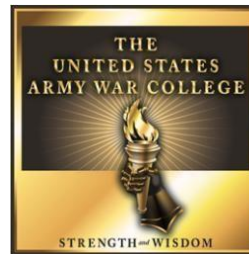


Countering Russian Aggression in the Baltics and Eastern Europe

by

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United States Army War College
Class of 2015

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Abstract

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Vladimir Putin's annexation of Crimea in March of 2014 highlighted the Russian Federation's expansionist actions to the world. The notion that Russian aggression and expansionism is a new threat fails to acknowledge centuries of an imperialist Russia. The 2015 US National Security Strategy calls for a continuous response to current Russian aggression in the wake of Putin's Crimea and Eastern Ukraine involvement. As a long term counter to Russian actions, U.S. training for a domestically developed and supported, cellular, resilient resistance network to deter and counter the asymmetric intrusion of the Russian Federation into sovereign territory is a viable solution. Resistance networks in the Baltics and other former soviet states may leverage existing state structures and security elements. The intent is to establish an "on order" capacity from within, as a defensive measure, incorporating civil elements not currently involved. This resistance network is a bridging capacity to address an operational gap in a nation's capacity to thwart Russian aggression which threatens national security but fails, by design, to clearly trigger a NATO Article V requirement.

Countering Russian Aggression in the Baltics and Eastern Europe

I have no way to defend my borders except to expand them.

—Catherine the Great¹

Vladimir Putin's annexation of Crimea in March of 2014 highlighted the Russian Federation's expansionist actions on the world stage. The reaction by the U.S. and the west was muted, slow and ineffective in deterring an unapologetic Putin. The notion that Russian aggression and expansionism is a new threat fails to acknowledge centuries of an imperialist Russia. A Russia for whom conquest and territorial expansion is not a policy or objective, but a state of being. Noted strategist Colin Gray captures this dynamic, stating "between the middle of the 16th century and the end of the 17th, Russia conquered territory the size of the modern Netherlands *every year for 150 years*"². This whole of government mobilization has been referred to as "lawfare"³

. . .the manipulation or exploitation of the international legal system to supplement military and political objectives legally, politically, and equally as important, through the use of propaganda⁴

The 2015 US National Security Strategy calls for a clear and continuous response to current Russian aggression in the wake of Vladimir Putin's annexation of Crimea and support to the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. U.S. European Command (EUCOM) regional objectives have long included furthering and bolstering a "Responsible Russia". President Obama explicitly states that the United States will maintain "the door open to greater collaboration with Russia in areas of common interests, should it choose a different path--a path of peaceful cooperation that respects the sovereignty and democratic development of neighboring states."⁵ This research paper contends that it is in the National Security interest of the United States that Russia is in fact a strong, stable regional power capable of symbiotic relationships with

its neighbors and former Soviet Union republics. The actions of Vladimir Putin over the past decade and in particular in the past six years have moved the Federation well along the latter objective of a strong Russia. It is the “responsible”, or rather the irresponsible, aspect of a resurgent Russia which has generated a NATO and collective western response aimed at halting and countering Putin’s ambitions. This paper examines the historical conditions which underlie Putin’s actions, the particular challenges posed to the nations bordering Russia, and proposes a methodology for the long term deterrence and countering of a Russian Federation unfettered by the constraints of international law.

Operation Atlantic Resolve (OAR) currently boasts a rotational multi-national brigade-sized conventional force focused on the Baltics and Poland. This patchwork of exercises, bilateral engagements and regional shows of force has been sourced by scrubbing current Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreements (ACSA) and Status of Forces Agreements (SOFA) to provide authorities for deployment.⁶ The manning in the wake of a dramatic European drawdown and overall Army Force Structure reduction has been sourced alternatively by the 173rd Infantry Brigade (Airborne) out of Italy and Germany, elements from 4th Infantry Division, 1st Cavalry Division and the 2nd Cavalry Regiment. Elements of the US Air Force and other multinational elements are in a continual rotation through the region, yet the bulk of the OAR forces are provided by the United States Army. If history provides any guide to future outcomes, eroding public support and force donor fatigue from the contributing nations is likely to leave the U.S. Army and U.S. joint force as the lone substantive contributor to this operation, which is the primary venue that “demonstrates U.S. commitment to NATO Allies following

Russian aggressive actions in Ukraine.”⁷ In an era of exacerbated budget shortfalls and pending land power force reductions, it behooves military planners and policy makers to consider long term economy of force measures which hold the potential to deter and counter Russian expansionist efforts and subversion of sovereignty. This research paper proposes the adoption of a national, domestic resistance network as part of an overarching national defense strategy which acknowledges the conventional mismatch of the small, former Soviet states in Russia’s near abroad while creating conditions in which these nations become “indigestible” to Russia.

Tsar Vladimir

The idea of constant warfare is not new and was most succinctly articulated by the classic Indian military philosopher Kautilya. According to Kautilya, war is designed for conquest with politics functioning as an extension of war, leveraging all elements of national power, to include statecraft, in the pursuit of victory in righteous war.⁸ Thus, the specter of an expanding and powerful Russia is at least not unique or without precedent. Therefore it is critical not to mistake the Russian Federation’s actions as ill-considered or reckless, but rather as part of a carefully orchestrated pursuit of an eternally expanding and reinforcing Russian Federation which exerts exclusive dominance within their domain.

The Eurasianist visions of Vladimir Putin still incorporate previous hardline Russian doctrine promulgated in the late 1990’s by prime minister and former KGB agent, Yevgeni Primakov. The five priorities of the nation under this doctrine were (*emphasis added*):

1. Maintain Russian Federation integrity

2. Cultivate a sphere of influence in the near abroad (*zone of privileged interest in the former USSR*)
3. Defense
4. Cultivate allies, reassert in critical world areas
5. Oppose unipolar power (*read United States*)⁹

Russia's imperial conquests have cycled between success and failure for centuries, yet the underlying ambition and nature of the Russian nation continuously seeks an expansive, vaunted place of power within the world order. The further development of an aggressive Russian foreign policy is elaborated by Russian chief of the General Staff, Nikolai Makarov. Makarov, who has openly discussed a Russian first strike capacity against US missile defense locations in Poland and Romania,¹⁰ authored the currently employed strategy which leverages hybrid-warfare and pursuit of national security objectives well below the international community's threshold for definitive use of force.¹¹

The centuries of tsarist Russian empire were characterized by a centralized, authoritarian governance, the largest army in Europe, and social control through secretive and abusive special police enforcement. The Tsars maintained a stranglehold on public press and information, promoted an official ideology (Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality) and a tradition of territorial expansion and imperialism.¹² After the 1917 Revolution which shed the rule of the tsars in pursuit of a government more equitable to the Russian people, the Soviet Union replaced the tsarist system with centralized, authoritarian governance, the largest army in Europe, social control through secretive and abusive special police enforcement as well as a stranglehold on public press and information. Orthodoxy was replaced by the official ideology of Communism and

territorial expansion flourished (USSR). The post-Soviet era contained much of the same figment of change. The overthrow of the tsars is not the same as the collapse of the Soviet Union, however the ostensible winds of change, liberalization of government and expansion of civil rights protections are equally unrealized.¹³

Russian President Vladimir Putin has systematically molded his government into the modern incarnation of tsarist Russia, mimicking every attribute under a thin veneer of democratic process. Russian history is long, rich and mostly devoid of democratic governance.¹⁴ The Kyivan Rus' established their first dynasty in the 9th century at Kyiv (modern Kiev), vastly expanded, reached their summit in the 11th century and then fell to the Tatars in 1240. The Rus' territories were then conquered by the Mongols until wrested from their control by Dmitri Donskoi in Kulikovo in 1380, giving rise to Moscow as the center of the Russian Empire.¹⁵

The first tsar, Ivan "the Great", emerged in 1462 and the series of heroic and tragic tsars ruled for centuries. Peter I "the Great" is largely acknowledged as the most influential westernizing influence in Russian history, integrating his state into Europe as a great world power.¹⁶ The Russian Tsars through the centuries consistently sought to balance imperial expansion, autocratic-centralized power and appeasement of a population occupying the largest land-mass nation on the planet. Nicolas II in 1905 attempted to install a form of representative government, a parliamentary assembly called the Duma, and then proceeded to contort the governmental systems and processes to ensure the Duma remained a mere figurehead with his autocratic stranglehold well ensconced. This cycle of events is routine in history, as the nature of man articulated in the U.S. Declaration of Independence captures: "mankind are more

disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.”¹⁷

One hundred years later, Vladimir Putin on the heels of failed reforms by Russian President Boris Yeltsin has followed suit. The Russian Federation has all the trappings of a democratic government, acknowledged and accepted by the international community as such, with the true centralized and complete power of the modern-day tsars.¹⁸ This historical perspective is critical to consider for U.S. military leaders and policy makers as the clarion call rings to address a “resurgent Russia”¹⁹. More appropriately, U.S. policy and military plans to support that policy ought to acknowledge the millennia which has shaped the character of the Russian people and nation; one that does not embrace representative governance and seeks security and power through conquest and exclusive influence.

Current Expansion Efforts

The potential zones of conflict and friction between the Russian Federation and the western powers (U.S. and Europe) are a direct overlay of the former soviet states of Eastern Europe, the Baltics and the Caucasus. President Putin has extended, or rather reclaimed, the Russian Federation’s obligation to protect the Russian speaking peoples of the region and of the world. A lofty and expansive claim, it is cloaked in aura of human rights and civil protection from “oppressive” non-Russian governments. Under this guise, Russia has exerted influence and supported or fomented conflict in the near abroad. Each of the frozen conflicts in these regions are centered on the Russian involvement and intransigence:

Republic of Georgia: South Ossetia and Abkhazia

Moldova: Transnistria

Armenia/Azerbaijan: Nagorno-Karabakh

Additionally the Baltic region with former USSR, now NATO, members Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia share lengthy eastern borders with Russian-speaking minorities (large minorities in Estonia and Latvia with a smaller population in Lithuania). In the Kautilyan tradition, Russia maintains western access to the Baltics from Kaliningrad and Russo-philic Belarus.

The geopolitical reality of the Russian Federation, and the former Russian Empire, is that this center of Mackinder's heartland²⁰ remains at the juncture of three major civilizations: Europe, East Asian and Muslim²¹. Catherine the Great's admonition that her borders were only defensible through expansion remains a relevant framework for consideration. The modern international order and the powerful Trans-Atlantic security apparatus have thus shaped the Russian Federation's approach of border expansion, either de facto through exclusive influence or in actuality.

The asymmetric approach to expanding Russian influence is codified in the 2007 cyber-attacks targeting Estonia. The orchestrated denial-of-service attacks shut down huge portions of the Estonian banking and government sectors.²² This attack is well known to have emanated from Russia, though there has never been a formal charge in an international venue. Vladimir Putin will likely guide the Federation's grasp at an exclusive zone of influence by carefully avoiding direct conflict with NATO nations. Thus the reliance on Article V within NATO, which designates an attack on one as an attack on all and defines the mandate for collective defense,²³ will remain an impotent tool to galvanize coalition action. The cyber-attack on Estonia was mimicked in the run up to the 2008 Russian seizure of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in the Republic of

Georgia. It is a key to note that Georgia, though an allied key partner to NATO, is not an Alliance member and thus no collective defense triggers were met. The pattern of Russian action is consistent however, with infiltration into Russian minority communities, issuance of Russian passports, undermining popular support of the target nation government, all designed to foment unrest and instability. This connected string of events leads right up to the annexation of Crimea and the current conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Again, here the target was not a NATO member and the objective was to provoke a reaction from Ukraine to which Russia might elevate an overt “response”.

The Baltics offer the most fertile and likely capacity to successfully implement this proposed deterrence method based on multiple factors. First and foremost they are former USSR nations who are now NATO members with a directly shared border to Russia. Second, the Baltics alternatively farm out their national security to the alliance collective security agreement (Article V) and require a unique relationship with Russia in the support of the Baltic Russian speaking populations. The Baltics are inherently dissident and hold a place of historical distrust within the Russian psychology.²⁴ Finally, the Russian-speaking populations within the Baltics enjoy a comparably higher standard of living than many of their ethnically related neighbors on the Russian side of the border. The opportunity for Russia to infiltrate is present through the language and cultural connections, yet the Baltic governments are in a strong position to establish a standing network among a receptive to neutral population.²⁵

Regional Perspectives

The nations considered in this proposal are those who share a common, or near common, border with the current Russian Federation, a drastic disparity in size and defense capacity in comparison with Russia and a historical and societal perspective

shaped by years of communist or autocratic oppression. These dynamics present a challenge to the development of a secretive, collaborative capacity designed to usurp an occupying power or government, i.e. a resistance movement. Both the governments and the populace may harbor deep inhibitions regarding establishment of such a capacity within the nation, yet a conventional standoff and build up reminiscent of US forces preparing to defend the Fulda Gap in the 1980s appears unlikely both from a budgetary and political will perspective. Thus the consideration of an economy of force effort, with long-term sustainment capacity, and force multiplying effectiveness is worthy of discussion. Each of the affected nations must balance the dual realities of a Russia which poses a threat to national sovereignty, but with whom each nation desires a beneficial relationship for trade, energy and immigration control.

We begin with the nations who have already or are most likely to be on the receiving end of naked aggression, those who are not NATO members, which include Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, the Caucasus and Central Asian States. Ukrainian Prime Minister Yatseniuk has stated plainly, "We will never recognize the annexation of Crimea".²⁶ Though there has been lukewarm security response to this action from the international community, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution in March of 2014 condemning the annexation of Crimea and affirming the territorial integrity of Ukraine.²⁷ The veto power of Russia on the UN Security Council ensures there would be no resolution emanating from that powerful body, but the general assembly vote importantly included the "annexation" verbiage which allows the UN Secretary General and UN officials to discuss the matter in public as such, an illegal annexation. Both Belarus and Armenia voted against the UN General Assembly

resolution with Armenia championing the Crimean referendum as a success of self-determination while Belarussian president Lukashenko approached the situation with more cautionary language stating the Crimean annexation sets a “bad precedent”.²⁸

The remaining Caucasus nations have tread lightly on the issue, while supporting the General Assembly resolution. Azerbaijan delivered public statements supporting the sovereignty of Ukrainian borders, while the Republic of Georgia has approached the issue as an opportunity to reinvigorate public and political support to further pursue NATO membership. Both of these nations are beholden to the Russian Federation for resolution of territorial disputes mired in frozen conflict: Nagorno-Karabakh for Azerbaijan and the Russian seized territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia.²⁹

Russian speakers compose substantial populations within the Baltics: One quarter in Estonia, a third in Latvia and approximately 6% in Lithuania.³⁰ A former US Army War College Lithuanian officer noted the Russian national security strategy “ominously proclaims that Russia’s military would protect Russian citizens in nearby states”.³¹ This proclamation has long served the Russian Federation leadership as a fig-leaf for transnational interference in the name of human rights and protection of an imagined collective Diaspora of Russian speaking peoples. Colonel Darius Jauniskis of the Lithuanian Armed Forces goes so far as to propose a collective Baltic defense cooperative, spearheaded by a combined Baltic Special Operations Force capacity.³² Inherent within the proposed collective Baltic defense construct is an acknowledgment that Article V guarantees of collective security are insufficient to counter the hybrid warfare and “vertikal”³³ power of a Putin-led Russian Federation.

In interviews with senior SOF officers in the region, LTC Riho Uhtegi, the Estonian SOF Commander remarks Estonia is well underway to employing this particular domestic resistance network strategy. The Estonian Special Forces elements are charged with developing Unconventional Warfare knowledge and support through designated elements of voluntary military auxiliary units. The development of the civil structure and planning for a shadow government in the face of occupation remains within the Estonian State Department purview. Important for the success of this effort is the Estonian government and people's commitment to a democratic state and democratic rule-of-law.³⁴ The Baltics have a precedent of organized resistance, namely the almost 100,000 partisans who fled to the forests of Estonia and mostly Lithuania, from which they launched a multi-year resistance effort against the Soviet occupation. The resistance included many military trained men, largely for territorial defense, who effectively subverted and sabotaged the Soviet occupiers for years, awaiting arrival of a Western allied force which never materialized.³⁵

A final regional perspective is available from Moldova and its former sovereign of Romania. Moldova is owner of the remaining frozen conflict in the breakaway Transnistrian territory along the Moldovan eastern border, which remains staunchly under the auspices and power of the Russian Federation. Moldova remains shaky and shaken amongst rumors of Russian Special Forces infiltration into Transnistria,³⁶ mimicking the tactics employed in Crimea and eastern Ukraine and demonstrative of the topic of this research project; non-attributable subversion initiated by Vladimir Putin, which were there a countering resistance network could be defeated, prevented or at least interrupted. Romania presents an interesting case as a solid NATO SOF

contributor and a nation perpetually regarded by Russia as fascist and untrustworthy, even during the period when Romania and the Soviet Union were supposed “fraternal socialist nations”. Romania borders both Moldova and Ukraine, additionally possessing important Black Sea ports affected by the Russian Black Sea fleet and the Crimean annexation. Romania does not possess a large Russian speaking population which would present the target population for Russian Federation infiltration. However, constant discussions of “reunification”, based on the historical relationship with Moldova which was part of Romania from 1918 to 1944, bring the Transnistria frozen conflict to the forefront of Romanian politics.³⁷ Moldova provides a buffer between Russia and the NATO/EU member Romania. Any westward leanings of western Moldova might spark a repeat of Eastern Ukraine in Transnistria. At that point, an economy of force effort which had established the standing resistance capacity would prove invaluable.

Developing a Domestic Resistance

Unconventional Warfare (UW) is defined as activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary and guerilla force in a denied area.³⁸ Development and support to Unconventional Warfare is a politically sensitive subject both in the U.S. and across our European allies. Given however that Russia’s Kautilyan approach achieves an asymmetry through the purposeful manipulation of international laws and customs to shield and obscure their activities, the U.S. Defense Strategic guidance is germane: “Whenever possible, we will develop innovative, low-cost and small-footprint approaches to achieve security objectives, relying on exercises, rotational presence and advisory capabilities.”³⁹

It is critical in this effort to specify the United States is not conducting Unconventional Warfare in any stage of this proposal, but rather supporting the acquisition and training of UW skill sets within a partner nation's repertoire. Additionally important is the clarification of the desired endstate: a resistance network, not an insurgency. The components of both organizations are analogous but the purpose and scope represent two distinct political goals and risks. A resistance network is an "organized effort by some portion of the civil population of a country to oppose or overthrow the established government or cause withdrawal of an occupying power."⁴⁰ In this case, the goal would be to cause withdrawal of Russian encroachment or occupation. An insurgency is an "organized resistance movement that uses subversion, sabotage, and armed conflict to achieve its aims."⁴¹

United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) is the Army proponent for Unconventional Warfare and denotes seven phases of establishing a resistance network: preparation, initial contact, infiltration, organization, buildup, combat employment, and demobilization.⁴² This unique application of UW as a defensive national capacity to counter Russian asymmetry, will necessarily abridge or modify various phases of a traditional resistance establishment. For example, the definition of UW states these activities are conducted in a denied area and in traditional U.S. support to a resistance, the establishment of the network would occur after or while the target area is a denied area. In this proposal, the host nation already has access to their sovereign territory and thus infiltration as a phase is curtailed or removed.

Establishing a resistance network requires three main components: an Underground, Auxiliary and a Guerrilla force. The Underground provides the command and control of the resistance and directs the operations of the Auxiliary and Guerrilla force. The Auxiliary provides logistics and intelligence support through members who are part of the civilian community within the denied area. The guerilla element is the resistance's decisive combat force which executes directed operations. The majority of tasks and capacity expected from a domestic resistance network to counter Russian incursion or occupation are designed to happen underground, both figuratively and literally. The resistance capacity is employed across a spectrum of increasingly complex and disruptive operations which are carried out via the underground elements (literally) and intended to remain cloaked in secrecy and deniability (figuratively underground). Figure 1 displays the potential array of resistance operations and effects.

Resistance networks in the Baltics and other former soviet states may leverage existing state structures and security elements. The intent is not to establish and train an entirely new, separate and parallel structure but to develop an "on order" capacity from within, incorporating civil elements not currently involved. This resistance network is a bridging capacity to address an operational gap in a nation's capacity to thwart Russian aggression which threatens national security but fails, by design, to clearly trigger a NATO Article V requirement. Within Estonia, the anticipated operations of the domestic resistance network include targeting enemy communication lines and implementing information warfare to publicize the resistance to both the Estonian people and an occupying or infiltrated Russian force.⁴³

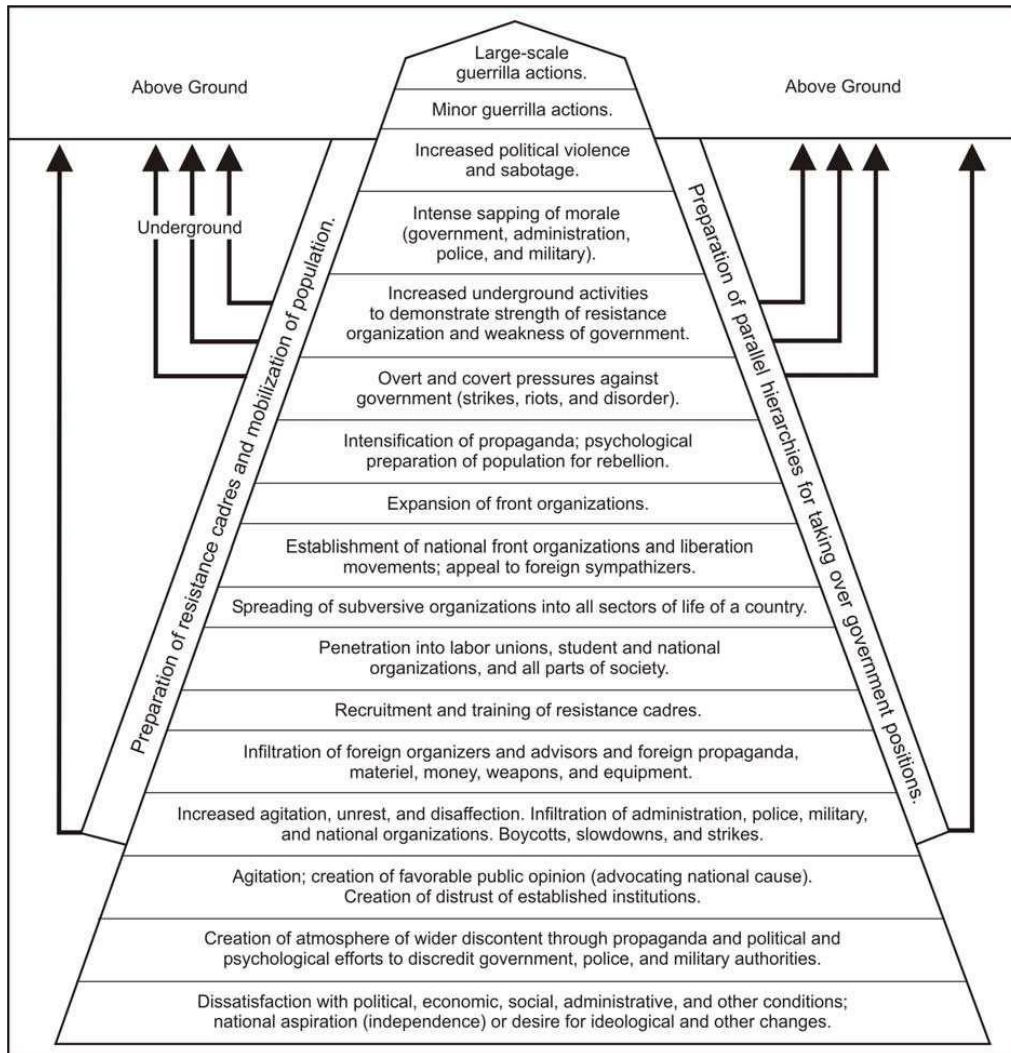


Figure 1. Building a Resistance Movement⁴⁴

Critics of leveraging Unconventional Warfare capacity may assert the non-definitive nature of a victory in addition to the already existing fears and suspicions of Vladimir Putin that the Maidan revolution in the Ukraine was fomented by the United States, thus generating a self-fulfilling prophecy which drives Putin to even more aggressive actions.⁴⁵ A realist on the other hand recognizes the bromide “nature abhors a vacuum”. The technological advances in cyber and space, coupled with an

anachronistic international definition of the use of force create just such a vacuum for a powerful nation willing to subvert customs and laws in pursuit of expansionist desires.

Why Resistance or Unconventional Warfare?

It is a fair question to ask whether or not this proposed course of action has any likelihood of success, both in implementation and in achieving the desired deterrent and counter-aggression goals. A significant part of the answer lies within Russia's own policy and doctrine. The current Gerasimov doctrine is designed to leverage asymmetric and irregular capacities to make up for a shortfall in conventional military capacity.⁴⁶ More recently articulated by First Deputy Minister of Defense Nikolai Markorov, the Gerasimov doctrine specifies the modality to achieve Russian national security interests without ever requiring the deployment of large scale conventional military capacity; something the Russian Federation is fiscally constrained in executing. This phased approach is initiated by targeting public opinion (both domestic and foreign) as well as media through information warfare operations. The movement of non-attributable Russian Special Forces into the targeted area under the guise of humanitarian or human rights protection creates the legal ambiguities which paralyze NATO and western liberal democracies for whom rule-of-law and the law of land warfare remain inviolate.⁴⁷ The combination of these elements is designed to reduce or remove altogether the requirement for a conventional military deployment. The scope of activities which the Russians may undertake are purposefully designed to evade and avoid a conventional force countering effort. Certainly additional elements of national power can and must be integrated to generate a synergistic effect, but a nation's development of an Unconventional Warfare capacity and establishment of a domestic resistance network meets the threat posed by the Gerasimov doctrine on an

equal playing field. Figure 2 illuminates just some of the observed and anticipated Russian activities which may be effectively addressed through domestic resistance capacity.

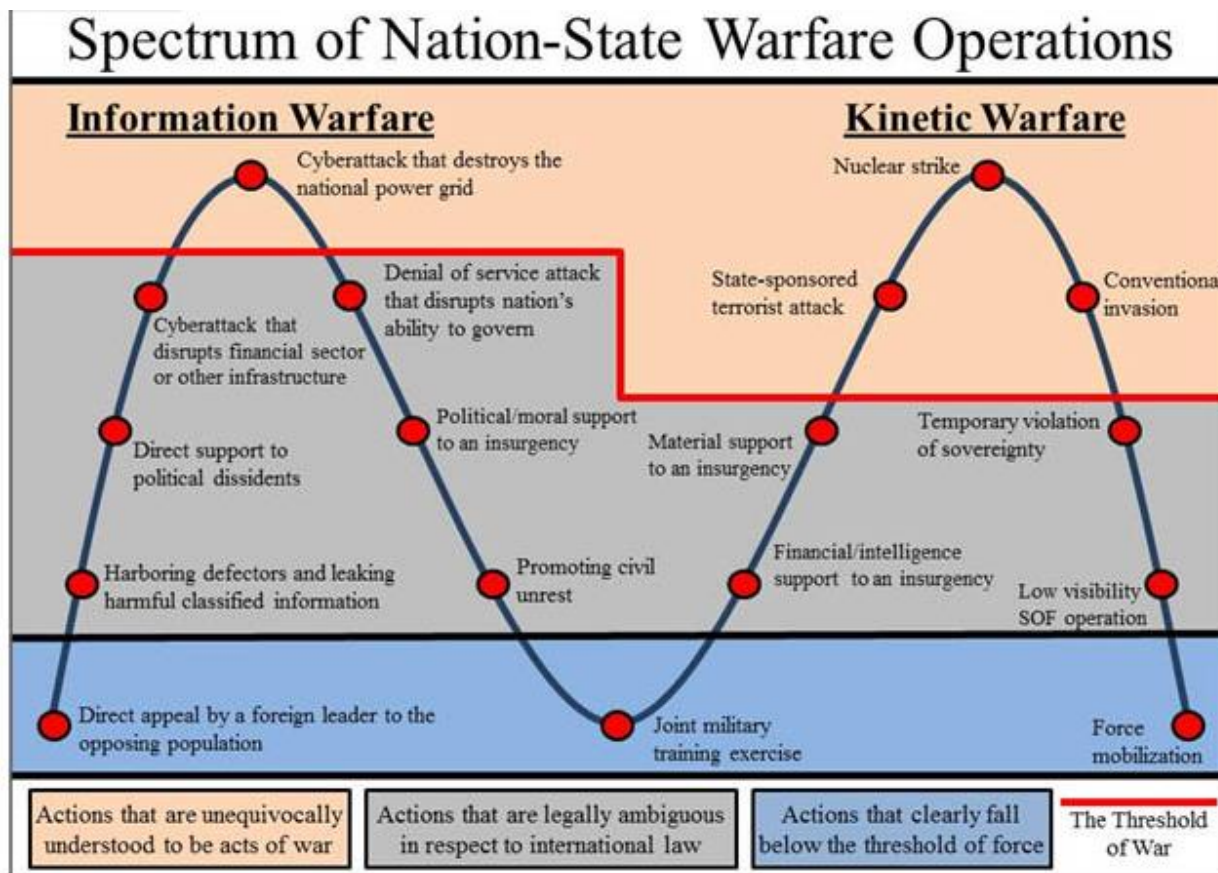


Figure 2. Anticipated Russian Aggression Designed to Avoid Article V⁴⁸

Interviews with regional subject matter experts confirm the assertions at the beginning of this paper: Russia's actions now are anything but new. According to Riho Uhtegi, the Estonian Special Forces Commander, the latest actions in Ukraine are simply an extension of a continuous series of efforts and operations over the last 24 years for post-Soviet Russia.⁴⁹

Risks

The greatest risk in pursuing a course of action supporting US assistance to develop a domestic resistance capacity is the tacit acknowledgement that the existing

NATO framework is inadequate to the task. Development of this capacity additionally concedes that Russia could fairly easily “take” the country or portions of the country in question. For a rightly proud Baltic and Eastern European nation, this may be a difficult narrative to embrace and propagate to the population.

A further risk lies in the fact the U.S. national security is well supported by a strong and responsible Russia. U.S. policy does not, nor should it, seek to create an incapacitated Russian Federation but rather a regional power who supports a stable and just international order. The U.S. needs Russia to aid, support and assist the development of the weak and faltering Central Asian States and other Eurasian developing nations. The risk lies in a Russian imperial DNA that has historically used its power for expansion, at the exclusion of other international actors.

Special Forces officer and noted Unconventional Warfare thinker, Marc Grdovic remarks,

Hostile indigenous governments that have had the benefit of years of intimidation and indoctrination have a much greater degree of control over a population than do occupying armies. Assessments of resistance potential have to be based not only on the population's will to resist but also on the government's level of control over the population. Without some exploitable vulnerability in the government's control over the population, successful UW operations are highly unlikely.⁵⁰

U.S. political support to previous insurgencies is likely to cloud efforts and proposals within Washington as the phrase Unconventional Warfare is misunderstood and maligned. The ability to provide UW training to foreign forces is already resident within current Security Force Assistance and Foreign Internal Defense missions. It is noted throughout this paper that this proposal is not U.S. execution of Unconventional Warfare but rather training of partners for their own operational adaptations.

Chances of Success in the Region

Estonia has embraced the overall concept proposed in this paper; establishing a standing resistance capacity as a defense and deterrence against Russia. What remains to be seen is the level at which the United States may or may not facilitate the further development of their standing national resistance capacity and the Estonian willingness to accept the same. What then of prospects in the remaining Baltic countries, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet satellite states? The Baltics will remain a “zone of interaction” between Russia and Europe, regardless of the security apparatus on either side of the border.⁵¹ The degree of success will likely be determined in part by the makeup of the Russian speaking constituencies and their geographic location within each nation. The chances of an effective network will be effected by the degree to which the Russian minority falls into one of five categories: Successfully integrated, Russian-speaking patriots of the nation, Native language speaking active and critical, Little integrated and Unintegrated.⁵² The greater the percentage of the Russian minority in the first two categories, the greater the efficacy of a domestic resistance network. The greater the percentage in the latter three, the more likely Russia will successfully leverage internal dynamics as pretense for action. Paradoxically, the more and better integrated the Russian minority is within each nation, the less likely the resistance network would be required. The capacity of Russia to foment unrest, even amongst integrated Russian-speaking communities, remains significant. After Estonia, the Baltic nations of Latvia and Lithuania, under the security umbrella of a NATO Article V guarantee are in the next most advantageous position to adopt this proposal. Latvia with its approximately 27% Russian population and

Lithuania with eight percent Russian speaking are in the most pressing positions, with both conditions and need.

The likelihood of successful establishment within Ukraine is limited given the rapidly approaching status of Eastern Ukraine into the frozen conflict range. Eastern Ukraine largely identifies with Russia, culturally and politically and the process of regaining control and undermining Russian control would be far more akin to a doctrinal Unconventional Warfare operation, requiring development of the network within the occupied and contested zone. The level of development of democratic institutions within Ukraine is additionally un conducive to a standing resistance network capacity which would beg for implementation in ulterior uses by less principled leadership.

The requirement to embrace democratic institutions and the reliance on liberal democratic values to bolster success and risk mitigation of a domestic resistance network is essential. Few of the nations in question here have historical legacies of representative, liberal democratic institutions. Problematically however, many such as Hungary have experienced regression of governmental institution transparency and effectiveness in recent years.⁵³ Romania remains mired in corruption and over-the-top populist anti-corruption responses which undermine legitimate rule of law and detract from the conditions necessary to implement a sensitive capacity such as a standing domestic resistance network for defense.⁵⁴

The Central Asian States and Caucasus are similarly limited in capacity to adopt this proposal. First and foremost, the underdeveloped Central Asian States are in consensual political and economic alliance with the Russian Federation. One might argue this affiliation is coerced through economic means, the reality remains however

the political and human infrastructure environment does not support development of a domestic resistance network as a defensive national security capacity to counter Russia.

The Caucasus are a zone of consideration for implementation, pending further development of democratic institutions. The outcome of the Republic of Georgia's NATO aspirations will move in parallel to the feasibility of establishing and supporting such a resistance network. The challenge remains the frozen conflict zones of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, where the network would require penetration into a denied area. One could argue the tactic remains valid for adoption by Georgia, however the U.S. military overt support to such an effort is outside the scope of this proposal.

Conclusion

Vladimir Putin and the Russian Federation leadership are likely to interpret all U.S. and larger NATO actions through the lens of anti-Russian actions. Any action is equally likely to be seized upon by the Putin administration and amplified through the state-influenced Russian media as confirming the conspiratorial and deep seated suspicions of a U.S. and NATO encroachment into Russia with the express purpose of weakening, antagonizing and undermining Russian national interests. The President's NSS does not support standing idly by while Russia continues to violate international norms and conventions as well as sovereign borders. Countering Russian aggression may be scrutinized as a requirement to counter Putin and not Russia writ large. This paper contends that Putin's actions are in line with and consistent with a millennia of Russian political and military behavior and that efforts to counter imperial efforts must be sustainable in the long term. Rhetorical condemnation within the United Nations is a necessary supporting action, yet the UNSC veto power of Russia will forever obviate an

authority to action. Absent a major policy and defense strategy shift, returning large U.S. armored formations to Europe and posted within the bordering regions, a domestic resistance network capacity of the nations in Russia's near abroad is a feasible, acceptable and suitable method of countering long term hybrid warfare attempts to regain a Russian zone of privileged interest.

The Baltic nations are best positioned to integrate a domestic resistance network and receive U.S. support in the form of Unconventional Warfare training. This assertion is made based both on need (significant Russian speaking minorities which Russia has already or may leverage) and capacity (stable democratic institutions and a security umbrella of NATO Article V which provides time and space for network development). The Eastern European nations of Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Bulgaria do not possess the minority Russian and Russian speaking populations⁵⁵ which define the vulnerabilities of the Baltics, though they too would benefit from independent pursuit and possibly future U.S. support in this capability. The Central Asian States are outside the purview of this proposal based on the standing integrated relationship with Russia through the Eurasian Union and developing mutual security organizations. The funds for this proposal are available within the current USSOCOM budgets for Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) and the EUCOM budgets for theater bi-lateral training. The means for achieving these ends requires simple prioritization of existing assets. Additionally, the use of International Military Education Funds (IMET) for training at an internationally releasable version of the Special Warfare Center (SWC) Unconventional Warfare Operational Design Course would provide the U.S. assistance to a partner's effort in implementing this proposal. As a long term counter to Russian interference and

aggression, U.S. training for a domestically developed and supported, cellular, resilient resistance network to deter and counter the asymmetric intrusion of the Russian Federation into sovereign territory is a viable solution with excellent prospects for success.

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