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Russia's Hybrid Warfare Strategy in Ukraine:

As a New Tool to Challenge the West

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ABSTRACT

The Orange Revolution and the Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement have been considered as a Western threat to the Russia's sphere of influence in the region. Thus, the Kremlin has increased its influence in Ukraine since the Ukrainian government developed a good relationship with the EU. The annexation of Crimea and Russia's support for separatist groups in Eastern Ukraine are both viewed as Russia's reaction to protect its sphere of influence in the post-Soviet space. Even though the Kremlin still argues that Russia has never participated in the war in Donbas, some evidences show that Russia's troops are in the field and Russia has used some special techniques of war. Russia's involvements in Ukraine by using the new methods of war such as using information warfare, the intelligent service, special forces, and militias have been named as *hybrid war*. The purpose of this paper is therefore to examine Russia's hybrid warfare strategy in Ukraine and give an answer to the question that Russia has achieved its fundamental goal by using hybrid war.

Key Words: *Hybrid war, Ukrainian crisis, Annexation of Crimea, War in Donbas.*

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Introduction

When Vladimir Putin gave his famous speech at the Munich Conference in February 2007, he pointed out that 'Russia would no longer accept the U.S.-led, unipolar model of international relations and that Russia would implement its own independent foreign policy in pursuit of its geopolitical interests.'[1] One year later, in April 2008, Putin described Ukraine to Georgia Bush at the NATO meeting in Bucharest as '…you don't understand, George, that Ukraine is not even a state. What is Ukraine? Part of its territories is Eastern Europe, but the greater part is a gift from us.'[2] Along with these speeches, Russia's annexation of Crimea and Russia's support for separatist groups in Eastern Ukraine since 2014 are not unexpected actions. Both can be engaged with Russia's reaction to protect its sphere of influence in the post-Soviet space, and a challenge for European security, rules and norms.[3]

Nevertheless, the Kremlin still argues that Russia has never participated in the war in Donbas.[4] Even though the Kremlin has denied Russia's involvement in the Eastern Ukrainian conflict, some evidence such as satellite images shows that Russia's military forces are fighting in the region.[5] Furthermore, as Lanoszka points out that although the Kremlin did not use traditional armed techniques to invade the Crimean Peninsula, 'it fomented local pro-Russian demonstrations, inserted unmarked militia groups ('little green men') to occupy official government buildings, and oversaw a local referendum to lend an air of legitimacy to the annexation effort.'[6] Therefore, Russia's involvements in the Ukrainian conflict by using the

[1] Snegovaya M, *Putin's Information Warfare in Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia's Hybrid Warfare*, [Washington, the Institute for the Study of War, 2015], p.9.

[2] Oliphant, R, *Fifteen years of Vladimir Putin: In quotes*, [2015] Available at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/vladimir-putin/11588182/Fifteen-years-of-Vladimir-Putin-in-quotes.html (Accessed: 8 May 2016).

[3] Cooley A, *Scripts of Sovereignty: The Freezing of the Russia-Ukraine Crisis and Dilemmas of Governance in Eurasia*, [Washington, Centre on Global Interests, 2015], p.3.

[4] Rácz A, *Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine Breaking the Enemy's Ability to Resist*, [Helsinki, the Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 2015], p.61; Czuperski M, Herbst J, Higgins E, Polyakova A, and Wilson D, *Hiding in Plain Sight: Putin's War in Ukraine*, [Washington, Atlantic Council, 2015], p.2.

[5] Lanoszka A, 'Russian hybrid warfare and extended deterrence in eastern Europe', *International Affairs*, 92 (1), [2016], pp. 175–195; Czuperski *at all. Hiding in Plain Sight: Putin's War in Ukraine*, p.3.

[6] Lanoszka A, 'Russian hybrid warfare and extended deterrence in eastern Europe', p.175.

new methods of war such as using information warfare techniques, the intelligent service, special forces, and militias, have engaged with the concept of hybrid warfare.[7]

This paper mainly argues that the Russia's hybrid warfare strategy in Ukraine does not directly aim at invasion and/or annexation of Eastern Ukraine. Yet, it in-fact desires to protect the Russia's sphere of influence that Russia lost with the Colour Revolutions and the Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement (both have been viewed as a Western threat for Russia's sphere of influence) in the post-Soviet space. Russia's hybrid warfare strategy therefore, not only aims to protect Russian-speakers in Donbas, but it also aims to establish a federation in Eastern Ukraine to control the region. In this context, Russia has not achieved its fundamental goal (federalization and/or special status of Donbas or creating a new frozen conflict area) in Ukraine even though Russia annexed Crimea. At this point, the success of Russia's hybrid warfare strategy seems very limited.

This paper is divided into three sections. In the first section, the historical development process of the term hybrid warfare will be analysed from both Russian and the Western perspectives. In the second section, firstly, Russia's hybrid warfare strategy and the annexation of Crimea will be examined. Then, the main aim of Putin's hybrid warfare strategy in Ukraine will be examined. In the last section, it will give an answer to the question of whether the Kremlin has achieved its main goal in Ukraine with the hybrid warfare strategy or not.

1. What Does the Term *Hybrid Warfare* Mean?

Russia has been highly criticised because of using directly forces in the Chechen wars and the Russo-Georgian war, and also some military shortcomings such as poor strategy, lack of coordination, and outdated equipment arose with these wars.[8] The Putin administration recognised its mistakes after these wars and decided to change Russia's military strategy in the

[7] Galeotti, M. 'Hybrid, ambiguous, and non-linear? How new is Russia's "new way of war?"' *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 27(2), [2016], pp. 282–301; Kofman M, *Russian hybrid warfare and other dark arts*, [2016], Available at: http://warontherocks.com/2016/03/russian-hybrid-warfare-and-other-dark-arts/ (Accessed: 13 May 2016); Lanoszka A, 'Russian hybrid warfare and extended deterrence in eastern Europe', p.175; Rácz A, *Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine Breaking the Enemy's Ability to Resist*, p.41; Snegovaya M, *Putin's Information Warfare in Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia's Hybrid Warfare*, p.7.

[8] Renz B and Smith H, *Russia and Hybrid Warfare – Going Beyond the Label*, [Finland, the Aleksanteri Institute, 2016].

region.[9] Thus, the term hybrid warfare has been exclusively used to frame Russia's operations in Crimea and Donbas.

The shift in the Russia's military strategy has firstly appeared in Valery Gerasimov's[10] famous article,[11] which has been viewed in the West as "Gerasimov's Doctrine." In this article, Valery Gerasimov seeks to describe a new Russia's warfare strategy that 'blends conventional and unconventional warfare with aspects of national power, often referred to as hybrid warfare.'[12] Gerasimov argues that '…the very rules of war have changed. The role of non-military 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.'[13] Therefore, Gerasimov describes the new way of waging war as 'the use of political, diplomatic, economic and other non-military measures in combination with the use of military forces.'[14]

As the term hybrid warfare was not coined with the Ukrainian conflict, the concept of hybrid warfare was not firstly used by Gerasimov.[15] In fact, the term was developed by a former US Marine officer Frank Hoffman in 2007.[16] Hoffman signals to the importance of the combination of conventional and irregular warfare for understanding the term hybrid warfare.[17] In this context, Hoffman argues 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. Hybrid wars can be conducted by both states and a variety of non-state actors. These multi-modal activities*

[9] Snegovaya M, *Putin's Information Warfare in Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia's Hybrid Warfare*, p.9.
[10] Valery Gerasimov is the chief of the General Staff of the Russian Federation Armed Forces.
[11] Gerasimov V, 'The value of science is in the foresight new challenges demand rethinking the forms and methods of carrying out combat operations', *Military Review English Edition*, [2016], pp. 23-29. Originally published in Military-Industrial Kurier, 27 February 2013. Translated from Russian 21 June 2014 by Robert Coalson, editor, Central News, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (Gerasimov 2016).
[12] Bartles C. K., 'Getting Gerasimov Right', *Military Review*, 96(1), [2016], pp. 30-38.
[13] Gerasimov V, 'The value of science is in the foresight new challenges demand rethinking the forms and methods of carrying out combat operations', p.24.
[14] Gerasimov V, 'The value of science is in the foresight new challenges demand rethinking the forms and methods of carrying out combat operations', p.25.
[15] Hoffman, for instance, describes the wars between non-states actors such as Taliban, Al Qaeda or Hezbollah and the US forces in Afghanistan, and Iraq as hybrid wars. Hoffman F, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, [Arlington, VA, Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007]. Similarly, Mccuen, in his famous article 'Hybrid Wars' explains the wars in Indochina, Vietnam, Greece, Somalia, and Lebanon as hybrid wars. Mccuen C. J., 'Hybrid Wars', *Military Review*, 88 (2), [2008], pp. 107–113.
[16] Renz and Smith, *Russia and Hybrid Warfare – Going Beyond the Label*, p.2.
[17] Hoffman F, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*.

can be conducted by separate units, or even by the same unit, but are generally operationally and tactically directed and coordinated within the main battlespace to achieve synergistic effects in the physical and psychological dimensions of the conflict. These effects can be gained at all levels of war.'[18]

As with the Hofmann's article, the concept of hybrid war is generally defined as a combination of regular and irregular means. The US definition of hybrid war, for instance, is '…any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a tailored mix of conventional, irregular, terrorism and criminal means or activities in the operational battlespace.'[19] Accordingly, a hybrid war consists of state and non-state actors rather than being one actor. Similarly, Freedman defines hybrid warfare as a '…number of types of force from across the full spectrum, including terrorism, insurgency and regular combat, along with the extensive use of information operations.'[20] Murray and Mansoor also define hybrid war 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.'[21]

Furthermore, Mccuen also seeks to combine the concepts of symmetric and asymmetric warfare to explain the new form of war, known as a hybrid war.[22] In this context, Mccuen argues that '…although conventional in form, the decisive battles in today's hybrid wars are fought not on conventional battlegrounds, but on asymmetric battlegrounds within the conflict zone population, the home front population, and the international community population.'[23] Thus, McCuen argues that '…in order to win a hybrid conflict, combat victories and territorial gains need to be immediately followed by massive efforts to (re)build security, governance, infrastructure and stability in the conquered territories.'[24]

In the same vein as Mccuen, Kofman and Rojansky also describe the concept of hybrid warfare as an '…aspect of the term simply denotes a combination of previously defined types of

[18] Hoffman F, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, p.8.
[19] Lanoszka A, 'Russian hybrid warfare and extended deterrence in eastern Europe', p.177.
[20] Freedman L, 'Ukraine and the art of limited war', *Survival*, 56(6), [2014], pp. 7–38.
[21] Murray W and Mansoor P.R, *Hybrid warfare: Fighting complex opponents from the ancient world to the present*, [New York, Cambridge University Press, 2012].
[22] Mccuen C. J., 'Hybrid Wars', p. 108.
[23] Mccuen C. J., 'Hybrid Wars', p.107.
[24] Rácz A, *Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine Breaking the Enemy's Ability to Resist*, p. 31.

warfare, whether conventional, irregular, political or information.'[25] Nevertheless, contrary to Mccuen and Grasimov's claims, Kofman and Rojansky argue that the combination of conventional and irregular warfare is not a new form of war; however, so-cold hybrid war is as old as warfare itself.[26] Similarly, McCulloh and Johnson argue that '…the concept is not needed or is redundant to other definitions of mixed forms of warfare, or offers nothing unique.'[27] In this context, Lanoszka argues that hybrid warfare is not a new type of war, but in fact is a strategy. In his words, '…it is a strategy because it deliberately integrates the use of various instruments of national power so as to achieve foreign policy objectives in the light of the believed goals and capabilities of the adversary.'[28]

In sum, the term hybrid warfare has been used by many IR scholars for understanding Russia's operations during the annexation of Crimea and the invasion of Eastern Ukraine; however, the term hybrid warfare in the literature on Russia's operations in Ukraine has referred to the meaning of a combination of conventional and irregular means rather than referring to Hofmann's definition of hybrid warfare.[29] Thus, in the next section, the Russia's hybrid warfare strategy will be examined in terms of the combination of conventional and irregular forms of warfare. Then, an answer will be given to the question of what the main aim of Putin's hybrid warfare strategy in Ukraine was.

2. Russia's Hybrid Warfare Strategy as a New Tool

Russia's operations in Ukraine in 2014 have created a new discussion to demonstrate Russia's foreign policy in the post-Soviet space for both Western and Russian scholars. Russia's operations in the Ukrainian Crisis rely on the idea of a 'sphere of influence' or more specifically, a 'right to interfere' in the domestic issues of their near abroad.[30] The annexation of Crimea and the invasion of Eastern Ukraine therefore, were not unforeseen actions by Russia's

[25] Kofman M and Rojansky M, *A Closer look at Russia's 'Hybrid War'*, [Kennan Cable No.7, 2015], p.2.
[26] Kofman and Rojansky *A Closer look at Russia's 'Hybrid War'*, p.2.
[27] McCulloh T and Johnson R, *Hybrid Warfare*, [MacDill AFB, Joint Special Operations University, 2013], p.x.
[28] Lanoszka A, 'Russian hybrid warfare and extended deterrence in eastern Europe', p.178.
[29] Renz and Smith, *Russia and Hybrid Warfare – Going Beyond the Label*.
[30] Reisinger H. and Golts A., 'Russia's Hybrid Warfare Waging War below the Radar of Traditional Collective Defence', *Research Division-NATO Defense College*, 105, [2014], pp. 1–12.

neighbours.[31] Even before the Ukrainian crisis, Blank mentioned Russia's use of military and non-military tools in the region and argues that

> *'…the emphasis on high-tech weapons and information operations, which may encompass broad, socio-psychological manipulation, does not make these writers outliers; rather, they are comfortably in the mainstream of Russian military thought.'*[32]

In this context, Blank argued that Russia's military could play a counter-revolutionary role in the region and '…future Russian combat operations may be expected to begin with a preventive information strike, not just to disable communications or infrastructure but also to incite mass socio-political upheaval through systematic propaganda.'[33] Consequently, Blank's claim, which is the use of military and non-military tools in the region in order to protect Russia's great power status, obviously took place in Ukraine in 2014.

The Kremlin has effectively operated a combination of military and non-military, conventional and irregular warfare, and also used all kinds of hybrid strategies such as information and cyber operations.[34] Yet, Russia's use of military and/or non-military tools in Ukraine often conceptualized as hybrid warfare is not different from the former Soviet's form of warfare strategy based on disinformation techniques.[35] In fact, the Soviet approach presented itself in Ukraine by '…the use of Russian troops without insignia, supporting the Ukrainian separatists in the eastern regions of the country, and subtly introducing Russian military officers and specialists into rebel units.'[36]

On the other hand, Kofman argues that the Russia's attempt in Crimea was not a hybrid war because '…the annexation of Crimea, which was a classic covert operation to enable a conventional invasion — the lead element was Russia's 810th Naval Infantry Brigade, already based in Crimea as part of the Black Sea Fleet.'[37] Giles also argues that in-spite of the Russia's

[31] Giles K, *Russia's 'New' Tools for Confronting the West Continuity and Innovation in Moscow's Exercise of Power*, [London, Chatham House, 2016].

[32] Blank S, *Signs of new Russian thinking about the military and war*, [2014], Available at: http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=41954# (Accessed: 9 May 2016).

[33] Blank S, *Signs of new Russian thinking about the military and war*, p.1.

[34] Reisinger and Golts, 'Russia's Hybrid Warfare Waging War below the Radar of Traditional Collective Defence', p.3.

[35] Snegovaya M, *Putin's Information Warfare in Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia's Hybrid Warfare*, p.11.

[36] Snegovaya M, *Putin's Information Warfare in Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia's Hybrid Warfare*, p.13.

[37] Kofman M, Russian hybrid warfare and other dark arts, 2016, Available at: http://warontherocks.com/2016/03/russian-hybrid-warfare-and-other-dark-arts/ (Accessed: 13 May 2016).

Military Doctrine referring to irregular and asymmetric wars, the term hybrid warfare does not describe the totality of the new Russia's war strategy.[38] In this context, Giles argues that

> *'Russia does indeed embrace the notion of asymmetric responses: but asymmetry applies in the conventional domain as well. Russia will be entirely content to make use of asymmetries of mass, presence, speed and will in high-intensity conventional warfighting if required. According to one argument, Russia's approach in Ukraine is in fact simply warfare, with no need for qualifying adjectives.'*[39]

Even though Kofman and Giles argue that hybridity does not describe Russia's warfare strategy in Ukraine, and even though Russia's military forces are directly involved in the Eastern Ukraine's crisis as a traditional military operation, some evidence illustrates that Russia has used both conventional and unconventional war techniques in Ukraine since 2014. The annexation of Crimea, for instance, began with a military operation, using hybrid strategies such as disinformation and combining ambiguity; and concluded with a traditional military invasion, using motor rifle brigades, naval infantry and Russia's airborne units.[40]

2.1 Russia's Hybrid Warfare Strategy

The Russia's hybrid warfare strategy is based on two elements, namely using propaganda and psychological operations in order to manipulate people's minds and supporting little green men (also known as the Polite People) during the Ukrainian crisis. Russia's mass media, for instance, represents the most important information and manipulation operations during the Crisis.[41] The media has actively used hybrid warfare tactics by 'calling the Ukrainians 'Banderites' (referring to Ukrainian Pro-Nazi World War II independence movement leader Stepan Bandera), describing them as a fascist junta.'[42] Moreover, The Kremlin's trolls can effectively use social media to manage cyber-attacks on the Internet and carefully manipulated the main aims of

[38] Giles K, *Russia's 'New' Tools for Confronting the West Continuity and Innovation in Moscow's Exercise of Power*, p.10.
[39] Giles K, *Russia's 'New' Tools for Confronting the West Continuity and Innovation in Moscow's Exercise of Power*, p.11.
[40] Kofman and Rojansky *A Closer look at Russia's 'Hybrid War'*, p3.
[41] Galeotti M, 'Hybrid War and Little Green Men: How It Works, and How It Doesn't', in Pikulicka-Wilczewska A and Sakwa R, (eds.) *Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives*, [Bristol, e-International Relations, 2015], pp. 156–165; Snegovaya, p.7; Kofman and Rojansky, p.5.
[42] Senegovaya M, *Putin's Information Warfare in Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia's Hybrid Warfare*, p.13.

Russia during the annexation of Crimea.[43] In this context, Russia's misinformation operation seems to have been successful. According to O'Loughlin and Toal's survey, carried out in Crimea, '…the annexation of the peninsula by Russia has the support of a strong majority of the Russian and Ukrainian ethnic groups. When asked if the annexation was a 'wrong decision,' 'generally a right decision' or 'absolutely the right decision', 84% of this combined group picked the third option.'[44]

Russia has also effectively used its little green men as a hybrid warfare tool during the Ukrainian Crisis and the annexation of Crimea. According to Reisinger and Golts the little green men are Russian Special Forces but they acted like local security forces, without any identification tags.[45] These little green men firstly appeared in February 2014 when Russian soldiers without insignia seized the peninsula.[46] Although Vladimir Putin argues that the little green men are not Russian officers, but they are local 'self-defense groups'; in fact, they had the same guns as Russian officers, their lorries had Russian number plates and they spoke in Russian accents.[47] Thus, it can be claimed that Russia supported the little green men in order to manage street protests and finally, annexed the Crimean Peninsula.

2.2 The Main Aim of Russia's Hybrid Warfare Strategy

The main aim of Russia's hybrid warfare strategy in Ukraine is based on Russia's sphere of influence in post-Soviet space. In this regard, the Orange Revolution in 2004 and an Association Agreement in 2013 which concerned Ukraine's eventual integration into the European Common Market were turning points for Russia's foreign policy in Ukraine. In fact, the Russia's leadership has viewed the Colour Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine as a Western threat to Russia's identity formation in the post-Soviet space.[48] At the Moscow Conference on

[43] Emerson J.B, *Exposing Russian Disinformation*, [2016], Available at: http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/exposing-russian-disinformation.

[44] O'Loughlin J and Toal G, *The Crimean conundrum*, [2015], Available at: https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/john-o%E2%80%99loughlin-gerard-toal/crimean-conundrum.

[45] Reisinger and Golts, 'Russia's Hybrid Warfare Waging War below the Radar of Traditional Collective Defence', p.4.

[46] Balmforth T, *Russia mulls special day to recognize its 'polite people'*, [2014], Available at: http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-ukraine-crimea-little-green-men-polite-people/26620327.html (Accessed: 12 May 2016).

[47] Shevchenko V, *'Little green men' or 'Russian invaders'?*, [2014], Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-26532154 (Accessed: 12 May 2016).

[48] Ziegler C. E., 'Conceptualizing sovereignty in Russian foreign policy: Realist and constructivist perspectives', *International Politics*, 49(4), [2012], pp. 400–417; Wilson J, 'The legacy of the color revolutions for Russian

International Security (MCIS) in 2014, organised by the Russian Ministry of Defence, Russian Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu defined the Colour Revolutions as a 'new form of warfare, taking the form of armed struggle according to the rules of military engagement but, in this case, involving all available tools.'[49] Thus, it can be claimed that the Colour Revolutions were a turning point for Russia's foreign policy towards Georgia and Ukraine. In 2008, for instance, Russia's army was directly involved in the South Ossetian and Abkhazian conflicts and Russia has consistently used military and/or non-military tools in the post-Soviet space since the Russo-Georgian War.

On the other hand, the possibility of Ukraine's membership of NATO has been also viewed as a threat for Russia's influence in the region. Mearsheimer argues that the Ukrainian crisis was the West's fault.[50] However, Ukraine's membership has not been on NATO's agenda since 2010, thus the main reason for the Ukrainian crisis was not a possible expansion of NATO, but in fact the reason was the Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement.[51] In this context, Menkiszak argues that the main aim of Russia's offensive strategy in Ukraine was '…forcing Ukraine to join the Customs Union and to abandon its association with the EU, which led to political crisis and eventually revolution in Ukraine.'[52] Therefore, the Kremlin felt threatened because of 'the prospect of the EU's soft power transforming its neighbour, the "brother" nation or "Little Russia" as Ukraine has been referred to since the 18th century.'[53]

According to the Kremlin, Russia pursued to protect Russian-speakers living in Eastern Ukraine through supporting pro-Russian groups, therefore, Russia's officials mainly argued that the real reason for the annexation was protecting the Russian-speakers in Crimea. President Vladimir Putin, in his speech on March 2014, talked about legitimizing of the annexation of Crimea. Putin argued that '…to understand the reason behind such a choice it is enough to know

politics and foreign policy', *Problems of Post-Communism*, 57(2), [2010], pp. 21–36; Tucker J. A., 'Enough! Electoral fraud, collective action problems, and post-communist colored revolutions', *Perspectives on Politics*, 5(3), [2007], pp. 535–551.

[49] Reisinger and Golts, 'Russia's Hybrid Warfare Waging War below the Radar of Traditional Collective Defence', p.2.

[50] Mearsheimer, for instance, argues that the annexation of Crimea was Putin's reaction to the possibility of Ukraine's membership of NATO. See for details, Mearsheimer J.J, 'Why the Ukraine crisis is the west's fault', *Foreign Affairs*, September/October Issue, [2014], p.1.

[51] Reisinger and Golts, 'Russia's Hybrid Warfare Waging War below the Radar of Traditional Collective Defence', p.1.

[52] Menkiszak M, *Russia's Long War on Ukraine*, [Washington, Transatlantic Academy, 2016], p.2.

[53] Reisinger and Golts, 'Russia's Hybrid Warfare Waging War below the Radar of Traditional Collective Defence', p.1.

the history of Crimea and what Russia and Crimea have always meant for each other.'[54] In this speech, Putin explicitly stated that

> *'…ethnic nationalist terms to explain and justify his foreign policy moves, calling Crimea primordial Russian land and complaining that with the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 the Russian nation became one of the biggest, if not the biggest, ethnic group in the world to be divided by borders.'*[55]

Even though, the Kremlin's argument mainly is centred on protecting the Russian minority's rights, the ethnic Russians are a predominant minority in Eastern Ukraine and there was no direct threat to the Russian minority.[56] Therefore, many IR scholars including Snegovaya and Marten oppose the Kremlin's view and they argue that the main aim of Putin's hybrid strategy was not protecting Russian-speakers in Crimea, but establishing a new frozen conflict area such as Transdniester, South Ossetia, Nagorgno-Karabakh, and Abkhazia.[57] In order to achieve this goal, Russia seeks to establish a federal state in Easter Ukraine or a special legal status to the separatist-controlled region of Donbas.[58] In this context, Snegovaya argues that

> *'Russia's invasion in Ukraine aimed to take control of several Russian-speaking regions to create a southeastern 'belt' that would link Crimea and Transnistria, but over the past 18 months, Russia's goals in Ukraine appear to have undergone a substantive evolution. Most analysts agree that at the moment, Russia's objectives include preventing Ukraine's accession to NATO and the EU, along with securing some degree of control over Ukrainian policymaking. Russia attempts to achieve the latter by demanding the federalization of Ukraine, or at least granting some special status to the separatist-controlled regions in Donetsk and Luhansk in the Ukrainian Constitution.'*[59]

Similarly, Menkiszak in his recent research, argues that after the Euromaidan Movement, which began after President Viktor Yanukovych suspended to sign the association agreement, the idea

[54] President of Russia, *Address by President of the Russian Federation*, [2014] Available at: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603 (Accessed: 14 May 2016).
[55] Marten K, 'Putin's Choices: Explaining Russian Foreign policy and Intervention in Ukraine', *the Washington Quarterly*, 38 (2), [2015], pp. 189-204, p.190.
[56] Marten K, 'Putin's Choices: Explaining Russian Foreign policy and Intervention in Ukraine', *the Washington Quarterly*, 38 (2), [2015], pp. 189-204, p.190.
[57] Marten K, 'Putin's Choices: Explaining Russian Foreign policy and Intervention in Ukraine', p.190; Snegovaya M, *Putin's Information Warfare in Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia's Hybrid Warfare*, p.15; Menkiszak M, *Russia's Long War on Ukraine*, p.1.
[58] Snegovaya M, *Putin's Information Warfare in Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia's Hybrid Warfare*, p.9.
[59] Snegovaya M, *Putin's Information Warfare in Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia's Hybrid Warfare*, p.15.

of the federalization of Ukraine was suggested by both some Russia's officials and supporters of pro-Russian leaders of Yanukovych's Party.[60] According to Menkiszak, the idea of the federalization of Ukraine was uttered by Oleg Tsarev, Vadim Kolesnichenko, and Mikhail Dobkin who were members of the pro-Russian Ruling Party of the Region in January 2014. In this context, '…the idea was that Ukraine should be divided into large regions with strong powers, including the possibility to conduct their own foreign economic relations and possibly possessing a veto power over decisions of the federal government in Kyiv.'[61]

3. Has Russia Achieved its Hybrid Warfare?

Once Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula, it was strongly argued that Russia's hybrid warfare strategy achieved its goal in Ukraine. However, this view seems rather debatable especially when we look more deeply into the main aim of Russia's hybrid warfare strategy in Ukraine, which is establishing a federalization in Eastern Ukraine. As Menkiszak argues, the idea of federalization was refuted by the Ukrainian government and special status has not been granted in the Donbas region.[62] In this context, it can be claimed that Russia's hybrid war strategy was partly successful because even though Russia achieved its goal in Crimea, the war in Donbas became problematic both for the Ukrainian and the Russian governments. During the war in Donbas, many people have been killed and wounded since April 2014. Yet, Russia has not still achieved its goal in Eastern Ukraine.

In this context, Galeotti argues that although Russia has achieved its goal in Crimea, its strategy experienced trouble in Donbas.[63] According to Galeotti, Russia's hybrid warfare strategy was successful in Crimea because of several reasons, such as that the new Ukrainian government was in chaos during the annexation of Crimea, Crimean local people, even some local police and Ukrainian Security Service, supported Russia's operation and Ukrainian forces could not withstand Russia's operations.[64] Yet, Russia's new war strategy did not work in Donbas. Galeotti argues that even though Russia could maintain the war and insurgency in Donbas, the

[60] Menkiszak M, *Russia's Long War on Ukraine*, p.7.
[61] Menkiszak M, *Russia's Long War on Ukraine*, p.7.
[62] Menkiszak M, *Russia's Long War on Ukraine*, p.9.
[63] Galeotti M, 'Hybrid War and Little Green Men: How It Works, and How It Doesn't.'
[64] Galeotti M, 'Hybrid War and Little Green Men: How It Works, and How It Doesn't.'

war '…has done so at catastrophic cost, considering the economic impact of the consequent Western sanctions regime, and with no evidence of any successful outcome.'[65]

Nevertheless, even though Russia has lost in Donbas, Russia's hybrid warfare strategy was successful as an information campaign. First of all, Russia was able to force the Western countries to *de facto* accept the annexation of Crimea.[66] Moreover, as Snegovaya points out that (1) 'Russia has managed to avoid a larger confrontation with the West despite having committed severe violations of international law', (2) 'since the conflict in Ukraine still lacks recognition as an international conflict, Russia is not acknowledged as a belligerent in the Minsk ceasefire agreements, and so the burden of fulfilling the agreement largely lies on the Ukrainian government.'[67]

Conclusion

Russia's foreign policy towards the post-Soviet space has been engaged with the term Russia's sphere of influence, since the collapse of the USSR. The Colour Revolutions have become a milestone for understanding the shift of Russia's foreign policy towards Georgia and Ukraine because the country's leadership has viewed the Colour Revolutions as a Western threat for its influence in the region. After the Colour Revolutions, therefore, Russia's foreign policy towards the post-Soviet space has been shifted. In 2008, for instance, Russia directly was involved in the South Ossetian and Abkhazian conflicts to protect its sphere of influence in post-Soviet space. However, Russia's use of military tools in the Russo-Georgian and the Chechen wars damaged Russia's economy and highlighted some military shortcomings in Russia's army. Thus, Russia has changed its strategy in the region after the Russo-Georgian war and the new method of war firstly appeared in the annexation of Crimea and Russia's operations in Eastern Ukraine. Although the term hybrid war has been executively used to explain Russia's operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, the Kremlin has still argued that Russia was not involved in the war in Donbas. However, some evidence, such as the existence of the little green men supported by Russia, using Russia's military equipment in the Donbas war, show that Russia has been directly involved in the war in Donbas.

[65] Galeotti M, 'Hybrid War and Little Green Men: How It Works, and How It Doesn't.'
[66] Menkiszak M, *Russia's Long War on Ukraine*, p.12.
[67] Sanegovaya M, *Putin's Information Warfare in Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia's Hybrid Warfare*, p.18.

The aim of Russia's hybrid warfare strategy in Ukraine is still a controversial question for both Russian and Western scholars. In fact, the Russia's hybrid warfare strategy is based on protecting the country's sphere of influence in post-Soviet space. The Colour Revolutions, and lastly the possibility of developing a relationship between Ukraine and the EU have been considered as a threat for Russia's identity formation in the post-Soviet space. Thus, although it is strongly argued that the main reason for the invasion of Eastern Ukraine is protecting Russian-speakers in this area, this paper mainly argues that the aim of Putin's hybrid warfare strategy is establishing a federation and/or special status of Donbas in Eastern Ukraine to control the region in order to protect its sphere of influence, rather than protecting Russian-speakers in Crimea and Donbas.

Russia's hybrid warfare has not achieved its main goal which is structured on establishing a federalisation of Eastern Ukraine. Even though it is mainly argued that Russia's hybrid warfare strategy has achieved its fundamental goal in Ukraine after the annexation of Crimea, Russia has in-fact faced some problems in the war in Donbas, and the idea of the federalization of Eastern Ukraine has not become reality so far which means a partially failure of Russia's hybrid warfare strategy in Ukraine.

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