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Military Means for Non-Military Measures: The Russian Approach to the Use of Armed Force as Seen in Ukraine

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ABSTRACT
The Russian Federation's approach to the use of armed force abroad is a concern for other states. This case study of Russian armed force use against Ukraine in 2014 and 2015 employs an analytical framework based on Russian conceptualizations. Distinguishing between military and non-military means and measures, we analyze Russia's deployment of armed forces to carry out measures in interstate conflict resolution, focusing on military forces deployed for non-military measures. We find that the use of armed forces in Ukraine largely conforms to Russian conceptualizations, allowing for extensive fighting without it amounting to a military conflict in the Russian view.

Introduction

In February 2014, the Russian Federation unleashed war on neighboring Ukraine. Although this is neither declared nor acknowledged by Russia, its extensive use of military, informational, diplomatic, and economic power in the conflict amounts to war. In this, the use of armed force has been a central feature. Understanding Russia's current approach in this regard is therefore important for Russia's neighbors and their allies. What are the Russian concepts regarding measures and means when employing armed force in interstate conflicts, and how does the actual use reflect these concepts?

The academic debate has to a large degree focused on how to conceptualize Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Lawrence Freedman conceived the conflict as crisis management, limited war, and a strategy of exhaustion.[1] Kristin Ven Bruusgard has argued that the use of force on Crimea indicates a revised view of both Russia's armed forces and how to use them to reach policy goals.[2] Stephen Cimbala points to Russia's use of armed force as a

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[1]L. Freedman: 'Ukraine and the Art of Crisis Management', *Survival*, 56(3) (2014), pp. 7–42; 'Ukraine and the Art of Limited War', *Survival*, 56(6) (2014–2015), pp. 7–38; 'Ukraine and the Art of Exhaustion', *Survival*, 57(5) (2015), pp. 77–106.

[2]K. Ven Bruusgard, 'Crimea and Russia's Strategic Overhaul', *Parameters*, 44(3) (2014), pp. 81–90.

strategy of military persuasion rather than physical subjugation.[3] Other researchers have introduced new concepts. Oscar Jonsson and Robert Seely proposed the term 'full-spectrum conflict' in order to capture the multitude of means used and the gray areas between war and peace.[4] In a similar vein and underscoring the nuclear weapons component, Dima Adamsky prefers the term 'cross-domain coercion'.[5] The term 'hybrid warfare' has been used to capture this phenomenon, in particular since NATO adopted it. András Rácz has traced the conceptual roots of hybrid war and applied it to the Russian aggression toward Ukraine.[6]

Only a few researchers have applied Russian concepts to the war against Ukraine. Jānis Bērziņš was one of the first to analyze the Crimea operation and did this employing a Russian view on new-generation warfare.[7] Tim Thomas later detailed how elements of Russian military strategy were applied in Ukraine, focusing on non-military methods.[8] Regarding the latter, Thomas drew on a speech made in early 2013 by the current Chief of the Russian General Staff, Army General Valery Gerasimov, outlining the pre-eminent role of non-military methods in interstate conflict resolution.[9] In his speech, Gerasimov noted the distinction between military and non-military armed forces, i.e., means, and introduced a similar division regarding measures in interstate conflicts. Other Western researchers have noted the distinction in contemporary Russian conceptualizing between military and non-military measures, as well as military and non-military armed forces, not least through Gerasimov's speech.[10] However, the distinction has not been discussed in depth or used to analyze Russia's actual use of force.

Other researchers have discussed aspects of Russia's application of armed force in Ukraine without a conceptual framework. Charles Bartles and Roger McDermott have analyzed how Russia used its Rapid Reaction Forces in the Crimea operation to achieve strategic effects.[11] The Centre for Analysis of

[3]S. J. Cimbala, 'Sun Tzu and Salami Tactics? Vladimir Putin and Military Persuasion in Ukraine 21 February–18 March 2014', *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 27(3) (2014), pp. 359–379.

[4]O. Jonsson & R. Seely, 'The Operational Art of Russian Full-Spectrum Conflict: An Appraisal after Ukraine', *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 28(1) (2015), pp. 1–22.

[5]D. Adamsky, *Cross-Domain Coercion: The Current Russian Art of Strategy*. Proliferation Papers 54, IFRI, Paris, 2015.

[6]A. Rácz, *Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine*, Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Helsinki, 2015.

[7]J. Bērziņš, 'Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine', Policy Paper No. 2, National Defence Academy of Latvia, Riga, 2014.

[8]T. Thomas, 'Russia's Military Strategy and Ukraine: Indirect, Asymmetric — and Putin-Led', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 28(3) (2015), pp. 445–461.

[9]The speech was later published in a Russian paper: Valerii Gerasimov, 'Tsennost nauki v predvidenii', *Voenno-Promyshlennyi Kurier*, 8(476), 27 February–5 March 2013, pp. 2–3.

[10]See G. Persson & C. Vendil Pallin, 'Setting the Scene — The View from Russia' in N. Granholm, J. Malminen, & G. Persson (eds.), *A Rude Awakening: Ramifications of Russian Aggression Towards Ukraine*, Swedish Defence Research Agency, Stockholm, 2014; C. Bartles, 'Getting Gerasimov Right', *Military Review*, 96(1) (2016), pp. 30–38; and C. Kasapoglu, 'Russia's Renewed Military Thinking: Non-Linear Warfare and Reflexive Control', NATO Defence College, Research Paper No 121, November 2015.

[11]C. K. Bartles & R. N. McDermott, 'Russia's Military Operation in Crimea: Road-Testing Rapid Reaction Capabilities', *Problems of Post-Communism*, 61(6) (2014), pp. 46–63.

Strategies and Technologies (CAST) in Moscow published a book describing the Ukrainian and Russian forces and the military aspects of the annexation of Crimea.[12] Nikolay Mitrokhin has analyzed the different phases of Russia's subsequent intervention in the Donetsk Basin area (Donbas for short) in 2014.[13] Igor Sutyagin has outlined how units from all four of Russia's military districts (MDs) have been deployed in or near Ukraine and how they have cooperated with 'rebel forces'.[14] Finally, Roger McDermott has examined the Donbas intervention in more detail, including Russian support for rebels.[15]

In sum, research relating to Russia's contemporary approach to the use of armed force largely focuses on either concepts or actual deployment but rarely links the two together. Western frameworks dominate the analysis with few exceptions. Furthermore, most of the published research has covered official military and paramilitary forces, leaving non-military armed forces outside its scope even though irregular armed formations (hereafter referred to as militias) seem to have played a role in the conflict. We attempt to fill a gap in current research regarding the Russian Federation's approach to the use of armed force in interstate conflict, by employing a Russian framework to analyze the actual use of both military and non-military forces in Crimea as well as in Donbas. The term 'approach' here denotes choices of measures and means in theory and practice, and we will base our analysis on the conceptual distinction between military and non-military measures as well as forces.

An intuitive division of labor would be that military forces carry out military measures while non-military forces are deployed for non-military measures: See outcomes A and D in Figure 1. As military units are part of official government armed force structures, openly deploying them abroad

		Type of armed force	
		Non-military	Military
Type of measure	Non-military	*Outcome A* Intuitive (for measures possible to carry out by armed force)	*Outcome B* Possible for measure not associated with civil war *or* if covert deployment
	Military	*Outcome C* Possible, if overt deployment	*Outcome D* Intuitive

Figure 1. Measures and armed force deployment: expected outcomes.

[12]C. Howard & R. Pukhov (eds.), *Brothers Armed: Military Aspects of the Crisis in Ukraine*, East View Press, Minneapolis, 2014.

[13]N. Mitrokhin, 'Infiltration, Instruction and Invasion: Russia's War in the Donbass', *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society*, 1(1) (2015), pp. 219–249.

[14]I. Sutyagin, 'Russian Forces in Ukraine', Royal United Services Institute, Briefing Paper, March 2015.

[15]R. McDermott, *Brothers Disunited: Russia's Use of Military Power in Ukraine*, Foreign Military Studies Office, Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, 2015.

implies acts of interstate war, unless under a UN Security Council mandate. This means that non-military measure that are associated with civil war are irreconcilable with the overt deployment of military forces by another state.

Non-military armed forces are, in theory, not part of official government structures, or at least should not appear to be. However, a non-military force arguably may still carry out a military measure if it is overtly deployed, i.e., the deployment is acknowledged by the state (outcome C). Similarly, it would be possible to use a military force to carry out a non-military measure associated with civil war provided that the deployment is covert, i.e., that it is denied and the force is designed to appear non-military. Also, non-military measures not associated with civil war could be carried out by overtly deployed military forces (outcome B). In the case of Russia's war against Ukraine, the Russian government denied deploying any forces on Crimea — initially — and in Donbas. Russia has not acknowledged that it has deployed any non-military forces, rendering outcome C in Figure 1 analytically uninteresting.

In view of this, our hypothesis is that Russia's actual use of armed force in its war against Ukraine largely conforms to a conceptual division into military and non-military measures as well as military and non-military forces. The expected outcome B, that Russia may deploy a military force to carry out a non-military measure associated with civil war by denying the deployment and deliberately adapting it to appear non-military, is analytically the most interesting. An emphasis on non-military methods encourages covert deployments, as noted by Tim Thomas.[16] If no other plausible explanation for adaptations that allow for a military force to appear non-military can be found, then we assume that it is an instance of military forces being deployed for carrying out a non-military measure, rather than a military. Another interesting outcome is force deployments that do not conform to any of the expected outcomes, indicating that our hypothesis may be false. We will focus on these two analytically interesting outcomes: outcome B and non-conformity.

Our analysis covers the extent to which Russia deployed different types of armed force in Ukraine to carry out different measures. It is not a comprehensive account of all of Russia's forces in Ukraine or exactly how they were or are deployed. Vital issues for military operations such as command and control, logistics, or why Russian regular military forces deployed in battalion or company tactical groups, are therefore not discussed here. We also omit historical comparisons and comparisons with other states.

Our approach is an analysis in three steps. First, we identify measures that can be carried out by the use of armed force, as presented by authoritative Russian sources. Second, we outline the means, i.e., the types of armed force available to the Russian Government and their characteristics. Third, we analyze which means Russia employed to carry out which measures in its war against

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[16]T. Thomas, 2015, op. cit., p. 455.

Ukraine, focusing on the use of military means for non-military measures and deployments that deviate from the expected outcomes. We then summarize the results and, finally, offer some conclusions and observations.

Measures within an interstate war: A Russian view

Which measures in an interstate conflict can be carried out by armed force? A formalized Russian concept of modern interstate wars has yet to be presented, but an authoritative view of the approach to the use of force can be derived from Russian military doctrines and General Gerasimov's speech. The 2010 Military Doctrine distinguished in general terms between military and non-military means in war. For example, for contemporary military conflict an important characteristic is the 'complex use of armed force and means of a non-military character' (Article 12a). The state's task is to 'neutralize possible military dangers and threats [to the Russian Federation] through the use of political, diplomatic and other non-military means' (Article 19b).

In 2013, General Gerasimov made a speech to the Russian Academy of Military Sciences, outlining the changing character of war and the vital role of non-military methods. It opened with the observation that the boundary between war and peace has become blurred. Gerasimov asserted that the 'color revolutions' in Soviet successor states and the Arab Spring uprisings show that states can succumb quickly to armed conflict and foreign intervention. Such conflicts do not look like traditional wars, but may have as far-reaching an impact on society. They are fought with both military and non-military armed forces, including special forces (SF), information warfare, private military companies (PMCs), and the creation of domestic oppositional forces.[17] In this aspect, Gerasimov reiterated the conceptualization of military and non-military means found in the 2010 military doctrine.

Gerasimov also introduced a similar distinction regarding measures in modern war. He emphasized the importance of non-military measures by stating that their correlation with military measures was 4:1 in modern interstate conflicts. The article based on Gerasimov's speech included a model illustrating the role of military and non-military measures in settling interstate conflicts (Figure 2), although without explicitly commenting on the model. The model presented the relation between six different phases and four military threat levels of an interstate conflict. It depicts 11 non-military and four military measures as well as to which phase of a conflict each measure belongs. An additional measure, *conducting information operations*, is presented as both military and non-military. The model conveys that military aspects of an

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[17]V. Gerasimov, 2013, op. cit.

Main conflict development phases (stages)

Military conflict
Neutralisation of the military conflict
Containment of military conflict
Direct military threat
Crisis reaction
Directed military threat
Intensification / deepening of contradictions
Potential military threat
Conversion of differences and contradictions and the political military leadership becoming aware of them
Emergence of diverging interests

1. Hidden/unnoticed emergence   2. Sharpening   3. Conflict actions begin   4. Crisis   5. Resolution   6. Restoring Peace (post conflict resolution)

Non-military measures
- Forming coalitions and unions
- Search for measures to solve the conflict
- Political and diplomatic pressure
- Economic sanctions
- Economic blocade
- Putting the economy on war footing
- Carrying out complex measures to reduce tensions in [interstate] relations
- Severing of diplomatic relations
- Organizing political opposition
- Actions of opposition forces
- Change of military-political leadership
- Conducting
- Correlation of non-military to military measures (4:1)
- Information operations

Military measures
- Military measures for strategic deterrence
- Strategic deployment
- Waging of combat operations
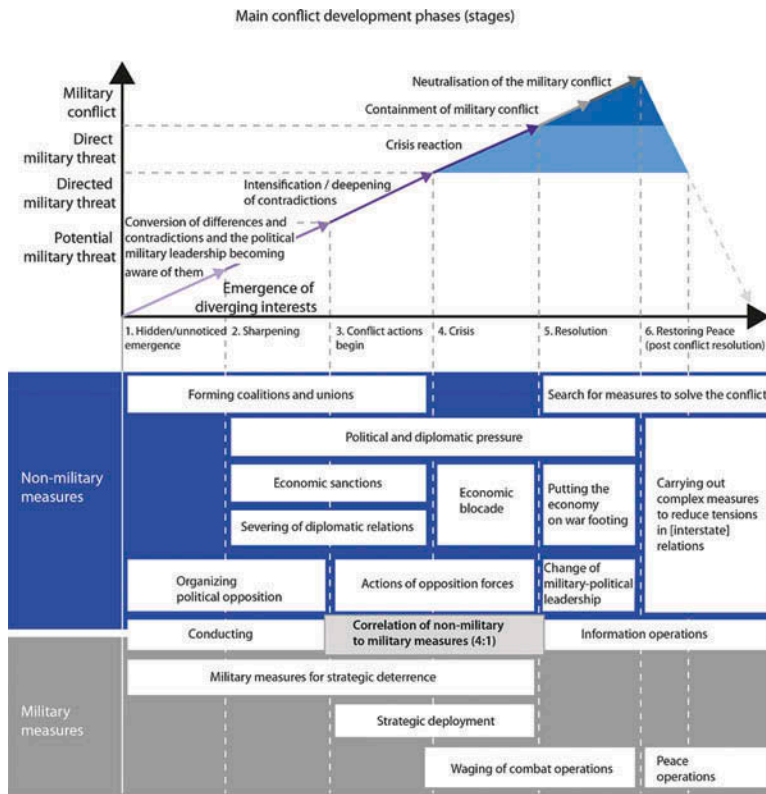- Peace operations

Figure 2. The role of non-military methods in interstate conflict resolution. Source: Gudrun Persson & Carolina Vendil Pallin, 'Setting the Scene — The View from Russia', in Granholm et al., *A Rude Awakening*, p. 33. Originally published in Gerasimov, 'Tsennost nauki v predvidenii' (in Russian).

interstate conflict are but one part of the whole and indicates an awareness of how the role of non-military measures changes warfare.[18]

General Gerasimov's distinction between military and non-military measures in war is echoed in the current military doctrine, published in late 2014. The description of the characteristics and particularities of modern armed conflict referred to 'political, economic, information, and other measures of a non-military character' (Article 15a). Non-military armed forces were also enumerated, such as 'irregular military formations and private military companies' (Article 15z).

Is the distinction between military and non-military measures and means applicable to Russian use of armed force? Gerasimov's speech purports to analyze modern war in general, but some observations indicate that it discusses a possible Russian approach. First, Gerasimov called on the Russian Academy of Military Sciences to develop concepts for future military capabilities to defend Russia but also noted Russia's need to use armed force to

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[18]G. Persson & C. Vendil Pallin, 2014, op. cit., p. 32.

protect its interests abroad. The latter indicates that the expected concepts are not necessarily defensive. Second, the ideas presented were soon incorporated in Russian military debate. Gerasimov's speech was published in the *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kurier* [Military Industrial Courier], a weekly paper with the Russian defense and security establishment as its main audience. The publication generated a number of articles by senior Russian officers in military journals elaborating on the themes raised by Gerasimov. Finally, Gerasimov's model (Figure 2) seems to embrace Russian military planning. It includes the measure *putting the economy on war footing*, which reflects Russian realities when preparing for war, but is hardly adaptable to Western states. Russia, however, updated its law On Defense, including its mobilization plan for the economy, in 2014.[19]

The division into military and non-military measures in interstate wars fits well into the general framework provided by the military doctrines and the contemporary Russian military debate. In an article published in the Ministry of Defense's journal *Voennaia Mysl* [Military Thought] in October 2013, S. G. Chekinov, head of the Centre for Military-Strategic Research at the Russian General Staff Academy, and S. A. Bogdanov discuss recent Russian thinking on the content and nature of future war drawing on Western examples.[20] Gerasimov's model and Chekinov's and Bogdanov's thinking clearly overlap.

Which of the measures in the model, 16 in all, may be carried out by the use of armed force? The four military measures are all generally recognized tasks for military forces in interstate war: *military measures for strategic deterrence, strategic deployment, waging of combat operations*, and *peace operations*. Most of the non-military measures are not suited for execution by armed force, but *actions of opposition forces* clearly are. The measures *change of military-political leadership* and *economic blockade* could at least partly be realized by using armed force. Regarding the latter, Gerasimov mentioned naval blockades with military forces.[21] Finally, the measure *conducting information operations* could also to some extent be carried out by armed force. Of these eight potential measures, three will not be part of our analysis. *Peace operations* have so far not materialized in Russia's war toward Ukraine. The armed force dimension has been insignificant regarding *economic blockade*, but more importantly the interstate character of it makes it analytically less interesting. Designated as both a military and a non-military measure, *conducting information operations* does not help us distinguish between military and non-military.

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[19]RIA (2014), 'Novy mobilizatsionny plan ekonomiki vveden v RF, zaiavil Rogozin', http://ria.ru/economy/20140114/989156528.html (accessed 15 September 2015).

[20]S. G. Chekinov & S. A. Bogdanov, 'O kharaktere i soderzhanii voiny novogo pokaleniia', *Voennaia Mysl*, 10(Oct.) (2013), pp. 13–24.

[21]V. Gerasimov, 2013, op. cit.

The five remaining measures need detail to be analytically useful. Starting with the non-military measures, *actions of opposition forces* intuitively signifies actions by local militias in order to control territory, resources, and population or to challenge state control. It is clearly associated with civil war. However, as we are adopting a state-centric approach, this measure here entails the deployment of a local militia and other non-military armed forces by another state to this end. Furthermore, in order not to be seen as foreign intervention, the deployment has to be denied by the state that is intervening. Arguably, under a conceptual division into military and non-military, military forces could also be deployed to carry out *actions of opposition forces* if they intentionally appear non-military and the deployment is denied.

The measure *change of military-political leadership* entails toppling and replacing state structures for political power and the organized use of force (police, security agencies, and military). It is likely to be a key aim in a domestic conflict and can affect national, regional, and local power structures in the area of operation. We have chosen to regard this measure as associated with civil war, since it has been labeled non-military by Gerasimov. As with *actions of opposition forces*, this measure can be carried out by non-military or military forces under the conditions outlined previously. These two non-military measures complement each other. One strikes at the head of society and the other at the body.

On the military side, the term *military measures for strategic deterrence* means the use of armed force to deter an adversary from attacking and third parties from intervening. It includes using conventional and nuclear military forces.[22] The measure *strategic deployment* denotes deploying armed forces to the area of operation to prepare for, or credibly threaten with, combat operations. Finally, the measure *waging of combat operations* here denotes the overt use of armed forces for fighting. This could be military operations but could also entail the acknowledged deployment of non-military forces. *Waging of combat operations* is distinguished from the non-military measures by the force deployment being acknowledged. This distinction reflects the basic division made in international law and politics between domestic conflicts and interstate war. The Russian political and military leadership has consistently denied that it has deployed armed forces in eastern Ukraine.[23]

Contemporary Russian military thinking allows for such a distinction. The 2014 Military Doctrine (Article 15a) describes the use of military SF to carry out non-military measures. Similarly, other military forces designed to appear as militias could arguably also be used. Military forces whose characteristics have been adapted to make them appear a non-military force and whose deployment is denied are in this context carrying out a non-military measure. Adapting the

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[22]In Russia, strategic deterrence also includes containment and coercion and is applicable both in peace and war, see K. Ven Bruusgaard, 'Russian Strategic Deterrence', *Survival*, 58:4 (2016), pp. 7–26.

[23]See, for example, Direct Line with Vladimir Putin, Kremlin, 16 April 2015, http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49261 (accessed 16 September 2015).

characteristics of a military unit here denotes concealing, substituting, or omitting its regular sub-units, weapon systems, or known standard operating procedures (SOPs), with the intent to make it appear as a non-military force.

Complex operations or the extensive use of sophisticated military equipment, however, cannot pass as actions of non-military forces, irrespective of denials. Nevertheless, if a deployment is consistently denied, it should not be regarded as *waging of combat operations*.[24] We therefore need a residual category for deployments that do not conform to the distinctions made here between military and non-military. A non-conforming deployment would be the use of a military force to carry out a non-military measure associated with civil war without it intentionally appearing as a non-military force. It could also be the denied deployment of a non-military force for military measures while acknowledging its presence on a country's own territory when the state can be expected to be able to uphold a monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force. Russia arguably passes this Weberian test.

Thus, we have selected five measures in interstate conflict resolution, each of which Russia may have carried out with armed force in Ukraine, and defined a residual category (see Table 1). We can now proceed to identify and characterize means to implement them: the different types of armed forces.

Table 1. Selected Measures in Interstate Conflict Related to the Use of Armed Force.

	Measure	Operationalization
Non-military	Actions of opposition forces	Deploying a non-military force — with or without military forces intentionally appearing as a non-military force —to control territory, resources, and population or at least challenge state control, *while denying* having deployed it
	Change of military-political leadership	Deploying a non-military force — with or without military forces intentionally appearing as a non-military force — to replace structures for political power and for organized use of force (police, security agencies, and military) with loyal substitutes, *while denying* having deployed it
Military	Strategic deterrence	Deploying an armed force to deter an adversary from attacking and/or other states from intervening
	Strategic deployment	Deploying an armed force to prepare for — or credibly threaten with — combat operations
	Waging of combat operations	*Overtly deploying* an armed force for fighting, i.e., acknowledging deployment of a military or non-military force
Residual	Non-conforming deployments	Denied deployment of a military force for a non-military measure associated with civil war *without* it intentionally appearing as a non-military force; or denied deployment of a non-military force for military measures *while acknowledging* its presence on a country's own territory (when state control can be expected)

[24]Denying the use of military force in the initial stages of an operation may be part of deception or diversionary tactics (*maskirovka* in Russian), but if the deployment is acknowledged within a short period of time, it should be regarded as overt.

Types of armed force for operations outside Russia

What armed forces are available to Russia in interstate conflicts? The Armed Forces of the Ministry of Defense (MoD) naturally come to mind, but several other ministries have paramilitary forces. According to the 1996 Law on Defense, the Interior Troops, the Federal Security Service (Federalnaia Sluzhba Bezopasnosti, FSB), and other services are included in Russia's military organization (Article 1). This is repeated in Russia's Military Doctrines of 2010 (Article 6 K) and 2014 (Article 8 K). Here, we call all of these military forces.

There are also non-military armed forces that the Russian government can employ abroad, such as militias. Russia has a wealth of Soviet experience of using partisan units during World War II and proxy armies during the Cold War.[25] Although formally not belonging to Russian government agencies, non-military forces can be deployed to act in support of Russia's aims, thus being a means to implement a measure. Somewhat counter-intuitively, SF units are here seen as a non-military force. Even though they are formally part of the Armed Forces, both Gerasimov's speech and the 2014 Military Doctrine clearly link the *use* of SF to non-military measures. Furthermore, SF units are designed to act covertly and appear non-military, as will be discussed subsequently, and therefore need little or no adaptation.

In the following we outline six different kinds of armed forces, beginning with non-military forces. We assume that the Russian government controls all armed forces discussed here; the significant distinction is between non-military forces and military forces.

Non-military forces

Non-military forces include militias and SF. Militias are not necessarily coherent and trained units able to handle complex operations and heavier equipment; they use primarily small arms and light weapons. The Russian military intelligence service is likely to be able to organize militias in an area of operations.[26] By organizing or supporting militias, the Russian government is responsible for their existence and actions. There are two main categories of militias: local militias and arriving militias.

Local militias are armed groups in the area of operations that act in Russia's interests although their motivation may also be related to national or local issues. They can be formed on a territorial or ethnic basis. Alternatively, radical political movements, organized crime, or armies of warlords could, in theory, be used. Local militias can be beefed up with volunteers from Russia and elsewhere. In

[25]See G. H. Turbiville, Jr., *Logistic Support and Insurgency: Guerrilla Sustainment and Applied Lessons of Soviet Insurgent Warfare: Why It Should Still Be Studied*, Joint Special Operations University Press, Hurlburt Field, Florida, 2005, Report 05-4; and V. Gerasimov, 2013, op. cit.

[26]See M. Galeotti, 'Putin's Secret Weapon', *Foreign Policy*, 7 July 2014.

addition to small arms, their armaments could also include armored vehicles, grenade launchers, portable surface-to-air missiles and anti-tank missiles, and even some main battle tanks.[27]

The second category, arriving militias, may be based on popular or political movements in Russia such as Cossacks or nationalist parties. Russian authorities have previously tried to harness the Cossack movements to use them both abroad, as in Moldova in 2013, and for public order duties at home.[28] Militias may also be deployed from semi-autonomous parts of Russia. Marc Galeotti notes that the Interior Troops of the Chechen Republic, despite their formal-sounding name, are loyal to the president of the Chechen Republic rather than to Russia's government.[29] Arriving militias may also come from de facto Russia-controlled areas such as South Ossetia, Transnistria, or Abkhazia. Some arriving militias may be better trained and more able to handle heavier equipment, such as armored vehicles and mortars.

SF include highly trained special operations units and special reconnaissance units. The former can conduct advanced small-unit combat operations, such as anti-terrorism operations and hostage rescue. Their strength was estimated in 2014 to be around 1,000 servicemen.[30] Russian media have underlined that these units can operate abroad.[31] Other special operations units are the FSB's *Vympel* and *Alfa* anti-terrorism units.[32] At least Alfa has operated abroad, in Afghanistan in 1985.[33] The FSB Special Operations Forces, including Regional Special Operations Departments, have some 2,000 personnel.[34] The Ministry of Interior[35] has such small-group combat capabilities in the police forces' Special Rapid Response Detachments and Special Purpose Police Detachment as well as the Interior Troops' Special Purpose Detachments.[36] They number some 4,500.[37] Other ministries have similar niche capabilities[38] that are less important in this context and are not discussed further. In short, Russia has plenty of special operations units.

The special reconnaissance units from the regular MoD Armed Forces are a combat support function for reconnaissance behind enemy lines. Their

[27]'Vooruzhennyi konflikt na Ukraine: realii i perspektivy', RIA Novosti, 31 July 2014, http://ria.ru/infografika/20140731/1018256300.html (accessed 10 February 2015).

[28]M. Galeotti, *Russian Security and Paramilitary Forces since 1991*, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, 2013, pp. 54–55; P. Enerud, 'Can the Kremlin Control the Cossacks?', Swedish Defence Research Agency, RUFS Briefing No. 18, March 2013.

[29]M. Galeotti, *Russian Security and Paramilitary Forces*, pp. 32–33.

[30]A. Nikolsky, 'Russian "Spetsnaz" Forces — from Saboteurs to Court Bailiffs', *Moscow Defence Brief*, 1/2014 26.

[31]A. Sladkov, 'Novy rossiiskii spetsnaz dlia zagranitsy', *Rossiia 1 Vesti Nedeli*, 28 April 2013, http://vesti7.ru/archive/news?id=40432 (accessed 10 February 2015).

[32]A. Nikolsky, 2014, op. cit., pp. 26–28; and M. Galeotti, *Russian Security and Paramilitary Forces*, pp. 35–41.

[33]I. Atamanenko, 'Groza shpionov', *Nezavizimoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, 25/2014 (25–31 July 2014), pp. 12–13; and M. Galeotti, *Russian Security and Paramilitary Forces*, p. 35.

[34]A. Nikolsky, 'Russian "Spetsnaz" Forces … ', p. 26.

[35]In 2016, the Interior Troops and other special units were transferred from the Ministry of Interior to a new federal executive body, The Federal Service of the National Guard Troops.

[36]M. Galeotti, *Russian Security and Paramilitary Forces*, pp. 10–21; 29–32.

[37]A. Nikolsky, 'Russian "Spetsnaz" Forces … ', p. 26.

[38]M. Galeotti, *Russian Security and Paramilitary Forces*; A. Nikolsky, 'Russian "Spetsnaz" Forces … '

combat capabilities resemble those of the special operations units, but perhaps with less emphasis on minimum use of deadly force. They include *spetsnaz* units such as the Armed Forces' SF Brigades and the Airborne Troops' 45th SF Regiment.[39] We assess the latter to be an SF unit, although it belongs to the Airborne Forces, a military force (see the next section).

Another possible type of non-military force is PMCs. These can play a role similar to that of militias.[40] Due to the lack of a legal base and government support, the number of Russian PMCs has so far been small.[41] Their role in Russia's war against Ukraine appears to have been limited, and we therefore omit them from this analysis.

Military forces

The MoD is the primary supplier of troops for operations abroad. Other ministries and services with armed units may supply special capabilities, such as the Interior Troops or the Border Troops belonging to the FSB.[42] We assume that Russia's entire military organization is available for operations abroad. For this analysis, we divide military forces into three categories: elite troops, regular troops, and nuclear forces.

The elite troops' primary task is combat. Essentially, they are highly mobile infantry units with lighter equipment than Russia's regular infantry. They can also perform light infantry and reconnaissance roles. Elite units often have contract soldiers, resulting in higher levels of training and morale than in the regular infantry, which is still primarily manned by one-year conscripts. The elite troops include the MoD's 32,000-strong Airborne Forces[43] and the 8,000-strong Naval Infantry.[44] Higher-quality units from the Interior Troops such as the 10 Special Designation Brigades, 4,400 soldiers in each, and one Independent Special Purpose Division numbering some 11,000[45] are also included in this category. Russia's elite troops nominally number up to some 95,000 men.

The second category is regular troops, the bulk of the MoD Armed Forces and Interior Troops. The latter number some 140,000 soldiers,[46] and their

[39]A. Nikolsky, 'The Olympic Reserve: Why Russia has Created Special Operations Command', *Moscow Defence Brief*, 4/2013, p. 22.

[40]The 2014 Military Doctrine (Article 15z); V. Gerasimov, 2013, op. cit.

[41]I. P. Konovalov & O. V. Valetskii, *Evoliutsiia chastnykh voennykh kompanii* Tsentr Strategicheskoi Koniuktury, Pushkino, 2013, pp. 95–102.

[42]For an overview, see M. Galeotti, *Russian Security and Paramilitary Forces*.

[43]J. Hedenskog & C. Vendil-Pallin (eds.), *Russian Military Capability in a Ten-Year Perspective 2013*, Swedish Defence Research Agency, Stockholm, 2013, p. 30; and Ministry of Defence, 'V VDV stalo na tri desantno-shturmovykh brigad bolshe', 21 October 2013, http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=11859469@egNews (accessed 10 February 2015).

[44]K. Åtland, *Russlands amfibiske evne mot 2020 — kapasiteter og operasjonskonsept*, Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, Oslo, 2013, p. 7.

[45]M. Galeotti, *Russian Security and Paramilitary Forces*, pp. 24–29.

[46]Ibid., p. 22.

main mission is domestic security. The MoD Armed Forces are primarily tasked with external security threats and are equipped and trained for regular warfare. In 2013, the regular troops included the four fleets and a flotilla of the Russian Navy; the Air Force's fixed-wing aircraft, attack helicopter, and air defense units; as well as some 35 motor rifle brigades; four tank brigades; and some 20 artillery and missile units and support units in the Ground Forces.[47] Finally, the third category, the nuclear forces, also belongs to the Armed Forces. They include air, sea, and ground units in the strategic nuclear triad as well as in sub-strategic nuclear-capable units. These high-priority units are well trained. The strategic forces number some 80,000 men.[48]

Distinguishing characteristics of the different forces

Having identified six categories of forces, we will elaborate on the significant differences between them regarding fighting power and suitability for non-military measures. We have chosen to characterize them according to five aspects: manpower, weaponry, military professionalism, non-military appearance, and consistency with the concept of civil war. The first three aspects pertain to fighting power. Available manpower and type of weaponry represent mass and lethality, two traditional elements of military power.[49] Military professionalism consists of several decisive non-physical elements, such as the degree of organization and morale as well as tactics and training.[50]

The other two aspects pertain to appearance. When distinguishing conceptually between military and non-military, the way an armed force appears is arguably as important as its fighting power for carrying out non-military measures. First, a non-military appearance allows a force to carry out a non-military measure. Its ability to appear as a militia-type force depends on its manpower, weaponry, and professionalism. A larger force with heavy armaments and standardized tactics is more easily recognized as military. A smaller unit with lighter and less conspicuous weapons and a high degree of professionalism may more easily look like a militia. Arguably, the degree to which a military force may appear non-military is inversely related to its fighting power. Militias and SF usually appear as non-military forces by virtue of their limited fighting power.

Second, an armed force's consistency with civil war matters. The two selected non-military measures are inherently domestic. If a state acknowledges having

[47]J. Hedenskog & C. Vendil-Pallin, 2013, op. cit., pp. 24–31.

[48]Ibid., pp. 32–37.

[49]S. Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ/ Oxford, 2004, pp. 13–17.

[50]M. van Creveld, *Fighting Power: German and U.S. Army Performance, 1939–1945*, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, 1982; S. Biddle, 2004, op. cit.

deployed armed force for fighting or to accomplish regime change in another state, this amounts to the military measure *waging of combat operations* as discussed previously. Therefore, upholding an impression of a civil, rather than interstate, war is important, as it makes it possible to conceal the deployment of forces that are less consistent with civil war. Local militias engaged in fighting are consistent with civil war. Arriving militias are somewhat consistent with civil war, especially if they are politically, ethnically, or otherwise close to local groups in the area of operation. The overt participation of Russian military forces is inconsistent with civil war.

Table 2 summarizes the varying characteristics of the six kinds of armed forces. Only elite and regular troops together with nuclear forces provide significant fighting power. This is, however, difficult to combine with a non-military appearance and is inconsistent with civil war. These forces are the best suited to carry out the military measures in Figure 2. Other forces have significantly less fighting power. SF units provide high military professionalism but little manpower and mainly light weaponry. Militias may have more manpower, but they often lack skills and heavier weapons.

SF and militias are better suited for carrying out non-military measures. Their high level of non-military appearance may compensate for their limited fighting power when choosing forces to carry out non-military measures. Deploying local and arriving militias provides manpower. Both types are consistent with civil war, especially the local militias. The overt participation of all other forces is not.

Different kinds of forces can compensate for each other's weaknesses when deployed together. The higher fighting power of military forces may be used for intimidation, diversion, or combat support for non-military forces. The clear non-military appearance and civil war consistency of militias may make it possible to disguise some military forces' participation in fighting. Militias

Table 2. Characteristics of Russia's Available Armed Forces: Assessed Fighting Power and Appearance.

Aspects Armed forces		Fighting power			Appearance	
		Available manpower	Type of weaponry	Level of military professionalism	Non-military appearance	Civil war consistency
Non-military	Local militias	1,000s	Light	Low	High	High
	Arriving militias	1,000s	Light–medium	Low–medium	High	Medium
	SF	1,000s	Light	High	High	No
Military	Elite troops	10,000s	Medium	High	Medium*	No
	Regular troops	100,000s	Heavy	Medium	Low	No
	Nuclear forces	10,000s	Very heavy	High	Low	No

*In light infantry role, not so if deployed by air, in bigger numbers or with heavier equipment.

may be a quantitative complement to military forces — for example, guard duties or manning checkpoints — which frees military forces for more qualified tasks when carrying out military measures. We will now turn to how Russia used armed force to carry out military and non-military measures in Ukraine in 2014.

Russia's use of armed force in Ukraine

What armed forces did Russia deploy to carry out which measures in Ukraine? In this section, we first examine the Crimea operation and then the Donbas operation. The analysis revolves around the aforementioned measures and forces. The account is therefore not chronological.

Russian use of armed force in Crimea

As Kiev's Maidan protests continued in early 2014, Russia fomented opposition movements in Crimea. The leader of Russia's Rodina Party and Duma member Alexei Zhuralev went to Crimea in early February to create the 'Slavic Anti-Fascist Front'.[51] Armed men gradually emerged to support demonstrations and protest movements in Crimea,[52] thus engaging in the non-military measure *actions of opposition forces* to take control over Crimea. Arriving militias, such as Cossacks from Russia's Kuban region, emerged in support of anti-Kiev actions in Crimea around 25 February.[53]

Militias were unable to bring about *change of military-political leadership*, i.e., topple Ukrainian political and military power in Crimea. Russian SF played the decisive parts in changing the political leadership. SF units, such as the 45th Independent SF Regiment of the Airborne Forces near Moscow and parts of the 16th and 3rd SF brigades in Tambov and Tolyatti respectively began deployment to Crimea around 22 February.[54] On 27 February, armed masked men stormed Crimea's parliament. A video clip shows a Russian SF unit taking charge of the building, according to the Russian military expert Alexey Nikolsky.[55] The following day pro-Russian Sergei Aksyonov, previously not a key politician, emerged as Crimea's leader, nominally controlling thousands of troops.[56]

[51]'Aleksei Zhuravlev: Ukrainu nuzhno osvobodit ot fashizma i razgula rusofobii', Rodina Party Website, 5 February 2014, http://rodina.ru/novosti/aleksej-zhuravlyov-ukrainu-nuzhno-osvobodit-ot-fashizma-i-razgula-rusofobii (accessed 10 February 2015).

[52]C. Howard & R. Pukhov, 2014, op. cit., pp. 161–162.

[53]Ibid., p. 162.

[54]Ibid., p. 160.

[55]Ibid., pp. 129–30.

[56]M. Laurinavicius, 'Aggression in Ukraine: What Consequences Await Its Architects?', *The Lithuania Tribune*, 26 August 2014, http://en.delfi.lt/central-eastern-europe/aggression-in-ukraine-what-consequences-await-its-architects.d?id=65650128 (accessed 30 September 2014).

SF were also deployed to disrupt the Ukrainian military command on Crimea. According to Nikolsky, Russian SF units 'took part in seizing the protected command station of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in Crimea, the HQ of the Ukrainian Navy in Sevastopol, and the HQ of the 204th Tactical Aviation Brigade of the Ukrainian Air Force in Belbek'.[57] On 2 March armed uniformed men took over the headquarters of the Ukrainian Border Guards' Service and destroyed computers and means of communication. The same day Russian SF soldiers tried to forcefully enter a training facility of the Ukrainian Navy in Sevastopol.[58] In our analysis, this was a non-military force, SF, carrying out a non-military measure. However, non-military forces were insufficient to change the military leadership.

Russian elite troops were also deployed to Crimea, blocking Ukrainian military bases to undermine Kiev's control over its armed forces. Apart from the Crimea-based 810th Naval Infantry Brigade, units from the Airborne Forces' 31st Air Assault Brigade in Ulyanovsk and the 7th Air Assault division in Novorossiisk followed shortly after the SF units.[59] The elite troops took pains to appear non-military, i.e., local, anonymous, or at least not clearly deployed by the Russian Federation. This was achieved by masking faces and removing unit insignia on uniforms, equipment, and vehicles.[60] It is hard to see an alternative explanation for this apart from the intention to appear non-military. In our analysis, a military force here carried out a non-military measure.

Russian military forces also carried out military measures. On 26 February, Russia's MoD announced a large surprise inspection exercise for conventional forces in the Western and Central MDs involving 150,000 servicemen.[61] It served to concentrate forces near the area of operation, i.e., carrying out the measure *strategic deployment*, giving Russia a potential to dominate escalation. In addition, regular troops, such as the Navy and Air Force, supported the elite troops with transport to Russian bases on Crimea.[62] The surprise inspection exercise was probably also aimed at deterring Ukraine from responding to actions on Crimea and NATO from interfering, thus being a part of *strategic deterrence*. Furthermore, Russia may also have used its nuclear forces to carry out

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[57]C. Howard & R. Pukhov, 2014, op. cit., p. 130.

[58]'Voskresenie v Krymu: uchod rossiiskogo spetsnaza iz Sevastopolia, zachvat shtaba pogranvoisk i vozbuzhdenie ugolovnogo dela protiv eks-komanduiuschego VMS', *Tut News Portal*, 2 March 2014, http://news.tut.by/world/388957.html (accessed 10 February 2015).

[59]R. McDermott, 2015, op. cit., p. 16.

[60]C. Howard & R. Pukhov, 2014, op. cit., p. 165.

[61]'Vnezapnaia proverka boegotovnsti voisk Zapadnogo i Tsentralnogo voennykh okrugov 26 fevralia 2014 g.', Ministry of Defence, 26 February 2014, http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=11905868@egNews (accessed 11 February 2015).

[62]C. Howard & R. Pukhov, 2014, op. cit., pp. 162–164.

Table 3. Use of Armed Forces to Carry out Measures in the Crimea Operation.

	Non-military forces	Military forces
Types of armed force Measures	SF; local militias; arriving militias	Elite troops; regular troops; nuclear forces
Actions of opposition forces	**Local & arriving**: control public space, in support of SF and elite troops	*No observed deployments*
Change of military-political leadership	**SF**: seize key military and political objects **Local & arriving**: underpin political change of leadership	**Elite**: block Ukrainian military bases
Strategic deterrence	*No observed deployments*	**Elite & regular (nuclear)**: deter Ukrainian and outside intervention through posture and exercises
Strategic deployment	*No observed deployments*	**Elite**: forward deployment to Crimea **Elite & Regular troops**: large scale forward deployment near Ukraine
Waging of combat operations	*No observed deployments*	*No observed deployments*
Non-conforming deployments	*No observed deployments*	**Regular**: denied deployment of attack helicopters, armoured units, artillery and missiles on Crimea without adaptation

Note. All use of military forces intentionally designed to appear non-military counts towards the non-military measure *actions of opposition forces*.

this measure. According to a later statement, President Putin was prepared to deter outside interference by putting the nuclear forces on alert.[63]

Some of the Russian deployments of regular troops on Crimea are, however, not compatible with the measures selected. On 28 February Russian attack helicopters were filmed flying across the border near Kerch toward Crimea.[64] By mid-March, Russia had also deployed at least one armored unit as well as artillery and coastal and air defense missiles units.[65] The Russian-Ukrainian agreement about the basing of Russia's Black Sea Fleet did not allow such units on Crimea. The units were arguably deployed for fighting, and no significant adaptations were made to their appearance. Russia nevertheless flatly denied the deployment for weeks, so that they cannot be regarded as *waging of combat operations* or *actions of opposition forces* but rather as non-conforming forces.

Russia illegally annexed Crimea on 18 March 2014. From a Russian point of view, the incorporation of Crimea meant that any Russian armed force deployed there from that day would constitute a *strategic deployment* measure. Table 3 summarizes Russia's use of armed force in Crimea to carry out our selected measures.

[63]Vladimir Putin in a TV documentary on the annexation of Crimea aired on 15 March 2015 by the state-owned TV channel *Rossiia 1*.
[64]C. Howard & R. Pukhov, 2014, op. cit., p. 165.
[65]Ibid., pp. 171–172, 165–166, 169.

Russian use of armed force in Donbas

Russia was already fanning the unease in Donbas in February 2014.[66] It had intelligence operatives in Donbas[67] who could help organizing militias needed for *actions of opposition forces* to challenge the Ukrainian government's control. Local militias of armed men appeared from demonstrations and protest movements as political tension in Kiev rose.[68] The militias challenged Ukrainian control over towns and settlements.[69] As in Crimea, their cohesion varied, and any local connection of the armed men was questionable because their faces were covered.

In contrast to Crimea, Ukrainian government and volunteer units fought back in Donbas. This prompted Russia to reinforce the militias, for example, by enabling volunteers to arrive from Russia.[70] As in Crimea, Russia also deployed arriving militias — for example, Cossacks.[71] One militia was reportedly recruited in South Ossetia to fight in Donbas.[72] In July 2014, an estimated 30 percent of the pro-Russian fighters in Donbas were Russian citizens.[73] The disparate pro-Russian militias seemed to have problems with discipline and command and control.[74] The deployment in late May of the Chechen *Vostok* (East) battalion in armored vehicles was probably a sign that Moscow was trying to discipline the pro-Russian forces.[75] It is highly unlikely that militias could have been set up in Russia or on Russian-controlled territories and been allowed to cross the Russian border into Ukraine without Russian government endorsement. SF may have participated in the fighting, but there has so far been no substantial evidence of this. Russia thus used militias to carry out *actions of opposition forces*. Russia also deployed military forces to this end.

[66]V. Socor, 'Moscow Encourages Centrifugal Forces in South-Eastern Ukraine', *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 11/36 (25 February 2014), http://www.jamestown.org/?id=70 (accessed 11 February 2015).

[67]N. Mitrokhin, 2015, op. cit., pp. 223, 227.

[68]'Aktsii protesta na vostoke Ukrainy', *RIA Novosti*, 29 May 2014, http://ria.ru/trend/protesty_East_Ukraine_07042014/ (accessed 11 February 2014).

[69]N. Mitrokhin, 2015, op. cit., pp. 221–230.

[70]E. Kostyuchenko, 'Armiia i dobrovoltsy', *Novaia Gazeta*, 3 September 2014, http://www.novayagazeta.ru/society/65096.html (accessed 5 September 2014).

[71]'Lidery Ukrainskikh opolchentsev vychislili donskikh kazakov-predatelei, planirovavshikh sdat Lugansk natsgvardii', *Bloknot-Rostov*, 10 June 2014, http://bloknot-rostov.ru/news/more/lidery-ukrainskih-opolchencev-zapodozrila-donskih-kazakov-pod-predvoditelstvom-atamana-kozicyna-v-predatelstve-20140610 (accessed 11 February 2015); and N. Mitrokhin, 2015, op. cit., p. 230.

[72]'Dobrovoltsy iz luzhnoi Ossetii namereny pomoch iugo-vostoku Ukrainy', *RIA Novosti*, 4 May 2014 (accessed 11 February 2015).

[73]R. Akhmirova, 'Kto iz Rossii voiuet protiv Kieva ha iugo-vostoke Ukrainy', *Sobessednik.ru*, http://sobesednik.ru/rassledovanie/20140716-kto-iz-rossii-i-pochemu-voyuet-protiv-kieva-na-yugo-vostoke (accessed 11 February 2015).

[74]'Something Has to Give', *The Economist*, 18 May 2014, http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2014/05/deadlock-ukraine; 'Ratchet up, Ratchet down', *The Economist*, 21 June 2014, http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21604563-violence-eastern-ukraine-may-abate-while-russian-meddling-could-crank-it-up (both accessed 11 February 2015).

[75]M. Galeotti, 'Is Putin Trying To Regain Control in Eastern Ukraine?', *In Moscow's Shadows Blog*, 27 May 2014, http://inmoscowsshadows.wordpress.com/2014/05/27/is-putin-trying-to-regain-control-in-eastern-ukraine/?blogsub=pending#blog_subscription-3 (accessed 9 June 2014).

Russian regular and elite troops initially supported the militias fighting in Donbas with training as well as military equipment and individuals with skills to handle it.[76] We consider this an act of fighting, since it helped the militias' fighting efforts. Training of volunteers and militias took place covertly in Donbas and in separately established training camps and exercise areas in Russia.[77] These actions deviate from the forces' known organization and SOPs, indicating an adaptation to carry out *actions of opposition forces*, rather than the military measure *waging of combat operations*. The Armed Forces have many bases and training facilities in western Russia. There is no apparent need to establish additional training camps — apart from keeping activity covert. Handing over military equipment to irregular forces is not a known SOP for Russian military forces, based on what is known about training and exercise patterns. A notorious case of Russian military equipment being supplied to Donbas is the Buk air defense missile and launcher that downed the Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 on 17 July 2014.[78]

By late July 2014 it was clear that the Russian-orchestrated uprising in Donbas was faltering. In August, Russia deployed military forces in Donbas for fighting. The units deployed included battalion tactical groups from both elite troops, such as the 7th, 76th, 98th, and 106th Airborne Divisions, and regular troops, such as the 17th, 18th, 21st, and 33rd Motor Rifle Brigades.[79] Evidence of Russian military forces fighting in Donbas was abundant: reports about killed and wounded soldiers, interrogations with Russian soldiers captured in Ukraine, and satellite images of Russian military hardware in Ukraine.[80]

Two observations indicate that Russian military forces' characteristics had been adapted. First, known SOPs were arguably not followed. Before the war in Ukraine, the Armed Forces had trained to fight large joint inter-service operations with air and sea forces supporting a ground force operation.[81] In

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[76]E. Kostyuchenko, 2014, op. cit.; R. Akhmirova, 2014, op. cit.; N. Mitrokhin, 2015, op. cit., p. 233; and M. Czuperski, J. Herbst, E. Higgins, A. Polyakova, and D. Wilson, *Hiding in Plain Sight — Putin's War in Ukraine*, Atlantic Council, May 2015, pp. 23–24.

[77]M. Czuperski et al., 2015, op. cit., pp. 23–24; N. Mitrokhin, 2015, op. cit., p. 236; C. Weaver, 'Café Encounter Exposes Reality of Russian Soldiers in Ukraine', *Financial Times*, 22 October 2014, http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/76bac354-59c2-11e4-9787-00144feab7de.html#axzz3z6DxryYL (accessed 3 February 2016).

[78]Dutch Safety Board, *Crash of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17*, 13 October 2015; Bellingcat, *MH17 — The Open Source Evidence*, 8 October 2015, https://www.bellingcat.com/news/uk-and-europe/2015/10/08/mh17-the-open-source-evidence/ (accessed 4 February 2015).

[79]I. Sutyagin, 2015, op. cit., p. 2.

[80]J. Miller, P. Vaux, C. A. Fitzpatrick & M. Wiess, *An Invasion by Any Other Name*, Institute of Modern Russia, New York, 2015; M. Czuperski et al., 2015, op. cit.; J. Kitchener, 'Kiev, Moscow Spar over Captured Russian Soldiers', Reuters, 26 August 2014, http://www.reuters.com/video/2014/08/26/kiev-moscow-spar-over-captured-russian-s?videoId=340773556 (accessed 11 February 2015); and 'New Satellite Imagery Exposes Russian Combat Troops Inside Ukraine', *NATO*, 28 August 2014, http://aco.nato.int/new-satellite-imagery-exposes-russian-combat-troops-inside-ukraine.aspx#prettyPhoto/1/ (accessed 1 February 2015).

[81]J. Norberg, *Training to Fight — Russia's Major Military Exercises 2011–2014*, Swedish Defence Research Agency, Stockholm, 2015.

Donbas, Russia used air support only very sparsely for its sizeable ground forces operation. Arguably, this impeded the suppression of opposing forces and hampered operations. Lack of ground-attack aircraft and attack helicopters was hardly the reason. In 2014, Russia had two regiments and 10 squadrons of ground-attack aircraft, and one brigade and eight squadrons of attack helicopters.[82] In this case, abstaining from air support for ground operations indicates an effort to appear non-military.

Second, equipment was anonymized by removing unit markings and number plates on vehicles.[83] Unit markings on vehicles usually help soldiers to identify units in the fog of combat. Removing markings makes such identification harder and risks increasing confusion, especially when the adversary has largely the same types of equipment. The only plausible explanation for the removal of markings on vehicles is that it was an intentional effort to appear non-military. Both the deviation from known SOPs and the removal of unit markings indicate that Russia deployed military forces to carry out the non-military measure *actions of opposition forces.*

April 2014 saw raids on town halls and police stations by armed men in Donbas,[84] indicating a *change of military-political leadership* measure. SF units provided militarily capable manpower to the uprising to handle some of these operations.[85] Militias propped up the new leaders; for example, at the 11 May referendum the self-proclaimed people's mayor of Slaviansk, Vyacheslav Ponomarev, said that security at polling stations was backed by policemen, militiamen, and Cossacks.[86]

Military measures for strategic deterrence with both conventional and nuclear forces continued throughout Russia's military operations in Ukraine. Reportedly, up to 90,000 servicemen from Russian elite and regular units were deployed to the east and north of Ukraine in the spring of 2014.[87] In March 2015, commander-in-chief President Putin ordered another large-scale surprise inspection starting in western Russia and involving some 80,000 servicemen and 12,000 vehicles, according to the Russian MoD.[88]

[82]IISS, *The Military Balance 2015*, Routledge, London, 2015, p. 190.

[83]K. Chkalova, 'Exclusive: Russia Masses Heavy Firepower on Border with Ukraine — Witness', *Reuters*, 27 May 2015, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-russia-military-idUSKBN0OC2K820150527 (accessed 1 February 2016).

[84]'Ukraine Crisis: Timeline', BBC, 9 September 2014, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26248275 (accessed 11 February 2015).

[85]N. Mitrokhin, 2015, op. cit., p. 227.

[86]'Donetsk Referendum To Be Held without Independent Observers', *Voice of Russia*, 10 May 2014, http://sputniknews.com/voiceofrussia/news/2014_05_10/Donetsk-referendum-to-be-held-without-independent-observers-8183/ (accessed 11 February 2014).

[87]I. Sutyagin, 2015, op. cit., p. 2; A. Croft and S. Karpukhin, 'Russia Sending Aid Convoy to Ukraine Despite Western Warnings of "Invasion Pretext"', Reuters, 12 August 2014, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-idUSKBN0GA0C620140812 (accessed 10 February 2015).

[88]Russian MoD, 'Natsionalny tsentr upravleniia oboronoi Rossii vpervye posetili bolee 100 inostrannykh voennykh attashe', 21 March 2015, http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12011147@egNews (accessed 4 February 2016).

Russia also used its nuclear forces to deter Western intervention. Russian heavy bombers stepped up their patrols over the Atlantic and on both sides of the Pacific Ocean, and an unprecedented number of nuclear-related snap inspections and exercises were initiated from March 2014.[89] These force deployments arguably deterred Ukraine from escalating the conflict and third parties from intervening. Furthermore, Russia deterred Ukraine and outside powers from acting over Crimea by deploying additional forces, primarily naval and coastal and air defense units, on the peninsula after the illegal annexation.[90] The aforementioned deployment of elite and regular troops close to Ukraine also corresponds to the military measure *strategic deployment*, undertaken in order to be able to escalate operations in Ukraine. This also includes the additional forces deployed to Crimea.

From early summer 2014, regular troops also supported rebel forces with artillery fire across the border into Ukraine.[91] Firing artillery shells into

Table 4. Use of Armed Forces to Carry out Measures in the Donbas Operation.

	Non-military forces	Military forces
Types of armed force Measures	SF; local militias; arriving militias	Elite troops; regular troops; nuclear forces
Actions of opposition forces	**Local & arriving**: challenge Ukrainian authority locally; fight Ukrainian forces	**Elite & regular**: supplying training and equipment to militias; fighting (from August 2014)
Change of military-political leadership	**Local & arriving**: underpin change of political leadership; raids on town halls and police stations; **SF**: seize key objects	*No observed deployments*
Strategic deterrence	*No observed deployments*	**Elite, regular & nuclear**: deter Ukrainian escalation and outside intervention through posture and exercises
Strategic deployment (towards Donbas)	*No observed deployments*	**Elite & regular**: large-scale forward deployment near Ukraine, including on Crimea
Waging of combat operations	*No observed deployments*	*No observed deployments*
Non-conforming deployments	*No observed deployments*	**Regular**: Denied artillery support from Russian territory to militias (before August 2014); denied deployment in Donbas of artillery and ground-based air defence systems unique to Russia (after August 2014)

Note. All use of military forces intentionally designed to appear non-military counts toward the non-military measure *actions of opposition forces*.

[89]J. Durkalec, *Nuclear Backed 'Little Green Men': Nuclear Messaging in the Ukraine Crisis*, Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw, 2015, pp. 9–14; D. Adamsky, 2015, op. cit., p. 38.

[90]'Rossiiskaia armiia v Krymu gos spustia: silnaia i sovremennaia', *RIA Novosti*, 13 March 2015, http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20150313/1052345063.html (accessed 3 February 2016).

[91]'Vsledstvie rossiiskikh obstrelov pogibli 27 ukrainskikh voennykh', *Ukrainskaia Pravda*, 29 July 2014, http://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2014/07/29/7033360/ (accessed 11 February 2015); and 'Origin of Artillery Attacks on Ukrainian Military Positions in Eastern Ukraine Between 14 July 2014 and 8 August 2014', Bellingcat, 17 February 2015, https://www.bellingcat.com/news/uk-and-europe/2015/02/17/origin-of-artillery-attacks/ (accessed 9 January 2016).

another country is obviously a case of fighting. In contrast to the other cases of fighting discussed previously, there are no observations of adaptations to the artillery units' characteristics. However, Russia still denied firing artillery rounds into Ukrainian territory.[92] Furthermore, in 2015 military equipment that only Russia plausibly could have deployed appeared in Ukraine, such as the TOS-1 multiple-rocket launch system and the Pantsir-S1 air defense system,[93] arguably for fighting. Deploying such unique and conspicuous equipment suggests that adaptation of characteristics did not take place, but Russian officials have consistently denied deploying armed forces in Donbas. In our analysis, this constitutes neither *waging of combat operations* nor *actions of opposition forces* and has to be regarded as a non-conforming deployment of armed force. Table 4 summarizes Russia's use of armed force in Donbas to carry out the selected measures.

Results

The analysis of Russia's use of armed force toward Ukraine in 2014 and 2015 does not contradict our hypothesis that the actual use largely conforms to a conceptual division into military and non-military measures as well as forces. Military forces alone were deployed to carry out military measures, while non-military forces only carried out non-military measures.

Crucially, the analysis shows that Russia covertly deployed military forces in significant numbers to carry out the non-military measures associated with civil war. On Crimea, anonymized elite troops were deployed to block Ukrainian military bases, contributing to the changing of the military leadership on the peninsula. In Donbas, both elite and regular troops were deployed to carry out *actions of opposition forces*, by supplying the militias with equipment and training in specially erected camps as well as by directly fighting Ukrainian forces. A large number of units took part, but without unit markings and the usual combat air support. We have found no plausible explanation for these adaptations except to make them appear as non-military forces.

Nevertheless, three of the 19 kinds of deployments observed and analyzed did not conform to our hypothesis. Both on Crimea and in Donbas, Russia deployed regular troops for fighting without adapting their appearance but still denied having deployed them. At least two of the deployments can be said to have had a significant impact on the operations. On Crimea, the deployment of attack helicopters as well as armored and artillery units

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[92]Bellingcat, Ibid.

[93]OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, Daily Report, 28 September 2015, http://www.osce.org/ukraine-smm/186276 (accessed 4 February 2016); the Bellingcat Vehicles Tracking Project website gave three cases of sightings of the Pantsir-S1 in Ukraine, https://bellingcat-vehicles.silk.co/page/Filterable-list-of-equipment-sightings (accessed 4 February 2016). The Pantsir-S1 has been exported, but not to other European countries and not to Ukraine.

substantially reinforced the fighting power of the lightly armed anonymized elite troops, facilitating the measure *change of military-political leadership*. The Russian cross-border shelling into Donbas visibly aided the militias, slowing the Ukrainian forces' advance. It is more difficult to assign military significance to the occasional deployment of conspicuous artillery and air defense systems in Donbas after August 2014, as anonymized Russian military forces were already there in large numbers by then.

Our analytical framework, based on Russian concepts, has enabled us to identify the non-conforming deployments. It has also shown the extent to which Russia has deployed military forces in Ukraine to carry out non-military measures and the division of labor between them and non-military forces in doing so. One can note that if SF had been considered as the military force they nominally are, the results would not have been fundamentally different. SF actions would have been regarded as covert military deployments, so the dependence on military forces would have been even more evident. SF were, however, only observed being deployed for non-military measures. The framework has also revealed the complementary roles of different armed forces; no measure was carried out by less than two kinds of forces.

All in all, we consider that Russia's actual use of armed force in Ukraine to a large degree conforms to the conceptual distinctions, traced in Russian official statements and documents, between military and non-military measures in interstate conflicts and between military and non-military forces. Despite the non-conforming deployments, our analytical framework facilitates a coherent and comprehensible analysis of Russia's use of armed force.

Discussion

To conclude, we have shown that Russia's current approach to the use of armed force in interstate conflict allows for an extensive use of armed force without engaging in overt combat operations. Judging by authoritative Russian statements and actions in its war toward Ukraine, there seems to be wide scope for fighting with covert military troops and non-military forces as well as for open intimidation using military forces. A nominally non-military measure, such as *actions of opposition forces*, can thus be very military in its execution and amount to all-arms combat operations, albeit denied and in disguise.

Our analytical framework indicates that in order to effectively wield armed force covertly, a wide array of forces and the ability to coordinate them is required. Such a comprehensive approach is visible both in conceptualizations and in the actual deployment of forces in Ukraine, where different kinds of military and non-military forces were combined. This approach also requires a credible escalation dominance, relying on adversaries being

unwilling or unable to call the bluff and face full war. As pointed out by Adamsky and Durkalec, nuclear weapons play an important role here.[94]

With the current Russian approach to the use of force, the distinction between military and non-military, or between interstate and civil war, is largely a matter of appearance. General Gerasimov opened his address to the Academy of Military Sciences by noting that the boundary between war and peace had become blurred. By its use of armed force toward Ukraine in 2014 and 2015, Russia has acted accordingly and thereby contributed to blurring that boundary. This is logical if the non-military measures are regarded as the initial stages of an interstate war, as Gerasimov's model implies and Chekinov and Bogdanov assert.[95]

The Russian approach to the use of force has implications regarding strategy for nations that might face Russia in a conflict. First, the emphasis on non-military measures and covert armed forces makes it difficult for an adversary to draw on its military power and on international law. As Ven Bruusgaard points out, 'planning for contingencies involving Russia should take account not only of military capabilities, but of the entire range of tools Russia might employ.'[96] In the West, there is a reluctance to label an armed conflict as war, short of military forces being overtly deployed for fighting. The current Russian approach seems to follow this distinction, favoring covert deployments. The ambiguity clearly makes the application of NATO's mutual defense guarantees more difficult.

Second, non-military forces — in particular local militias — are necessary for carrying out non-military measures associated with civil war but arguably not sufficient. The fighting power of military forces was required in both Crimea and Donbas. Together with the view of non-military measures as merely a first phase in a conflict, this implies that once Russia initiates non-military measures requiring armed force, the Russian Armed Forces are very likely to get involved.

Using Russian concepts to analyze Russian actions helped dispel analytical challenges caused by Moscow's consistent denials.[97] As our analysis suggests, Russian forces were deployed in Ukraine in accordance with Russian conceptualizations of the use of armed force. Employing armed force to carry out military and non-military measures is a key component of war, according to current Russian military thinking. Consequently, more efforts at understanding Russian concepts are needed, particularly non-military measures and forces.[98]

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[94]D. Adamsky, 2015, op. cit.
[95]S. G. Chekinov & S. A. Bogdanov, 2013, op. cit., pp. 17–18.
[96]K. Ven Bruusgaard, 2014, op. cit., p. 90.
[97]See, e.g., L. Freedman, *Ukraine and the Art of Exhaustion*, p. 85.
[98]This has also been pointed out by T. Thomas, 2015, op. cit., p. 460.

Acknowledgments

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