

*Kęstutis Kilinskas\**

*Faculty of History, Vilnius University*

## Hybrid Warfare: an Orientating or Misleading Concept in Analysing Russia's Military Actions in Ukraine?

Hybrid warfare is perhaps the most frequently used concept in seeking to explain and define Russia's military actions in Ukraine. This article thoroughly analyses the development of the theory of hybrid warfare and circumstances of its formation, draws a line between hybrid warfare and hybrid threats, and discusses the perception of hybrid warfare in the armies of Western states and Russia. Actions of the Russian army in Crimea are analysed on the grounds of the provisions of the theory of hybrid warfare formulated by Frank Hoffman through revealing the impact on a military operation not only of the changing warfare tendencies but also of political, cultural, demographic and military conditions that existed on the Crimean peninsula. The article ends with an assessment of the capability of the hybrid warfare theory, as an analytical category, to explain Russia's military actions in Crimea.

### Introduction

Hybrid warfare is the term used by representatives of mass media, politicians, professional military personnel, leaders of defence institutions and experts of military warfare to define actions of the Russian army in occupying Crimea and invading the territories of East Ukraine. It is natural that statements by authoritative politicians, officers and defence experts helped make the concept of hybrid warfare popular and helped it to become an inseparable part of the public discourse defining military actions taking place in Ukraine. However, it should be pointed out that the concept of hybrid warfare is used in public discourse without going deeper into its meaning, content or context that created conditions for the creation of this concept. Most probably that is why recently in the academic circles there has emerged ever strengthening

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\* *Kęstutis Kilinskas* is a PhD candidate of the Faculty of History at Vilnius University.

Address for correspondence: Universiteto 7, LT-01513 Vilnius, Lithuania; tel. +370-5-2687280;

e-mail: [kestutis.kilinskas@gmail.com](mailto:kestutis.kilinskas@gmail.com)

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doubts as to the purposefulness of using the concept hybrid warfare and its ability to explain Russia's military actions in Ukraine. With the expansion of fighting between the Russia-backed separatists and Ukrainian state forces in East Ukraine, some scientists of Western states have started doubting the originality and novelty of the war concept applied by Russia.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the Soviet Union has a rich historic experience with how to seize the territory of other states or carry out military interventions via manipulating political, economic and military means. Soviet invasions into Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan and Georgia testify most distinctly to this.

A year after the beginning of military actions in Ukraine, a famous US researcher of warfare, Roger McDermott, called hybrid warfare a myth<sup>2</sup>. A little later, Michael Koffman and Mathew Rojanski followed the way laid by McDermott and claimed that the concept of the hybrid war was more suitable to define the spread of Russia's power yet could hardly be used as a new war model<sup>3</sup>. The opinion of these authors partly reflects discussions and concerns that broke out among US warfare scientists when the concept of the hybrid war was included into the strategic documents regulating USA army actions<sup>4</sup>.

The concept of the hybrid war looks particularly suspicious in the context of the history of the Baltic States. These states experienced, in between the wars, the covert impact of diplomatic, economic and military leverages of the Soviet Union and Germany<sup>5</sup>. Judging from the historic perspective of the Baltic States, the annexation of Crimea carried out by Russia is more similar to well-known (to these Baltic states) instruments and impact mechanisms of the spread of Russia's power with which Western states are but slightly familiar. Parallels between the subversive activity of the Nazis in the Klaipeda region at the end of the fourth decade and the occupation scenario, executed by Russia

<sup>1</sup> McDermott R., „Does Russia's Hybrid war really exists?“, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=43989&cHash=442fe213f503aef45d5505da34dc34c3#.VaZNV\\_ntmko](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=43989&cHash=442fe213f503aef45d5505da34dc34c3#.VaZNV_ntmko), 20 06 2015

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Koffman M, Rojanski M, „A closer look at Russia „Hybrid war“, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/kennan-cable-no7-closer-look-russia%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%99Chybrid-war%E2%80%99D>, 15 05 2015

<sup>4</sup> Hoffman F, „Hybrid vs. Compound war“, <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/hybrid-vs-compound-war/>, 18 06 2015

<sup>5</sup> Butkus Z., SSRS Intrigos Baltijos šalyse 1920 – 1940, *Darbai ir dienos*, t. 8, 1998, p. 141 – 160.

Butkus Z., *Vokietijos ir Sovietų diplomatijos poveikis Baltijos valstybių užsienio bei vidaus politikai 1920 – 1940 m.*, habilitacijos procedūrai teikiamų mokslo darbų apžvalga, Vilnius, 2007, Švilpa J., *Komintermas ir komunistinis pogrindis Lietuvoje XX a. ketvirtajame dešimtmetyje (organizaciniai veiklos aspektai)*, daktaro disertacija, Kaunas, 2007.

in Crimea, have been discerned by historian Vytautas Jokubauskas<sup>6</sup>. The Estonian researcher Merle Maigre discovered similarities between Russia's military actions in Ukraine and the attempts of the Soviets to launch a Bolshevik coup in Estonia in 1924<sup>7</sup>. In the daily newspaper *Gazeta Baltycka* published in Poland, the Polish historian Marcin Siekański, compared the occupation of Crimea with the march of General Lucjan Żeligowski to Vilnius in 1920<sup>8</sup>.

It is obvious that historic parallels are not in short supply, while the examples provided indicate that discussions on hybrid warfare in the academic circles and the interpretations of hybrid warfare as well as a particularly broad use of this concept poses the question of whether the concept of the hybrid war can help explain and understand military actions executed by Russia in Ukraine. Is this a new paradigm of reasoning and an analytical category, helping to better understand changes taking place in warfare? Or maybe the use of the hybrid war concept rather misleads than contributes to a more comprehensive and deep cognition of the war in Ukraine? I contend that a thorough research of the hybrid war concept would not only answer the questions raised, but would help society to better orientate itself and more accurately assess threats towards the state as well as enable the institutions, responsible for the defence of the state, to prepare appropriate state defence instruments.

The objective of this study is to analyse the concept of hybrid war and research, by applying it, the actions of Russia's military forces during the occupation of Crimea. Seeking to implement the objective of the research, the article takes up these tasks:

- To disclose the genesis and development of the concept of hybrid war.
- To apply the theoretical concept of the hybrid war in reconstructing Russia's military actions on the Crimean peninsula.
- To assess the capability of the hybrid war concept to explain the actions of Russia's armed forces in occupying Crimea.

The chronological limits of the research cover the period from February 21–23, 2014 to March 18, 2014. These chronological limits were dictated by important political developments associated with the occupation of Crimea.

<sup>6</sup> Garškaitė R., „Istorikas: Krymo okupacija primena Klaipėdos krašto užėmimo scenarijų“, <http://lzinios.lt/lzinios/istorija/istorikas-kryma-rusiai-uzeme-taip-pat-kaip-naciai-klaipedos-krasta/191628>, 22 04 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Merle M., „Nothing new in hybrid warfare: The Estonian experience and recommendations for NATO“, <http://www.gmfus.org/publications/nothing-new-hybrid-warfare-estonian-experience-and-recommendations-nato/>; 29 05 2015

<sup>8</sup> Siekański M., „Nasz polski Krym w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym“, *Gazeta Baltycka*, 20.03.2014 <http://gazetabaltycka.pl/promowane/nasz-polski-krym-w-dwudziestoleciu-miedzywojennym>, 08 07 2015.

On February 21–23, 2014, Russia's military activeness in Crimea and by the eastern border of Ukraine escalated and, less than a month later, on March 18, the agreement on the incorporation of the Crimean Autonomous Republic into the Russian Federation was signed. Russia's military operation is perceived by the author of this research as actions carried out by Russia's armed forces on the Crimean peninsula within the defined chronological limits.

The structure of the article is devised in compliance with the objectives of the research. The first part of the article discloses the circumstances of the creation of the hybrid war concept and its genesis and touches upon Russia's attitude to changes taking place in warfare. The second part researches, on the grounds of the concept of the hybrid war, Russia's military actions in Crimea.

The research has been prepared on the basis of a wide range of scientific monographs, academic publications, mass media reports, and official state documents of international organizations. Analysis of the changes that took place at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is substantiated by Mary Kaldor's<sup>9</sup> and Martin Crevelde's<sup>10</sup> monographs. The research makes use of military terms and concepts defined in field manuals<sup>11</sup> of the US army. The genesis and development of hybrid threats and hybrid war concepts are explored on the grounds of the publications by the originator of this concept Frank Hoffman<sup>12</sup> and David Kilcullen<sup>13</sup>, US National Security Strategies for 2005 and 2006<sup>14</sup>, as well as statements in mass media by high-ranking US military commanders. The attitude toward hybrid threats, existing within the NATO organization, is revealed on the basis of NATO's Strategic Concept for 2010 and publications by the Estonian researcher Maigre<sup>15</sup>, Martin Zapolski<sup>16</sup> and Dominic Bachmann<sup>17</sup>. Articles which criticized the concept of the hybrid

<sup>9</sup> Kaldor M., *New and Old Wars*, Stanford: John Wiley & Sons, 1999.

<sup>10</sup> Crevelde M., *Transformation of War*, New York: Free Press, 1991.

<sup>11</sup> US Army Field Manuals were used for the research: *U.S. Army Field Manual 3-0 Operations C-1*, Washington, DC: February 2011 in *Army special operation forces unconventional warfare*, FM3- 05.130 1 – 4, Washington, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Hoffman F., *Conflict in the XXI st century: the rise of the hybrid war*, Virginia, 2007; Hoffman F., "Hybrid vs. Compound war", <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/hybrid-vs-compound-war/>, 18 06 2015

<sup>13</sup> Kilcullen D., „Countering global insurgency“, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 4(18), 2005, 597 – 617

<sup>14</sup> Department of defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2006*, <http://www.defense.gov/qdr/report/Report20060203.pdf>, 06 07 2015

<sup>15</sup> Merle M., „Nothing new in hybrid warfare: The Estonian experience and recommendations for NATO“, <http://www.gmfus.org/publications/nothing-new-hybrid-warfare-estonian-experience-and-recommendations-nato>; 29 05 2015

<sup>16</sup> Zapolskis M., "1999 and 2010 NATO Strategic Concepts: A Comparative Analysis", *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review*, vol. 10, 2011-2012, p. 35-56.

<sup>17</sup> Bachmann D., "Hybrid threats, cyber warfare and NATO comprehensive approach for countering 21 st. Century threats – mapping the new frontier of global risk and the security management", [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1989808](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1989808), 18 06 2015

war, written by the critics of the hybrid war concept Koffman, Rojanski<sup>18</sup> and McDermott<sup>19</sup>, were also of service to the research. The perception of new warfare forms in Russia's armed forces was disclosed in the text by the Chief of Staff of the armed forces of the Russian Federation Valery Gerasimov<sup>20</sup> and in Margaret Klein's analysis<sup>21</sup> of Russia's military doctrine published in 2014.

The course of the military operation and actions of Russia's armed forces in Crimea are reconstructed on the grounds of the research by the above-mentioned McDermott, Emanuel Karagiani<sup>22</sup>, Stephen Cimbala<sup>23</sup>, Andras Racz<sup>24</sup>, as well as information reports in the internet mass media reflecting the course of the military operation. Studies, carried out by Lada Roslycky<sup>25</sup>, John Biersac<sup>26</sup> and Johan Norberg<sup>27</sup>, assisted in understanding Russia-employed mechanisms and means of the spread of the soft power on the Crimean peninsula.

## 1. Genesis of the Concept of Hybrid Warfare and Theory Formation

The beginnings of the concept of hybrid warfare can be traced back to the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when, after the end of the Cold War, the nature of armed conflicts and wars started changing. Modern, ready-for-wide-scope-conventional-war armies of Western states found themselves face-to-face with new-type forms of organized violence in Africa, the Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon. At that time, in the West, there appeared the

<sup>18</sup> Koffman M, Rojanski M, „A closer look at Russia „Hybrid war“, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/kennan-cable-no7-closer-look-russia%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%9Chybrid-war%E2%80%9D>, 15 05 2015

<sup>19</sup> McDermott R., „Does Russia's Hybrid war really exist?,“ [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=43989&cHash=442fe213f503aef45d5505da34dc34c3#.VaZNV\\_ntmko](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=43989&cHash=442fe213f503aef45d5505da34dc34c3#.VaZNV_ntmko), 20 06 2015

<sup>20</sup> Герасимов В., „Ценность науки в предвидении“, <http://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/14632>, 14 06 2015

<sup>21</sup> Klein M., Russia's new military doctrine, [http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2015C09\\_kle.pdf](http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2015C09_kle.pdf), 13 06 2015

<sup>22</sup> Karagianis E., „The Russian interventions in South Ossetia and Crimea compared: military performance, legitimacy and goals“, *Contemporary security policy*, 35: 3, 2015, p.400 – 420.

<sup>23</sup> Cimbala S., „Sunt Tzu and Salami tactics: Vladimir Putin and Military persuasion in Ukraine 21 February – 18 March“, *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, vol. 27, issue 3, 2014, p. 359-379.

<sup>24</sup> Racz A., Russia's hybrid war in Ukraine, Helsinki, 2014.

<sup>25</sup> Roslycky L., „Russian smart power in Crimea: sowing seeds of trust“, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 11, 2011, p. 299 – 316.

<sup>26</sup> Biersac J., Olear S., „The Geopolitics of Russia's annexation of Crimea: narratives, identity, silences and energy“, *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 55: 3, 2014, p. 247 – 269.

<sup>27</sup> Norberg J., „The use of Russia's military in the Crimean crisis“, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/03/13/use-of-russia-s-military-in-crimean-crisis>, 08 06 2015

first studies in which scientists attempted to reflect upon and explain new-type wars. The first to notice the beginnings of new wars and disappearing lines between war and politics, conflict and peace, military person and civilian, between war and peace zones and the increasing decentralization of violence was Thom Hammes. He formulated the generation-four war concept that was related to threats posed by non-governmental military actors<sup>28</sup>. The US political analyst and sociologist Kaldor considered non-political objectives and motives of new wars, sought by non-governmental armed organizations<sup>29</sup>, as the difference between the old and new wars. She emphasized that, in new wars, the line between the *war* (a state when fighting sides seek political goals) and *organized crime* (a state when private persons or their groups seek private interests) has disappeared. Kaldor formulated the concept of new wars on the basis of the analysis of the First Gulf War and civil wars in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia. This author based her thinking on the assumption that globalization, while changing social relations in society, would also inevitably transform the phenomenon of war.

After the First Gulf War, the Israel war historian Creveld started exploring changes that occurred in warfare. He predicted that conventional wars would disappear due to the dilemma, created by the use of nuclear weaponry (the threat of bilateral destruction – the author’s note), and the ever increasing number of low intensity conflicts<sup>30</sup> which in the nearest future would replace high intensity conventional conflicts. According to Creveld, low intensity conflicts proved their advantages and the provided political benefits during the Cold War<sup>31</sup>. Creveld also forecast that eventually states would lose the monopoly of the use of power and coercion in their possession which would be replaced by non-governmental players, military actors, employing warfare forms typical of low intensity conflicts.

After the terrorist attacks in the USA in 2001, the wars that started in Afghanistan and Iraq and acquired the generalizing title of “Global war on terrorism,” as if confirming Kaldor’s and Creveld’s theoretical considerations. In these wars, the main opponents of the USA and coalition partners became the terrorist organization Al Qaeda and other non-governmental organizations, and non-conventional attacks carried out by them forced Western states to

<sup>28</sup> Williamson S., „From fourth generation warfare to hybrid warfare“, US army college, 2009, p. 4-5.

<sup>29</sup> Kaldor M., *New and Old Wars*, Stanford, 1999, p. 2 – 7.

<sup>30</sup> In the US Army Field Manual FM 100 – 20, (*FM 100 – 20 Fundamentals of low intensity conflict* the level of confrontations between states or interest groups when the employed armed force does not turn into a wide-scale conventional war) is considered as low-intensity conflicts.

<sup>31</sup> Creveld M., *Transformation of War*, New York, 1991, p. 15-25

seek effective warfare strategies. It is important to understand that the military thinking of the USA in the years of the Cold War was more orientated towards conventional war; however, the opponents' tactics and warfare conditions in Afghanistan and Iraq were different – unusual and unfamiliar non-conventional threats, a response to which had yet to be found. It was then that the renewed and newly adapted insurgency–counterinsurgency theory<sup>32</sup>, employed during the Vietnam War, was recalled in the USA. In this strategy, *insurgency uprising* is perceived as the “strategy undertaken by groups incapable of achieving their political objectives by conventional means” and characterized as lasting for a certain period of time asymmetrical violence, advantages of terrain, psychological war and political mobilization – everything that helps insurgents to sustain and eventually change the balance of forces to their own advantage<sup>33</sup>. The definition indicates that the spectrum of insurgents' actions is much wider than that of non-regular military threats and includes political mobilization, influence, propaganda as well as searching for ways to impact upon the military power of the US by non-conventional means. Insurgency and counterinsurgency theory was the earliest stage of the development of the concept of hybrid warfare and prompted the impulse to further develop the concept.

The threats that emerged in the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars were summarized in the US National Security Strategy published in 2005 and categorized into four types: traditional, irregular, terrorist and disruptive threats. This document notes that, in the future, it will be not governmental organizations or armed groups that will seek synergy in employing all the enumerated threats<sup>34</sup> as a complex and claims that the USA is strong in the context of traditional military threats; therefore, the activity of hostile organizations and groups will be directed towards finding and taking advantage of weak points of the USA. The US National Defense Strategy, published in 2006, also emphasizes that non-conventional type of war will dominate in the future, while the concept of hybrid threats is developed as a quadrennial defense strategy<sup>35</sup>.

In the National Defense Strategies for 2005–2006, the probability of the enumerated military threats and the opinion that future threats are predicted correctly were still further enhanced by the war between Israel and Lebanon

<sup>32</sup> Kilcullen D., Countering global insurgency, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 4 (18), 2005, 597-617,

<sup>33</sup> Jermalavičius T, “ ‘Global War on terrorism’: Rediscovering the Insurgency and Counterinsurgency”, *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review*, vol. 5, 2006, p. 30.

<sup>34</sup> Hoffman F., Conflict in the XXI st century: the rise of the hybrid war, Virginia, 2007, p. 7

<sup>35</sup> Department of defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2006*, p. 20 <http://www.defense.gov/qdr/report/Report20060203.pdf>, 07 06 2015



in 2006 in which the terrorist organization Hezbollah used modern, conventional weapons and non-regular tactics against the conventional Israel army. After the incident at Israel–Lebanon border, Israeli tanks and armored personnel carriers, invading the territory of Lebanon, were met with fire from modern guided antitank missiles, volleys of field artillery, unmanned aerial reconnaissance vehicles and fortified terrorist positions. After 34 days of intensive battles, military actions were stopped by the international community. The Lebanon War demonstrated that non-governmental organizations with a broad arsenal of modern weapons (ranging from conventional automatic guns to guided anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles, artillery pieces, unmanned reconnaissance vehicles, controlled by technically and tactically well-prepared combatants) can successfully counter modern conventional military forces.

After the war between Israel and Lebanon, the US war theorist Hoffman put quadrennial threats together to form a single theory of hybrid war<sup>36</sup>. Hoffman considers hybrid war to be hybrid warfare that incorporates a range of different modes of warfare including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts, including indiscriminate violence and coercion and criminal disorder<sup>37</sup>. He points out the following five features of hybrid war which distinguishing it from conventional war:

- Modality – a method of warfare combining the four modes.
- Synchrony of actions – actions of all the four types carried out simultaneously.
- Fusion – a common objective sought by actions of all the fighting groups.
- Multimodality – variety and complexity of military actions.
- Criminality – criminal actions creating the environment of fear and distrust.

Hoffman claimed that the theory of hybrid warfare formulated by him better explains the then-on-going military conflicts than the insurgency–counterinsurgency theory, questions the perception of the existing binary conventional and non-conventional mode of fighting, and helps predict and forecast future threats<sup>38</sup>. This concept attracted much attention and criticism in US military and academic publications; however, despite the criticism, many of the newly-created terms defining the new threats did not manage to outdo

<sup>36</sup> Hoffman F., *Conflict in the XXI st Century: The Rise of the Hybrid War*, Virginia, 2007, p. 29-30.

<sup>37</sup> Hoffman F., „Hybrid vs. Compound war“, <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/hybrid-vs-compound-war/>, 18 06 2015

<sup>38</sup> Gunneriosson H., „Nothing is taken serious until its get serious: countering hybrid threats“, *Defense Against Terrorism Review*, vol. 4, 2012, [http://www.coedat.nato.int/publication/datr/volume7/04-Countering\\_Hybrid\\_Threats.pdf](http://www.coedat.nato.int/publication/datr/volume7/04-Countering_Hybrid_Threats.pdf), 15 06 2015



the concept of the hybrid war developed by Hoffman; consequently, in time, Hoffman's concept got established in the US high-ranking military circles. For example, the Chief of Staff of the US Land Forces, General George Casey wrote in 2008 that hybrid threats comprise "conventional, irregular, terrorist and criminal threats"<sup>39</sup>. The US Joint Military Command considers the hybrid threat as "any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism and criminal behavior in the battle space to obtain desired political objectives"<sup>40</sup>. This is how the former Chief of Staff of the US Joint Forces, General Raymond Odierno, defined hybrid threats "in the future it would be increasingly common for the army to operate in environments with both regular military and irregular paramilitary or civilian adversaries, with the potential for terrorism, criminality and other complications."<sup>41</sup> According to the US Marine Corps General James Mattis<sup>42</sup>, hybrid wars were associated with failed states when paramilitary organizations, guided by ethnic motives, make use of the seized weaponry or even weapons of mass destruction of failed states' conventional armies. The term hybrid war found its way into the US Field Manuals in 2011.<sup>43</sup> All this indicates that the concept of the hybrid war was created and established in the USA in 2005–2011, and its formation was determined by the aspiration of the USA to explain the threats that the US army had encountered while fighting the "global war on terrorism".

NATO's interest in hybrid threats emerged much later than the discussions on the topic in the USA. This was determined by the relatively limited involvement of NATO in military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. The beginnings of hybrid threats can be traced back to the Strategic Concept of NATO adopted in Lisbon in 2010 which is the key document of the organization, providing NATO objectives, assessing the security environment and defining relationship with other actors of the international system.<sup>44</sup> In this document quite a lot of attention is given to new-type threats, first of all to cy-

<sup>39</sup> Hoffman F., „Perspectives on the future security environment“, <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/AS/AS26/20130213/100261/HHRG-113-AS26-Wstate-HoffmanF-20130213.pdf>, 25 06 2015

<sup>40</sup> Hoffman F., „Further thoughts on Hybrid Conflict“, *Small Wars Journal*, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2009/03/thoughts-on-hybrid-conflict/>, 05 07 2015

<sup>41</sup> Merle M., „Nothing new in hybrid warfare: The Estonian experience and recommendations for NATO“, 29 05 2015

<sup>42</sup> Mattis J., „Future warfare: The rise of the hybrid wars“, <http://milnewstbay.pbworks.com/f/MattisFour-BlockWarUSNINov2005.pdf>, 13 06 2015

<sup>43</sup> *U.S. Army Field Manual 3-0 Operations C-1*, <http://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-0.pdf>, 10 07 2015

<sup>44</sup> Zapolskis M., „1999 and 2010 NATO Strategic Concepts: A Comparative Analysis“, *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review*, vol. 10, 2011-2012, p. 35

ber-attacks, terrorism and disturbances of energetic security.<sup>45</sup> In the Strategic Concept of NATO, hybrid threats are threats posed by adversaries, with the ability to simultaneously employ conventional and non-conventional means adaptively in pursuit of their objectives<sup>46</sup>. It should be pointed out that NATO does not use the term *hybrid war concept*; however, on the basis of the experience acquired in the Afghanistan War, it names new-type hybrid threats.<sup>47</sup> In 2011, NATO-initiated workshops were held in Estonia and Belgium with the aim of discussing challenges, posed by hybrid-type threats, and attempting to find ways for their neutralization. At the seminars, it was stated that the response to new-type threats must comprise political, military and civilian instruments.<sup>48</sup> Most probably, the attempts of NATO to reflect upon hybrid threats limited themselves to the Strategic concept 2010 and not beyond it.

Considerations of military conflicts that took place after the Cold War were also underway in Russia. In 2013, the Chief of the General Staff of the armed forces of the Russian Federation, General Gerasimov, published an article in which he outlined his attitude towards changes and processes taking place in warfare, development of military technologies and determined directions of future research for Russia's warfare scientists<sup>49</sup>. According to the General, the nature of war has changed the line between war and peace, making it effectively disappear; nowadays wars are not declared before they start, and present-time military conflicts in Afghanistan, crisis in Libya and coloured revolutions in Arab countries clearly testify to the on-going changes in the forms of fighting. In the General's opinion, the times of great battles and fighting by conventional military forces are gone. At present, society and not territory has become the object and goal of war; therefore, new instruments of war comprise a wide spectrum of political, economic, humanitarian, and information means in employing which, the importance of Special Forces has considerably grown. He emphasized that of late, "the significance of non-military means for achieving political and strategic aims has increased"<sup>50</sup>.

Gerasimov rhetorically asked what kind an army should look and be like in the future. What kind of war should it get ready for? What weapons should it be armed with? According to him, warfare science should help deal

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p. 53 - 55

<sup>46</sup> Bachmann D., „Hybrid threats, cyber warfare and NATO comprehensive approach for countering 21 st. Century threats – mapping the new frontier of global risk and the security management“, [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1989808](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1989808), 18 06 2015

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>49</sup> Герасимов В., „Ценность науки в предвидении“, <http://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/14632>, 14 06 2015

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*.

with these questions and the problems of the changing warfare. Military forces must be multi-tiered and ready to respond to different military conflicts. The text written by a high-ranking Russian military official confirms the fact that on the basis of the experience of Western states, high military command of Russia reflects on and perceives the changing nature of warfare. It is demonstrated by the military operation, carried out by Russia in Crimea, and by the Russian Military Strategy issued in 2014, which provides for the use of political, military, informational and non-military instruments. Russia's most recent Military Doctrine states that military intervention can be conducted in a covert form, taking advantage of public discontent, protests and by funding and guiding the activities of political and social movements<sup>51</sup>. These considerations show that in Russia, the recent experience of military conflicts is being reflected upon and analysed and attempts are made to predict the nature of the future warfare. In academic circles of warfare researchers, there is a general consensus that Russia's military actions in Crimea were different from the Russo-Georgian War that took place in 2008; however, the question arises whether the military actions of Russia in Crimea can be called a hybrid war? We will try to answer this question in the next section.

## 2. Analysis of Military Actions of the Russian Armed Forces in Crimea

The only author who provided a consistent theory of the hybrid war is Hoffman; therefore, for the explanation and interpretation of the military actions executed by Russia's army, we will use the theory of hybrid war developed by him. We should note again that Hoffman considers the hybrid war as military actions when any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism and criminal behaviour in the battle space to obtain desired political objectives.<sup>52</sup> It should be pointed out that Hoffman does not elaborate on the features by which conventional or non-regular military actions can be categorized and divided; therefore, in this study we will employ concepts and terms given in US Army Field Manuals. In these manuals, regular forces are armed individu-

<sup>51</sup> Klein M., Russia's new military doctrine, [http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2015C09\\_kle.pdf](http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2015C09_kle.pdf), 13 06 2015

<sup>52</sup> Hoffman F., „Hybrid vs. Compound war“, <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/hybrid-vs-compound-war/>, 18 06 2015

als or groups of individuals who are members of a regular armed force, police or other internal security force.<sup>53</sup> Non-conventional or non-regular forces are operations conducted by, with or through irregular forces in support of resistance movement or insurgency, or conventional military operations.<sup>54</sup> We will also use these concepts to define regular and irregular way of warfare.

The actions of the Russian army in Crimea were going on in specific, characteristic of only the Crimean peninsula, conditions which determined the choice of the military operation strategy. The most important conditions were the following: favourable for Russia ethnic composition of the Crimean population and their political views, the presence of the Black Sea naval base on the territory of Ukraine and the poor readiness of the Ukrainian armed forces as well as their non-resistance to the Russian aggression.

The Autonomous Republic of Crimea on the Crimean peninsula is a sovereign territory of the Republic of Ukraine, but the population of Crimea is 2.5 million. 60 percent of the population of the peninsula are ethnic Russians; a still higher number of Russians live in Sevastopol, the city where the Russian naval base is situated. Apart from Russians, in Crimea, there are 24 percent of Ukrainians and 12 percent of Crimean Tartars<sup>55</sup>. The ethnic composition created favourable conditions for Russia to instigate separatist moods. It is worth mentioning that as early as 1991-1992, quite a few of Russian politicians started doubting the legitimacy of the Ukrainian authorities on the Crimean peninsula and already in 1992, Russian separatists, encouraged by Moscow, announced the Declaration of Independence of Crimea, which was soon withdrawn; however, approximately at the same time, Russia's Parliament voted on the transfer of the peninsula in 1954 as unconstitutional.<sup>56</sup> Thus, we can see that from the very collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia started instigating separatist sentiments on the Crimean peninsula. Russia's subversive actions on the Crimean peninsula also continued in the first decade of this century. This fact was mentioned in 2006 by the then President of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko, Ukraine's former Intelligence Chief Viktor Nalyvaichenko, and Ukrainian journalists.<sup>57</sup> At that time it was declared that the Black Sea naval base was the stronghold of the activity of Russian special services on the

<sup>53</sup> *Army special operation forces unconventional warfare*, FM3-05.130 1 - 4, <https://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-05-130.pdf>, 28 05 2015

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Jekelčyk S., *Ukraina modernios nacijos gimimas*, Vilnius, 2007, p. 309

<sup>57</sup> Roslycky L., „ Russian smart power in Crimea: sowing seeds of thrust“, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 11, 2011, p. 303.

Crimean peninsula. The official task of Russian special services in this region is not only counterintelligence in seeking to protect the Sevastopol military base, but also collection of information on the military, political, economic and social situation in Crimea as well as instigation of pro-Russian and separatist attitudes through pro-Russian public organizations and the mass media.<sup>58</sup>

The Russian Black Sea naval base located on the Crimean peninsula is an object of utmost strategic importance that provides access for the Russian fleet to the Black and the Mediterranean Seas. This base has a significant symbolic meaning testifying to Russia's military victories during the Crimean War and World War II<sup>59</sup>. In 1997, the Treaty of Friendship between Russia and Ukraine was signed, according to which the lease on the Russian Navy's military base in Ukraine was extended until 2017, yet having become the president, Viktor Yanukovich extended this term until 2042.<sup>60</sup> The legal status of this treaty remains controversial since, according to Article 16 of the Constitution of Ukraine, the presence of foreign military bases on the territory of Ukraine is prohibited. This has been mentioned on several occasions by Arseniy Yatsenyuk.<sup>61</sup>

The Black Sea Fleet base also affected the ethnic and social structure of the Crimean peninsula. Russian citizens that are called up for mandatory military service or officers who have graduated from military institutions come to the peninsula, do their military service and afterwards stay in Crimea.<sup>62</sup> In Sevastopol, there is the Black Sea Branch of Moscow University where former officers of Russian special services work as teachers, and young graduates stay to work in the mass media operating in Crimea or in state institutions of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. There is also a wide circle of political and non-governmental organizations supported and financed by Russia which are united by the Russian Community of Crimea established in 1991. This organization is a kind of umbrella which, through political, economic and social networks brings together 25 non-governmental organizations comprising 15,000 members. The major Russian organizations operating in Crimea are the people's front Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia, the youth organization Proryv, the Eurasian Youth Union and Nashi. In 2006, the Ukrainian authorities prohibited the activity of the first two organizations because of the terrorist nature of

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 303

<sup>59</sup> Jekelčyk S., *Ukraina modernios nacijos gimimas*, Vilnius, 2007 p. 309 - 310

<sup>60</sup> Karagiannis E., „The Russian interventions in South Ossetia and Crimea compared: military performance, legitimacy, goal“, *Contemporary Security Policy*, 35:3, 2014, p. 407

<sup>61</sup> Roslycky L., „Russian smart power in Crimea: sowing seeds of thrust“, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 11, 2011, p. 302.

<sup>62</sup> Bartles C., McDermott R., „Russia military operation in Crimea“, *Problems of Post-Communism*, 61:6, 2014, 46 - 63

their activity<sup>63</sup>. Seeking to increase the number of Russian citizens in Crimea and find a pretext to justify a possible military aggression, Russia started pursuing an active policy of granting citizenship in Crimea. In recent years, the Russian citizenship could be granted and passports issued to up to 170,000-200,000 people of Crimea and East Ukraine<sup>64</sup>.

The collected data indicates that Russia's military infrastructure (military bases on land, military naval and air ports) on the peninsula of the Russian Crimea provided favourable conditions to transport Russian army units to the Crimean peninsula and operate from it, whereas the attitudes of the Crimean population favourable to Russia created a "friendly" atmosphere and helped the Russian army to occupy the Crimean peninsula without major military clashes. The fact the Ukrainian military forces were poorly prepared and inadequately armed, not trained and not ready to show resistance was also useful for Russia; therefore, the probability of resistance was low. Russian intelligence services were aware that after Yanukovich became Ukraine's President in 2010, the cooperation between Ukrainian and Russian defense and security structures became more intensive;<sup>65</sup> thus, it is reasonable to assume that Russia had information about the situation in the Ukrainian army.<sup>66</sup> Besides, when the military operation started, Ukraine's police units in the Crimea, subordinate to Kiev, only observed how rallies were going on, roads were being blocked and government buildings were being seized, yet they did not take any action.<sup>67</sup> These factors determined the character of the actions of the Russian armed forces in Ukraine.

The actions of regular military forces, related to the military operation in Crimea, started on February 26, when the Russian Federation's Western and Southern Military Districts launched a military exercise in which 150,000 troops participated.<sup>68</sup> This exercise had political and military objectives. The political goal of Russia was to demonstrate resolve to defend its interests in Ukraine by military means and dissuade any external forces from a possible intervention<sup>69</sup>. Under the pretext of military exercises near the border of Ukrai-

<sup>63</sup> Roslycky L., „Russian smart power in Crimea: sowing seeds of thrust“, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 11, 2011, p. 303

<sup>64</sup> Biersac J., Olear S., „The Geopolitics of Russia's annexation of Crimea: narratives, identity, silences and energy“, *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 55: 3, 2014, p. 256

<sup>65</sup> Gotz E., „It's geopolitics is stupid: explaining Russia's Ukraine policy“, *Global Affairs*, 1 – 1, 2015, p. 4

<sup>66</sup> Bartles C., McDermott R., „Russia military operation in Crimea“, *Problems of Post-Communism*, 61:6, 2014, p. 55

<sup>67</sup> Cimbala S., „Sunt Tzu and Salami tactics: Vladimir Putin and Military persuasion in Ukraine 21 February – 18 March“, *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, vol. 27, issue 3, 2014, p. 370

<sup>68</sup> Norberg J., „The use of Russia's military in the Crimean crisis“, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/03/13/use-of-russia-s-military-in-crimean-crisis>, 08 06 2015

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

ne, military forces were amassed so that, in case the Ukrainian forces showed resistance, they could provide support for Russian military units in Crimea.

The activity of the Russian Special Forces on the Crimean peninsula started on February 21, after the President Ukraine Yanukovich fled the country. Then, taking advantage of the increased level of military readiness due to Sochi Olympic Games<sup>70</sup>, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Special Forces Brigade of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Russian Federation was transported to the 810<sup>th</sup> Marine Brigade based in Sevastopol; following negotiations with the Crimean politicians, the troops of this Special Forces brigade alongside the officials of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Russian Federation started to instigate and organize pro-Russian rallies directed against the Ukrainian authorities<sup>71</sup>. The favorable demographic situation of the Crimean population, their political views as well as the decision of the Ukrainian authorities to abolish the status of Russian as an official language contributed to the instigation of these rallies<sup>72</sup>. The rallies were aimed at instilling the idea that the democratically elected President Yanukovich had been overthrown in an illegal way and Russian speakers in Crimea were facing a threat.<sup>73</sup>

On February 27–28, with the rallies still going on, units of the Special Forces of the Main Intelligence Directorate disguised as civilians and operating together with pro-Russian population, irregular and criminal groups, seized the strategic objects: the Parliament of Crimea and the buildings of the Council of Ministers in Simferopol, Simferopol international airport and Belbek airport, the TV station, Ukrainian air defense installations, and blocked the military units deployed in Crimea as well as the Ukrainian naval base in Balaklava bay.<sup>74</sup> They cut off lines of communications and disrupted radio and Internet connection.<sup>75</sup> They established control and check points on major roads leading to the Crimean peninsula near Dzhankoy and Armyansk<sup>76</sup>. These acts, by faking discontent of the Crimean population, were carried out by the troops of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, the 3<sup>rd</sup>, the 10<sup>th</sup>, the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 22<sup>nd</sup> Brigades of the Special Forces units of the Main

<sup>70</sup> Gorenburg D., Crimea taught us a lesson, but not how the Russian military fights, [www.warontherocks.com](http://www.warontherocks.com), 05 07 2015

<sup>71</sup> Cimbala S., „Sunt Tzu and Salami tactics: Vladimir Putin and Military persuasion in Ukraine 21 February – 18 march“, *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, vol. 27, issue 3, 2014, p. 371.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Karagianis E., „The Russian interventions in South Ossetia and Crimea compared: military performance, legitimacy and goals“, *Contemporary Security Policy*, 35:3, 2015, p. 409

<sup>75</sup> Bartles C., McDermott R., „Russia military operation in Crimea“, *Problems of Post-Communism*, 61: 6, 2014, p. 63

<sup>76</sup> Karagianis E., „The Russian interventions in South Ossetia and Crimea compared: military performance, legitimacy and goals“, *Contemporary Security Policy*, 35:3, 2015, p. 408



Intelligence Directorate.<sup>77</sup> After these actions of the Russian Special Forces, the Crimean peninsula was cut off from the communication with the continental part of Ukraine and got de facto under control of the Russian army.

On February 28, by airlift and sea transportation, additional military forces were deployed to Crimea, the servicemen of which soon got to cities and were later referred to as “green men” by the mass media. Research by Western scientists indicates that it was airborne divisions related to the Russian Rapid Reaction Forces that were transported to Crimea: the 7<sup>th</sup> (deployed in Novosijsk), the 76<sup>th</sup> (deployed in Pskov) and the 31<sup>st</sup> (deployed in Ulyanovsk). A little later, a still larger contingent of military units suitable for conventional fighting was brought to Crimea: the 727<sup>th</sup> Separate Marine Brigade, the 291<sup>st</sup> Artillery Brigade and the 18<sup>th</sup> Motor Riflemen Brigade.<sup>78</sup> These military forces had to deter the Ukrainian army from making attempts to launch military actions against the Russian army.

Shortly after that, no insignia bearing Russian servicemen, who would suddenly appear on the streets of Crimea and around the most important strategic objects, were used to create an image that these were peaceful forces seeking to protect the population of Crimea from the reigning chaos. (This had been caused by military formations and criminal elements controlled by Russia itself.) At that time, the mass media showed sights where the “green men” took pictures with women and children, helped civilians, behaved politely and did not loiter in streets<sup>79</sup>. In addition to the military function, the role of the “green men” had a representative function and fulfilled Russia’s ambition to shape the opinion in the information space that military forces had been deployed to protect Russian-speaking population from the reigning chaos. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia denied that Russian troops were involved in military actions on the Crimean peninsula.

The activity of non-regular military formations, criminality and the actions of criminal actors comprise the second and third aspects of Hoffman’s concept of the hybrid war. During the occupation of Crimea, the actions of non-regular formations and criminal elements were closely integrated with the actions of Russian Special Forces troops and intelligence officials, and it was Russia’s military authorities that controlled the activities of these forma-

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<sup>77</sup> Bartles C., McDermott R., “Russia military operation in Crimea“, *Problems of Post-Communism*, 61: 6, 2014, p. 63

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8

<sup>79</sup> Bartles C., McDermott R., „Russia military operation in Crimea“, *Problems of Post-Communism*, 61 : 6, 2014, p. 63

tions<sup>80</sup>. This aspect slightly complicates the application of Hoffman's theory of the hybrid war since, according to Hoffman, criminal activities are intended to cause disorder and total chaos within the zone of military actions<sup>81</sup>, whereas the aim of irregular formations and criminal gangs that operated during the occupation of Crimea was the assault on strategic objects and not the infliction of total chaos. However, it should be noted that in legal terms, irregular military formations and criminal groups should be qualified as illegal military structures acting on the territory of Ukraine<sup>82</sup>, while the actions carried out by them may be treated as actions of illegal coercion executed by actors having no legal authorization<sup>83</sup>. Thus, the operation of these groups can be considered a crime; but we should point out that their actions only partly match the concept of the hybrid war suggested by Hoffman.

In public discourse, the term Crimean self-defence units was widely used to define non-regular military formations, but they were composed of groups comprising different people: employees of private security agencies<sup>84</sup>, Kuban Cossack formations<sup>85</sup>, veterans of the Afghan and Chechen Wars<sup>86</sup>, members of the Night Wolves biker club<sup>87</sup>. The spectrum of actions of the mentioned groups is particularly wide, quite often involving activities characteristic of non-regular military formations and criminal gangs. Crimean Cossacks alongside Russian special operations forces and employees of security firms stormed the building of the Crimean Parliament<sup>88</sup>, Simferopol airport and other strategic objects on the Crimean peninsula<sup>89</sup>. A little later, they illegally detained, kidnapped and tortured pro-governmental activists Andrei Schekun and Reshat Akhmetov<sup>90</sup>, established illegal check points and checked people

<sup>80</sup> Jane's Intelligence Review, „The rising influence of Russian special forces“, [http://www.janes360.com/images/assets/299/46299/The\\_rising\\_influence\\_of\\_Russian\\_special\\_forces.pdf](http://www.janes360.com/images/assets/299/46299/The_rising_influence_of_Russian_special_forces.pdf), 12 07 2015

<sup>81</sup> Hoffman F., *Conflicts in the XXI century rising the hybrid warfares*, Virginia. 2007, p. 29

<sup>82</sup> Wilk A., „Russian military intervention in Crimea“, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2014-03-05/russian-military-intervention-crimea>, 30 06 2015

<sup>83</sup> Račius E., „The Globality of Terrorism: a View from Lithuania“, *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review*, vol. 3, 2004, p. 12-13.

<sup>84</sup> Karagianis E., „The Russian interventions in South Ossetia and Crimea compared: military performance, legitimacy and goals“, *Contemporary Security Policy*, 35:3, 2015, p. 408

<sup>85</sup> Wright W., „Meet the cossaks wolves, doing Russia's dirty work in Ukraine“, <http://time.com/95898/wolves-hundred-ukraine-russia-cossack/>, 30 05 2015

<sup>86</sup> Thomas T., „Russia's military strategy and Ukraine: indirect, asymmetric – and Putin led“, *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 28:3, 2015, p. 455

<sup>87</sup> Center for civil liberties report, Freedom of assembly in Crimea occupied by the Russian federation 2015.04.16 – 17, <http://www.osce.org/pc/151691?download=true>, 10 16 2015

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Racz A., *Russia's hybrid warfare in Ukraine: breaking enemies will to resist*, [http://www.fiia.fi/en/publication/514/russia\\_s\\_hybrid\\_war\\_in\\_ukraine/](http://www.fiia.fi/en/publication/514/russia_s_hybrid_war_in_ukraine/),

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

and vehicles, disrupted the work of journalists<sup>91</sup>. Crimean Cossacks maintained close relations with the Russian organizations 'Proryv' (Sally), the Eurasian Youth Union and 'Nashi' (Ours)<sup>92</sup>. As previously mentioned, the activity of the first two organizations was prohibited in 2006. Members of the Night Wolves biker club, which is close to the Russian President, attacked the objects belonging to the Ukrainian Navy in the city of Sevastopol<sup>93</sup>.

Alongside the non-regular formations, criminal gangs that connected with the future Prime Minister of Crimea Sergey Aksionov were also operating. In the 1990s, Aksionov was a member of the criminal organization Salem acting on the Crimean peninsula. The activity of this criminal gang is related to racketeering and smuggling through the port of Sevastopol. Later, Aksionov got involved in the process of privatization, and in 2010 he engaged in the political activity of the party United Russia. During the occupation of Crimea, a 700-man strong battalion subordinate to Aksionov was formed on the basis of criminal elements and the mentioned party<sup>94</sup> and participated in military actions.

The data collected indicates that the activity of non-regular criminal groups was a very significant constituent of the military operation that provided conditions for Russia to act unexpectedly disguise military actions and form a favourable role concerning the information about the events in Crimea. While operating in the background of demonstrations and rallies taking place in Crimea, these gangs stormed and seized the most important strategic objects, faked a threat to the Russian-speaking population; all this was followed by sending in conventional military forces. In terms of tactics, the activities of irregular formations complicated a possible response from the Ukrainian police, because the use of police force against the alleged Russian-speakers could provide a pretext to send in Russian armed forces. The activity of these groups on the territory of Ukraine was illegal, but the character of their criminal activity does not match Hoffman's concept of the hybrid war. Due to political motives of the criminal activity, this activity is more similar to terrorist acts, which Hoffman considers to be the fourth feature of hybrid war. Despite many existing definitions of terrorism, a generalized definition of terrorism may be considered an intentional use of violence against civilians or

<sup>91</sup> Human rights watch, „Crimea: Attacks, „disappearances“ by illegal forces“, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/03/14/crimea-attacks-disappearances-illegal-forces>, 15 10 2015

<sup>92</sup> Roslycky L., „Russian smart power in Crimea: sowing seeds of thrust“, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 11, 2011, p. 303

<sup>93</sup> Wright W., „Meet the cossaks wolves, doing Russia's dirty work in Ukraine“, <http://time.com/95898/wolves-hundred-ukraine-russia-cossack/>, 30 05 2015

<sup>94</sup> Galeotti M., „Putting the crime back in Crimea“, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/putting-the-crime-back-in-crimea/501477.html>, 15-10- 2015

civilian targets in the pursuit of political goals<sup>95</sup>. According to Egdūnas Račius, peacetime attacks against power structures of one's state can, in exceptional circumstances, be qualified as terrorist attacks, yet only in those cases when these actions have clear political motivation and aspiration to change the social or political system of the state<sup>96</sup>. There were no major terrorist acts during the occupation of Crimea, but in certain actions, carried out by non-regular military formations and criminal gangs, some evidence of terrorist activities could be detected when the aim, under the threat of violence, is to change the political leadership of the state. The capture of pro-Ukrainian political activists and threats to the representatives of the national minority of Crimean Tartars can be attributed to such actions<sup>97</sup>. However, actions of this character did not gain wider scope; besides, it is unlikely that they could have become means to attract public attention and announce political demands or declarations. These actions should be treated as the activities of criminal or irregular groups intended to threaten political opponents and restrict their behaviour.

Having analysed Russia's military actions on the basis of Hoffman's concept of the hybrid war, we can state that actions executed by Russia completely correspond to two aspects of the theory of the hybrid war as formulated by Hoffman: the activity of conventional military forces and irregular military formations. Meanwhile, the character of the activity of non-regular criminal groups and poor evidence of terrorist activity in Crimea differed from the provisions established in Hoffman's concept of hybrid war. This means that the theory of the hybrid war can only partly explain the actions of the Russian army during the occupation of Crimea.

It is important to point out that the specific features characteristic of the Crimean peninsula and determining the choice of the type of the military operation contributed more to the success of the military operation than the theory popular in the West of the hybrid war, on the basis of which through the experience of the last two decades attempts are made to define Russia's military actions in Crimea. The concept of hybrid war was created on the basis of the concrete experience of military conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon; yet, because of the differing circumstances of the aforementioned conflicts, this concept can-

<sup>95</sup> Beinoravičius D., „Terrorizmas: jo priežastys bei raidos tendencijos“, *Jurisprudencija*, t. 68, 2005, p. 52-53.

<sup>96</sup> Račius E., „The Globality of Terrorism: a View from Lithuania“, *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review*, vol. 3, 2004, p. 12-13.

<sup>97</sup> „Lithuania in the UN Security Council: Attempts of Russia-backed armed groups to seize further territory will be evident violation of the Minsk Agreements“, <http://www.bernardinai.lt/index.php/straipsnis/2015-03-07-lietuva-jt-saugumo-taryboje-rusijos-remiamu-ginkluotu-grupiu-bandymai-uzimti-papildoma-teritorija-bus-akivaizdus-minsko-susitarimu-pazeidimas/128296>, 15 10 2015

not be applied to explain the military actions in Ukraine. Therefore, in order to learn a lesson from the scenario of the occupation of Crimea and predict future threats, we should better understand not only the new tendencies of warfare but also conditions, possibilities and mechanisms of Russia's geopolitical spread to the Baltic States based on which new threat scenarios may be constructed.

## Conclusions

Geopolitical changes in the world that occurred at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century essentially transformed the security environment and forced Western states to get involved in a new type of asymmetric military conflicts with non-state actors, terrorist organizations and criminal syndicates. New-type threats, variety of military conflicts and the search for an effective response require reconsideration, generalization, and assessment of the most recent military experience and formulation of theoretical concepts that would help prepare and operate effectively within the zone of military conflicts. These conditions led to the formulation and establishment of new military theories, including the theory of hybrid war.

The theory of the hybrid war developed by Hoffman includes four aspects: conventional forces, non-regular tactics, terrorism and criminal acts within a single battle space. Having analysed Russia's military actions in Crimea, we can state that they correspond to only two aspects of Hoffman's theory of hybrid war. During the military operation, Russia employed conventional military forces and non-regular military formations, but the character of crimes committed by criminal actors as well as scarce evidence of terrorist actions differed from those defined in Hoffman's theory.

Our comprehensive study of Russia's military actions in Crimea raises doubts about the analytical value of Hoffman's theory of hybrid war, since the essential fact in choosing the mode of military operation was the specific conditions characteristic of the Crimean peninsula, taking advantage of which the military operation was executed. Therefore, in attempting to forecast possible military conflicts in the post-Soviet space and seeking to better understand future threats, we should analyse not only the newest warfare theories, but also thoroughly study political, economic, social and military conditions that can provide a basis for the opponent to make military interventions or destabilize the situation in the Baltic States.

*Vilnius, June – August 2015*