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The Russian Threat to the Baltic States: The Problems of Shaping Local Defense Mechanisms

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the responses made by the Baltic States to the threat they face from Russian hybrid warfare. It looks first at the nature of this threat and at the many modes of warfare that are being employed by Russia, including, and in particular, information warfare. The article then goes on to examine the way in which this threat is viewed in the Baltic States and the debate over how it can best be countered. Raising defenses, though, as is made clear here, is not easy. Indeed, this article argues that the defenses that are being raised by the Baltic States will prove largely ineffective and possibly counterproductive.

Introduction

There has been much discussion recently about the phenomenon of ‘hybrid warfare’ and its use by Russia in its conflict with Ukraine. While, as a concept, this type of warfare has been the subject of analysis for some years in the military realm, it is only recently that it has come to be examined more widely in mainstream academic circles. And it is important that it is. Russia employed the tenets of hybrid warfare very successfully against Ukraine (albeit in an largely ad hoc form), and it may also be very successful in its employment of the very same tenets against the Baltic States — Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Moscow’s ongoing hybrid warfare campaign against these countries is aimed at destabilizing them, and it represents a significant threat to their democratic processes, if not, indeed, to their actual independence. And this is not a campaign, moreover, that will end any time soon. It constitutes — to use the parlance of those who have examined the nature of new Russian strategic thinking — a ‘permanent war’.

This article firstly examines the nature of the threat that Russian hybrid warfare poses to the Baltic States. It begins with a brief explanation of the concept of hybrid warfare and how it has been adopted, captured in doctrine, and then put into practice in both Russian civilian and military realms. There is then an examination of its use by Russia against the Baltic States. In

particular, there is a highlighting of Moscow's manipulation of these states' democratic processes as one of its main means of operationalizing the concept. Finally, this article examines the defenses raised by the Baltic States and questions their efficacy.

Hybrid warfare

It is not the aim here to describe in great detail the concept known as hybrid warfare. But some detail is necessary. Hybrid warfare is basically the result of what, in asymmetric warfare terms, is a natural action-reaction dynamic. The militaries of the United States and, to a degree, those of its NATO allies have become so superior in terms of technology, organization, professionalism, and sheer size that any potential *state* adversary, in order to survive on any battlefield — let alone prevail in a future conflict — is being forced to adopt novel means of warfighting.

It was probably the two Chinese colonels who, in their influential work from 1999, *Unrestricted Warfare*, first highlighted the new thinking that was subsequently to gather so much momentum.¹

War, they said, would become, in particular, 'omni-directional'; it would have more facets. Strategists and commanders would now be obliged to think of achieving effect using new means that were not limited to the *battlefield* but that had nevertheless become part of the *battlespace*. Political, economic, cultural, moral, and psychological factors all had now to be factored into the conduct of modern warfare.² In the West, the likes of Michael Evans of the Australian Defence Academy, writing in 2003, had also read the runes. War, he said, would become 'multi-modal' and 'multi-variant', with a mixture of elements that were military and nonmilitary, unconventional and conventional. Ideally, any state actor now operating in the offense would try and apply as many different modes and variants of warfare as possible and employ them concurrently. Through this aspect of concurrency, a powerful synergy would be created.³

With more 'directions', 'modes', and 'variants' being applied, warfare was thus going to become more complicated. This overall aspect of complication came to be captured most adroitly in this new notion of 'hybrid warfare'. It was a concept given significant shape and substance by Frank Hoffman, writing first in 2007. Hybrid warfare, he noted, was essentially a form of warfare characterized as having these numerous modes. Not only would there be 'the physical and the psychological, the kinetic and

¹Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, Pan American Publishing, New York, 2002.

²F. G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, Potomac Institute for Policy Studies 23 (2007).

³*Ibid.*, p. 27.

the non-kinetic', said Hoffman, but a variety of human actors would also be involved, both 'combatants and non-combatants'.⁴

A specific aim of any state practicing hybrid warfare is noted as being to create uncertainty and doubt in an opponent, to destroy that opponent's 'managerial capacity'.⁵ 'Destabilization' is a word often used. Such an opponent becomes unclear whether a state of war or peace exists; unclear about the nature, degree, and direction of the threat faced, and unclear about who is a combatant and who is not. The inculcation of such uncertainty and doubt, and aided in no small measure by psychological warfare measures, is designed not only to slow down an adversary's reaction times to the threats involved, but also to produce, in best case scenarios, a situation whereby the opponent simply loses the will to resist.⁶ A state of paralysis is induced. A 'war' is won and 'lost' without a shot being fired.⁷ This is perhaps the ultimate promise of the notion of hybrid warfare: It can be used to *persuade* enemies into defeat rather than *forcing* them into it. It could be argued that the advent of hybrid warfare means that 'war' is no longer, as Clausewitz had once averred, 'an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will'; it may now, in large part, have become merely an act of persuasion.⁸

Probably the most important mode of hybrid warfare is information warfare (IW). In any hybrid campaign, IW will be intensively utilized by an aggressor state at all the levels of war — strategic, operational, and tactical. It is information that will be the chief hybrid warfare tool in terms of attempts to achieve strategic objectives through persuasion and without recourse to the use of force.⁹

The Russian threat to the Baltic States

It is clear that Russia is targeting Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania — NATO member-states — as part of a hybrid warfare campaign. This is one of the results of the more aggressive stance Russia has recently come to adopt on the international stage. The reasons for this aggression have been widely discussed, and it is not the intention of this article to revisit them.¹⁰

⁴Ibid.

⁵D. Adamsky, 'Cross-Domain Coercion: The Current Russian Art of Strategy' Proliferation Papers 54, Institut Français des Relations Internationales, November 2015, p. 28. <http://www.ifri.org/en/publications/enotes/proliferation-papers/cross-domain-coercion-current-russian-art-strategy>.

⁶K. Saifetdinov, 'Informatsionnoe Protivoborstvo v Voennoi Sfere', *Voennaiia Mysl'* 7 (2014), p. 39.

⁷F. G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century*, p. 27.

⁸C. von Clausewitz, *On War*, translated by M. Howard and P. Paret, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1984, p. 80.

⁹F. G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century*, p. 8.

¹⁰See, for instance, A. Kuchins and I. Zevelev, 'Russian Foreign Policy: Continuity in Change', *The Washington Quarterly*, 35(1) (2012); D. E. McNabb, *Vladimir Putin and Russia's Imperial Revival*, CRS Press, Washington, DC, 2015.

In terms of the specific issue of threatening the Baltic States, the rationale raised for its actions is that Russia is concerned about its 'strategic depth'. The fact that NATO is now on its doorstep in the Baltics and a mere few hundred kilometers from St. Petersburg is deeply uncomfortable for the Kremlin. Washington is blamed. As one Russian source puts it, 'The US uses the organization [NATO] to continually push against [Russia's] strategic depth'.¹¹ Thus, from a Russian perspective, if Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania can be induced into a state of domestic turmoil, then they will be unable to act as effective NATO allies and thus can once more act as buffer states between core NATO members and Russian territory.¹² Moscow's goal, it seems, is not to militarily occupy these states — it is to destabilize them. The same logic has been apparent in eastern Ukraine. The consensus in that case is that Vladimir Putin has no desire to have Russian troops occupying the region. He merely wants to create instability: 'He wants the separatist Donbas to remain inside Ukraine, but as an open sore which Russia can prod when needed to control the country'.¹³

These rationales leading to a much more aggressive Kremlin foreign policy have led to the creation of what one analyst has labeled the 'Kremlin's new strategic vision'. As part of this, 'Russia anticipates a perpetual state of war with the values, politics, and ideology of Western civilization'.¹⁴ Janis Berzins of the Latvian Defence Academy sees a Russian move to create a 'state of permanent war'. Where such a 'state' becomes 'the natural condition in national life'.¹⁵ This 'war' would rely less on spectacular military endeavors to produce results and more on a long-term process of attrition over time. The Baltic States, it can thus be said, must be prepared for a very long-term campaign of attempted destabilization.¹⁶

This 'perpetual war' with the West, though, can obviously not be allowed to break out into open, traditional conflict. There would be any number of costs involved — diplomatic, economic, human — if Russia engaged militarily with the West. It is thus a 'perpetual war' that has to be both restrained and, of course, cost-effective. As Alexander Baunov of the Carnegie Moscow Centre puts it, 'The Kremlin want[s] to conduct this war on the cheap'.¹⁷ In light of such constraints, the ideas inherent in the notion of hybrid warfare

¹¹A. Korybko, 'NATO's Next Step: Regional Blocs and the New Iron Curtain', *Sputnik News*, 17 April 2015. <http://sputniknews.com/columnists/20150417/1021017441.html>.

¹²J. Berzins, *Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defence Policy*, National Defence Academy of Latvia Center for Security and Strategic Research 2 (2014), p. 1.

¹³'Russia and the West: Alternative Reality', *The Economist*, 30 May 2015. <http://www.economist.com/node/21652339/print>.

¹⁴M. J. Williams, 'Russia's New Doctrine: How the Kremlin Has Learned to Fight Tomorrow's War Today', Center for European Policy Analysis, 9 May 2014. <http://cepa.org/content/russia%E2%80%99s-new-doctrine-how-kremlin-has-learned-fight-tomorrow%E2%80%99s-war-today>.

¹⁵J. Berzins, *Russia's New Generation Warfare*, p. 5.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷'Russia and the West: Alternative Reality'.

present themselves as the perfect tools for the conduct of this type of 'permanent' conflict.¹⁸ Hybrid warfare's major subset, IW, is an especially alluring tool.

The prominence of information warfare

Long versed, because of Soviet propaganda output, in the skills necessary to engage in IW against opponents, it seemed a natural option for the Kremlin to concentrate on.¹⁹ For relatively little outlay there was the promise of tangible strategic rewards over the long term.²⁰ Leading Russian political and military figures came thus to focus on IW as the principle means of achieving both foreign policy and military objectives.²¹ As the Lithuanian ambassador to Washington, Zygimantas Pavilionis, acidly put it, 'Russia [is using] information in order to conquer countries without having to conquer them with military means'.²²

The actual targets and the approach to be adopted — in terms of operationalizing this Russian IW capability — were fleshed out in a book that was published in Moscow in three installments from 2005 to 2009. It was called the 'New Russian Doctrine'.²³ The former head of the Estonian Defence Forces, General Ants Laaneots, has analyzed this book. He notes that these volumes were distributed to all government agencies, pointing to the work's stature as an officially sanctioned document. In the third volume, written in 2009, a specific call was made to reestablish Moscow's influence in the post-Soviet states that had been lost, or was in the process of being lost, to the West (in the shape of NATO and the European Union). 'The restoration of Russia's influence', it intoned,

in the neighbouring countries requires a judicious, wide-ranging, and diverse information policy. Sporadic campaigns to protect the Russian language ... must be replaced by a continuous, well-advised and purposeful cultural expansion into neighbouring countries, particularly by means of mass media.

In regard to the populations of these 'neighbouring countries' (including, of course, Ukraine and the Baltics), the message was clear: 'Russia must constantly, actively and creatively convince ... *their people about the*

¹⁸See A. Lanoszka, 'Russian Hybrid Warfare and Extended Deterrence in Eastern Europe', *International Affairs*, 92(1) (2016), pp. 175–195.

¹⁹K. Kosachev, 'V Mire Slozhiilos Presumptsiia Vinovnosti Rossii', *Kommersant*, 3 September 2014. <http://kommersant.ru/doc/2014308>.

²⁰See especially, U. Franke, *War by Non-military Means: Understanding Russian Information Warfare*, Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), March 2015.

²¹T. L. Thomas, 'Russian Information Warfare Theory', in S. Blank and R. Weitz (eds.), *The Russian Military Today and Tomorrow: Essays in Memory of Sarah Fitzgerald*, US Department of the Army, Washington, DC, 2010, p. 265.

²²P. Gritenas, 'Zygimantas Pavilionis: Barbarians Already Inside the Country, Not Just at the Gates', *Lietuvos Rytas*, 4 December 2014, BBC Monitoring EU1EUPRTFS1FsuPolog.

²³General (ret.) A. Laaneots, 'Putin's Russia Doctrine', *Delfi*, 19 November 2014, BBC Monitoring EU1EUPRTFS1FsuPolog.

advantages of joining [Russia]'.²⁴ The use of such words as 'continuous' and 'constantly' highlights the core role that IW has in the 'perpetual war'.

There is a specific target in mind when it comes to IW campaigns conducted against the populations of Ukraine and the Baltic States. This target is what Russian law labels as the 'Compatriots Living Abroad'.²⁵ These 'compatriot Russians' are those who now live as minorities in the ex-Soviet states that border today's Russia.²⁶ They play an important role in Moscow's employment of hybrid warfare.

The calls for action presented in this 'New Russian Doctrine' were backed up by no little substance.²⁷ A huge investment was made in creating the infrastructure for this 'wide-ranging and diverse information policy'. 'Moscow', it has been noted, 'does not count money when it comes to propaganda tools'.²⁸ New television and radio stations and Internet sites were established that were specifically designed to 'convince' people immediately beyond its borders — whether compatriot Russians or indigenous populations — that 'joining' Russia was a positive choice.²⁹

In taking on their tasks, the Russian media outlets involved — and following in the Soviet tradition — have not been overly concerned with veracity. The goal of Moscow's untruths is not so much to present an alternative to the actual truth but rather to present a series of variants of the truth so that the target audience has no real idea what is actually true or untrue. As one American media insider colorfully expresses it,

Kremlin propaganda intentionally and willfully undermines public confidence through lies and propaganda. It questions — not to find answers — but to question the hell out of you so you tune out. It undermines confidence in the media, in democracy, in the EU, in NATO, in the West.³⁰

'Today's Kremlin', as another analyst puts it, 'is engaged in a nihilistic bid to sow confusion among the "enemies of Russia", based on the almost postmodern conviction that objective truth is irrelevant and the importance of facts has evaporated in favour of narratives'.³¹ This 'questioning' and the

²⁴Ibid. Stress added.

²⁵'Analysis of Russia's Information Campaign against Ukraine', NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence 3 (2014), p. 8.

²⁶V. Socor, 'Putin Inflates "Russian World" Identity, Claims Protection Rights', *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 11/120 (2014). http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42579&no_cache=1#.VVIXkvmqqko.

²⁷K. Giles, 'Russia's "New" Tools for Confronting the West', Chatham House Russia and Eurasia Programme (March 2016), p. 33.

²⁸S. Cerniauskas, 'Putin's Favourite is Focusing on Lithuania', *Delfi*, 11 November 2014, BBC Monitoring EU1EUPRTMD1Mediaog.

²⁹See P. Pomerantsev and M. Weiss, 'The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money', *The Interpreter*, 22 November 2014. <http://www.interpretermag.com/the-menace-of-unreality-how-the-kremlin-weaponizes-information-culture-and-money>.

³⁰Quote from Matthew Armstrong, a board member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), a US federal agency overseeing the Voice of America and similar radio stations. Quoted in C. McGreal, 'Vladimir Putin's "Misinformation" Offensive Prompts US to Deploy its Cold War Propaganda Tools', *The Guardian*, 25 April 2015, p. 5.

³¹W. Armstrong, 'Army of Spin: Following in Putin's Footsteps', *Foreign Policy*, 9 December 2014. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/12/09/army-of-spin-turkey-media-erdogan>.

‘sowing of confusion’ — the creation of uncertainty and doubt — is designed to contribute to what is seen as the required ‘destabilizing effect’ in regard to the likes of Ukraine and the Baltic States.³²

One of the more telling aspects of this Russian IW output is how it has come to be supported by the military arm of the state. The almost seamless integration of civilian and military information campaigns has been a distinct force-multiplier in the type of hybrid warfare Russia practices today. The development of such an integration has been no accident. There is now a new Russian military thinking that has itself come to favor the use, not just of IW, but also of a whole host of other hybrid warfare techniques as well.³³

The Russian military adopts hybrid warfare

The Russian military, seen during most of the post-Cold War era as moribund and legacy-orientated, began to undergo major reforms after the war with Georgia in 2008.³⁴ This was a war that highlighted its patent inefficiencies. Although there followed much investment in new equipment and in a professionalization process, in terms of changes the ‘most important [was] the evolution of Russian strategic thinking’.³⁵ This involved a moving on from the idea that mass and firepower represented the only routes to combat effectiveness. Russian senior officers, as with their Chinese counterparts, came to understand that attempts to overcome US military superiority would have to involve something more cerebral than just mere kinetic action. The Russian military thus took the concept of hybrid warfare and ran with it. The actual phrase ‘hybrid warfare’ (*gibridnaya voina*) is, however, only used in Russian military writings to describe the activities of the US and NATO against Russia itself.³⁶ Hybrid warfare as a concept, though, is, to all intents and purposes, the same as the Russian military’s newly advertised framework for the conduct of its ideal-case future war — namely ‘new-generation warfare’ (*voina novogo pokoleniia*) (NGW)³⁷ (sometimes referred to as ‘non-linear warfare’ (*nelineinaya voina*)³⁸).

³²S. Walker, ‘Latvia’s Ruling Coalition Keeps Russia-leaning Party at Bay in Election’, *The Guardian*, 5 October 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/05/latvia-ruling-coalition-russia-leaning-party-election>.

³³T. L. Thomas, ‘Russian Information Warfare Theory’.

³⁴See B. Renz, ‘Russian Military Capabilities Twenty after Years of Reform’, *Survival*, 56(3) (2014), pp. 61–84.

³⁵M. J. Williams, ‘Russia’s New Doctrine’.

³⁶See, for instance, A. Bartosh, ‘Gibridnye Voyny v Strategii SSHA i NATO’, *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, No. 36, 10 October 2014; O. Vlyadkin, ‘Voyna Upravliaemogo Khaosa’, *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, No. 38, 24 October 2014.

³⁷Colonel S. Chekinov and Lieutenant-General S. Bogdanov, ‘O Kharaktere i Soderzhanii Voyny Novogo Pokoleniia’, *Voennaya Mysl’*, No. 10 (2013).

³⁸The Chief of the Russian General Staff, Valerii Gerasimov, used this phrase ‘non-linear warfare’ in an article in February 2013. V. Gerasimov, ‘Tsennost’ Nauki v Predvidenii’, *Voenno-Promyshlennyy Kur’er*, 8/476 (2013), pp. 1–2. http://vpk-news.ru/sites/default/files/pdf/VPK_08_476.pdf. See also R. McDermott, ‘Myth and Reality — A Net Assessment of Russia’s “Hybrid Warfare” Strategy since the Start of 2014 (Part 1)’, *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 11/184, 17 October 2014.

Given the constraint that the Russian military could not risk open conflict with NATO, these new ideas about the conduct of warfare were geared to seeking ways around Western military strengths. Asymmetric thinking thus came to the fore.³⁹ The notion was being formed that for the Russian military 'conflict was not about destruction, it was about influence'. Military theorists thus began to emphasize that it was the case now that 'the main battlespace is in the mind'.⁴⁰ That is, as noted earlier, an adversary should, ideally, be persuaded into defeat rather than being forced into it. In Clausewitzian terms, the centre of gravity of a state being targeted by the Russian military had thus become *morale*: of its population; of its government, and of the personnel serving in its military. The principal *military* aim was now *also* seen to be to destabilize rather than to destroy an opponent. This would be done by generating an 'inner decay'⁴¹ that would, ideally, 'freez[e] [an adversary's] society from within'.⁴² As two prominent Russian military analysts put it, the goal of NGW is 'to depress the moral and psychological feelings of the civilian population and armed forces personnel to level where they give up resistance'.⁴³ Of especial importance is the need to target these 'armed forces personnel'. As these authors point out, NGW will involve 'attempt[s] to intimidate, deceive and bribe government and military officers, to blackmail them and induce top commanding officers ... to abandon fulfillment of their ... duties [and] to manipulate their behaviour'.⁴⁴

The Russian military would also, as part of this new thinking, apply its own forms of IW at the military-strategic, operational, and tactical levels.⁴⁵ IW is given far greater prominence in the Russian military canon than in that of those of Western counterparts. 'Information War' (*Informatsionnaya Voina*) is defined by this military as the:

confrontation between two or more states in the information space with the purpose of inflicting damage on information systems, processes and resources, critical and other structures, of undermining the political, economic and social systems, of creating a massive psychological manipulation of the population in order to destabilize the state and society, and to coerce the state to take decisions to the benefit of the opposing force.⁴⁶

³⁹See, for instance, Colonel S. Chekinov and Lieutenant-General S. Bogdanov, 'Vliianie Nepriamykh Deistvii na Kharakter Sovremennoi Voyny', *Voennaya Mysl'*, No. 6 (2011), pp. 3–13; Colonel S. Chekinov and Lieutenant-General S. Bogdanov, 'Assymetrichnye Deistviia po Obespecheniiu Voennoi Bezopastnosti Rossii', *Voennaya Mysl'*, No.3 (2010), pp. 13–22.

⁴⁰From a presentation that Peter Mattsson of the Swedish National Defence Academy gave at a conference in Riga: 'The Russian Armed Forces Adapted to new Operational Concepts in a Multipolar World', 19 February 2014. Quoted in J. Berzins, *Russia's New Generation Warfare*, p. 6.

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴²Comment of Zygimantis Pavilionis, Lithuanian ambassador to the US, in Gritenas, 'Zygimantas Pavilionis'.

⁴³S. Chekinov and S. Bogdanov, 'O Kharaktere'.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵M. Galleotti, 'The "Gerasimov Doctrine" and Russian Non-linear Warfare', *In Moscow's Shadows*, 6 July 2014. <https://inmoscowsshadows.wordpress.com/2014/07/06/the-gerasimov-doctrine-and-russian-non-linear-war>.

⁴⁶'Kontseptual'nye Vzgliady na Deiatel'nost' Vooruzhennykh Sil Rossiiskoi Federatsii v Informatsionnom Prostranstve', Russian Ministry of Defence (2011), p. 5. <http://www.pircenter.org/media/content/files/9/13480921870.pdf>.

Interestingly, when NATO itself comes to translate this Russian definition, the phrase ‘massive psychological manipulation of the population’ (*massirovannoi psikhologicheskoi obrabotki naseleniia*) is rendered using a much more colorful phrase: the ‘massive brainwashing of the population’.⁴⁷

The Russian IW operations are designed not only to be applied ‘continuously’ in peacetime but also in coordination with other forms of hybrid warfare.⁴⁸ Creating this coordination is now the specific responsibility of the Ministry of Defence’s newly established ‘National Command and Control Centre for State Defence’ (NTsUO⁴⁹).⁵⁰

Other military assets used in noncombat roles are now also being looked upon as important tools in the generation of psychological pressure. The saber-rattling of troop movements on borders, large-scale exercises, and violations of airspace and territorial waters can all act as force multipliers in terms of targeting the morale of an opponent. As the head of the Polish armed forces, General Mieczyslaw Gocul, put it, such activities are designed to ‘spread uncertainty, fear and a constant sense of threat’.⁵¹

Given the new emphasis on the cerebral over the kinetic (and reinforced in the writings of the head of the Russian military himself, General Valerii Gerasimov⁵²), the conceptual thinking about state-on-state hybrid warfare within the Russian military is now locked into the idea that overt military *force* should only be used as a last resort in any encounter with a state adversary. The main function of the military is seen as being as an adjunct to the overall, long-term process of destabilizing adversaries: It is to help with the *inner* decay. Of course, it is accepted that a number of Russian troops might still have to cross borders to ensure ultimate success (as in Crimea in 2014), but the demand is that such ‘invasions’ be conducted subtly and involve the bare minimum of (covertly operating) special forces in plausibly deniable operations.⁵³

This idea of the plausible deniability of the use of any ‘armed attack’ is linked — certainly where NATO countries are concerned — to the issue of Article 5.⁵⁴ If there is no obvious armed attack on, say, the Baltic States by

⁴⁷Translation by NATO of above document, NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (Riga), p. 5. https://ccdcoe.org/strategies/Russian_Federation_unofficial_translation.pdf.

⁴⁸V. Gerasimov, ‘Tsennost’ Nauki v Predvidenii’, p. 2.

⁴⁹NTsUO stands for *Natsional’nyi Tsentr Upravleniya Oborony* [National Centre for the Management of Defence].

⁵⁰R. McDermott, ‘Russia Activates New Defense Management Center’, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 11/196, 4 November 2014. http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=43041&cHash=60f76b139c88bc8177cb5cba105c4fe6#.Vkgkt3YrLIU.

⁵¹P. Wronski, ‘Poland-Russia: Who Calls the Shots Here?’, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 8 December 2014, BBC Mon EU1EuroPolFS1FsuPol101214dz/prt.

⁵²General V. Gerasimov, ‘Tsennost’ Nauki v Predvidenii’, *Voenno-Promyshlennyy Kur’er*, 8/476 (2013), pp. 1–2. http://vpk-news.ru/sites/default/files/pdf/VPK_08_476.pdf.

⁵³M. J. Williams, ‘Russia’s New Doctrine’; S. Chekinov and S. Bogdanov, ‘O Kharaktere’.

⁵⁴This states that ‘Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them ... shall be considered an attack against them all’, Washington Treaty, Article 5. <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2006/issue2/english/art2.html>.

Russia, then there can be no obvious call for a NATO armed intervention in response.⁵⁵ As Michael Williams points out, this new Russian approach is a 'direct threat to NATO as it circumvents the triggers necessary to provide assistance to allies under Article 5'.⁵⁶

The vulnerability of the Baltic States to Russian hybrid warfare

Although probably analytically invidious to lump all of the Baltic States together, with brevity in mind, it is possible to deal in commonalities. These states — together — patently feel that they are a target of Russian hybrid warfare, and all three feel a sense of threat. As Michael Fallon, the UK Defence Secretary, recently put it: there is a 'real and present danger' to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania from Russia's hybrid warfare campaign. The Lithuanian government, indeed, has gone as far as publishing a manual recently for its citizens on how to deal with an actual Russian invasion.⁵⁷ But it seems that the main aim, as Fallon himself says, of Russia is trying to 'destabilize' these countries.⁵⁸ The Estonian Internal Security Service Review of 2105 sums up the main issue: 'Behind the escalation and utilization of the problems and related tensions in Estonia ... lies Russia, with its tool kit of aggressive foreign policy, military activity ... and information influence operations'.⁵⁹ Ojars Kalnins, the chairman of the Latvian parliament's foreign affairs committee, points out what may be the Russians' best-case scenario as a result of its actions:

Their real strategy is not to militarily occupy the Baltic States; that would create a problem for them for a long time. But what they would love is at least one of the Baltic states with a government that they can control, that would give them influence in the EU and NATO.⁶⁰

NATO also does not see the Russian threat as being manifest in a crossing of borders — 'not as an invasion or obvious Article 5 incursion'.⁶¹

These countries are especially vulnerable to a hybrid warfare campaign designed to generate the aforementioned 'inner decay'. Various factors lead to this conclusion. To begin with, Russia/the Soviet Union has occupied the Baltics before. It is not unthinkable, therefore, that it would do so again. This by itself creates a psychological weakness within the Baltic

⁵⁵A. Lanoszka, 'Russian Hybrid Warfare', p. 192.

⁵⁶M. J. Williams, 'Russia's New Doctrine'.

⁵⁷A. Kuncina and D. Sindelar, 'Wary of Russian Aggression, Vilnius Creates How-To Manual for Dealing With Foreign Invasion', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 19 January 2015. <http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-lithuania-manual-foreign-invasion/26802181.html>.

⁵⁸'Russia "Danger" to Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia — Fallon', BBC News, 19 February 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-31528981>.

⁵⁹Estonian Internal Security Service, Annual Review 2015 (Tallinn 2016), p. 4.

⁶⁰S. Walker, 'Latvians Fear Elections Could Let Kremlin in by Back Door', *The Guardian*, 4 October 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/04/latvia-russia-putin-crimea-riga-ukraine-voting>.

⁶¹J. M. Calha, 'Hybrid Warfare: NATO's New Strategic Challenge', NATO Parliamentary Assembly (Draft Report), 7 April 2015, p. 8.

populations. Second, geographical propinquity allows for Russia to apply psychological pressure very easily. Russian troop movements on their borders, for instance, will readily cause alarm in these states, as will unannounced incursions by Russian military aircraft or naval vessels.⁶² Third, the armed forces of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are weak and do not represent a sufficiently robust defense mechanism to ward off unwelcome Russian attentions. The fact that they are weak magnifies, of course, the psychological pressure of the slightest of Russian provocative military actions. Fourth, Russian leaders know that these three countries are not seen as core members of NATO and that the will within this organization to defend them is not absolute. It has been noted that, 'today [there is a] threat to Baltic States towards whom there is scant solidarity among the populations of the original NATO countries'.⁶³ Germany, for one, is refusing to contribute troops to bolster garrisons in the Baltic States.⁶⁴ Fifth, the fact that they are heavily reliant on Russian energy sources leaves them susceptible to leverage by Moscow.⁶⁵ Sixth, these states and the western Soviet Union were both under the control of German forces during the Great Patriotic War. This shared history of fascist occupation — and the fear generated by those that agitate today for 'the rehabilitation of Nazism' in the Baltics — can be played upon by Moscow.⁶⁶ Seventh, these Baltic States carry the inherent 'weakness' of being liberal democracies. Any Russian hybrid warfare campaign can play on such a weakness. Finally, and most significantly, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania contain significant minorities of ethnic Russians — the aforementioned 'compatriot Russians'.

These Russian minorities in the Baltics can be looked upon as ripe for manipulation by Moscow. They tend — although certainly not exclusively — to be at the margins of their respective societies.⁶⁷ It is difficult for them to integrate fully, to find good jobs, and to prosper. They are held back mostly because of the language barrier. Citizenship, indeed, can be denied to those Russian speakers who lack competence in the local languages.⁶⁸ The evident sense of dissatisfaction means that at least some of these 'Russians' can act as Trojan Horses for any Kremlin desire to generate the requisite destabilization. As the Estonian Internal Security Service Review puts it, "The Kremlin

⁶²R. Lyman, 'Ukraine Crisis in Mind, Lithuania Establishes a Rapid-Reaction Force, *The International New York Times*, 20 December 2014, A4.

⁶³P. Mason, 'Putin Has Made the Nuclear Question Even More Complicated', *The Guardian*, 20 April 2015, p. 10.

⁶⁴G. Pridham, 'To Keep Putin Out, the Baltics Need More NATO Boots on the Ground', *Newsweek*, 6 Aug. 2015. <http://www.newsweek.com/keep-putin-out-baltics-need-more-nato-boots-ground-360220>.

⁶⁵See A. Lanoszka, 'Russian Hybrid Warfare'.

⁶⁶V. Kara-Muza, 'Russia and the Baltics: Once Friend, Now Foe', *World Affairs* (Jan/Feb. 2015). <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/russia-and-baltics-once-friend-now-foe>.

⁶⁷A. Lanoszka, 'Russian Hybrid Warfare', p. 185.

⁶⁸S. Walker, 'Latvians Fear Elections'. Because of the small number of Russians in Lithuania, most (bar ex-Soviet soldiers and KGB officers) have been granted citizenship regardless of linguistic competence. University of Maryland, 'Minorities at Risk: Assessment for Russians in Lithuania' (2006). <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/assessment.asp?groupid=36802>.

has decided to use the slogan of “compatriot policy” to instigate segregation and undermine integration’.⁶⁹ Here is distinctly ‘fertile ground’ for ‘Russian nationalists and their machinations to divide and weaken NATO’s eastern-most fringe’.⁷⁰

While the proportion of ethnic Russians making up the Lithuanian population is only 4.9 percent, in Latvia it is 27.9 percent and in Estonia, 24 percent.⁷¹ These Russian communities tend to be concentrated in the big cities. Almost half of the population of Riga is, for instance, composed of ethnic Russians.⁷² Heavy concentrations are also found near the border with Russia: The Estonian city of Narva is 82 percent ethnic Russian,⁷³ and the district of Latgale in Latvia is 42 percent ethnic Russian.⁷⁴

The ideal scenario

As stated, Moscow’s primary aim where the Baltic States are concerned would appear to be to generate an instability that weakens ties with NATO and the EU while, in a zero-sum game, strengthening those with Moscow. Russia would then have greater control over these neighbors.

A scenario employing hybrid warfare techniques to create instability, via the vehicle of the compatriot Russians, is eminently predictable (and has been discussed in Russian military journals⁷⁵). This would involve, using IW, the stoking of fears among these ‘compatriots’ that they were being treated unfairly and were under threat from their host governments. They would then be encouraged to seek protection from what have been variously called ‘self-protection units’⁷⁶ or ‘commercial irregular groupings’ — i.e., vigilantes.⁷⁷ These would be in the pay of Moscow. Clashes would then ensue between these groups and more extremist elements among the native Balts. The infamous ‘little green men’ seen in Ukraine — Russian troops operating without insignia — may then be introduced by Moscow (referred to elliptically in one source as ‘international bands of militants’⁷⁸). The forces of law and order would by this time have been undermined and emasculated by any number of hybrid warfare means. A crisis point would be reached,

⁶⁹Estonian Internal Security Service, p. 7.

⁷⁰A. Higgins, ‘Stirring up Separatist Passions in Latvia’s East’, *International New York Times*, 22 May 2015, pp. 1 and 3.

⁷¹M. Best, ‘The Russian Ethnic Minority: A Problematic Issue in the Baltic States’, *Germanic and Slavic Studies in Review* 2(1) (2013), pp. 33–41.

⁷²S. Walker, ‘Latvia’s Ruling Coalition’.

⁷³R. Milne, ‘Spotlight Shifts to Estonian Town if Russia Tests NATO Mettle’, *Financial Times*, 11 April 2014. <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/9f829192-c07d-11e3-8578-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3awZTjnog>.

⁷⁴‘Pro-Russian Activity Raises Concerns in Latvia’, *Stratfor*, 20 November 2014. <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/pro-russian-activity-raises-concerns-latvia>.

⁷⁵See, for instance, S. Chekinov and S. Bogdanov, ‘O Kharaktere’.

⁷⁶M. J. Williams, ‘Russia’s New Doctrine’.

⁷⁷Mattsson quoted in J. Berzins, *Russia’s New Generation Warfare*, p. 6.

⁷⁸S. Chekinov and S. Bogdanov, ‘O Kharaktere’, p. 20.

democratic processes would be suspended, and the degree of instability desired by Moscow would have come to pass.

Such a scenario, involving vigilantes and actual physical clashes, may be at the more extreme end of those that might characterize Russian attempts at destabilization in the Baltics. A perhaps more likely scenario is that Moscow would achieve its objectives through a much subtler use of hybrid warfare techniques — again favoring IW — involving the compatriot Russians. This would make use of the electoral process. While many of these Russians are barred (because they lack citizenship) from voting in national elections, enough can vote to make a significant difference to their outcome. Moreover, the strength of the Russian vote in the cities of Riga and Tallinn (virtually all resident Russians can vote in local elections) means that these cities are actually administered by political parties that are not only led by ethnic Russians but are also actually pro-Moscow. Indeed, the parties in question ‘have official “cooperation agreements” with Putin’s own party, United Russia’.⁷⁹ In Riga’s case, it is the Soglasie Party (*soglasie* means ‘harmony’ in Russian) and in Estonia it is the Centre Party. The leader of the Centre Party, Edgar Savisar, has even openly declared his support for Russia’s annexation of Crimea.⁸⁰ As one analyst puts it, ‘There are some in the Baltics who worry more about little green mayors than little green men’.⁸¹

As well as working on the compatriot Russians, the Balts themselves would be the target of Moscow’s IW campaign. The aim where they are concerned would be to affect their voting patterns in efforts to divide and rule: The more the vote of the indigenous populations is split, the more powerful any voting bloc of compatriot Russians becomes.⁸² Pro-Moscow parties could be left holding the balance of power or even, in a best case, they could form pro-Moscow national governments. The required ‘influence’ and ‘control’ would have been achieved. Given such an outcome, there would be no need for any violent clashes to be generated or for any ‘little green men’ to make an appearance in order for Moscow’s strategic aims to be achieved.⁸³ It would all be left to the likes of the ‘little green mayors’.

The means used

As discussed, the most telling mode of hybrid warfare used by Russia is IW. And it is certainly a powerful tool where the Baltic States are concerned. At the highest levels, the scale of the threat it represents has been recognized. In

⁷⁹V. Kara-Muza, ‘Russia and the Baltics’.

⁸⁰‘Estonians Vote under Pall of Resurgent Russia’, *Gulf Times*, 2 March 2015, 18.

⁸¹A. Stuttaford, ‘Baltic States in Spotlight as Russia Seeks to Help “Compatriots”’, *Financial Review*, 14 August 2015. <http://www.afr.com/news/world/europe/baltic-states-in-spotlight-at-russia-seeks-to-help-compatriots-20150727-gila0c>.

⁸²S. Walker, ‘Latvians Fear Elections’.

⁸³S. Cerniauskas, ‘Putin’s Favourite Is Focusing on Lithuania’.

Lithuania, Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevicius has warned that, 'A very strong propaganda war against Lithuania has been launched [by Russia] ... It is war, information war'.⁸⁴ In Estonia, the president, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, has said that the Russian propaganda assault has gone so far as to create a sense of 'parallel reality' in his country.⁸⁵

It must be remembered that Russia's IW campaign is not limited just to the output of television and radio stations. There are also, for example, the much-discussed cyber-attacks and the activities of 'trolls'.⁸⁶ Less well known is the fact that, in the Baltic States, Moscow funds a variety of organizations, bodies, and institutions that support Russian interests.⁸⁷ Among these are Russian-speaking schools, private universities, and nongovernmental organizations.⁸⁸ The head of the Latvian Security Police, Normunds Mezviets, has talked of over 100 organizations in his country that support Russia's compatriot policy. There are also, he says, individuals — known as 'professional compatriots' — who receive money from sources in Russia to fund pro-Moscow 'research, public activities, production of films, writing of books and travel to international conferences'.⁸⁹

Besides the variants of IW and the saber-rattling military activities, Moscow's hybrid warfare campaign against the Baltic States has a variety of other facets. It makes much use, for instance, of their reliance on Russian energy sources.⁹⁰ Moscow, indeed, has a history of using this energy weapon to influence these states after their independence.⁹¹ Efforts have naturally been made to diversify energy sources, but Russia can stymie them in a variety of ways. Lithuania, for instance, has tried to seek alternative supplies of energy through the building of new power stations and pipelines that would circumvent Russian supplies of oil and gas. These moves have met resistance from Moscow, and the nature of this resistance has been labeled a form of hybrid warfare by the former minister for energy in Lithuania. The accusation is that Russia lends support to pressure groups within — in this case, Lithuania — who protest about the building of new energy

⁸⁴T. Dapkus, 'Prime Minister about Russia's Provocations', *Alfa*, 30 November 2014, BBC Monitoring EU1EUPRTFS1FsuPolog.

⁸⁵In a speech at Halifax International Security Forum, 24 November 2014. Website of Estonian president. <http://www.president.ee/en/media/press-releases/10789-president-ilves-at-the-security-forum-in-halifax-canada-propaganda-from-the-kremlin-creates-a-parallel-reality/>.

⁸⁶P. Pomerantsev and M. Weiss, 'The Menace of Unreality', p. 6.

⁸⁷This is done through the Russian government's *Programma Raboty s Sootechestvennikami*, *Prozhivaiushchimi za Rubezhom* [State Programme for Working with Compatriots Living Abroad]. <http://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/70311152/>.

⁸⁸K. Putinceva, 'Fidgeting on the Red Border on the Latgalian Land', *Diena*, 14 November 2014, BBC Monitoring EU1EUPRTFS1FsuPolmm.

⁸⁹V. Krustins, G. Zvirbulis, and M. Antonevics, 'Understanding of Security Issues Improving', *Latvijas Avize*, 9 March 2015, BBC Monitoring EU1EUPRTFS1FsuPolog.

⁹⁰See O. Jonsson and R. Seely, 'Russian Full-Spectrum Conflict: An Appraisal after Ukraine', *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 28 (2015), pp. 1–22.

⁹¹A. Sekmokas, 'Hybrid War in Energy Sector Still Taking Place', *Delfi*, 20 October 2014, BBC Monitoring EU1EUPRTFS1FsuPolog.

infrastructure on grounds ranging from cost to environmental issues. These activities seem to have proven very effective. Lithuania has been unable to develop much new energy infrastructure because of the protest movements and is thus still largely reliant on Russian energy and is still prone, therefore, to leverage by Moscow.⁹²

Trade union activism funded by Russia is noted as being another form of hybrid warfare. Moscow is seen to try and manipulate the outcomes of certain industrial disputes events to its liking through the control of trade unions led by Russian *agent-provocateurs* or through the creation of false trade unions.⁹³ This is supposedly done, again, to encourage dissatisfaction and protest.⁹⁴

Such generic examples provide evidence as to the sheer scope of the Russian hybrid warfare campaign against the Baltic States. This campaign is not limited to just a few television programs and the odd airspace incursion; it is a broadly conceived enterprise that is applied and funded across a wide variety of fronts in both civilian and military realms.

Baltic responses to Russian hybrid warfare

The Baltic States currently receive assistance from core NATO members in terms of troop deployments and additional interceptor aircraft.⁹⁵ It is not the aim here to discuss what NATO has done but rather to concentrate on what these states themselves have done. They have obviously raised defenses against the threat they face in both civilian and military realms. In regard to the former, however, it is difficult for these states to counter a hybrid warfare campaign given that they are liberal democracies. As Pomerantsev and Weiss point out, 'the Kremlin has systematically learnt to use the principles of liberal democracies against them'.⁹⁶ The clear Achilles' heel here is in the information realm. Democracies cannot clamp down on what can be seen as the cornerstone of their political *raison d'être* — free speech. As the Lithuanian Defence Minister, Juozas Olekas, put it in expressing the problem in regard to Russian propaganda, 'It is difficult to react to these lies, because they are using our values [to spread them] — such as our freedom of speech'.⁹⁷ In true asymmetric warfare

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³In their article on the nature of new-generation warfare, Chekinov and Bogdanov specifically talk about the use of *agent-provocateurs*. S. Chekinov and S. Bogdanov, 'O Kharaktere', p. 20.

⁹⁴E. Valiuskeviciute, 'Mission To Find Weak Spots in Lithuanian State', *Lietuvos Rytas*, 23 February 2015, BBC Monitoring EU1EUPRTFS1FsuPolmm.

⁹⁵F. Perraudin, 'Britain to Station Troops in Baltic Region "to Deter Russian Aggression"', *The Guardian*, 8 October 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/oct/08/britain-station-troops-poland-latvia-lithuania-estonia-russian-aggression>; J. E. Barnes, 'NATO Looks at Stationing More Troops Along Eastern Flank', *Wall Street Journal*, 28 October 2015. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/nato-looks-at-stationing-more-troops-along-eastern-flank-1446050987>.

⁹⁶P. Pomerantsev and M. Weiss, 'The Menace of Unreality', p. 4.

⁹⁷M. Ehl, 'How to Stop the Russians', *Hospodarske Noviny*, 13 March 2015, BBC Monitoring EU1FS1FsuPol160315nn/prt.

fashion, a strength of liberal democracies — their ‘values’ — is being turned into a weakness by Russia.

The Baltic States have, of course, tried to restrict Moscow’s propaganda output. Lithuania has been the most aggressive in terms of restricting local Russian-language TV and radio channels, and some have been turned off for certain periods for spreading ‘anti-Lithuanian propaganda’.⁹⁸ But such channels cannot be banned outright. For this to happen, laws would have to change. But then the *quod erat demonstrandum* factor would make its entrance. If they are restricted, Moscow would be able to say that its stations were being discriminated against and that Russians in the Baltic States were not getting a fair deal.⁹⁹

Action against the ‘professional compatriot’ organizations and individuals that take money from Moscow is likewise subject to legal constraints. This financing is perfectly legal, even though it is, cumulatively, designed to undermine the Baltic governments. As Mezviets notes, ‘Ours is a liberal democracy and we cannot ban organizations from receiving foreign financing’. But, he goes on, rather darkly, ‘there is an increasing understanding that freedom of speech must be in line with national security interests’.¹⁰⁰ New, more draconian laws are being mooted. Again, though, what might be seen in one quarter as perfectly reasonable counters to a threat can be seen in others as being discriminatory.¹⁰¹

It can also be difficult for individual national leaders in the Baltics to adopt a robust attitude toward Russia’s actions. The Lithuanian president, for instance, Dalia Grybauskaite (seen as ‘the leading voice of opposition to Russia’ in the Baltics¹⁰²) referred in November 2014 to Russia as a ‘terrorist state’.¹⁰³ In doing so, she was appealing, naturally enough, to the ethnically Lithuanian constituency in her country. But it is another zero-sum game. This same rhetoric alarms her Russian minority and is grist to the mill for Moscow’s propaganda machine: It becomes easier to create an image of these Russians being marginalized in their ‘own’ country. Moreover, this machine can also peddle the line that Grybauskaite is looking for support from Lithuania’s ‘fascist’ elements. Grybauskaite’s message also creates divisions among ethnic Lithuanians: While many support her views, others do not and wish to avoid antagonizing Russia. The Lithuanians, as Moscow encourages, become divided.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸S. Cerniauskas, ‘Putin’s Favourite is Focusing on Lithuania’.

⁹⁹V. Krustins, ‘Dealing More with Practical Issues’, *Latvijas Avīze*, 3 March 2015, BBC Monitoring EU1EUPRTFS1FsuPolog.

¹⁰⁰V. Krustins, G. Zvirbulis, and M. Antonevics, ‘Understanding of Security Issues Improving’.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*

¹⁰²Defiant Lithuanians Hold “Little Green Man” Military Exercise’, *Gulf Times*, 7 May 2015, p. 25.

¹⁰³Lithuania Without Strategy Easy Target’, *Lietuvos Rytas*, 30 November 2014, BBC Monitoring EU1EUPRTFS1FsuPolog.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*

The political leaderships in Estonia and Latvia are, of course, much more cautious in their anti-Moscow rhetoric than is Grybauskaite. They have much larger Russian minorities to accommodate and have to remain more circumspect with any anti-Russian comments.¹⁰⁵

For these democracies, raising any defensive measures against Russian hybrid warfare in the civilian realm is difficult. A liberal democracy cannot be seen to disadvantage one sector of its own population. If it does, then it merely plays into the hands of the state — Russia, in this case — that, through its hybrid warfare campaign, is seeking to goad these states into restrictive measures.

In terms of the Baltic States *military* responses to Russia's hybrid warfare threat, they may be described as limited. These countries have, since independence, maintained armed forces small in number and weak in capabilities. And, after joining NATO in 2008, they let their defenses drop even further.¹⁰⁶ They did this to the point where the three states can now only muster one tank — a 1960s-era T-55 in Riga — among them!¹⁰⁷ As a professor at the Lithuanian military academy puts it, 'after our accession to NATO ... we did not take care of our defense at all'.¹⁰⁸ This attitude also led to the ending, in 2008, of conscription in Latvia and Lithuania. These two countries then, with NATO overseas missions in mind, 'prioritized expeditionary capabilities at the expense of the capacity to defend state territory'. Estonia, on the other hand and giving more emphasis to territorial defense, did maintain a form of conscription. It is, though, one that could best be described as 'conscription lite'.¹⁰⁹

Now, however, and in light of the growing Russian threat, the Baltic States have perceived the need to bolster their military defenses. In 2015, all three raised their defense spending, and further increases are planned. But defense is still not a major budget item: Lithuania currently commits only 1.1 percent of its GDP to defense; Latvia 1 percent, and Estonia 2.1 percent.¹¹⁰

Where, though, should this extra spending be directed? When the threat is emanating from a state practicing hybrid warfare, then normal threat-

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶L. Coffey, 'The Baltic States: Why the United States Must Strengthen Security Cooperation', *The Heritage Foundation*, 25 October 2013. <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/10/the-baltic-states-why-the-united-states-must-strengthen-security-cooperation>.

¹⁰⁷A. Doyle and S. Johnson, 'Nordic, Baltic States Face a "New Normal" of Russian Military Threats', Reuters, 28 October 2014. <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/10/28/uk-nordics-russia-idUKKBN0IH19V20141028>.

¹⁰⁸E. Samoskaite, 'What Could Russia Do to Us?', *Delfi*, 27 October 2014, BBC Monitoring EU1EUPRTFS1FsuPolog.

¹⁰⁹Estonian conscripts only actually serve for their few weeks training period. They are not forwarded to any units. They are merely sent home after training and immediately become part of the reserve. Martin Hurt, 'Lessons to Learn from Crimea: Does Estonia's National Defence Model Meet Our Needs?' *Diplomaatia* 29 (May 2014). <http://www.diplomaatia.ee/en/article/lessons-to-learn-from-crimea-does-estonias-national-defence-model-meet-our-needs/>.

¹¹⁰G. O'Dwyer, 'Rising Tensions Boost Nordic, Baltic Spending', *Defense News*, 27 June 2015. <http://www.defense-news.com/story/defense/policy-budget/2015/06/27/finland-sweden-russia-nato-baltics-tensions-budgets-gdp/29289941/>.

assessment techniques can seem inadequate. Hybrid warfare, after all, is designed to work its way around clear definitions of threat by creating uncertainty and doubt. While UK Defence Secretary Fallon might say that the Baltic States face a ‘clear and present danger’, the actual form this ‘danger’ is taking is far from ‘clear’. For instance, while more than half of the population of the most anti-Russian of the Baltic States — Lithuania — believes that Russia poses a threat (and only just over half) there is no agreement as to the most pressing aspect of this multifaceted threat. It is thus not clear what specific defense mechanisms are most immediately required.¹¹¹

One defense mechanism naturally considered has been to reintroduce conscription. Lithuania has now brought back the draft, and its return is being mooted in Latvia.¹¹² There is the question, though, as to what degree having more conscripts would make any difference in the current situation. The concept of conscription favors mass over the inculcation of individual military skills. Conventionally, conscription is predicated on the idea that the conscripts complete a short training period, serve for a limited time in units, and are then sent to form a reserve. It is a system designed to create a large pool of manpower that can be recalled — mobilized — when periods of tension reach a crisis point.

However, as one Latvian political scientist puts it, such an idea of short-term, compulsory service ‘is part of the military of the 20th, not the 21st century’.¹¹³ Conscripts, while they might have some use if facing a traditional invasion, are actually of little use in dealing with a hybrid warfare threat that is specifically designed to generate internal security problems, not external ones. Conscripts are slow to be deployed, and even if deployed, they do not have the skills to operate effectively in the internal security role.¹¹⁴ What *are* needed are rapid-reaction forces that can be called out quickly and have the skills necessary to tackle, for instance, outbreaks of unrest before they escalate and to deal with ‘terrorists’/‘little green men’/‘international bands of militants’ before they have a chance to do much damage. It is vital, if an enemy is trying to create internal instability, that such instability is nipped in the bud before it can reach a critical mass.¹¹⁵ So, while reintroducing conscription is indicative of taking the Russian threat seriously, it actually serves little practical purpose in the current situation in the Baltic States.

¹¹¹In a survey, 55.5 percent of Lithuanians said that Russian was a threat, while 27.9 percent said that it was not. E. Samoskaite, ‘What Could Russia Do to Us?’

¹¹²P. Szymanski, ‘The Baltic States’ Territorial Defence Forces in the Face of Hybrid Threats’, *Osrodek Studiów Wschodnich*, 20 March 2015. <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2015-03-20/baltic-states-territorial-defence-forces-face-hybrid-threats>.

¹¹³Interview with Zaneta Ozolina, political science professor at University of Latvia. G. Baltrusyte, ‘Latvian Political Analyst: We Are Watching How Kremlin’s Money Flows’, *Delfi*, 23 March 2015, BBC Monitoring EU1EUPRTFS1FsuPolmm.

¹¹⁴M. Hurt, ‘Lessons to Learn from Crimea’.

¹¹⁵U. Smits, ‘Borders’, *Latvijas Avīze*, 20 October 2014, BBC Monitoring EU1EUPRTog.

Given the nature of the Russian threat, it is probably the Baltic States' professional, standing forces that are of most importance.¹¹⁶ There has been a concentration recently within these states on turning a significant proportion of their professional land forces (over half in Lithuania's case) into rapid-reaction forces specifically geared to dealing with both internal unrest and covertly operating Russian forces — rather than an overt Russian invasion.¹¹⁷

Besides the conscripts and the professionals, there is a third force element in the Baltic States land forces. These are the Territorial Defence Forces (TDF). They consist of volunteer units raised from local communities. Their personnel train just a few days (8–20) each year (although increases are planned), and they can be used to carry out the mundane guard duties that free up the forces more capable of dealing with internal security tasks. TDF personnel can be called out and report to their local site of duty very quickly. Each Baltic country plans to increase the size of its TDF.¹¹⁸

There is, however, yet another zero-sum game here. The more the Baltic States increase the size of their militaries (of whatever type), the more it appears (as the Moscow-controlled media advertises) that they are being lined up to be used against the 'compatriot Russians'. Tensions are inevitably raised.¹¹⁹ What is more, in order to encourage reluctant Balts to sign up for the various military elements, it is perceived that a greater sense of nationalism needs to be created. But pushing nationalism in the Baltic States can only be created, as ever, by highlighting the 'other' — in this case Russia and, by extension, the ethnic Russians within the borders of these Baltic States.¹²⁰ Is creating a greater sense of nationalism thus really beneficial to overall state security? Given this question, Latvia and Estonia are less enthusiastic about strengthening their militaries than is Lithuania, with only its small Russian minority.¹²¹

Conclusion

Recent Russian military writings have talked about the employment, against future adversaries, of this military's concept of hybrid warfare (or, in Russian

¹¹⁶The figures for professionals serving in the armed forces are: Estonia 3,250; Latvia 5,300; Lithuania 9,100. P. Szymanski, 'The Baltic States Territorial Defence Forces'.

¹¹⁷R. Lyman, 'Ukraine crisis in mind'.

¹¹⁸Estonia currently has 14,800 personnel in its TDF — called the *Kaitselit* (Defense League). This number is planned to increase to 30,000 by 2022. Latvia's TDF — the *Zemessardze* (Latvian National Guard) is around 8,000 strong with a slated increase to 12,000 by 2020. Lithuania's KASP is smaller at 4,500 strong. P. Szymanski, 'The Baltic States Territorial Defence Forces'.

¹¹⁹M. Hurt, 'Lessons to Learn from Crimea'.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*

¹²¹V. Krustins and G. Vikmanis, 'Little Green Men? They Will Be Liquidated Quickly', *Latvijas Avize*, 12 March 2015, BBC Monitoring EU1EUPRTF51FsuPolmm.

parlance, 'new-generation warfare'). Many modes of this hybrid warfare are being used. They are being applied in a coordinated fashion that creates a synergy not seen before in any previous form of 'omni-directional' warfare. Their use became evident, and broadcast to the world, in operations in and around Ukraine in 2014. But it is in the Baltic States that Russian hybrid warfare may be seen as being utilized in its most idealized, long-term form. It is unequivocally clear that these states are under threat from a 'permanent' hybrid war directed from Russia that is designed to slowly erode their capacities — via a process of internal destabilization — to remain both fully independent and strong NATO allies.

One major element of this form of warfare is, obviously, the use of Russia's military instrument. But its use is subtle. This is not an instrument that is likely to be one used to conduct an *en masse* invasion of these states. Rather, its main role is seen to be to act as a psychological tool that fits in with the whole gamut of other hybrid warfare means that are being applied. The Russian military, in its concept of new-generation warfare, has made clear the need to avoid any overt action that might goad NATO into an active military response. In order to achieve strategic goals, actual Russian military intervention in the Baltics may need to go no further than the insertion of plausibly deniable special forces in order to encourage, if necessary, internal disorder.

So what then are the best means that these Baltic States can employ to counter Russian actions? A conundrum presents itself. The main problem for these states is that they are democracies, and hybrid warfare works best against democracies. It turns, in asymmetric fashion, their Western, liberal strengths against them. There is, moreover, and especially in Estonia and Latvia, the problem of the compatriot Russians. Using them, the Kremlin may rely on democratic processes (with no little manipulation from its own quarter) to achieve the aims of either making these states ungovernable or in actually bringing to power pro-Moscow national administrations. And, even if these democratic avenues do not produce the desired results, then these minorities still, from a Russian perspective, have the capacity to be agitated into protest movements that can go a long way in generating the process of state destabilization. And, of course, the more that the Baltic States attempt to curtail any expressions of dissatisfaction from the Russian minority quarter, the more these minorities may see themselves as victims and then come to welcome any external Russian 'assistance'. Draconian measures imposed from Baltic capitals can and probably will make the situation worse and just be playing into Moscow's hands. It is, as stated, a conundrum.

Notes on contributors

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