

RUSSIAN NON-LINEAR WARFARE IN UKRAINE AND MOLDOVA:

LESSONS FOR VISEGRAD COUNTRIES

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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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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 arena¹ – it became clear that Russia would try to correct the situation according to the Russian vision of the future, which anticipates a 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, Széky and Lencsés:² 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.”³ 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.”⁴ 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

¹ “Vladimir Putin speech and the following discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy”, 2007. Available online: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034> (accessed on December 19, 2017)

² P. Krekó, L. Győri, D. Milo, J. Marušiak, J. Széky, and A. Lencsés, *Marching towards Eurasia: the Kremlin connections of the Slovak far-right*, published by Political Capital Kft. and Social Development Institute Kft, 2015. Available online: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287218227_Marching_towards_Eurasia_The_Kremlin_connections_of_the_Slovak_far-right (accessed on December 19, 2017)

³ V. Gerasimov, “The value of science is in the foresight: new challenges demand rethinking the forms and methods of carrying out combat operations”, *Military Review*, February, 2016. Available online: http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20160228_art008.pdf (accessed on November 10, 2017)

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.”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”.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 Murphy⁷ 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.⁸

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ A. Monaghan, “The ‘war’ in Russia’s ‘hybrid warfare’”, *Parameters* 45(4), Winter 2015-16, pp. 66-74. Available online: http://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/parameters/issues/Winter_2015-16/9_Monaghan.pdf (accessed on December 19, 2017)

⁷ M. Murphy, “Understanding Russia’s concept for total war in Europe”, *The Heritage Foundation Report*, September 12, 2016. Available online: <http://www.heritage.org/defense/report/understanding-russias-concept-total-war-europe> (accessed on December 19, 2017)

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 one specific piece of 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 a 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 multi-directional. The stakes can be raised rapidly, possibly without reasonable limit.¹²

⁹ A. Lanoszka, “Russian hybrid warfare and extended deterrence in eastern Europe”, *International Affairs*, Volume 92, Number 1, January 2016. Available online: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/ia/russian-hybrid-warfare-and-extended-deterrence-eastern-europe> (accessed on December 19, 2017)

¹⁰ A. Racz, “Russia’s Hybrid War in Ukraine: breaking the enemy’s ability to resist”, *FIIA Report 43*, June 16 2015, Available online: http://www.fii.fi/en/publication/514/russia_s_hybrid_war_in_ukraine/ (accessed on December 19, 2017)

¹¹ A. Monaghan, op. cit.

¹² M. Murphy, op. cit.

This Russian approach is rooted in its Revolutionary Expansionism,¹³ 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,¹⁴ 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

¹³A. Tsygankov, (1997), “From International Institutionalism to Revolutionary Expansionism: The Foreign Policy Discourse of Contemporary Russia”, *Mershon International Studies Review*, Vol. 41, No. 2, November 1997, pp. 247-268, p. 249.

¹⁴ A. Duncan, “New ‘Hybrid War’ or old ‘dirty tricks’? The Gerasimov Debate and Russia’s response to the Contemporary Operating Environment”, *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 3, Summer 2017. Available online: <http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/Vol17/no3/PDF/CMJ173Ep6.pdf> (accessed on December 19, 2017)

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.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.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 Evans¹⁷ 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

¹⁵ A. Radin, "Hybrid warfare in the Baltics: threats and potential responses", Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017. Available online https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1500/RR1577/RAND_RR1577.pdf (accessed on December 19, 2017)

¹⁶ A. Duncan, op. cit.

¹⁷ M. Connel, R. Evans, "Russia's 'ambiguous warfare' and implications for the U.S. Marine Corps", *CNA's Occasional Paper*, May 2015. Available online https://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/dop-2015-u-010447-final.pdf (accessed on December 19, 2017)

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.¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ While in neighboring countries Russia uses “sootchestvenniki” 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.²⁰ 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 above-mentioned 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

¹⁸M. 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)

¹⁹D. Alandete, “Putin encourages independence movement via envoy to Catalonia”, *El Pais*, October 10, 2017. Available online: https://elpais.com/elpais/2017/10/26/inenglish/1509011964_600939.html (accessed on December 19, 2017)

²⁰B. 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)

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 Racz²¹ 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

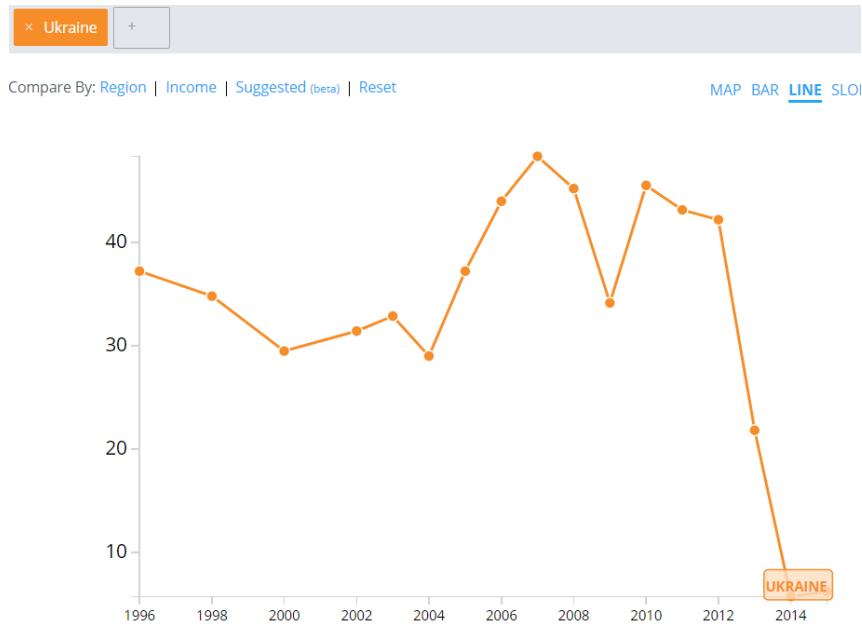
Section 1.	<p>Strategic preparation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring points of vulnerability in the state administration, economy and armed forces of the target country. • Establishing networks of loyal NGOs and media channels in the territory of the target country. • Establishing diplomatic and media positions in order to influence the international audience.
Section 2.	<p>Political preparation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging dissatisfaction with the central authorities in the target country by using political, diplomatic, special operation and media tools. • Strengthening local separatist movements and fuelling ethnic, religious, and social tensions, among others. • Actively using information measures against the target government and country. • Bribing politicians, administrative officials and armed forces officers, and then 'turning them over'. • Establishing contacts with local oligarchs and business people; making them dependent on the attacking country via profitable contracts. • Establishing contacts with local organized crime groups.
Section 3.	<p>Operational preparation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launching coordinated political pressure and disinformation actions. • Mobilizing officials, officers and local criminal groups that have been 'turned over'. • Mobilizing the Russian armed forces under the pretext of military exercises.

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 Yanukovich'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)²² 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.

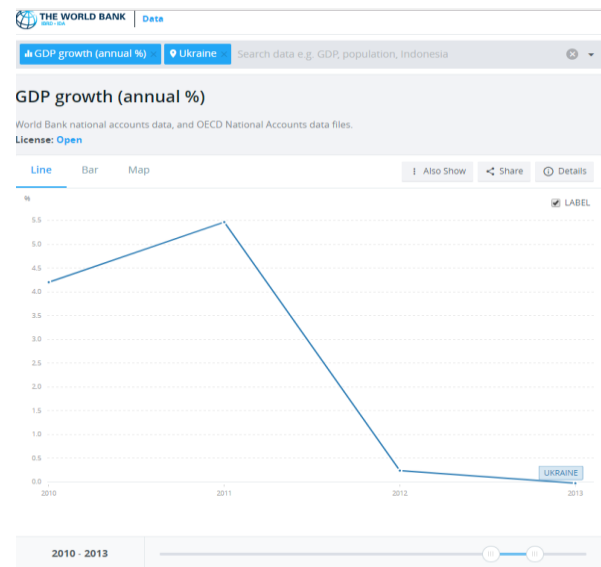
Chart 1



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,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 –

Chart 2



²² “The World Bank Political Stability Score”. Available online: https://tcdata360.worldbank.org/indicators/pol.stable.scr?country=UKR&indicator=379&viz=line_chart&years=1996,2015 (accessed November 12, 2017)

²³ “The World Bank Data”. Available online: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?end=2013&locations=UA&start=2010> (accessed on December 19, 2017)

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).

Table 2	Table 3
<p>Section 4. Exploding the tensions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organizing massive anti-government protests and riots in the attacked country. - Infiltrating special forces, disguised as local civilians, deliver the first sabotage attacks, capture the first administrative buildings in the targeted regions (with the active or passive support of corrupt local officials and police), in cooperation with local criminal groups. - Provocations and sabotage attacks are taking place everywhere in the target country, in order to divert the attention and resources of the central power. - The media of the attacking country launches a strong disinformation campaign. - Meanwhile, counter-attack possibilities by the attacked government are blocked by Russian regular forces, which are lined up on the border, to present an imminent threat of an overwhelming conventional attack. <p>Section 5. Ousting the central power from the targeted region</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disabling the central power by capturing administrative buildings and telecommunications infrastructure in the targeted region. - Blocking the central power’s media, establishing communication and information monopoly. - Disabling the local armed forces of the central power in non-armed ways: blockading their barracks, bribing their commanders, breaking their morale, etc. Disabling the border guards is of particular importance. - Meanwhile, the diplomacy, media, economic actors and armed forces of the attacking country put strong pressure on the target country. The media of the attackers tries to mislead and disorientate the international audience, and discredit the target country. <p>Section 6. Establishing alternative political power</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Declaring an alternative political centre, based on the captured administrative buildings, by referring to real or fabricated traditions of separation. - Replacing administrative organs of the central power with newly established political bodies, thereby creating a quasi-legitimacy. - Media of the attacking country strengthens the legitimacy of the new political bodies. - Alienating local population from the central power via the information monopoly. - Counter-attack options of the central power are continuously blocked by the threat of a conventional military attack. 	<p>Section 7. Political stabilization of the outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organizing a ‘referendum’ and decision about secession/independence in the target country, all with the strong diplomatic and media support of the attacking country. - The new ‘state’ asks for help from the attacking country. <p>Section 8. Separation of the captured territory from the target country</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 8a: attacking country annexes the captured territory (Crimea), or - 8b: establishes (open or covert) military presence there, and starts fighting the central government in the name of the newly established ‘state’, thereby continuing to weaken it in the political, economic and military sense (Eastern Ukraine). A sub-variant is an open invasion under the pretext of ‘peacekeeping’ or ‘crisis management’. <p>Section 9. Lasting limitation of the strategic freedom of movement of the attacked country</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loss of territory (economy, population, infrastructure, etc.) results in severe economic hardship, domestic political destabilization and possibly grave humanitarian situation. - Lacking full control over its territory, the attacked country is unable to join any political or military alliance that requires territorial integrity.

²⁴A. Tsygankov, “If not by tanks, then by banks? The role of soft power in Putin’s foreign policy”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 7 (Nov., 2006), pp. 1079-1099, p. 1084.

²⁵S. Gerasymchuk, Y. Matychuk, O. Nantoi, A. Platon, *Competition of Geopolitical Interests in Post-Soviet Space: Future Prospects for the Eastern Partnership Countries*, Chisinau, 2013. Available online: <https://www.soros.md/files/publications/documents/Geopolitical%20Interests%20policy%20paper%20final.pdf> (accessed on December 19, 2017)

²⁶A. Racz, op.cit.

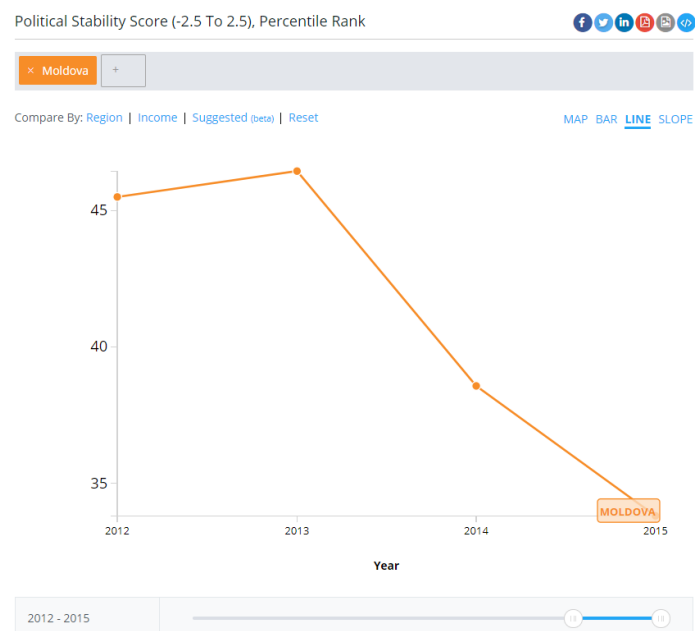
II.2. Preparatory Phase in the Republic of Moldova?

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 Score²⁷ 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

Chart 3



(President Vladimir Putin and the United Russia Party) before the 2018 elections.²⁸ 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

²⁷ "The World Bank Political Stability Score". Available online: https://tcdata360.worldbank.org/indicators/pol.stable.scr?country=MDA&indicator=379&viz=line_chart&years=2012,2015 (accessed on November 12, 2017)

²⁸ D. Cenușa, "Domestic and foreign politics of Moldova: regression of the rule of law and geopolitical orientation in opposite directions", *Republic of Moldova 2017. State of the country report*. Available online: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320346020_Domestic_and_Foreign_Politics_of_Moldova_Regression_of_the_Rule_of_Law_and_Geopolitical_Orientation_in_Opposite_Directions (accessed on December 19, 2017)

purpose of monopolizing political power, exploiting the weaknesses of the temporary political partners.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 shows 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.³⁰

Chart 4



²⁹Ibid.

³⁰E. Rumer, “Moldova between Russia and the West: a delicate balance”, May 23, 2017. Available online: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/05/23/moldova-between-russia-and-west-delicate-balance-pub-70056> (accessed on December 19, 2017)

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 of 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

³¹M. Popșoi, “Moldova's foreign policy in disarray”, *Moldovan Politics*, June 20, 2017. Available online: <https://moldovanpolitics.com/2017/06/20/moldovas-foreign-policy-in-disarray/> (accessed on December 19, 2017)

³²A. Rosca, “Media in Moldova: between freedom and monopoly”, *Moldova Monthly*, September 14, 2017. Available online: <http://mailchi.mp/fpri/moldova-between-scylla-and-charybdis-foreign-threats-and-domestic-issues-538345?e=0a10e010fd> (accessed December 19, 2017)

Transnistria” Yevgeniy Shevchuk, Nina Stanski, blamed both Ukraine and Moldova for “waging a hybrid war against Transnistria.”³³

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) show 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

Name of index	Ukraine	The Republic of Moldova
Human Development and Social Vulnerability		
Human Development Index (2016)	Index 0.743, Rank 84	Index 0.699, Rank 107
Social Progress Index (Deloitte) 2017	Lower Middle Social Progress, Rank 63, 66.43	Lower Middle Social Progress, Rank 72, 64.73
Vulnerability to Corruption		
TI Corruption Perceptions Index 2016	Rank 131 / 176, Score 29 / 100	Rank 123 / 176, Score 30 / 100
World Economic Forum: Transparency of government policies 2016	99/3.72	106/3.65
Political Stability		
Marsh Political Risk Map	<49, Unstable	<49, Unstable
Freedom		
Freedom House 2016	61 Partly Free	60 Partly Free
Human Freedom Index CATO 2016	Human Freedom 111/159 Personal Freedom 89/159 Economic Freedom	Human Freedom 69/159 Personal Freedom 67/159 Economic Freedom

³³“Moldova, Ukraine wage hybrid war against Transnistria”, *Sputnik News*, June 13, 2015, Available online: <https://sputniknews.com/politics/201506131023323420/>

	135/159	99/159
Heritage Index of Economic Freedom 2017	Overall score 48.1, World rank 166	Overall score 58.0, World rank 110
Media Freedom (World Press Freedom Index 2017)	102/33.19	80/30.41

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).

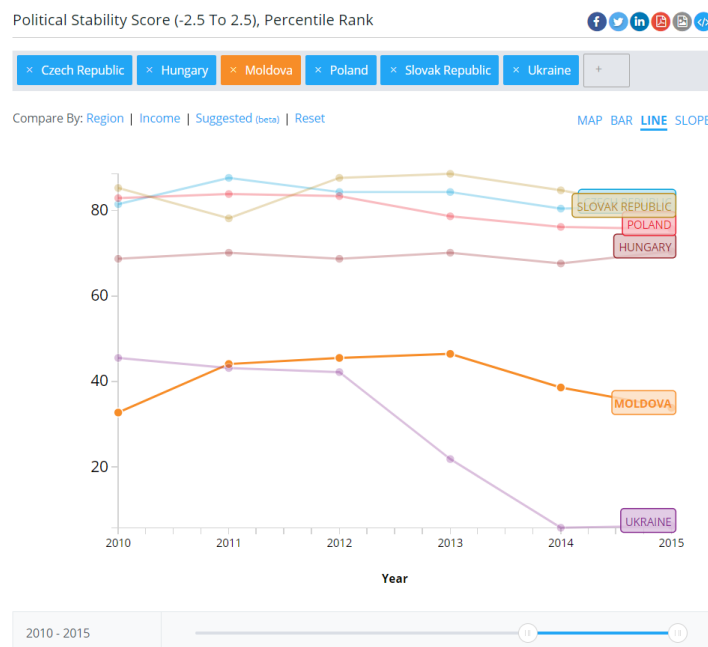
In addition, the lack of freedom – including both media and economic freedom – also creates preconditions for the general dissatisfaction of the population, which may then be used by Russia to create additional pressure on the national governments and manipulate public opinion.

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 Bank³⁴ (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

³⁴ “The World Bank Political Stability Score”. Available online:

https://tcdata360.worldbank.org/indicators/pol.stable.scr?country=MDA&indicator=379&countries=SVK,UKR,POL,HUN,CZE&viz=line_chart&years=2010,2015 (accessed on November 12, 2017)

³⁵ “The World Bank Data”. Available online: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?end=2016&locations=UA-MD-PL-CZ-SK-HU&start=2010> (accessed on December 19, 2017)



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.

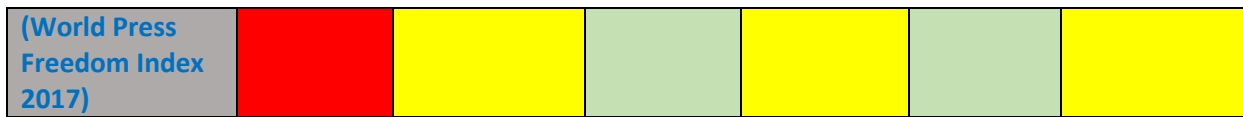
On the other hand, however, if we look at the list of vulnerabilities that we discussed in relation to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, check the relevant indexes, and do not underestimate the strategic goal of Russian Federation (i.e. to regain the status of a superpower by deterring the EU and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

Name of index	Ukraine	The Republic	Czech	Hungary	Slovak	Poland
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		of Moldova	Republic		Republic	
Human Development and Social Vulnerability						
Human Development Index (2016)	Index 0.743 Rank 84	Index 0.699 Rank 107	Index 0.878 Rank 28	Index 0.836 Rank 43	Index 0.845 Rank 40	Index 0.855 Rank 36
Social Progress Index (Deloitte)	Lower Middle Social Progress, Rank 63, 66.43	Lower Middle Social Progress, Rank 72, 64.73	High Social Progress, Rank 22, 82.80	High Social Progress, Rank 35, 76.88	High Social Progress, Rank 31, 78.96	High Social Progress, Rank 30, 79.76
Vulnerability to Corruption						
TI Corruption Perceptions Index 2016	Rank 131 / 176 Score 29 / 100	Rank 123 / 176 Score 30 / 100	Rank 47 / 176 Score 55 / 100	Rank 57 / 176 Score 48 / 100	Rank 54 / 176 Score 51 / 100	Rank 29 / 176 Score 62 / 100
World Economic Forum: Transparency of government policies 2016	99/3.72	106/3.65	77/4.03	136/2.71	84/3.87	109/3.57
Political Stability						
Marsh Political Risk Map	<49 Unstable	<49 Unstable	70-79 Mostly stable	60-69 Partly stable	60-69 Partly stable	70-79 Mostly stable
Freedom						
Freedom House 2016	61 Partly Free	60 Partly Free	95 Free	79 Free	89 Free	93 Free
Human Freedom Index CATO 2016	Human Freedom 111/159 Personal Freedom 89/159 Economic Freedom 135/159	Human Freedom 69/159 Personal Freedom 67/159 Economic Freedom 99/159	Human Freedom 18/159 Personal Freedom 17/159 Economic Freedom 31/159	Human Freedom 37/159 Personal Freedom 35/159 Economic Freedom 57/159	Human Freedom 27/159 Personal Freedom 29/159 Economic Freedom 39/159	Human Freedom 21/159 Personal Freedom 16/159 Economic Freedom 40/159
Heritage Index of Economic Freedom	Overall score 48.1 World rank 166	Overall score 58.0 World rank 110	Overall score 73.3 World rank 28	Overall score 65.8 World rank 56	Overall score 65.7 World rank 57	Overall score 68.3 World rank 45
Media Freedom	102/33.19	80/30.41	23/16.91	71/29.01	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,³⁶ according to which Hungary is the Central European country most vulnerable to subversive Russian influence (see Table 6).

Table 6

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Slovak Republic	Poland
GLOBSEC Vulnerability Index*	Vulnerability Index 38	Vulnerability Index 57	Vulnerability Index 51	Vulnerability Index 30
*Public perception	Index 36	Index 31	Index 53	Index 20
*Public perception	Index 36	Index 31	Index 53	Index 20
*Media	Index 34	Index 60	Index 40	Index 35
*State Countermeasures	Index 23	Index 70	Index 80	Index 33

³⁶D. Milo, K. Klingová, *Vulnerability Index: Subversive Russian Policy in Central Europe*, Globsec, Bratislava, 2016. Available online: <https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/globsec-vulnerability-index.pdf> (accessed December 19, 2017)

*Civil Society	Index 40	Index 39	Index 45	Index 53
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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,³⁷ 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

³⁷ *Strengthening the Eastern Frontier* (ed. by Bartha D.), EUROPEUM, 2017. Available online: <http://www.europeum.org/data/articles/v4-security-strengthening-the-eastern-frontier-of-the-v4.pdf> (accessed December 19, 2017)

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 provide 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.

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