RUSSIAN NON-LINEAR WARFARE IN UKRAINE AND MOLDOVA:

LESSONS FOR VISEGRAD COUNTRIES

Sergiy Gerasymchuk

Abstract

Although the issue of hybrid war with its instruments and phases is well elaborated in the academic literature, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and illegal annexation of Crimea has introduced certain new aspects of hybrid and non-linear warfare to the international political and academic agenda. The author attempts to synthesize the existing definitions of hybrid warfare in the Western literature with the new generation warfare involving the Russian/Soviet concepts of deep operations, active measures and reflexive control, and non-linear war.

By analyzing the so called Gerasimov Doctrine, the phases and sections of Russian hybrid warfare in Ukraine, and political developments in the Republic of Moldova, the author comes to the conclusion that the current situation in the Republic of Moldova can be characterized as the preparatory phase of a hybrid war that may shift into attack and stabilization phases in the following year when parliamentary elections are held in Moldova.

In addition, the author argues that – despite a lack of certain key prerequisites for Russian hybrid war in Visegrad countries (such as a Russian ethnic population) – the V4 still faces the risk of a growing Russian influence, and that V4 countries can still be targeted by Russian non-linear warfare within the vulnerable spheres indicated.

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CONTENTS

1. RUSSIAN HYBRID/NON-LINEAR WAR DOCTRINE, ITS SOVIET ROOTS, CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS AND STRATEGIC GOALS

2. RUSSIAN HYBRID WARFARE IN UKRAINE AND MOLDOVA
   2.1. Hybrid war in Ukraine
   2.2. Preparatory Phase in the Republic of Moldova?
   2.3. Protracted Vulnerabilities

3. LESSONS FOR THE V4 COUNTRIES

4. CONCLUSIONS

5. LITERATURE
1. RUSSIAN HYBRID/NON-LINEAR WARFARE DOCTRINE, ITS SOVIET ROOTS, CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS AND STRATEGIC GOALS

After the 2007 Munich conference – where Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed his views on the current situation within the international political system, criticized the unipolar system, and hinted at further Russian activity in the international arena – it became clear that Russia would try to correct the situation according to the Russian vision of the future, which anticipates the restoration of Russia’s status as a superpower (in either a bi-polar or multi-polar system), and would make efforts to reestablish Russian influence in the world – a rare example of an explicit declaration of a Russian strategic goal. The term “Russian influence” is used here with the meaning suggested by Krekó, Győri, Milo, Marušiak, Széký and Lencsés: explicit and implicit actions by the Russian state and related actors (including intellectuals, businessmen, journalists, etc.) or organizations aimed at creating a political change in the behavior and/or political agenda of certain political actors through political means and/or financial instruments. And it must be emphasized that the reestablishing of Russian influence is one of the tools to be used for the achievement of the aforementioned strategic goal of restoring Russia’s superpower status.

Furthermore, since 2014 – when Russia illegally annexed the Crimea (and subsequently interfered in Eastern Ukraine) – Russian performance in the international arena has often been perceived through the lens of the so-called Gerasimov Doctrine, which has offered some clues for understanding the additional instruments Russia would apply to achieve its strategic goals. The cornerstones of the Doctrine were described by Valery Gerasimov, chief of the General Staff of the Russian Federation Armed Forces, in his article “The Value of Science is in the Foresight.” In this article, published in Military-Industrial Kurier on February 27, 2013, Gerasimov argues that “the very ‘rules of war’ have changed. 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.” Gerasimov also mentions that “asymmetrical actions have come into widespread use, enabling the nullification of an enemy’s advantages in armed conflict. Among such actions are

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4 Ibid.
the use of special operations forces and internal opposition to create a permanently operating front through the entire territory of the enemy state, as well as informational actions, devices, and means that are constantly being perfected. These ongoing changes are reflected in the doctrinal views of the world’s leading states and are being used in military conflicts.\textsuperscript{5}

Although in the article Gerasimov mostly describes the methods arguably applied by Western powers during the color revolutions and Arab spring, many Western commentators have suggested the Russian operation in Crimea heralded the emergence of a new Russian form of “hybrid warfare”.\textsuperscript{6} In this regard, those commenting on the “hybrid warfare” approach refer to the definitions coined by Western scholars (most often cited are William J. Nemeth, John J. McCuen, Frank J. Hoffmann and Russel W. Glenn). As American scholar Martin Murphy\textsuperscript{7} rightly mentions, the term hybrid was first linked with warfare by Nemeth in his thesis on the Chechen war, in which he proposed that for the Chechens the war amounted to much more than what took place on the battlefield itself. Militarily, they brought together regular and irregular methods in a highly flexible combination. However, they also perceived war “in a wider, non-linear sense and hence, in addition to field tactics, they also employed all the means of the information age to gain an advantage over their enemies.” For McCuen, hybrid conflicts were “full spectrum wars with both physical and conceptual dimensions: the former, a struggle against an armed enemy and the latter, a wider struggle for control and support of the combat zone’s indigenous population, the support of the home fronts of the intervening nations, and the support of the international community.” Hoffman’s conclusion was that hybrid threats incorporate a full range of different modes of warfare including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder, and are generally operationally and tactically directed and coordinated within the main battle pace to achieve synergistic effects in the physical and psychological dimensions of the conflict. Finally, Glenn adds additional dimensions to hybridized warfare when he argues that any definition that focuses predominantly on the use of force and violence and underplays the use of political, diplomatic, and economic tools turns a blind eye to critical aspects of this new form of war.\textsuperscript{8}

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
American scholars Williamson Murray and Peter R. Mansoor define hybrid warfare as “a conflict involving a combination of conventional military forces and irregulars (guerrillas, insurgents and terrorists), which could include both state and non-state actors, aimed at achieving a common political purpose.”⁹

As Racz¹⁰ rightly notes, a breakthrough in the discourse came when NATO decided to adopt the expression – in a NATO Review video posted on July 3, 2014, NATO publicly declared this new form of warfare to be “hybrid war.” Shortly thereafter, in August, the Washington Post also used the term, followed by the use of the expression “hybrid warfare” more than once – and as a well-elaborated, comprehensive term – during NATO’s Wales Summit in late September of that year. The Wales Summit declaration described “hybrid warfare” as “a wide range of overt and covert military, paramilitary, and civilian measures ... employed in a highly integrated design.”

The labels “hybrid war” and “Gerasimov doctrine” have served an important purpose – they have energized debate about the evolving Russian influence and power and the range of tools at Moscow’s disposal, highlighting in particular the role of information and strategic communication. And this emphasizes the need for better coordination between NATO and the European Union. But at the same time, these labels illuminate only onespecific pieceof what is a much larger evolving puzzle.¹¹ In addition, in-depth analyses of the means employed in “hybrid war” often overlook the essential issue – the strategic goal of such war, which naturally differs depending on the actor. In the case of Russia, it is the regaining of its status as a global superpower.

In this regard, we will have a better understanding of Russia hybrid warfare if the Western concepts of hybrid or non-linear warfare are applied within the context of Russian attempts to stem the erosion of its status as global power, and its readiness to achieve its objectives by combining organized military violence with economic, political, and diplomatic activity – a combination known as “new generation warfare.” This is the concept of fighting a total war, in this case in Europe, across all fronts – political, economic, informational, cyber – simultaneously through fear and intimidation, and without launching a large-scale attack. If fighting is required, it is highly networked and multidirectional. The stakes can be raised rapidly, possibly without reasonable limit.¹²

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¹¹ A. Monaghan, op. cit.

¹² M. Murphy, op. cit.
This Russian approach is rooted in its Revolutionary Expansionism, which offers a clue as to the sustainable strategic goals of the Russian leadership, and combines newly emerged hybrid warfare instruments with the “old school” Soviet concepts of deep operations, active measures, and reflexive control. It is therefore basically nothing more than a restoration/continuation of proven Soviet methods adapted to exploit the new geopolitical reality. The concept of deep operations, as described by the American scholar Andrew J. Duncan, helps to explain the recent Russian emphasis on the integration of all elements of its national power in its pressuring of a target state or states, while that of active measures explains the use of proxy forces and certain kinds of information operations. Meanwhile, reflexive control theory makes sense of Russian actions in the information domain. Duncan provides the following descriptions of deep operations, active measures and reflexive control:

**Deep operations:** “... integrated use of military force, political, economic, informational, and other non-military measures,” and “... the effect on the enemy throughout the depth of its territory simultaneously in the global information space, aerospace, land, and sea;”

**Active measures:** “...a form of political warfare conducted by Soviet intelligence and security services to influence the course of world events. Active measures ranged from ‘media manipulations to special actions involving various degrees of violence’ and included disinformation, propaganda, counterfeiting official documents, assassinations, and political repression.” “Although the concept was developed to assist the spread of communism through non-conventional means, many of its elements are evident in the means used by contemporary Russia to advance its interests. The Russian use of deniable irregular forces, cyberwarfare, ethnic diasporas, media manipulation, political parties, and ‘think tanks’ are all contemporary manifestations of this old Soviet concept;”

**Reflexive control:** The “reflex” in reflexive control refers to a behavioral model constructed to understand a target’s decision-making processes. If an actor understands


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the behavioral model of its target, that actor can manipulate the target’s plans, views, and how it fights.

As Andrew Radin rightly maintains, activities under hybrid warfare are distinct because they are not admitted as official policy, and they primarily seek to influence a given country’s domestic politics rather than target its armed forces.\(^\text{15}\) Therefore, by definition, Russia cannot accept the thesis that it is engaged in hybrid warfare. Rather, employing a pattern of “whataboutism”, Russia will deny this and blame the West for using hybrid warfare — a form of “mirror imaging” that masks the Russian use of hybrid war by denouncing an alleged American approach.\(^\text{16}\)

The important pre-requisite for Russia’s conducting of hybrid warfare is the weakness of the target state. Russia seeks to identify vulnerabilities in target states and applies its instruments to exploit such vulnerabilities in order to approach its strategic goal – the restoration of Russia’s status as a superpower in a bipolar or multipolar world. However, it should not be forgotten that since the strategic goal is regaining the status of a superpower, Russian leadership always bears in mind – even when targeting weak and vulnerable states – that the key rivals along its way to global leadership are the United States and the West more generally. It must be mentioned here that while until recently the EU was perceived rather as an economic power with whom Russia had no interest in open confrontation, the Trans-Atlantic solidarity that came about as a reaction to the Russian invasion of Ukraine led to the EU’s being labeled as another enemy or rival that Russia now has to compete with. Even more, Russia’s efforts to prevent Ukraine from signing the Association Agreement with the EU at the Vilnius summit in 2013 showed that already at that time Russian leadership was aware of the EU’s growing geopolitical strength, and did not want Ukraine to move in the European direction.

American scholars Mary Ellen Connel & Ryan Evans\(^\text{17}\) point out that it is usual for Russia to use the ethnic Russian population in a target state as a “fifth column,” fomenting protests and resistance to the country’s government. Such actions have the potential to generate backlash and discrimination against ethnic Russians by the government and majority populations, which in turn


\(^{16}\) A. Duncan, op. cit.

can escalate the situation in the target country. In essence, Russia can activate a self-reinforcing mechanism to generate conflict. However, it is worth mentioning that, firstly, Russia does not limit Russians to ethnic Russians – see, for example, Putin’s statements on those who are Russians just by virtue of feeling Russian.\footnote{M. Wehner, “Goals of Putin, ideology of Russia”, Inosmi, May 5, 2015. Available online at http://inosmi.ru/politic/20160505/236420932.html (in Russian) (accessed on November 12, 2017)} And secondly, the Russian president does not rely on Russians only but is ready to apply the same pattern to other minority groups in target countries and in the EU – see the example of Catalonia.\footnote{D. Alandete, “Putin encourages independence movement via envoy to Catalonia”, El País, October 10, 2017. Available online: https://elpais.com/elpais/2017/10/26/inenglish/1509011964_600939.html (accessed on December 19, 2017)} While in neighboring countries Russia uses “sootechestvenniki” to undermine the power of national governments, in the wider context of the EU it seeks either separate minorities, or even certain EU member states, to undermine the EU’s growing power.

Meanwhile, despite the often unconstructive and hostile positions taken by the Russian Federation, Russia seeks, as Friedman suggests, to present themselves as offering a solution to intolerable problems. If they are simultaneously the cause of those problems, or seek to exacerbate them, that is irrelevant.\footnote{B. Friedman, “Fellow travelers: managing savagery and the Gerasimov Doctrine”, The Bridge, April 27, 2017. Available online: https://weaponizednarrative.asu.edu/system/files/library/docs/fellow_travelers.pdf (accessed on December 19, 2017)} It is fair to assume that by employing such means the Russian Federation opens a back door for negotiating its return to the club of superpowers.

To summarize, when speaking of Russian influence and Russian non-linear warfare in Ukraine and Moldova and the lessons for Visegrad countries, by “Russian influence” we mean explicit and implicit actions by the Russian state and related actors (including intellectuals, businessmen, journalists, etc.) or organizations, aimed at creating changes in the political behavior and/or agenda of certain political actors, through political means and/or financial instruments. When speaking of Russian non-linear or hybrid warfare, we refer to the Gerasimov Doctrine, Western studies on hybrid warfare, and the Soviet school of deep operations, active measures and reflexive control. Therefore, the definition of Russian hybrid warfare used in this study is informed by consideration of the abovementioned concepts, and is as follows: Russian hybrid warfare is a combination of nonmilitary means and asymmetrical actions (including the use of special operations forces and internal opposition, informational activities, conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder) and the use of political, diplomatic, and economic tools combined with deep operations, active measures and reflexive control instruments that lead to achieving the political and strategic goals of the Russian Federation (although they are not admitted by Russia as official policy since they target the domestic
politics rather than the armed forces of a given country). The strategic goals of the Russian Federation are the implementation of its aspirations to become one of the few “major powers” of the world, deterrence of the EU’s growing ambitions, and the ability to compete with the US.
2. RUSSIAN HYBRID WARFARE IN UKRAINE AND MOLDOVA

2.1. Hybrid war in Ukraine

The main example of Russian hybrid warfare in practice is the case of Ukraine. Although it does not necessarily constitute a template that may be applied in other cases – since the Russian Federation makes an effort to remain unpredictable – some of the activities undertaken during the Russian operations in Ukraine are in line with the Gerasimov Doctrine, and analyzing them provides us an opportunity to attempt a forecast of Russia’s further steps.

Hungarian scholar Andras Racz describes in detail the main phases and sections of the Russian hybrid war in Ukraine. According to his analysis, the first preparatory phase includes three sections (see Table 1).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section 1</th>
<th>Strategic preparation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Exploring points of vulnerability in the state administration, economy and armed forces of the target country.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Establishing networks of loyal media and media channels in the territory of the target country.</td>
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<td>- Establishing diplomatic and media positions in order to influence the international audience.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section 2</th>
<th>Political preparation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Encouraging dissatisfaction with the central authorities in the target country by using political, diplomatic, special operation and media tools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Strengthening local separatist movements and fueling ethnic, religious, and social tensions, among others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Actively using information measures against the target government and country.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Bribery politicians, administrative officials and armed forces officers, and then ‘turning them over’.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Establishing contacts with local oligarchs and business people; making them dependent on the attacking country via profitable contracts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Establishing contacts with local organized crime groups.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Section 3</th>
<th>Operational preparation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Launching coordinated political pressure and disinformation actions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Mobilizing officials, officers and local criminal groups that have been ‘turned over’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Mobilizing the Russian armed forces under the pretext of military exercises.</td>
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In this regard, indeed, exploration of the vulnerability of the Ukrainian state administration, economy and armed forces showed that the target country was weak at the moment of Russian intervention. One might argue that this was the result of the Revolution of Dignity and Yanukovych’s escape from Ukraine to Russia.

However, when one looks into the details one might take note of the fact (according to the World Bank Political Stability Score) that the curve of political stability had been moving downward during the whole period of Yanukovich’s rule (see Chart 1).

21 A. Racz, op. cit.
The situation in the field of economics was also fragile. The GDP (%) growth noted in the first year of Yanukovich’s rule was, according to the World Bank,\textsuperscript{23} gradually moving downwards, causing social instability (see Chart 2).

In addition, Moscow is increasingly aware of the new opportunities presented by electronic media. The Russian language is ranked as the tenth most used language on the Internet and it dominates the region. Many people in the region have access to Russian telecommunication networks and prefer them to those of the West –


partly because of their knowledge of the language, and partly because of the already established historic ties.24

In addition, Russia infiltrated the Ukrainian Armed Forces and Special Services with its agents, the result of which was Ukraine’s inability to respond to Russian hybrid operations, first in Crimea and then in the East of Ukraine.

Russia also created numerous “quasi-institutes of civil society,” which were financed by Russia (directly or indirectly), guided by neo-imperial ideology, and aimed at discrediting civil society from the inside, acting as provocateurs under the status of “independent analytical center” or “NGO.” Specialists in this field have often defined MMK “Proryv” (“Breakthrough”), which was active both in Ukraine and Moldova until recently, or the National Strategy Institute headed by Stanislav Belkovskiy (known in Ukraine as an official mouthpiece of the Kremlin),25 as this type of organization. Such organizations, or their branches, emphasized their non-governmental and non-partisan status, while indirectly or directly demonstrating their pro-Russian orientation and underlining the fact that what they do is representative of the majority of the population.

Under such circumstances it was easy to move to the second (attack) and third (stabilization) phases of hybrid war as described by Racz26 (see Tables 2 and 3).

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26A. Racz, op.cit.
II.2. Preparatory Phase in the Republic of Moldova?

At first glance the situation in the Republic of Moldova might seem different from that of Ukraine, since in Moldova Russia has not progressed to sections 4–9 of its hybrid war. However, when looking at the question of vulnerabilities, one may come to the conclusion that those faced by Moldova today are to a great extent similar to those faced by Ukraine back in 2013–2014.

First, according to the World Bank Political Stability Score, the level of political stability in the country has been declining since 2013 (see Chart 3).

The anti-Russian rhetoric of the ruling Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM), supplemented by an excessive though incoherent pro-European approach (ignoring the EU’s recommendations on the mixed voting). Meanwhile, the Socialists (PSM) – the opposition political party represented by the current President of the Republic of Moldova, Igor Dodon – has fully embraced the Russian–Eurasian vector in an attempt to win over the entire pro-Russian electoral segment and obtain political support from the Russian elites (President Vladimir Putin and the United Russia Party) before the 2018 elections.

The breakup of the PDM–Liberal Party ruling coalition in May 2017 repeated the failure of other ruling coalitions that were established from 2009 onwards. This demonstrates a persistent trait of the Moldovan political system – an inability on the part of the local political class to form sustainable political coalitions in order to ensure a stable and predictable governance centered on the public interest. On the contrary, Moldovan political coalitions have a situational role and are employed with the main

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purpose of monopolizing political power, exploiting the weaknesses of the temporary political partners.\textsuperscript{29}

The economic situation is also far from flourishing. According to World Bank data, GDP (%) growth is uncertain. A comparative analysis of the GDP (%) growth of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova show that both countries faced a downward trend during 2011–2015, and that only in 2015–2016 was relative growth observed (see Chart 4).

A significant blow to the Moldovan economy was the disappearance of US$1.5 billion from the country’s three largest banks just weeks before national parliamentary elections in 2014. The Moldovan dependence on the Russian Federation also makes it an attractive target for Russian hybrid war. In actual fact, the EU is Moldova’s biggest trading partner, with some US$3.5 billion in overall trade in 2016. However, Russia is more important than Romania as a destination for Moldovan migrant workers. Russia is— at least temporarily — home to some 500,000 Moldovan workers. Russia is the second-largest export market for Moldovan goods, at US$241 million in 2015.

In addition, there is a significant Russian share in the Moldovan energy sector. Moldova owes Russia over US$6 billion for energy supplies. A large portion of that debt is owed by Transnistria to Russian Gazprom for gas deliveries, but was nonetheless recognized, apparently, by Moldovan President Igor Dodon as part of Moldova’s overall debt to Russia.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{29}Ibid.
Another factor is that, as in Ukraine, the Russian language is often used in the Republic of Moldova as the instrument for political speculation. Typically, the number problems with Russian language-speakers who claim to be oppressed rises during election periods. The next such period will occur next year, when parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova are due to be held. Russian-speakers are presented as the opposition to the state’s majority, reinforcing existing secessionist problems (e.g. Crimea and Transnistria).

An indicator of the active measures being undertaken in Moldova was Moldova’s expulsion of five Russian diplomats in 2017, amid accusations that Moscow was recruiting fighters from Moldova’s autonomous region of Gagauzia for the Russia-backed insurgency in neighboring Ukraine. Prior to this, in 2014, Moldova’s Intelligence Service had investigated several Gagauz officials – including the region’s former governor Mihail Formuzal – also for allegedly recruiting fighters (which indicates that there were pro-Russian politicians and officials who had infiltrated the Gagauz autonomous leadership), but no prosecutions followed as Formuzal was voted out of office and some of his purported lieutenants managed to escape to Russia.31

Moldovan scholar Alla Rosca32 also points out that the economic interests of Moldova’s media magnates have led many television stations to rebroadcast Russian channels in Moldova. The rebroadcasted news programs originating from Russian media outlets constitute a large segment of Moldova’s informational landscape, giving the Russian press a large impact in the shaping of public opinion in Moldova. Accordingly, Moldovan viewers tend to become inclined toward viewing favorably the interests of a foreign power.

Simultaneously, Russia and pro-Russian proxies in the Republic of Moldova are applying the “mirror imaging” strategy described in Part 1. For example, in 2017, when the Ukrainian government banned the transfer of ethyl alcohol, beers, spirits, tobacco, petroleum products, liquefied gas and cars into Transnistria without the permission of the Moldovan authorities – while Moldova also prevents the rotation of Russian troops illegally placed in the Transnistrian region, and both countries have agreed on launching a joint border control on the Transnistrian part of the Ukrainian–Moldovan border – the former so-called “Minister of Foreign Affairs” and wife of former “President of

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Transnistria” Yevgeniy Shevchuk, Nina Stanski, blamed both Ukraine and Moldova for “waging a hybrid war against Transnistria.”

II.3. Protracted Vulnerabilities

Despite the awareness of both the Ukrainian and Moldovan governments that Russia is waging hybrid warfare in both states simultaneously (although the particular phases do not coincide), and despite the assistance provided by both the EU and the US, neither Ukraine nor Moldova are resistant to Russian non-linear warfare.

Both countries still are vulnerable in many respects. An analysis of the most recently released indexes with respect to various fields (see Table 4, compiled by the author) shows that – apart from the application of Western pressure and sanctions – Russia can still take advantage of these vulnerabilities and proceed with imposing its own rules of the game, increasing its influence in these countries.

**Table 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of index</th>
<th>Ukraine</th>
<th>The Republic of Moldova</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human Development and Social Vulnerability</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Development Index (2016)</td>
<td>Index 0.743, Rank 84</td>
<td>Index 0.699, Rank 107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Progress Index (Deloitte) 2017</td>
<td>Lower Middle Social Progress, Rank 63, 66.43</td>
<td>Lower Middle Social Progress, Rank 72, 64.73</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Vulnerability to Corruption</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>TI Corruption Perceptions Index 2016</td>
<td>Rank 131 / 176, Score 29 / 100</td>
<td>Rank 123 / 176, Score 30 / 100</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Political Stability</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Marsh Political Risk Map</td>
<td>&lt;49, Unstable</td>
<td>&lt;49, Unstable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom House 2016</td>
<td>61 Partly Free</td>
<td>60 Partly Free</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

33“Moldova, Ukraine wage hybrid war against Transnistria”, Sputnik News, June 13, 2015, Available online: https://sputniknews.com/politics/201506131023323420/
Unless the situation in the area of human and social development improves, Russia will use this factor to influence the situation in both countries by encouraging the population of these target countries to be dissatisfied with their central authorities (corresponds to section 2 of phase 1 of hybrid war – see Table 1).

Unless there is improvement in the fight against corruption, Russia will stand to gain from bribing politicians and local officials, as well as from establishing contacts with local oligarchs and business people, in order to make them dependent on the attacking country via profitable contracts (corresponds to section 2 of phase 1 of hybrid war – see Table 1).

The lack of political stability makes both Ukraine and Moldova vulnerable to coordinated political pressure (corresponds to section 2 of phase 1 of hybrid war – see Table 1).

In addition, the lack of freedom – including both media and economic freedom – also creates preconditions for the general dissatisfaction of the population, which may then be used by Russia to create additional pressure on the national governments and manipulate public opinion.

In the case of Ukraine, the activities envisaged by sections 4–9 of the attack and stabilization phases are relevant (see Tables 2 and 3). This gives Russia the additional option of approaching the West with the proposal to find a solution to intolerable problems (as described by Friedman, cited in Part 1), on the condition that the US and the EU will agree to exclusive Russian influence in the region.
3. LESSONS FOR V4 COUNTRIES

At first glance, the situation in the V4 countries completely differs from that of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. They are seldom if ever regarded as potential target countries. The political stability indicators are relatively high, according to data provided by the World Bank\(^34\) (see Chart 5)—although in the period of 2010–2016 there was a certain decline seen in Poland and Hungary, which constantly had the lowest scores among V4 countries.

Chart 5

The same is true of the economic indicators – in comparison to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, the V4 countries are doing relatively well. In 2015 in particular, when both Ukraine and Moldova experienced their lowest GDP growth (%) of the whole period of 2010–2016, the V4 countries did not follow this pattern and had relatively high scores. Moreover, in 2013–2015, when the Ukrainian and Moldovan economies were in decline, the economies of the Visegrad countries (according to the World Bank data\(^35\)) were growing (see Chart 6).

Chart 6


In addition, none of the V4 countries meets one important precondition for becoming a target of Russian hybrid war – namely having a significant share of ethnic Russian population. In this regard, the Baltic states – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – are much more vulnerable given their Russian ethnic groups, geographic proximity to the Russian Federation, and the absence of a language barrier, which makes the populations of these countries vulnerable to Russian media-influence, as in Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova.

On the other hand, however, if we look at the list of vulnerabilities that we discussed in relation to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, check the relevant indexes, and do not underestimate the strategic goal of Russian Federation (i.e. to regain the status of a superpower by deterring the EU and competing with the US), the situation with V4 countries looks less stable.

Looking at the same indexes we examined for the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, we can see that the situation in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia is in fact much better (see Table 5, compiled by the author).

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of index</th>
<th>Ukraine</th>
<th>The Republic</th>
<th>Czech</th>
<th>Hungary</th>
<th>Slovak</th>
<th>Poland</th>
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<th></th>
<th>Republic</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Human Development and Social Vulnerability</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Development Index (2016)</td>
<td>Index 0.743 Rank 84</td>
<td>Index 0.699 Rank 107</td>
<td>Index 0.878 Rank 28</td>
<td>Index 0.836 Rank 43</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Progress Index (Deloitte)</td>
<td>Lower Middle Social Progress, Rank 63, 66.43</td>
<td>Lower Middle Social Progress, Rank 72, 64.73</td>
<td>High Social Progress, Rank 22, 82.80</td>
<td>High Social Progress, Rank 35, 76.88</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Vulnerability to Corruption</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>TI Corruption Perceptions Index 2016</td>
<td>Rank 131 / 176 Score 29 / 100</td>
<td>Rank 123 / 176 Score 30 / 100</td>
<td>Rank 47 / 176 Score 55 / 100</td>
<td>Rank 57 / 176 Score 48 / 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>World Economic Forum: Transparency of government policies 2016</td>
<td>99/3.72</td>
<td>106/3.65</td>
<td>77/4.03</td>
<td>136/2.71</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Political Stability</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Marsh Political Risk Map</td>
<td>&lt;49 Unstable</td>
<td>&lt;49 Unstable</td>
<td>70-79 Mostly stable</td>
<td>60-69 Partly stable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom House 2016</td>
<td>61 Partly Free</td>
<td>60 Partly Free</td>
<td>95 Free</td>
<td>89 Free</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heritage Index of Economic Freedom</td>
<td>Overall score 48.1 World rank 166</td>
<td>Overall score 58.0 World rank 110</td>
<td>Overall score 73.3 World rank 28</td>
<td>Overall score 65.8 World rank 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Freedom</td>
<td>102/33.19</td>
<td>80/30.41</td>
<td>23/16.91</td>
<td>71/29.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                                |          |          |          |          |
|                                | 17/15.51 | 54/26.47 |          |          |
An analysis of this table shows that in terms of their economies, there is little ground for any social unrest in the V4 countries which could be exploited by Russia and used in the first phase of a hybrid war. All four countries are ranked as having a high level of social progress. The Czech Republic leads in this regard, while the lowest scores, but still relatively high, belong to Hungary.

The situation with regard to vulnerability to corruption is less positive. Although all V4 countries are ranked higher than Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova on the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, when it comes to the question of the transparency of government policies the situation in Hungary and Poland is even worse than in Ukraine or the Republic of Moldova, with only the Czech Republic and Slovakia ranked higher than those countries. This creates preconditions for Russian interference, for example the bribing of politicians.

In terms of political stability (according to the Marsh Political Risk Map), the Czech Republic and Poland are mostly stable, whereas Hungary and Slovakia are partly stable. This also creates preconditions for the growth of Russian influence.

Finally, the compilation of freedom indexes shows that Hungary is the least free of the V4 countries (including economic freedom and freedom of media), making Hungary also the most vulnerable among them and an attractive target for Russian non-linear hybrid warfare.

This analysis coincides with the assessment provided by GLOBSEC, according to which Hungary is the Central European country most vulnerable to subversive Russian influence (see Table 6).

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Czech Republic</th>
<th>Hungary</th>
<th>Slovak Republic</th>
<th>Poland</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>GLOBSEC Vulnerability Index</strong></td>
<td>Vulnerability Index 38</td>
<td>Vulnerability Index 57</td>
<td>Vulnerability Index 51</td>
<td>Vulnerability Index 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Public perception</td>
<td>Index 36</td>
<td>Index 31</td>
<td>Index 53</td>
<td>Index 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Public perception</td>
<td>Index 36</td>
<td>Index 31</td>
<td>Index 53</td>
<td>Index 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Media</td>
<td>Index 34</td>
<td>Index 60</td>
<td>Index 40</td>
<td>Index 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*State Countermeasures</td>
<td>Index 23</td>
<td>Index 70</td>
<td>Index 80</td>
<td>Index 33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The situation looks even worse when considering the fact that in V4 countries there is a wide network of lobbying and pro-Russian elements which are used to support actions which are presented not as Russian ones, but rather as local, internal processes (the Russian “active measures” concept). Any criticism of media publications is presented as a violation of free speech (demonstrating a mechanism in which an adversary uses principles of the targeted society for its own benefit, manipulating their meaning— a form of “mirror imaging” masking a Russian method of conducting hybrid war).

Direct and indirect support for pro-Russian politicians, especially if they are members of the national parliament, is also an important element in the security sphere, enabling them to influence budgeting, the authorization of military support and cooperation, etc. In most cases representatives of the far left or far right parties become involved, which corresponds to sections 1 and 2 of the preparatory phase of hybrid war, and also corresponds to the active measures and reflexive control concepts inherited from the Soviet Union.

Presumably, Russia is not seeking to move directly to the attack and stabilization phases in V4 countries, but rather intends to gain a dominant influence in these countries through corrupt, populist politicians, using them to shape a platform for hybrid war with the EU, in order to deter its geopolitical strength and weaken its solidarity. Similar Russian attempts in the Netherlands, France and Germany have failed so far. However, in order to reach its strategic goal the Kremlin will keep trying, making use of the vulnerabilities of potential target states.

By gaining dominant political control in vulnerable EU states, Russia is already moving on to section 2 of hybrid war by encouraging dissatisfaction with EU bodies and strengthening Euro-pessimist movements, and to section 3 by increasing political pressure on EU bodies.

Conclusions

A brief analysis of Russian hybrid warfare shows that the issue has been well elaborated by representatives of academia, the military, and political circles. However, although there are numerous interpretations and definitions of Russian hybrid warfare, some of them lack an understanding of Russian strategic goals, while others skip any analysis of the Russian schools of

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foreign policy (e.g. the Revolutionary Expansionism approach) or the Russian concepts of deep operations, active measures and reflexive control. We are persuaded that only an approach to these issues which considers them all, and in their full complexity, can provided us with an opportunity to better understand the nature of Russian warfare.

While in Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova the application of Russian hybrid warfare is clear (in the East of Ukraine and in Crimea, Russia has already passed through the preparatory and attack phases and is in the process of implementing the stabilization phase; in the Republic of Moldova it is still in the preparatory phase but may possibly move to the attack and stabilization phases in the foreseeable future, e.g. during and after parliamentary elections in 2018), in the case of the V4 countries it is less clear. An important element necessary for successful hybrid war – a significant share of Russian population – is missing. However, when we look more closely it becomes clear that the V4 countries are also challenged by certain vulnerabilities similar to those in Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. And although there are no clear indicators that they will be used to attack V4 countries directly, we must assume that they could be used to enhance Russian influence, so as to use these countries as platforms for attacking the EU as an entity. So far, the most vulnerable V4 country in this regard is Hungary, and the most resilient the Czech Republic (although current political developments in the latter may lead to changes in this respect).

Presumably, in the event of worsening economic troubles and political instability in the EU, Russia will try to assert its influence and move to the second and third phases of hybrid war – with the EU itself as the target entity rather than EU member states individually – during the period of political rotation due to take place in the EU in 2019.
LITERATURE


