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## **THE CONCEPT OF WAR OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION. MILITARY INSTRUMENTS IN THE RUSSIAN POWER POLICY IN 2014**

**ABSTRACT:** In recent years, the Russian concept of war has evolved significantly. Its aim is to seek a change in the global balance of power. The subject of discussion in this article is the issue of war in the Russian military doctrine, the specificity of the hybrid war, the probability of Russian military intervention, and the question of building strategic independence. The author used a complementary cognition paradigm that allows combining the process of cognition with the functions of science. The considerations focused on the activities related to the annexation of Crimea in 2014. The research presents the Russian perspective of contemporary armed conflict which examines the experience of the Russian armed forces and the particularity of modern military operations. The key elements of the hybrid war were identified and the basis of Russian strategic independence which the ruling elite, in fact, was striving to achieve, was indicated. From the Russian point of view with regard to the armed conflict, there is a conviction that it is necessary to comprehensively use military, political and economic information as well as asymmetric actions. Russia is systematically rebuilding its armed forces since it has ambitions to play a significant role in the international environment; and the armed forces facilitate: articulating its opinions, deterring, and demonstrating its importance.

**KEYWORDS:** Russia, military doctrine, strategic independence, hybrid warfare

### **Introduction**

Since the early 1990s, Russian perspectives on the essence of modern armed conflict have evolved. Russia believed that the modern war would start without its declaration; it would have limited political goals and would be held in all the theatres – land, air, space, sea as well as in information space. Russians are convinced that crises erupt unexpectedly, frequently developing into a local war and even a global conflict. Moscow fears that modern systems of precise and strategic destruction may bring nearly the same effects as the use of nuclear weapons. It reserves the right to respond with nuclear means to a conventional attack in the event of a threat to the vital interests of the state (Lumpov | Bagmet 2002, 19-26).

The issues of war and peace have been the topic of public debate in Russia in recent years. They are present in the media, both electronic and printed. War has

become an element of patriotic education and consolidation of society towards the western world. Since 2011, a social movement has also been observed in Russia, namely that of the “immortal regiment” (“bessmertnyy polk”) whose aim is to preserve the memory of the Great Patriotic War (Velikaya Otechestvennaya Voyna). The participants of the Victory Day movement pass in a column through the streets of cities with photographs of their relatives – veterans of the armed forces, partisans, members of underground organizations, and prisoners of concentration camps. They describe their stories, suffering, and achievements on the dedicated website (Bessmertnyj Polk 2017).

Issues related to World War II and the conflict in Ukraine are the leading motif of the stage. A case in point is the work of the popular Russian patriotic singer Vika Tsyganova. She has not only the repertoire from the Second World War, but also sings praiseworthy songs about modern Russian officers and the glory of regaining Crimea (YouTube, Vika Tsyganova, 2017).

Russian military theorists have been engaged in the debate on changes in the art of war. The capture of Crimea in 2014 and the use of the armed forces in Donetsk and Lugansk were a huge surprise for the West. Its reaction shows that politicians, experts, and intelligence institutions have not paid adequate attention to the evolution of Russian military thought in the last few years. However, it is true that western observers were astonished by the ability of the Russian armed forces to effectively combine military and non-military forces and resources. Unexpectedly, special forces, operational and strategic information, disinformation, diplomacy, political and economic instruments were used effectively. In considerations regarding the armed forces, a distinction should be made between military doctrine and military thought. The former expresses the official state’s position regarding the objectives, tasks and ways of using the armed forces. In contrast, the latter expresses the viewpoints of experts, scientists representing military sciences in Russia, practitioners – soldiers, but also politicians, lobbyists, and publicists. One of the most important forums for presenting and exchanging views is the magazine “Voyennaya Mysl” issued by the Ministry of Defence since 1918. It includes such sections as geopolitics and security, military and operational art, tactics, theory and military practice, directing and military command, military training and education, and a discussion forum. It can be assumed that some of these outlooks are reflected in official documents and present opinions on the problems of the armed forces and their place in foreign policy, internal policy and security of the Russian Federation (Pavlov | Bel’skij | Klimenko 2015). The attitudes expressed in publications also provide valuable research material. Nevertheless, considering the culture of secrecy in Russia, preserved for many years, especially in the times of the USSR, as well as the sensitivity of defence and state security issues, not only in Russia, but also in other countries, it should be realized that some issues are unavailable to the public. The thesis is additionally reinforced by political circumstances and the

official public interpretation approved by the society that the West is conducting a political, economic, and informational war against Russia (Vystuplenie Ministra Obrony Rossijskoj Federatsii 2016).

## **1. Literature Review and Methodological Remarks**

In recent years, the Russian strategic concept of war has evolved significantly. Its aim is to seek a change in the global balance of power. The conducted research demonstrates the Russian view of the contemporary armed conflict which considers the experience of the Russian armed forces and the specificity of modern military operations. The author identified the key elements of the hybrid war and indicated what is, in fact, the basis of Russian strategic independence. War as an instrument of Russian foreign and security policy is the subject of numerous scientific and journalistic studies. The deliberations are focused on historical war experiences, the context of rebuilding the empire and the related strengthening of military potential, as well as hybrid war. It is, therefore, worth mentioning the monograph by M. H. van Herpen (2015). The message of the publication is to draw attention to the fact that through the aforementioned *Putin's wars* the Kremlin is implementing a secret, phased strategy, designed to restore its position in the world. According to the monograph of D. E. Schoen (2016), Putin has a plan aimed at destroying the European political and economic system, dividing NATO, gaining influence in the world and marginalizing the United States. In this way, he wants Russia to become a global power.

O. Jonsson (2019) has performed an in-depth analysis of the Russian approach to the problem of war over the centuries, starting with the Bolshevik revolution and ending with the contemporary meaning of war. It is worth emphasizing that his research was based both on doctrinal documents, the concepts of Russian military theorists and the assessment of Russian war experiences. The author pointed out the importance of “the non-violent war” in contemporary Russian politics. In the opinion of the representatives of the Russian ruling elite, the Federation has been waging it with the West since the turn of 2011-2012.

Russian views on war were also shared in the publication: Chekov | Makarycheva | Solomentseva et al. 2019, 25-48. In the authors' view the nuclear powers will avoid a nuclear conflict, similarly to the period of inter-bloc rivalry. On the contrary, Russians assert that non-military activities, such as information wars and offensives in cyberspace, will play an essential role in the rivalry between Russia and the West. Remarkably, as stated by Russian researchers, such events as the Arab Spring pave the way for foreign interventions, and the war experiences in Ukraine lead to the claim that irregular armed forces and private armies are of fundamental concern.

It is also worth noting M. Minkina's monograph (2017), in which the focus was on the geopolitical context of rivalry between the great power, namely the United States and Russia, aspiring and striving for the status of a global power. The author's analysis mainly concentrates on identifying the interests of both sides, attempting to establish a qualitative and quantitative category of influence, but at the same time to understand the behavior of the US on one side and Russia on the other. The aim of the article is to analyze the Russian approach to the issue of war from a doctrinal perspective, to define the specificity of the commonly named hybrid war and Russian strategic independence. As the foundation of the research conducted facts and empirically perceived phenomena are incorporated. The key is, therefore, the positivist and post-positivist outlook encompassing the so-called mainstream theories as well as realism common in Russian foreign policy.

For the purposes of the research, it is particularly useful to refer to the theory of political realism, embodying the assumptions of Kenneth Waltz's structural realism, which emphasizes the study of power instruments in state politics (Elman 2012, 23). According to neorealists, whose leading representative is the aforementioned Kenneth Waltz, the causative factor in the actions of states is the structure of the international system, and building power is treated as a means leading to the goal, namely the survival and security of the state. Waltz's current is state-centered, addressing the international system and considered as competitive. In keeping with the assumptions of the theory in question, international cooperation is difficult because states are guided by the possibility of conflict while assuming the worst-case scenario, i.e. its occurrence (Czaputowicz 2013). An additional argument justifying the reference to this theory is the fact that after the end of the Cold War it gained the status of the intellectual mainstream, under which decision-makers analyze the international system, define the national interest and implement foreign policy (Shakleyina | Bogaturov 2004, 37-51; Więclawski 2011, 170-179). The Russian Federation expresses this in practice by contesting the current, hegemonic international order, striving to reconstruct it towards a multipolar world, with the key role of powers balancing each other's influence.

The author also used systematic and structural analysis. Assuming that the armed forces are an internally ordered set of elements with a specific structure, whose primary task is to conduct war, it appeared the most adequate. Moreover, a feature of system analysis is the comprehensiveness of the approach to research problems and the use of interdisciplinary analytical methods to solve complex problem situations, justified in research on the Russian vision of war as an instrument of foreign and security policy. Thus, system analysis enabled the combination of the achievements of various scientific disciplines relevant to the problems studied.

## **2. Military Doctrine of Russia**

The military doctrine of the RF from 2014 in par. 8 identifies the key concepts that characterize the security environment and the theatre of operations of the armed forces (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia 2014). A military (armed) conflict is understood as a kind of state action to resolve a dispute between states or within a state with the help of the armed forces. It includes all types of armed confrontation – on a large scale, local and regional war, and armed conflict. The last option is conceived as a confrontation with the use of force on a limited scale, between states or between parties within the territory of a given state. The doctrine distinguishes three types of wars: local, regional, and large-scale war. The local war has limited political and military aims and involves states that are in a mutual, usually bilateral dispute. In the regional war, several states or a coalition of the armed forces of several states are engaged. Each participant endeavours to achieve political goals and interests. A large-scale war is an armed conflict between a coalition of states or between great powers. It may be the effect of the escalation of an armed conflict, local or regional war. Such a conflict requires full mobilization and commitment of the material, moral, and spiritual potential of the state (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia 2014, par. g, d, e, f, z).

Contemporary armed conflicts, in accordance with Russian doctrine, are characterized by an “integrated use of military force, political, economic, informational, and other military activities, carried out with a wide use of the resistance of the population, and operations of special forces” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia 2014, par. 15a). During action in the conflict, “irregular armed groups”, “private military companies”, “asymmetrical methods” will be used (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia 2014, par.15). In the Russian narrative about foreign agents NGOs are recognized for, it is supplemented by the provisions that speak of participation in the armed conflict of political forces and social movements financed and directed from the outside (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia 2014, par. 15k).

In 2005, the State Duma adopted amendments to the law on these organizations. Their aim was to combat the entities in question. The main ideologist of the Kremlin, Vladislav Surkov repeatedly declared that statutory regulations were needed in Russia to prevent attempts on the part of the West to organize colourful revolutions. With reference to the American NGO Freedom House promoting freedom and democracy in the world, he stated: “Everyone knows that Freedom House is headed by Woolsey, who once was in charge of the CIA. Moreover, Surkov told the members of the pro-Kremlin organization ‘Nashi’ – Only an idiot can entrust such an institution with a humanitarian mission” (Zygar 2016, 401).

Provisions of the population protesting against the authorities did not exist in the previous doctrine of 2010. Including them in the current document is the

result of the events in Ukraine from the years 2013-2014, which proves that social protests against the existing regimes are perceived from a military perspective. This means that the armed forces can be used to prevent or control the so-called colourful revolutions.

Analysing the doctrine of 2014, it can be regarded that it is not completely new way of thinking compared to the previous military doctrine of February 2010 (Rossijskaya Gazeta 2010). New content was incorporated after the protests in Moscow and other Russian cities following the 2011 Duma elections and presidential elections in 2012. Most likely, the social turmoil, apart from the conflict in Ukraine, prompted the authors to enrich the document. It also shows the notion expressed in the famous lecture of the Head of the General Staff, delivered at the Academy of Military Science in February 2013 (Gerasimov 2013). He claimed, among others, that the Arab Spring was an example of the war of the 21st century, from which essential conclusions were drawn. The events in North Africa and the Middle East revealed – according to Gerasimov – how a well-functioning state could be tragically involved in a short period of time, become a victim of external intervention and then plunge into chaos, humanitarian catastrophe and civil war (Gerasimov 2013). It also transpires that in achieving political and strategic goals, non-military rather than military means are more effective.

The West, in Moscow's opinion, planned and implemented changes in the governments of Georgia, the Middle East and North Africa. Western actions are closely watched, analysed and incorporated into political and military doctrines. In practice, they were employed in Ukraine. The main theses of the aforementioned lecture were published in the weekly "Voyenno-Promyshlenny Kur'er" (Gerasimov 2013). The notions expressed in the lecture of the head of staff were described as "the doctrine of Gerasimov". Nevertheless, its message was interpreted differently in the West. It was supposed to be a response to colourful revolutions, in particular to the Arab Spring and the way of Western involvement (Kross 2016). In contrast, others argue that the key views of Gerasimov's address are embedded in history, but contemporary Russian views of war and are convergent with Chinese concepts of "unlimited war" (Morris 2016). They were engrained in the realities of the 21st century and they are known in Russian military terminology as the concept of non-linear combat operations. The purpose of such a war is to achieve the desired strategic and geopolitical results, making use of a wide range of instruments of non-military methods and means, including overt and covert diplomacy, economic pressure, and gaining local support (Morris 2016).

In Gerasimov's doctrine, the proportion of non-military instruments to the military is 4:1 (Morris 2016). As for the latter, the following are enumerated: military actions of strategic containment; strategic development of strength; conducting combat operations; peace operations. As already mentioned, non-military actions prevail: building coalitions and alliances; political and diplomatic pressure; economic

sanctions; economic blockade; breaking off diplomatic relations; building a political opposition; actions of opposition forces; transition of the opponent's economy into the military regime; seeking ways to settle the conflict; changing the political leadership of Russia's opponent state; implementing comprehensive actions to reduce tension in relations after the change of political leadership (Morris 2016). In addition, Gerasimov believes that information warfare is taking place simultaneously with the above-mentioned activities. He does not, however, qualify it in any of these categories, probably considering it as a separate domain.

The term Gerasimov's doctrine came into widespread use in journalistic materials, scientific studies, and even statements of senior officials and officers of the Western countries. It is commonly claimed that it presents a vision of the Russian armed forces in modern operations. It appears that this interpretation is wrong, and the lecture itself has little to do with the Russian warfare (Bartles 2016, 30-38). In fact, Gerasimov, instead of Russian intentions, rendered Moscow's perception of the intervention of Western states under the leadership of the United States in the internal affairs of other states. The result of it is an inspiration for colourful revolutions in countries that oppose American hegemony by financing and supplying weapons to rebels (Prezident Rossji 2014).

Gerasimov also remarked that in the event of an armed conflict, a strategy of global war, nuclear containment, and indirect action would be used. At the same time, he interpreted the Russian view of Western actions. To his mind, the US and its allies clearly defined the vectors of their foreign policy. They develop offensive combat action plans, which include "global strike", "multidimensional encounter" by applying "colourful revolutions and soft power". One of the goals of American policy is the destruction of inconvenient states, a violation of their sovereignty, and change of the authorities elected in accordance with the law. This was the case in Iraq, Libya and Ukraine. Similar activities are currently under way in Venezuela. Russia must be prepared to prevent such actions. Military science should participate in developing the theoretical concepts of the Russian military strategy. Additionally, scientists ought to conduct research on the introduction of modern armaments to the armed forces and counteracting military threats in space and from space. The policy of Western "partners" forces the Russian Federation to respond to threats by posing a threat to the West.

Returning to the topic concerning the Russian military doctrine, it was also emphasized that one of the tasks of the Russian defence policy is to support preparations for the mobilization of the economy, in other words, changing its functioning under war conditions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia 2014, par. 21 d). It is a more concise paraphrase of the provisions of the security strategy in which the motive of mobilizing the entire state potential is much more developed because it speaks not only of the mobilization of the economy but of all state and local government institutions as well (Rossijskaya Gazeta 2015). The doctrine also

pointed to the increase of efforts as regards the patriotic and defensive education of citizens, including soldiers in active service (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia 2014, par. 21 e). One of the most serious threats are the information operations of the opponent addressed to the young generation, to undermine the historical, patriotic and spiritual traditions of the defence of the Homeland.

### **3. The Implementation of the Military Doctrine of Russia during the Conflict in Ukraine**

During the Ukrainian crisis in early 2014, the world learned about the so-called “little green men” who appeared in unmarked green army uniforms in the Crimea. They occupied administration facilities, military units, and other strategic places on the peninsula. Vladimir Putin, when asked about them, did not initially admit that they were soldiers of the Russian armed forces. He claimed that those were spontaneous forms of self-defence of the Russian inhabitants of Crimea (Shevchenko 2014). The fact that they were Russian soldiers was confirmed only a few months later. They were – together with information warfare, power demonstrations and cyber attacks – part of the measures applied during the Crimea occupation. This way of conducting activities was defined in the world as hybrid warfare. Former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen clearly stated that this was a new form of action performed by the Russian Federation to destabilize European countries. “Russia has adopted such an approach, namely a mix of very well-known conventional warfare as well as new, more sophisticated propaganda and disinformation campaigns including Russian efforts to influence public opinion through financial links with political parties within NATO and engagement in NGOs” (Sharkov 2015). According to Rasmussen, this is a tactic that makes Russia more dangerous than the USSR during the Cold War since it is less predictable. Irregularity is expressed in Russian military thought about the war of the 21st century and in the statements of senior military commanders. In their view, the achievement of strategic and political goals will be possible through the simultaneous use of military and non-military instruments in the fight, supported by propaganda and disinformation. Victory in such a war is not only about occupying the territory and important strategic objects, but also in the media, which is to provide support for public opinion, both local and international.

A commonly used method is to accuse the West, particularly the United States, of interfering in the sovereignty of other countries. And it is Russia that is afraid of colourful revolutions, trying to influence the situation in other countries, especially in the post-Soviet space (Minkina 2018, 11-12). It is aware that in a world where the West is united in a strong military alliance and, additionally, possesses greater political, economic and military power than itself, the only solution is to engage



in unconventional actions while achieving goals. To prevent Ukraine from signing an agreement with the EU, the Kremlin has struck the weakest points of this country, thus avoiding open confrontation. In the new war, a civil plane can be shot down (and actually it was), but the commander of the rocket launcher who issued the order and the firing person remains unknown. Ukrainian cities were bombarded by artillery, people were killed, and perpetrators were unidentified. However, Russia still denies that it has something to do with those tragic events (Russia's new tactics 2014). It is similar to conducting non-informational intelligence operations that affect actions, events and create desirable conditions in another country, but at the same time the state from which the intelligence institution originates does not admit participation (see Minkina 2014, 209-250).

In all likelihood, the concept of hybrid warfare was Putin's brainchild as well as Siloviks surroundings him. The president, as a KGB officer, was trained in such activity, widely used by this institution. The advantage of hybrid actions, in the situation of an opponent's military superiority, is their ability to adapt to specific circumstances and multiple repetitions. The Kremlin and its supporters in Ukraine have constantly changed their tactics. To achieve their goals, they applied military, political, economic, and diplomatic means. In addition, in hybrid warfare, conventional weapons can be employed as an unconventional means of pressure. Russia is threatening its neighbours with the deployment of S 300, S 400, and Iskander missile systems near their territory (Roblin 2017). Placing these systems in Abkhazia or South Ossetia, Russia has the option of controlling Georgian airspace. The distribution of Iskander K systems in the Kaliningrad Oblast creates the possibility of destroying almost the entire territory of Poland, part of Germany, and part of Sweden, and Iskander M most of Western Europe (Tvn24.pl 2017). Despite the NATO Baltic Air Policing operation, conducted since 2004 to cover the airspace of the Baltic States, Russia systematically violates this space, forcing allied air forces to take off. In the case of the Nordic countries, the very fact that they are considering joining NATO is a pretext for intimidating and harassing them (see Forss 2015). Concurrently, it is worth emphasizing that Russia has sufficient power and instruments to impose its will on the neighboring countries (Kaszuba 2017, 129). The examples cited show that conventional weapons do not have to be applied to raise public and government concerns about security. It should be reasonable to simply place a high technology weapon in a specific area and propagate its combat capabilities. Putin realizes that there is no will to confront Russia in the West. Article 5 of the Washington Treaty does not extend to pro-Western countries that are not members of NATO. Its provisions refer to an armed attack and not to the violation of air space, information warfare or attack in cyberspace. Thus, hybrid warfare instruments are a convenient way to bypass allied security guarantees.

#### 4. Hybrid Warfare – A New Type of Conflict?

The term hybrid warfare appeared during the occupation of Crimea and the early stage of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Experts attempted to find an adequate name for the new kind of conflict. Various phrases were employed to describe direct and indirect aggression on Ukraine – asymmetrical, non-linear conflict, “special war” (How Russia Wages Special War 2014). However, in the second half of 2014, that of hybrid warfare began to dominate. By all appearances, the conflict in Ukraine has contributed to the consolidation of the term for multifaceted activities, not necessarily related to Russian actions. It was used previously to describe those against guerrilla armed groups in order to distinguish them from a more general one – a conflict of low intensity, limited range (Cilluffo | Clark 2012, 47-63). The narrative of hybridity has firmly established itself in NATO’s theoretical thinking that characterizes the Russian operation in Ukraine and is present in the doctrine and thought of military allies. In addition, the conflict in Ukraine has added diversity of interpretation to this hybridity (See Lasconjarias. Larsen 2015).

The concept of hybrid warfare was introduced to NATO defence and operational planning by the Allied Command Transformation in mid-2014. It was considered necessary to understand and explain Russia’s behaviour during the conflict in Ukraine, which was not foreseen in NATO’s operational planning. During the discussion within the Alliance, new terms for a new type of threat posed by Russia – “hybrid warfare under a nuclear umbrella” or “strategic hybrid warfare” – were added (Giles 2016, 6-7).

There is no consensus to treat the term as a new type of action that came into existence during the occupation of Crimea. Hybrid warfare has been an integral part of every armed conflict since antiquity, but in order to draw public attention to threats from Russia – hybrid threats – its operations have been categorized as something unique and unheard of so far (Giles 2016, 8). Hybrid activities could include, among others, the Israeli war with Hezbollah, the Vietnam War or the operation against the Taliban in Afghanistan. Even in the case of Russia, these allegedly new elements such as diversion, physical and informational provocations accompanying regular military operations, use of special forces, non-formal operations of civil and military intelligence subject to the coordination of paramilitary and political groups in the enemy’s environment were part of the Russian and Soviet martial arts throughout generations (Jonsson | Seely 2015, 1-22). Only in the twentieth century were Soviet troops involved – to which they were rarely or not even admitted – in Spain, Afghanistan, Egypt, Syria, Vietnam, Cuba, Korea and Angola. The category of hybrid activities, where regular forces were accompanied by information warfare, use of militias and the communist movement, can also include Moscow’s expansion in 1939-1940. In addition, the grey zone of instability between the state of war and peace often occurs in armed conflicts.

Another reason for using the term hybrid warfare in relation to Russia is the difficulty in identifying Russian thinking about war and its nature. In contrast, such a procedure, instead of explaining the problem, complicates it even more. The notion of hybrid warfare in Russian publications “gibridnaya voyna” is frequently employed in a similar context to war in cyberspace – “kibervoına”. Regardless, the two concepts do not refer to Russian actions but Western ones directed against Russia (see Markov 2015, 37-42). Hybrid warfare is not found in Russian operational thinking. The variety of instruments in armed conflict is understood as special operations (Giles 2016, 8).

Russian analysts admit that to protect and promote their interests, Russia does not rely solely on military instruments. In the regions of conflicts in the post-Soviet space, it makes use of, apart from armed forces, various local allies – pro-Russian political groups, paramilitary organizations, business lobbies, as well as military experts and other specialists from Russia. Such actions, according to Dmitri Trenin – a Russian political scientist and former officer of the Soviet Army – have been identified in the West as hybrid warfare. In fact, it is a combined power of armed forces, paramilitary and non-military means to support the implementation of political goals, resulting in difficulties in accusing Russia of direct military intervention (Trenin 2016, 32). The implementation of such collaborative instruments allowed Moscow to effectively take Crimea “without a single shot”. The situation was more complex in Donbas, nevertheless, Russia did not decide to intervene directly as it did not wish the conflict to transform into a war between states. It limited its military engagement to the minimum, which was necessary to prevent the Ukrainian forces from occupying Donetsk and Lugansk, and to ensure border crossings between the separatist republics and the Russian Federation. It is worth noting that, similarly to the previously mentioned non-informational intelligence operations, the Kremlin consistently denied military involvement. Russia also rejected Western accusations of misrepresenting.

The Russian military understand and acknowledge the importance of asymmetry in the battlefield, yet treat it as a complement to conventional activities. Following this line of reasoning, an argument can be put forward that the war in Ukraine was simply a war, without the need to further specify it with an adjective. As in any war, Russia moved its forces to places of permanent dislocation, introduced states of increased and full readiness in all types of armed forces, which were ready for use, and the mere threat of applying force was enough to qualify it for the actions characterizing the war. In addition, the forces were, in fact, partly employed, and a consistent denial could be treated in terms of a ruse, which – as military history indicates – was applied by the commanders on the battlefield for centuries. Even assuming that Russia was conducting hybrid warfare in Ukraine, its basic part was a conventional operation reinforced by a total disinformation campaign. Therefore, there are no strong arguments indicating that there have been any significant changes

in the Soviet or Russian military art. Attention should also be paid to the emphasis on information warfare, yet, this tendency had already been noticeable before the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine. In fact, it was still present in the Russian thinking about war. Shortly before the events in Ukraine, the representative of the Russian General Staff Academy, Sergei Chekinov, stated:

Asymmetric actions, too, will be performed extensively to level off the enemy's superiority in armed struggle by a combination of political, economic, information, technological, and ecological campaigns in the form of indirect actions and non-military measures. In its new technological format, the indirect action strategy will draw on, above all, a great variety of forms and methods of non-military techniques and non-military measures, including information warfare to neutralize adversary actions without resorting to weapons (through indirect actions), by exercising information superiority, in the first place [...]. With powerful information technologies at its disposal, the aggressor will make an effort to involve all public institutions in the country it intends to attack, primarily the mass media (Chekinov | Bogdanov 2013, 12-23).

Many elements of such an approach can be found on entering Crimea. If, in spite of these arguments, the hybrid warfare is regarded as an element of the doctrine concerning the use of Russian troops in the future, it will apply to the involvement in the near abroad. In the case of the annexation of Crimea, aforementioned here several times, it can be considered specific, because in addition to combining traditional tactics with other contemporary instruments, Moscow has invented an innovative way of moving from peace to conflict. Nevertheless, the method of this transition deserves recognition as it has prevented the international community from reacting in a situation of a growing conflict that has not been properly noticed. The key element was to manage the transformation of the transition from one state to another, the escalation of control over the various stages of implementation of the fundamental goal of joining the peninsula to Russia. Several variants of starting a war and conducting it were always present, first in the Soviet and later in the Russian military thought. Thus, there was nothing new in the hybrid warfare, during the occupation of Crimea despite the large number of theoretical deliberations. A combination of various military and non-military elements during the combat operations was adopted by the Russian and Soviet commanders before in the Crimea and in the Donbas "Putin's little green men" appeared. Regardless, such terms were non-existent then. In secret documents, similar actions were referred to as "active intelligence" ("aktivnoy razvedkoy"), while in explicit publications and statements they were described as guerrilla activities, insurgent movements or – later in post-war times, when the USSR supported communist movements in different regions of the world – national liberation struggle – and the national liberation movement (Voronov 2014).

## **Conclusion**

The expert debate on the construction of Russian military capabilities is dominated by the trend of aggressive intentions towards neighbours and other countries of the post-Soviet area. The process of rebuilding these competencies has lasted for over 20 years and became intensified after 2008 (Russia Military Power 2017). It is associated with transformations in Putin's way of thinking. Disappointed with the attempts to cooperate with the West, he expressed his frustration in the famous speech at the Munich conference in 2007. After the military intervention in Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea and the first expedition operation outside the area of the former USSR – the operation in Syria, concerns about the consequences of the revival of Russia's military power over its neighbours, NATO and the West, became intensified. Russia took advantage of the conflict in Syria to demonstrate the progress, or rather the successes, of the modernization program. The world, in particular the West, was to see high-tech weapons that Moscow was able to employ effectively, both from its territory and beyond (Kozhanov 2015). During the takeover of the NATO Allied Force Command in Europe in May 2016, US General Saceur Curtis Scaparotti had no doubt that Russia was building its conventional military capabilities to be recognized as a global power and, therefore, NATO must strengthen its combat readiness and be an alliance capable of fighting, unless repelling would bring the expected results (Bodner 2016). In this context, concerns about a potential Russian attack arose during the joint Russian-Belarusian military exercises ZAPAD (Potocki 2017). All the same, there are views among experts that increasing military capabilities and aggressive rhetoric, especially directed at NATO, does not mean that Russia is preparing for an armed conflict with NATO, and the threat of applying force is a response to the no less warlike narrative of the West.

Any country that has the ambition to play a significant role in the international environment must have an efficient army that facilitates the articulation of its position and can impose violence to obey this position. Its other tasks are to show its significance, deterrence, and to lead the opponent to abandon hostile intentions. According to Bettina Renz, a Russian offensive against NATO is highly unlikely. In her opinion, Russia would have to lose rationalism by opting for a conflict with the West, which could turn into a nuclear one, due to the substantial advantage of the West (Renz 2016, 24).

Military strength has been a key determinant of state power for centuries, as demonstrated by Hans Morgenthau – classic of offensive realism. He argued that as long as the international system remains anarchic, “armed force as a threat or potential is the most material factor that creates the political power of states.” (Morgenthau 1973, 29). During the post-Cold War rivalry of the US and USSR, the power status of these countries was determined by their conventional forces and the potential for nuclear deterrence. The end of the Cold War favoured the prevailing

belief in the decreasing value of military force in the sphere of international relations. According to numerous researchers, rivalry between states was to shift from the political and military sphere to matters of finance and economic cooperation. Nonetheless, innumerable armed conflicts of the 1990s were evidence of incorrect thinking in this matter. Western countries were peculiarly impressed by the war in Georgia and Ukraine, because they unambiguously contested the myth of peaceful international politics.

The contemporary Russian concept of war is, in fact, a reflection of the experience gained from conflicts, especially the Ukrainian one. Simultaneously, it is a response to changes taking place in the sphere of technology, communication, and computerization. Russians are aware that victory in the modern armed conflict requires not only possessing efficient military instruments, but also no less important non-military ones. In the author's view, the Kremlin's policy should not be demonized and perceived as a threat of war against the western world. Notwithstanding, at the same time the West needs to analyse Moscow's actions more closely and beware of being manipulated.

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