Russian Strategic Culture After the Cold War

A Comparative Case-Study of the Second Chechen War, the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, and the 2014 Invasion of Crimea

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ABSTRACT

In 2014, Russia annexed Crimea and got involved in an insurgency in the Donbass region of Ukraine. The Russian willingness to use military force in an internationally aggressive manner surprised the West. Subsequently, these incidents sparked a vivid debate about what lay behind the Russian actions in Ukraine.

This thesis attempts to shed some light on this debate by answering the question: *How do the Second Chechen War, the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, and the 2014 Invasion of Crimea reveal characteristics and developments in Russian strategic culture?* That is, what perspective on the use of military force is guiding the Russian decision-makers and strategic community? In order to answer the research question, the analysis will define three models of Russian strategic culture. These models are *hybrid warfare*, *deep operations* and *expansive deterrence*. Subsequently, the models will be compared to three cases. The cases are chosen because they show post-Cold War conflicts, in which Russia participates as one of the primary actors, and where the Russian Armed Forces are directly involved. The selected cases are: the *1999 Second Chechen War, the 2008 Russo-Georgian War,* and the *2014 Russian Invasion of Crimea*. Thus, this analysis will systematically describe the development of Russian conflict behavior after the Cold War and elucidate the underlying and persistent Russian strategic culture.

The analysis points to a continuation of Soviet strategic culture that is influenced by changing strategic objectives and military capabilities. The thesis rejects the hypothesis of a novel Russian operational level hybrid warfare doctrine. Moreover, Russian strategic culture after the Cold War is characterized by a continuous emphasis on nuclear and conventional capabilities, where success is achieved by exposing an opponent to systemic shock through an enhanced deep operations framework. Further, strategic risk-management measures accompany the application of military force, and penetration of enemy defense systems is key to establishing this deep operations framework.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

In the fall of 2013, Putin seemed to have persuaded Ukraine to align with him. On November 21, V. Yanukovych, the Ukrainian President, announced that Ukraine had withdrawn from the Association Agreement with the EU (Sakwa, 2016, p. 81). This set in motion a chain of events that led to Russian use of military force against Ukraine, and even the annexation of parts of sovereign Ukrainian territory. The Russian invasion of Crimea, and subsequent *de facto* annexation, surprised the West. Similar Russian assertiveness had been observed earlier, for example in the invasion of Georgia in 2008, but not to this extent. Although it was not the first time Russia had shown international aggression in the post-Soviet area, the invasion of Crimea re-arranged the European security system and increased the tension between NATO and Russia. This level of military tension had not been seen since the Cold War, and has taken European security along a path presumably no one wants. Subsequently, the Russian use of military force sparked a vivid debate on how to interpret the Russian actions; was the Russian use of force based on an offensive or defensive perspective? In order to interpret behavior in armed conflict, it is imperative to know how that actor is perceiving the role and efficacy of military force – in other words, the actor's strategic culture. This thesis aims at contributing to the understanding of Russian international conduct after the Cold War by providing a theoretical framework suitable for elucidating Russian strategic culture and explaining Russian conflict behavior.

Increased Russian international assertiveness has frightened Western countries. Apparently, Russian resolve and ability to use military force to secure national interests has steadily increased until its climax, so far, with the interventions into Ukraine territory. However, it seems Western countries are left somewhat confused and perplexed about the Russian intentions. There are at least three contending perspectives. The first perspective describes Russia as a "revisionist state bent on overturning the post-Cold War order in Europe" (Götz, 2016b, p. 251). The primary goal is to re-establish Russia as a major European power and to reverse some of the "Western encroachment," such as the NATO expansion. Another contending perspective sees Russia as a victim. The West, and especially NATO, has continuously pressured Russia after the end of the Cold War. Thus, Russia, primarily a *status-quo* power, is trying to counterbalance its superior rival (Götz, 2016b, pp. 253-254). Finally,

Russian international behavior is designed to influence internal politics and bolster the contemporary Russian regime. The interventions in Ukraine were merely a distraction from domestic problems and falling popularity of the Putin regime (Götz, 2016b, p. 255). All these perspectives are likely to bring some understanding to the academic discourse. However, the perspective of the Russian decision-makers and military community on the use of military force is also important in the effort to understand Russian international behavior. In order to understand Russian intentions and international conduct, the interpretation of Russian conflict behavior has to be guided by an accurate theoretical framework. Accordingly, the purpose of this thesis is to contribute to this theoretical framework, in the form of strategic culture, explaining conflict behavior. That is, this thesis will assess the elucidating power of three models describing Russian strategic culture through an analysis of three cases. These three models, *hybrid warfare, deep operations* and *expansive deterrence*, will be thoroughly presented in later chapters.

Research question

An analysis of Russian conflict behavior necessarily looks at both military and political factors. This thesis contributes to the discourse that is concerned with the interaction between military measures and politics; in other words, the realm of strategy. Additionally, this thesis avoids the temptation to exclusively analyze one prominent individual conflict, for example, the recent interventions into Ukraine. Instead, it will study Russian conflict behavior over time. It is plausible to presume a significant shift in Russian strategic culture after the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, and this can lead to the conclusion to study the most recent conflicts, which leaves conflicts before 2008 to only be of historical interest. However, this thesis challenges that notion and claims that strategic culture, due to its inherent inertia, has to be studied over a long timeframe. Culture, as a shared and exchanged phenomenon, shapes the actors within a group and induces continuity. Thus, individual conflicts are not suited to unlock the latent strategic culture of a country's strategic community.

The concept of strategic culture, which will be elaborated in the theory chapter, is the essence of this thesis. It is the subject of study and indicates the delimitation of the analysis. Consequently, the actors relevant to the study are not strictly Putin, the Russian General Staff, or any other single entity; it is rather the whole community participating in the process of devising and directing the Russian strategy. Additionally, the analysis addresses the time

period after the Cold War, and is pointing toward the development over time rather than a "snapshot" of the strategic culture. In light of these constraints the research question is:

How do the Second Chechen War, the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, and the 2014 Invasion of Crimea reveal characteristics and developments in Russian strategic culture?

The theoretical proposition, or the hypothesis, that will best answer this research question points to a continuation of Soviet strategic culture that is influenced by changing strategic objectives and military capabilities. The thesis rejects the hypothesis of a novel Russian operational level hybrid warfare doctrine. Moreover, Russian strategic culture after the Cold War is characterized by a continuous emphasis on nuclear and conventional capabilities, where success is achieved by exposing an opponent to systemic shock through an enhanced deep operations framework. Further, strategic risk-management measures accompany the application of military force, and penetration of enemy defense systems is key to establishing this deep operations framework.

Definitions

In the strategic vocabulary there are several concepts without a clear and common definition. Often, the concepts are used differently between authors, and their meanings are frequently overlapping. In this chapter some of these concepts will be clarified. Note that the concepts are idealized constructions and, consequently, there are no conflicts, models or examples that will be perfectly represented by one of them.

Conventional warfare

The definition used here is more specific than the common understanding of conventional warfare as merely warfare without the use of weapons of mass destruction. The narrower definition of conventional warfare, used in this thesis, is the application of military power, by a state actor, to destroy another state actor's armed forces or to occupy its territory. The objective is to exert its own will on the opponent by influencing its government. This is achieved through dominating the opponent's armed forces.[1] Conventional warfare is usually characterized by mass deployment of forces, intensive violence and decisiveness. Conventional forces are the category of forces best suited to conduct conventional warfare;

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[1] This definition is partly based on the definition of *traditional warfare* from Joint Publication 1 (US, Department of Defense (DOD), 2013, p. I-6).

however, they do not include forces using weapons of mass destruction. More precisely, conventional forces are designed to maximize the combined effects of their firepower, protection and ability to maneuver to defeat an armed enemy in combat. As such, this definition of conventional warfare largely corresponds to the term "regular forces." Importantly, other categories of forces, such as special operation forces and militias, can conduct conventional warfare; yet they are still not conventional forces.

Irregular warfare

Irregular warfare is largely a contrast to conventional warfare and is characterized as "[a] violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population" (Larson, Eaton, Nichiporuk and Szayna, 2008, p. 10; US, DOD, 2013, p. I-6). This kind of warfare often exploits asymmetric and indirect approaches, especially when faced with a stronger opponent. Asymmetry is the use of "dissimilar strategies, tactics, capabilities, and methods to circumvent or negate an opponent's strengths while exploiting his weaknesses" (US, DOD, 2016, p. 17). An indirect approach is to neutralize or degrade an opponent's military strength by attacking an element supporting this strength. The attacked element can be both mental or physical. In some circumstances, irregular warfare might be targeted at the opponent's conventional armed forces and not the relevant population. However, then the warfare will be asymmetric and protracted, where the infliction of casualties and disruption of military activities are the tool to degrade the opponent's will to continue the conflict. Irregular forces are forces that are suited for irregular warfare, for example, light forces that can blend and interact with the civilian population, easily conceal themselves in the terrain, conduct surprise attacks and then easily disappear. Guerilla forces, militias or special operations forces are some of the diverse categories of irregular forces. Still, irregular forces can be used both to conduct irregular and conventional warfare related tasks.

Levels of war

The definition of the levels of war is not consistent in the literature, and the boundaries between the levels themselves are blurred. However, some commonalities exist and this thesis will use a common military definition, obtained from US doctrines. There are three levels of war: strategic, operational, and tactical (see US, DOD, 2013, p. I-7).

Strategic: The strategic level of war is concerned with the overall objectives of the conflict and the processes of defining end-states, setting restrictions, allocating resources and devising

concepts to utilize these resources effectively at a national or multinational level. Often a distinction is drawn between the military strategic level and "grand strategy," which includes all military and non-military means available to the political leadership. This thesis understands the strategic level to include all relevant means or sectors of government. The strategic level of war is thus concerned with the development and implementation of national policy and strategies (US, DOD, 2013: I-8).

Operational: The operational level is the link between the strategic and tactical levels of war. It is concerned with how the overall objectives at a national/political level can be achieved. In other words, the operational level devises plans, in the form of campaigns and major operations, to ensure that the victories at the tactical level contribute to the objectives at the strategic level (US, DOD, 2013, p. I-8).

Tactical level: The tactical level is concerned with the employment and synchronization of forces in single engagements or battles. Thus, the tactical level is restricted in space and time (US, DOD, 2013, p. I-8).

The distinction between the operational and strategic levels of war is significant to this thesis. For example, hybrid warfare, understood as an operational framework, is a prescription for how the conventional, irregular, and non-military measures, made available to a military commander, should be combined to achieve objectives within the confines of a campaign or operation. That is, not the synchronization between these measures, such as a conventional offensive and information operations, at a strategic level.

STRATEGIC CULTURE

Strategic culture theory stands in contrast to strict rationality in international relations. Structural realism, on the other hand, is a proponent of rational choice, and views international relations in a systemic perspective (Dunne and Schmidt, 2014, p. 104). The states, as presumed rational actors, negotiate the anarchic international system in a search for power or security; the perceived rational factors influencing inter-state relationships are emphasized. Thus, according to structural realism, the complex interactions between domestic factors, such as culture, and the international system is either insignificant or indirectly caused by the international structure (Dunne and Schmidt, 2014, pp. 104-105). However, many scholars, particularly after the Cold War, have criticized this narrow perspective on international relations (Barnett, 2014, p. 157). Constructivism claims the actors in the international system are not just driven by rational choice. There are also socially constructed ideas and norms that significantly influence the international system (Barnett, 2014, pp. 156-158). Accordingly, latent cultural preferences, existing domestically, can influence the political-military decision-makers; for example, a domestic *strategic culture* impacts the state's security policy and use of military force.

Thus, in a constructivist perspective, rationality is not sufficient to explain behavior in international relations, let alone in armed conflicts. This analytical shortcoming has spurred a body of literature on strategic culture. A. I. Johnston, in his authoritative article "Thinking about Strategic Culture," systematized the literature into three generations (1995). The first generation emerged in the early 1980s, and, according to Johnston, emphasized overarching national strategic cultures derived from a nation's historical experience, political culture, and geography (Johnston, 1995, p. 36). Consequently, there was a distinct Soviet and American "way of strategy," which influenced strategic decisions. The work of J. Snyder about the Soviet perspective on limited nuclear warfare from 1977 was the origin of the first generation (Johnston, 1995, pp. 36-37). He claimed that:

> [n]either Soviet nor American strategists are culture-free, preconception-free game theorists. Soviet and American doctrines have developed in different organizational, historical, and political contexts (…) As a result, the Soviets and Americans have asked somewhat different questions about the use of nuclear weapons and have developed answers that differ in significant respects (Snyder, 1977, p. v).

Another author, placed in the first generation by Johnston, is C. S. Gray. He developed Snyder's argument and explained the difference in perspectives on limited nuclear warfare with uniquely national "beliefs" regarding strategy, created by a uniquely national historical experience (Johnston, 1995, p. 34).

The second generation of strategic culture scholars was skeptical to the significant cultural impact on strategic behavior expressed by the first generation. Rather, they perceived strategic culture to fill an instrumental function to the dominant strategic elite. To them, strategic behavior was largely determined by rational considerations; strategic culture, on the other hand, was used instrumentally to legitimatize the chosen strategy and to silence political opposition (Johnston, 1995, pp. 39-40). Yet, despite the instrumental character of strategic culture, "it does not come out of the pockets of political and military elites," but is shaped by historical experience (Johnston, 1995, p. 40).

The third generation was reluctant to accept that all strategic behavior could be explained by the realist notion of rationality. On the contrary, they claimed that non-rational decisions existed, and that cultural explanations were salient. Consequently, they created a conceptual framework to separate cultural effects on strategic behavior. Then, behavior needed to be detached from the definition of culture, otherwise the strategic culture would be both the treatment and the effect (Johnston, 1995, pp. 41-42). This final point, the detachment of behavior from the cultural concept, is the main controversy in the literature of strategic culture. Although, the controversy is not so much questioning the existence of cultural influence on strategy; it is an epistemological rivalry concerned with the very nature of culture. More specifically, is it possible to observe the causal effect of culture on behavior? Or are ideas and behavior so intertwined within the phenomenon of culture that it cannot be separated? This debate will be elucidated below.

C. S. Gray has developed a universal theory of strategy and he claims that "there is an essential unity to all strategic experience in all periods of history because nothing vital to the nature and function of war and strategy changes" (Gray, 1999a, p. 1). He continues to elaborate on the dimensions central to the strategic experience through time, and identifies seventeen of them. One of these central dimensions is the cultural context influencing the national strategic apparatus (Gray, 1999a, pp. 23-26). However, despite a universal perspective on strategy, Gray argues that conduct of strategy is both holistic, *viz.* that each component cannot be

analyzed in isolation, and cultural. That is, the cultural factor does not just cause the strategic decisions, but permeates the actors, through their thoughts, feelings and habits; thus, the holistic and ubiquitous nature of strategic culture makes it nearly impossible to observe causality in a positivistic sense (Gray, 1999b, pp. 57-59). Accordingly, Gray incorporates both ideas and behavior into his strategic culture concept. He argues that the behavior of a strategic entity is part of its culture and not just the consequence of it (Gray, 1999a, p. 138).

However, Gray does not refute that strategic agents most often act within so-called rationality, despite their inability to detach themselves from the cultural context, because the strategic culture itself is shaped by the factors giving a country comparative advantages. In other words, Gray's theory of strategic culture does not completely contradict structural realism (Gray, 1999a, pp. 143-146). Finally, and most importantly, the strategic culture, through both its rational and emotional components, derives from national strategic experience; which in turn, points to unique historical and geographical features in the effort to understand strategic culture (Gray, 1999a, pp. 140-141; Gray, 2007, p. 7).

However, this approach has met critique, most notably from A. I. Johnston. He argues that Gray's approach is too deterministic, i.e. that it includes so many contextual factors explaining strategic culture that it leaves no room for other explanations for strategic behavior. Additionally, Johnston warns that Gray's excessive emphasis on country-specific cultures, what he calls essentialism, strongly tied to lasting historical and geographical characteristics of a country, will ignore other viable explaining factors. Thus, Gray's concept of strategic culture explains everything about strategic behavior, but cannot distinguish the influence from different strategic cultures or other non-cultural factors on behavior (Johnston, 1995, p. 33; Johnston 1999).

Johnston's alternative to Gray's approach is to assume that strategic behavior is caused by strategic culture, among other variables. That is, strategic behavior and strategic culture are not expressions of the same concept. Thus, the influence of strategic culture becomes significantly easier to test, and falsify, through identification of the strategic culture's effect on the strategic behavior (Johnston, 1995, pp. 32-36). Apparently, Johnston needs to justify a definition of culture that is restricted to the ideational domain. He compares strategic culture to the concept of political culture, and finds that common definitions of political culture can

be operationalized to the concept of strategic culture. Johnston defines strategic culture to be:

> [a] system of symbols (e.g., argumentation structures, languages, analogies, metaphors) which acts to establish pervasive and long-lasting strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs, and by clothing these conceptions with such aura of factuality that the strategic preferences seem uniquely realistic and efficacious (Johnston, 1999, p. 46).

As such, this definition opens for instrumental use of culture, to retain dominance or silence opposition; and for the existence of multiple, both competing and complementing, strategic cultures in the same strategic community. Further, in the creation of hypothesized strategic cultures, Johnston stresses the need to create accompanying ranked strategic preferences, and not only a set of possible preferred actions. This will give a more explicit and detailed model, thus increasing the possibility to isolate the cultural effect and falsify the hypothesis (Johnston, 1999, pp. 46-48).

Johnston is also recommending a method for strategic culture research. An essential problem, according to Johnston, is to unlock the relation between strategic culture and strategic behavior. He argues there is a central paradigm of strategic culture explaining how the ideational basis of strategic culture is affecting strategic choice. This central paradigm consists of three dimensions: whether war is perceived as predominantly inevitable or an aberration; whether the international system is seen as a zero- or variable-sum environment; and the expected efficacy of violence to control outcomes and neutralize threats. The strategic cultures "score" along these dimensions will tell whether strategic acts will be characterized by "hard realpolitik" or "soft idealpolitik" (Johnston, 1999, pp. 46-48). There are two main steps to Johnston's method: Firstly, the identification of a hypothesis strategic culture; and secondly, to empirically test that hypothesis on strategic behavior. In this final test, the aim is to distinguish the cultural effect from other non-cultural, including materialist, effects (Johnston, 1999, pp. 50-53).

However, Gray provided several counter-arguments to Johnston's method. Firstly, he saw the distinction between explaining and understanding as illustrative of the difference between their approaches. Johnston wants to *explain the relationship* between a strategic culture and the strategic behavior; conversely, Gray wants to *understand the phenomena* of strategic culture. According to Gray, these methodological concepts are not the same, and, due to the

contextual nature of culture, it guides action rather than causing it (Gray, 1999b, p. 50). However, Johnston argues, quite convincingly, that this is a false dichotomy; *understanding* the cultural context surrounding an agent of action is implicitly a process of choosing *explanations* for such actions (Johnston, 1999, p. 520). After all, human actions are encultured, and neither solely rational nor random; thus, culture will influence action.

Another of Gray's counter-arguments is a lot more potent. He states that "all strategic behavior is effected by human beings who cannot help but be cultural agents" (Gray, 1999b, p. 59). Thus, there is no "conceptual space" left for strategic behavior. When the cultural context is ubiquitous, shaping the perception of people, organizations, procedures and technology, it cannot be isolated from material factors (see Poore, 2003, p. 280). This is what Gray calls a "methodological appalling truth" (Gray, 1999b, p. 59). However, this methodological problem is subsequently addressed by Johnston. He accepted that material and cultural factors cannot be sensibly separated methodologically, and, instead of including material factors in his research, looked at the relevance of rival cultural hypotheses explaining strategic behavior (Poore, 2003, p. 282).

This thesis rests on two central assumptions. Firstly, it recognizes that strategic culture, and culture in general, is characterized by some degree of inertia through time. C. Geertz defines culture as "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (Geertz, 1993, p. 89). Culture as a shared and exchanged phenomenon indicates, at least to some degree, continuity. Gray reiterates this argument, stating that cultural ideas and habits will often be present for years, decades or centuries. However, he also argues that strategic culture is not static, it evolves, and in special circumstances it can change drastically (Gray, 2007, p. 7). Gray uses war as an example of such special circumstances. Still, the dissolution of the Soviet Union could obviously have caused the necessary traumatic shock to change the Russian strategic culture radically. Indeed, the strategic community of the Russian Federation would operate under significantly different conditions than the Soviet one. Yet, it is more or less the same organization and people that constitutes the strategic community during the period before and after the dissolution of the Soviet Union (see Odom, 1998, pp. 361-362, 386; Eitelhuber,

2009, p. 9; Skak, 2016, pp. 326-330; Walther, 2014, p. 669). In her article about contemporary Russian strategic culture, M. Skak argues that:

> The continuity between Soviet and post-Soviet Russian strategic culture manifests itself in the *chekist* [former members of the Soviet secret services] instinct of *kto kogo* [a zero-sum view of international relations], which turns Russian strategic culture into a 'besieged fortress' Cold War mentality (Skak, 2016, pp. 330).

The point to be made is that there is a continuity of people and organizations in the strategic community of the Soviet Union and Russia. Combined with the inertia of strategic culture suggested by Gray, the underlying assumption is that there is a degree of continuity within the post-Cold War strategic community of the Russian Federation, and even between the Soviet and Russian strategic communities.

Secondly, this thesis assumes that a shared strategic culture, or at least the aggregated conceptualization of it, ensures a "link" between the ideational strategic culture and strategic behavior. This "link" addresses Johnston's essential methodological problem of showing an explicit relation between culture and behavior. In essence, using Geertz' definition, culture is the attribution of meaning to the material world, shared by individuals within a group, shaping those individuals' knowledge and attitude toward life. Moreover, individuals will, to a large degree, make decisions based on their knowledge and attitude toward life. Then, Gray's statement that "human beings (…) cannot help but be cultural agents" (Gray, 1999b, p. 59) indicates that strategic behavior is, in fact, a consequence of strategic culture. In other words, the "link" between ideas and behavior is assured by encultured agents. For example, a military organization synchronizes its actions toward a specific mode of warfighting through the meaning they attribute to "military doctrine." However, it is important to note that this assumption's validity hinges on the uniformity of the existing strategic culture. The accuracy of the "link" is dependent on the consistency of the cultural influence on both the individual that executes a decision, and the individual that made the decision. Gray warns that the concept of strategic culture is an umbrella concept and can easily become interwoven with substantially different concepts. More specifically, it is important to distinguish between the strategic culture, i.e. the culture of the national strategic community, and the public and military culture. The public culture exists "around" the strategic community, and the military culture exists in the subordinate military organization. Further, Gray similarly warns of the fallacy of expecting one unitary and distinct strategic culture (Gray, 2007, p. 7).

The question of a "link" between strategic culture and conflict behavior also has bearing on civil-military relations. According to Feaver's model of civil-military relations, agency is at the center of the interactions between civilian authorities and military leaders. On one side, the civilian authorities "[seek] to trade off the advantages of specialization against the disadvantages of agency" (Feaver, 1997, p. 2). Intrusively monitoring the military avoids self-serving and divergent behavior outside the intent of the civilian authorities. However, intrusive monitoring of the armed forces induces costs, for example by micro-managing suboptimal solutions to military problems (Feaver, 1997, p. 2). The military decides whether it wants to do what the civilian authorities tell it to do, to "work," or what it wants to do itself, to "shirk." Then, according to this game-theoretical model, the civilian authorities attempt to reduce the difference between "work" and "shirk," and simultaneously minimize the costs of intrusive monitoring (Feaver, 1997, pp. 2-3). This dichotomy is a problem for the assumption that the Russian strategic decision-making apparatus can be unitarily analyzed. In Feaver's model, civilian authorities and the military, both part of the strategic community, are perceived to have two different cultures. However, the secrecy and non-transparent character of strategic communities in general, and the Russian strategic leadership in particular, makes a meticulous analysis very difficult. Thus, the remaining viable alternative is an aggregated perspective on Russian strategic culture.

According to G. Pavlovsky, a former consultant to the Russian president, Putin's governance is characterized by a system, often called the *sistema*, in which the state should "enjoy unlimited access to all national resources" (Pavlovsky, 2016, p. 14). These resources are often mobilized through independently acting agents with a loose mandate from the state, but no orders or clear directives. "Thus, 'orders' become 'deals'" in the Russian political system where the independent agents negotiate with the state over access to resources and contributions to the function of the state (Pavlovsky, 2016, p. 14). This "blurring" of the chain of command decreases the coherence of any potential nationally designed strategy. However, it will also enhance the effect of any underlying strategic culture influencing all actors within the Russian strategic community. Both Putin, with his inner circle of advisors, and the independent agents within the military and other Russian institutions are more susceptible to a common culture than if the system had made it possible to design and implement a clear strategy from the top. Consequently, if commonalities in the culture of the Russian strategic community exist, they

will be more recognizable in conflict behavior than in, for example, the more centralized Western states.

METHOD

Initially, it will be productive to clarify some central concepts. When the term causality is used, it refers to a definition presented by King, Keohane and Verba. To them, causality in social science is "[the effect from] the difference between the systematic component of observations made when the explanatory variable takes one value and the systematic component of comparable observations when the explanatory variable takes on another value" (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994, pp. 81-82). Thus, causality is not a necessary and/or sufficient condition for something to happen; it is the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable if all relevant non-systematic components are controlled for. However, in social sciences, the ability to control for all non-systematic components is close to impossible; thus, there is no guaranteed way to go from correlation to causation. Still, causation arguably exists in social reality, and it is conceivable to infer causal relationships if certain untestable assumptions are accepted. King et al. identifies *homogeneous units of analysis* and *conditional independence* as the necessary assumptions for causal inference in social sciences (King et al., 1994, p. 85). This thesis applies King et al.'s lenient definition of causation.

The core concepts relating to the issue at hand are also in need of some clarification, namely: strategy, strategic culture, and conflict behavior. According to Gray, strategy is "the use that is made of force and the threat of force for the ends of policy" (Gray, 1999a, p. 17). However, an analysis of Russian strategic culture after the Cold War would be inadequate without an expanded view on strategy. Thus, this thesis treats *strategy* as the use of all the state's means for the ends of policy in armed conflict. *Conflict behavior* is defined as the implemented method and chosen conflict related objectives, which are spatially and temporally limited within a conflict, and occur after the decision to use force is made. As such, conflict behavior is not general Russian international behavior, or decisions and activities made during peacetime (though the difference between peacetime and conflict is not always easy to discern). Moreover, the concept of *strategic culture* follows Johnston's definition; thus, the ideational dimension of culture is emphasized. Additionally, it is *how* Russia uses force, rather than *why*, that is essential in this thesis.

The research question will be answered with the aid of a model with strategic culture as the independent variable and conflict behavior as the dependent. This model derives from

Johnston's recommended method of analysis. The *strategic culture* is hypothesized – in this study there are three alternative hypotheses – and then tested on *conflict behavior*. Each of the three alternative hypotheses, *hybrid warfare*, *deep operations* and *expansive deterrence*, are associated with a set of ranked indicators. These indicators, coupled with the assumption of a "link" between culture and behavior, are the foundation of the case-analyses. The analyses will isolate the effect from strategic culture on Russian conflict behavior, and decide which of the models, if any, is the most pervasive. Subsequently, the results from the case-analyses are synthesized into an overarching analysis of Russian strategic culture after the Cold War. Still, the purpose of the causal model is merely to aid the analyses of Russian strategic culture; the cultural characteristics of the object of analysis makes it necessary to interpret the results, both within-case and in the effort of synthesizing the results from all the cases.

The function of theory in this thesis is to provide a framework for analysis and to constitute testable hypotheses. Three models of Soviet/Russian strategic culture are chosen and compared to the cases. A theoretical proposition, "a reasoned and precise speculation about the answer to a research question," should usually be developed first and then tested against the data (King et al., 1994, p. 19). Conversely, to adjust or create a theory to fit existing data will, by definition, make the theory impossible to falsify. In these circumstances, new data need to be gathered to test the proposed theory; thus, the theory must be stated before evaluating it against the data (King et al., 1994, p. 21). Concerning falsifiability, a theoretical proposition should be stated in such a way that it can be falsified. Otherwise, the theory is not suitable to answer the research question. According to the principle of falsifiability, the better a theory is to propose specific and observable predictions the more suitable it is (King et al., 1994, pp. 19-20). Therefore, the models presented in this thesis are accompanied with concrete indicators of their existence.

Importantly, Gray's argument that all material factors are encultured, and cannot be comprehended without interpretation, needs to be addressed. Therefore, the model compares three rival cultural hypotheses and not a combination of cultural and material hypotheses. Even more importantly, the matching of the indicators to the conflict behavior cannot be inferred directly; it needs to be interpreted. The presence of non-cultural factors, for example overall conflict-specific objectives or available capabilities, will influence the

outcome; however, they are attributed meaning through a cultural system of symbols. For example, increased Russian utilization of cyberwarfare can be a result of better equipment and competence; that cyberwarfare is especially beneficial to reach the current Russian objectives; because an underlying strategic culture emphasizes the covert and ambiguous nature of cyberwarfare; or, more likely, a combination of the above. Thus, the fact that Russia is increasing its use of cyberwarfare in a specific conflict is meaningless by itself, and has to be analyzed in a cultural context.

The understanding of meaning, attributed to human actions, texts and other material, demands a suitable method. Because the notion of meaning is found in the object's relation to the world, a suitable method for observing meaning is found in the shifting analysis of the "part" and the "whole," known as the "hermeneutical circle" (Mantzavinos, 2016, pp. 3-5). For example, to understand Russian behavior in conflict, historical narratives must be analyzed to distinguish historical details, and these details need to be interpreted in their context to unlock their meaning. Then, the broadened understanding supports a more informed analysis of the individual details, and so on. This thesis uses the "hermeneutical circle" to comprehend the empirical data through interpretation of their contextual meaning.

The model, presented above, has some apparent deductive characteristics. Indeed, the attempt to test a hypothesis by empirically looking for the existence of carefully chosen indicators is a hypothetical-deductive method; hence deductive reasoning. However, the research design is far from being strictly deductive. Firstly, the data is interpreted to observe meaning before any causal effect can be determined. Secondly, the alternative hypotheses are tested on three independent cases, where the hypothetical-deductive model is repeated three times and the results are finally synthesized. Thus, this research design uses *abductive* reasoning to arrive at its final conclusions, which means that the observed data is used to find the most likely explanation (Thomas, 2010, p. 576). That is, it is not an example of inductive reasoning; the subject of analysis, strategic culture, cannot be observed directly, making induction, in a strict definition, impossible. Induction implies that an observation is expected to be repeated in a future case with a similar set of conditions, which cannot be applied to the unobservable phenomena of strategic culture (Thomas, 2010, p. 576). The methodological problem of "filling in the dots" in abductive reasoning, in contrast to the more empirical logic of induction, is common in case studies in social sciences (Thomas, 2010, pp. 575-576).

The background and prejudice of the scientist is central when applying abductive reasoning, and in analytical processes in accordance with the "hermeneutical circle." While having some obvious negative implications, H.-G. Gadamer points to some positive, or constituent, sides of prejudice. He argues that prejudice is, by definition, necessary to understand a phenomenon. In order to understand "something," a person needs to understand there is "something" meant to be understood. In other words, scientists cannot escape the problems created by their own prejudice and background; thus, they cannot claim to be genuinely objective (Malpas, 2016, pp. 6-7), though, according to Gadamer, there is a way to mitigate this problem. A dialogical approach, both to outside critics and to oneself, will possibly reveal the problematic prejudice that distorts understanding, enabling more educated conclusions (Malpas, 2016, p. 7). This thesis sees *method* as the key to this dialogical approach. Conversely to Gray's holistic methodology (see Gray, 1999b, pp. 57-59), applying a strict and well-structured method induces self-critique and epistemological reflection in the scientist. Leaving interpretation and analysis to contemplation alone, without the guidance of method, is in danger of giving prejudice undue influence. Additionally, a clearly communicated and well-structured method lays bare the assumptions and weaknesses of the study, therefore contributing to the scholarly dialogue of critique.

There are several factors obstructing the author's clear understanding of the matter at hand. Firstly, a lack of Russian language skills decreases the amount of available data and increases reliance on secondary sources. Additionally, Russian culture in general differs from Western cultures, and widens the cultural gap between the author and Russian strategic culture. In order to mitigate this weakness, this thesis takes advantage of developed hypothetical models, compiled from Western literature regarding Russian strategic culture. In this way, the prejudice of the author, necessary as a starting point, is partly replaced by authoritative studies, presumably conducted by persons with greater cultural and linguistic skills. Still, self-awareness and self-critique is paramount. For instance, there is likely a distinct Western strategic culture that influences both the author and the Western academic college on Russian strategic culture. It is, of course, difficult to elucidate one's own prejudice; however, it is relatively safe to argue that Western counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan and Iraq in recent years have increased the emphasis on irregular warfare and how military means relate to non-military domains. These developments, coupled with the significant impact of C. von

Clausewitz on Western military tradition, point to a modern view on warfare where strictly material approaches are doomed to be inadequate and the opponent's will to fight is more accentuated.

A final point: the Russian strategic community is likely anxious to conceal their culture behind a shroud of secrecy and deception because disclosure of it can expose vulnerabilities. Still, an analysis of the available data, supported by a well-structured method and cultural self-awareness, is the best, and only, course of action for this thesis. The relevance of the subject is undisputable; a Western failure to grasp the strategic culture of Russia might lead to misunderstandings and distrust, and in the worst case, strategic nuclear war.

Research design specifics

This thesis treats the components of the Russian Federation concerned with the directing and execution of military endeavors as the unit of analysis. In Gray's conceptualization of strategic culture, this component is the strategic community of the Russian Federation. The delimitation of this thesis, specified through the research question, limits the unit of analysis to the time period after the Cold War. However, there is good reason to question the consistency of the unit, considering this timeframe includes the transition from the Soviet Union to the Russian Federation. As discussed above, this thesis treats the unit of analysis as comparable through the selected cases.

A case "connotes a spatially delimited phenomenon (a unit) observed at a single point or over some period of time" (Gerring, 2007, p. 19). This thesis observes the unit of analysis – the strategic community of the Russian Federation – through a set of cases; specifically, it compares several cases to infer the Russian strategic culture. Because the analysis is concerned with conflict behavior, the cases need to be some sort of armed conflict after the Cold War, and at least partly orchestrated by the strategic community of the Russian Federation. As shown in table 1, all potential cases of Russian use of force in conflict after the Cold War are not only finite, but are even limited and accessible. The criteria used for case-selection are aimed at reducing the impact of distorting factors. For example, a case which includes Russia as the sole party on one of the belligerent sides will more efficiently use the data, conflict behavior, to infer Russian strategic culture. Conversely, when Russia acts through a proxy or jointly with other actors the conflict behavior might simultaneously express the strategic culture of those additional actors. Therefore, to be selected, the case needs to

be an example of the Russian Armed Forces conducting military operations in a conflict to which Russia is a primary party.

From the end of the Cold War to present, eight cases meet the criteria. From these eight cases three are chosen to be analyzed. Ideally, all cases meeting the criteria should have been chosen; however, the scope of this thesis limits the number of included cases. The reasons for not including cases are varied. Firstly, the cyberattack against Estonia in 2007 is not selected because cyberwarfare alone is peripheral to the concept of armed conflict despite the potential for physical destruction of the opponent's infrastructure and resources (See Rid, 2012). Additionally, the access to relevant data is limited, which also is the main reason for not selecting the Lithuanian Secession Event and the Pristina Airport Incident. The first Chechen War occurred when both the Russian society and military were in a state of chaos, fragmentation and resource deficiencies. Additionally, the second Chechen War is included. Finally, the Rebellion in Donbas is not chosen due to its indeterminate character, lack of data, uncertainties and controversies. Thus, the sample of cases include the 1999 Second Chechen War, the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, and the 2014 Russian Invasion of Crimea. Furthermore, the cases are close to be evenly distributed on both sides of the influential reform of the Russian Armed Forces that started in 2008 (Trenin 2016, p. 23). This will increase the ability to observe any change in the strategic culture associated with this reform.

Conflict	Timeframe	Actors	Meeting criteria	Selected	Reference
Lithuanian secession event	1991	Soviet Union – Lithuania SSR	Yes	No	US ASOC, 2015
Internal conflict in Transnistria	1990-1992	Russian affiliated Transnistria - Moldova	No	No	Grigas, 2016
Internal conflict in South Ossetia	1991-1992	Russian affiliated South Ossetia – Georgia	No	No	Grigas, 2016
Internal conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh	1991-1994	Armenia – Azerbaijan[2]	No	No	Grigas, 2016
Internal conflict in Abkhazia	1992-1993	Russian affiliated Abkhazia – Georgia	No	No	Kozhokin, 1996
Tajikistan Civil War	1992-1997	Government assisted by Russia – Islamic opposition	No	No	Dubnov, 1996
First Chechen War	1994-1996	Russia – Chechen Republic	Yes	No	Van Herpen, 2014
Pristina airport incident	1999	Russia	Yes	No	BBC, 2000
Second Chechen War	1999-2000	Russia – Chechen Republic	Yes	Yes	Van Herpen, 2014
Internal conflict in South-Ossetia	2004	Russian affiliated South Ossetia – Georgia	No	No	Welt, 2010
Cyberattack against Estonia[3]	2007	Russia – Estonia	Yes	No	Deibert et al., 2012
2008 Russo-Georgian War	2008	Russia – Georgia	Yes	Yes	Bowker, 2011
2014 Invasion of Crimea	2014	Russia – Ukraine	Yes	Yes	Grigas, 2016
Rebellion in Donbas	2014-	Russia and Russian affiliated rebels – Ukraine	Yes[4]	No	Grigas, 2016
Syrian Civil War	2015-	Russian affiliated Syrian government – various rebel groups	No	No	BBC, 2015b

Figure 1

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[2] Russia active on both sides (Grigas, 2016, p. 4).

[3] Cyberattack against banking and public management services (Deibert, Rohozinski and Crete-Nishihata, 2012, p. 4).

[4] It is uncertain whether Russia can be treated as a primary party or not. However, there are several authors claiming that Russia was so heavily involved after the initial revolts that they can be treated as the most influential party (see Jacobs and Lasconjarias, 2015, p. 8; Rácz, 2015, pp. 11, 68-69; United States Army Special Operations Command (US ASOC), 2015).

In the plethora of case study types this thesis falls within the category of a theory-guided idiographic case study. According to J. S. Levy, this type of case study aims to "describe, explain, interpret, and/or understand a single case as an end in itself" (Levy, 2008, p. 4). This process is guided by a theoretical framework, that is, "explicitly structured by a well-developed conceptual framework that focuses attention on some theoretically specified aspects of reality and neglects others" (Levy, 2008, p. 4). More specifically, this thesis consists of three individual idiographic, theory-guided case studies which are combined into one comparative analysis. As such, the scope and purpose of this analysis is partly hypothesis-generating. Hypothesis-generation, the identification of viable hypotheses that can be subsequently tested, is viewed as one of case studies' primary fortes (Gerring, 2007, p. 39). Within the analysis of this thesis, the cases are compared to define general trends in Russian strategic culture. This generates a conceptual framework, explaining Russian use of military force after the Cold War, that can be applied and expanded beyond the individual cases themselves.

Obviously, the primary source of data in this thesis is historical details describing Russian conflict behavior. However, the unobserved strategic culture can manifest itself in ways other than just conflict behavior. For example, formal documents describing Russian strategy and foreign policy indicate what strategic culture is dominant in the Russian strategic community. Military doctrine, what Gray calls "an intermediate function (…) between ideas and behaviour," is another example of manifestations of strategic culture (Gray, 1999a, pp. 35-36). This thesis will take advantage of other data sources, such as formal documents and doctrines, to strengthen the understanding of strategic culture. However, the author's indisposition to use sources in Russian, and the reliance on mostly secondary sources are significant drawbacks to this thesis.

HYPOTHETICAL MODELS OF RUSSIAN STRATEGIC CULTURE

This chapter will present three hypothetical models of Russian strategic culture, which are chosen for their relevance and diversity. They will aid the interpretation of the historical details in the case analyses. It is important to note that these models are not mutual exclusive, and none of them is expected to be an absolute match.

Hybrid warfare

Hybrid warfare is a concept with many definitions and little common ground. Additionally, the term itself has evolved extensively through contributions from various authors. Early concepts of hybrid warfare are very different from the sense indicated by modern definitions. Thus, it is important to retrace the history of hybrid warfare.

Major W. J. Nemeth used the term in an academic setting for the first time in 2002. He studied how the Chechen society laid the foundations for a very effective resistance. The combination of a modern and a traditional society, a hybrid society, enabled a hybrid form of warfare. Chechen leaders were able to successfully combine conventional military methods with the loyalty and social mobilization of a traditional society (Rácz, 2015, pp. 27-28).

However, the most famous author studying hybrid warfare is probably F. G. Hoffman. He is often regarded as the inventor of the concept. In an article from 2005, co-authored by Lt. General J. N. Mattis, hybrid warfare was described as the simultaneous existence of several modes of warfare or conflict. They used General C. Krulak's "three block war" concept, consisting of a warfighting "block," a humanitarian "block" and a peacekeeping "block," and added a fourth. This fourth "block" was the informational battlespace (Mattis and Hoffman, 2005, pp. 18-19). Building on this analysis, Hoffman presented a new article in 2009 where he elaborated on the concept of hybrid warfare in light of the spectacular successes of Hezbollah during the Israeli invasion of Southern Lebanon in 2006. He stated that hybrid wars "can be conducted by both states and a variety of nonstate actors," and they "incorporate a full range of modes of warfare, including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts that include indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder" (Hoffman, 2009, p. 36). However, the simultaneous application of both conventional and irregular components fighting coordinated in the same theater, the characteristics of "compound wars," was not sufficient to constitute a hybrid threat. According to Hoffman, in order to be classified as a hybrid threat, there must be fusion and synergy effects of multiple

modes of warfare, not only at the strategic level of war, but also at the operational and even the tactical level (Hoffman, 2009, p. 36). This distinction, the synchronization and leadership at the operational level of war, is very accommodating for a functioning conceptualization of hybrid warfare. Most conflicts include components of conventional and irregular warfare; examples of the detailed synchronization and leadership of conventional and irregular forces at the operational level are rarer.

The contemporary literature on hybrid warfare is both varied and abundant. Especially the period after the 2014 Russian Invasion of Crimea has produced many descriptions of the concept. Generally, there are two perspectives: that the Russian actions in Crimea and the Donbas are indicators of a novel Russian hybrid warfare doctrine; and skepticism to the notion that the methods used by the Russians are something essentially new (Renz, 2016a, pp. 283-284). The proponents of a Russian hybrid warfare doctrine are known to retrace the development through several articles by Russian authors; the most notorious is an article by Russian Armed Forces Chief of Staff General V. Gerasimov from 2013. Gerasimov wrote about future conflict and the importance of a scientific approach. He warned that future conflict would hinge on effective use of non-military means at a significantly higher degree than before. Additionally, the transition between war and peace will be more blurred and ambiguous, and the fighting will take place on the entire battlefield, often at the same time (Gerasimov, 2013). Later, Colonel S. G. Chekinov and Lt. General S. A. Bogdanov expanded on Gerasimov's arguments. They reiterated the importance of non-military measures, the informational battlespace and asymmetry in future conflict, and coined this phenomena New Generation Warfare (NGW) (Chekinov and Bogdanov, 2013, 19-20). However, the critics of the hybrid warfare doctrine claim that Gerasimov, Chekinov and Bogdanov were describing the threat of Western influence and intervention, and not the desire to establish a native Russian hybrid warfare doctrine (Renz, 2016a, p. 286). Additionally, the central Russian articles are filled with references to a perceived Western use of information operations and propaganda to destabilize target countries. For example, Gerasimov's article seems to have been written as a response to the Arab Spring, and underscores the Russian need to prepare itself for this kind of threat. The articles also emphasize the enhancement of precision strike capabilities and the use of robotic weapons, which are neither irregular nor non-military.

There is no commonly accepted definition of hybrid warfare; however, in order to compare a theoretical concept, such as hybrid warfare, with the cases selected for this thesis, an analysis is reliant on an operationalization of the concept. The lack of a common and scholarly workable definition of hybrid warfare is in fact the core critique to the concept (see Renz and Smith, 2016, part 1). Thus, this analysis needs to choose and specify a definition hybrid warfare, notwithstanding any arbitrariness. Still, it has to be based on the relevant literature and be specific enough to distinguish it from other models.

Firstly, the hybrid warfare model presupposes a synchronization and unified command of both conventional and irregular forces at the operational level of war. The combination of conventional and irregular forces to achieve strategic objectives is far from being novel; it is even common in military history. For example, in the Vietnam War both the conventional forces of the North Vietnamese Army and the irregular forces of the Viet Cong contributed to the overall strategic objectives of North Vietnam. Another example is the invasion of Normandy in World War II. The French Resistance fought alongside the conventional forces of the Allies (Crowdy, 2007, p. 51). One of Hoffman's main considerations when defining hybrid warfare is the distinction between the strategic and operational level of war. He uses the term "compound wars" in cases when irregular and conventional components are combined at the strategic level of war, and the term "hybrid warfare" when they are combined at the operational level (Hoffman, 2009, p. 36). Still, merely using one component to conduct tasks that traditionally fall within the portfolio of other components does not fall under the definition of hybrid warfare in this thesis. For example, using irregular forces as auxiliaries to boost a conventional army with manpower is not sufficient.

Secondly, hybrid warfare, as defined by this thesis, does not solely include conventional and irregular components. The integration of traditionally non-military means into the war effort is also part of the conceptualization of hybrid warfare. The Western proponents of an existing Russian hybrid warfare doctrine, called New Generation Warfare in Russian literature, view Gerasimov's 2013 article as an indirect disclosure of such a doctrine. Gerasimov emphasizes that future and contemporary conflicts are dominated by non-military means. He uses the Arab Spring as an example of how the West can achieve considerable strategic goals with non-military means (Gerasimov, 2013, p. 24). Therefore, a model describing a potential Russian hybrid warfare doctrine needs to include the integrated use of non-military means. Moreover,

the information space and cyberspace are highlighted as particularly important parts of the total battlespace. Conflict success will largely depend on the ability to influence the target population and troops. If the enemy's will to resist is reduced, the strategic objectives can be reached by less, or no, use of conventional military force (Rácz, 2015, pp. 37-38). Adding to that, the NATO conceptualization of Russian hybrid warfare also emphasizes the use of non-military means. The Wales Summit Declaration stated that "hybrid warfare threats, [are threats] where a wide range of overt and covert military, paramilitary, and civilian measures are employed in a highly integrated design" (NATO, 2014, pt. 13). Thus, to be an example of hybrid warfare, two or more different force components need to take advantage of the asymmetry inherent in the component, and be coordinated and led at the operational level of war.

Thirdly, this project's conceptualization of hybrid warfare presupposes the existence of a guide to the employment of hybrid warfare. As a feature of the operational level of war, hybrid warfare is a specific solution to a potential problem. Conversely, strategy is a customized solution to a specific problem. Thus, hybrid warfare is an operational recipe with a logical and specific framework of its employment. Chekinov and Bogdanov, elaborating on their New Generation Warfare, divided a potential war into two different stages, the opening and closing period. In the opening period the opponent will be exposed to a unified information, electronic warfare, air and space, and high-precision strike operation. According to Chekinov and Bogdanov, this opening period will be the "pivotal and critical time of the war" (Chekinov and Bogdanov, 2014, p. 21). The closing period will be the "mopping-up" operation, where conventional forces will roll over remaining resistance. This partitioning of war is relevant for the time period after the outbreak of violence. Still, it shows an emphasis on the psychological preparation of an opponent before the conventional attack (Chekinov and Bogdanov, 2014, p. 22). In a model of hybrid warfare by A. Rácz, based on the events in Ukraine, a potential hybrid warfare campaign is subdivided into three phases. Firstly, a preparatory phase "concentrates on mapping out the strategic, political, economic, social, and infrastructural weaknesses and vulnerabilities of the target country, and creating the necessary means for capitalizing on them." Secondly, an attack phase exploits the weaknesses discovered in the preparatory phase, and includes the initialization of "open, organized [and] armed violence." Finally, a stabilization phase aims at strengthening and legitimizing the gains achieved during the attack

phase (Rácz, 2015, pp. 57-67). Thus, hybrid warfare presupposes a pre-conflict phase, aimed at facilitating for effective and unopposed use of force at a later stage. This pre-conflict phase needs to be continuous and active in order to shape the battlefield for a potential attack phase in a sufficiently and timely manner.

The presence of a strategic culture influenced by the hybrid warfare model is likely when the following indicators are observed in Russian conflict behavior:

- Continuous preparations for war against potential opponents. This can be indicated by preparations, linked to a concrete battleplan, prior to the outbreak of hostilities.
- Conventional, irregular and non-military components integrated and led at an operational level. The integration of three component categories is a stronger indication than two. The more specific and local this coordination is conducted, the stronger the indication of a hybrid warfare strategic culture.
- The hybrid warfare model presupposes that the effect from one component is directly facilitating or enhancing the effect from a component of another category. Further, this effect has to be produced by the component category's uniqueness e.g. not the use of irregular forces as auxiliaries to boost a conventional army with manpower. This implies sophisticated use of asymmetry in warfare.

Deep operations

Another hypothetical model, perhaps overlooked in the current debate, is the Soviet theory of deep operations. Since its formulation in the 1920s, the theory has had a significant impact on Soviet military thinking. Its influence has even reached outside the Soviet Union because of the preeminence of its theorization on operational art (Naveh, 1997, pp. 164-165; Kelly & Brennan, 2009, p. 40). It was the experience of World War I and the Russian Civil War that led to the development of the deep operations theory. World War I showed, with immense brutality, that it was no longer possible to win the war by the victory of one decisive tactical battle. The nineteenth century's paradigm of *Vernichtungsslacht*, victory through decisive battle, was perceived to be proven wrong. This led to the demand for a conceptualization of how tactical battles were going to achieve the strategic objectives of the state. If the enemy could not be beaten by a single blow, there was a need to coordinate and orchestrate a series of single blows so the strategic objective could be achieved (Naveh, 1997, pp. XVI-XIX). Additionally, the Russian Civil War had provided the Russian military elite with influential

experience. The extreme distances and non-linear character of the Civil War had facilitated the notion of "depth" and the primacy of maneuver. That is, the size of the military forces was very small in relation to the vast areas of the Russian empire. Thus, breakthroughs, evasions, and battles through all of the area of operations became commonplace and induced a different view on war than the European linear perspective (Naveh, 1997, pp. 168-169).

The model of deep operations presented in this thesis derives largely from S. Naveh's description of Soviet operational theory. His work has received some notable criticism. J. Kelly and M. Brennan argue that the systems theory used by Naveh as a basis for deep operations theory was not present until the second half of the nineteenth century. Thus, this general theory of systems could not influence the origins of deep operations theory (Kelly and Brennan, 2009, p. 56, note 82). Additionally, Kelly and Brennan are critical to the abstract and psychological features Naveh attributes to deep operations theory. To them, Soviet deep operations theory was about the destruction of the enemy's men and material, and not an indirect and psychological method. In fact, they suggest that Naveh's interpretation of Soviet deep operations theory puts demoralization over destruction similar to J. F. C. Fuller and B. Liddell-Hart (Kelly and Brennan, 2009, pp. 44, 56-58). Still, Kelly and Brennan agree that deep operations theory emphasizes the need to force a systemic collapse in the enemy organization (Kelly and Brennan, 2009, p. 43).

The development of Soviet deep operations theory originated in a unique society of military theorists. Following the turbulent years after World War I, there ensued a "golden age" of Soviet military theorization. In 1924, M. Frunze gathered several influential minds like M. Tukhachevsky, A. Svechin and V. Triandafillov in the General Staff of the newly formed Red Army. This concentration of military *intelligentsia* created the foundation for the forming and implementation of a Soviet deep operations doctrine (Naveh, 1997, pp. 174-175). In 1936, this process culminated with the issue of a field service regulation prescribing a Deep Battle (Naveh, 1997, p. 190). However, this "golden age" came to an abrupt end when Stalin purged many of the prominent officers from 1937 to 1941. The execution or imprisonment of 30,000 out of 80,000 officers in the Red Army contributed greatly to the catastrophic performance during the 1941 German invasion. From 1942, the Red Army regained some of its preoccupation with deep operations theory (Edwards, 2005, pp. 56-57). Then, by the advent of nuclear weapons, the primarily conventional theory of deep operations was seen as less

relevant. In the 1970s, the theory was yet again receiving increased attention when the Soviet Union saw the possibility of a non-nuclear war with the capitalist West (Ziemke, 1983, pp. 31-32). Thus, by the fall of the Soviet Union in 1992, the deep operations theory was at the forefront of Soviet military thinking. The concept of the operational maneuver group, a novel conceptualization of deep operations theory, was conceived and implemented during the 1980s (Edwards, 2005, pp. 59-60). Consequently, Soviet deep operations theory is one of the possible factors influencing Russian military behavior after the end of the Cold War.

The origin of deep operations is linked to the fundamental problems faced by military theorists after World War I. Despite their desperate attempts, the warring parties were unable to determine the outcome of the war with a single decisive battle. Additionally, the armies of the early 1900s had become so large and complex that it was difficult to direct them like a tactical force. Thus, there was a need for an operational level of war that could coordinate and direct the massive forces. Deep operations theory was an answer to these fundamental problems. In essence, the underlying purpose of the military organization changed from destruction of the enemy's main force, to the disruption of the enemy's ability to reach its strategic objective. The emphasis was no longer on a single point, but on the enemy system. The enemy force was seen as indestructible, shaped by the World War I experience; consequently, the disruption of the enemy system, and the coherence of one's own, became the primary concern. This systemic approach, as explained by S. Naveh, saw the synergetic effects of coordination and coherence between an army's subsystems as the target of the operational effort. The disruption of these synergetic effects would deal an operational, or systemic, shock to the enemy (Naveh, 1997, pp. 16-17). Note that Kelly and Brennan object to the premise that the enemy force was seen as indestructible; on the contrary, the annihilation of the enemy force was still the proposed end-state. M. Tukhachevsky and A. Svechin disagreed on this premise themselves. On the one hand, Tukhachevsky saw the possibility of the destruction of the enemy force through offensive action; on the other, Svechin claimed the enemy force could not be destroyed and argued for an attritional approach (Kelly and Brennan, 2009, pp. 40-42, note 54). This thesis emphasizes the systemic perspective and treats the question of destructibility as less relevant to this perspective. Whether the end-state includes the destruction of the enemy force, or not, the struggle will be focused at the enemy system and

how to deal an operational shock. According to Tukhachevsky, who won the debate, this meant a defensive approach based on offensive action (Kelly and Brennan, 2009, p. 42).

The infliction of an operational shock to an enemy system is achieved by separating its subsystems and disrupting the enemy system's synergetic "whole." This is accomplished along a linear dimension, parallel to the frontline of the opposing forces, and a dimension along the depth of the enemy system (Naveh, 1997, pp. 16-17). An operational force needs to strike through the enemy's defenses to gain access to the depth of his system. Then, it is possible to fragment the opponent's system through a striking maneuver into the depth of the enemy defensive system; that is, separate the defensive line from its reserves, sever communications lines, block axes of withdrawal, and other actions that will disrupt the coherence of the enemy operational force (Naveh, 1997, pp. 209-214). To achieve this fragmentation effect, Soviet deep operations theory prescribed the use of echelons of forces and attack columns, rather than a linear approach. A first echelon – the holding force – would attack and entangle the defenders, and then the second echelon – the strike force – would penetrate the defenses and strike into the depth. The strike force, a highly mobile and powerful unit, achieves the fragmentation effect of the enemy system. Additionally, airborne ground forces, inserted into the depth, contribute another striking force; thus, increasing the fragmentation effect and the total operational shock dealt to the enemy. Also, long range fire support, including nuclear and chemical weapons, can accomplish the same effect as a striking force. Importantly, a simultaneous employment, rather than sequential, will enhance the operational shock (Naveh, 1997, pp. 215-229). To sum up, the simultaneous employment of long-range fire support, mobile and airborne forces into the depth of the enemy defensive system, disrupting the enemy's system coherence, will create operational shock and deprive the enemy of its ability to reach its strategic objectives.

A more recent addition to the theory, the Operational Maneuver Group, came about in the 1980s. The Red Army contemplated infiltrating tank divisions behind NATO lines in an early stage of a war with NATO. Thus, by creating a threat on the far side of the defensive center of mass, the Red Army would be able to deal an operational shock to NATO. The units performing this maneuver would be powerful formations consisting of tanks and customized support. These units were designated Operational Maneuver Groups and did not belong to an echelon (Glantz, 1991, pp. 227-228; Naveh, 1997, p. 167). According to Naveh, this is an example of

the second method of creating operational shock, the "turning maneuver." A striking force penetrating beyond the defender's center of mass will create a physical and cognitive challenge to the enemy. Physically, it will place a threat between the defensive force and its source of support and reinforcement. Cognitively, the striking force will compel the enemy to shift its attention from its strategic objective to the striking force. In short, it will deprive the enemy its possibility to reach its objectives by placing an operational force on the far side of the defensive center of mass; thus, creating operational shock (Naveh, 1997, pp. 211-215).

Finally, deep operations theory includes considerations of the enemy system's vulnerabilities, how to create situations where these vulnerabilities can be exploited, and the actual exploitation of them. Further, it is imperative to keep the enemy unaware of the impending operation. Thus, the creation and exploitation of a situation from which the operational force can neutralize the enemy's opportunities to reach its objectives hinges, to a large degree, on the use of deception and surprise. The echeloning and dispersion of one's own forces along the depth dimension also creates its own vulnerabilities. For example, flanks are left vulnerable, supply axes are open to attacks, and the ability to mass forces is reduced. Thus, surprise and deception become necessary to avoid giving the defender an opportunity to concentrate its forces, threatening the attacker's dispersed forces. The use of deception and surprise on the operational level of war is named *maskirovka* in Russian doctrines (Naveh, 1997, pp. 18-19, 27, note 66).

There are two characteristics of the deep operations model necessary to inflict operational shock. Firstly, in order to access the depth of the enemy system a penetration of the defenses is essential. This penetration is not necessarily very tangible and violent, like a concentration of conventional firepower. As Kasapoglu noted in a NATO research paper, the Russian annexation of Crimea might have been a deep operations penetration, but with the use of more unorthodox means (Kasapoglu, 2015, p. 2). Secondly, deep operations theory requires secrecy, surprise and deception in order to disguise its own inherent vulnerabilities and avoid enemy countermeasures. Indeed, the history of deep operations theory has primarily been concerned with the conduct of operations in major conventional war; however, there have been efforts to define it on an abstract level. As such, it is possible to expand the applicability of deep operations theory to other subtypes of warfare. For example, cyberwarfare can be used to stun and pacify a defense system allowing conventional forces to penetrate.

The presence of a strategic culture influenced by the deep operations model is likely when the following indicators are observed in Russian conflict behavior:

- The dealing of operational shock to the opponent's military organization through fragmentation and disruption of its coherence. This is achieved by penetrating and inserting primarily conventional forces into the depth of the opponent's defense system. Non-military means as well as both conventional and irregular military forces facilitate for the penetration.
- Primarily a conventional effort. Irregular forces and non-military means have a secondary role until the strategic objectives are reached and the situation is permissible for political negotiations.
- The use of *maskirovka*, such as secrecy and deception, to shield the inherent vulnerabilities in a deep operation framework.

Expansive deterrence

The third model of Russian use of military force emphasizes the signaling of deterrence. According to K. Bruusgaard, the Russian conception of deterrence is more expansive than the Western one. More specifically, it includes elements of traditional deterrence, containment and coercion; that is, all applicable measures aimed at conflict prevention. Thus, the Russian ability to pursue its national interests without military opposition is also part of the model of *expansive deterrence*. This expansive conceptualization of deterrence broadens the range of relevant measures. Both nuclear and non-nuclear military measures become part of a deterrence strategy. Interestingly, non-military measures can also be integrated into an expansive deterrence model (Bruusgaard, 2016, pp. 7-11). Bruusgaard uses the term *strategicheskoe sderzhivanie* (strategic deterrence) which is "part of [Russian] doctrine and strategy," and is the method with which Russia realizes its strategic goals and defense policy (Bruusgaard, 2016, pp. 7-8). This is also where *expansive deterrence* parts ways with *strategicheskoe sderzhivanie*; the former is a model of Russian strategic culture and the latter a strategy.

The most obvious deterrent available to Russia is nuclear weapons. Usually, nuclear weapons are divided into two subcategories: strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons. The former type is designed to be used in a retaliatory strike if under attack by weapons of mass destruction. Such use of nuclear weapons is best illustrated by the bipolar stalemate during

the Cold War, when the Soviet Union and the USA achieved mutual assured destruction. Russia's Soviet legacy enabled a continuation of a strategic nuclear arsenal and second-strike capability (Adamsky, 2015, p. 13). However, this is not the only mode for a nuclear strategy. Nuclear weapons might also be used against conventional threats, either through the direct targeting of the enemy's conventional forces or as a de-escalation measure. In these circumstances non-strategic, often called tactical, nuclear weapons are most relevant. These weapons typically have lower yield, shorter range and are possible to deploy in the field. With the issue of the 1993 military doctrine, Russia formally declared its willingness to use nuclear weapons as a response to large-scale conventional threats to core national interests. The threshold is lowered in subsequent Russian military doctrines; first-use of nuclear weapons was later authorized for conflicts on a regional scale (Adamsky, 2015, p. 14).

The cornerstone of Russian deterrence strategy is its nuclear capability. However, NATO expansion and the American ballistic missile shield program showed the Russians that a nuclear deterrent was not sufficient to deter threats to core Russian national interests. These considerations have led to an increased Russian preoccupation with non-nuclear deterrence. Most importantly, the increased utility of precision guided munitions (PGM) strike systems, illustrated by recent NATO air bombing campaigns, and the asymmetric use of special operations forces have spurred the Russian Armed Forces to acquire these capabilities (Adamsky, 2015, pp. 31-35). Accordingly, the 2014 military doctrine made references to deterrence measures other than nuclear weapons. Still, these non-nuclear measures are meant to augment nuclear weapons, not replace them. In fact, it is the combination of nuclear and non-nuclear tools that is expected to create a more suitable deterrent. For example, PGMs can be used to inflict severe costs on a target country, as a final warning and an additional step on the escalation ladder, before limited use of nuclear weapons is authorized (Bruusgaard, 2016, pp. 12-14). Another aspect of the nuclear-conventional relationship is the Russian concern that the US developments of ballistic missile defenses and "global strike" capabilities can potentially alter the Russian ability of nuclear retaliation. Strike assets with conventional warheads can effectively supplement nuclear weapons in the effort to destroy the opponent's nuclear retaliatory capability. Then, a ballistic missile defense can neutralize the reduced second-strike launch of missiles, and, at least in theory, create a prospect of victory in strategic nuclear war. Thus, technological trends can increase the significance of

conventional weapons in the strategic balance between Russia and NATO, and it is imperative for Russian strategists to meet this severe challenge to Russia's position as an equal nuclear power compared to the USA (Rumer, 2016, p. 12).

Obviously, conventional forces are an instrument for defending and attacking territory in large-scale armed conflicts. However, conventional forces do have other important functions. According to B. Renz, Russia, as an aspiring major power, desires a strong conventional military as an attribute of state power. It can be used in "non-physical ways to deter, coerce, compel, swagger, reassure, or dissuade other actors" (Renz, 2016b, p. 27). She also suggests that military "swaggering," coupled with the interventions in Ukraine and Syria, is aimed at bringing global prestige and is a means of "getting heard" to Russia (Renz, 2016b, p. 31). These non-physical functions of conventional forces fit the expansive deterrence model. Consequently, conflict behavior, involving conventional forces, cannot be judged in isolation. According to the model of expansive deterrence, the use of conventional military force has to be seen in a broader perspective, where conventional forces have important functions even when they are not meant to be used.

The model of expansive deterrence can also include non-military measures. As such, measures targeting the informational space are central. The effect of informational measures can be broadly divided into two categories: Firstly, information campaigns can enhance the effect of already existing deterrents. Influencing the population and decision-makers in a target country can manipulate their strategic cost calculus of harming Russian national interests (Adamsky, 2015, pp. 35-37). The method of manipulating the informational space is often termed reflexive control in Russian discourse. Reflexive control is a Soviet legacy concept, and can be defined as "a means of conveying specially prepared information to a partner or an opponent to incline him to voluntarily make the predetermined decision desired by the initiator of the action" (Thomas, 2015, p. 456). Secondly, non-military measures can have a deterring effect by inflicting costs to the target country. Cyberwarfare is an increasingly relevant example of such non-military deterrent. A cyberattack can have severe consequences and inflict significant costs on a target country. Additionally, it is perceived that a cyberattack will, to a lesser degree, induce a retaliatory strike with military means; thus, contributing to deterrence and coercion without escalating the conflict to armed struggle (Adamsky, 2015, pp. 35-36). Consequently, cyber capabilities can mitigate the Russian lack of an indisputable

conventional deterrent toward NATO, and lessen the gap between diplomatic accommodations and conventional warfare. However, the utilization of a cyber deterrent creates a notable paradox. Usually, cyberattacks are conducted covertly in order to avoid responsibility, retaliatory responses and countermeasures. Consequently, the deterring effect is dubious because the target country is, by design, left unaware of the origin of the cyberattack (Bruusgaard, 2016, p. 15). Still, traditional diplomatic tools of coercion, like economic sanctions, are still applicable to the concept of expansive deterrence. The overall impact on a target country's cost calculus is dependent on both military and non-military means.

The model of expansive deterrence is in many ways similar to the concept of cross-domain coercion (see Adamsky, 2015). The two concepts differ mainly in their anticipation of effectiveness. Cross-domain coercion does not include uncertainties about the existence and operationalization of non-military means, and expects this methodological framework to be effective. In essence, cross-domain coercion consists of a continuous informational manipulation of all audiences, that are designed to accommodate the combination and use of military and non-military means. Nuclear signaling is used to create a "cordon" against third-party intervention, thus, establishing an immune sphere of action (Adamsky, 2015, p. 37). Thus, according to "cross-domain coercion" Russia is participating in an informational struggle with its adversaries to create favorable conditions for its pursuit of national interests. For example, the "little green men" appearing in Crimea during the Russian annexation created conditions for minimalization of forceful opposition, while nuclear signaling was aimed at pacifying the West (Adamsky, 2015, pp. 37-38).

Building on the concept of *strategicheskoe sderzhivanie*, the expansive deterrence model of strategic culture has three important characteristics. Firstly, it is universal, which allows all means to be used in all situations. As noted earlier, the model of expansive deterrence entails coercion and containment, in addition to deterrence. Thus, it is a concept that can be used to achieve all three purposes, applying nuclear, non-nuclear military, and non-military means (Bruusgaard, 2016, pp. 17-18). Secondly, expansive deterrence is characterized by continuousness; that is, it applies to all stages on the continuum between "deep peace" and "total war." There is no substantial distinction between wartime and peace; however, some measures are more relevant to a certain conflict situation than others. Accordingly, expansive

deterrence allows the use of more brute force in the case of addressing developments during peacetime, which are perceived to lead to future war (Bruusgaard, 2016, pp. 17-18). Thirdly, it blends deterring and coercive effects making it a broader foreign policy tool. The broadening of the concept increases its relevance in wartime. When military conflict breaks out, and traditional deterrence is perceived to have failed, expansive deterrence continues to be relevant through the inclusion of coercion in the concept (Bruusgaard, 2016, pp. 17-18). Interestingly, measures at the lower end of the deterrence scale need some sort of demonstration to be effective. Without the knowledge of subtle measures in the target country, a deterrence and coercive effect cannot materialize. Also, for military measures to be effective in the expansive deterrence model, there has to be some sort of signal in order for a target country to be coerced or deterred; thus, a secret or deceptive military operation is in danger of lacking the signal crucial to deter or coerce. This applies to nearly all measures. However, nuclear weapons, situated at the high end of the scale, are deterring a potential rival by the mere existence of immense destructive power (Bruusgaard, 2016, p. 18).

On a final note, it appears that many contemporary Russian theorists are inspired by A. A. Svechin, who was influential in the 1920s and 1930s (Thomas, 2015, p. 453). He stated that "[i]t is necessary to work out a particular line of strategic conduct for each war, and each war represents a partial case, requiring the establishment of its own peculiar logic, and not the application of some sort of model" (Thomas, 2015, p. 453). In other words, he warns against any predetermined operational level model, and implies that each conflict must be solved with a unique and customized approach. Thus, if the Russian strategic culture is shaped by Svechin's thoughts, a correlation of conflict behavior across different cases of Russian conflicts will be more difficult to discern. However, the expansive deterrence model, emphasizing universal and continuous use of the all measures available is compatible with Svechin's flexible and idiosyncratic perspective. Thus, the expansive deterrence model expects a creative, adaptive, and broad mix of measures applied in the conflict.

The presence of a strategic culture influenced by the expansive deterrence model is likely when the following indicators are observed in Russian conflict behavior:

- Emphasis on signaling. The conflict behavior constitutes a signal that is designed to be relevant in a future political environment.

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- Demonstration of non-military means without direct and imminent instrumental effect. In order to display the will and ability to use non-military means to induce costs to an opponent, the means need to be demonstrated.

- Universal, continuous, and blended use of nuclear, non-nuclear military and non-military means. The effort to deter and coerce an opponent is continued into the conflict and conducted with a broad mix of measures. Different measures are customized and then directed at specific audiences.

RESULTS

1999 Second Chechen War

Chechnya was an autonomous republic within the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic (RSFSR) and continued as an autonomous republic within the Russian Federation after the collapse of the USSR. However, similar to many other autonomous entities in the USSR, the disintegration of the larger union in the early 1990s brought with it a wave of nationalism. The Chechen people had been exposed to severe oppression during the period of Soviet rule. In 1944, as a measure of collective punishment, the entire Chechen population was forcibly displaced to present day Kazakhstan and this historical legacy created a solid foundation for nationalist and separatist sentiments (Cheterian, 2009b, pp. 225-227). In 1991, the Chechens declared their independence, revolted against Soviet authorities in Chechnya, set up their own government, and elected D. Dudayev, a former Soviet Air Force Major-General, as their president (Cheterian, 2009b, pp. 229-232). The Russian Federation was very concerned about the ramifications of Chechen independence for the integrity of the federation, especially in the North Caucasus. Therefore, on December 11, 1994, a large Russian force invaded Chechnya. Supported by aircraft, tanks, artillery, and armored vehicles, 25,000 soldiers approached Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, from three directions. The Russians hoped for a rapid victory; P. Grachev, the Minister of Defense at the time, boasted that "One airborne regiment would be enough to solve all the questions in two hours" (Cheterian, 2009b, p. 257). This was not to be the case. After just under two years, approximately 11,500 combatants and 35,000 civilians had been killed (Hughes, 2007, pp. 81-82), and the war ended in a Russian defeat (Hughes, 2007, p. 87). Most of the Russian forces had to withdraw from the Chechen republic and the Chechens secured a high degree of self-governance, but had to remain within the Russian Federation (Hughes, 2007, pp. 87-92).

In August 1999, Chechen jihadists invaded neighboring Dagestan in an effort to start a Caucasian jihad. Then, in September the same year, several apartment buildings were blown up in Moscow, Volgodonsk and Buinaksk, allegedly by Chechens, increasing the demands for action coming from the Russian population (Hughes, 2007, p. 110). Putin, then prime minister, was a central proponent of military intervention, and he saw an opportunity to increase his popularity by showing resolve. There are some speculations that the Second Chechen War was partly designed to assure Putin's victory in the upcoming presidential election (Hughes,

2007, pp. 110-111). There are several discrepancies related to the apartment building bombings that point to a Russian "false flag" operation. These discrepancies include the use of uncommon military grade explosives and detonators; the killing of people claiming to know the truth about the incidents; the disruption of official investigative commissions; and the apprehension of suspects that turned out to be FSB agents, who had been preparing a bomb in the basement of an apartment building in Ryazan (Van Herpen, 2014, pp. 177-183). Still, these speculations are not confirmed in any way. What is less uncertain is the internal turmoil, rising crime levels and lack of effective governance during the Chechen years of independence between 1996 and 1999 (Hughes, 2001, p. 34). When the violence expanded to areas outside the Chechen borders, as it did in the August 1999 attacks into Dagestan, the federal government was not prepared to sit idle.

September 22, 1999, the Russian so-called "counter-terrorism operation" started with an extensive aerial bombardment of targets within Chechnya (Van Herpen, 2014, p. 187). While it was called a "counter-terrorism operation" it was directed at defeating a separatist and anti-federal rebellion. The end-state involved control of the Chechen population and territory; in other words, a counterinsurgency operation (see Miakonkov, 2011). As elaborated below, the Russian version of counterinsurgency was significantly different from the NATO version implemented in Iraq and Afghanistan.[5] The aerial bombardment was followed by a Russian occupation of the northern parts of Chechnya in October and the encirclement of Grozny in late 1999 (Kramer, 2004, p. 8). A total of more than 100,000 Russian servicemen participated in the invasion (Cheterian, 2009b, p. 348); this was two to three times the force of the 1994 invasion (Miakinkov, 2011, p. 653). Grozny became encircled and isolated, and was subsequently totally devastated by Russian heavy firepower. Conversely to the First Chechen War, land forces did not enter the city before artillery and air strikes had pounded Chechen rebels for weeks. The result was a successful seizure of the city, but at a steep price for the civilian population (Hodgson, 2003, pp. 72-74). The Russian campaign continued with military success, at least compared to the 1994 invasion, and the "counter-terrorism operation" changed incrementally to a more political effort. A puppet regime and locally recruited militia forces were installed to "Chechenize" the conflict (Cheterian, 2009b, pp. 350-351). On April

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[5] The US counterinsurgency doctrine, called COIN, emphasizes controlling, securing, and supporting the population, and the legitimacy of the counterinsurgent force in the eyes of the population (FM 3-24: 3-1, 3-2).

16, 2009, almost ten years after the second invasion, Russian officials stated the war was over (Van Herpen, 2014, p. 187). However, the Russian-backed Chechen leaders continued to operate independently of the federal government. For example, militiamen from the so-called *Kadyrovtsy*, loyal to the Chechen strongman Ramzan Kadyrov, killed another Chechen militia-leader in Moscow in 2006. This happened during an alleged arrest attempt by Chechens operating far outside of their jurisdiction (Smid & Mares, 2015, pp. 662-663). These kinds of incidents show the Russian Federation still has not regained complete constitutional control of the Chechen Republic and is reluctantly accepting the situation.

The 1999 Russian invasion of Chechnya was prepared and allegedly planned in advance. Obviously, many of the lessons identified in the First Chechen War were addressed in the Russian Armed Forces in the inter-war period and improvements were implemented. The most significant changes were increased training in mountain combat, better coordination between forces from different governmental ministries and agencies, and higher readiness on a limited number of units (Oliker, 2001, p. 36). New strategies and tactics for how a second war should be won were also envisaged. For example, the Russians determined that they would not enter urban combat in a new war. This decision was based on both the desire to avoid a second catastrophe similar to the New Year's Eve attack on Grozny in 1995, and to exploit the Russian advantages in long range firepower (Oliker, 2001, p. 38). In July 1998, a large exercise, involving 15,000 servicemen and several ministries and agencies, was conducted in North Caucasus. The scenario of the exercise involved "mass attacks by 'bandit' formations and individual terrorist attacks," clearly a preparation for a potential new operation in Chechnya (Oliker, 2001, p. 37). Additionally, the exact time of the decision to go to war is not known, but some authors speculate that the decision was already made in May 1999 (see Hodgson, 2003, pp. 68-69), or even in March (see Ware, 2005, pp. 79-115). The sheer size of the invasion force does also indicate that preparations were made weeks or months before the start of the operation. A notable detail in the lead-up to the invasion is the lack of clear ultimatums, threats or signaling aimed at the Chechen authorities. The labelling of Chechnya as a "terrorist state" and the invasion as a "counter-terrorist operation" effectively closed the Chechen opportunity to negotiate or make concessions (Hughes, 2007, p. 112; Kramer, 2004, p. 12).

One of the most apparent differences between the 1994 and 1999 invasions of Chechnya was the emphasis on operational speed. In 1994, the invasion was launched on December 11 and the assault on Grozny was conducted already on December 31. The assault had been planned to take place much earlier, but was delayed for several days due to demonstrations and roadblocks by civilians in neighboring republics (Cheterian, 2009b, pp. 256-261). On the other hand, the second invasion in 1999 was conducted in a more methodological and incremental manner. First, an aerial campaign that started in mid-September was aimed at destroying and isolating rebel forces without risking ground forces, a technique inspired by the aerial campaign against Yugoslavia earlier that year (Hodgson, 2003, p. 67). Second, surrounding and isolating the rebel forces was a major concern in the second invasion. Chechnya as a whole was isolated through force emplacements along the borders of neighboring republics and at the Terek River in the north. Similarly, each village and town was also meticulously surrounded before the rebels were destroyed (Hodgson, 2003, p. 69). Finally, Grozny was seized February 4, 2000 after a complete encirclement and blockade of the city and several weeks of heavy shelling starting in December the previous year (Cheterian, 2009b, p. 349). Thus, preparatory firepower and a piecemeal approach replaced speed and audacity. The first invasion, more focused on operational speed and in combination with a three-pronged attack, resembles the model of deep operations. The Russian forces sought penetration through surprise, multiple entry points and operational speed. In 1999, the emphasis on operational speed was played down and the operation was conducted in a more protracted and methodical manner. However, the concept of fragmentation and degradation of the system's synergetic "whole" can still be recognized in the Second Chechen War. The aerial campaign prioritized the destruction of Chechen infrastructure; Russian aircraft destroyed 30 bridges, 200 km of roads and temporarily blocked 12 mountain passes in September 1999 (Hodgson, 2003, p. 68). Additionally, the rebels' ability to cooperate and function as a system was reduced through the Russian encirclements and piecemeal destruction of smaller rebel forces. However, this approach is also compatible with other models of strategic culture; for example, the contemporary Western COIN doctrine includes a shape-clear-hold-build technique emphasizing a methodical isolation and then removal of insurgent presence from the area (see US, DOD, 2014, ch. 9). Thus, these models may as well be the inspiration of the Russian approach in the Second Chechen War.

What is similar in the two campaigns is the primacy of conventional forces. Arguably, the Russian "counter-terrorism operation" can even be said to be based primarily on conventional military formations; at least initially. There are some reports of local militias being used during the invasion, but mostly in conventional roles. The most notable of the militias, which also participated in the assault of Grozny, were loyal to B. Gantamirov. Paradoxically, Gantamirov was also the former mayor of Grozny (Oliker, 2001, p. 44). Throughout the invasion, irregular warfare tasks were conducted by conventional forces. For example, conventional Russian Army forces were used to conduct search operations amongst the civilian population. These operations, also called *zachistki* (meaning "stripping off" in Russian), were conducted after larger forces had isolated an area, for example a village. Then, the search party went from house to house sweeping out suspected rebels or people assisting the them. Severe brutality and arbitrary violence characterized these searches. Extrajudicial executions, torture and looting were common (Van Herpen, 2014, pp. 191-193). At a later stage in the campaign, locally recruited militias assumed these operations (Hughes, 2007, pp. 119-120).

Despite the combination of conventional and irregular forces, they did not fulfill mutual enforcing roles in the initial phase of the invasion. Gantamirov's militia was used in conventional roles and did not contribute to the war effort by creating advantages through their asymmetry; they were merely auxiliary forces boosting the conventional army (Oliker, 2001, pp. 43-44). Thus, this instance of Russian use of local militias does not fit the hybrid warfare model. As previously mentioned, the most influential militia in post-invasion Chechnya was the *Kadyrovtsy*, the forces loyal to the Chechen strong-man R. Kadyrov, who eventually became the dominant leader in Chechnya. The federal government strongly encouraged his success and created an effective puppet regime (Smid and Mares, 2015, pp. 656-658). This "chechenization" of the "counter-terrorist operation" exploited the militias' knowledge of the local political situation, and the fact that casualties and the inconvenient consequences of oppressive behavior were linked to Chechen actors and less to the federal government. However, this development did not constitute an operational level integration; rather, the implementation was made at the strategic level of war. Moreover, the local militias pursued their own agendas and the cooperation with federal forces was lukewarm at best, if not hostile in certain circumstances (Smid and Mares, 2015, p. 658). Thus, the post-invasion use of locally recruited militia was not compatible with the hybrid warfare model either.

However, the Russian "counter-terrorism operation" was partly a conventional invasion, and partly a counterinsurgency operation, thus automatically combining conventional operations and irregular counterinsurgency methods. Regardless of what task the irregular forces were set to achieve, the campaign, by its purpose, needed to extensively combine conventional and irregular activities. Thus, the Russian operational level was required to direct and synchronize both conventional and irregular activities. The hybrid warfare model is then, by definition, relevant to Russian conduct of the Second Chechen War. Still, the lack of Russian emphasis on utilizing effective irregular methods and non-military measures is telling of their degree of cultural susceptibility to the hybrid warfare model. Firstly, the Russian federal authorities did not favor a political process to influence the Chechen population and to capitalize on the gains on the battlefield; they merely presented demands (Malek, 2009b, pp. 94-95), and subsequently installed a loyal puppet regime through the Kadyrov clan (Miakinkov, 2011, p. 664). This shows little appreciation for taking advantage of the full spectrum of measures available. Secondly, there were few collateral damage considerations; on the contrary, the use of indiscriminate conventional firepower was one of the most central means to subdue the population (Miakinkov, 2011, p. 674). This indiscriminate use of force can easily have been counterproductive because the Chechen culture emphasized blood feuds and revenge. In cases of excessive use of force, impacting civilians, originally passive Chechens may have become culturally obliged to seek revenge on the Russians. However, Miakonkov argues, based on his study of the Second Chechen War, that the successfulness of the Russian punitive version of counterinsurgency is "not only theoretically plausible but realistically feasible" (Miakinkov, 2011, pp. 673-674). Still, the choice of method indicates a preference for conventional force. These examples indicate a Russian desire to apply conventional force, also in counterinsurgency operations. E. Miakinkov argues the Russians' number one lesson in the First Chechen War was the importance of creating conditions to allow for the use of massive indiscriminate conventional firepower on the Chechens. When successful, both the rebels and the Chechen population would be subdued through protracted and unbearable destruction (Miakinkov, 2011, p. 674). The most important condition that allowed for the Russian use of force in the second war was the ability to control the domestic opinion.

According to the Russians, one of the reasons for the failure in the first Chechen War was the Russian public's moral unwillingness to accept the brutality and casualties of the war. In

particular, the deaths of thousands of Russian conscripts increased the pressure of public opinion to end the war (Miakinkov, 2011, p. 665). During the first war the press had considerable access to the combat zone. Both Russian and Western reporters were embedded with Russian units and even with the rebels. However, in the Second Chechen War both the press and the information available to the public were strictly controlled. Therefore, Russian authorities could effectively portray the campaign as necessary to neutralize terrorists, and to reduce the impact of high casualty rates. This led to a more permissible public opinion in Russia (Oliker, 2001, pp. 62-65; Hodgson, 2007, pp. 75-76). Similarly, the controlling of the media allowed the Russian authorities to avoid some of the criticism from the international community. Still, international disapproval intensified in the months following the invasion. However, the Western "war against terrorism," the response to the September 11 attacks, created a more receptive attitude towards the Russian campaign (Hughes, 2001, p. 38). Another important measure to alleviate the domestic opposition to the war was the introduction of contract soldiers, the *kontraktniki*, and locally recruited militia. The death of a *kontraktniki* or a Chechen militiaman would not create the same emotional reaction in Russia as the death of a young and forcefully conscripted regular soldier (Miakinkov, 2011, pp. 665-666). Thus, the Russian behavior in the Second Chechen War points to a strategic culture that lacks the Western counterinsurgency tenets which emphasize tools other than brute conventional firepower. Additionally, information operations are used to allow this massive use of conventional force. Interestingly, there is little description of the Russian use of information operations to influence the Chechen population directly. Apparently, the Russians relied on the punitive effect of the indiscriminate use of firepower, and the use of torture, mistreatment, and extrajudicial executions.

This emphasis on punitive effects is principally different from Western approaches to counterinsurgency and is present in both Chechen wars. Consequently, it indicates an underlying preference for punitive measures in the Russian strategic culture. As one Russian general put it, "If we are fired at from a house, then we destroy the house. If we are fired at from a village, then we destroy the village" (Malek, 2009b, p. 92). This mindset can be credited the expansive deterrence model of strategic culture; however, the level at which it is meant to have affect is more uncertain. At a local level the destruction of one village would send a message to other villages in the area. Correspondingly, at a Russian national level, the punitive

effect of Russian use of overwhelming military force could deter other separatist movements. In other words, the use of *zachistki*, filtration camps, torture and extrajudicial killings was possibly aimed at showing future potential separatists the harsh consequences of going against the federal government. Still, the domestically-focused strategic communication, emphasizing low levels of casualties and devastation, is somewhat difficult to combine with a deterrent to other potential separatist groups within the Russian Federation. This is also illustrative of the difficulties of synchronizing audience-specific information operations with the expansive deterrence model.

However, there are other salient explanations for the Russian preference for the use of punitive and harsh methods. The Russian concept of *bespredel* originated in the 1990s as a description of criminal conduct in violation "of the old Soviet underworld's unwritten rules;" however, it has later gained a more general meaning of moral "limitless-ness" (Goldberg, 2016, p. 1). Jacob Kipp, an expert on the Russian Army, argues that a culture of *bespredel* exists in the Russian Armed Forces. He elaborates, "Russians come from a tradition that all war is 'total war.' … After you've made the decision that it's right to start a war, there isn't any notion that there can and should be limits on how you conduct the war" (Reynolds, 2000, p. 6). These considerations can indicate that the atrocities and little regard for collateral damage in the Russian Armed Forces during the Second Chechen War were not just a result of deliberate strategic decisions, but also a result of cultural expectations of how warfare should be conducted, from private to president.

The Russian invasion force, and the Russian security forces in general, are usually made up of forces from many different ministries and agencies. For example, the Russian forces in Chechnya consisted of forces from the Ministry of Defense (MoD); the interior ministry (MVD); forces from various security agencies as FSB and GRU; the OMON (special riot police); and others (Kramer, 2004, p. 14). In the First Chechen War, the coordination and joint command of these forces failed immensely. The 1999 invasion showed progress, but there was still a lack of coordination, and even enmity, between the different organizations, resulting in ineffectiveness and fratricide (Oliker, 2001, p. 51). These factors show a low Russian ability for operational level coordination and leadership in the Second Chechen War.

2008 Russo-Georgian War

The start of the 2008 Russo-Georgian War is somewhat difficult to pinpoint. Firstly, clashes and escalations were widespread all through the summer of 2008. For example, there were incursions into Georgian airspace; bombings on both sides of the cease-fire line; and Georgian villages were shelled using heavy weapons, allegedly by South-Ossetian separatists (Malek, 2009a, p. 229; Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (IIFFMCG), 2009, p. 19). Secondly, it is also difficult to establish which party initiated major military operations, though Russia was arguably the party responsible for international aggression through their intervention into Georgian sovereign territory. Despite these uncertainties, there are several interesting aspects of the 2008 Russo-Georgian War that can elucidate Russian strategic culture.

The background for the conflict dates back to the break-up of the Soviet Union. When Georgia declared its independence in 1991, the "autonomous regions" of South-Ossetia, Adjara and Abkhazia within the Georgian SSR became part of the new Georgian state. This has fueled an enduring conflict between Georgian nationalists, and separatists from the "autonomous regions" (Goltz, 2009, pp. 12-17; IIFFMCG, 2009, pp. 12-13). After Georgian independence, internal armed conflict erupted between the Georgian central government and its autonomous regions, in South Ossetia from 1991 to 1992, and in Abkhazia from 1992 to 1994. As a consequence, Georgia lost control of part of its territory and the hostilities ended through a cease-fire agreement and a Russian peacekeeping mission (IIFFMCG, 2009, p. 13; Gordadze, 2009, pp. 34-36). South-Ossetia and Abkhazia both have a large Russian population, and Russia continued to support the secessionist "autonomous regions" throughout most of the post-Soviet period. The Russian policy of protecting Russians abroad has been influential. For example, Russia started distributing Russian passports to Georgian citizens living in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, further cementing the conflict (IIFFMCG, 2009, p. 18). However, the most salient factors, contributing to the tension between Georgia and Russia, are Georgia's strategic position, giving access to Turkey and the Middle East, coupled with Georgia's growing aspirations to join NATO and align towards the West (Karagiannis, 2014, pp. 406-407). On the other side, the assertive nationalism in Georgia after Saakashvili took power in 2004 also contributed to the tension. After their successful re-occupation of Adjara on the border to Turkey and the Kodori Gorge, a valley inside Abkhazia, Georgian confidence was high (Cheterian, 2009a, pp. 157-159).

There were several significant events in 2008 that set the stage for the outbreak of the war August 7–8 (Popjanevski, 2009, pp. 143-144). Firstly, the West's recognition of Kosovo's declaration of independence in February 2008 enraged Russia and, according to them, opened for Abkhazian and South Ossetian independence under the legitimacy of "self-determination" (IIFFMCG, 2009, p. 30). The Georgian decision to withdraw from the Joint Control Commission (JCC) on March 4, a forum for negotiations regarding South Ossetia, increased the distance between Georgia and Russia. Two days later, Russia answered by lifting implemented sanctions against Abkhazia (Popjanevski, 2009, p. 144). On April 20, Russia shot down a Georgian unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) over Abkhazia (Malek, 2009a, p. 229). Additionally, Russia increased its peacekeeper contingent throughout April due to alleged Georgian preparations for an attack on Abkhazia. Then, in May and June Russia further increased its forces in Abkhazia through the introduction of 400 railway troops tasked with maintenance of Abkhazian infrastructure (Popjanevski, 2009, pp. 145-146). In June and July, several explosions inside Abkhazia further escalated the tension, causing Abkhazian authorities to close the border to Georgia proper (Popjanevski, 2009, p. 147). During the latter half of July, Russia conducted a large-scale exercise, *Kavkaz*-2008 (Caucasus-2008), in North Caucasus (IIFFMCG, 2009, p. 19). Finally, several clashes and explosions in South-Ossetia occurred during the first days of August, shifting the center of events from Abkhazia to South Ossetia. These incidents extended seamlessly into the initiation of large-scale hostilities August 7–8 (Popjanevski, 2009, pp. 147-151).

During the night between August 7 and 8, the Georgian president Saakashvili ordered his troops to advance towards Tskhinvali to halt a Russian invasion and to stop the shelling of Georgian villages by South Ossetian forces. The Georgian forces started the operation with a heavy artillery attack on Tskhinvali, lasting through the night (Popjanevski, 2009, pp. 150-151). However, there are controversies surrounding the validity of the claim that Saakashvili merely reacted to a Russian threat. W. Richter, one of the contributors to the EU's facts finding mission, claimed Georgian forces had planned and prepared for an offensive operation into South Ossetia for some time. Thus, a possible Russian invasion was used as a pretext for the Georgian operation (Richter, 2009, pp. 6-7). In this perspective, the Russian invasion was indeed a reaction to Georgian aggression, and not the other way around. The simultaneity of the two attacks makes it difficult, at least within the scope of this thesis, to establish which

party attacked first. However, irrespective of who attacked whom, this thesis concludes the Russian Armed Forces had planned and prepared for the invasion. By the morning of August 8, Georgian forces had seized parts of Tskhinvali, but the advancing Russian forces forced them to withdraw during the next day. At this point Georgia faced a full-fledge Russian invasion, including large mechanized forces attacking through the Roki tunnel and into South Ossetia, air attacks at targets in the interior of Georgia, and a distributed-denial-of-service (DDoS)[6] cyberattack on Georgian governmental and media web-sites (Popjanevski, 2009, p. 152).

Parallel to the events in South Ossetia, a Russian build-up occurred in Abkhazia. Already on August 10 a Russian armored column crossed the Inguri river and entered Western Georgia (Felgenhauer, 2009, pp. 171-173). From then on, the Russians advanced with little opposition into Georgia. Gori, a strategically placed town south of South Ossetia, and several towns along the Black Sea coast were seized (Popjanevski, 2009, pp. 152-153). Large parts of the Georgian Army retreated to the city of Mtskheta, a natural defensive position controlling access to Tbilisi, and prepared for a last stand (Felgenhauer, 2009, pp. 174-176). Although a cease-fire agreement, brokered by the French President N. Sarkozy, was accepted August 12, the Russian advance continued and several violations of the cease-fire occurred later. For example, about 20 Georgian soldiers were taken prisoner August 19, along with US Army jeeps, in the Georgian town of Poti (Felgenhauer, 2009, pp. 176, 178-179).

It is disputable whether Russia provoked the 2008 Russo-Georgian War; however, it is to a large degree certain that Russia made preparations for a war with Georgia during the spring and summer of 2008 (Popjanevski, 2009, pp. 153-155; Malek, 2009a). President Medvedev admitted to Russian preparations for war during a TV interview; he explained that he foresaw the Georgian operation and stated, "so we prepared for that, and as a result of our preparations the operation was a success" (Felgenhauer, 2009, pp. 166). Three preparatory measures are significant and demand further explanation.

Firstly, the Russian side seems to have been concerned with building a narrative that could lead to a *casus bello*. The rhetoric of a perceived Kosovo precedence of self-determination can be interpreted as contextual groundwork for the use of force. However, the strongest

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[6] "DDoS refers to an attempt to prevent users from accessing a specific computer resource, such as a website. DDoS events usually involve overwhelming the targeted computer with requests so that it is no longer able to communicate with its intended users" (Deibert et al., 2012, n. 3).

indication is related to the Russian peacekeepers within Georgia. When South Ossetian separatists, unlikely to be beyond Russian control, attacked Georgian villages within the enclave in the days before August 7, the Russian peacekeepers stood idle (Popjanevski, 2009, p. 150). While Georgian forces reacted to the events unfolding, the Russian Armed Forces entered South Ossetia, claiming they needed to protect the Russian population and peacekeepers (Allison, 2008, pp. 1151-1152), thus not showing an intent of de-escalating the situation.

Secondly, Russia was preparing its operation by the pre-deployment of forces within Georgia and along the border. On one hand, an alleged Georgian military build-up within Abkhazia, though not confirmed by the United Nations Observer Mission to Georgia (UNOMIG), was used as a pretext for an increase of Russian peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia (Popjanevski, 2009, pp. 145, 150), when on the other hand, South Ossetian security forces were bolstered by volunteers from Russia (Allison, 2008, p. 1147). Additionally, the *Kavkas*-2008 exercise conveniently placed a large Russian force, partly the same force used in the invasion, along the border of Georgia. In fact, the exercise itself was framed by a scenario where Russian forces would assist Russian peacekeepers within Georgia in a peace enforcement operation. The exercise included 8,000 servicemen, 700 armored vehicles, 30 aircraft and elements from the Black Sea Fleet (Pallin and Westerlund, 2009, pp. 405-406). Illustratively, through the latter half of July, Russian paratrooper units were guarding the northern entrance of the strategically important Roki tunnel on the border to South Ossetia (Illarionov, 2009, pp. 71-72).

Thirdly, and maybe most tellingly, a Russian battalion of railway troops was conducting maintenance and repair on a 54 km stretch of railway in Abkhazia which was later used in the invasion (Allison, 2008, p. 1151). This railway contributed significantly to the speed and logistical support of the Russian advance through Abkhazia and into Western parts of Georgia.

Other events of significance are the appearance of Russian journalists in Tskhinvali days before the outbreak of the war (Popjanevski, 2009, p. 149), and the evacuation of 40 percent of the South Ossetian population to Russia before and during the Georgian attack on South Ossetia (Illarionov, 2009, p. 73). Undoubtedly, Russia was prepared for war at the outbreak August 7–8. However, it is less certain whether Russia wanted to start the war, or if it launched the invasion to avoid a Georgian re-occupation of South Ossetia and a subsequent genocide, which is their own explanation. In a hybrid warfare context, these preparations show a

modification of the battlefield to accommodate a specific battleplan. Yet, the battleplan itself is not directed at achieving asymmetry and an indirect approach to the strategic objectives. Rather, it is aimed at disguising the preparations for war and avoiding third-party political or military interference. As such, the Russian preparations correspond better to precautions to assure initial penetration of Georgian defenses. In particular, the repair of the railroad, the influx of "peacekeeping forces" and the *Kavkas*-2008 exercise were not measures synchronized to irregular or non-military lines of operation; they were specific actions to assist tempo and penetration of a brute conventional force.

This leads to another question regarding the lead-up to the war. Did the Georgian government receive a warning in the form of military action, which would be expected in an expansive deterrence perspective, or was the Russian operation premediated and launched without the intent of giving Georgian authorities the opportunity to yield to Russian interests? In the period of escalating violence in South Ossetia prior to the Russian attack, it is difficult to find examples of Russian threatening acts communicating large-scale use of military force directed towards Georgian authorities. The Russian violation of Georgian airspace above South Ossetia with four Su-24s on July 8, openly admitted by Russia after the expected Georgian protest, is one of few relevant examples of pre-war signaling of major military operations (Cohen and Hamilton, 2011, pp. 19-20). Also, the Russian lack of interest in Georgian cease-fire offers, first the unilateral cease-fire on August 7 to defuse the tense situation in South Ossetia, and then the offer on August 10 when Georgia was in danger of getting overrun completely (Popjanevski, 2009, pp. 150-151; Dzhindzhikhashvili, 2008), shows little emphasis on intra-conflict coercion. However, without knowing the extent of Russian strategic objectives it is difficult to make credible conclusions. It is less controversial, then, to argue that the scale of the 2008 Russo-Georgian War was designed to send a message to other states within the Russian sphere of influence to stay in line.

The nature of the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, with the combination of an intra-state and inter-state conflict, meant that irregular forces were present during the hostilities. There were separatist militias both in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The militia in Abkhazia were far better equipped and organized. Additionally, a large group of North Ossetian volunteers joined their South Ossetian brethren in the build-up to the war, and, finally, two battalions of Chechen militiamen, the "Vostok" (East) and "Zapad" (West) battalions, fought alongside Russian forces

in South Ossetia (Cohen and Hamilton, 2011, pp. 42-43). During the critical hours of August 7–8 South Ossetian irregular forces were defending Tskhinvali against the Georgian assault. This resistance enabled the Russian main force to get through the Roki tunnel where a relatively small Georgian force could have blocked the Russian advance. Thus, the presence of a small South Ossetian force, using asymmetrical methods such as hit-and-run tactics and the use of civilian clothing (Cohen and Hamilton, 2011, pp. 42-43), harassed and delayed the Georgian operation through the introduction of a hybrid threat. Accordingly, under the assumption that the South Ossetian defense of Tskhinvali was designed and directed by the Russian leadership, the initial phase of the conflict shows an example of hybrid warfare. However, an equal or even more likely explanation of these events is that the South Ossetians were not influenced directly by Russian command, but their effort just happened to coincide with the Russian operational need to delay Georgian countermeasures at the Roki tunnel. If this is the case, it is not an example of hybrid warfare, but the random events in a dynamic conflict. Another possible example of hybrid warfare is the use of irregular forces to harass and forcibly displace the Georgian civilian population in South Ossetia, i.e. ethnic cleansing. Several authors claim this was a deliberate aim of the South Ossetian authorities (see IIFFMCG, 2009, p. 27; Felgenhauer, 2009, p. 178). In any case, the displacement of Georgian civilians was one of the consequences of the war. Russia could achieve this aim through the allied militias to avoid the international stigma that would be caused by using conventional Russian forces. Still, Russia did not fully avoid responsibility and condemnation from the international community (IIFFMCG, 2009, pp. 27, 37-38), and it is debatable whether this was a Russian objective, or decided locally in South Ossetia. On the other hand, Russian forces were using irregular units to solve conventional tasks. For example, militia forces in South Ossetia were used in mopping-up operations and in other auxiliary roles (Cohen and Hamilton, 2011, pp. 42-43; Donovan, 2009, p. 14); in Abkhazia, militia forces, supported by Russian forces, seized the Georgian stronghold of the Kodori Gorge, illustrating such conventional tasks.

Another more salient example of the construction of a hybrid threat, exploiting asymmetry, is the Russian peacekeepers within Abkhazia and South Ossetia. According to R. Allison, Russian perception of peacekeeping is more related to enforcement and even coercion than in the West. The peacekeeper contingent was viewed as the first echelon, preparing for more powerful forces if peace in the post-Soviet area was threatened (Allison, 2008, pp. 1155-1156).

In that case, it is reasonable to argue that Russian peacekeeping missions, such as the Russian mission in South Ossetia established by the 1992 Sochi agreement, are instrumental to Russian national interests. In any case, for the Georgian forces, these peacekeepers would appear as a hybrid threat, i.e. they are agents of Russian national interests, with the legitimacy that comes with the peacekeeping role, but acting as the advance guard of a much larger and powerful Russian force. Thus, they constitute an effective hybrid threat, certainly under the command of Russian military authorities, which may well make it operationally integrated.

Russian information operations were aimed at portraying the Saakashvili regime as aggressors, and the Russian intervention as necessary to protect Russians in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Thus, according to the Russian strategic communication, the Russian use of military force was reactive and limited to protecting human rights (Goble, 2009, p. 183). This "pacific" justification had the possibility of reducing the signaling effect, important in the expansive deterrence model, aimed at deterring other states in the post-Soviet state from getting too close to the West. However, despite the Russian propaganda, the facts on the ground, such as Russian forces in the outskirts of Tbilisi, would probably be sufficient for other post-Soviet states to "get the message." Additionally, though not directly disclosing that the invasion was a punishment for Western alignment, Putin implied this when he stated that "an aggressor must be punished," comparing the extended invasion of Georgia with the Allies' total occupation of Nazi Germany at the end of World War II (Goble, 2009, p. 189).

The details of Russian cyberwarfare in the 2008 Russo-Georgian War and how it is integrated into the overall Russian war effort is somewhat difficult to comprehend. R. J. Deibert et al. argues that while Georgia was undoubtedly the target of several DDoS attacks, it is not clear to what extent Russian authorities were involved. They further argue that a "privateering" perspective, civilians operating with the consent and encouragement of Russian authorities; or a self-organizing perspective, civilians independently contributing to the war effort, are equally credible explanations of the cyberattacks against Georgia (Deibert et al., 2012 pp. 12-17). Interestingly, they empirically tested a common claim: that some especially powerful cyberattacks coincided with the Russian forces passing through the Roki tunnel; however, they did not find conclusive evidence (Deibert et al., 2012, p. 15). Such a coincidence would have indicated operational level integration, thus within the framework of hybrid warfare. The potential lack of governmental involvement and sender ambiguity both reduce the future

deterring effect of Russian cyberattacks. Because future opponents of Russia cannot know whether Russia possesses the will and ability to conduct cyberattacks, it is less likely that cyberwarfare will enter their cost-calculus of crossing Russian interests. However, unless the kind of cyberattack demonstrated in the 2008 Russo-Georgian War was a one-time incident, the expectation of a cyberattack accompanying a conflict, regardless of the origin of the attacks, will increase the deterring effect. Thus, a pattern of cyberattacks with an undeclared originator can still be part of an expansive deterrence concept within Russian strategic culture.

One interesting characteristic of the Russian invasion is the use of multiple entrances to the battlefield. These entrances are used both before and during hostilities and are surprisingly numerous given the perceived Russian capabilities in 2008. Firstly, the Black Sea Fleet inserted a battalion-sized task force of paratroopers from the 7th Airborne Assault Division into the port of Ochamchira close to the border between Abkhazia and Georgia proper (Lavrov, 2010, p. 65). Secondly, four additional battalion-sized task forces of paratroopers were airlifted into Babushary airfield within Abkhazia before midday on August 10. Thirdly, the main force of the 7th Airborne Assault Division was transported by railway to Ochamchira. This was the same railway that was repaired a week prior to the invasion (Lavrov, 2010, p. 68). Fourthly, the Russian peacekeepers in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia were bolstered by more soldiers from late July (Illarionov, 2009, pp. 69, 73). Fifthly, Russian special forces were allegedly inserted by helicopter behind Georgian lines (Cohen and Hamilton, 2011, p. 42; Lavrov, 2010, p. 68). Finally, Russian forces entered Georgian territory both through the Roki tunnel into South Ossetia and over land into Abkhazia. In addition to these multiple entrances into Georgian territory, the Russian war effort included air strikes to destroy Georgian military infrastructure (Cohen and Hamilton, 2011, p. 39; Lavrov, 2010, p. 55); use of long range fires, included ballistic missiles, into the depth of Georgian defenses (Lavrov, 2010, p. 64; Felgenhauer, 2009, pp. 174-175; McDermott, 2009, p. 66); a naval blockade (Lavrov, 2010, pp. 65-66); and cyberattacks, whether they originated from Russian authorities or not (Deibert et al., 2012, p. 4). All these aspects contributed to the overall chaos and fragmentation of the Georgian military effort, and point to an intent to inflict systemic shock. Within a deep operations framework, this would allow for a rapid and unimpeded advance into Georgia proper. Interestingly, the Georgian offensive lost its momentum already on August 10 and the

Georgian forces initiated a retreat that did not end before the last stand at Mtskheta (Felgenhauer, 2009, pp. 173-175).

The Russian strategic vulnerabilities presented by the Roki tunnel and the Caucasian mountains, which constituted a natural barrier on the northern border of Georgia, increased the strategic risk of launching the Russian invasion. Additionally, the dispersion of Russian forces, through their multiple entry-points into Georgia, and the possibility of countermeasures from Georgian partners, most notably the USA, would also incur risk to the Russian war effort. In a short-term perspective, such countermeasures could be supplements of weapons and intelligence, or threatening maneuvers conducted far from Caucasus. In a long-term perspective, the very unlikely, but still plausible, event of introduction of NATO-forces into the conflict could become catastrophic to Russian interests in the region. In a protracted conflict between Russia and Georgia that scenario was not perceived as impossible, at least not for Russian authorities (Allison, 2008, p. 1165). It is important to note that the size of the Russian force used in the invasion, probably 40,000 servicemen or more (see Felgenhauer, 2009, p. 173; Bukkvoll, 2009, p. 57), was a considerable portion of the combat ready Russian Armed Forces. Consequently, the speed and resolution of the Russian invasion, both the decision to initiate military operations and the operations themselves, can be explained by risk-management considerations. Interestingly, deception and secrecy are also means to reduce the risk of effective countermeasures to an invasion. The apparent Russian preference to avoid clearly stating their intentions, for example through a clear escalation of force, indicates they value secrecy and deception for risk-management purposes. Also, the lack of compliance with the cease-fire agreement and continuous military operation far beyond their officially stated war objective – protecting Russian peacekeepers and avoiding a South Ossetian genocide – reduces the Georgian ability to act to comply with Russian demands. Consequently, secrecy and deception reduce Russia's opponents' susceptibility to intra-conflict deterrence and coercion, a core ingredient in the expansive deterrence model. In the case of the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, deterrence, expansively defined, is not continuous through the different stages of conflict; when the Russian invasion was launched it continued until the strategic objectives were achieved and no potential Georgian concessions seemed able to alter the Russian military progress.

However, the Russian operation, advancing beyond the borders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, is possibly meant to have a demonstrative effect. More specifically, to show the ability and will of Russia to use massive military force if core interests are threatened in the post-Soviet space. Additionally, on August 16, a senior Russian official stated that "[b]y deploying [a ballistic missile defense], Poland is exposing itself to a strike - 100%" and that Russia can use nuclear weapons against "an active ally of a nuclear power such as America" (Traynor, Harding & Womak, 2008). Notwithstanding it being a response to a Polish decision to allow American ballistic missile defenses on their territory, it shows nuclear signaling to deter third-party intervention in the Georgia conflict. Another example is the statements of a Russian military source that the Baltic Fleet was planned to become armed with nuclear weapons on August 18 (O'Mahony, 2008). These examples indicate an Russian expansive deterrence perspective; however, it is aimed at recipients temporally and spatially dislocated from the conflict itself.

2014 Russian Invasion of Crimea

Crimea, a strategically placed peninsula on the Black Sea, was brought into the Russian empire in 1783 (Biersack and O'Lear, 2014, p. 250). It has been home to different ethnic groups; today the population consists predominantly of Russians, but also Tatars and Ukrainians. Moreover, Crimea became a vital part of Russian history through the Crimean War (1853–1856) and the battle of Sevastopol in World War II (1941–1945) (Biersack and O'Leary, 2014, p. 250). After World War II, with its terrible destruction, millions of Russians moved into Ukraine to rebuild and industrialize the region. This shifted the demography of Ukraine, thus creating an even greater historical and cultural linkage to Russia. Additionally, in 1954 Crimea was transferred from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR by the General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, N. Khrushchev. This further explains the tight bonds between Russia and the population of Crimea (US ASOC, 2015, p. 22; Kofman, Migacheva, Nichiporuk, Radin, Tkacheva and Oberholtzer, 2017, pp. 16-17). The alleged arbitrariness of the transfer was used as a pretext for the 2014 Invasion of Crimea. This pretext was used even tough Russia had subsequently accepted ensuring Ukrainian territorial integrity through the 1994 Budapest Memorandum. This was an agreement where several signatories, including Russia and the US, guaranteed Ukrainian security in exchange for the nuclear disarmament of Ukraine (Biersack and O'Leary, 2014, p. 251).

The shared history and cultural linkage between Russia and Crimea are salient motivations for the Russian annexation of the peninsula. However, there are other possible motivations. Firstly, the Russian Black Sea Fleet and its home port in Sevastopol are important strategic assets to the Russian Federation. Despite Sevastopol being on Ukrainian soil, a continued Russian presence was ensured until 2042 through an agreement between Russia and Ukraine. Still, Russian control of the whole peninsula would make a more absolute guarantee (Biersack and O'Leary, 2014, pp. 257-258). Secondly, there is a petroleum-rich seabed off the coast of Crimea, now under Russia's control. Russia, already controlling enormous petroleum reserves, does not badly need more, but the ability to deny Ukraine the resource, thus forcing them to continue to be reliant on natural gas imported from Russia, is far more important (Biersack and O'Lear, 2014, p. 258). However, the full explanation for the Russian annexation of Crimea cannot be viewed in isolation. The overall motivation for the Russian move is linked to civil unrest and political developments in the whole of Ukraine from late 2013.

In November 2013, the Ukrainian president V. Yanukovych reversed his decision to sign an association agreement with the EU. The agreement was supposed to open for free trade between the EU and Ukraine, and would mean a significant alignment with the West at the expense of Russian interests. The reversal played into Putin's hands and he quickly made approaches to secure a deal with Ukraine. However, in late November civil unrest, named "Euromaidan," sprang up in several Ukrainian cities. The protesters demanded that the EU association agreement had to be carried out. Also, the protests were partly fueled by general discontent regarding nepotism and corruption within the Ukrainian state (Ditrych, 2014, p. 82). The Russians, facing NATO enlargements and increased Western influence in the post-Soviet space, had been increasingly concerned about an Ukrainian slip into the fold of the West; the possibility of an Ukrainian alignment with the West was perceived as catastrophic to Russian interests (Götz, 2016a, pp. 313-314). The Euromaidan grew increasingly violent and ended in Yanukovych being overthrown after the security forces backed down to avoid further bloodshed. On February 21, Yanukovych fled as he was no longer protected by his security forces. He eventually ended up in Russia. Subsequently, an interim government, comprised of the opposition, took power (Biersack and O'Leary, 2014, pp. 248-249). Then, on February 27, a few days after the closing ceremony of the Sochi Olympic Games, unmarked Russian soldiers started to appear in Crimea (Ditrych, 2014, pp. 82-83). A close to "bloodless" invasion

followed, in which Russian forces surrounded and pacified Ukrainian military units, took control of political and economic institutions, and fortified the peninsula in case of intervention from Ukraine or third-party countries. Already on March 6, the Crimean parliament voted for independence from Ukraine and that a referendum, deciding whether Crimea would join the Russian Federation or stay independent, would follow (Gardner, 2015, pp. 176-177). Finally, on March 18, after an overwhelming majority had voted for unification, Crimea and the city of Sevastopol were formally integrated into the Russian Federation (US ASOC, 2015, pp. 30-31). However, the result of the referendum and the political process was deemed illegal and illegitimate by Ukraine and most of the countries in the world (Bebler, 2015, pp. 14-15).

This case analysis does not involve the spread of pro-Russian rebellions to other parts of Ukraine, for example the rebellion in the Donbas region, consisting of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, in Eastern Ukraine. The origin of the pro-Russian protests and rebellious events is not clear; however, several authors point to locally and popularly based protests against the central Ukrainian authorities, accelerated and exploited by Russia (see Kofman et al., 2017; Tsygankov, 2015; Sakwa, 2015). The armed phase of the rebellion started on April 6 when pro-Russian separatists stormed police stations and government buildings in Donetsk oblast. Similar developments followed in other oblasts in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine (Flikke, 2015, pp. 16-20; Tsygankov, 2015, p. 285). Then, as a result, the Ukrainian central authorities launched an "Anti Terrorist Operation" (ATO) to defeat the rebellion. After initial Ukrainian successes in their ATO, Russian conventional forces were deployed to Donbas and caused several crushing defeats for the Ukrainian forces. To what extent the rebellion was driven by local actors, Russian volunteers or Russian authorities is uncertain; however, it was undoubtedly a combination of the three (Sakwa, 2015, pp. 148-156). Today, the conflict in Eastern Ukraine is characterized by stalemate and protracted fighting.

Several authors have characterized the Russian invasion of Crimea as mainly covert and without the use of significant conventional force (Connable, Campbell and Madden, 2016, pp. 19-20; Johnson, 2015, p. 8; US ASOC, 2015, p. 56). This thesis will argue that the Russian invasion of Crimea was conducted as a conventional invasion, however, it was bloodless due to the lack of effective Ukrainian resistance. As such, it was a military operation mainly using overt measures. Despite Russian forces being unmarked, they mostly used Russian uniforms,

Russian equipment, and would easily expose their Russian nationality through interaction with the Ukrainian forces and civilian population; thus, there could be no doubt for the local Ukrainian forces or central authorities that the so-called "little green men" were Russian soldiers (see Lavrov: 2014, p. 173). For example, in the meeting of the UN Security Council March 1, the Ukrainian UN Permanent Representative claimed "[Russian] troops were already in country and their numbers were increasing, constituting an act of aggression" (United Nations, 2014). However, the intentions of the Russian invasion force would be harder to discern.

The Russian operation, which started to enter Ukrainian territory on February 24, was primarily conducted by conventional forces operating overtly. Naval infantry from the Russian base at Sevastopol appeared in the city of Sevastopol on February 24, and in Yalta on February 25 (Kofman et al., 2017, p. 7). On the morning of February 28, Russian military transport and attack helicopters entered Crimea, and simultaneously, Russian forces equipped with APCs and light utility vehicles started to seize key military and political installations and infrastructure (Kofman et al., 2017, p. 9; Lavrov, 2014, pp. 164-165). From March 6, and especially after March 12, mechanized forces with artillery and air-defense support started to cross the Kerch strait at the eastern tip of the Crimean Peninsula (Kofman et al., 2017, pp. 9-10; Lavrov, 2014, pp. 171-172). With some exceptions, the literature does not indicate Russian forces in civilian clothing, Ukrainian uniforms, or mainly operating hidden. Some notable exceptions are the gunmen, allegedly Russian special forces operators, seizing Crimean government buildings in Simferopol on February 27, and Russian airborne infantry using Ukrainian police uniforms aiding in keeping order (Kofman et al., 2017, pp. 7, 9). In addition to the Russian conventional forces there were several pro-Russian militias, often named "self-defense" forces by Russian authorities, operating in a way that portrayed them as locally-led and loyal to the Crimean authorities. These forces could have given the impression that the developments in Crimea were a Crimean rebellion rather than a Russian invasion. However, they were most likely playing a supplementary role in the invasion (Bukkvoll, 2016, p. 28). Indeed, a covert invasion presupposes that the bulk of the invading force needs to be unrecognized by the defender; obviously, the simple measures of removing badges and flags did not fool the Ukrainians. Thus, despite the lack of Ukrainian resistance, the Russian invasion of Crimea relied primarily on overt and conventional military force.

Consequently, the lack of a Ukrainian forceful response was more a result of the strategic situation than any uncertainty about the reality of a Russian invasion. Firstly, Russia's implied threat to invade or punish mainland Ukraine if they intervened in Crimea, amplified by the Russian 40,000 men strong exercise along the eastern borders of Ukraine, created an Ukrainian aversion against military action. Additionally, the memory of Georgia's hotheaded actions in the prelude to the 2008 Georgian War, creating a Russian pretext for the war, was probably a serious consideration for the Ukrainian leadership (Kofman et al., 2017, pp. 23-24). Uncertainty about the Russian intentions created a fear of unnecessary escalations if the Russian intervention was limited or temporary. Secondly, the chaotic state of the Ukrainian polity, and thus the ineptitude of the political and military leadership to show resolve, reduced the ability to present a forceful and united response to the Russian invasion. Thirdly, the Crimean authorities, population, and locally deployed military units were largely acting compliantly or passively in the face of the Russian invasion. A general dissatisfaction with the Ukrainian government and cultural bonds to Russia in large parts of the population created a permissive environment for the Russian invasion force. This was combined with an aggressive information operation and intimidation from Russian forces and pro-Russian militias (Bebler, 2015, pp. 11-15). Thus, the Ukrainian willingness to halt the Russian invasion by force seemed impotent, and this was mainly caused by the strategic realities. The Ukrainian authorities did also order their forces in Crimea to not put up any active resistance (Lavrov, 2014, p. 166).

The lack of a Western, and particularly NATO, military response was predominantly caused by the severe consequences of a direct confrontation between opponents armed with strategic nuclear weapons. A Russian "declaration of intervention" at the start of the invasion of Crimea would be unlikely to provoke a military response from NATO (see Bebler, 2015, p. 5). After all, NATO did not get militarily involved in the conflict in Donbas which did not transition into a *fait accompli*. Also, an internal insurgency in Crimea or Donbas would be potentially less risky for NATO to get involved with than the direct confrontation with the Russian Federation. In other words, if Russian involvement was ambiguous, the probability of NATO intervention could be higher. In the end, the West settled on a policy of political condemnation and targeted sanctions (Ditrych, 2014, p. 83). Immediately following the invasion, Russian air

defense and other anti-access/area-denial (A2AD)[7] units were committed to protecting the Crimean Peninsula, thus securing the Russian territorial gains from outside intervention (Kofman et al., 2017, pp. 10, 25). Additionally, and more importantly, both President Putin and foreign minister Lavrov have signaled that nuclear weapons might be used in the case of NATO interventions (Johnson, 2015, p. 9). Most notably, on March 15, 2015, one year after the invasion, Putin stated he was ready to put his nuclear forces on combat alert during the invasion of Crimea (BBC, 2015c). In the year following the Crimean invasion, Russia displayed a significant increase in flights of nuclear-capable bombers, flying close to, or even inside, territorial airspace of NATO countries. For example, on April 23, two Tu-95 bombers violated Dutch airspace (Durkalec, 2015, p. 10). Even more worryingly, in late March, Russian strategic forces conducted a snap exercise involving 1,000 pieces of equipment from 30 units. In May, another exercise involved launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) and sea-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) (Durkalec, 2015, p. 13). The combination of official statements, communicating an implied threat of the use of nuclear weapons; the increase in provocative flights of nuclear-armed bombers; and large-scale exercises involving strategic forces strongly indicate a Russian emphasis on deterring NATO from intervening in the Ukrainian crisis. However, the Russian lack of nuclear signaling, in conjunction with the invasion in early March, suggests not every Russian activity was prepared and coordinated before the invasion. Thus, nuclear signaling sought to consolidate Russian territorial gains in Crimea after the fact, but did not take effect during the invasion. Nevertheless, the nuclear signaling was aimed at a specific audience, NATO, and was more or less separated from the Russian relationship with Ukraine. It was continuously applied during and after "hostilities" with Ukraine, and aimed at a recipient that was not in a state of conflict with Russia. Additionally, Russian forces seemed to be attempting to shield their aggressive actions in Crimea and Donbas from NATO interferences, resembling coercion rather than deterrence. Consequently, the Russian nuclear signaling, following the invasion of Crimea, indicates a model of strategic culture based on expansive deterrence.

The Russian information operation was primarily targeted at a Russian domestic audience (Kofman et al., 2017, p. 12). The strategic communication included messages that were meant

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[7] "A2AD refers to [measures aimed at] preventing an adversary from operating in a particular region or area" (US, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), 2017, p. 32).

to portray the interim Ukrainian government as illegitimate and the result of an illegal and "fascist" coup. The Euromaidan was described as a pro-Western and nationalist movement, threatening the Russian population in Ukraine, and especially in Crimea (Kofman et al., 2017, pp. 12-13; Bebler, 2015, pp. 13-14). Another part of the information operation was the Russian denial of the deployment of its forces to Crimea. This Russian denial continued until Putin acknowledged the involvement of Russian forces on April 17 (Flikke, 2015, pp. 17-18). Clearly, Russia was dependent on showing accountability for the security of the Crimean population in order to "embrace" the strategic communication. After all, one of the main narratives was that the people of Crimea needed to become a part of Russia to protect them from the "fascist" government in Kiev. On the other hand, it does not appear that the Russian information operations were directed against the opponent's military system to a large extent. Thus, the information operations were not an integrated part of the effort to defeat the Ukrainian military forces in Crimea.

As mentioned above, the strategic situation was the primary factor pacifying the Ukrainian forces in Crimea. Consequently, the Ukrainian awareness that their opponent was the mighty Russian army could more easily have increased the reluctance to resist, than if they had been local paramilitary groups. As such, the bulk of the information operations were not an integrated part of the military operation; they were rather a measure of securing a receptive attitude toward Russian military action, both domestically and in the ethnically Russian population in Crimea. In other words, the information operation was strategically applied, and not integrated at the operational level of war, and does not favor the hybrid warfare model. A more likely explanation of the Russian denial of their presence in Crimea is to avoid disclosure of the exact timing and intent of the invasion. This obscuration of the intent and disposition of military forces, through denying their existence in critical phases of an operation, is part of the traditional Russian concept of *maskirovka* (Bruusgaard, 2014, p. 83). So, this thesis does not refute that the Russian information operations included an effort to deny the existence of an invasion, and that it was partly aimed at an Ukrainian and international audience. On the contrary, it is a trademark of Russian operations (Johnson, 2015, p. 1). However, it argues that the so-called plausible deniability had marginal effect on the local Ukrainian forces' will and ability to resist. Still, it was able to create some confusion about the intent of the Russian forces, and consequently contributed to an unimpeded

advance in the operation's vulnerable preliminary phase. In other words, it ensured penetration of the Ukrainian defense systems in the first few hours of the invasion and points to a deep operations model of strategic culture.

Another interesting aspect of the Russian invasion is the use of multiple entrances into the area of operations. An equal approach is also recognizable in the 2008 Georgian War. The attacking Russian forces came into play from different areas and with different insertion methods. Firstly, the Russian access to the Sevastopol naval base, the homeport of the Russian Black Fleet, was exploited to facilitate an influx of troops. Already on February 25, an Alligator-class landing ship arrived at Sevastopol carrying 200 Russian special operations forces. Another landing ship arrived a few days later carrying 300 soldiers. Additionally, the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade, permanently based at Sevastopol, was readily available and started their operations on February 24 (Kofman et al., 2017, p. 7; Lavrov, 2014, pp. 162-164). Secondly, special forces, masked as "self-defense militia," seized the Crimean Parliament on February 27. This type of masked entrance, inserting special forces and *spetsnaz*,[8] was another example of the diversity of entrances (Kofman et al., 2017, p. 9; Lavrov, 2014, p. 163). Thirdly, one of the first installations to be seized by Russian forces was the Simferopol airport. This enabled yet another entrance by airlifting in ground forces (Lavrov, 2014, pp. 164-165). Fourthly, as the invasion progressed, several landing ships disembarked considerable forces at several locations on the Crimean Peninsula (Kofman et al., 2017, p. 9). Fifthly, Russian mechanized forces, with heavy support, crossed the Kerch strait in eastern Crimea from March 6 (Kofman et al., 2017, pp. 9-10; Lavrov, 2014, pp. 170-172). These multiple entrances show that Russia was prepared to take operational risks to quickly gain advantageous positions. The risks involved dispersion of Russian forces with the possibility of fighting Ukrainian forces outnumbered; severed lines of communications; and the lack of coherence and mutual support between the different combat formations. Thus, Russian forces favored the opportunity to deal operational shock to the Ukrainians over the ability to mass their own forces. This points to the deep operations model, where denial and secrecy negotiated some of the risk involved in such an audacious approach.

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[8] *Spetsnaz* are Russian special operations forces. The term refers to a diverse group of forces, but it is mainly used for Russian elite light infantry (Bukkvoll, 2015, p. 26).

On the night of February 22, as Yanukovych fled the capitol, Putin and other Russian top leaders met and allegedly made the decision to "bring Crimea back into Russia" (BBC, 2015a). Already three days later, the Russian Armed Forces initiated a large so-called "snap exercise" involving 150,000 soldiers from the Western Military District. The purpose was to inspect force readiness and to obscure individual deployments. From this mobilization of forces, selected units were redirected towards the Crimean theater. *Spetsnaz* and airborne infantry forces had been deployed even earlier (Kofman et al., 2017, pp. 7-8). Subsequently, forces were deployed close to the eastern border of Ukraine as a diversion and a threat, facilitating the invasion of the peninsula. Eventually, a force of 30,000–40,000 soldiers was massed at the Ukrainian eastern border. Another "snap exercise," involving 65,000 soldiers, was conducted a few weeks later in the Central Military District (Reisinger and Golts, 2015, p. 118). These "snap exercises" show a remarkable Russian ability to mobilize large forces in a short timeframe. Consequently, Russian decision-makers are able to adequately react to eventualities, pursue contingency plans when appropriate, and conduct show of force when needed. In an expansive deterrence perspective, the rapid build-up of forces constitutes a threat of sudden and overwhelming use of force to a potential opponent; thus, this kind of "snap exercises" is a deterring and coercive instrument that can be applied after the outbreak of hostilities. For example, as Russian forces gained control of the Crimean Peninsula, the Russian force at Ukraine's eastern border created an effective deterrent, contributing to the pacification of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in Crimea. Although it is difficult to ascertain whether the invasion of Crimea was premediated or not, the fact that a large exercise in 2013, *Zapad*-2013 (West-13), had rehearsed operations along the eastern border of Ukraine indicates that a major conflict with Ukraine was one of the Russian contingencies at the time (Reisinger and Golts, 2015, p. 119n). As such, the indication of a premediated battle plan points to a hybrid warfare model. However, the hybrid warfare model goes further than just contingency planning; it also requires some form of active preparation of the battlefield, establishing preconditions for a concrete battleplan. The anti-Euromaidan information operation, conducted through Russian media outlets and targeted at the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine, is an example of such preparations and supports a hybrid warfare preparatory framework (US ASOC, 2015, pp. 53-54).

After the Russian cyberattack against Estonia in 2007 and the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, some expected that the next Russian war would involve massive and even decisive cyberattacks, fought solely on a cyber battlefield (Limnéll, 2015, p. 525). This was, of course, not to be the case. In the Russian invasion of Crimea, cyberwarfare was integrated with other tools in the Russian toolkit. Ukrainian authorities experienced DDoS attacks targeted at their main website. This was conducted already in early March as the Russian soldiers entered Crimea. Additionally, the Russian information operations, to which cyberwarfare is a subordinate concept in Russian doctrine, involved the exploitation of the cyber domain, for example through the Russia based "trolls" that were active on news sites and social media to influence specific audiences (Limnèll, 2015, p. 530). What is important to note is that these measures were targeted at the population and their attitude towards the Ukrainian, Russian, or Western authorities, not as a synchronized part of the invasion aiding the armed elements in Crimea directly.

However, there were other related events, most certainly directly aiding the military effort and happening parallel to the invasion. Clearly, the Russian Federation was determined to sever communications and isolate the Ukrainian forces in Crimea from their superiors in mainland Ukraine, thus contributing to the chaos and uncertainty within the Ukrainian chain of command. As stated above, this chaos and uncertainty was partly responsible for the pacification of the Ukrainian forces and it was one of the clearest examples of operational level synchronization of effects during the invasion, thus indicating a hybrid warfare model. However, the main contributors to the isolation of the Ukrainian forces in Crimea were physical interceptions of communications to and from mainland Ukraine. This was done either through the physical cutting of land-lines by Russian special forces, or the interception of electromagnetic signals, especially cell phone services, conducted by ship-based electromagnetic jamming originating in the Black Sea (Kofman et al., 2017, p. 10). In other words, the isolating effect of the Ukrainian forces was not achieved through operations in cyberspace, but in the physical and electromagnetic domain, evidently within the scope of conventional warfare. Thus, the threat presented to the Ukrainian Armed Forces was not as hybrid as it first may have been perceived.

Another interesting aspect of Russian cyberwarfare in general is the existence of hacker groups, which apparently are civilians conducting criminal cyberattacks as a patriotic act

(Limnèll, 2015, p. 528). These "hacktivist groups" were often blamed for cyberattacks in the Ukrainian conflict. However, strong indications point to an affiliation with Russian authorities, though Russia strongly denies this (Limnèll, 2015, p. 526). Yet, in an expansive deterrence perspective, the link between Russia and the cyber operations targeted at Ukraine needs to be plausible in order to be deterring or coercive. Paradoxically, in cyberwarfare Russia is dependent on achieving plausible responsibility, rather than plausible deniability.

What is remarkable in the 2014 Russian Invasion of Crimea is the close to non-existence of casualities on both sides. Compared to the Second Chechen War, where the employment of punitive conventional firepower was a precondition for successful execution of the operational concept, the Russian forces invading Crimea went very far in order to restrain their use of force. Some of the difference has to be ascribed to the better trained and more disciplined Russian forces. Moreover, escalation control and limiting the level of violence in the conflict is nothing new in Russian doctrines, despite the Chechen wars indicating otherwise (Bruusgaard, 2014, pp. 84-85). Thus, the lack of massive use of violence does not necessarily constitute a major shift in Russia's strategic culture. After all, the annexation of territory belonging to another sovereign state, and the use of unmarked soldiers still show an unwillingness to adhere to international law. Thus, the concept of *bespredel*, that conduct in war should not be morally restricted, does still have validity.

DISCUSSION

This chapter will discuss and synthesize the findings from the cases and attempt to describe the development in Russian conflict behavior. Based on one of the analytical assumptions, that an underlying strategic culture can influence conflict behavior, the description of it can then indicate the underlying Russian strategic culture. According to Geertz and Gray, some degree of continuity characterizes culture, which allows this analysis to make general inferences from the three cases (Geertz, 1993, p. 89; Gray, 2007, p. 7). Moreover, culture requires interpretation to be understood. Thus, the results must be discussed in their context to make it possible to achieve valid conclusions. The hypothetical models, presented earlier, are the primary guides to understanding the context; however, other perspectives are utilized if they can contribute to the understanding of Russian strategic culture. Importantly, none of the models are mutual exclusive or an absolute match.

Most states' armed forces plan for contingences. In case of invasion, international crisis or mobilization, a campaign plan usually exists. One of the central findings in the three cases is the Russian preference for not only planning, but also preparing for contingencies. The most prominent example is the Russian use of "snap exercises," both to train for specific events and to deploy forces close to a potential area of operations. Before the Second Chechen War and the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, large exercises, rehearsing operations similar to the corresponding war, were conducted during the period leading up to the outbreak of hostilities. In conjunction with the 2008 Russo-Georgian War and the 2014 Invasion of Crimea, large "snap exercises" facilitated the deployment of forces used in the conflicts. Another example of specifically targeted preparations is the railroad maintenance and repairs conducted by Russian railway troops in Abkhazia before the 2008 Russo-Georgian War.

According to T. Thomas, an expert on the Soviet/Russian military, the concept of foresight is central in Russian military thought. The ability to forecast armed conflicts, how they will be conducted and their likely outcome, is fundamental to the Russian strategic community (Thomas, 2015, p. 451). Another important Russian concept, according to Thomas, is the correlation-of-forces (COF), which "helps determine the degree of superiority of one force over the other based on a variety of factors" (Thomas, 2015, p. 452). Thus, the continuous "calculation" of potential future conflicts, and what the COF would be, is a core activity in the development of Russian strategy. This also corresponds to the Russian preference for

mathematical and scientific approaches when planning and executing military operations (Grau and Bartles, 2016, pp. 38-58). In other words, Russian strategists put confidence in predicting armed conflict. According to Thomas, the emphasis on foresight, coupled with Svechin's argument that every conflict follows its own peculiar logic, suggests that Russian strategists devise unique and customized approaches to potential future conflicts (Thomas, 2015, pp. 452-453). Consequently, the Russian Federation has the habit of planning, and even preparing, for individual future conflicts. This focus on preparations, devising concrete battleplans for possible conflicts, resembles the hybrid warfare model. However, this does not mean the decision to use military force is made beforehand; still, the Russians will appear well prepared when the decision is eventually made, which, tellingly, was true in all three cases.

Another interesting characteristic of Russian conflict behavior is the use of multiple entrances into the area of operations. Both in the 2008 Russo-Georgian War and the 2014 Invasion of Crimea, many different means and methods were used to insert the forces into play. They ranged from the bolstering of peacekeepers in Abkhazia and South Ossetia prior to the war against Georgia, to the ferrying of mechanized forces across the Kerch strait during the invasion of Crimea. Still, it is not unusual in military operations to exploit different ways to insert forces into the area of operations. However, it can be argued that the dispersion and danger of encirclement that comes with the large amount of entrances, which characterizes Russian operations, can increase the risk to the forces; this voluntarily risk-taking demands further explanation. The ability to quickly seize key terrain to isolate the opponent's forces; prevent cooperation between subunits; and deny a coherent defensive system are key factors explaining multiple entrances. Several entrances, combined with operational speed, will facilitate for the fragmentation of the enemy defensive system which in turn will, according to deep operations theory, deal operational shock to the opponent. Accordingly, the deep operations model is crucial in explaining Russian initial behavior in two of the three cases. Another possible application of deep operations theory, showing the permeating character of this theory in Russian military thought, is the emphasis on anti-access/area-denial (A2AD) capabilities. This is an interlocking system of long-range precision-strike anti-ship, ground attack and air defense missile systems, and one of the areas where Russia is focusing its technological development (US, DIA, 2017, p. 32). An A2AD system can effectively keep reinforcements and NATO air and missile power out of the combat zone, thus denying support

to the opponent's forces in contact with Russian forces and effectively fragmenting their military system (see Palmer, 2015, pp. 59-61).

Maskirovka is an enduring Soviet/Russian concept. It is to "mislead (…) the enemy with regard to the presence and dispositions of troops and military objectives" (Bruusgaard, 2014, p. 83). In deep operations theory, secrecy and deception, elements of *maskirovka*, are crucial to negate the theory's inherent vulnerabilities. When the military forces have penetrated the defensive system, and are operating in the depth of the opponent, they will be dispersed and have exposed flanks and lines of communication. In such circumstances, *maskirovka* reduces the opponent's ability to exploit this inherent vulnerability. In all three cases, there were no ultimatums or large-scale show of force immediately before the outbreak of hostilities; the vulnerable initial phase of the military operation was concealed by *maskirovka* rather than disclosed by one last warning. However, this does not mean there were no warnings issued. For example, the annexation of Crimea was warned about in due time; at the 2008 Bucharest Summit, Putin stated that "[Ukraine] received huge territories from Russia in the east and south of the country. It is a complicated state formation. If we introduce into it NATO problems, other problems, it may put the state on the verge of its existence" (UNIAN, 2008). The lack of adherence to the cease-fire agreement during the 2008 Russo-Georgian War was another possible act of *maskirovka*. Russian forces continued their operations, and additional seizure of Georgian territory, after the cease-fire; thus, the Russians used deception to further strengthen their position (Felgenhauer, 2009, pp. 176, 178-179). Interestingly, the same approach was used in Donbas in connection with the first Minsk cease-fire agreement in 2014; Russian military operations continued after the implementation of the cease-fire agreement, thus improving the Russian military situation (Thomas, 2015, p. 456). Additionally, so-called plausible deniability, exercised by Russian authorities during the Crimean invasion, is yet another example of *maskirovka*. The denial of the Russian invasion, concealing the intent of the apparent Russian presence on the peninsula, contributed to the general chaos and indecision in the Ukrainian forces. However, this effect was not as decisive as some analysts tend to believe; the Ukrainian lack of resistance derived from the strategic and political situation rather than the lack of information. Also, it was not the first time Soviet or Russian forces had used similar methods; in the initial phase of the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, 700 Soviet paratroopers, mostly Soviet Muslims dressed in Afghan uniforms,

seized key buildings and infrastructure in Kabul (Popescu, 2015). While the use of *maskirovka* is undoubtedly an example of exploitation of asymmetry, the underlying purpose of it is not the metamorphosis of the Russian Armed Forces into a hybrid fighting force; rather, it is a supporting activity, aimed at inserting a conventional force into the area of operations. In other words, it is a supporting activity to enable a deep operations framework.

The primacy of conventional force in Russian military operations, contrary to the hybrid warfare perspective, is one of the main findings in this thesis. Looking at the invasion of Crimea, what appears to be a fundamental shift in the Russian emphasis away from conventional force is, in fact, a continuation. In the Second Chechen War, the Russian Armed Forces chose an approach of largely punitive conventional and indiscriminate firepower to subdue the insurgents. They could have chosen an approach similar to Western COIN doctrine, emphasizing irregular forces and methods, and non-military elements, but they did not. The 2008 Russo-Georgian War was clearly a predominantly conventional invasion, and the 2014 Invasion of Crimea, despite the "bloodless" consequences, was also mainly conducted with overt and conventional forces. Another interesting aspect, regarding the relationship between conventional and irregular forces, is the inconsistency in exploiting the asymmetry and advantages of each category. For example, in both the Second Chechen War and the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, Russian irregular forces were used to bolster the conventional forces, conducting conventional tasks, and thus assigning tasks to irregular forces to which they are less suited. The Russian emphasis on conventional warfare is also recognizable through the "new look" reforms, starting in 2008. Beyond bureaucratic improvements, the "new look" reforms aim at increasing readiness and procuring modern equipment for Russia's conventional forces (see Barabanov, 2014a; Renz, 2016b; McDermott, 2014). The new hardware includes 1,500 aircraft, 100 ships, and vehicles and equipment for the Ground Forces at an estimated cost of USD 700 billion by 2020 (McDermott, 2011, pp. 19-22; Trenin, 2016, p. 24).

Despite extensive reforms, Russia is still far from conventional parity with NATO, at least in light of military spending.[9] Thus, the Russian nuclear capability continues to be vital for

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[9] While the Russian Federation spent USD 70 billion on its military in 2016, the top NATO countries spent: USA USD 606 billion, France USD 56 billion, United Kingdom USD 54 billion, and Germany USD 41 billion (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2017).

deterring NATO. However, NATO enlargement and other threats to Russian core security interests, happening despite the Russian strategic nuclear deterrent, suggests that it is in fact insufficient. H. Strachan argues that the end of the Cold War increased the utility of conventional forces because the extreme bipolar tension disappeared and the readiness to use nuclear weapons was drastically reduced (Strachan, quoted in Renz 2016b, pp. 25-26). Thus, the use of conventional forces is not restricted to the same degree after the Cold War. Following that reasoning, for states aspiring to be a global power, strong conventional forces are even more beneficial today than during the Cold War (Renz, 2016b, pp. 25-27). Accordingly, in an expansive deterrence model of Russian strategic culture, a strong conventional capacity is fundamental in deterring and coercing opponents without resorting to the use of nuclear weapons. For example, Russia used conventional force against Ukraine, coercing them into a *fait accompli*, while holding NATO at bay with nuclear signaling.

Then, combining the preference for preparations, *maskirovka*, and conventional force points to a Russian strategic culture where preemption and strategic surprise is paramount. First, specific planning and preparations assures a favorable COF, and then *maskirovka* is used to conceal these preparations and to achieve a strategic advantage in the initial vulnerable phase of an operation. Finally, the primacy of conventional force necessitates a rapid and powerful intervention, thus resulting in an inclination to strike first. Yet, there are other factors amplifying this inclination. S. R. Covington argues that in addition to Russian aspirations of being a major power, there is also a sense of strategic vulnerability. The Russian border is almost 60,000 km long, which means that the Russian Ground Forces, regardless of its size, will never be able to mount a continuous defense along the border (Covington, 2016, pp. 13-15). Additionally, Russian strategic culture is greatly shaped by the experience of the 1941 invasion of Nazi-Germany. The unpreparedness of the Red Army and the devastation that followed the invasion have created a desire to never fight another war on Russian soil (Covington, 2016, p. 37). Thus, in Russian strategic culture, there is no clear relationship between a defensive war and a defensive strategy. To defend itself, Russia will likely use its military forces offensively, and, if possible, preempt and surprise the opponent (Covington, 2016, pp. 13-17). This underscores the primacy of conventional force; it is difficult to envisage an offensive defense against a conventionally equivalent opponent without massive use of

conventional force. Understanding the consequences of the Russian approach, S. R. Covington warns Western decision-makers:

> Mirror imaging Western approaches and assumptions or relying on weapons capability-centric analysis alone, will not capture how Moscow sees future conflict and war. (…) Russian strategy is not defensive in the sense that it is designed to give away territory in the face of an adversaries' offensive with geographic lines in the country's interior serving as trip wires for conventional counterattacks or nuclear escalation. This Western approach would trade territory for decision space in a crisis or war. Traditional Russian strategic culture would suggest that this is a trade the Russians will not accept (Covington ,2016, p. 42).

According to Covington, another important characteristic of Russian strategic culture is the inclination to include all the state's available resources into the war effort (Covington, 2016, p. 26). This aspect can also be recognized in the expansive deterrence model. The universalism of expansive deterrence, which allows all means to be used in all situations, implies that the division between the military and the civilian is artificial. However, the mobilization of all available resources to defend the state, in other words total war, is neither new nor specific to Russia. The opposite, that Russian strategic culture allows for the use of military force in a broader group of situations, is more interesting. That is, in Russian handling of international conflict, military force, including the threat of using nuclear weapons, is more frequently on the table. However, the analysis of the three cases is not suitable for making inferences about the Russian willingness to use military force. In order to do that, the analysis should also have included cases of Russian non-use of military force. The Russian perception of strategic vulnerability addressed above indicates Russia is less likely to use military force, but on the other hand will use it offensively and forcefully when the decision is made. Also, the concept of *bespredel*, that conduct in war should not be morally restricted, does have relevance to the universal character of expansive deterrence. The violation of cease-fires, which appeared in the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, and the use of punitive conventional force in counterinsurgencies both point to a perspective of war shaped by *bespredel.* However, it seems that *bespredel* no longer means an undue lack of restraint and discipline. The difference between the Second Chechen War and the 2014 Invasion of Crimea is striking. The ability to restrain the use of force by the Russian soldiers in Crimea, almost without exception, was a precondition for maintaining the Ukrainian pacification. Still, Russia is prepared to break international law, for example by annexing another state's territory and using forces without insignia, thus adhering to the concept of *bespredel* above the individual soldier level.

The continuousness of the expansive deterrence model is even more in accordance with the analysis. One telling example is the behavior of Ukrainian authorities during the Russian invasion of Crimea. It seems plausible that the Ukrainian reluctance to resist the invasion was partly caused by Russia's massive use of force against Georgia in 2008. The Russian invasion of Georgian territory greatly exceeded what was necessary in order to reach their declared objective, which was to assist the peacekeeping forces in South Ossetia; thus, making it partly a warning to other states in the post-Soviet space to stay in line. When the Russian Armed Forces invaded Crimea, the Ukrainian decision-makers would then have little expectation of containing the Russian use of force in Crimea. An all-out invasion of Ukraine was at stake. Yet, what reduces the relevance of the continuousness aspect of the expansive deterrence model is the Russian emphasis on *maskirovka* in the preliminary phases of a conflict. The secrecy and deception in these circumstances reduces the Russian ability to signal to their opponent through the use of force; thus, *maskirovka* reduces the coercive and deterring effect beyond the achievements of military force itself. Additionally, the Russian habit of targeting their domestic audience with propaganda, reducing the impact of their military operations, can complicate the attempt to convey a clear signal to an opponent. For example, in the Second Chechen War, the Russian measures to lessen the emotional impact on the Russian population, such as the control of media and denying the scale of the casualty rates, reduced the effect of a potential punitive signal to other separatist movements in the Russian Federation. In all three cases, a justification for the use of force was emphasized: to defeat terrorism in the Second Chechen War; protect Russian peacekeepers and citizens in the 2008 Russo-Georgian War; and to preemptively stop abuses from Ukrainian nationalists and "fascists" in the 2014 Invasion of Crimea. This shows that Russian information operations usually involve a component targeting the Russian population.

What is not static in the three cases is the level of Russian inter-agency cooperation. The Second Chechen War showed severe problems with coordinating activities conducted by different military organizations, security agencies, and other sectors of the state – even cases of enmity between the different forces operating in Chechnya – were reported. The 2008 Russo-Georgian War seemed to show progress, and the rapid and synchronized conduct of Russian forces in the 2014 Invasion of Crimea did astonish some Western observers. Obviously, the complex structure of Russian armed forces and security agencies does not favor

cooperation. For example, there are three major intelligence services: the Federal Security Service (FSB), the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), and the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff (GRU) (US, DIA, 2017, pp. 72-74). All in all, there are approximately 50 different entities in the Russian polity responsible for national defense (Johnson, 2015, p. 144). Additionally, according to G. Pavlovsky, the existence of the *sistema* reduces the possibility for coherent and unified strategic conduct in the Russian state. The *sistema*, the tradition of giving agents-of-the-state the mandate to retrieve resources and conduct activities on behalf of the state, does not promote detailed synchronization of complex campaigns (Pavlovsky, 2016, p. 14). However, there are indications of an increasing centralization in the planning and execution of military operations in Russia. In April 2013, the Russian General Staff was given the mandate of "coordinating authority" over all the different ministries and agencies responsible for national defense. One year later, this mandate resulted in the creation of the National Center for Direction of the Defense of the Russian Federation (NCDD) (Johnson, 2015, pp. 144-145). The NCDD was created too late to contribute to the increased performance during the invasion of Crimea, but the mandate given to the General Staff is a clear manifestation of a continuous Russian effort to improve coordination within the national defense sector (Bruusgaard, 2014, p. 86). Thus, this indicates that Putin is challenging the *sistema*, at least in the national defense sector.

One disputed question after the 2014 Invasion of Crimea was whether Russia had implemented a novel doctrine or not. The debate revolved around the concept of "hybrid warfare" and other conceptualizations, such as the Gerasimov doctrine, non-linear warfare, or new-generation warfare. The hybrid warfare model, applied in this study, is an operationalization of these doctrinal concepts. Despite finding some examples of hybrid threats, such as the use of Russian peacekeepers and conventional forces in the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, the analyses of the three cases do not support that there is a novel Russian hybrid warfare doctrine. However, that does not mean that later cases of Russian use of military force, such as the Rebellion in Donbas and the military assistance to the Syrian regime, cannot show a Russian hybrid warfare doctrine. Still, the cultural characteristic of strategic culture implies that changes will occur slowly. That is, the Russian strategy may change from conflict to conflict, but the underlying culture within the strategic community endures and, thus, will shape the conflict behavior.

One central article in the debate was the 2013 article by General V. Gerasimov, the Chief of the General Staff, where he elaborated about future war. The similarities between the article's prediction and the Russian response to Euromaidan is said to support the claim that there is a novel Russian hybrid warfare doctrine. However, two particular factors indicate otherwise. Firstly, it is debatable whether the Russian General Staff willingly discloses a new, predominantly covert, method of warfare. Secondly, Gerasimov is addressing the Russian strategic community, warning about future threats and urges to prepare for them. The timeframe of one year between the article and the outbreak of hostilities between Russia and Ukraine suggests that a potential Russian reform would not have time to take effect. After all, the Russian officer corps did not appear to be progressive and flexible during the 1990s and up to 2008 (see McDermott 2014, p. 14; Barabanov, 2014b, pp. 88-89). Tellingly, the Russian 2014 Military Doctrine, published December 26, 2014, emphasizes the threat from foreign subversive influence, causing civil unrest and threatening vital Russian interests (Sinovetz and Renz, 2015, pp. 73-76) – that is, answering Gerasimov's call to prepare for the future war.

As stated earlier, it is important to have a framework to interpret Russian conflict behavior if one wants to understand Russian international conduct and intentions. The purpose of this thesis is not to understand *why*, but *how*, Russia uses military force. Still, this analysis can elucidate Russian international intentions to some degree. Firstly, the Russian preference for contingency preparations, surprise and offensive action means that both an offensive and defensive intention will likely produce an offensive operation. The 2014 Invasion of Crimea may have been caused by two different perspectives: a "revisionist" Russia, widening its sphere of influence; or a "status-quo" Russia, considering core Russian security interests. In both cases, offensive military operations into Ukrainian territory would be one of the alternative courses of action. Secondly, the use of military force does not appear to be solely a method for getting domestic support. Certainly, war is a well-proven method to achieve social mobilization; however, high casualty rates and protracted conflict have had a tendency to create discontent in the Russian public. It is possible to argue that the war in Afghanistan contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the Chechen Wars did also create domestic strain in Russia (Miakinkov, 2011, p. 665). Additionally, the three case analyses have shown that Russian authorities have given much attention to designing information operations, targeted at the Russian population, justifying the use of military force. Thus, it

seems that the use of military force entails great risk for internal stability, even in Putin's Russia.

CONCLUSION

The dream of a European system of collective security seems far away today. Russia's international aggression in Ukraine has resulted in Western economic sanctions, and the military tension in Europe is at its highest since the Cold War. However, the consequences of these developments are dwarfed in comparison with the consequences of a military conflict between Russia and NATO. The use of military force between them, regardless how limited it is initially, has a considerable possibility of ending in nuclear warfare, even in the full exchange of strategic nuclear arsenals. Therefore, in the time to come, it is paramount for NATO to be able to interpret Russian actions correctly to avoid international crises and accidents that can escalate into military conflict. This thesis contributes to the understanding of how and when Russia uses military force by revealing its strategic culture. To understand the Russian strategic culture is to understand how the Russian strategic community views "the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs" (Johnston, 1995, pp. 45-46). Importantly, the analysis rests on two basic assumptions: Firstly, strategic culture has some degree of inertia, making sudden and extensive changes unlikely; and secondly, that strategic culture actually has a measurable effect on conflict behavior. These two assumptions make it possible to reveal Russian strategic culture by analyzing three cases: the Second Chechen War, the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, and the 2014 Invasion of Crimea.

The findings, produced from the case-analyses, point toward a strategic culture that is strongly influenced by the Soviet legacy. When the Russian Federation devises strategies, they appear to view military force in a framework influenced by deep operations. The overall objective is to inflict a systemic shock to the opponent's defensive system. In order to achieve this objective, the Russian strategic community seems to prefer three central features: Firstly, the ability to predict future conflicts and assess their outcomes is perceived as crucial to Russian strategists. Both their perceived strategic vulnerability and World War II history have urged the Russians to always attempt to use force preemptively and with an element of surprise toward an aggressor. An ability to foresee conflicts enables tangible and adaptive preparations, and these preparatory measures will more easily allow a penetration of the opponent's defenses. Secondly, the use of multiple entrances is seen as beneficial to the effort to penetrate and fragment the defenses. However, the dispersion of forces, caused by this approach, induces risks and calls for a risk-managing mechanism. The third feature is one such

risk-management mechanism, namely the traditional Russian concept of *maskirovka*. The concept includes secrecy, deception, and denial, which all are examples of methods to conceal preparations and reduce the risks associated with dispersed and isolated forces. Additionally, the primacy of conventional forces is prominent in the Russian perception of how military force should be used efficiently. An offensive approach, even in a defensive war, combined with the objective to deal systemic shock, favors the decisive and coercive nature of conventional forces. All three cases have shown a Russian preference for conventional force, and the extensive Russian military reforms, which started in 2008, have equally prioritized the improvement of conventional forces.

Further, Russian strategic culture is characterized by the view that all means, and methods are, and should be, available in a situation of armed conflict. This is embodied in the concept *bespredel*, that conduct in war should not be morally restricted. However, the 2014 Invasion of Crimea indicated that *bespredel* no longer applies to the individual soldier level; the Russian soldiers showed restraint and discipline rather than rampant use of violence, infamous from the Chechen Wars. Additionally, the use of force is often presented as a signal, designed to have coercive and deterring effects beyond the specific use. This applies both spatially, as with the threatening build-up of Russian forces on the eastern border of Ukraine during the invasion of Crimea, and temporally, as with the excessive invasion of Georgia signaling to other post-Soviet states to stay in line.

Finally, the analysis did not find many examples of operational level coordination of conventional, irregular and non-military threats; that is, it did not indicate a hybrid warfare model. In fact, the examples that did exist were primarily connected to the effort to penetrate the opponent's defense systems, not to create a hybrid warfare force. However, on the other hand, the Russian strategic community is concerned about hybrid threats, illustrated by Gerasimov's 2013 article and the 2014 Military Doctrine, and it can be expected that Russia will increasingly focus on fighting wars on a hybrid battlefield.

The three cases used in this thesis do not entail all possible cases of Russian conflicts after the Cold War. One obvious recommendation for future research will be to expand this study to the rebellion in Donbas and the Russian involvement in the Syrian Civil War. However, following the logic of this thesis, it is imperative to treat strategic culture as enduring. Russian strategies and methods may change from conflict to conflict, but the underlying strategic

culture will not. This also points toward the chief purpose of this thesis: To interpret the next instance of Russian use of military force, and to design the appropriate response, is more dependent on an understanding of the enduring Russian strategic culture, rather than the latest Russian conflict. Another possible expansion of this thesis is to look at *when*, rather than *how*, Russia uses military force. In that case, the incidents where Russia refrained from applying military force in conflict will be equally as important as materialized conflicts. The theoretical framework of Russian strategic culture, presented in this thesis, is an essential aid when interpreting the cases of Russian use and non-use of military force. Thus, it will make it easier to understand the intention behind each decision and make inferences about when Russia is likely to use military force.

It is also important to interpret Russian actions from a Russian-centric perspective, rather than presuming the "worst-case" alternative, the alternative that plays into Russian strengths and our weaknesses. Russian strategists are also facing uncertainties, resource shortages and strategic dilemmas. As a final note, it can be worthwhile to consider B. Renz and H. Smith's warning:

> Interpreting Crimea as evidence of a grander master plan of Russian 'hybrid warfare' is reminiscent of the West's enemy image of the Soviet Union, which viewed the Soviet leadership as a chess master that was vastly superior in terms of centralization, organisation and coordination. As it turned out, the Soviet Union leadership's centralisation and strategic foresight was not as strong as had been presumed (Renz and Smith, 2016, p. 9).

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