel of Ukrainian Armed Forces in 2014,” www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/ukraine/personnel.htm.

⁴⁰ Ukraine Today, “Over 2,500 Ukrainian Soldiers Killed Since Russia Invaded Ukraine,” *Ukraine Today* (November 20, 2015), <http://uatoday.tv/politics/over-2-500-ukrainian-soldiers-killed-since-russia-invaded-ukraine-538686.html>.

large scale combat has receded the potential for large scale kinetic events still remains; however, it is clear that the actual presence of Ukrainian conventional motorized, mechanized, and armored units disrupted Russia's non-linear warfare methods. It became significantly harder for Russia to effectively influence the narrative inside Ukraine when major combat operations were underway.

There were many factors that prevented Russia's operations in Ukraine from achieving full success; however, it is clear that Ukraine's timely and kinetic response was significant in disrupting the efforts of pro-Russian separatists, Russian agents, and Russian conventional forces (both little green men and designated forces just east of the Russian border). Within three days of the "pro-Russian separatists" seizing key terrain, Ukraine's leaders vowed to retaliate with force, and nine days after the first separatists' seizures military force was employed.⁴¹ This timely response, though plagued with challenges, missteps, poor coordination and sometimes excessive force, blunted the initiative and momentum of the pro-Russian separatists, which in turn served as a catalyst for Russia to deploy more overt and conventional military forces in Ukraine.

Within nine days of the first "little green men" appearing in the Donbass, Ukrainian conventional military force arrived and influenced the situation to change the calculus on the battlefield. Dr. Phillip Karber,⁴² after a year in Ukraine researching the conflict noted that:⁴³

⁴¹ On 6 April, 2014, a crowd of over 1,000 demonstrators gathered in Donetsk and demanded a status referendum. The protesters eventually stormed and took control of the Donetsk Regional State Administration (RSA) building. Throughout the month of April similar seizures occurred in multiple other cities within the Oblast: Mariupol, Horlivka, Sloviansk, Kramatorsk, Yenakieve, Makivka, Druzhkivka, and Zhdanivka. On 9 April, 2014, Arsen Avakov, the Minister of Internal Affairs, said "there are two opposite ways for resolving this conflict – a political dialogue and the heavy-handed approach. We are ready for both." The President Oleksandr Turchynov launched a military counter-offensive against insurgents in the region; this offensive began with Ukrainian military forces re-taking the airfield in Kramatorsk from the Donbass People's Militia.

⁴² Dr. Phillip Karber spent a year in Ukraine during the conflict. He focused on interviewing Ukrainian military leaders at all levels and he personally observed numerous kinetic engagements, ultimately being wounded and

In March and April of 2014, The Russian Army was massed on the eastern Ukrainian border. Although weakened by two decades of force structure decline, lack of modernized technology, and abject neglect of readiness, the Ukrainian Army conducted the largest counter-mobilization of any European army since the end of World War Two and deployed its fifteen Brigades east of the Dnepr to confront the Russian threat illustrated in these documents. The Russian Op Plan was designed to be executable as of 29 April 2014...In comparing the timeline of Ukraine's redeployment to the East with Russia's concentration on their border, it becomes apparent, that the option for a quick *fait accompli* was denied. One of the classic academic debates over deterrence is the difficulty in proving the success of an action that produces a non-event. This case potentially provides one of the clearest examples of deterrence working as a result of a defensive effort. That is a lesson that should not be lost on NATO."

Military force capabilities, size, and proximity to the initiation of conflict mattered in Ukraine, as the Ukrainians were able to influence the vastness of their time and space. How does this equation change in potential, future areas such as the Baltic States?

When military personnel are deployed to an area without Russian insignia, and their presence in the area is officially denied, matters of "response" from outside nations are severely complicated and stalled. But in Ukraine one observes that conventional military responses from within the affected conflict area proved capable of denying Russia the terrain and the ability to dominate the sphere of IO. Russia's non-linear warfare relies on a high ratio of non-military to military actions—4 to 1 as professed by Gerasimov; however, events in Ukraine demonstrate that an opposing conventional military force inhibits the effectiveness of both non-military, and military actions.

Dr. Karber, reaches the conclusion that conventional military forces, and their response, affects the entire system of non-linear warfare. Below is a list of what Dr. Karber observed to be the five key elements to Russia's non-linear warfare:

evacuated. In 2014 he presented a fifty page "Lessons Learned" document through the Potomac Foundation. Dr. Phillip A Karber, "'Lessons Learned' from the Russo-Ukrainian War, Personal Observations," *Historical Lessons Learned Workshop sponsored by Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory & U.S. Army Capabilities Center (ARCIC)*; (6 July 2015).

⁴³ Phillip A Karber.

Political subversion: Insertion of agents; classic ‘agi-prop’ information operations employing modern mass media to exploit ethnic-linguistic-class differences; corruption, compromise of local officials.

Proxy Sanctuary: Seizing local governmental centers, police stations, airports and military depots; arming and training insurgents; creating checkpoints and destroying ingress transportation infrastructure; cyber attacks compromising victim communications; phony referendum with single party representation and establishment of a ‘People’s Republic’ under Russian tutelage.

Intervention: Deployment of the Russian forces to the border with sudden large scale exercises involving ground, naval air and airborne troops; surreptitious introduction of heavy weapons to insurgents; creation of training and logistics camps adjacent to the border; commitment of so-called ‘volunteer’ combined-arms Battalion Tactical Groups; integrating proxy troops into Russian equipped, supported and led higher level formations.

Coercive Deterrence: Secret Strategic force alerts and ‘snap checks;’ forward deployment of tactical nuclear delivery systems; theater and intercontinental ‘in your face’ maneuvers and aggressive air patrolling of neighboring areas to inhibit their involvement.

Negotiated Manipulation: The use and abuse of Western negotiated ‘ceasefires’ to rearm their proxies; using violations to bleed the opponent’s Army white while inhibiting other states from helping under the fear of ‘escalation;’ divide the Western alliance by playing economic incentives, selective and repetitive phone negotiations infatuating a favorite ‘security partner.’”⁴⁴

Dr. Karber’s description of Russia’s non-linear warfare in both Crimea and Ukraine is that of a complex and highly effective methodology that has stalled in large part due to the surprising resilience and tenacity of Ukraine’s military efforts. In this finding, there are implications for future conflict. The presence and ability of a conventional military force in Ukraine contributed to the denial of Russia’s non-linear warfare. Are other nations, such as the Baltic States, as prepared as Ukraine was?

Part II: Future Threats and Countering Non-Linear Warfare

The Baltic States are at Risk.

The Baltic States are a primary area of strategic interest for Russia due to their geographic location along the Baltic Sea, and their sizable ethnic Russians populations. Latvia’s

⁴⁴ Phillip Karber.

population is approximately 27 percent Russian, Estonia's is 25 percent, and Lithuania's is 6 percent. One of the main reasons for Putin's annexation of Crimea was his concern for protecting "the rights of ethnic Russians," commonly referred to as "compatriots."⁴⁵ The Baltic States are concerned and have taken action, all of them increasing defense spending in the wake of events in Ukraine.⁴⁶ Also significant to the Baltic States is not just the ethnic Russians present within their borders, but also those on their periphery, such as in the Russian Oblast of Kaliningrad.

The Kaliningrad Oblast⁴⁷ is significant due to its location and its status as a sovereign Russian territory. The Oblast has a population of approximately 942,000, and of those 86.4% are ethnic Russian according to the 2010 census.⁴⁸ It is a Russian exclave that borders with the Baltic States and has a major seaport, the city of Kaliningrad. Kaliningrad's location is significant as it is on the southern border of Lithuania, the southernmost Baltic State. Sovereign Russian territory on the southern border of the Baltic States would be valuable if Russia was to employ non-linear warfare in this region, and Russia has recently increased military activity in

⁴⁵ In an analysis of Russia's mobilization and use of ethnic Russians, and Russian supporters living outside Russian borders (compatriots), the Center for Naval Analysis found that "Moscow has identified protection of and support for compatriot populations as a foreign policy priority since shortly after Russia's independence, and official Russian foreign policy and national security documents routinely cite it as such." and that "In seeking to influence the former Soviet region, Russian compatriots can be useful to Moscow in many ways." Vera Zakem, Paul Saunders, and Daniel Antoun, "Mobilizing Compatriots: Russia's Strategy, Tactics, and Influence in the Former Soviet Union. *CNA* (Nov, 2015).

⁴⁶ In the Baltic states, there have been increases in military spending in the past 2–3 years, but only Estonia meets NATO's 2 per cent target. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania all plan to increase spending again in 2015, Lithuania by 50 per cent—according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

⁴⁷ Kaliningrad Oblast was allocated from Germany to the Soviet Union at the Potsdam Conference in 1945. Prior to Soviet occupation the city was called Königsberg. Once the city became Soviet property it was renamed Kaliningrad in 1946 after Mikhail Kalinin the formal leader of the Soviet Union from 1919-1946; subsequently the German population was forced out and they were replaced by Soviet citizens. Merriam-Webster defines an Oblast as "A political subdivision of Imperial Russia or a republic of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics or of the Russian Federation." <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/oblast>.

⁴⁸ 2010 Census of Russian Federation <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/pril.php>.

Kaliningrad. In December of 2014, Russia executed a large scale military drill in the Oblast that featured 9,000 soldiers and over 55 naval vessels. The following graphic shows the percentage of ethnic Russians within the Baltic States and the location of the Kaliningrad Oblast.⁴⁹



Figure 5. The Baltic States' Percentage of Ethnic Russian Speakers, and the Kaliningrad Oblast. UN National Statistics Agencies.
<http://www.bing.com/images/search?q=map+of+ethnic+russians+in+the+baltics&view>

The Baltic States are not prepared to counter non-linear warfare or an even larger conventional Russian penetration. Currently, the Baltic States have relatively small, poorly equipped militaries; the three states, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, have a combined total of less than 30,000 troops, no tanks, no attack helicopters, and no fighter jets.⁵⁰ Moreover, the states are

⁴⁹ Stratfor, "Baltic States Concerned about Large Russian Minority" *STRATFOR, Global Intelligence*, (October 16, 2014), <https://www.stratfor.com/image/baltic-states-concerned-about-large-russian-minority>.

⁵⁰ The size of the Baltic States militaries are as follows: Lithuania has 15,000 active and 4,200 reserve personnel, 0 tanks, 54 artillery pieces, and 432 Armored Fighting Vehicles (AFVs); Latvia has 13,000 active and 11,000 reserve personnel, 0 tanks, 20 artillery pieces, and 250 AFVs; Estonia has 3,500 active and 60,000 reserve personnel, 0 tanks, 66 artillery pieces, and 318 AFVs. Statistics found on the *Global Fire Power* database website. <http://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail>.

not well linked together in an overall defense plan. Each of the Baltic States is a NATO member and each relies on the fact that Article V of the NATO charter states that an attack on one NATO member is an attack on all. However, NATO presence is minimal in the region currently. For example, the US provides the majority of NATO forces in the Baltic States and currently the US maintains only a little over company sized element in each Baltic State.⁵¹ Furthermore, the logistical support for these forces is provided primarily via ground lines of communication (LOCs) that run through Poland—these LOCs are susceptible to being easily cut, thereby isolating the small US presence there. Additionally, the current company sized US elements in the Baltic States have minimal air traffic control capability.

Such a small US led NATO force in the region concerns the Baltic States in light of recent events. In June 2014 tensions were high throughout Eastern Europe. Russian backed separatists and Russian little green men were engaging in conventional combat operations in the Donbas, and just four months earlier Russia had invaded and annexed Crimea. With this as a backdrop, 9,000 people flocked to a small island in the Baltic Sea to attend a music festival. As they assembled on Bornholm Island these 9,000 people were the subjects of a Russian simulated attack in the form of a massive strike on the island; the planes were armed with live missiles and bombs. Prominent Russian experts at *The Heritage Foundation* a prominent Washington DC think tank, called the event “the most overtly offensive Russian simulated strike against Denmark since the Cold War.”⁵² This simulated attack and airspace violation stirred fear about

⁵¹ According to the *2015 U.S. Index of Military Strength*: “600 U.S. soldiers who rapidly deployed to the Baltics and Poland deployed from U.S. bases in Italy.” And “The F-15s and F-16s (including their crews, maintenance staff, fuel, spare parts, etc.) the U.S. Air Force sent to the region deployed to Eastern Europe from U.S. air bases in the United Kingdom and Italy, respectively.”

⁵² James Jay Carafano, Ph.D., Ted R. Bromund, Ph.D., Dean Cheng, Luke Coffey, Lisa Curtis, Helle C. Dale, Michaela Dodge, David Inserra, Bruce Klingner, Daniel Kochis, Ryan Olson, James Phillips, Ana Quintana, Bryan Riley, Brian Slattery and William T. Wilson, Ph.D “U.S. Comprehensive Strategy Towards Russia,” *The Heritage Foundation*, Special Report #173 on Russia and Eurasia,” (9 December, 2015).

the unstable, erratic and increasing threat of Russian belligerence. Concern in the region was strong enough to fuel a debate about whether or not Finland and Sweden should join NATO to defend against Russia.⁵³

The dramatic and belligerent Russian violation of internationally recognized airspace is not an isolated incident. Despite the US desire for Russia to become a responsible nation that slowly embraces a consistent acceptance of internationally established sovereignty and borders the record clearly shows that Russia is not on that path. Russian military incursions and belligerence is actually increasing. In fact, in 2013, in support of the Baltic Air Policing (BAP) mission, NATO scrambled planes hundreds of times to intercept Russian planes flying close to or even crossing into NATO airspace and the number increased in 2014 to 400 total violations.

The lack of tangible US and NATO military power on the ground concerns The Baltic States. Over the past eight years Russia has become increasingly belligerent; first by invading Georgia in 2008, then annexing Crimea and operating in Ukraine in 2014, and most recently through increasing air incursions and border violations. Despite the growing threat of Russian actions in the region NATO and the US have not significantly increased troop presence in Eastern Europe. Due to fiscal constraints and a reduction in the overall size of its military,⁵⁴ the US cannot position robust military forces in every state throughout Europe in an effort to deter Russian aggression. That said, the US should concentrate what forces it can in the Baltic States as the threat there is real and the Baltic States are unique and strategically important.

⁵³ Stratfor, "Sweden and Finland Consider NATO Membership," (16 September, 2015), <https://www.stratfor.com/geopolitical-diary/sweden-and-finland-consider-nato-membership>.

⁵⁴ In 2012, the regular Army consisted of approximately 570,000 soldiers, at the end of fiscal year (FY) 2015, the force was about 490,000; at the end of FY16, it is predicted at around 475,000; and by the end of FY17, 450,000. Todd C. Lopez "Army to Realign Brigades, Cut 40,000 Soldiers, 17,000 civilians," WWW.ARMY.MIL. http://www.army.mil/article/151/992/Army_to_realign_brigades_cut_40_000_Soldiers_17_000_civilians.

The US Should Increase Military presence in the Baltic States

“Forward presence activities demonstrate our commitment, lend credibility to our alliances, enhance regional stability, and provide a crisis response capability while promoting US influence and access. Joint force presence often keeps unstable situations from escalating into larger conflicts.”

—US Joint Publication 3-0 Operations

As General Breedlove states, the US must stop “hugging the Russian bear”⁵⁵ and stop hoping that Russia will eventually become a moderate and responsible actor within the region. For the US to leave its European allies and partners to defend against the threat of Russian non-linear warfare with such a small US presence is emboldening Russia, and causing concern among the states on Russia’s periphery.⁵⁶ With only 30,000 personnel allocated to all of Europe the North Atlantic Council, as well as the US DOD must determine what areas are strategically important and require larger, more capable forces; the Baltic States fall into that category. The Baltic States are NATO members with multiple seaports and airports, they have significant ethnic Russian minorities, they are bordered by the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad, and they have minimal defense capabilities relative to Russia.

NATO and the US DOD should commit to significantly increasing the size of the force stationed within the Baltic States. There are many options for the size, composition, and capabilities of this force. Possible options may include an army division, or an army brigade (reinforced) sized Task Force; or a smaller battalion (reinforced) sized Marine Air Ground Task

⁵⁵ On 5 January 2016 U.S. Air Force General Phillip Breedlove, NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander for Europe told reporters that the U.S. had “hugged the bear” (referring to Russia) in Europe for two decades, but that it was time to move away from that strategy due to Russian actions over the past decade.

⁵⁶ One example of this is found in a 98-page pamphlet titled “How to act in extreme situations or instances of war;” the Lithuanian Ministry of Defense released this pamphlet in January, 2015 as concerns about Russian actions spread throughout the region. The pamphlet was intended to instruct Lithuanians on how to survive foreign occupation and organize nonviolent resistance. Andrius Kuncina, and Daisy Sindelar, “How to Survive a Russian Invasion,” *The Atlantic*, (22, Jan 2015), <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/01/how-to-survive-a-russian-invasion/384692/>.

Force (MAGTF). Any of these options would serve to assure allies and deter Russian aggression within the Baltic States because it places US military forces and NATO personnel in a position of direct confrontation with Russia. The question then becomes what should the increased size and capabilities of the US force in the Baltic States consist of.

Some of the key benefits of an army division are its sheer mass. Divisions range from 15,000 to 20,000 personnel and they consist of anywhere from 160 to 240 tanks, an aviation brigade consisting of approximately 100 helicopters, and from 50 to 70 artillery pieces. Such a large force would provide a highly capable ground combat force with helicopter aviation assets to the Baltic States. However, such a force would pose a serious logistical challenge to the three small Baltic States as none of them currently possess the infrastructure to house this number of troops.

Another option may be a smaller US Army brigade sized task force in which supporting aviation and other assets are added to the force; this would reduce the overall size of the force while still maintaining requisite combat power. However, either of these army forces would lack organic fixed wing aviation assets and therefore would need to coordinate and plan across services. Additionally, the US Army is in a period of downsizing, and its forces are already stretched thin globally.

A better option may be a MAGTF slightly bigger than that of the Special Purpose (SP) MAGTF currently stationed in the Balkans known as the Black Sea Rotational Force (BSRF).⁵⁷ Some of the benefits of positioning a MAGTF in the Baltic States include a significantly smaller number of personnel, between 500 and 2,000. The small size and expeditionary nature of a MAGTF reduces the logistical footprint and strain on host nation infrastructure requirements.

⁵⁷ The Black Sea Rotational Force (BSRF) began in 2010 and has evolved every year; currently the force consists of approximately 500 Marines and sailors. The BSRF is based primarily in Mihail Kogălniceanu International Airport. It is a MAGTF capable of a range of missions from Security Cooperation to Joint Forcible Entry Operations (JFEO).

Furthermore, despite the significantly smaller size of such a MAGTF the force would still possess the ability to execute a myriad of operations ranging from security cooperation to conventional offensive and defensive combat operations.

Despite its smaller size, a MAGTF possesses both helicopter and fixed wing air assets. Additionally, a MAGTF has a logistics element skilled at coordinating and enabling the rapid flow of follow on forces through port and air facilities. One of the missions that MAGTFs regularly train for are Joint Forcible Entry Operations (JFEOs). A JFEO requires execution of combat operations in a non-permissive environment with simultaneous execution of logistical throughput.

In order to truly deter Russian non-linear warfare in the Baltic States, any US force positioned there needs to be able to hold key terrain, block an armored penetration, and enable the secure and timely flow of follow on forces. An army division, brigade task force, or a Baltic State-based MAGTF would provide the capabilities required to offset Russian mass at key points, while simultaneously setting conditions and coordinating for the follow on flow of forces. Regardless of the size of the force that the US DOD decides upon, there is an urgent need for an increase of US military forces ashore in the Baltic States. In the conclusion of his “Lessons Learned” about Russian non-linear warfare in Ukraine Dr. Karber offers the following:

The strategic “lesson” is that Eastern Europe needs American presence on the ground and in the air. A CONUS based U.S. Army designed for ‘assurance and deterrence’ but that arrives too late with too little is not a solution to their problem and not a structure the country will sacrifice for.⁵⁸

Dr. Karber’s assessment is that without significantly increased military presence in Eastern Europe, Russia will continue to exert force to gain influence within the region; I agree.

⁵⁸ Phillip A Karber.

The reality is there are not enough military forces in the Baltic States currently to prevent Russia from eventually employing non-linear warfare there; this is something the US can change.

Joint Publication 3-0 Operations states the following about deterrence:

Deterrence stems from an adversary's belief that a credible threat of retaliation exists, the contemplated action cannot succeed, or the costs outweigh the perceived benefits of acting. Thus, a potential aggressor chooses not to act for fear of failure, cost, or consequences. Ideally, deterrent forces should be able to conduct decisive operations immediately. However, if committed forces lack the combat power to conduct decisive operations, they conduct defensive operations while additional forces deploy.⁵⁹

By increasing combat power in the Baltic States, the US would be able to block Russia along key terrain while facilitating follow on flow of forces; such action would be both strategically deterring and operationally effective and would effectively counter Russia's non-linear warfare.

Conclusion

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the concurrent end to the Cold War, the US and most of the international community hoped that Russia would eventually become an open, democratic, and non-threatening nation. This is reflected in the massive US troop withdrawal from Europe, from 300,000 down to 30,000. The point of this paper is not to criticize this hope, nor the action of the large draw-down of forces; rather, it is to shed light on the reality that Russia does not share the same desire as the West in this regard. The facts are that under Vladimir Putin's leadership Russia has steadily sought to strengthen its military, demonstrated in the strikingly swift and broad reaching military reforms that began in 2008. Further evidence of Putin's intent starts that same year, in 2008, when he sent tanks, troops, and aircraft into the sovereign country of Georgia. This event was an indicator of future events to come in Crimea and Ukraine.

⁵⁹ Joint Publication 3-0 (Chapter V, P10).

Along with the military reforms came the evolution of non-linear warfare in Russia. This is less of an entirely new type of warfare, and more of a combination of familiar tactics with new technology. Russia's non-linear warfare continues to evolve. With recent success in Crimea, and ongoing operations in Eastern Ukraine, it is logical to believe Gerasimov and Putin will continue to employ non-linear warfare along Russia's periphery. The West cannot afford to continue hoping for a peaceful, non-threatening Russia—instead, the West needs to respond to the threat, assure allies, and deter Russian belligerence. The US should significantly increase the size and capability of its forces in the Baltic States; doing so is a sensible start.

Ultimately, Russia's continuing development and use of non-linear warfare—massive IO efforts, infiltration, agitation, and undeclared troops—is a real challenge for the West to deal with. However, hoping it just stops and goes away is not a responsible course of action. The West is capable of defeating this threat, and it is time to implement logical, responsible actions; Russia's use of non-linear warfare is alarming but it can, and should, be defeated.

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